

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Just heard about the new Covid variant, sir! Shall we get ready with our utensils?

SHORT TAKES

Gayatribala to receive Sahitya Akademi Award

BHUBANESWAR: Well-known poet and writer, Dr Gayatribala Panda has been conferred the prestigious 'Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award' for 2022 for her book *Daya Nadi*, a collection of poems. Earlier in 2011, she won the 'Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar' literary honour in the poetry genre for *Gaan*, a collection of poems. Panda has to her credit 10 collections of poetry, three novels and two collections of short stories.

SC demonetisation judgement Jan 2

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court will pronounce its judgment January 2 on a clutch of petitions challenging the Centre's 2016 decision to demonetise currency notes of ₹1,000 and ₹500 denominations. A five-judge Constitution bench, headed by Justice SA Nazeer, is scheduled to pronounce the judgment. The other judges comprising the bench are Justices BR Gavai, AS Bopanna, V Ramasubramanian, and BV Nagarathna.

Mask up, says Centre

Random testing of arrivals at international airports to start Dec 24 and a slew of other measures on cards to prevent the spread of Covid-19

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 22: Amid a spurt in Covid-19 cases in China and in some other countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi cautioned Thursday against complacency and directed officials to strengthen the ongoing surveillance measures, especially at international airports. Modi's assertion came during a high-level meeting, which he chaired to assess the Covid-19 situation in India, preparedness of health infrastructure and logistics, status of the vaccination campaign and the emergence of new variants and their public health implications.

During the meeting, Modi urged everyone to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, including wearing masks in crowded public places, at all times, especially in view of the



upcoming festive season, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Advisory regarding the masks has also been sent to all the states, sources informed. They added that the Centre is contemplating to put in place compulsory use of masks again, especially in crowded places.

Modi also urged that precaution doses may be encouraged especially for vulnerable and elderly groups.

'Follow rules or face lockdown'

Bhubaneswar: Amid resurgence of Covid-19 due to Omicron BF.7 sub-variant of the virus, Odisha Public Health director Niranjana Mishra said Thursday that people need to take precautions to avoid lockdown and shutdown in the state. "There is no need to panic about the sub-variant of the virus. Covid-19 cases are rising in other countries but not in India. However, chances of a spike can't be ruled out. People should obey Covid-related rules to avoid lockdown and shutdown situations," Mishra warned. Meanwhile a crucial meeting will be held Friday here to discuss containment measures that need to be taken to prevent the spread of the disease. After the meeting, the Health department is likely to announce new guidelines to check spread of the virus.

Continued on P4

CM launches slew of projects in Balasore

₹220 CRORE AID FOR 60,000 WOMEN DISTRIBUTED



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik waves to the crowd at a programme in Balasore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik visited Balasore Thursday and launched 191 developmental projects worth ₹1,806 crore. Patnaik inaugurated projects worth ₹374 crore and laid foundation stone for projects worth ₹1,431 crore. Besides, he inaugurated a Railway overbridge at Somnathpur in the district.

During his visit to the coastal district, the Chief Minister also distributed ₹220 crore aid to 60,000 women of 5,600 women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and appealed to them to become entrepreneurs.

Stressing on 'one panchayat one product', Patnaik stressed on the need for each panchayat to produce one 'special' item. "It will help create a market for the product and create a special identity for the panchayat," Patnaik said.

Continued on P4

1 dead, 2 injured in Ganjam clash

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patrapur, Dec 22: A youth was killed and two of his relatives suffered critical injuries Thursday after a group of villagers attacked them over past enmity outside the Samantiapalli panchayat office under this block in Ganjam district. The deceased was identified as M Rama Rao of Ambagaon village under the same panchayat. Among the injured are M Krishna Rao and M Lachheya, an uncle and cousin of the deceased.

The incident occurred when the three had gone to the panchayat office to collect their quota of public distribution system (PDS) quota of rice. It should be stated here that in the past similar clashes have occurred between people of a particular community in Ambagaon village. A number of people have suffered injuries in the past due to the clashes.

Thursday also there was fight between the two groups over rice distribution. Members of one group viciously attacked Rama Rao with sharp weapons leaving him seriously injured.

In an effort to save him, Rama Rao's uncle and cousin were also injured. Locals rescued the three and took them to Patrapur community health centre (CHC) where doctors pronounced Rama Rao dead. Krishna and Lachheya were shifted to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur from where they were again transferred to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack after their condition deteriorated.

Meanwhile after the clash personnel from Jarada police station reached the spot and have launched a probe.

Bachelors march for brides in Maharashtra

STATE'S SEX RATIO AT 1,000:920 PREVENTING MANY WANNABE BRIDEGROOMS FROM GETTING THEIR PERFECT MATCH

AGENCIES

Pune, Dec 22: A total of 50 eligible bachelors, clad in wedding costumes, riding horses and accompanied with 'band baja and baraat' took out a procession, not to a marriage hall, but to the Solapur district collector's office seeking brides. Their main intention was to highlight the issue of skewed male-female ratio in Maharashtra.

The unusual march, organised by NGO 'Jyoti Kranti Parishad' (JKP),

evoked curiosity, leers and even cheers, but highlighted a major problem gnawing at the rural hinterlands of Solapur and other districts, where there is a stark 'shortage' of girls for marriage to the bachelors, in the age group of 25-40, and even older hopefuls.

The JKP later submitted a memorandum at the district collector's office seeking strict implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act to improve the male-female ratio in Maharashtra. As per the National



Family Health Survey (2019-21), Maharashtra's sex ratio stands at 920 females per 1,000 males.

All the wannabe grooms carried placards that read, "Wanted a Wife, A

Wife! Anybody can give a Girl to Marry Me! Government, come to your senses and talk to us, you will have to take note of our plight!" A flustered 12-year-old kid Vicky Sadigle led the procession carrying a poster "In future, Will I get married or Not?"

Shilvant Kshirsagar, 29, who runs a dairy business, was among the 50 eligible bachelors seeking a bride. "I am 29 years old, unmarried, and hail from a rural part of Solapur district. We have a family dairy business and also do farming on two-acre

land. Every time a marriage proposal comes, the prospective bride's first question is whether I live in a city and have a job or not," he said.

"So far there have been 25 marriage proposals but in most cases, the woman's side rejected the proposal after coming to know I do not live in a city and I do not have a job. I have also put up my profile on some matrimonial sites and marriage bureaus, but in vain," a visibly disappointed Kshirsagar said.

Continued on P4



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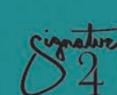
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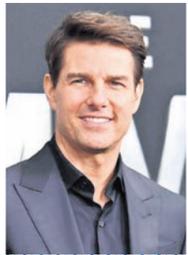






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leisure



CRUISE HAS NEVER EATEN FAMOUS CAKES HE SENDS FOR CHRISTMAS

Hollywood star Tom Cruise is said to have never tried the famous white chocolate cake he spends a fortune sending to hundreds of his friends every Christmas. The actor sends \$50 White Chocolate Coconut Bundt Cake from Doan's Bakery in Woodland Hills, Los Angeles, each December, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).

SWIFT'S ALL TOO WELL OUT OF OSCARS RACE

Singer Taylor Swift won't be making her upcoming directorial debut as an Oscar-nominated filmmaker. Although she is still among the 15 songs still in the running for best original song, her film *All Too Well: The Short Film*, failed to advance to the next round of voting for best live-action short.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, you will turn an attentive ear to your inner voice. As a result, you will be able to execute all your plans with precision. Besides being cheerful, you will even take disappointments with a pinch of salt. Why just today, says Ganesh, you can have this rare quality for keeps.

TAURUS

As a manager, you may be able to outclass your colleagues by a great margin, predicts Ganesh. You will soften your approach with time and move towards a more democratic style of decision-making rather than the arbitrary protocol that you are used to.

GEMINI

A day of conflicting emotions awaits you. Your personal and professional life will both be important. Hence you will experience anxious moments as you try to balance the demands made by both. However, the good news is you will succeed in your attempts and will do justice to all your duties, says Ganesh.

CANCER

You will love to stroll in a world of fantasy. Religious impact will prevail over you. You will charter your fantasy to a mysterious level. You will have communion with God at a temple, mosque or church. You will try to draw lessons from your experience.

LEO

You will exercise your will today and will be in the mood to soar like a free bird today. You will not be in the mood to listen to anyone. Work related travel will be beneficial. Guard against ego clashes in personal relationships, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

You will pen down the things to be done today. However, Ganesh suggests that just making a note of them is not enough; you need to set practical goals according to priority. Moreover, Ganesh warns that items you mark on the top of the list will demand immediate action.

LIBRA

Ganesh says that your day today will be extremely busy and as a result you will be agitated today. Your happy nature will have to bear the brunt of the sad circumstances and situations that life will shower on you but you will be able to face the situation with your inner strength. You will have to be careful about your health today and will need to watch your diet.

SCORPIO

Negative thoughts are likely to surround you today, try to avoid it. You may feel lonely and left-out when the day begins. However, a long list of activities and responsibilities will keep you occupied throughout the day. There are possibilities that you may land up in tricky situations, but you have the knack of handling things gracefully.

SAGITTARIUS

Your ways to deal with your team mates and colleagues will be strict and disciplined. However, your perfect ways at work will leave them awestruck. Your personal equations will be least affected by your stern ways, says Ganesh. Do not let success go to your head.

CAPRICORN

A penny saved is a penny earned. Your strong belief in this will make you scrutinise your requirements and rearrange the priority list, so that you know where and how to utilise the resources. Your choice of friends will represent your approach and outlook towards life. Ganesh advises you to choose your friends wisely.

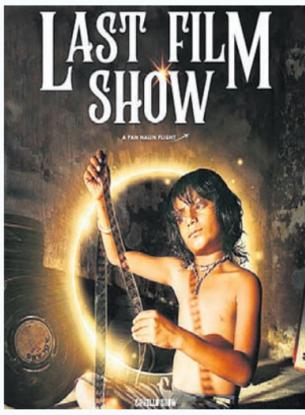
AQUARIUS

There is nothing like having a good time with your brothers and sisters. Generally, you plan out your routine and activities by yourself, but it is a different day today. Your siblings will make plans for you and you will just go along with the flow, predicts Ganesh.

PISCES

Some unknown fear could haunt you today. You will direct your energies to discovering the source of your worries and eliminate them. Lovers will find some precious time to cozy up with their partners.

Chhello Show, All That Breathes, song from RRR in Oscars shortlist



New Delhi: India's official entry to the upcoming Oscars *Chhello Show* (titled *Last Film Show* in English), acclaimed documentary feature *All That Breathes*, documentary short *The Elephant Whisperers*, and *Naatu*

Naatu - the song from period action blockbuster *RRR* have made it to the 95th Academy Awards shortlist, the organisers said Thursday.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the body behind the awards, announced the shortlists in 10 categories: documentary feature film, documentary short film, international feature film, makeup and hairstyling, music (original score), music (original song), animated short film, live action short film, sound, and visual effects.

While *Chhello Show* is part of the international feature film shortlist, *Naatu Naatu* from *RRR* appears on the music (original song) shortlist. *All That Breathes* and *The Elephant Whisperers* are included in the shortlists of documentary feature and documentary short

segments, respectively.

Directed by Pan Nalin and produced by Siddharth Roy Kapur and Dheer Momaya, *Chhello Show* is a Gujarati-language coming-of-age story of a young boy's love affair with cinema in a Saurashtra village.

Meanwhile, Pakistani film *Joyland* has also been shortlisted for the Oscars, the first ever movie to do so from the country. It is among 15 films that made the cut for the best international feature film honour and will advance to the final stage of nominations.

The nominations for the 95th Academy Awards will be announced January 24, while the Oscars ceremony will be held March 12, at the Dolby Theatre at Ovation Hollywood in Los Angeles.

Pooja shares her 'crazy' experience

Mumbai: Known for her South Indian blockbusters, actress Pooja Hegde is all set to star in Rohit Shetty's upcoming comedy drama film *Cirkus*. Ahead of the film's release, the actress shared the crazy

experience of shooting a hectic song sequence for *Cirkus*. When asked about her craziest day on the set, Pooja shared, "I think for me it was the last song of the film because there was this one really long shot. "It was the longest take," she added. "You had to have hit the mark before the camera reached because there are two Ranveers. And it's all in one shot and it would be like- we would be waiting, just when the camera pans to us we have to do our step. And if one person messes up, we have to start all over again. It was exhausting for him [Ranveer Singh] especially because he was dancing with both of us

[Pooja and Jacqueline]. So, he was like in every frame." Besides Pooja Hegde, the comedy-drama also includes Varun Sharma, Jacqueline Fernandez, Tiku Talsania, Johnny Lever, Sanjay Mishra and Vrajesh Hirjee in pivotal roles. *Cirkus* arrives in theatres December 23.



Bhumi adds sensual twist to her animal print saree

Mumbai: Bhumi Pednekar has a history of embracing risk when it comes to provocative outfits, as seen by her

career in fashion. The ensembles Pednekar wears are frequently greeted with nods of approval, suggesting that she may have an instinctive knowledge of what flatters her form. She clearly has a preference for unusual and avant-garde silhouettes.

This year, the *Badhai Do* actress is dishing sparkly numbers one after the other, going full force into party mode. Pednekar is channelling huge main character energy as she creates yet another elevated outfit—this time a risqué saree by Ekaya Banaras—to add the gloss and glamour to the season of flashy clothing.

Bhumi served as the muse for fashion label Ekaya, choosing the breath-taking six yards of grace to up the sensuality at the Filmfare OTT Awards. She chose a saree with animal stripes in black and gold. She paired it with a striking similar blouse that had long sleeves and a crisscross neckline. Bhumi displayed her midriff while posing with her pallu on one shoulder. The statement golden ear cuffs from the house of To complete the look, she let the outfit speak for itself and kept the make-up muted wearing maroon eyeshadow, black eyeliner, black kohl, mascara-laden eyelashes, drawn eyebrows, contoured cheeks and a shade of nude lipstick.

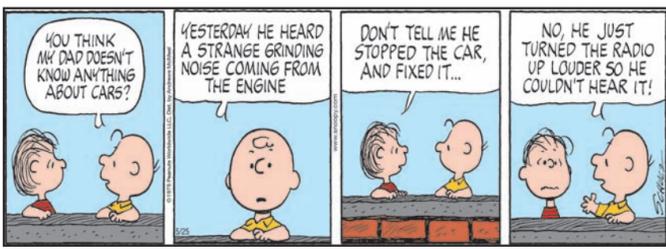
Meanwhile, on the work front, Bhumi will be sharing screen space with Arjun Kapoor in Ajay Bah'li's romantic thriller *The Ladykiller*.

Man held for issuing rape, death threat to Uorfi

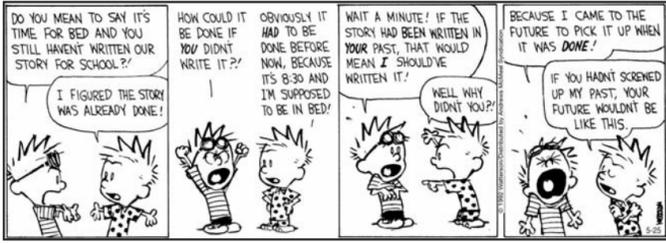
Mumbai: Social media influencer Uorfi Javed, who is currently in Dubai, was recently threatened by a person online as he issued death and rape threats to her. According to a report, the police in Goregaon area of Mumbai have arrested a man by the name of Naveen Giri. Meanwhile, the social media influencer was reportedly detained by the police for allegedly shooting a video in a revealing outfit in Dubai.

However, the actress later clarified that her clothes had nothing to do with the Dubai police landing on the sets of her shoot, but rather; it was some miscommunication by her production team regarding the timings of the shoot at the public place. Uorfi is known to stir controversy with her choice of clothing. She had also called out a group of teens on social media a few weeks back for allegedly calling and texting her abuses and threats.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

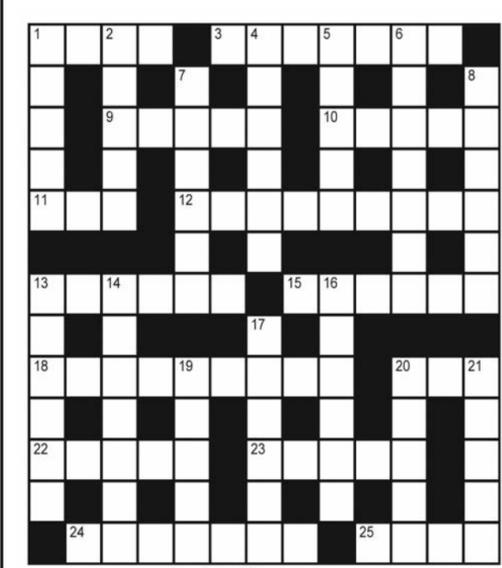


BREVITY



FUN post

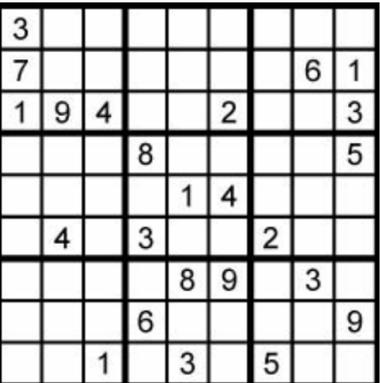
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Injure
 - 3 Chinese dish (4,3)
 - 9 Colorful parrot
 - 10 Old photo colour
 - 11 Young newt
 - 12 Magician's forte (4,5)
 - 13 Fisherman
 - 15 Woodland
 - 18 Have a party
 - 20 Fall from grace
 - 22 Decorative jugs
 - 23 Charter
 - 24 Fencing cry (2,5)
 - 25 Goad
 - 5 Furnace button
 - 6 Snake, e.g.
 - 7 Winter hanger
 - 8 O ring, for one
 - 13 Zodiac symbol
 - 14 Sailing ship of yore
 - 16 Ticket type (3-3)
 - 17 Voyaged
 - 19 Iraqi port
 - 20 Look of disdain
 - 21 Famous

SUDOKU

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

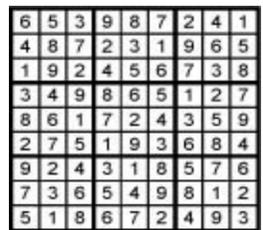


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



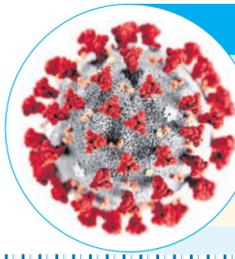
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



CHRISTMAS AHEAD

A church at Unit-4 in Bhubaneswar decked up with colourful lights ahead of Christmas celebrations in City



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	65,99,27,818	63,28,07,165	66,79,319
India	4,46,76,515	4,41,42,432	5,30,681
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Row over Mamita's DNA test report

BJP demands a CBI probe into Gobinda Sahu's death, while a Congress delegation meets Governor Ganeshi Lal and urges him to direct the state govt for a High Court-monitored SIT probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: The opposition BJP and Congress Thursday intensified their demand for a neutral inquiry into the death of Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in Kalahandi woman teacher's kidnap and murder case. At the same time, the disparity in statements by the police and the victim's lawyer regarding the DNA test report of Mamita Meher has kicked up a political storm.

BJP demanded a CBI probe into the incident, while a Congress delegation met Governor Ganeshi Lal and urged him to direct the state government for a High Court-monitored SIT probe.

Raising the issue of disparity in the DNA test report of the woman teacher, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said a CBI probe into Sahu's death is the need of the hour as the incident has raised many questions.

Sahu, who was the president of the school managing committee where the teacher worked, was arrested and lodged in Kantabanji sub-jail in Bolangir district died in suspicious circumstances hours before his production in a local court. His body was found hanging from a tree behind the jail's kitchen



Cong delegation after submitting the memorandum to Governor Ganeshi Lal

A team of Crime Branch along with scientific experts Thursday visited Kantabanji sub-jail for an inquiry into Sahu's death

Tuesday. Pradhan said the jail administration needs to answer how Sahu died inside the prison and the manner in which he was found dead raises many questions and suspicion.

Pradhan said, "In a democratic set up the government is answerable to the people... The disparity in the DNA test report has added to the suspicion in the Gobinda

Sahu death case. While the victim's advocate said that the teacher's DNA report does not match with that of her parents, the police claimed otherwise."

A five-member Congress delegation submitted a memorandum to the governor seeking a High Court-monitored probe by a special investigation team into the case as the government's claim that the death is a case of suicide is "totally unacceptable".

It also said that Sahu's wife has lodged a police complaint and demanded a CBI probe into the death of her husband.

The incident is a case of gross negligence of jail administration for which the Chief Minister cannot es-

cape accountability as he is also the home minister, the petition said. "It is natural that the question arises when every activity is under CCTV surveillance, how could Sahu come out and hang himself?" it said. The delegation comprised MLAs Santosh Singh Saluja and Adhiraj Panigrahi besides senior leaders Lalatendu Mohapatra, Ganeswar Behera and Sivananda Ray.

BJD MLA Amar Prasad Satapathy said, "CBI and Crime Branch are separate investigative agencies and have defined domains to work. Let them work independently."

Meanwhile, a CB team along with scientific experts Thursday visited Kantabanji sub jail for inquiry into Sahu's death. Ward No-1 where Sahu was staying was opened by the team in the presence of jail authorities and witnesses.

"During search, a bunch of documents including some hand written papers, medicine files, FIR copy and final form related to the case vide Sindhakela PS Case No. 97/2021 have been seized. Daily medicine issue registers and personal file of UTP Sahu were also seized," said the CB. Location of 16 CCTV installations has been verified and requisition has been placed with the jail authorities for production of CCTV footages, it added.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Start survey on qualification of doctors: High Court to govt

PNN/ AGENCIES

Cuttack, Dec 22: The Orissa High Court has directed the state government to develop a comprehensive plan under which a survey will be conducted to find out if allopathic doctors practising in Odisha possess the relevant qualification.

"Such a survey should be undertaken in a time-bound manner and be concluded preferably within a period of six months," said a division bench headed by Chief Justice S Muralidhar.

The bench was adjudicating over a writ petition filed by the Odisha State Legal Aid Services Authority (OSLASA) Wednesday. Quoting a survey conducted by the World Bank in which it was reported that at least 51 per cent of medical practitioners across the world do not possess valid qualification, the High Court ex-



THE HIGH COURT BENCH WAS ADJUDICATING OVER A WRIT PETITION FILED BY THE ODISHA STATE LEGAL AID SERVICES AUTHORITY

pressed concern and said action taken only in respect of one case in the state can hardly be termed as adequate.

"Accordingly, a direction is issued to the health secretary to file an affidavit setting out the modalities of verification, the time period within which the verification will be concluded and

the consequential action against medical practitioners practicing without valid qualification," the court said in its order. The OSLASA had filed a petition, seeking action in one particular case of appointment of a doctor without a proper degree certificate, including action against the selection committee.

11 medical boards for MTP on the cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Health and Family Welfare department secretary Shalini Pandit Thursday said that to ease the process of Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) for women with more than 24 weeks of pregnancy, the state government has decided to constitute medical boards at 11 more government medical colleges and PG institutes, apart from the one existing at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

Pandit said that as per the provisions of the MTP Act, 1971 (34 of 1971), for referral of such cases, the state government had constituted a medical board at SCB to take decisions regarding allowing or denying termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks of gestation period after due consideration and assurance that the procedure would be safe for the woman at that stage.

"The MTP cases from all over the state were being referred to that board for decision taking in a

time bound manner. It was difficult as well as time consuming for such cases, referred from places far off from Cuttack, to approach the Medical Board at Cuttack for termination of pregnancy and to avail timely services of the board. Hence, constitution of multiple medical boards for the purpose was the need felt," said a department official.

The government medical colleges and PG institutes where medical board are to be constituted are: MKCG Medical College & Hospital,

Berhampur; VSS Medical College & Hospital, Burla; FM Medical College & Hospital, Balasore; PRM Medical College & Hospital, Mayurbhanj; BB Medical College & Hospital, Bolangir; SLN Medical College & Hospital, Koraput; Shree Jagannath Medical College & Hospital, Puri; Keonjhar Government Medical College & Hospital, Sundargarh Government Medical College & Hospital, AIIMS, Bhubaneswar and PG Institute of Medical Education & Research, Bhubaneswar.

Ganga Deb wants direct flights to metro cities from Jharsuguda airport

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 22: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Sambalpur Nitesh Ganga Deb Thursday requested the Union Civil Aviation Ministry to commence direct flights from Jharsuguda airport to Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata at the earliest.

The BJP MP raised the issue in Lok Sabha under Rule 377. The Veer Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2018 under the regional connectivity scheme UDAN, he said, adding that the flights from the airport have been cancelled frequently in recent months as a result of which air passengers are facing lots of difficulties.



ART EXPO: Justice DP Choudhury of Orissa High Court along with other guests admiring an artwork at a tribal art exhibition in Cuttack, Thursday

PREVENTING MISHAP DEATHS

State to have 55 more trauma care facilities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: With a view to providing emergency medical care to road accident victims, the state government has given in-principle approval to establishment of 55 more trauma care facilities (TCFs) in the existing health facilities across the state.

The Health and Family Welfare department Thursday issued a notification in this regard. As per the operational guidelines on capacity building for developing trauma care facilities along National Highways issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, the preventable deaths because of road accidents are to be brought down to 10 per cent by developing a pan-India trauma care network in which no trauma victim would have to travel for more than 50 km and a designated trauma centre is available at every 100 km.

Following the direction of the Supreme Court, the state government has already asked for setting up of 33 TCFs through a notifica-



Preventable deaths because of road accidents are to be brought down to 10% by developing a pan-India trauma care network

tion in 2018. With the decision to establish 55 more TCFs, one trauma care facility will now be available within 50 km.

The Health department will also take steps to assess the gap in infrastructure, manpower, equipment and instrument and fulfil them to strengthen the new trauma care facilities.



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

"There is no direct Air India flight to Delhi from this airport till today. My Parliamentary constituency Sambalpur is the industrial, mining, and commercial hub of western Odisha. The air passengers of western Odisha as well as neighbouring states depend on this airport for travelling," the BJP MP said.

Ganga Deb also thanked the minister of Civil Aviation for commissioning the all weather instrument landing system (ILS) which provides technology of both vertical and horizontal guidance to pilots during landing.

"I urge the Minister of Civil Aviation to look into the matter urgently and ensure regular flights not only to Delhi but also to other metro cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Kolkata at the earliest," the parliamentarian said.

NASA's humanoid robot will help explore space

NASA is reportedly working on a project to develop a humanoid robot that will help humans travel to new celestial bodies and may even help with laundry at home.

Appttronik, a US-based robotics company, is collaborating with NASA to develop 'Apollo', a 5-ft 8-inch, 160-pound (about 72 kg) general-purpose humanoid robot designed to assist with tasks in space, the commercial sector, and, most interestingly, the home, reports ZDNET.

"You know, I'm ready for it. I'm tired of doing my dishes and laundry," Jeff Cardenas, CEO of Appttronik was quoted as saying.

Apollo will be equipped to perform a variety of tasks in various environments, with the mission



of carrying burdens that humans do not need or want to carry, said the report.

"The initial things that these robots are going to do are very sort

of simple things, like move objects," said Cardenas.

"Things that we're exerting a lot of energy on, and I think what this will do is free humans up to do

■ Apollo will make its first debut at South by Southwest in March 2023, according to the report

■ South by Southwest is an annual conglomeration of parallel film, interactive media, and music festivals and conferences organised jointly that take place in mid-March in the US

■ Appttronik will then spend the rest of the year working closely with select customers to deploy the robot and observe use cases. However, the wider rollout will not begin until 2024

things that are much more worthy of our time, and our talent," he added. Apollo will make its first debut

at South by Southwest in March 2023, according to the report.

South by Southwest is an annual conglomeration of parallel film, interactive media, and music festivals and conferences organised jointly that take place in mid-March in the US.

Appttronik will then spend the rest of the year working closely with select customers to deploy the robot and observe use cases. However, the wider rollout will not begin until 2024.

NASA and Appttronik first collaborated in 2013, when they built NASA's Valkyrie Robot for the DARPA Robotics Challenge (DRC).

Valkyrie was a multi-purpose humanoid robot that could have walked straight out of a sci-fi movie, the report added.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	60826.22	↓ 241.02
NIFTY	18127.35	↓ 71.75
DOLLAR	82.68	↑ ₹0.04
EURO	87.93	↑ ₹0.05
GOLD	₹54,620	↓ ₹451
SILVER	₹68,749	↓ ₹960

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 27.6°C	26.6°C
	MIN 14.6°C	14.4°C
Humidity	90%	94%
Rainfall	0.0mm	0.0mm

Forecast: Moderate Fog very likely

CM launches slew...

Continued from P1
“My government is committed to uplifting the weaker sections in general and poor women in particular. I am sure women will create a new history in the industrial development of the state,” the CM added. Patnaik said ₹50,000 crore interest-free loan would be provided to the women SHG members in next five years.
Meanwhile, police detained several BJP leaders, including president of the Balasore town unit, Umakanta Mohapatra, as a preventive measure keeping law and order issues in mind before Patnaik’s arrival here. They were later released after the CM’s departure, officials said.

Mask up, says Centre

Continued from P1
He directed officials to ramp up testing and also genomic sequencing efforts. Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in the meeting that states have also been asked to ramp up the booster dose drive, especially for senior citizens.
States have also been asked to share a larger number of samples with the designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) for genome sequencing on a daily basis, the PMO said. This will support timely detection of newer variants, if any circulating in the country and facilitate undertaking requisite public health measures, it said.
Decision was taken to conduct random testing of international arrivals that will begin December 24, officials informed.
Meanwhile in a separate development, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) appealed Thursday to the public to follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour with immediate effect. In an advisory, it listed necessary steps to overcome the impending Covid outbreak, including wearing face masks in all public places, maintaining social distancing, regular handwashing with soap and water or sanitizers’.

IDCOL joint manager arrested in DA case

The accused worked as the joint manager at IDCOL’s Ampa Valli Lime Stone Mines at Simagoda in Koraput district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: The Vigilance directorate Thursday arrested Gaya Santara, joint manager of the Industrial Development Corporation of Odisha Limited (IDCOL), for possessing disproportionate assets to the tune of more than ₹10 crore. A case (11/22) has been registered against Santara and his wife by the Vigilance in this regard.

The accused worked as the joint manager at IDCOL’s Ampa Valli Lime Stone Mines at Simagoda in Koraput district. He was later produced before the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance here Thursday.

The vigilance officials claimed that Santara failed to present any satisfactory details about the sources of income from which he has been able to accumulate such huge amount of assets.

During the search, Santara was found possessing a three-storey building in Mancheswar Industrial Estate, a four-storey building under construction in Jaydev Vihar area in the Capital city, 13 plots including 7 plots in prime areas of the City, with another 5 plots in Jajpur and one plot in Nayagarh. The anti-corruption sleuths also traced deposits worth ₹4.44 crore in various bank accounts in Santara’s name, ₹1, 06, 44,500 in cash, gold and silver ornaments weighing 1kg 96 gm and

Vig unearthed assets worth ₹160cr in 2022

State Vigilance director YK Jethwa Thursday revealed that the directorate has registered 270 cases in 2022 so far, of which 75 are related to possession of disproportionate assets.

The vigilance has registered 114 trap cases after catching public servants red-handed while accepting bribe. “Last year state vigilance had detected and registered the highest number of DA cases in the country and this year too we hope for a similar performance,” Jethwa told media. As per information, nearly 60 cases have been registered against class-I officers in 2022 which is the highest in last 5 years. “The top four cash seizures in DA searches in the history of Odisha vigilance have happened in 2022 with approx ₹7 crore seized. Overall we have unearthed approx ₹160 crore worth DA in 2022,” revealed Jethwa.

He also claimed that the vigilance recorded highest ever cash seizure in trap cases in the history of Odisha Vigilance in the current year. With 87 cases ending in convictions this year, the vigilance achieved 50 per cent conviction rate. Investigations in all trap cases of 2021 and earlier have been completed. The vigilance director also hinted towards intensifying the vigilance activities in the coming days against corrupt public servants in higher ranks. He also stressed on improving performance with the application of technology in detection and investigation of corruption cases.

7 kg 500 gm respectively. Santara also owns two 4-wheelers and four 2-wheelers.



CULTURAL FEST: The annual cultural event SPECTRA-2022 kicked off at ODM Public School in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

State to invite all CMs to Hockey WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday announced that his counterparts from all the states would be invited to the ensuing Men’s Hockey World Cup.

Patnaik made the announcement at an all-party meeting convened here ahead of the sporting extravaganza. Representatives of ruling BJP, opposition BJP and Congress, CPI (M), CPI, Samajwadi Party, RJD and AAP attended it.

While seeking the cooperation of all the political parties for the smooth conduct of the international event, Patnaik said, “We have decided to invite the chief ministers of all the states...”

The decision was appreciated by representatives of all the political parties. Patnaik also thanked the Centre, particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for extending support to the state government for hoisting the event,



which will take place from January 13-29. He said the smooth conduct of the event is a matter of prestige for not only Odisha but also the entire nation.

“Therefore, we should work in tandem to make the event successful,” Patnaik told the leaders of different parties.

The tournament will pan out in two venues -- Bhubaneswar’s Kalinga Stadium and Birsamunda

Stadium in Rourkela.

Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who attended the meeting, said that the central government would extend all support to the state. “I thank the Odisha government for hoisting the international sports event,” he said.

“We should work together to ensure that as many as 100 Olympians emerge from Odisha by 2036 when the state observes its 100th foundation day,” Pradhan said.

Bachelors march...

Continued from P1
Audumbar Mali, 27, a Mohol tehsil native who does tailoring work and owns two-acre farmland, has a similar story. “I have so far received eight marriage proposals, but the first question from the woman’s family is whether I have a proper job or not. The next question is whether we have adequate farmland. It seems they have high expectations about a bridegroom’s financial condition,” he pointed out.

The present condition of eligible bachelors not getting brides is also because of the skewed male-female ratio, Mali said. Had there been proper implementation of the PCPNDT act, the situation would have been different, Mali asserted. Ramesh Baraskar, the founder of JKP said people may mock this morcha, but the grim reality is that youth of marriageable age are not getting brides just because the male-female ratio is skewed in Maharashtra.

Sunkar inspects Bhub rly station

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: East Coast Railway General Manager Roop Narayan Sunkar inspected Bhubaneswar Railway Station, Thursday and reviewed the redevelopment Work. During the inspection, Sunkar stressed on the need and significance of facilities provided to the passengers.

Focusing the development of work, Sunkar informed that the station is a part of the vision of the Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to create modern infrastructural facilities and amenities for the railway passengers throughout India. Redevelopment of the station is very important project as this project is being monitored by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. Sunkar also inspected the circulating areas, concourse, platforms and other important works related to the infrastructural development which is much needed for the comfort of passengers.

Thanks to AIIMS, Barsha has her arm back

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: A young lady, Barsha Das, 25, from the Krushnaprasad Block of Puri was given another chance at a healthy and normal life by the doctors of the City AIIMS as a team from the national institute successfully replanted her completely separated left forearm, a process that took around 10 hours.

Barsha came to the emergency department of AIIMS recently at around 9pm with traumatic amputation of the left forearm below the elbow.

As per available information, Barsha was working at her home and her dupatta got stuck in the rice cutting machine along with her left hand at around 4pm following which she was taken to the local government hospital along with the amputated hand where primary treatment was given, with dressing, to stop the bleeding. The amputated part was wrapped in a ganjee pad and was kept in an ice bath by the



person who attended her in the local hospital.

The patient was immediately planned for reimplantation and was taken up for surgery on the same night at around 11:30pm by a team lead by Sanjay Kumar Giri (head of burns & plastic surgery). The team consisted of Santanu Suba, Priyanka Pant, Akanksha Rajpoot, Vishnu from plastic surgery department, Nikhil and Manjor from Orthopaedics, Jayant Mitra, Hrushikesh and Shailaja from Anaesthesia department, and

was assisted by nursing officer Babulal and Jaswant Singh.

At first, the doctors took out the amputated part from the fridge and started bench dissection, identifying all the vital structures and shortening 3 cm bone. Then the patient was taken into the operating room and was given anaesthesia. Amputated stumps were opened and debridement was performed after which all the vital structures were isolated.

“After that, the amputated part was attached to the body by first two

bony fixations. Then arterial circulation was established along with vein, followed by two major nerves that were repaired along with muscles and skin,” said Sanjay Giri.

The surgery went up till 8am in the morning and the patient was then shifted to ICU. “After the tenth postoperative day, we took the patient to the operating room again as the skin around the elbow was not good. Under anaesthesia, we removed all the devitalised skin and covered it with skin graft. Today it is around two weeks following the incident. At present the limb is viable,” added Giri.

Executive director Ashutosh Biswas visiting the young lady Thursday in the ward applauded the effort of the doctors for the heroic job. Biswas also praised Barsha for her bravery and assured her a prosperous future. Among others medical superintendent SN Mohanty, DDA(I/C) Rashmi Ranjan Sethy also praised the doctors.

ALZHEIMER’S RISK MAY VARY WITH RACE

A study conducted by US-based researchers has found that the same gene variant may carry different risks for Alzheimer’s disease in people from different races.

In the largest-ever genetic study of dementia among people of African descent, Veterans Affairs (VA) researchers have identified several genetic risks different from those seen in people of European ancestry.

By using data from the VA Million Veteran Program (MVP), the team found multiple instances where gene variants may raise the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, the study said. The findings appear in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.

“MVP represents an incredible resource for examining the genetics of many diseases, including dementia,” said study author

Dr. Mark Logue.

“This study is one of the first Alzheimer’s-disease-related studies to come out of MVP. My colleagues and I are working hard to ramp up dementia work in MVP and to team up with other large-scale Alzheimer’s disease and dementia studies. “The results signify a substantial increase in the knowledge of the genetic architecture of dementia risk in African ancestry populations,” said Logue.

People of African descent and other minority groups are historically underrepresented in genetic research, which is why this study represents an important milestone, according to the research team.

According to the study, in the United States, a greater proportion of African-Americans have Alzheimer’s disease than people of European descent; however, most large genetic studies of



Alzheimer’s disease study white participants.

While there are genes implicated in Alzheimer’s that are consistent across different populations, the researchers explained in the study that specific variants may differ by ancestry. That means study results using only one ethnic group

may not apply to other groups, hindering dementia prevention and treatment, the study said.

For example, studies have found that a gene variant called APOE E4 carries the largest genetic risk for Alzheimer’s disease in people with European ancestry, but the effect of APOE E4 is half as strong in peo-

ple of African ancestry, the study said. Increasing the representation of non-European ancestry populations in genome-wide association studies has been identified as a critical scientific and equity issue in genetic studies. The difference in sample sizes between European ancestry and non-European ancestry studies to date could even contribute to health disparities in minority populations, according to the study.

To address this disparity, Boston VA researchers compared the genomes of more than 4,000 MVP participants of African ancestry who had dementia with more than 18,000 Veterans without dementia.

The team also conducted a second analysis comparing 7,000 black MVP participants who reported that their parents had dementia with 56,000 others whose parents didn’t have dementia.

CMC’s workshop for SHG members

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 22: A three-day capacity building workshop, organised by Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) for women self help groups (WSHGs) commenced December 20, 2022 to orient the SHG members on CMC’s revenue collection mechanism, concluded Thursday.

It will be followed by a two-day door-to-door visit for practical demonstration. Each of the 59 wards will have one SHG group, known as ‘Tax Sathi’ to digitally collect revenues like holding tax, user fee and trade licence fee. They will be provided with adequate hand-holding support by the CMC tax collectors. The opening day training was presided over by CMC Commissioner Nikhil Pawan Kalyan and attended by 72 members.

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Satellite survey exposes false paddy cultivation



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, Dec 22: A satellite survey has uncovered false cultivation of paddy crops on 12,776 plots by some unscrupulous farmers and landowners in Subarnapur district.

Reportedly, hundreds of farmers, including landowners, had registered their names with the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) and women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to sell their harvested paddy and grab the government benefits for paddy cultivation in this kharif season.

After the allegations, a satellite survey was conducted by the state Revenue, Agriculture, and Cooperative departments. Subsequently, their lies have been exposed by the survey. The farmlands they had mentioned in their registration were found to be grasslands, barren lands, open grounds, and water bodies with no sign of any cultivation.

ers (VAWs) to conduct field visits and take stock of paddy cultivation. The RIs and VAWs visited their respective areas and cancelled the registration of farmlands where there was no paddy cultivation.

However, due to lack of workforce, thousands of hectares of farmlands in the district were not thoroughly investigated. Subsequently, the government decided to conduct a satellite survey and get proper details of the farmlands.

Satellite survey found that no paddy cultivation was carried out on 12,959 plots in the district. To make the survey free from any error, the state government directed the District Collector to ask revenue and cooperative officials to conduct field visits and submit their reports in this regard. As many as 206 employees visited the plots that had raised doubts during the satellite survey.

They clicked the photographs of the lands where no cultivation was undertaken and uploaded them to the departmental website. According to the survey, no paddy cultivation was carried out on 12,776 plots.

The wrongdoings were committed by unscrupulous farmers and landowners in Durguripalli, Binka, Tarava, Birmaharajpur, Ulunda, and Sonepur blocks. Many unscrupulous people sell paddy without any actual cultivation.

Paddy was purchased from the farmers through a satellite survey conducted in eight districts, including Subarnapur district, in the 2021-22 kharif season. The state government has also made plans for the 2022-23 kharif season in all 30 districts.



ANNUAL FUNCTION: Girls performed at the annual function of Bagbar Government UP School under Birmaharajpur block in Subarnapur district

OP PHOTO

Youth gets 25-year RI for minor's rape

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Dec 22: Adjudicating a case of rape, the POCSO court at Phulbani in Kandhamal district awarded 25 years of rigorous imprisonment to a youth, Thursday. Sanjit Kumar Behera, special judge of the POCSO court, also imposed a penalty of ₹22,000 on the convict, identified as Ganesh Behera (28) of Brahmanigaon under Daringbadi block.

According to the case diary, Ganesh had lured a minor girl promising her snacks January 26, 2020 and raped her. A complaint in this regard was lodged with Brahmanigaon police station.

JUMBO POACHING AND CARCASS BURNING IN STR Dead eyewitness' wife alleges murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 22: Turam Purty was the eyewitness in the alleged poaching and burning of the carcass of a wild tusker in the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district. His wife has charged the three accused in the said case alleging murder, Thursday.

Purty's wife has lodged a complaint at Jashipur police station against the three accused - Jenabila ranger in-charge Shiv Shankar Samal, forester Chandrabhanu Behera and forest guard Binod Kumar Das.

According to reports, some forest

officials had burnt an elephant carcass and threw the charred remains to a nearby stream in an attempt to destroy the evidence after poachers killed the jumbo and removed its tusks in the core area of the tiger reserve.

Purty was present there and he sent some photos of the incident to the higher authorities.

Acting on it, the forest department conducted a probe and suspended the three accused. They had threatened Purty of dire consequences if he opened his mouth.

As a result, he lost his mental composure and drank poison on the night of December 11.

He was immediately admitted to Karanjia Sub Divisional Hospital and later shifted to Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College and Hospital at Baripada.

As his condition worsened, he was again shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. However, he passed away during treatment December 16.

Dolphin census begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: The annual census of dolphins began in Bhitarkanika National Park and Gahirmatha marine sanctuary, officials said Thursday.

Over 100 wildlife experts were conducting the headcount in a three-day exercise, which began Wednesday, they said.

Each team is equipped with binoculars, GPS sets, rangefinders and data recording sheets for a foolproof headcount of the dolphins, officials of the Chilika Development Authority said.

The exercise was being conducted using the 'Transact Survey Method', followed worldwide, they said.

The Odisha coast has emerged as an ideal habitat for dolphins with an impressive rise of 33 per cent in their population, officials said, quoting the last census.

A total of 726 dolphins were sighted during the census conducted in the last December-January season in the five coastal divisions in Chilika lagoon, they said.

GOBINDA'S DEATH IN JAIL

Mystery deepens as pictures of sub-jail premises go viral

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 22: A ten-member Crime Branch team has intensified its probe into the alleged suicide of Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in Mamita Maher murder case, in Kantabanji sub-jail.

The sudden death of Gobinda has led to claims and counter-claims with the jail authorities and police claiming it to be a suicide while family members have termed it as murder.

While the mystery is yet to be unraveled, a photograph of the place where Gobinda allegedly committed suicide inside the jail has gone viral, Thursday.

The photograph has given rise to more doubts about Gobinda's death. In the photograph, two napkins were found hanging from the railings of a window which is fitted with iron doors. One of the napkins is blue in colour with white prints while another is white and soiled.

It is suspected that the second white napkin was being used for mopping the kitchen in the jail. A piece of tree trunk used to cut



meat is also seen under the window along with a pair of slippers lying nearby.

It is suspected that the photograph shows the window railings of the kitchen from where Gobinda committed suicide inside the Kantabanji sub-jail.

The place where Gobinda committed suicide inside the jail is not covered under CCTV surveillance. The death of Gobinda inside the jail has become even more mysterious after the photograph went viral.

Questions are being raised such as who took the tree trunk near the window and at what time while avoiding the close watch of the jail staff, how Gobinda got the two napkins, when did he commit suicide and who first spotted him after the suicide.

It is also being asked who made the photograph viral and with what motive. These questions have remained unsolved and need to be answered.

Gobinda's uncle in-law made some serious allegations Wednesday. He alleged that Gobinda was murdered inside the jail by engaging Supari killers and rejected the CB probe while demanding a probe by the CBI.

Fake IMFL liquor-making unit busted, 3 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 22: A strike team of the Excise department busted a fake liquor-manufacturing unit and arrested three persons including the kingpin here in this connection, Thursday.

The breakthrough came after Excise Commissioner Ashish Singh and District Collector Dibyajyoti Parida were tipped off about manufacturing of fake IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) in the district and smuggling of liquor to various places in and outside the district. The seized liquor and raw materials were valued at ₹10 lakh in the market.

A case was registered in this connection and the accused were identified as Tarini Jena, 25, the kingpin, a liquor trader Prafulla Kumar Sahu, 59, and a pickup van driver Nakula Gamango, 28.

The strike team conducted a raid at Indira Awas Square in Dengapadar village in Ganjam dis-

trict where it intercepted a liquor-laden pickup van and seized 100 litre of fake IMFL from it. The vehicle driver Nakula Gamango, 28, and trader Prafulla Kumar Sahu, 59, were detained.

During questioning they revealed that they have brought the consignment from a fake liquor manufacturing unit at Ayodhya Nagar, Fast Gate being run by one Tarini Jena. The team members asked Prafulla to call Tarini on phone and tell him that he requires more liquor for sale.

Accordingly, Tarini came to the place with 54 bottles of liquor on a scooter when the team members nabbed him. Later, basing on his confessions, the team members raided his unit at Ayodhya Nagar and seized another 54 bottles from the place and raw materials used in manufacturing.

Excise officials have been carrying out raids in various parts of the city, but bootlegging has not been curbed as yet, it was alleged.

Labourer electrocuted

Anandapur: A labourer, identified as Bhima Munda of Bamebari area in Keonjhar was electrocuted as he accidentally came in contact with an overhanging 11-kv wire.

EAST COAST RAILWAY	
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/22-23/ E-Tender/126, Dt.: 20.12.2022	
(1) Tender No.: etender-NORTH-KUR-349-2022, Dt.: 09.12.2022	
Description: PROVISION OF BASIC FACILITY FOR LABOURS AT GOODS SHED OF NEGLUNDI, DHANMADAL, DHENKANAL, DATARI & SUKINDAROAD.	
Approx cost of the work: ₹172.29 Lakhs, EMD: ₹2,36,200/-	
(2) Tender No.: etender-HQ-KUR-352-2022, Dt.: 13.12.2022	
Description: PROPOSED REPAIRS AND RENOVATION OF NEELACHAL REST HOUSE AT PURI.	
Approx cost of the work: ₹109.53 Lakhs, EMD: ₹2,04,800/-	
Completion period: 12 (Twelve) Months (For SI No. 1), 06 (Six) Months (For SI No. 2)	
Tender Closing Date and Time: at 1500hrs. of 04.01.2023 (For both tenders)	
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letterhead and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.	
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website http://www.ireps.gov.in	
The tenderers / bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderers/bidders can participate on e-tendering. All relevant papers must have to be uploaded at the time of participating on e-tendering as per instruction.	
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender.	
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), PR-835/N/22-23	Khurda Road

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No.C-2062: E-mail - eephchpr@gmail.com
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No.44/03/SPH(C)/2022-23 dt.19.12.2022

- Name of the work : 07 (Seven) nos of works
- Estimate cost : 05.73 lakh to 12.42 lakh
- Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 11.00 AM of 26.12.2022 to 5.00 PM of 11.01.2023
- Last date / time of receipt of bid in the portal : 5.00 PM of 11.01.2023
- Date and time of opening of bids : 11.00A.M. on dated 13.01.2023
- Name and address of the Officer inviting the bid : Superintending Engineer, P.H. Division, Bhanjanagar at Chatrapur.

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

Sd./- Superintending Engineer, P.H.Division, Bhanjanagar at Chatrapur
OIPR-13172/11/0009/2223

Government of Odisha
"e" procurement notice
Bid Identification No. TENDER ONLINE SBPR-17 OF 22-23
e-mail ID- rv_sambalpur@yahoo.co.in, Phone No.0663-2401850
No. O-1503: No.4550, Dated 20.12.22

- Name of the work : Road Works as per DTCN available in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
- Total No. of Work : 06 (Six) Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Varies from 2.94 lakhs to 29.06 lakhs
- Period of Completion : 01 (One) to 02 (Two) Calendar months
- Period and time of availability of bid document in the portal for bidding : 26.12.2022 at 11.00AM to 05.01.2023 up to 5.00 PM
- Date and time of opening of Tender : 06.01.2023 at 11.00AM
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : E.E.R.W. Divn., Sambalpur

(1) Other details can be seen from detailed notice inviting tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
(2) Corrigendum if any shall only be published in the website: www.tenderodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Sambalpur
OIPR-25076/11/0018/2223

'Bhitarkanika croc conservation a big success'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Dec 22: The conservation programme of saltwater crocodiles in Bhitarkanika National Park has turned out to be the most successful one in the country, an expert said.

Dr Sudhakar Kar, a noted herpetologist and the former wildlife researcher of state forest department, dwelt on the success of the project while addressing a seminar on 'Estuarine Crocodile and Conservation in Bhitarkanika National Park; A success' Wednesday, organised by the Zoology Department of Kendrapara Autonomous College.

The three species of crocodile, salt-water or estuarine crocodile, Mugger and Gharial breeding and rearing programme had begun in 1974 in 34 places in West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and other states in India, he said.

Crocodiles were threatened in India due to indiscriminate killing for commercial purposes and severe habitat loss until enactment of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

He said all three species of crocodiles - Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), Mugger (*Crocodylus palustris*) and Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the river systems of Odisha were on the



Bhitarkanika is home to nearly 70% of India's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles. The salt-water crocodile population in Bhitarkanika has increased manifold from 96 in 1975 to 1,784 so far

verge of extinction by the seventies. In 1974 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in collaboration with the government of India launched a crocodile conservation project. The main objective of the crocodile

conservation project was to protect their natural habitats and to rebuild the population quickly through captive breeding as the survival rate of the crocodile hatchlings in nature is low because of predation, added Dr Kar.

The forest department stopped the crocodile rearing programme in 1995 as the crocodile population reached a saturation point from mere 96 in 1974 to more than 1,000.

But each year the forest department collects eggs from a nest to breed them in the crocodile hatchery and rearing complex at Dangamal. As per the 2022 January crocodile census report, the population of the crocodile reached 1,784 in the Bhitarkanika National Park, Kar said.

Crocodiles are also an important part of the ecosystem and help keep the riverine ecology clean and guard mangrove forest from tree cutters and poachers as locals fear to reach near the mangrove forest by crossing the crocodile infested rivers and creeks, said Dr Basanti Sukla of Zoology department of the college.

Bhitarkanika is home to nearly 70 per cent of India's estuarine crocodile or saltwater crocodiles. The salt-water crocodile population in Bhitarkanika has increased manifold from 96 in 1975 to 1,784 so far.

Let nothing short of Perfection be your ideal in work and you are sure to become a true instrument of the Divine.

THE MOTHER



Defending Defenders

In the southwest corner of the Philippines, the forest of the Batak people is a biodiversity hotspot. At least 31 endangered and threatened species – including the pangolin, the world’s most trafficked mammal – can be found only here, in an area the size of Montreal. The forest also played a critical role in shielding people from the 160-mile-per-hour winds of Super Typhoon Odette at the end of 2021. The Batak maintain and monitor the forest for only \$20,000 per year – about the price of a low-end Rolex watch.

The Batak are not alone in calling a biodiversity hotspot home. The Innu homelands of Nitassinan, in what is now known as Quebec and Labrador, lie in Canada’s boreal forest – the largest intact forest left on the planet. Home to migratory and woodland caribou, lynx, wolves, and polar bears, and a major flyway for birds, scientists predict that it will become a refuge for even more animals and plants as climate change transforms their habitats. The Innu Nation, longtime stewards of these lands, is attempting to protect them by proposing and establishing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

An estimated 80 per cent of the planet’s remaining biodiversity can be found on the lands of indigenous peoples and local communities. With as many as one million species of plants and animals at risk of extinction today, the need to empower these groups to protect nature should be obvious. The just-concluded United Nations summit on biodiversity (COP15) in Montreal – several hundred miles south of the Nitassinan – offered an opportunity to do just that.

The world has failed to recognise the seriousness of the extinction crisis, let alone taken the action needed to address it. COP15 was delayed for more than a year by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the problem goes back much further. Scientists were publishing papers about the extinction crisis more than a decade ago, while indigenous communities were fighting to stop rapacious development – from open-pit mines to vast soybean plantations to massive hydropower barrages – from destroying their lands.

Now, the world is finally beginning to wake up to the extent of the ecosystem damage that has been done and to the injustices committed against the indigenous peoples who have proved to be nature’s most responsible stewards. Achieving the global “30x30” goal of protecting at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and marine habitats by 2030, while respecting indigenous and community rights (including land rights), is one of the most important ways to avoid catastrophic loss of species. At COP15, it was a major topic of discussion, and on the final day of the summit, roughly 190 countries approved an agreement that included the 30x30 goal.

Representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities from around the world attended the summit to push world leaders to match their ambitions for sustaining biodiversity by recognising indigenous and community land rights and supporting tried-and-true conservation practices. Their advocacy helped to ensure that language about indigenous rights were included in the agreement – an important safeguard for communities that feared being displaced by measures linked to the 30x30 goal. Indigenous peoples and local communities should have the opportunity to give their informed consent to measures linked to the goal – which must be pursued with a human-rights-based approach – and should receive direct funding for their work on biodiversity protection.

In this respect, Canada is setting a powerful example. Like indigenous people around the world, Canada’s First Nations – including the Innu – have proved that they know how to manage ecosystems sustainably. Indigenous leadership or partnerships have been behind the creation of nearly 90 per cent of the protected areas established in Canada over the past two decades. And First Nations are leading the way on proposals to establish scores more protected areas.

The Canadian government has recognised indigenous peoples as essential partners in achieving biodiversity goals. Last year, it announced CAN\$340 million (\$258 million) in new funding for indigenous-led conservation, to be delivered over five years. Almost half of the total will support indigenous-protected and conserved areas; the rest will fund First Nations-led stewardship initiatives. The success of the COP15 agreement hinges on whether other industrialised countries follow this model.

As it stands, indigenous peoples and local communities receive only 16-23 per cent total support for land protection from international conservation institutions. But we deliver the same outcomes with fewer resources than government-run conservation. In other words, indigenous peoples and local communities are not only the best protectors of biodiversity, but also the most cost-effective – and among the most in need. Support for their conservation and stewardship benefits people and the planet.

The COP15 agreement is an important step toward stopping the biodiversity crisis from robbing us of our pollinators, our sources of new medicines and superfoods, and the ecosystem services that underpin healthy and prosperous communities. But given how rapidly the extinction crisis is progressing, transforming commitments into action is vital. Indigenous peoples have shown that we can protect the Earth’s biodiversity. But we can’t do it alone. We need the world’s support.

Valérie Courtois is Director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative. KM Reyes is a co-founder and adviser at the Centre for Sustainability PH. @PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

For those who have obtained unobstructed knowledge of Self, the world is seen merely as a bondage causing imagination. RAMANA MAHARSHI

There is something good in all seeming failures. You are not to see that now. Time will reveal it. Be patient. SWAMI SIVANANDA

Die to everything of yesterday so that your mind is always fresh, always young, innocent, full of vigour and passion. JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

WORDSWORTH

Eagre

A bore is a type of tidal wave, a single wave that flows up a river estuary as a result of an especially high tide. It’s an example of what scientists call a soliton, a solitary wave that travels with little loss of energy, retaining its shape and speed but increasing in height as the river narrows and shallows. Among the most famous bores is that on the River Severn, a few miles from me. Eagre is an older dialect name for the phenomenon on the rivers Ouse and Trent as well as the Severn. It’s been written in many ways, among them hygre, higre, agar and aigre. These are now rarely seen, but the spelling aegir is still in use for the similar bore on the River Trent. Though we understand how eagres happen, we’re no nearer discovering the origin of that name. One theory was described by Eliza Chase in her novel Acadia of 1884: “In some northern countries the Bore is called the Eagre. Octavia says this must be because it screws its way so eagerly into the land, but is immediately suppressed, and informed that the name is a corruption of Oegir, the Scandinavian god of the sea.” Dictionary makers are now sure that’s incorrect, but they have nothing to put in its place.

FOCUS TAWANG CLASH

A WAKE UP CALL



The foreign policy shift away from Islamabad to Beijing has not happened yet. The present government seems to be uncertain about this necessary and unavoidable shift

On 9 December, Indian and Chinese troops clashed at Yangtse in Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh. The fight involved hundreds of Chinese and Indian troops, a few of them sustaining minor or major injuries. Tawang is quite a sensitive border area. It was in this sector that the 1962 India-China war had first begun. It was also the last spot where the ceasefire was brought about. The Chinese attempted unsuccessfully to change the status quo at Yangtse by perhaps wresting the area from India. The debate in India and speculations across the world has revived on whether India and China will go to war at some point.



DK Giri

WHETHER INDIA AND CHINA WILL GO TO WAR AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE IS NOT THE QUESTION. THE REAL POSITION SHOULD BE THAT WE ARE AT WAR WITH CHINA

Before engaging in the debate on probability of an India-China war, a quick dip into the causes of the latest physical conflict is in order. India and China share the longest border in the world which has been contested by both sides. There have been recurring conflicts on the border since 1962. The bones of contention are Aksai Chin, a region north of Nepal, which is controlled by China and claimed by India. Likewise, Arunachal on the east of Bhutan is controlled by India while claimed by China. Such claims and counter-claims have created 13 hotspots.

At any rate, the Chinese incursions into India are not random or one-off. They are consistent and coordinated. Some Dutch academics have studied this process deeply in a commendable work called, “Rising tensions in the Himalayas: A geo-spatial analyses of Chinese incursions into India”. By studying several incursions from 2006 to 2020, they have established the pattern of incursions as a part of expansionist strategy adopted by China. Elaborating on Chinese military tactics, they infer that China will bite a bit of territory, than a bit more, forcing India to accept it as part of Chinese occupation. Some people call it the ‘salami slicing’ tactics.

Another metaphor for Chinese strategy of nibbling away our territory is to ‘keep the pot boiling, but do not let it boil over’. China

will like to tear into other countries’ territory. It will take a small piece of land; keep it under the threshold from where the target country, in this case India, could counter-attack. But over time, it becomes a bigger piece of land as part of Chinese territory. Yet another Chinese tactic of grabbing land is to enter into another country’s territory and when confronted militarily or diplomatically back-off half way and declare that they had done it inadvertently as the lines of demarcation were not clear and have then withdrawn.

Such strategies for acquiring territory are well-known. The Dutch study has also found out that Beijing goes for territorial aggression on certain periods of its domestic politics and economy. The study said, “We found an uptick in incursions when China is experiencing economic stress such as low consumer confidence and in Indian case, when New Delhi gets closer to Washington.” If overseas observers are aware of Chinese ‘deception diplomacy’ and territorial expansionism, it will be hard to believe that Indian foreign policy officials and strategists are oblivious to Chinese games at borders!

Since the Galwan confrontation in June 2020 that killed Indian and Chinese troops, the 9th December clash is a serious development which should be regarded as a wake-up call vis-à-vis China. The

current debate post 9 December is whether China will launch a full-scale war on India. Some observers contend that war is not a question of whether but when. Some of us, myself in this column, have repeatedly alerted the government about the sinister designs of China on India: trying to encircle India by poaching on her neighbours, stunting India’s economic growth, making illegitimate claims on Indian territory and sporadic incursions into Indian land. So, whether India and China will go to war at some point in future is not the question. The real position should be that we are at war with China. Such a position will correctly define or redefine our strategy towards China. One can credit Narendra Modi regime for breaking some new grounds on India’s foreign policy. But on China, I have consistently maintained that New Delhi has fumbled. It does not have a long-term, viable and workable policy towards China. It is at best reacting to each crisis that emerges, whereas it should have a comprehensive, well thought-out strategy.

Admittedly, there is a clear economic asymmetry between New Delhi and Beijing. This need not translate into military power disparity. If Ukraine can engage the mighty Russia, Indian Army can certainly stand up to China. At any rate, if a military conflict breaks out, the world powers get involved di-

rectly or indirectly in order to maintain the balance of power and in some cases, related superiority.

The current Indian strategy appears to consist of the following steps – build border infrastructure, use military power as India did in Galwan and Tawang in order to rebuff Chinese intrusion, seek military advantage strategically or even fortuitously. Furthermore, diplomatically deepen partnership with the democratic world by projecting China as a systemic threat; participate in counter-voicing coalitions. Moreover, over a period of time when Indian economy catches up with that of China, New Delhi could take on China in any which way Beijing approaches.

Even the Dutch scholars are suggesting that confrontation or military retaliation is not the way to resolve the border disputes. Early warning systems have to be used to ward-off incursions and negotiations for settling disputes. New Delhi needs to build-up its economy to match the might of Chinese robust economy. The strategy may be appropriate for the time-being. But nothing stops India from being diplomatically proactive in countering China.

Why is India in SCO and BRICS when Beijing is moving its military into Indian territory? New Delhi has taken a position against Islamabad that it will not hold talks until the latter stops sponsoring terrorism in Indian territory. Why cannot New Delhi have a similar approach to China however big it may be?

To reiterate, we have been arguing that India’s foreign policy should revolve around our China policy not Pakistan although the latter is a vote-catcher. This shift away from Islamabad to Beijing has not happened yet. The present government seems to be uncertain about this necessary and unavoidable shift. Galwan and Tawang are litmus tests on Chinese intention and attitude towards India. Will the government take this on board and make this urgent shift forthwith.

The writer is Professor, International Relations, JIMMC. @NFA

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Quest for environmental justice

On the eve of the Human Rights Day, President Droupadi Murmu expressively spoke about the dignity and rights of nature. In Montreal, the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) to Convention on Biological Diversity ironed out a fair and just global biodiversity governance system. Meanwhile, in Dubai, during the India Global Forum UAE 2022, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar slammed developed countries that despite occupying major carbon space they are not helping poorer countries in addressing climate change. Even if these three episodes are geographically separated, they have one common underpinning objective – quest for environmental justice.

To preserve, conserve and manage the common heritage of humankind in the ecosphere is one of the contested turfs in achieving environmental justice among countries. At macro level, fairness is being sought after between the State and its various citizen groups in the environmental decision-making process. At micro level, it’s the equity of survival space between humankind and other living beings.

Justice, equity and fairness (social, economic and political) is being secured by the Preamble of the Constitution of India, through var-

ious provisions especially through fundamental rights and directives to the Union and the state governments. Can justice, as we understand so far, be expanded to include the environmental dimension as President Murmu suggested in her speech? Or, will it remain just a catchphrase to be used in eloquent speeches or covering up one’s weakness in environmental governance?

Inequality is the norm of the world. Access to and control over environmental resources weigh in favour of a few resulting in huge environmental burden on the rest of the humankind. Let’s take the example of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The world’s richest one per cent will have per capita GHG emissions 30 times higher than the global per capita by 2030. At the same time the carbon footprint of the poorest half of the world will be several times below. But, it’s the countries which have emitted GHG the least that will be harmed the most due to climate change. Who must carry the environmental burdens of climate change? This is exactly the message the EAM of India intended to send for next year’s climate conference in the UAE.

Achieving environmental justice is a perpetual struggle. It is about the interweaving of the environment and society. It is based on

the premises that natural resource decision making process puts unfair burden on some disadvantaged groups. Environmental justice, as the US Environment Protection Agency defines, is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Can we find an example in India of formulation of any such environmental laws or policies recently? If we put recent amendments, proposed or inserted, to environmental laws or policies such as Environment Impact Assessment, Indian Wildlife Protection Act or Forest Conservation Act, to test under environmental justice lens of meaningful participation of all sections of society, neither of them would have been approved in present form.

In the realm of State vs citizens, the State controls and manages the environmental space and resources. While the State solely takes the decision to alter that environmental space and resources, the environmental burden is potentially high on the vulnerable citizen groups. The Constitution in its various provisions guides both State’s obligation and citizen’s duty to collaboratively preserve, protect and manage the ecosphere. From

Parliament to Panchayat, meaningful involvement of all people in formulating and administering laws, regulations and policies on the environment is a step towards achieving environmental justice in India. The symbiotic relation between human and nature has been eroding fast and frantic. The human and animal conflict has increased manifold. Despite the High Court of Uttarakhand holding that the Ganga and Yamuna have the same legal rights as human beings, 351 river stretches of India were polluted in 2018, as identified by the Central Pollution Control Board. Unregulated maldevelopment that is being relentlessly executed by humans is threatening the very existence of the natural world. But who will speak for the natural world, a river, an elephant or an Olive Ridley?

With multiple threats emanating from degradation of ecosphere, environmental justice can uphold the survival of humankind. Agreeing with President Murmu, we must re-learn to treat nature with dignity. Environmental justice cannot be attained overnight or through adjudication. It must be put at the centre of decision-making process.

The writer is Principal Scientist at Peri-urban Initiative, IIT Madras and Senior Fellow at SSPC.



Avilash Roul

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CANNOT BE ATTAINED OVERNIGHT OR THROUGH ADJUDICATION. IT MUST BE PUT AT THE CENTRE OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Don’t lower guard

Sir, COVID-19 is rearing its ugly head again. Globally, active cases and the case fatality rate were on the wane though its presence always posed a threat. India is under constant risk; the authorities can’t lower their guard. It is said that the national recovery rate is 98.8 per cent, but fresh cases are being reported from Kerala. The time rested test-track-treat-vaccination should be undertaken on a war-footing. The problem lies in complacency. The health ministry has declared that 220 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the country. But many districts are running short of vaccines. Children, especially, are not able to complete their vaccination schedule due to paucity of particular vaccines. The Centre has to clear this confusion. In addition, people seem to have given a toss to the COVID-appropriate behaviour. Even hospitals and public places are witness to staff and people going about their task with utmost disdain towards masks and social distancing. No amount of genome sequencing of positive cases to track new variants will be of any help if people aren’t aware of their responsibilities. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Embrace population

Sir, We all know that the global population has been reported to have crossed the so-called 8-billion mark. Factually speaking, the current population is a kind of achievement on the part of humanity braving all the odds and difficulties out there. But even then, most media houses have been carrying comments on the robust population growth in a negative manner. However, the undisputed fact is that the global population has always been behind robust economic growth and all kinds of activities across the board – one way or another. Well, can you imagine “a world” without humanity? Yes, it would have been literally plain and flat across the board – sans human activities. At the same time, growing concerns over issues like climate change, scarcity of food crops and so on should be taken seriously. Even though there have been plenty of discussions and comments on climate change issues through the world media and intergovernmental forums, there have been no fruitful results achieved on the ground. In this context, human attitude towards Mother Earth has to change or transform in a positive way. For instance, humans must be more sensitive to the environment and green belt areas around them. Technology apart, the human focus should be mainly and primarily on encouraging more green activities like supporting agriculture/farming rigorously. P. Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI

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

The Opposition is making efforts for proper working of the House and raising important issues. However, the ruling party legislators are disrupting the proceedings and creating drama over Disha Salian death case

AJIT PAWAR | LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE MAHARASHTRA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Congress will follow all the precautions related to the prevention of Covid, but the yatra will not stop, will not stop, will not stop

SALMAN KHURSHID | CONGRESS LEADER

At the time when we were at ease that the COVID was gone, it has aggravated in other countries. From one country China it spreads across, it is contagious. So both state and central governments have taken it very seriously, as viruses move faster than electronics

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CM

SHORT TAKES

'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' to continue

Jaipur/New Delhi: Hours after deciding to suspend its 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' in Rajasthan in view of a rising number of coronavirus cases globally, the BJP said it will go ahead with its plan of holding public meetings in assembly constituencies while following the COVID-19 protocol. BJP state president Satish Poonia said there was some confusion regarding the Jan Aakrosh Yatra which has been cleared now and the Jan Aakrosh Sabhas (meetings) will take place as per the schedule. Earlier, the party had announced to suspend the yatra.

Aaftab withdraws bail plea

New Delhi: Aaftab Amin Poonawala, accused of strangling his live-in partner Shradha Walkar and chopping her body into pieces, withdrew his bail plea Thursday. Poonawala appeared before the court through video-conferencing and said he wished to withdraw the bail application which was filed before the court on December 15. Poonawala's advocate M S Khan informed the court that the bail application was moved because of "miscommunication" between him and the accused.

Military boost

New Delhi: The defence ministry Thursday approved the procurement of a number of military platforms and weapons including light tanks, anti-ship missiles and long range guided bombs at a cost of ₹84,328 crore to boost combat capabilities of the armed forces. The procurement proposals were cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the procurement came amid a spike in tensions between India and China after troops from the two sides were engaged in a clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at Yangtse in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh.

Five injured

Chennai: Five persons were injured in a fire mishap at Unit II of Neyveli New Thermal Power Station (2x500 MW) in Cuddalore district on Thursday. Sources in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC) told IANS that the technical team of NLC is trying to ascertain the exact cause of the mishap.



Is there a new variant of coronavirus in China? But they (China) have not imposed anything (restriction). I will ask the health department to keep a tab on the situation

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

COVID SURVEY

As the country gears up to tackle fresh Covid wave concerns amid infection surge in China, a survey revealed Thursday that over six in 10 Indians (64 per cent) are reluctant to take the Covid booster dose and rising cases of heart attacks in young people have largely contributed to this hesitancy



Govt finding excuses to stop yatra: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nuh (Haryana), Dec 22: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday said the government is coming up with "excuses" to stop the Bharat Jodo Yatra, days after Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya wrote to him to consider suspending the march if Covid protocols could not be followed.

The yatra, which started in Kanyakumari on September 7 and will conclude in Kashmir, is in Haryana, after covering Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. "This yatra will go to Kashmir. Now, they have come out with a new idea. They wrote me a letter that Covid was spreading, stop the yatra," Rahul Gandhi said while addressing a gathering in Ghasera village in Haryana's Nuh district. The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by him entered the state through Nuh on Wednesday after its Rajasthan leg. "Now, they are coming up with excuses to stop the yatra. Wear masks,



stop the yatra, Covid is spreading, these are all excuses," he said. Union Health Minister Mandaviya on Tuesday wrote to former Congress president Gandhi and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot to consider suspending the yatra if Covid protocols could not be followed. Targeting the BJP, which is in power at the Centre and in Haryana, Rahul said it is scared of the truth. "Hindustan ki shakti say, Hindustan ki Sachai say, yeh log dar gaye hai, yeh sachai hai (they have

got scared of power and truth of the country. This is the truth)," the former Congress chief said, adding that "we do not want RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi's hate filled India". They are trying to spread fear and hatred in the country, he alleged. Understand the character of Modi, when anyone stands against him, be it farmers who protested against the now-repealed three farm laws, he starts running in the opposite direction, Rahul Gandhi

alleged. "You recognise (him). Whenever anyone stands against him, Modi does not face him, (he) runs away and leaves the field," Rahul said. The BJP government is also trying to suppress the (opposition) Congress' voice in Parliament and this is also a reason why this yatra was taken out, Gandhi said. The Winter Session of Parliament began on December 7 and will end on December 23, a week ahead of schedule. "If we want to speak in Parliament or raise an issue such as the Rafale jet matter, demonetisation, GST (Goods and Services Tax) or regarding hatred spreading in the country, do you know what happens? The mic is switched off... Keep on speaking, (but) no one will hear," he said. "The TV camera's direction is changed and the (Lok Sabha) speaker's face is visible and the mic is switched off in Parliament," Rahul Gandhi said, and added that "this is why, we had to take out this yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir".

India, China hold talks on eastern Ladakh



Opposition parties repeatedly disrupted the Lok Sabha proceedings Thursday while demanding a discussion on the Sino-Indian border issue, resulting in five adjournments. This is the first time during the ongoing Winter Session that the Lok Sabha was repeatedly adjourned by disruptions created by opposition parties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: In the backdrop of fresh tensions over the clash between their troops in the Tawang sector, India and China Tuesday held the 17th round of high-level military talks on the eastern Ladakh border standoff but there was no indication of any forward movement in resolution of the remaining issues.

A joint statement released on Thursday said both sides exchanged views in an "open and constructive" manner to resolve the "relevant issues" and described the talks as "frank and in-depth". It said the two sides agreed to stay in "close contact", maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest. The corps commander-level talks took place over a month after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping shook hands and exchanged pleasantries at the G20 summit in Bali. People

familiar with the military dialogue at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) said it began around 9:30 am and continued for 10 hours. It is learnt that the Indian side insisted on resolving the issues at the remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh as soon as possible. "Building on the progress made after the last meeting (16th round) on July 17, the two sides exchanged views on the resolution of the relevant issues along the LAC in the Western Sector in an open and constructive manner," the statement said. "They had a frank and in-depth discussion, keeping in line with the guidance provided by the state leaders to work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest which would help in restoration of peace and tranquility along the LAC in the Western Sector and enable progress in bilateral relations," it said.

In line with a decision taken at the 16th round of military talks, the two sides carried out disengagement from Patrolling Point 15 in the Gogra-Hotsprings area in September. "In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the security and stability on the ground in the Western Sector," the joint statement said. "The two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest," it noted. The Corps Commander-level talks, instituted to resolve the eastern Ladakh row, took place 11 days after Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in a clash in Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector.

Jacqueline withdraws plea seeking nod to travel abroad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez, accused in a money laundering case, on Thursday withdrew from a Delhi court her plea for permission to go abroad.

The actor told the court about her decision after the judge said the case was at a crucial stage and suggested that the question of charge should first be decided. Fernandez had sought permission to visit Bahrain from December 23 to January 5 to see her mother. "You want to meet your mother who suffered stroke in 2021? We all are emotional for our parents, but the case is at a crucial stage... You can withdraw the application and let the question of charge first be decided. Otherwise I will pass a judicial order," Special Judge Shaileendra Malik told Fernandez.

Thereafter, the actor had a discussion with her lawyers and informed the court that she was withdrawing her application "at this stage". During the brief arguments, the Enforcement Directorate opposed her plea, saying if she is allowed to go abroad she may not return.

"She is a foreign national. Though she has her career here, but she can make her career somewhere else (also)," the anti-money laundering agency said. Prior to withdrawing the application, the actor told the court that during the probe she was earlier granted permission to travel abroad. She said the ED had opposed her petition but the Delhi High Court allowed it.

"My next date in this case is Jan 6. I will return by Jan 5, even though that's not my turn to argue on 6th. There's no lack of cooperation from me, never was, nor will," her counsel told the court. Fernandez was earlier permitted by the Delhi High Court on May 31 this year to travel abroad for the IIFA awards subject to certain conditions.



Jammu-based government employees, posted in Kashmir, raise slogans during a protest demanding their transfer to their home districts, in Jammu

Vadra land deal: HC rejects plea to quash case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jodhpur, Dec 22: In a blow to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra, the Rajasthan High Court on Thursday rejected a petition seeking the quashing of an Enforcement Directorate investigation into the purchase of land in Bikaner by a company linked to him and his mother.

Justice P S Bhati also turned down his plea seeking for "no coercive action" in the alleged money laundering case, but extended an earlier stay on Vadra's arrest by four more weeks to allow the petitioners to appeal before a two-judge bench.

The ED filed an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR)



in September 2015 based on a complaint over the purchase of 125 bighas of land in Bikaner's Kolayat by Sky Light Hospitality. Vadra, who is Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi's husband, had sought the quashing of the ECIR,

The ED filed an Enforcement Case Information Report in September 2015 based on a complaint over the purchase of 125 bighas of land in Bikaner's Kolayat by Sky Light Hospitality

a document usually prepared by the ED when it begins an investigation. The payment for the land was allegedly made through conduits, and it was later sold at a huge profit. Forged documents were al-

Fresh trouble for DMK MP Raja

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The Enforcement Directorate Thursday said it has attached a "benami" asset worth ₹55 crore of DMK MP A Raja - 45 acres of land in Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu - under the anti-money laundering law.

The federal agency said in a statement that the land was purchased by a company allegedly linked to Raja, in lieu of granting environmental clearance to a Gurugram-based real estate company by the leader during his stint as the Union minister for environment and forests between 2004 and 2007.



The land is held in the name of a "benami" company of Raja, the ED said. Benami means 'no name' or 'without name' and such properties are those in which the real beneficiary is not the one in whose name the property has been purchased. "The real estate company (listed on the BSE) has given kickbacks to A Raja as quid pro quo for awarding the environmental clearance, around the same period in 2007, in the garb of land commission income in the hands of one benami company of A Raja." "It is found that A Raja incorporated the company in the same year (2007) in the name of his family members and his close family friend, with the sole objective of using it as a vehicle to park the proceeds of crime," the ED alleged.

'Critical deficiencies' must be addressed on priority: IAF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The "critical deficiencies" of the Indian Air Force like shortage of fighter squadrons and force multipliers must be addressed on priority so that the force retains its combat edge, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari said Thursday, amid mounting concerns over China boosting its air power at a rapid pace.

In an address at a seminar, the Chief of the Air Staff said India's neighbourhood continues to remain volatile and uncertain and that the country must enhance its collective strength by partnering with nations which share common beliefs and values.

The comments by Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari came amid fresh tensions between India and China following a clash between their armies in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9 that was triggered by Chinese PLA's attempt to change



the status quo in the Yangtse area. There have been reports of China significantly modernising its air force and strengthening deployments of its air assets at major air bases close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC). "There are certain critical deficiencies like shortage of fighter squadrons and force multipliers which must be addressed on priority to retain our combat edge," he said addressing the 19th Subroto Mukherjee seminar on

the subject 'India's Eminence in the Emerging World Order'. The Chief of Air Staff also asserted that there can be no soft power without adequate and credible hard power. "Only when our borders, airspace and coasts are secure will India flourish." Delving into the evolving regional security matrix including the situation in Indo-Pacific, Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari said the "IAF will be expected to con-

There are certain critical deficiencies like shortage of fighter squadrons and force multipliers which must be addressed on priority to retain our combat edge

VR CHAUDHARI | AIR CHIEF MARSHAL

tribute across the full spectrum of conflict. Air power has the capability to deter, defend and if required punish the adversary in a conflict." The number of fighter squadrons of the IAF is going down as several of them have been phased out in recent years while a number of others are due for number-plating (retirement) in the next few years that include the Jaguar fleet. At present, the IAF has around 31 fighter squadrons against the sanctioned strength 42 fighter squadrons. Each squadron comprises around 18 jets.

In October, Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari acknowledged that his force would not be able to reach the sanctioned strength of 42 fighter squadron anytime soon, notwithstanding upcoming inductions. "The Indian Air Force needs to evolve into an aerospace power and to do so, there is a need to develop the capability to fight and win tomorrow's wars," he said.

The IAF chief said that multi-domain operations and hybrid warfare are going to stay and "we must, therefore, realign and reform to keep pace with technology to remain relevant." In his remarks, the IAF chief talked about India's neighbourhood remaining "volatile and uncertain". "Amidst this volatility we must enhance our collective strength by partnering with nations which share common beliefs and values. We must use our image as a stable country with considerable economic heft to forge mutually beneficial relationships and strategic partnerships," he said.

Srinagar records coldest night of season

While 'Chillai-Kalan' begins December 21, it will end January 30. The cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold)



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 22: 'Chilla-i-Kalan', the 40-day harshest winter period, has made its presence felt in the Kashmir valley with Srinagar recording its coldest night this winter, even as water supply lines and interiors of the Dal Lake froze due to the cold conditions, officials said Thursday.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar recorded Wednesday night was minus 5.5 degrees Celsius, which is the lowest so far this season, they said. The city had recorded minus 4.2 degrees Celsius the previous night.

The cold conditions led to freezing of water supply lines in many places across the valley, even as the interior parts of the Dal Lake also developed a thick layer of frost.

The officials said Pahalgam, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 6.8 degrees Celsius and was the coldest

recorded place in the valley. It was also the coldest night of the season so far at the tourist resort.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, they said.

The minimum in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, while Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, recorded minus 4.4 degrees Celsius, and Kokernag recorded a low of minus 3.3 degrees Celsius.

The meteorological department has forecast mostly dry weather in Jammu and Kashmir till December 24.

There is possibility of rain or light snowfall in some parts of Kashmir around Christmas, it said.

The 'Chilla-i-Kalan' is the 40-day harshest winter period when a cold wave grips the region and the

temperature drops considerably leading to freezing of water bodies as well as the water supply lines in several parts of the valley.

The chances of snowfall are the most frequent and maximum during this period and most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall.

While 'Chillai-Kalan' begins December 21, it will end January 30. The cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold).

JAMMU-SRINAGAR NH REOPENS

The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, which was closed due to a landslide near Dewal bridge Wednesday, has now been re-opened for vehicular traffic, officials said. Traffic released from both ends on Jammu-Srinagar NHW after clearance of debris (single carriageway), Jammu and Kashmir Traffic Police said. Earlier, all type of vehicles remained suspended on the National Highway in view of major landslide near Dewal bridge which had damaged both sides of the National Highway. The highway is the lifeline of the Kashmir Valley as it is the main road link connecting it with the rest of the country. Kashmir-bound trucks laden with essential supplies and other vehicles pass through the highway and fruit carrying trucks from Kashmir head out for the rest of the country.

Targetted killings Pak conspiracy to harm brotherhood: J&K DGP

SINGH SAID THAT AFTER GUNS, PAKISTAN IS NOW SUPPLYING DRUGS TO HARM THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN J&K

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Dec 22: Jammu and Kashmir DGP Dilbag Singh during a visit to Tral and Pulwama in south Kashmir Wednesday cautioned about the continuous attempts of elements from across the border to instigate the youth of J&K and trap them in the shackles of drugs.

The DGP also chaired a security review meeting at Tral wherein he was briefed about the overall security scenario in the area.

The DGP said that the police on their part have been counselling people and have made possible the return of a good number of misguided youth into the mainstream.

He said that elements from across the border through different media are making continuous attempts to instigate the youth and drag them into the path of destruction, adding that it is the responsibility of the parents to see and monitor the activities of their children.

Singh said that J&K Police are committed to end the drugs menace and anti-peace activities, as he sought cooperation of the people to accomplish the mission.

With regard to infiltration, the DGP said that the border secu-



urity grid is very strong and all measures are in place to stop infiltration bids.

A number of infiltration attempts were made, most of which were neutralised on the borders. Some infiltrators managed to cross over, most of which were eliminated in the hinterlands and manhunts are on to trace the remaining.

Security grids have been further strengthened in view of the

winter season, he added.

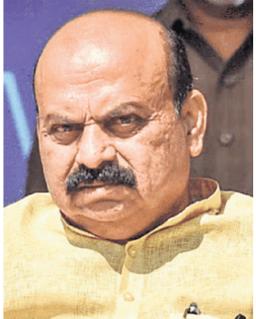
He also said that targeted killing is a big conspiracy hatched by Pakistan to harm the exemplary brotherhood and harmony of Kashmir; adding that almost all the cases of target killings have been solved.

Singh said that after guns, Pakistan is now supplying drugs to harm the younger generation in J&K.

Kannadigas will repulse Maha like Indian Army, says Bommai

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Belagavi (Karnataka), Dec 22: Reacting strongly to the statement of Maharashtra senior leader Sanjay Raut that his people should enter Karnataka like the Chinese Army, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai stated that if they come like Chinese army, Kannada people would push them back like the Indian Army.



Speaking to reporters at Belagavi, CM Bommai stated that everyone knows what importance should be given to Sanjay Raut. He always gives provocative statements, he said.

Commenting on the demand by Maharashtra MLA to increase the height of dams and not letting the flow of water into the state, CM Bommai stated that the opposition members in Maharashtra had made the statement.

"We are living in a federal structure. Water does not belong to one state. It flows in three to four states and there is an inter-connection. There is Water Disputes Act, tribunals, there are Supreme Court judgements," he said.

"Nowhere has it been done and nowhere has this kind of statement been made. Certainly, I am telling them to restrain from

“The relationship between one state and another is always going to be there. The border dispute is in the Supreme Court. If they have so much power, let them fight there. We have confidence. As per the constitution, we have a strong case and submit our arguments efficiently there”

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | CM, KARNATAKA

making the statements. There is no use in stubborn statements. No one can implement such things. It is just a political talk," CM Bommai maintained.



MERRY X-MAS: People dance as they take part in a procession during celebrations of Christmas festival in Jammu, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Valley hotels booked in advance for X-mas, New Year celebration

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Dec 22: Crowds of tourists have started to gather in the Valley ahead of Christmas and New Year with most hotels registering full bookings.

All the hotels in the popular tourist destination of Gulmarg have been booked in advance.

Year 2022 has been a good year in terms of tourism for Kashmir. According to the official data, more than two million tourists visited the Valley till the end of November.

According to the President of the Travel Agents Association of Kashmir, Farooq Ahmad Kathu,

there has been an increase in the arrival of tourists for the last two weeks due to the arrival of the Christmas festival and New Year. Hotels in Gulmarg and Pahalgam are 100 per cent booked for Christmas and New Year.

Kashmir is always teeming with tourists during Christmas and New Year and this is an indication that this time too a large number of tourists will visit the Valley, and hotel owners are taking the opportunity to attract tourists. The hotel owners have also announced special packages for gala dinner and other entertainment.

In the last two years, all the ac-

tivities of international tourism were suspended due to the global pandemic of coronavirus. But now all these restrictions have ended, due to which there is a wave of happiness among the people associated with tourism.

The tourism department of J&K government has also planned Christmas and New Year celebrations in Gulmarg and Pahalgam to woo tourists. Director Tourism Fazlul Haseeb said that the department will celebrate the winter carnival and New Year in Gulmarg and Pahalgam December 25. Events will also be held at Doodhpathri and Yusmarg.

Exotic birds to attract visitors at Pilikula park

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mangalore, Dec 22: Pilikula Biological Park here has acquired new exotic species of birds and mammals to attract more visitors.



The new species have been brought to the park from Greens Zoo of Gujarat under the animal exchange programme as approved by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), H Jayaprakash Bhandary, park director said.

The new birds are the Blue and Gold Macaw which is native to south America, Military Macaw of the central and south America, the Gala Pink and Grey Cockatoo of Australia and Green Turaco of west Africa. They have been let in display enclosures for the visitors, he said.

The new mammals introduced at the park include squirrel monkeys found in central and south America, red handed tamarin, native of north Amazon River; common marmosets of north eastern coast of Brazil and large rodents called the Patagonian Mara found in Patagonia and Argentina.

K'taka: Face masks must in indoor locations

In view of fresh outbreak of COVID-19 in countries like China, the state government has decided to review its preparedness

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Belagavi(KTK), Dec 22: The Karnataka government Thursday decided to conduct mandatory testing of Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) in the state amid a spurt in COVID-19 cases in some parts of the world, including China.

The government also decided to make face masks mandatory in closed spaces and airconditioned rooms. The two per cent random testing of international passengers arriving in the state will continue until revised directions from the Centre, state Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said.

"We are going to issue advisory to wear masks in indoor locations, closed spaces and air-conditioned rooms. Also, there will be mandatory testing of ILI and SARI cases across Karnataka," Sudhakar said briefing reporters after a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on COVID-19.

The meeting was attended by ministers, health department officials and the members of the Technical Advisory Committee



(TAC) on COVID-19.

Sudhakar said that it was also decided in the meeting to open dedicated Covid wards in all district hospitals with sufficient beds and supply of Oxygen.

There will also be coordination with private hospitals and super speciality hospitals for reserving beds to treat Covid patients as existed during the peak of COVID a year ago, he added.

In view of fresh outbreak of COVID-19 in countries like China, the state government decided to review its preparedness and the measures to be taken to check any such occurrence in the state.

The government decided to set up special camps across Karnataka to improve the booster dose coverage from the existing 20 to 60 per cent within a month. In this connection, the state will coordinate with the Centre for additional stock of booster doses.

In order to check its readiness, the government planned to hold drills in all government and private hospitals to test the condition of oxygen generators, supply networks and the functioning of oxygen cylinders.

All samples from positive patients are to be sent to the labs for genomic sequencing.



international



What harm is there in women's education? What harm does it do Afghanistan? Is there an Islamic explanation? On the contrary, our religion, Islam, is not against education, on the contrary, it encourages education and science

MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU | FOREIGN MINISTER, TURKEY

DHAKA'S AIR MOST POLLUTED

Bangladesh's capital Dhaka has once again topped the list of world cities with the worst air quality. India's Kolkata and Vietnam's Hanoi occupied the second and third spots on the list



of the day quote

India is a key regional leader and an important partner in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. The US and India share a strong military-to-military relationship under the US-India Major Defence Partnership



MARK A MILEJ | JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, US

After 10 years of membership (in the EU), we intentionally and deservedly reached the stage where we would become the only country in history to join the Schengen and eurozones on the same day



ANDREJ PLENKOVIC | PM, CROATIA

I hope the Hong Kong government will unite and lead the people of Hong Kong to contribute its advantages as it integrates into the national development plan in accordance with the country's needs



LI KEQIANG | CHINESE PREMIER

SHORT TAKES

Winter storm threatens US

Mission (US): Temperatures plunged far and fast Thursday as a winter storm began forming ahead of Christmas weekend, promising heavy snow, ice, flooding and powerful winds across a broad swath of the country and complicating holiday travel. The National Weather Service reported that temperatures across the central High Plains plummeted 50 degrees Fahrenheit in just a few hours.

Official birthday date revealed

London: The official birthday of the new British monarch, King Charles III, will take place on June 17 next year, Buckingham Palace said Thursday. The celebration, packed with pomp and pageantry, is known as Trooping the Colour and will involve the King's wife, Queen Camilla, and daughter-in-law Catherine, the Princess of Wales, taking on ceremonial military roles during the royal parade.

SL navy arrests Indian fishermen

Colombo: The Sri Lanka Navy has arrested 12 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters. The fishermen were arrested off the coast of Vettalaikerni in northern Jaffna district on Wednesday, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a statement.

Turkey, Saudi decry ban

Kabul: Turkey and Saudi Arabia became the latest Muslim-majority countries to condemn a decision by Taliban authorities to bar women from universities, while about two dozen women staged a protest in the streets of Kabul on Thursday. In another sign of domestic opposition, several Afghan cricketers condemned the university ban. Cricket is a hugely popular sport in Afghanistan, and players have hundreds of thousands of followers on social media.

Round six of India-UK FTA ends

London: The sixth round of negotiations between India and the UK to finalise a free trade agreement (FTA) concluded last week with detailed draft treaty discussions across 11 policy areas over 28 separate sessions, the British government said Thursday.

Patriot missiles will not help end conflict: Russia

REUTERS

Washington/Kyiv, Dec 22: Russia said Thursday that supplies of U.S. Patriot missile systems to Ukraine, announced during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Washington, would not help settle the conflict or prevent Russia from achieving its goals. In a call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that there had been no signs of readiness for peace talks during Zelenskyy's visit, proving that the United States was fighting a proxy war with Russia "to the last Ukrainian".

Zelenskyy told the U.S. Congress on Wednesday that aid to his country was an investment in democracy as he invoked battles against the Nazis in World War Two to press for more assistance in the war against Russia.

Zelenskyy's comments came as Republicans - some of whom have voiced increasing scepticism about sending so much aid to Ukraine - are set to take control of the U.S. House of Representatives from Democrats on January 3.

The United States announced another \$1.85 billion in military aid for Ukraine, including the Patriot air defence system to help it ward off barrages of Russian missiles. Zelenskyy said the Patriot system was an important step in creating an air shield.

"This is the only way that we can deprive the terrorist state of its main instrument of terror - the possibility to hit our cities, our energy," Zelenskyy told a White House news conference, standing next to President Joe Biden. "We would



- US ANNOUNCES NEW \$1.85 BLN MILITARY AID PACKAGE
- US PATRIOT AIR DEFENCE BATTERY PART OF NEW ASSISTANCE
- KREMLIN-PATRIOTS WON'T STOP IT FROM ACHIEVING ITS GOALS
- PUTIN BACKS INCREASING SIZE OF RUSSIAN MILITARY BY 30%

like to get more Patriots ... we are in war," Zelenskyy said at the White House.

Some Republicans have urged an end to aid and an audit to trace how allocated money has been spent. Russia says it launched its "special military operation" in Ukraine on Feb. 24 to rid it of nationalists and protect Russian-speaking communities. Ukraine and the West describe Russia's actions as an unprovoked war of aggression.

'RUSSIA MUST LOSE' Congress is on the verge of approving an additional \$44.9 billion in emergency military and economic assistance, on top of some \$50 billion already sent to Ukraine this year as Europe's biggest land conflict since World War Two drags on. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Washington was seeing no

sign that Russian President Vladimir Putin was willing to engage in peacemaking.

Zelenskyy's aide, Mykhailo Podolyak, said the United States had "finally pinpointed the baseline" in the conflict. "1. Russia must lose. 2. No territory in exchange for pseudo/world compromises. 3. Ukraine will receive all necessary military aid. As much as possible. 4. No one cares about Russia's talk to us 'hysteria...'", he wrote on Twitter.

Ukraine has come under repeated Russian strikes targeting its energy infrastructure in recent weeks, leaving millions without power or running water in the dead of winter. Zelenskyy congratulated electrical workers for working round the clock, trying to keep the lights on as they marked Power Engineers' Day on Thursday, a day after the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year.

Trump paid no income tax in 2020

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 22: Donald Trump paid no income tax during the final full year of his presidency as he reported a loss from his sprawling business interests, according to tax figures released by a congressional panel.

The records, released by the Democratic-led House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee after a years-long fight, show that Trump's income, and his tax liability, fluctuated dramatically during his four years in the White House.

The records cut against the Republican ex-president's long-cultivated image as a successful businessman as he mounts another bid for the White House. Trump and his wife, Melania, paid some form of tax during all four years, the documents showed, but were able to minimize their income taxes in several years as income from Trump's businesses was more than offset by deductions and losses.

The committee questioned the legitimacy of some of those deductions, including one for \$916 million, and members said the tax returns were short on details. The panel is expected to release redacted versions of his full returns in coming days.

Trump refused to make his tax returns public during his two presidential bids and his campaign for office, even though all other major-party presidential candidates have done so for decades. The committee obtained the records after a years-long fight and voted on Tuesday to make them public.

A Trump spokesman said the release of the documents was politically motivated.



A girl looks at divers during a promotional event for Christmas at an aquarium in Seoul, South Korea

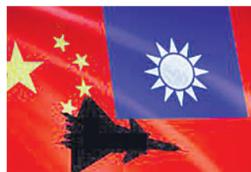
REUTERS

Taiwan warns away 39 Chinese aircraft

REUTERS

Taipei, Taiwan, Dec22: Taiwan scrambled combat jets to warn away 39 Chinese aircraft that entered its southeastern air defence zone, the island's defence ministry said on Thursday.

Taiwan has complained of repeated missions by the Chinese air force over the last two years, often in southern areas of its air defence identification zone, or ADIZ. Thursday's incursion in-



cluded 21 fighters and four H-6 bombers, as well as early warning, antisubmarine and aerial refuelling aircraft, Taiwan's defence ministry said in a report detail-

ing Chinese activities in its ADIZ over the last 24 hours.

Many of the aircraft flew over a waterway known as the Bashi Channel to an area off the island's southeastern coast, according to a map provided by the ministry. Three Chinese navy ships were also detected near Taiwan, the ministry said.

Taiwan sent unspecified combat aircraft to warn away the Chinese planes, while missile systems monitored their flight, the

ministry said, using standard wording for its response.

Separate Taiwan government notices have said the defence ministry's research and development arm, the National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology, is holding a missile firing drill this week on the island's southeastern coast. China, which claims Taiwan as its own, has stepped up pressure in recent years on the self-governed island to accept Beijing's rule.

Japan looks into claim that China running covert police stations

REUTERS

Tokyo/Beijing, Dec 22: The government in Tokyo is investigating a report that China has set up covert police stations inside Japan, amid similar checks by authorities in European countries, the United States and Canada.

Safeguard Defenders, an Asia-focused rights group based in Spain, has published two reports since September alleging that Chinese authorities have established 102 overseas police stations in 53 countries, including Japan.

China has dismissed the allegations and on Thursday its foreign ministry denied that such police stations existed.

Asked about the Japanese government's response to the report, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told a news conference: "We will take all necessary steps as we clarify the situation." Matsuno said Japan had told Chinese authorities that any activity that violated Japan's sovereignty would be "unacceptable."

The Safeguard Defenders reports alleged that the Chinese po-



lice were using the police stations to target Chinese nationals liv-

ing abroad and pressuring some to return home to face criminal

charges. Chinese authorities have said the facilities are volunteer-run centres that help citizens renew documents and offer other services that were disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"China has always adhered to the principle of not interfering in the domestic affairs of foreign countries, strictly abided by international laws and respected the judicial sovereignty of each country," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Thursday.

"The so-called Chinese over-

seas police stations simply do not exist." Safeguard Defenders said in a September report that police from the Chinese city of Fuzhou had set up a "service station" in Tokyo. The group indicated in a follow-up report that police from China's Nantong had another such station somewhere in Japan.

South Korean authorities are investigating allegations similar activities there, Yonhap news agency said in a report. A spokesperson for the foreign ministry in Seoul declined to comment directly on the report.

Charles Sobhraj's release delayed



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Dec 22: Charles Sobhraj, a Frenchman of Indian and Vietnamese parentage, will spend one more day in Nepal's prison as the immigration authorities on Thursday expressed their inability to arrange accommodation for the notorious serial killer who is expected to be deported after his release on the orders of the apex court.

A joint bench of justices Sapana Pradhan Malla and Tilak Prasad Shrestha on Wednesday ordered to free 78-year-old Sobhraj from jail. "Though everything has been cleared for his release from jail, he has to be handed over to the Immigration Department. The immigration authorities have requested to postpone his release till Friday as they need preparation for his accommodation," said his lawyer Gopal Shivakoti Chintan.

Nicknamed "the Bikini Killer" and "the Serpent" due to his skill at deception and evasion, Sobhraj was serving a life-term in the Kathmandu jail since 2003 for the

Sobhraj was serving a life term in the Kathmandu jail since 2003 for the murder of American woman Connie Jo Bronzich in 1975

murder of American woman Connie Jo Bronzich in 1975 in Nepal. In 2014, he was convicted of killing Laurent Carriere, a Canadian backpacker, and given a second life sentence.

A life-term in Nepal means 20 years in jail. The order by the division bench of Nepal's top court came after Sobhraj filed a plea claiming that he was put in prison more than the period recommended for him. There is a legal provision to release prisoners who have completed 75 per cent jail term and showed good character during imprisonment. Sobhraj through his petition had claimed that he had completed his jail term as per the 'concessions' entitled to senior citizens of Nepal.

China hospital warns of 'tragic battle'

REUTERS

Shanghai/Beijing, Dec 22: A Shanghai hospital has told its staff to prepare for a "tragic battle" with COVID-19 as it expects half of the city's 25 million people will get infected by the end of next week, while the virus sweeps through China largely unchecked.

After widespread protests against strict mitigation measures, China this month began dismantling its "zero-COVID" regime, which had taken a great financial and psychological toll on its 1.4 billion people. China's official death count since the pandemic began three years ago stands at 5,241 - a fraction of what most other countries faced - but now looks bound to rise sharply. China reported no new COVID deaths for a second consecutive day for Wednesday, even as funeral parlour workers say demand for their services has increased sharply over the past week.

Authorities - who have narrowed the criteria for COVID deaths, prompting criticism from many disease experts - confirmed 389,306 cases with symptoms.

Some experts say official case figures have become an unreliable guide as less testing is being done following the easing of restrictions. Infections in China are likely to be more than a million a day with deaths at more than 5,000 a day, a "stark contrast" from official data, British-based health data firm Airfinity said this week. Airfinity said it examined data from China's regional provinces, noting that cases are rising quicker in capital Beijing.

Global economy seems headed for a severe recession, parallels are being drawn with the global financial crisis of 2008, and the slowdown brought about in 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic. The world economy is lurching toward an unprecedented confluence of economic, financial and debt crises, following the explosion of deficits, borrowing and leverage in recent decades. The economies of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are faltering. Hit by the pandemic, the Russian war in Ukraine, India's neighbouring economies are now faced with soaring debt and high inflation. After the collapse of the Sri Lankan economy which led to months of protests and toppling of government, global outlook looks gloomy



THE BIG DEFAULT

Burning year for Lanka

Sri Lanka is grappling with its worst downturn on record since its independence in 1948 after running out of foreign currency to buy imports, leaving scarce supplies of food, fuel and other essentials. In mid-April, Sri Lanka declared its international debt default due to the forex crisis.

The deepening economic crisis sparked mass protests that forced President Gotabaya Rajapaksa accused for corruption to flee the country, leaving his successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, to declare a state of emergency while seeking a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. Rajapaksa fled to the Maldives July 13, driven out after an economic collapse unleashed a popular uprising that appeared to end his family's near two-decade dominance of the country. His decision to leave his ally Wickremesinghe in charge as acting president triggered more demonstrations, with protesters storming the premier's office demanding that he go too.

In one of the largest anti-government demonstrations in the



What is the plan for reform? Frankly, I have no plan for it. What reforms when we don't have an economy. What we want to do is to build a new economy

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

crisis-hit island nation, thousands of protesters marched down the streets of Colombo's government district July 10, shouting slogans

ECONOMIC FREE FALL

- SL is nearly bankrupt and has suspended repaying its \$51bn foreign debt, including \$6.5bn to China, of which it must repay \$28 billion by 2027

- Lanka now imports \$3bn more than it exports every year, and that is why it has run out of foreign currency

- At the end of 2019, Lanka had \$7.6bn in forex reserves, which have dropped to around \$250m

- Inflation is running at more than 50%

against the president and tearing down barricades, Reuters reported. Police deployed tear gas and water cannons, but were unable to quell the unrest, Sri Lanka's Daily Mirror reported.

The protest saw tens of thousands of demonstrators from across the country entering the capital city carrying black and national flags and chanting "Go go home." They marched towards a police and military security cordon surrounding key buildings, including the President's House and Finance Ministry, Reuters reported.

In late June, the government banned the sale of petrol and diesel for non-essential vehicles for two weeks. Sales of fuel remain severely restricted. Schools have closed, and people have been asked to work from home to help conserve supplies.

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, plunged into financial and political turmoil earlier this year. The island nation's tourism-dependent economy was hammered first by the Covid-19 pandemic and then a fall in remittances from overseas Sri Lankans

Children going to bed hungry: UN

Children in Sri Lanka are "going to bed hungry" because of the island nation's economic crisis, the UN said Friday, warning other South Asian countries could be approaching similar shortages. The crisis was being acutely felt by families who were "skipping regular meals" because kitchen staples were becoming unaffordable, said George Laryea-Adjei, the South Asia director for the UN children's agency (UNICEF). "Children are going to bed hungry, unsure of where their next meal will come from," he told reporters. UNICEF has issued an appeal for \$25 million to meet urgent needs for at least half of Sri Lanka's child population. Official figures in 2021 showed 127,000 out of 570,000 pre-school students nationwide were malnourished. "As Sri Lanka is still reeling from an unprecedented financial crisis, nearly 40,000 children are likely to suffer from malnutrition in the coming months," Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella told Parliament. According to a latest survey, 21,000 children are currently suffering from malnutrition and the number is estimated to rise to 40,000 in the coming months, the Minister said. The situation has led to around 5.7 million people, including 2.3 million children, in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

PAK ECONOMY UNDER STRESS

Islamabad: Pakistan, a country of around 220 million people with a \$350 billion economy, has long struggled with its external accounts, and the IMF has bailed it out over 20 times since 1958.

Concerns are rising again over the health of Pakistan's economy as foreign reserves run low, the local currency weakens and inflation stands at decades-high levels despite the resumption of an International Monetary Fund funding programme in August.

Adding to the already troubled economy, Pakistan was hit by major floods in late August that killed more than 1,500 people and caused nearly \$30 billion in damages, heaping even more pressure on its finances.

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS? The biggest worries centre around Pakistan's ability to pay for imports such as energy and food and to meet sovereign debt obligations abroad. Before the floods hit, external financing needs for the 2022-23 financial year were estimated at \$33.5 billion.

WILL PAKISTAN DEFAULT? Pakistan has never defaulted on external debt obligations. The central bank chief and the former fi-



- FOREX RESERVES stand at \$8 billion
- PAK'S RUPEE depreciated 20% in 2022
- INFLATION at multi-decade high of 27.3%

nance minister have stressed that it was not facing imminent default. It has interest payments worth around \$600 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year but the next full bond redemption is not until April 2024.

WHAT HAPPENED? Petroleum imports more than doubled to \$23.3 billion from a year earlier. It propelled current account deficit to over \$17 billion - close to 5% of GDP, six times higher than 2020-21. Imports rose 42% to a record \$80 billion; exports also hit a record of nearly \$32 billion but grew 25%.

We still have foreign debt of \$130 billion and \$73 billion due in three years. Our deficit for next three years is a minimum of \$20 to \$30 billion. Additionally, super inflation is killing the poor. This is a financial emergency

AHMAD JAWAD | CEO, PAKISTAN BUSINESS FORUM



Economic turbulence in Bangladesh

growth for years but things changed dramatically following the Ukraine war pushing the prices of everything up. Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves stand at \$39.67 billion as of July 20, which is sufficient for just four months' worth of imports - slightly higher than the IMF's recommended three-month cover. Just for comparison, the forex reserves were \$45.5 billion in the year-ago period. The country is reeling under inflation, too. In June, price rise hit a nine-month high of 7.56%, taking the average inflation for 2021-22 to 6.15%, overshooting the revised annual target of 5.9%. Imports stood at \$81.5 billion between July 2021 and May 2022, up 40% from a year earlier. The government raised fuel prices by more than 50% last month to counter soaring costs due to high oil prices, triggering protests over the rising cost of living. As a result, the current account deficit - the shortfall between exports and imports - widened over six times to \$17.2 billion in the first 11 months of fiscal 2021-22.

WHAT WENT WRONG? Bangladesh's \$416 billion economy is heavily dependent on its garment industry which survives on exports mostly to Europe, the US and Latin American countries. It has been supporting the country's

WORLD'S WORST FINANCIAL CRISES

Financial crises are, unfortunately, quite common in history and often cause economic tsunamis in affected economies

The Credit Crisis of 1872 This crisis originated in London and quickly spread to the rest of Europe. In the mid-1760s the British Empire had accumulated an enormous amount of wealth through its colonial possessions and trade. This created an aura of over optimism and a period of rapid credit expansion by many British banks. The hype came to an abrupt end June 8, 1872, when Alexander Fordey, and Down - fled to France to escape his debt repayments. The news quickly spread and triggered a banking panic in England, as creditors began to form long lines in front of British banks to demand instant cash withdrawals. The ensuing crisis rap-



idly spread to Scotland, the Netherlands, other parts of Europe, and the British American colonies. **The Great Depression of 1929-39** This was the worst financial and economic disaster of the 20th century. Many believe that the Great Depression was triggered by the Wall Street crash of 1929 and later exacerbated by the poor policy decisions of the US government. The Depression lasted almost 10 years and resulted in massive loss of income, record unemployment rates, and output loss, especially in industrialized nations. In the United States the unemployment rate hit almost 25 percent at the peak of the crisis in 1933. **The OPEC Oil Price Shock of 1973** This crisis began when OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) member countries - primarily consisting of Arab nations - decided to retaliate against the United States in response to its sending arms supplies to Israel during the Fourth Arab-Israeli War. OPEC countries declared an oil embargo, abruptly halting oil exports to the United States and its allies. This caused major oil shortages and a severe spike in oil prices and led to an economic crisis in the US and many other developed countries.

The Asian Crisis of 1997 This crisis originated in Thailand in 1997 and quickly spread to the rest of East Asia and its trading partners. Speculative capital flows from developed countries to the East Asian economies of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea (known then as the "Asian tigers") had triggered an era of optimism that resulted in an overextension of credit and too much debt accumulation in those economies. **The Financial Crisis of 2007-08** This sparked the Great Recession, the most-severe financial crisis since the Great Depression, and it wreaked havoc in financial markets around the world. Triggered by the collapse of the housing bubble in the US, the crisis resulted in the collapse of Lehman Brothers (one of the biggest investment banks in the world), brought many key financial institutions and businesses to the brink of collapse, and required government bailouts of unprecedented proportions. It took almost a decade for things to return to normal, wiping away millions of jobs and billions of dollars of income along the way.

NATIONS IN RED ZONE

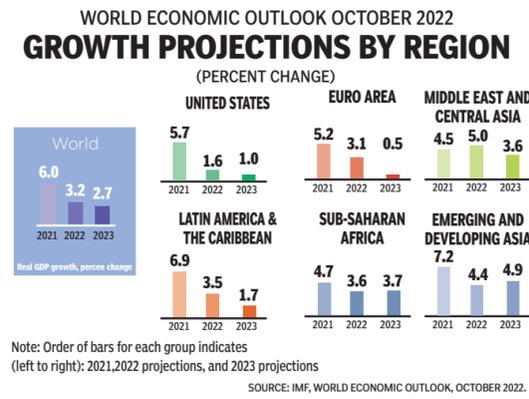
UKRAINE: The war started by Russia and its relentless attacks on civilian infrastructure in Ukrainian cities away from the front lines will complicate the dire economic situation facing the country, which has already seen a tenfold increase in poverty this year.

NEPAL: It is because of such short-sightedness that Nepal's economy was in trouble long before Covid and Ukraine. The banking sector had a liquidity crisis because it had over-extended loans to real estate speculators. Stagnant overseas remittance, falling exports and a jump in imports had led to a growing trade deficit, and depleted foreign exchange reserves.

AFGHANISTAN: In August 2021, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. International donors immediately suspended most non-humanitarian funding and froze billions of dollars in assets. The hunger crisis is affecting 22.8 million people which is equivalent to more than half of the population, as a result of extended drought, conflict, and political instability.

MYANMAR: The events of February 2021 in Myanmar sparked a cycle of armed clashes and violence that has caused significant new displacement and humanitarian need across the country. The economic impacts of this instability, combined with the impact of Covid-19, are projected to push millions into poverty in 2022.

PALESTINE: Palestinian territories are facing the worst fiscal crisis in their history, much of it due to lagging international support. The economy is still reeling under the impact of Covid-19, which has sent unemployment levels soaring, deepening poverty and misery in the occupied territories.



business



Engaging China in a trade war at this juncture will mean sacrificing a considerable part of our potential growth. Purely on economic grounds, it will be unwise to take any action in response to it (border row)
ARVIND PANAGARIYA | FORMER VC, NITI AAYOG

STRICT VIGIL BY META

Social media giant Meta took action against more than 2.29 crore pieces of content created by Indian users on Facebook and Instagram in November, according to India Monthly Report released by the company Thursday



of the day quote

Carbon emissions are a concern. The steel sector must increase use of scrap in their steel production
FAGGAN SINGH KULASTE | UNION MINISTER

We will continue to support civil aviation growth and deepen our industrial footprint in India
GUILLAUME FAURY | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, AIRBUS

It has got decided last month that it (cash burn) would no more be continuing. As far as Paytm is concerned, we have publicly declared that we are far ahead of our ambitions — far meaning the border of magnitude ahead — in terms of re-setting our cash burns
VIJAY SHEKHAR SHARMA | FOUNDER, PAYTM

Gas procurement rules for fert firms tweaked

INDIA, WHICH IMPORTS UP TO 40% OF THE 50 MILLION TONNE OF FERTILISER IT NEEDS ANNUALLY, HAS BEEN HIT HARD BY RISING PRICES AFTER RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE DISRUPTED SUPPLIES. RUSSIA IS A MAJOR FERTILISER PRODUCER



- FERTILISER COMPANIES CAN BUY 20% OF GAS FROM SPOT MARKET
- GOVERNMENT AIMS TO CUT FERTILISER SUBSIDY BY UP TO 240 BLN
- COMPANIES MANDATED TO HONOUR 40% OF PURCHASE COMMITMENT
- SHARES OF FERTILISER COMPANIES FALL

REUTERS
New Delhi, Dec 22: India has revised the gas procurement policy for fertiliser companies, allowing them to buy about a fifth of their monthly needs through the domestic spot market to help the government cut its subsidy bill, two government officials said.

The federal government provides financial support for domestic fertiliser sales at rates below the market to insulate farmers from high prices and to contain inflation.

The government expects to cut its fertiliser subsidy bill by up to Rs 240 billion if the fifth of companies' supplies is bought through bilateral contracts or gas exchange, said one of the government officials, who declined to be identified.

Early last month, Fertilisers Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that due to higher global prices, India's fertiliser subsidy bill for the fiscal year would rise to a record 2.25 trillion rupees from about 1.5 trillion rupees the previous year. "To help rein in the fertiliser subsidy bill for next fiscal, the fertiliser ministry is trying to rework

the mechanism of how gas is procured by fertiliser plants," said a second government official, who also declined to be identified.

The government has amended 2015 gas procurement guidelines under which fertiliser plants had to procure 80% of their gas through long-term contracts, and the balance through three-month tenders, they said.

"Three-month prices are high as there is lot of padding and hedging by suppliers, more so since there is so much volatility in global gas prices," the first official said.

Under the revision, fertiliser companies will have to buy 40% of their supplies under a "take or pay" rule, in contrast to no minimum purchase required under the guidelines previously, the official added. The "take and pay" rule led to shares of state-run fertiliser companies, National Fertilizers Ltd, Rashtriya

Chemicals and Fertilizers Ltd, falling by 4% to 5% after the news, under performing the broader index.

Fertiliser plants can source gas through the Indian Gas Exchange and inter-company contracts. The new rule also allows fertiliser companies to withdraw tenders if they feel the bidding has led to higher-than-expected prices.

Fertiliser plants bought gas at \$38 per million British thermal units (mmbtu) for supply in the October-December quarter through a tender. The maximum price quoted in the tender was \$55 while gas was available at the Indian Gas Exchange and bilateral markets for \$15 to \$20 per mmbtu.

Asia's third-largest economy needs crop nutrients to feed its huge agriculture sector, which employs about 60% of the workforce and accounts for 15% of nearly \$3 trillion economy.

Aviation industry sees ₹11,658 crore loss in 2021-2022

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 22: The country's aviation industry has suffered a loss of Rs 11,658 crore in 2021-22, the government said.

According to the Civil Aviation Ministry, the details of losses incurred by the industry are: FY 2019-20 Rs 4,770 crore; FY 2020-21 Rs 12,479 crore; and FY 2021-22 Rs 11,658 crore.

The losses to the industry were primarily because of the Covid-induced disruption across the globe; currency depreciation (USD/INR); high operating cost environment, especially due to increase in ATF prices which constitute a major portion of the operational cost of airline; increase in crude oil prices in international market; VAT; excise duty; and the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war.

Airlines were unable to pass full impact of cost increases to the passenger, Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia told the Lok Sabha in a written reply Thursday.

The actual figure of profit/losses to the industry will be known only when the audited accounts are available at the end of the financial year 2022-23, the reply added.

The airlines and major airports are operated by the private sector and they evolve their own SOPs for cost minimisation and profitability.



However, the government has taken various steps to facilitate airlines. The UDAN Scheme is a game-changer for the aviation industry, the reply added.

The UDAN Scheme or Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik, is a regional connectivity scheme that seeks to make air travel accessible and affordable for the masses.

Other measures taken by the Government included the reduction of VAT on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) was taken up with state governments/union territories levying high VAT on ATF. As a result 16 states have reduced the VAT in the range of 1-4 per cent.

RE industry set to grow in 2023

Renewable energy sector to boom with likely investments of over \$25 billion in 2023



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: With an oil price shock threatening to derail economies globally, the focus has shifted to renewable energy with over \$25 billion or Rs 2 lakh crore investment planned in India for using sunlight, water and air to produce energy.

Oil and gas prices shooting through the roof in 2022 in the aftermath of Russia's war in Ukraine sent governments in import-dependent nations like India scrambling for options. Not just imports but a shift to renewables is also seen as a way to cut carbon footprint and meet net-zero targets.

The government in 2022 aggressively pushed for the adoption of electric vehicles, the production of green hydrogen, manufacturing of solar

equipment and energy storage in pursuit of its ambitious 500 GW renewable capacity target by 2030.

India would have to add at least 25GW of renewable energy capacity per annum for eight years continuously to achieve the 500 GW target by 2030.

Talking to PTI, Union power and new & renewable energy minister RK Singh stated that the investment in the renewable energy sector could be around \$25 billion in 2023. Elaborating further he said, "We have to achieve a 500 GW target (of clean energy by 2030). Currently, we have a capacity of 173 GW (including large hydro and nuclear power). Capacity under construction is around 80 GW. It

At present, India has around 173GW of non-fossil fuel based clean energy capacity which includes about 62GW of solar, 42GW of wind energy, 10GW of biomass power, about five GW of small hydro, 47 GW of large hydro and seven GW of nuclear power capacity

takes it to 250 GW. So we have to do another 200 GW by 2030."

Singh further said: "We are also doing (solar) manufacturing, which will also attract investment. Currently, a capacity worth Rs 8,780 crore is under construction. It includes polysilicon and module. We are bringing the PLI (Production

Linked Incentive) scheme worth Rs 19,500 crore, under which around 40GW capacity will be developed. We are also doing off-shore wind of 4GW, which will also fetch billions of dollars."

The government is also focussing on green hydrogen with its National Mission on Green Hydrogen. The bids are expected for the manufacturing of electrolyzers next year. That would also bring investment in the clean energy sector.

In 2022, the government provided an additional allocation of Rs 19,500 crore to the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme 'National Programme on High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules'. The bids are already issued this year and would be allocated in 2023.

India needs to add about 25 GW of renewable energy capacity per annum for the next eight years, which would require an investment of Rs 1,25,000 crore or \$15 billion to 16 billion factoring in ₹5 crore requirement per MW of capacity addition

RK SINGH | UNION MINISTER FOR POWER AND NEW & RENEWABLE ENERGY

SHORT TAKES

Cognizant, Garuda Aerospace team up

New Delhi: IT major Cognizant Thursday announced that it has signed a pact with Garuda Aerospace, a drone startup, to power its drones with advanced digital capabilities. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will also bring innovative solutions at scale for enterprises, according to a statement. Cognizant and Garuda Aerospace will collectively bring a slew of drone-based management and monitoring offerings for businesses across sectors.

Tepid mkt debut for Sula Vineyards

New Delhi: Shares of Sula Vineyards Thursday made a tepid market debut and ended nearly 8 per cent lower against the issue price of Rs 357. The stock was listed at Rs 358, marginally higher by 0.27 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it hit a high of Rs 363.40 and low of Rs 328.60. Shares of the company finally ended at Rs 331.15 apiece, a decline of 7.24 per cent. On the NSE, it made its debut at Rs 361, climbing 1.12 per cent. The stock settled at Rs 329.90 per share, lower by 7.59 per cent. The company commanded a market valuation of Rs 2,788.24 crore on the BSE.

JK Cement forays into paint space

New Delhi: JK Cement Thursday announced its foray into the paints business by acquiring 60 per cent stake in Rajasthan-based Acro Paints in a Rs 153 crore deal. Its wholly-owned subsidiary JK Paints and Coatings Ltd has entered into a share purchase agreement with Acro Paints Ltd and its shareholders to acquire a 60 per cent controlling stake in the company. The "remaining 40 per cent shall be acquired over a period of 12 months as per the definitive agreement entered between the parties", a joint statement said. Acro Paints is a manufacturer of architectural and high-performance paints and coatings.

NSE to set-up SSE as separate space

New Delhi: Leading stock exchange NSE Thursday said it has received in-principle approval from capital markets regulator Sebi to set-up a social stock exchange as a separate segment. The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE India) received an in-principle nod from the Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi) December 19. "We believe this platform will immensely benefit the social enterprises contributing to the sustainable development goals," Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD and CEO of NSE, said.

CIPET signs MoU with MCL

Bhubaneswar: CIPET:CSTS, Bhubaneswar and MCL, Sambalpur signed two agreements December 21. A total of 1000 unemployed youth from the operational areas of MCL will be given six-month free skill training under 'Project-NIPUNA' in five different flagship trades of CIPET which ensures the employment. On the other hand forty needy and unemployed candidate's will also be given two years of ITI training under MCL's 'Project-KOVIDA'. On this occasion, GM (CSR) RK Panigrahi on behalf of MCL and Director & Head BP Patra of CIPET:CSTS, Bhubaneswar signed the MoU in presence of MCL, CMD, OP Singh, Jayant Kumar Das, Administrative Officer, CIPET, and Keshav Rao, Director (Personal); Jugal Kishore Borah, Director (Technical) and Rohit Singh, Assistant Manager from MCL, Sambalpur were present during the signing of MoU.



Sensex ends below 61K

Equities skid for third day as bears tighten grip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 22: Equity benchmarks surrendered early gains to finish in the red for the third session on the trot Thursday as hawkish comments from RBI and the Covid surge in China kept buying sentiment in check despite largely positive global market trends.

After a gap-up opening, the 30-share BSE Sensex buckled under selling pressure as the session progressed and finally closed 241.02 points or 0.39 per cent lower at 60,826.22. During the day, it tumbled 430 points or 0.70 per cent to 60,637.24. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty dropped 71.75 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 18,127.35.

Mahindra & Mahindra was the

top loser on the Sensex chart, declining 2.61 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, L&T, Tata Steel and Axis Bank. UltraTech Cement, Infosys, Asian Paints, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Sun Pharma and Bharti Airtel were the winners, climbing up to 0.84 per cent. The market breadth was negative, with 24 of the 30 Sensex stocks posting losses.

International oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.99 per cent to \$83.01 per barrel. The rupee appreciated by 8 paise to close at 82.76 (provisional) against the US currency Thursday following a weak greenback in overseas markets.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought shares worth a net Rs 928.63 crore Thursday.

Jio acquires Reliance Infratel

JIO DEPOSITS RS 3,720 CRORE IN SBI ESCROW ACCOUNT TO ACQUIRE RELIANCE INFRATEL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 22: Reliance Projects and Property Management Services, a subsidiary of telecom major Jio, has deposited Rs 3,720 crore in an SBI escrow account to acquire mobile tower and fibre assets of Reliance Infratel.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) gave approval to Jio for the acquisition of Reliance Infratel (RITL) in November.

"Reliance Infratel transaction is complete. Jio has deposited Rs 3,720 crore in a SBI escrow account as directed by NCLT," a source told PTI.



Billionaire Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani-led Jio placed a bid of Rs 3,720 crore in November 2019 to acquire the tower and fibre asset of debt-ridden subsidiary of his younger brother Anil Ambani-

Reliance to buy Metro AG's India biz

Reliance Industries Ltd will acquire German firm Metro AG's wholesale operations in India for Rs 2,850 crore as the conglomerate run by billionaire Mukesh Ambani seeks to strengthen its dominant position in India's mammoth retail sector. Through this acquisition, Reliance Retail will get access to a network of 31 large format Metro India stores located in prime locations across key cities, along with a large base of registered kiranas and other institutional customers, and a strong supplier network.

managed firm Reliance Communications.

The tribunal asked Jio to deposit Rs 3,720 crore in the State Bank of India (SBI) escrow account to complete the acquisition of RCOM's tower and fibre assets.

On November 6, Jio had proposed to deposit Rs 3,720 crore in an escrow account to complete the

acquisition of Reliance Infratel which is undergoing an insolvency resolution process.

The Committee of Creditors has already approved the resolution plan by Jio March 4, 2020 with a 100 per cent vote. RITL has fibre assets of around 1.78 lakh route kilometers and 43,540 mobile towers across the country.

UNFAIR BIZ PRACTICES

Parl panel for digital competition act to rein in Big Tech

Competitive behaviour of big tech companies needs to be monitored in advance and not after markets become monopolised, the panel noted

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 22: An Indian parliamentary panel Thursday recommended the government enact a digital competition act to regulate anti-competitive business practices by Big Tech companies on its platforms.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has had strained relations with many large technology companies, and New Delhi has

been tightening the regulation of firms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

Alphabet Inc's Google and Apple have in the past faced scrutiny from the country's competition watchdog, the Competition Commission of India (CCI), over alleged abuse of the application market.

The Committee recommend that the government should consider and introduce a digital competition act to ensure a fair, transpar-



ent and contestable digital ecosystem, which will be a boon not only

for our country and its nascent start-up economy but also for the

entire world, the panel said in a report submitted in India's lower house of parliament.

The panel recommended the identification of top tech players as systemically important digital intermediaries to counter monopoly and warned they must not favour their own offers over the offers of their competitors when acting as mediators to supply and sales markets.

In India, Amazon and rival Flipkart are facing accusations of anti-competitive practices, such as promoting preferred sellers on websites and giving priority to listings by some sellers.

Companies including Facebook, Twitter and Google have for years been concerned with many regulations India has proposed for the technology sector, with companies complaining about excessive compliance burdens. The complaints have sometimes strained relations between New Delhi and Washington.

A specialised digital markets unit should be established within the competition watchdog, the panel said, adding that competitive behaviour of big tech companies needs to be monitored in advance and not after markets become monopolised.

INDIA RESTRICT BANGLADESH TO 227 IN THE FIRST INNINGS OF THE SECOND TEST

UMESH, ASHWIN LIFT INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mirpur, Dec 22: Umesh Yadav's incisive spells with the old ball and Ravichandran Ashwin's controlled effort put India in complete command as Bangladesh were bowled out for a below-par 227 on the opening day of the second Test here Thursday.

At stumps, India reached 19 for no loss with skipper KL Rahul batting on 3 in company of Shubman Gill (14 batting). Some of the balls bowled by Bangladeshi spinners were turning square and the decision to drop last Test's player of the match Kuldeep Yadav is looking a controversial one.

When Bangladesh batted, Umesh (4/25) led the Indian pace attack manfully while Ashwin (4/71) closed in on a career-haul of 450 wickets (447 currently) on a day when Jaydev Unadkat's (2/50 in 16 overs) return to Test fold after 12 long years did stir up fair amount of debate about some selection calls taken by this team management.

However, Unadkat could term himself lucky as last game's hero Kuldeep (8 wickets and 40 runs) was unceremoniously dumped by the team management comprising the two Rahuls - head coach Dravid and skipper Kannaur Lokesh (KL).

The pitch was termed to be a confusing one by skipper Rahul at the toss which prompted them to pick an extra seam bowler in Unadkat. The decision didn't backfire because of the inferior quality of Bangladesh batting line-up more than anything else.

Former skipper Mominul Haque (84, 157b, 12x4, 1x6) was the only batter who showed admirable patience for more than four hours but he hardly enjoyed any support from the other end.

Zakir Hasan (15) and Najmul Hossain Shanto (24) added 39 for the first wicket but more importantly saw off the morning spell from Umesh and Mohammed Siraj



Ravichandran Ashwin celebrates a wicket with skipper KL Rahul, Thursday

(0/39). It was Unadkat who got the first breakthrough when the ball bounced a tad more and was caught in the slips.

However, the Saurashtra player bowled a better delivery to get the stodgy Mushfiqur Rahim when he came round the wicket and angled one into the batter. The ball straightened enough after pitching as it completely squared up Rahim.

Unadkat, who made his debut against South Africa at Centurion in December 2010, returned to Test format after a gap of 12 years. In

between, he missed 118 matches, the highest by an Indian and the second highest in world cricket.

However, the most impressive bowler for India was Umesh, who consistently pitched the ball up. What was heartening to see was that along with his stock ball - the outswinger - he has also developed a potent inswinger, one which he used to get rid of Nurul Hasan.

He also got important wickets of Shakib Al Hasan and Mehidy Hasan Miraz by bowling a probing channel and the slowness of the track

Unadkat's rare feat

Mirpur: Pacer Jaydev Unadkat's got into cricketing records for an unenviable piece of statistic Thursday, returning to the Test fold after missing 118 games. Unadkat made his Test debut against South Africa at Centurion December 16, 2020. In between, he missed more than a century of Tests, the second highest in world cricket. Only England's Gareth Batty (142) has missed more matches between two games in the history of Test cricket. Unadkat, playing only the second Test of his career in the ongoing match against Bangladesh here, looked lively on the morning of the first day and picked up the wicket of Zakir Hasan. He replaced wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who had returned with match-winning figures of 8/113 in India's 188-run win in the opening game in Chattogram. Unadkat got the call-up for the Bangladesh tour as a replacement for the injured Mohammed Shami. His selection came following an impressive performance for Saurashtra in Vijay Hazare Trophy.

did the rest.

Litton Das (25 off 26 balls) played an attacking knock which had two boundaries and a six but he couldn't carry on the good work as he flicked a full length delivery from Ashwin straight to captain KL Rahul.

But, Mominul kept his calm and went about his business in a quiet fashion, hitting 12 fours and a six in the process. It was Ashwin, who removed Mominul at the fag end of the day when he shaped for an expansive drive and then decided to check his stroke but the ball kissed his gloves into Rishabh Pant's gloves.

BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh 227 (Mominul Haque 84, Mushfiqur Rahim 26; Umesh Yadav 4/25, Ravichandran Ashwin 4/71, Jaydev Unadkat 2/50); **India 19** for no loss. Match to continue.

It's management's call to drop Kuldeep: Umesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mirpur, Dec 22: Last match hero Kuldeep Yadav's exclusion from the Indian playing eleven for the ongoing second Test against Bangladesh may have surprised many, but senior pacer Umesh Yadav Thursday said it's a "management call", something every cricketer has to deal with.

Kuldeep was the player of the match in India's 188-run win against Bangladesh in the first Test with the left-arm wrist spinner returning with a match haul of eight wickets, besides scoring a useful 40 runs in the visiting team's first innings.

But to everyone's shock, Kuldeep was left out for the second and final Test here as the Rahul Dravid-coached side opted for an extra pacer in Jaydev Unadkat.

"It's part of your journey. It happened to me also. Sometimes you are out of the team because of performance and sometimes it's a management's call. You have to go with the team's requirements," Umesh told reporters after the end of first day's play. "It's good for him (Kuldeep) that he came back and performed well (in the first Test in Chattogram)."

Left-arm pacer Unadkat, who was playing the Test after more than a decade, justified his inclusion by giving the first breakthrough, dismissing last match centu-



ron Zakir Hasan with a delivery that came back into the south-paw.

"When he (Unadkat) made his debut I was with him in South Africa. So, I'm very happy for him that he finally got his chance. He has performed well in the domestic season," said Umesh.

"When he came into bowl with the new ball, the ball was doing a bit, many balls took the nick of batter's gloves," he said of Unadkat who returned with day's figures of 2/50.

"We knew that Unadkat is used to bowl on these types of wickets and can swing it both ways. So he just had to keep bowling in the right areas and test the batters' patience."

It seemed to be an under-par total by the hosts but Umesh said they (Indian bowlers) have to keep bowling well. "In Tests, you can't just say a total. You have to keep bowling well. It's a good performance with the way the wicket is playing, odd ball turning, some keeping out. It was a good bowling show to keep them under 300."

Asked if the Indian bowlers had it easy against the Bangladeshi batters, he said: "No batting lineup is easy, you just can't come and get them out. Test cricket is the toughest format. You have to keep bowling and batting well. Test cricket is all about patience. "It's a 50-50 kind of wicket. It's not fully for the pacers or the spinners. Some of the balls are doing something and some not doing. We have to be patient and bowl in the right areas. The odd ball is bouncing from the back of length," he said about the wicket.

Odisha stare at innings defeat vs Uttarakhand

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Odisha are in threat of suffering an innings defeat in their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match against Uttarakhand as they were 167 runs behind the hosts' first innings total with only six wickets in hand at stumps in Dehradun, Thursday.

After conceding a 264-run first innings lead to Uttarakhand, Odisha were 97/4 when the umpires called off the play for the third day. Opener Anurag Sarangi (59 batting, 106b, 12x4) was still at the crease, losing out of partners at the other end.

Odisha lost the other opener Shantanu Mishra in the second over before a 72-run second wicket partnership between Sarangi and skipper Subhranshu Senapati (13) raised some hope of a fightback.

Odisha then lost experienced Biplab Samantray (9) and Subham Nayak (0) one after the other to be struggling at 93/4. Mayank Mishra (2/29) bagged two wickets, while Deepak Dhapola (1/8) and Akash Madhwal (1/21) got a wicket each.

PELE'S CANCER WORSENS; KIDNEYS, HEART AFFECTED

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sao Paulo, Dec 22: Pele's health has worsened during his hospital stay to regulate his cancer medication, doctors said. The Albert Einstein hospital in Sao Paulo said in a statement on Wednesday that Pele's cancer has advanced and that the 82-year-old Brazilian soccer great is under "elevated care" related to "kidney and cardiac dysfunctions."

The hospital did not mention any signs of the three-time World Cup winner's recent respiratory infection, which was aggravated by COVID-19.

Edson Arantes do Nascimento, who is globally known as Pele, is undergoing chemotherapy in his fight against cancer since he had a colon tumor removed in September 2021. Neither his family nor the hospital have said whether it had spread to other organs.

Kely Nascimento, one of his daughters, said Pele will stay in the hospital during Christmas. "We decided with doctors that, for many reasons, it will be best for us to stay here, with all the care that this new family at Einstein gives us," she wrote on Instagram. "We will even make some caipirinhas (no kidding). We love you and we will give up an update next week."



Newspaper Folha de S Paulo reported Saturday that Pele's chemotherapy is not working and that doctors had decided to put him on palliative care. Pele's family denied that report. The Associated Press could not confirm the newspaper's information.

Pele led Brazil to victory the 1958, 1962 and 1970 World Cups and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals. Neymar tied Pele's record during the latest World Cup.

Several tributes and get-well soon wishes were made for the former footballer during the Qatar tournament, which was won by Argentina Sunday.

Man Utd advance in League Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, Dec 22: Christian Eriksen and Marcus Rashford scored to help Manchester United beat Burnley 2-0 and advance to the quarterfinals of the English League Cup.

Back from their World Cup duties, Denmark's Eriksen finished from close range in the 27th minute Wednesday and England's Rashford scored on a superb solo effort after the break in United's first game since Cristiano Ronaldo's departure last month.

Nottingham Forest also reached the quarterfinals in a 4-1 victory over second-division Blackburn. Wales international Brennan Johnson scored twice on his return to action after the World Cup.

The shock of the evening was third-tier Charlton's upset of Premier League club Brighton in a penalty shootout after a goalless draw in London.

Brighton were without midfielder Alexis MacAllister, who is still celebrating with his Argentina teammates after winning the World Cup in Qatar. Charlton won the shootout 4-3 to reach the quarterfinals for the first time since 2006.

Brighton manager Roberto De Zerbi apologised to the travelling Brighton fans. "I'm sorry for the result and sorry for our fans," said De Zerbi, who was hired in September. "We played a good game,



Manchester United players, including Marcus Rashford (No.10), celebrate Christian Eriksen's (2nd from R) goal against Burnley, Wednesday

not a fantastic game but enough to win."

At Old Trafford, Rashford continued his fine form after scoring three goals for England in Qatar. In the 57th minute, he darted from his own half into the visitors' box before drilling the ball into the net.

Burnley is atop the second-tier Championship and is managed by

former Manchester City great Vincent Kompany. United manager Erik ten Hag named five players who had been at the World Cup in a strong starting lineup.

The eighth quarterfinalist will be determined Thursday when Manchester City hosts Liverpool. The Premier League resumes Monday, December 26.

Argentina No.2 in FIFA chart despite WC win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Zurich, Dec 22: Winning the World Cup was not enough to lift Argentina atop the FIFA world rankings with Brazil keeping the No.1 position Thursday.

Brazil was eliminated in the quarterfinals by Croatia but built enough rankings points from results over recent years that feed into FIFA's calculation.

Argentina moved up one place to No. 2 and beaten finalist France also rose one to No.3. Belgium are still at No.4, a fall of two places, despite winning only one game in Qatar and failing to advance from the group stage.

England and the Netherlands, both beaten quarterfinalists, stay at Nos.5 and 6 respectively. Croatia climbed five places to No.7. European champion Italy is at No.8 despite failing to qualify for the World Cup.

Morocco are the best-placed African nation at No.11, up 11 places, for its historic run to the semifinals. The United States at No.13 is the best of the CONCACAF region teams, rising three places after advancing to the round of 16. Mexico are No.15. Japan lead the Asian confederation teams at No.20, up four places, and Australia rise 11 places to No.27. Both reached the round of 16. Cameroon, which beat Brazil in the group stage, rose 10 places to be No.33. Qatar dropped 10 places to No.60 after losing all three games as the home team at the World Cup.

BRIEF SCORES
ODISHA 213 & 97/4 (Anurag Sarangi 59 batting; Mayank Mishra 2/29);
UTTARAKHAND 477 (Jiwanjot Singh 218, Aditya Tare 57; Suryakant Pradhan 3/90, Abhishek Raut 2/33, Subham Nayak 2/79).
Match to continue.

Earlier, resuming the play at an overnight score of 308/3, Uttarakhand lost Swapnil Singh (65) in the third over of the day. Suryakant Pradhan (3/90) trapped Swapnil in front. The other overnight batter - skipper Jiwanjot Singh (218, 363b, 35x4) - then found an abled ally in seasoned Aditya Tare (57, 89b, 9x4).

The duo stitched together 86 runs for the fifth wicket taking the team's total to 400 in the process. Biplab (1/52) broke the dangerous-looking stand getting rid of Jiwanjot.

Uttarakhand then lost wickets at regular intervals to be bowled out for 477. Subham Nayak (2/79) and Abhishek Raut (2/33) got two wickets apiece, while Saurabh Kanojia (1/121) bagged the prized wicket of Tare.

Messi's black cloak: A brief history of the bisht

Shortly before Lionel Messi took to the stage to lift up the World Cup trophy, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani put a black cloak, called a "bisht," over the Argentine football star's shoulders.

Images of Messi wrapped in black fabric, which might have been construed as obscuring his national jersey, caused confusion around the world.

Many fans questioned why the La Pulga was shrouded in an Arabian cape, with some suggesting that it "ruined an iconic moment."

A cloak for the ages

The origins of the bisht date back to the fifth century BC. It was initially used as a travelling coat to protect the skin of no-

madic shepherds and Bedouins as they journeyed through different climates.

The word itself derives from Persian and translates literally to "on one's back." Also called an "aba" in Arabic, the bisht is traditionally a long, hand-woven cloak made of camel hair and goat fur. Its fibres were specifically crafted for the harsh desert climates - both cold and warm.

The process of spinning and weaving the fabric together - usually black, brown, beige or gray - makes it highly breathable. Over time, tailors began adding specialised trim to the cloth, such as hand-spun gold or silver. The trim, called "zari," was crafted by mixing fine metals with silk to give it a lasting sheen.

The zari was added to the outer



Lionel Messi kisses the World Cup trophy as FIFA president Gianni Infantino (L) and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, look on

portions to distinguish travelling cloaks from those to be worn by dignitaries or on special occasions.

By the time of the Prophet Muhammad in the sixth century, soldiers and generals who performed well were shrouded with a bisht after battle in the conquests of the Persian and later Arab empires.

The more transparent the fabric and more ornate the trim, the higher the honour. In countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar that were formed in the early 1900s, royalty and politicians, referred to as Al Malaki, frequently wore the more ornate bisht.

Culture and the meaning of style

Today, there are many kinds and levels of the bisht, ranging in price from a few hundred to a few hundred thousand US dollars.

While the invention of the sewing machine facilitated the mass production of these cloaks, royalty, dignitaries and sheikhs wear only handmade, woven and trimmed bisht.

Like fashion and outerwear around the world, Middle Eastern clothing such as the bisht or the traditional white robes worn by many Arabs in the Persian Gulf, called "dish dasha," are a status symbol.

For Qataris, shrouding Messi, the star of the FIFA World Cup, with their most honorific clothing was an opportunity to share their culture - and the geopolitical importance of the World Cup games - with the world.