



NOSTALGIC DEEPIKA

Five years after *Bajirao Mastani's* release, actor Deepika Padukone recalls working in the film with great passion

LEISURE P2



KHALISTAN 'PAK PROJECT'

In an eye-opening report, Canadian journalist Terry Milewski has warned that the Khalistan project is sponsored by Pakistan

INTERNATIONAL P10



LEWANDOWSKI 'THE BEST'

Robert Lewandowski wins FIFA Best Men's Player for 2020 after a 55-goal season with Bayern Munich

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I can go up to any extent to save my ideology!

SHORT TAKES

Train runs over two in Rourkela

Rourkela: Two unidentified youths were killed after a train reportedly ran over them near Panposh railway overbridge in Rourkela Friday morning. As per reports, Ahmedabad-Howrah Express train mowed down the duo this morning while they were walking on the rail tracks near Panposh overbridge. The Government Railway Police (GRP) recovered the bodies for post mortem in Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH). It was some passengers that first spotted the bodies close to the railway track.

Neighbour admits to killing 3-yr-old

Dhenkanal: A day after the mysterious death of a 3-year-old boy in Dhenkanal, police Friday revealed that the neighbour of the deceased's parents is the real culprit behind the crime. The body of the missing 3-year-old boy from Khankira village under Nihalprasad police limits was found floating in a well of his village December 17. After recovering body, the police started an investigation in this regard and found that a woman who was the neighbour of the deceased boy is the culprit.

State weighs green cess on diesel

AS PER THE DRAFT ELECTRIC VEHICLE POLICY, THE STATE WILL IMPOSE A CESS OF 25 PAISE/LTR OF DIESEL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: In order to promote electric vehicles (EVs) in the state, the government is planning to impose pollution cess of 25 paise per litre of diesel sold.

The plan has been mentioned in the draft Electric Vehicle Policy 2020, which is now in the discussion stage. The government is set to offer various incentives to EV buyers and manufacturers. It will establish a dedicated fund to facilitate these incentives.

As per the draft policy, the cess will later be imposed on all internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

On similar lines, the government is mulling an additional road tax on diesel and petrol vehicles, especially on luxurious cars. The additional tax will be based on a sliding scale with high price diesel vehicles paying the highest additional road tax and low price two wheelers incurring a small addition.

Further, the government has planned to levy appropriate congestion fee on all trips originating and terminating from different places in Odisha and also from car aggregators. This tax will be waived for e-vehicles. The gap left after funding from the above sources will be met through budgetary allocation.

The transport department will be the nodal agency to implement the pol-



ENSURING COMPLIANCE

A State-level Task Force headed by chief secretary and Steering Committee led by Transport secretary will be formed for effective implementation of the policy. The draft policy will be finalised soon and notified, sources said. Nearly 82 per cent of all new vehicles registered in the state comprise two wheelers. It is the most popular segment of vehicles which contribute a major part in air pollution. Similarly, three wheelers numbers constitute 3.06 per cent and cars (light motor vehicles) make up 7.04 per cent of total registered vehicles in the state.

DRAFT EV POLICY

100% exemption of road tax and registration fees on EVs purchased within Odisha

100% interest-free loans can be availed by state government employees for purchasing EVs

25% of capital investment will be provided to small and micro EV battery manufacturing units

icy while a dedicated EV Cell will be formed in the department to monitor it.

Under the policy, the government is planning 100 per cent exemption of road tax and registration fees on EVs purchased within Odisha.

The government will provide 15 per cent subsidy — a maximum of ₹5,000 for two-wheeler; ₹12,000 for three-wheeler; and ₹one lakh for four-wheeler — on the base price.

State government employees can avail 100 per cent interest-free loans for purchasing EVs in the state.

Government departments/offices and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)

will prefer EVs for official use, the draft said. Municipal authorities will be asked to provide subsidised parking for all personal EVs in their respective jurisdiction.

The government has also decided to incentivize new small and micro EV battery manufacturing units. All such units will get 25 per cent of capital investment made in plant & machinery subject to an upper limit of ₹1 crore.

As charging point is necessary for plying of such vehicles in the state, the government decided to provide grant upto ₹5000 for set up of first 20,000 such points.



Hathras victim was 'gangraped, killed'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The CBI Friday filed its charge sheet against four accused in the alleged gangrape and murder case of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in Hathras, officials said.

The agency invoked charges of gangrape and murder against Sandeep, Luvkush, Ravi and Ramu and the local court in Hathras

has taken cognisance, lawyer for the accused told reporters outside the court. The Dalit woman was allegedly raped by four upper-caste men in Hathras September 14. She died September 29 at Delhi's Safdarjung

Hospital during treatment.

The victim was cremated in the dead of the night near her home September 30. Her family alleged they were forced by the local police to hurriedly conduct her last rites. Local police officers, however, said the cremation was carried out as per the wishes of the family.

The agency has looked into the role of accused Sandeep, Luvkush, Ravi and Ramu who are in judicial custody, officials said.

They were also put through different forensic tests at the Forensic Science Laboratory in Gandhinagar, they said.



Vaccination for Covid-19 will be voluntary: Govt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Getting vaccinated for Covid-19 will be voluntary, the Union health ministry has said while underlining that the vaccine introduced in India will be as effective as any vaccine developed by other countries.

The ministry further stated that it was advisable to receive a complete schedule of the anti-coronavirus vaccine irrespective of past history of infection with Covid-19 as this will help in developing a strong immune response against the disease.

It also said that protective level of antibodies generally develop two weeks after receiving the second dose. "Vaccination for Covid-19 is voluntary. However, it is advisable to receive the complete schedule of the vaccine for protecting one-self against this disease and also to limit the spread of this disease to the close contacts including family members, friends, relatives and co-workers," the ministry said in response to a question on if it is mandatory to take the shot.

Odisha Police slams charges against SIT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Following charges against IPS officer Arun Bothra, head of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing into the Pari murder case, of offering bribe to a youth to take the blame in the case, Odisha Police Friday rubbished the allegation.

"The team has been diligently working out clues. A large number of people have been examined in the process and significant progress has been made. The entire village has extended cooperation in the investigation," said Odisha Police in a press release.

"However, such unfounded allegation by one person has been used to cast aspersions on the investigation agency. It may end up demotivating officers who are sincerely working to unearth the truth. It is both unfortunate and unethical," it added.

"We request everyone and particularly media to allow the SIT to complete



Head of SIT Arun Bothra

its work. Odisha Police is committed to fair and diligent investigation. We assure that no stone will be left unturned to ensure justice," it added.

A college student Saroj Sethy of Jadupur village has levelled the serious allegation against Bothra. He was under the SIT scanner in the murder case as the minor girl had visited his residence for berries a day before her abduction in July.

Missing minor rescued from factory

GAJAPATI: An eight-year-old boy who was allegedly kidnapped Thursday from Kashi Nagar NAC was rescued from an under-construction building at Koithapadar village in Gajapati district Friday. The rescue of the youngster, 40 hours after his abduction, has brought relief to the family members. The boy was identified as Jammii Hardhik, son of Jammii Gopi of Kumuti Sahi locality. He was playing with his friends when he was abducted. Hardhik's uncle, Patanuru Naresh, had gone to Koithapadar village. There, he spotted his nephew inside the under-construction building. He contacted the police who reached the spot and rescued Hardhik.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VI
SENSEX	46960.69	↑ 70.35
NIFTY	13760.50	↑ 19.80
DOLLAR	73.57	↓ ₹0.07
EURO	90.10	↓ ₹0.07
GOLD	₹50,280	↓ ₹110
SILVER	₹67,755	↓ ₹512

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	28.3°C	27.5°C
TEMP MIN	17.6°C	15.8°C
Humidity	92%	82%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning	

RIL, BP find gas in Asia's deepest offshore field

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 18: Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and BP Friday announced the start of production from the R Cluster, ultra-deep-water gas field in KG-D6 block off the east coast of India.

RIL and BP are developing three deepwater gas projects in KG-D6 block — R Cluster, Satellites Cluster and MJ — which together are expected to meet 15% of India's gas demand by 2023. RIL is the operator of KG-D6 block with a 66.67% participating interest and BP holds a 33.33% participating interest.

"R Cluster is the first of the three projects to come onstream. The field is located about 60 kilometers from the existing KG D6 Control & Riser Platform (CRP) off the Kakinada coast and comprises a subsea production system tied back to CRP via a subsea pipeline. Located at a water depth of greater



MEETING GAS DEMANDS

The field is expected to reach plateau gas production of about 12.9 million standard cubic meters per day (mmscmd) in 2021

RIL and BP are developing three deepwater gas projects in KG-D6 block which are expected to meet 15% of India's gas demand by 2023

This is a significant milestone in India's energy landscape, for a cleaner and greener gas-based economy

MUKESH AMBANI | CHAIRMAN & MD, RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LIMITED

than 2000 meters, it is the deepest offshore gas field in Asia. The field is expected to reach plateau gas production of about 12.9 million standard cubic meters per day (mmscmd) in 2021," RIL said in an official statement.

"We are proud of our partnership with BP that combines our expertise in commissioning gas projects expeditiously, under some of the most challenging geographical and weather con-

ditions. This is a significant milestone in India's energy landscape, for a cleaner and greener gas-based economy."

"Through our deep-water infrastructure in the Krishna Godavari basin we expect to produce gas and meet the growing clean energy requirements of the nation," said Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director of Reliance Industries Limited.

"This start-up is another example

of the possibility of our partnership with Reliance, bringing the best of both companies to help meet India's rapidly expanding energy needs. Growing India's own production of cleaner-burning gas to meet a significant portion of its energy demand, these three new KG D6 projects will support the country's drive to shape and improve its future energy mix," said BP Chief Executive Bernard Looney.

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Gate No. 3, Exhibition Ground, Unit-III, Kharvela Nagar, BBSR 19th Dec. 2020- 14th Jan. 2021 Time: 10.30 AM To 9.00 PM

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TINA SAYS SHE SAVED A MAN'S LIFE DURING PANDEMIC

Actress Tina Fey has revealed that during the pandemic she saved a man's life. During an appearance on *The Tonight Show*, Tina told host Jimmy Fallon that she recently helped save the life of a stranger who had been kayaking in the Hudson and ended up floating in the water following an accident, reports *eonline.com*.

JENNIFER LOPEZ TO STAR IN FILM ADAPTATION OF THE CIPHER

Singer-actress Jennifer Lopez will star in a film adaptation of the bestselling book, *The Cipher*. Lopez will produce and star in the film based on the book written by Isabella Maldonado.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today is reserved for your hobbies and obsessions. Doing the things you love will give you a high, and it will reflect in the way you treat your loved ones, says Ganesha. Your mind may not be at work, but your seniors may thoughtfully allow some concessions.

TAURUS
It is quite likely that grandparents will shower love at home and seniors will shower favours at work, says Ganesha. You will probably collect certain overdue payments in the afternoon. Later in the day, a gamble you took in business may pay rich dividends, expects Ganesha.

GEMINI
There is every possibility that your emotional responses to certain issues will be intense today, foretells Ganesha. You are likely to join some personality development classes. Seductive conversation may culminate into something extraordinary with your partner.

CANCER
Your relationship with your lover may get a little messy today. But it has little to do with the lack of love, and more with too much of it. The two of you will get extremely emotional, and if your sweetheart has the same sun sign as yours, the situation may get ridiculously emotional.

LEO
You will take important decisions relating to some partnership today. A progressive day at the workplace awaits. Traders may face some financial constraints however. The stress of over-work may tie you down. So do not bite off more than you can chew, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Ganesha foresees you up the ante today. You will set new limits for yourself and break existing barriers today. The afternoon may see you being alarmed about the health of your finances. Trivial matters will spoil your spirits, but attain the next level by spending the evening in spiritual well-being.

LIBRA
So, love finally entraps you with the help of the stars, chuckles Ganesha. There is a high probability that you will begin a long-lasting romantic relationship today. This new factor shall keep you elated throughout the day. Avoid any confrontation with those living around you.

SCORPIO
Your beloved will pulsate with pangs of passion, and even you won't remain unaffected for long, says Ganesha. Your skills in negotiating will help you save a huge chunk of money. Some quiet and prosperity at home will help you relax.

SAGITTARIUS
Wield the baton and conduct proceedings today, says Ganesha. You may enrol yourself in a personality development course to hone your skills. But a small, out-of-synch, unexpected chord may spoil the sonata for you today. But remember, there is always hope.

CAPRICORN
Love will top your priority list once again, and will make innumerable demands that you will strive to meet, says Ganesha. If you currently have any research work on hand, expect a breakthrough today.

AQUARIUS
Today, you experience the joy of giving freely, as your benevolent side decides to manifest itself. You also realise that a broad-minded approach is less stressful for you. You find it spiritually uplifting to fight against injustice and discrimination.

PISCES
While you have cultivated a wide network of acquaintances, it is that core group you have nurtured over the years that will stand you in good stead now. In times of need, it is good to know that you can bank on their support. Today, you will get your chance to experience the benefits of their friendship, says Ganesha.



Kajol shares her Christmas confusion

Mumbai: Actress Kajol is already in Christmas mood, and is wondering if she is on naughty list or nice. Kajol has shared her Yuletide mood on Instagram.
The actress shared a photograph of herself with a confused expression and wrote: "Me wondering which list am I on? The naughty or the nice?"
In the caption, she wrote: "Which list are you on #NaughtyOrNice #MeWhenI (sic)."
The post prompted many responses from her fans and followers. One user wrote: "Both", while one shared "Naughty mam".
Kajol keeps on using social media to share her sense of humour with fans.
She recently posted a picture of a Christmas tree on Instagram Stories. On the photo she wrote: "Covid humour — I've put on so much weight in this year that even my phone doesn't recognise me!"
Kajol was last seen on the big screen in this year's historical action blockbuster *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, co-starring her husband Ajay Devgn. Her next film, *Tribhanga* is expected to release in January. The film is directed by actress Renuka Shahane, and also stars Tanvi Azmi and Mithila Palkar.



Vidyut eager to meet Kolkata fan

Kolkata: Action star Vidyut Jammwal Friday expressed eagerness to meet a fan who has inked his face on the chest. The fan is a youngster named Krishna Sonkar from Howrah near Kolkata.
Sonkar has not only tattooed the actor's face on his chest, but also follows his fitness regime and dreams of building a body like Vidyut.
Vidyut Friday reacted to a news piece about Sonkar on Twitter and expressed his eagerness to meet his fan.
The actor tweeted: "The moment I land in Kolkata, you'll be the first person that I meet Krishna. Love."
The actor recently featured in the digitally-released film, *Khuda Haafiz*. He will next star in the film's second chapter.

Dhanush to star in The Gray Man

New Delhi: Tamil actor Dhanush will star alongside Ryan Gosling, Chris Evans and Ana De Armas in the highly anticipated film, *The Gray Man*, helmed by the Russo brothers.
The film also stars Wagner Moura, Jessica Henwick and Julia Butters. The actor revealed the news on Twitter through a note.
"Elated to announce that I will be joining the team of Netflix's *The Gray Man* starring Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans, directed by The Russo Brothers (*Avengers*, *Captain America: Winter Soldier*)," he said in the note.
"Looking forward to being a part of this wonderful action packed experience. My sincere thanks to my dearest fans from all over the world for all the love and support you have been showing me throughout these years. Love you all. Spread Love," he added. The details of Dhanush's role are still under wraps.
The Gray Man is based on the 2009 Mark Greaney novel of the same name and is about a freelance assassin and former CIA operative named Court Gentry (played by Gosling). The movie will follow Gentry as he is hunted across the world by Lloyd Hansen (Evans), a former member of Gentry's CIA team.
The film will be produced with a budget of \$200 million. Dhanush's earlier international foray was Ken Scott's 2018 comedy, *The Extraordinary Journey Of The Fakir*.
The film co-starred Benicio Bejo, Erin Moriarty, Ben Miller and Barkhad Abdi.



Deepika: Mastani was fuelled by her passion

Mumbai: The Sanjay Leela Bhansali magnum opus *Bajirao Mastani* released five years ago on this day. Actress Deepika Padukone, who starred in the film as Mastani, recalled working in the film saying the character was fuelled by her passion.
Deepika posted a picture in her character alongside the filmmaker.
"Whether in love or war, Mastani was fuelled by her passion, unafraid to write her own destiny, no matter how perilous the path," the actress wrote in the caption.
She added: "She never bowed down and always stood her ground with a fierce dignity and a love so strong that its burning embers seared through every societal constraint, to join both her and her lover's names, for all of eternity..."
The film also stars Deepika's husband Ranveer Singh as Maratha Peshwa Bajirao I and actress Priyanka Chopra as Bajirao's first wife Kashibai.
Deepika is awaiting the release of the cricket drama *83*, and is also working in director Shakun Batra's untitled next film.



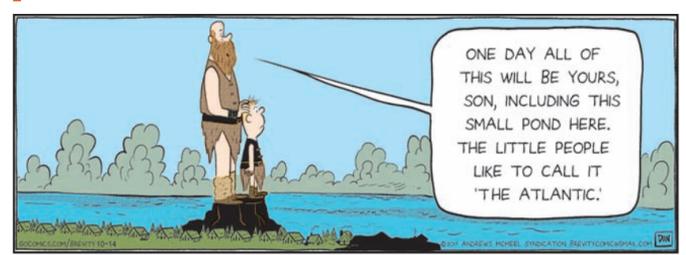
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

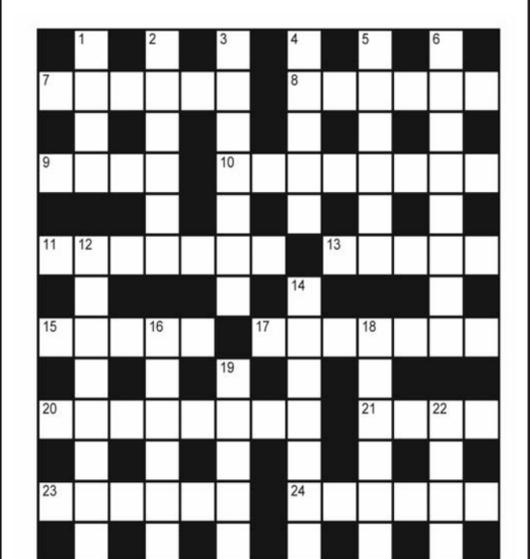


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



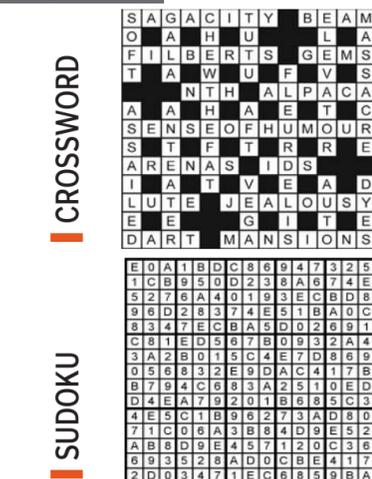
- Across**
- 7 Billiard table part
 - 8 Movie, part 2
 - 9 Scratch
 - 10 Kind of tree or wine
 - 11 Honours
 - 13 Detonation
 - 15 Joint type
 - 17 Desert sight
 - 20 Underground tunnel
 - 21 Diplomacy
 - 23 Grief
 - 24 Stomach woes
 - 4 Sacred hymn
 - 5 Talk like a pig
 - 6 Mid-west US state
 - 12 Walt Disney was one
 - 14 Seaport
 - 16 Sanity
 - 18 Capers
 - 19 Repentant word
 - 22 Freshwater fish
- Down**
- 1 Grouse or turkey
 - 2 Spit
 - 3 Make an error

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



SOLUTIONS

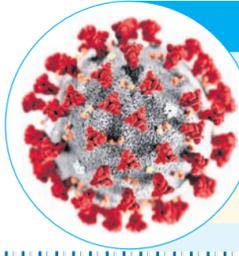


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DUSKY HORIZON

Sun sets over the kans grass field near Pipli bypass in Puri district, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	7,54,92,793	5,30,27,223	16,72,379
India	99,79,447	95,20,827	1,44,789
Odisha	3,25,505	3,20,947	1,829

Srimandir all set to reopen Dec 23

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 18: After remaining out of bounds for devotees for over nine months, the Srimandir here will reopen December 23. This was confirmed by District Collector of Puri Balwant Singh here Friday.

Temple had been closed in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak and devotees were not being allowed to have darshan of the deities.

As per a directive of the Odisha government, the Puri district administration has chalked out a standard operating procedure (SOP) for reopening of the 12th century shrine.

Initially for first two days, the servitors and their family members will be allowed to have darshan of the three deities. Later, the residents in Puri town will be allowed to enter the shrine in a phased manner till December 31 evening, Singh said.

"The people of Puri city would be allowed to visit the shrine in phases till December 31. The temple would remain closed January 1 and 2. The shrine would be kept open for all from January 3," said a source in the district administration. Meanwhile, it was revealed that tokens would be issued to the locals for have darshan of the deities.

It is learnt that the administration would open special counters



Barricades and sheds in front of Srimandir ready for reopening of the shrine December 23

For the first two days, the servitors and their family members will be allowed to have darshan of the deities

have to show their Aadhaar card and other valid ID proofs before entering the temple.

Other temples and religious institutions in Puri district will also reopen December 23 with strict adherence to prevailing Covid-19 restrictions including maintenance of social distancing, the district Collector clarified.

Keeping in mind the rush during New Year's Day, visitors will not be allowed inside the temple January 1 and 2. However, darshan of the three deities will resume January 3, 2021.

CITY SHRINES TO REOPEN JAN 3

Bhubaneswar: All religious institutions will reopen in temple city Bhubaneswar from January 3 with strict observance of Covid-19 safety protocols, said Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday. However, BMC allowed entry of devotees into Lingaraj temple, the 11th century shrine, in a phased manner from December 27. Only the temple servitors and their family members will be allowed to the temple from December 27 to December 31, informed BMC commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary in an order. The temple would remain closed January 1 and 2, 2021. However, the daily rituals would be taking place as usual, the BMC commissioner said. From January 3 to January 5, the temple would remain open only for the residents of Bhubaneswar. Devotees will have to produce Covid-19 negative report obtained during the 'last five days' to enter the temple. From January 6, tourists, devotees from other parts of the state and the country will be allowed inside the temple with strict observance of Covid-19 safety protocol, said Chaudhary.

GRAINS OF LABOUR



A farmer winnows out chaff from newly-harvested paddy at Balianta on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Friday

Gangster Raja booked under NSA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The Commissionerate Police Friday booked gangster Raja Acharya under National Security Act (NSA) a few hours after he was granted bail by the SDJM court here.

The Commissionerate Police informed through its official twitter handle that Raja has been detained under the NSA in order to prevent him from indulging in any criminal activities.

"Raja @ Sandeep Acharya (49) of BJB Nagar Bhubaneswar has been detained under the NSA to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to public order," tweeted Commissionerate Police.

The police accused Raja of 'terrorising' citizens repeatedly for extortion (dadabati).



File photo of gangster Raja Acharya

Raja was arrested on charges of demanding ₹20,000 as extortion money from a businessman October 17

bail as the investigating cops failed to submit the charge-sheet against Raja before the court within the stipulated 60 days.

Meanwhile, the investigating officials are regularly failing to submit the charge-sheets within the stipulated time period. As per rules, the cops have to submit the charge-sheets within '60 days from the date of arrest' when the matter is under trial at lower courts and '90 days in cases which is trial by Court of Sessions'.

POCSO court denies bail to Infocity rape accused

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: A POCSO court here Friday rejected the bail application of the four accused held in connection with the alleged rape of 13-year-old girl in Infocity area of the Capital city during the lockdown.

The four accused - two staffers of a regional television channel and two security guards - were arrested by Crime Branch late Sunday night.

The victim's mother was working as a receptionist at the office of the television channel when the alleged rape took place between April and May this year. The victim allegedly took the names of accused persons during the recording of her statement.

A police official and his two associates were also allegedly sexually abused the minor girl. However, the Crime Branch is yet to arrest the accused police officials.

Earlier, the Orissa High Court, while hearing a PIL in this regard, had expressed displeasure over the snail-paced investigation.

Abhay Pathak moves SDJM court for bail



File photo of suspended IFS officer AK Pathak

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Tainted IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak Friday filed a petition in Bhubaneswar Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) Court seeking bail in connection with the fraud allegation levelled against him by Sky King travel agency.

On the other hand, the Commissionerate Police has taken Abhay's son Akash Pathak on a four-day remand, said Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi.

Notably, the state Vigilance department had arrested Pathak and his son Akash for allegedly amassing ill-gotten wealth amounting to more than ₹20 crore. Both father and son are now lodged in Jharpada jail.

The Vigilance during investigation found that Pathak was making cash deposits of his ill-gotten wealth in his son Akash's bank accounts and further helping his son in fraudulently posing as MD of Tata Motors.

Meanwhile, Tata Motors authorities have lodged an FIR against

The Commissionerate Police has taken Abhay Kant's son Akash Pathak on a four-day remand

Akash for illegally using their name. The Vigilance department during the investigation revealed that Pathak was himself using high-end expensive cars such as Mercedes, BMW from the ill-gotten wealth.

During the lockdown, the Pathaks were flying across India in chartered planes and staying in luxurious five-star and seven-star hotels. The father-son duo was using private security guards/bouncers to flaunt their ill-gotten wealth.

Earlier, the state government had suspended Pathak for possessing disproportionate assets to the tune of ₹9.35 crore, beyond his known sources of income - which he could not account for satisfactorily.

Woman, daughter found dead in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 18: The bodies of a 35-year-old woman and her seven-month-old daughter were recovered from the former's house at State Bank Colony under Bidanasi police limits here, police said Friday.

Police suspect that the woman might have killed her daughter before ending her life.

"We recovered the bodies of Manasmita Ojha, an employee of State Bank of India (SBI), and her seven-month-old daughter. The child's mutilated body was found in a pool of blood, while Ojha's body was found hanging from her room's ceiling," a Bidanasi police official said.

Police suspect that the woman might have killed her daughter before ending her life

The incident took place in the evening when Ojha's husband, an engineer, was out for some work.

On his return, the man grew suspicious as his desperate knocks at the door went unanswered. "Perturbed, the man raised an alarm following which his neighbours rushed to his help and broke open the door to find the lifeless mother-daughter duo," said one of the neighbours who witnessed the entire episode and informed the police.

Quoting Ojha's husband, the police official said that Manasmita was under extreme stress over her daughter had some abnormalities. "This could be a reason behind the lady taking the extreme step. Probe is on. Things will be clear soon," the official pointed out.

EOW begins probe into ₹1.50 crore loan fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch has started investigations into the alleged illegal sanction of loans under Mudra Scheme by a woman bank manager of Sindurapank branch of Sambalpur. The regional office of Indian Overseas Bank at Berhampur has lodged a complaint with the EOW in this regard.

According to the complaint, the accused branch manager, in connivance with others, had disbursed loans to the tune of over ₹2.30 crore without checking documents or receiving mortgages as security against the loans between 2017 and 2019.

The IOB authorities claimed that the bank is likely to lose around ₹1.50 crore as loans were doled out



The accused branch manager, in connivance with others, had disbursed loans to the tune of over ₹2.30 crore without checking documents

through forgery and by accepting bribe.

The matter came to the fore after the bank's vigilance department at its central office at Chennai received a complaint under Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informer scheme recently. The regional vigilance officer was assigned to investigate the case and submit a report by January 5, 2020.

The special internal vigilance

team found that the loans have been disbursed to ghost units. The team also ascertained that more than ₹60,000 has been transferred from the account of a borrower to the account of branch manager's brother without his knowledge.

The accused manager also allegedly issued loans to many people without ensuring mortgages from borrowers or without checking the KYC details.

Uphold rights of paralytic in jail, NHRC tells Prisons DG

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 18: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the Director General of Prisons, Odisha, to take appropriate action in order to prevent the alleged human rights violation of Binod Naik, an under-trial prisoner, who has been allegedly afflicted with paralysis.

Naik was arrested by the Odisha Police in 2016 for his alleged involvement in Maoist related activities. According to reports, he has been lodged in Sambalpur circle jail for four years.

The NHRC has asked the DG, Prisons, to take immediate and appropriate action over the matter. The NHRC order came in a petition filed by Bijayani Mishra, a PhD scholar of Jawaharlal Nehru University here. The petitioner pleaded the commission to issue a notice to the jail authorities to prevent



Binod Naik was arrested by Odisha police in 2016 for his alleged involvement in Maoist related activities

the human rights violation of the victim and provide him free treatment in a quality empaneled hospital of the government and also provide compensation.

Naik's brother, Manoranjan Naik, had earlier submitted a memorandum to the district administration addressing to the Chief Minister to shift his brother to a private hospital or to their home for better treatment. Manoranjan, a retired teacher, is a native of

Marangbahal village under Jujumura block in Sambalpur district.

Manoranjan claimed that his brother had no links with any Maoist outfits. "However, police arrested him and some innocent and poor youths on false charges as the ultras had their presence in their area for a brief period," he added. Many of them have been acquitted by the court for want of evidence while Naik is still languishing in jail due to delay in hearing of his bail plea, he said.

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Four fresh fatalities take state's Covid toll to 1,829

THREE DISTRICTS—BOUDH, KANDHAMAL AND MALKANGIRI— DID NOT REGISTER ANY NEW CASES DURING THE LAST 24 HOURS



Children sanitise their hands before writing Class-III scholarship exam at a school at Hanspal in Bhubaneswar, Friday

WAR NOT OVER YET

Angul recorded the highest of new cases at 52 followed by Khurda (36) and Balasore (35)

One each succumbed to the infection in Khurda, Puri, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara

The state has tested 65.36 lakh samples for Covid-19 so far including 33,809 Thursday

Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.98 per cent

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: State Friday reported 358 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the tally to 3,25,505, while the death toll rose to 1,829 with four fresh fatalities, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The new cases were detected in 27 of the coastal state's 30 districts, with 208 of them reported from different quarantine centres and the remaining 150 from local contacts. Three districts—Boudh,

Kandhamal and Malkangiri—did not register any new cases during the last 24 hours, said the official. Angul district recorded the highest cases at 52 followed by Khurda (36) and Balasore (35).

Taking to Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform the demise of four numbers of Covid positive patients while undergoing treatment in hospitals."

One each succumbed to the infection in the districts of Khurda, Puri, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara, the official said.

Of the total 1,829 fatalities reported so far in the state, Khurda district alone accounted for 312 deaths followed by Ganjam (246), Sundargarh (158), Cuttack (138) and Puri (112).

As many as 25 other districts reported fatalities below 100, the official pointed out.

Apart from the 1,829 Covid deaths, 53 people who were Covid-19 positive had also died due to comorbidities.

The state has tested 65.36 lakh samples for Covid-19 so far including 33,809 Thursday. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.98 per cent, the data released by the H&FW department said.

Steps to boost organic farming need of the hour

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: A webinar on 'Doubling farmers' income in Odisha by 2022 with focus on organic farming' was organised by Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) here, Friday.

In the national-level webinar, Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Pratap Chandra Sarangi, called for undertaking organic farming in indigenous way and emphasised on sale of more and more organic products.

Ashok Dalwai CEO, National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA), Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, said that for the success of organic farming in the state, the farmers need to learn latest knowledge, techniques and skills of organic farming. He said that the researchers and farmers need to come up with alternative ideas of reducing the chemical load from yield without disturbing the productivity.

Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education & Director General Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), said, "To encourage organic farming, we must produce more and more organic manure used by farmers to provide food (plant nutrients) for the crop plants. Also, steps should be taken from all sectors for the success of organic farming."

Experts stressed on reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers to promote organic farming.

Youth abducted, rescued

Bhubaneswar: Some unknown miscreants abducted a youth from a busy market area at CRP square here Friday evening. The youth has been undergoing treatment at the Capital hospital till the latest report came in. The victim, identified as Piyush Patra, 19, was returning from tuition when three miscreants in a car intercepted him near Vivekananda Hospital here. They reportedly sprayed some liquid on his face following which he fell unconscious. The miscreants then dumped him near Bhubaneswar Club here. He was rescued by his relatives who rushed him to Capital hospital. Police have started investigations into incident.

Night temp to dip further

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Cold wave will again grip the state as the night temperature is likely to fall by 3-5 degrees Celsius across the state during next 48 hours, Bhubaneswar Met Centre said here Friday.

As per a report of the Centre, Daringbadi recorded a minimum temperature of 12.5 degrees Celsius while the temperature was 13.4 degrees at Jharsuguda, 14 degrees each at Koraput and Angul, and 14.5 degrees at Phulbani. The minimum

temperature at Sundargarh was 15 degrees. All other places have witnessed a temperature of above 15 degrees Celsius.

Bhubaneswar and Cuttack recorded 17.6 and 15.8 degrees Celsius, respectively. Dry weather is likely to prevail across the days. Shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at one or two places in the morning in Kandhamal, Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Boudh, Malkangiri, Angul and Dhenkanal districts during next 24 hours.



Ambulance workers feted

Bhubaneswar: A number of workers of 108 and 102 ambulance services were Friday felicitated for their works to reach out to the people during distress. The awards were given by the Ziqta Healthcare Limited, which manages the ambulance services in the state. A total of seven cluster leaders, five maintenance executives and seven crew members were felicitated for their distinguished efforts. Seven bright wards of the employees of the ambulance services who secured good marks in Class X were also felicitated.

Tribal museum in City reopens with Covid curbs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: After remaining closed for last several months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Odisha State Tribal Museum here reopened for the public, Friday.

A few people visited the museum in strict adherence to Covid-19 norms on the first day of the reopening, sources said.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) Director, AB Ota, said that visitors will have to follow certain guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"The visitors' body temperatures will be checked by using thermal forehead scanners at the entrance of the museum. Anybody with temperature above the normal body temperature will not be allowed to enter the museum. Visitors without masks too will be denied entry to the museum," Ota said.

According to Ota, visitors need to maintain a space of at least 10 feet from each other while visiting the museum. They need to sanitise their hands at the entry point of the museum. Visitors are not allowed to touch any showcase, touch screen kiosk, VR Headset and ar-



Visitors at Odisha State Tribal Museum in Bhubaneswar, Friday

tifacts displayed in the galleries and tribal huts.

"They are only allowed to view the exhibits and read the write-ups in the display showcases. No visitor above 65 years of age and below the age of 14 will be allowed. The museum will remain open from 10am to 5:30pm from Monday to Friday in a week till further orders," Ota

UNIQUE DEMO



Health workers beat plates as part of their ongoing demonstration at PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Friday, demanding regular employment

Mural paintings provided livelihood to artists: BMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has reportedly engaged around 150 artists for wall painting and murals which aimed at spreading awareness about Covid-19 and its prevention since April this year.

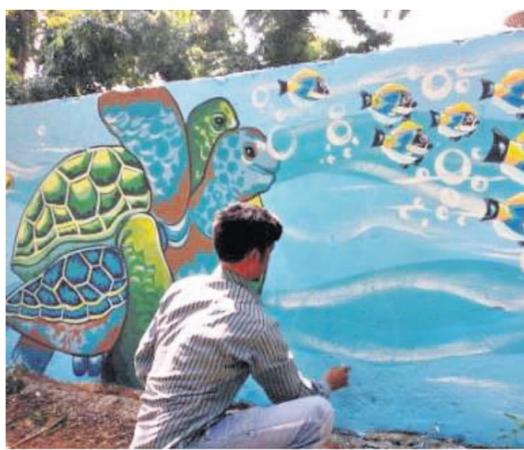
Initiated under state government's scheme of Urban Wage Employment Initiative, the artists were hired through self-help groups (SHGs) in order to provide livelihood options to the urban poor amidst the pandemic. The scheme coupled with civic authority's city beautification goals was overseen by 16 engineers for all 67 wards.

"The aim of the initiative was to generate maximum employment especially during lockdowns when livelihood of the most was lost. The BMC had hired artists through SHGs who also benefitted from the scheme. About three SHGs were contracted for the work in every ward.

Each ward has about 5,000 sq ft of painting area. The initiative will continue till end of this year," said a senior BMC engineer.

The official also added that the paintings or murals are based on different development themes. Meanwhile, religious themes have been strictly avoided.

While the civic authority has claimed that 80 per cent work has been done, the remaining is said to be completed by end of this year. So far, the paintings have been com-



File photo of a mural in AG area of Bhubaneswar

THE BMC HAD HIRED ARTISTS THROUGH SHGS WHO ALSO BENEFITTED FROM THE SCHEME

THE PAINTINGS OR MURALS ARE BASED ON DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT THEMES

RELIGIOUS THEMES HAVE BEEN STRICTLY AVOIDED

pleted at major places including the boundary wall of Mothers Public School, overbridge near Sundarpada and GGP Colony High School among others, said sources. Moreover, the BMC will now be taking up a major plantation drive

and will engage local job seekers. With a roadmap already prepared, the civic authority will involve micro activity centres in all 67 wards which will operate as job hubs mainly for those living in slum areas.

The BMC is said to spend ₹16 crore for the projects to be executed as part of the urban wage employment initiative.

Sources also said that local workers will be registered by the civic body under this initiative for the works and wages for their work will be provided to them through Direct Benefit Transfer mode.

Anubhav appears in SDJM court

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 18: Odia film actor and MP Anubhav Mohanty Friday appeared before the SDJM court here in connection with a case filed by his actress wife Varsha Priyadarshini.

Mohanty submitted his reply on the case in an affidavit. The court had earlier served a notice on Mohanty in connection with a domestic violence case filed by Varsha.

"I have full faith in the judiciary and law. I have submitted my reply to the court. I hope that I will get justice," Mohanty told media persons outside the court.

There has been a marital discord between the actor couple for last several months. Varsha had filed a case in the SDJM court seeking maintenance from Mohanty.

On the other hand, Mohanty had filed a petition in the Patiala House court in Delhi seeking divorce from Varsha.

Subsequently, Varsha had approached the Supreme Court seeking transfer of the divorce petition filed by Mohanty from Patiala House court to a Family Court in Cuttack.

The Apex Court had asked the couple to explore possibilities of mutual settlement while hearing Varsha's plea.

'Prepare mechanism to mitigate migration crisis'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: A webinar on 'Circular Economy, Migration, Covid-19 and beyond' was organised on the International Migrants Day by voluntary outfits here, Friday.

Participating in the webinar, experts and speakers said that the coronavirus pandemic has heavily impacted life and livelihoods of millions of migrant workers across the country. In spite of a slew of programmes rolled out by both the governments, migrants are finding it difficult to get their livelihoods restored because of unavailability of suitable jobs and wages.

It is high time the government made an institutional arrangement to recognise their contributions towards strengthening economy and enriching the growth story.

Cultural anthropologist and Professor in California State University, USA, Arnapurna Pandey, highlighted the need for concrete plan of action and responding to fundamental issues interwoven in rural areas like agrarian crisis, forest based livelihoods and exploring coastal resources among others.

TREAT TO EYES

SCSTRTI Director, AB Ota, said that visitors will have to follow certain guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19

Visitors need to maintain a space of at least 10 feet from each other while visiting the museum

VISITORS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO TOUCH ANY SHOWCASE, TOUCH SCREEN KIOSK, VR HEAD SET AND ARTIFACTS DISPLAYED IN THE GALLERIES AND TRIBAL HUTS

its website. People can enjoy the 360-degree tour of our galleries and outdoor display of tribal huts through virtual mode," said a mu-

seum official. This apart, people can download the app for multimedia tour of the Museum. The multimedia



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Long term murram leases will destroy Asia hill range

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chandikhole, Dec 18: Long term leases of murram quarries at different places under Darpan tehsil of Jajpur are feared to cause large-scale destruction of jungles in these areas, a report said.

According to the report, the tehsil administration has floated tenders to give away murram quarries on long term basis at Manduka, Asia and Achyutabasant areas. Local residents and environmentalists apprehended that if quarries were given to lease holders for long periods, the Asia hill range in the area will see clearing of thousands of trees. Besides, many species of wild animals residing in the hill range will do a vanishing act, they observed.

There are 2,600 acres of forest land in the Asia hill range. Lands belonging to the revenue department are near the hill range. The area was once under the scanner of the Crime Branch as murram mafia used to loot minor minerals at their will. Since then, no part of the hill range had been leased out for murram mining.

However, the tehsil administration has come out with a notification (vide letter 3605, dated November 25, 2020) for leasing the land for murram extraction.

Here are details of the land to be leased out. Five acres of land linked to Khata no-737(plot-491) in Asia mouza are of pahad kismat (hill category). Besides, 9.75 acres of land linked to khata-471(plot no-1061) in Achyutabasant mouza is of Parbat kismat land (hill category). The tehsil also plans to lease out 12 acres (khata-1349, plot-3611) belonging to parbat kismat in Manduka mouza.



Darpan tehsil floated tenders to give away murram quarries on long term basis at Manduka, Asia and Achyutabasant areas

Local environmentalists apprehended that if quarries were given to lease holders for long periods, the Asia hill range in the area will see clearing of thousands of trees

2,600 acres of forest land are part of the Asia hill range. Lands belonging to the revenue department are near the hill range. The area was once under the scanner of the Crime Branch as murram mafia used to loot minor minerals at their will

The forest department has already taken up massive plantation on these lands. "Murram can't be extracted without clearing the trees. Thousands of trees will be chopped off for this purpose," local environmentalists lamented.

In the notification, it was stated that 14807 cusec/metre of murram will be extracted annually in Asia area while the volume of murram extraction in Agyutabasant area is 30227 cusec/metre. In Manduka mouza, the lease holder will have to extract 33721 cusec/metre annually. The revenue department will get Rs 35 as royalty per a cusec/metre of murram extraction while additional charges amount to Rs 45.

Locals say Asia-Charinagal reserve forest is home to wild ani-

mals life hyena, sambar, barking deer, spotted deer, boars and other reptiles. Due to illegal murram mining, their population has been fast declining in the area, it was alleged.

On one hand, the forest department has spent crores of rupees for regeneration of forests while on the other, the revenue department leases out the land for murram extraction. Whenever these areas had been leased out earlier, lease holders had allegedly resorted to excessive murram mining, thus causing loss of revenue as well as forests. Locals had reportedly protested against it in the past.

Though the Darpan tehsildar was contacted over phone by our reporter, he did not respond to the call.

3 ITDA techies caught by Vig; ₹3 lakh seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Dec 18: Vigilance sleuths detained three engineers of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) in Nabarangpur district on charge of carrying unaccounted cash in their office vehicle (bearing registration number OD-24 A-3328) Thursday night. The vehicle was on its way to Umerkote area.

Those detained are additional executive engineer Sarat Kumar Majhi and assistant engineers Baikunthanath Behera and Pramod Kumar Pradhan.

Acting on a tip-off, the team led by Nabarangpur Vigilance DSP in-charge Kalabati Bagh intercepted the vehicle near Deer Park in Papadahandi and seized Rs 3,09,400 kept in a handbag.

The handbag belonged to Pradhan. During the interrogation by officials, he, however, could not give satisfactory reason as to where and why he was carrying such a large amount of money.

Two mutilated bodies recovered

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 18: Two mutilated bodies were recovered from a railway track near Panposh Railway Station in Sundargarh district Friday.

The GRP seized the bodies and sent them to Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) for post mortem. Some passengers spotted the bodies lying close to the railway track - at about 5am. Efforts are underway to ascertain the identities of the deceased while an investigation into the incident is on.

Canal water is used for road construction; farmers fume

POST NEWS NETWORK

Umerkote, Dec 18: Farmers from Dargaguda area in Nabarangpur district have expressed unhappiness over a contractor drawing water from an irrigation canal for road construction works.

Since usage of water from irrigation canal in non-irrigation purposes is unlawful, the farmers have demanded action against the contractor.

The works dept is currently constructing Umerkote-Raighar road. Farmers accused the contractor of siphoning off canal water for the road work

For agricultural activities in Dargaguda area, water from Bhaskel dam was released into the canal December 11. The canal is still getting water from the reservoir and



farmers are drawing water from the canal to irrigate their farmlands. At present, the works department is constructing Umerkote-Raighar road. The farmers have alleged that the contractor engaged in the road construction work takes water from the canal in tankers to his construction site.

"In the past, the dam authorities would seize farmers' motors whenever they were found being used for pumping water to farmlands. But now they are not taking any action against the said contractor for his daylight water pilferage," rued the distraught

farmers. When asked, Umerkote Works Department SDO Santosh Patra said the contractor should never use canal water in road construction work. He will be asked to refrain from such practice.

Meanwhile, Bhaskel Irrigation Department SDO Niranjan Sahu said he was not aware of the contractor using the canal water in road construction work. "If he is doing so, the matter will be taken up with Umerkote tehsildar. Besides stringent action will be taken against the contractor and all his equipment will be seized," Sahu added.

Murder over witchcraft solved; 2 minors surrender

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 18: Two minors, including a girl, surrendered before police at Dhenkikote outpost under Ghatagaon police limits in Keonjhar district Thursday evening. They confessed to have hacked an elderly woman to death suspecting her to be practicing sorcery Wednesday night.

The police had recovered the body of Kuni Munda (65) inside her house at Bholbeda village under Ghatagaon police limits Thursday morning. As an investigation was on, the two turned up at Dhenkikote outpost to surrender. They were produced at a juvenile court Friday and later sent to a correction home. A girl's mother was suffering from an unknown illness for the

last eight months. She suspected that Kuni had hexed her mother. Similarly the parents of the minor boy had died a few days ago. He also blamed Kuni for their death.

As the two nurtured a grudge against Kuni, they planned to eliminate her. As Kuni stayed alone, they managed to barge into her house Wednesday night and hacked her to death with an axe.

Bolangir admin rescues 21 labourers on way to Andhra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 18: Twenty one migrant labourers who were allegedly being trafficked from Bolangir district to Andhra Pradesh were rescued from the Kantabanji railway station in the wee hours of Friday. They were waiting for a train when police rescued them. Among the labourers, four were women.

The efforts of Bolangir police and Kantabanji block administration paid off and the labourers were saved in the nick of time. Acting on a tip-off, the team reached the railway station to rescue the workers. The agent who was taking them to an unknown destination in Andhra Pradesh has been detained by the police. A majority of the villagers belonged to Siluana village of Kantabanji block.

The labourers said they were in need of jobs and hence they were travelling to the neighbouring state. "The state government had promised us jobs when we returned home due to the pandemic. Since that did not happen we are being forced to look for work elsewhere to sustain ourselves," some of the workers said. "With no source of income here, we are struggling to make both ends meet. So we are forced to move to other states in search of work," said a migrant worker. November 14, 56 migrant labourers were rescued from Kantabanji station.

REMOVAL OF LAND HURDLES SOUGHT

JEYORE-NABARANGPUR RAILWAY LINE



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Dec 18: Land hurdles have hampered the progress of the long awaited Jeyore-Nabarangpur railway line under East Coast Railway. Now, the administration has laid stress on expeditious land acquisitions, a report said.

According to reports, a review meeting on the project was held at the Mission Shakti conference hall here recently under the chairmanship of Nabarangpur MP Ramesh Chandra Majhi.

The state government is committed to providing free land to the project. But the land required for the project has not been acquired till date.

At the meeting, Collector Ajit Kumar Mishra assured that staff would be engaged for land acquisition, which will be carried out within 45 days. Public hearings will be held over the project and the

land acquisition, he added.

As per information, the Jeyore-Nabarangpur railway line will be laid for 45.35 km while a stretch of 11 km will be constructed through Nabarangpur. It was learnt that 149,927 acres of private land and 5,418 acres of government land will be acquired in Nabarangpur sadar area, Daibhatta, Gadabaguda and Padalguda.

A map for the land acquisition has been drawn up. The railway project entails construction of nine big bridges, 51 small bridges and two stations. Jeyore sub-collector representing the Koraput district administration presented detailed data about the size of land to be acquired in Koraput.

Next review meeting will be held in the last week of February in Koraput. Officials of the Malkangiri district administration will be present. Notably this project has been approved by the Central government in 2016-17.

Keonjhar: Closure of tourist spots extended

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 18: With the fear of a second wave of COVID-19 looming large, the district administration has decided not to open the gates of popular tourist spots in Keonjhar district to visitors and picnickers.

The tourism department has identified 15 tourist spots in Keonjhar district. Besides those, there are also some other locations that offer postcard-perfect scenes. However, they do not feature on the tourism department's list.

Most of these tourist spots witness footfalls throughout the year. It increases during winter months from November to February. A few places, especially those with religious importance, witness more than 1,00,000 persons on certain occasions. Among the tourist spots are Sana Ghagara, Bada Ghagara, Khandadhar and Handibhanga

Waterfalls. Visitors also flock to the Kanjhari, Hadagari dams and Kanjipani Ghat. People throng to Baldevjev Ghatagaon Maa Tarini and Deogaon Kushaleswar temples. They also visit Gonasika - the place of Baitarani's origin, Murga Mahadev and Chakraterth. Usually at this time of the year, all these places are very crowded. However, this time around they are wearing a deserted look due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When contacted, District Collector Ashish Thakre said the tourist spots will remain closed for the time being. "We have taken this decision as there is a likelihood of a second wave of COVID-19 during winter. This apart, our objective is to make Keonjhar a coronavirus-free district," Thakre said. The district administration's decision has hit a section of people who depend on these spots directly or indirectly for earning livelihood.

DSP detained for blackmailing lady cop

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kalahandi, Dec 18: A senior police officer was detained Friday for betraying a woman constable. The officer had allegedly married her at a temple in Kalahandi district. The

detained officer was identified as Malkangiri Sadar DSP Akshay Nayak. Personnel from the Kesinga police station, where the woman is posted, detained him. In her complaint lodged at Kesinga police station, the constable accused the officer of torturing her mentally. Nayak was the SDPO in Kesinga from 2009 to 2012 when he had an affair with the female cop. Later they got married at a temple, but the SDPO started ignoring the lady cop.

Admin farms pulses to save endangered blackbucks



Located around 190 km from Bhubaneswar and 50 km from Berhampur, Bhetanai is famous for blackbucks. It is said that the village has the highest concentration of these animals in India. Locals do not harm these animals whenever they enter human habitats in search of food

Prasanna Kumar Sahu, Ranger of Aska Forest Range, said: The public demand is to save the blackbucks and also ensure protection of their crops. We stepped up efforts to meet their expectations and solved both the issues

lage has the highest concentration of these animals in India. Though locals do not harm these animals, the blackbucks, in search of food, enter into human habitats.

To deal with such a situation, the forest department took upon themselves to safeguard the blackbucks and the crops simultaneously by reserving a large patch of grassland for growing pulses like green gram, Bengal gram and ragi among others. The step will give the blackbucks ample spaces for grazing which in turn will effectively solve the issues of farm crop loss.

Sources said there are approximately 1,600 blackbucks who rule the grasslands on the foothills of the Eastern Ghats. The blackbucks are considered the second fastest animal on earth after the cheetah. They are scheduled under endangered species and are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

Prasanna Kumar Sahu, Ranger of Aska Forest Range, said "The public demand is to save the blackbucks and also ensure protection of

their crops. We stepped up efforts to meet their expectations and solved both the issues."

EAST COAST RAILWAY
e-Tender Notice No. SNTPBBSJKPR-JEN0122020 Dt: 14.12.2020

Name of the work: ALL WORKS FOR MID TAKE OFF STATION BETWEEN JAKHAPURA - JENAPUR AND CONNECTIVITY WITH TATA SIDING OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION IN EAST COAST RAILWAY. (THIS INCLUDES ALTERATION IN MEDHA MAKE ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING AT JAKHAPURA, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF MEDHA MAKE ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING AT MID SECTION TAKE OFF STATION SUPPLIED BY RAILWAY).

Approx cost of the work : ₹ 1,90,49,226/-
EMD: ₹ 2,45,300/-. Cost of tender document: ₹ 5,900/-. Completion period of the work: 06 Months.

Tender opening/closing date & time : at 1200 hrs. of 05.01.2021.

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders.

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

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 07 (Seven) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender.

By, Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer/ PR-72/CD/20-21 Project/Bhubaneswar

J-22012/42/2020-CS(W)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change

Sub:- Advertisement for the engagement of Consultant 'B' on contractual basis in M/o Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Applications are invited for a Consultant 'B' in the Wetlands Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change on payment of consolidated monthly fee of Rs. 80,000/-. Full details of the advertisement are available on Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change website www.moef.gov.in.

The last date of receipt of application is **21 days** from the date of publication of this advertisement in the newspaper.

dayp 13101/11/0025/2021

FORM G
INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
(Under Regulation 36A (1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016)

RELEVANT PARTICULARS	
1. Name of the corporate debtor	KRISHNA FERRO PRODUCTS LTD
2. Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	14/12/1982
3. Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated/registered	Registrar of Companies-Cuttack
4. Corporate identity number / limited liability identification number of corporate debtor	L2732001982PLC001137
5. Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	Registered address: Mandiakudhar Kansbahal Rajgang Pur, OR-770034 IN
6. Insolvency commencement date of the corporate debtor	04/10/2019
7. Date of invitation of expression of interest	19/12/2020 (2nd Extension), 08/08/2020 (1st extension) & 01/02/2020 (Original)
8. Eligibility for resolution applicants under section 25(2)(n) of the Code is available at:	The detailed EOI and the Eligibility Criteria are available at: 2B, Grant Lane, Room No. 303, 3rd floor, Bajrang Kunj, Kolkata-700012. The same can also be obtained via email at: manishmahavir@gmail.com .
9. Norms of ineligibility applicable under section 29A are available at:	The details of Norms of ineligibility applicable under section 29A are available at: 2B, Grant Lane, Room No. 303, 3rd floor, Bajrang Kunj, Kolkata-700012. The same can also be obtained via email at: manishmahavir@gmail.com .
10. Last date for receipt of expression of interest	29/12/2020
11. Date of issue of provisional list of prospective resolution applicants	30/12/2020
12. Last date for submission of objections to provisional list	31/12/2020
13. Date of issue of final list of prospective resolution applicants	31/12/2020
14. Date of issue of information memorandum, evaluation matrix and request for resolution plans to prospective resolution applicants	29/12/2020
15. Manner of obtaining request for resolution plan, evaluation matrix, information memorandum and further information	The Resolution Professional will share the documents through Electronic Mail or Virtual Data Room after verification of KYC, eligibility under section 29A of IBC, 2016 and prequalification criteria, as approved by CoC.
16. Last date for submission of resolution plans	28/01/2021 (30 days from issue of RFRP)
17. Manner of submitting resolution plans to resolution professional	Details shall be provided in the RFRP documents
18. Estimated date for submission of resolution plan to the Adjudicating Authority for approval	30/01/2021 which is subject to approval of HR, NCLT for exclusion of lockdown period and extensions of CIRP PERIOD.
19. Name and registration number of the resolution professional	Mr. Manish Jain, Registration No.: IBB/PA-001/IP-P00582/2017-2018/11023
20. Name, Address and e-mail of the resolution professional, as registered with the Board	Manish Jain, Manish Mahavir & Co. 2B, Grant Lane, Room No. 303, 3rd floor, Bajrang Kunj, Kolkata-700012. manishmahavir@gmail.com
21. Address and email to be used for correspondence with the resolution professional	Correspondence Address: Manish Jain, C/o Manish Mahavir & Co. 2B, Grant Lane, Room No. 303, 3rd floor, Bajrang Kunj, Kolkata-700012. manishmahavir@gmail.com Mobile: 9830248684 / 8582806221
22. Further Details are available at or with	With the Resolution Professional Manish Jain, Manish Mahavir & Co. 2B, Grant Lane, Room No. 303, 3rd floor, Bajrang Kunj, Kolkata-700012
23. Date of publication of Form G	19/12/2020

NOTES:

- All the dates mentioned in form-G are subject to the approval of the Hon'ble NCLT, Cuttack Bench.
- All EOI received will be reviewed by the RP as well as the CoC and thereafter further information/documents related to the process will be provided to the shortlisted parties. The RP/CoC shall have the discretion to change the criteria for the EOI at any point of time.
- RP/CoC reserves the right to cancel or modify the process/ application without assigning any reason and without any liability whatsoever.

Sd/-
Manish Jain
IBB/PA-001/IP-P00582/2017-2018/11023
Resolution Professional in the matter of
KRISHNA FERRO PRODUCTS LTD

Date : 19/12/2020
Place : Kolkata

FOCUS DIGITAL ECONOMY

THE BRUSSELS EFFECT



The European Commission has just unveiled landmark regulations for the digital economy, setting yet another global standard. The Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA), designed to curtail the power of Big Tech, will have a far-reaching impact on the business practices of Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Google, and other primarily US-based tech giants.

The new regulations will complement the EU's antitrust authority which has repeatedly been used to extract billions of dollars in fines from US tech giants and to mandate changes to their business practices. Under the DMA, for example, practices such as self-preferencing will be "blacklisted" — presumed illegal without the need for the EU to bring an antitrust challenge to demonstrate harm to competition.

The DSA, for its part, will impose more onerous obligations on Big Tech companies to disclose their algorithms or remove illegal or harmful online content, including hate speech and disinformation. Together, these measures will assert significant new regulatory control over the digital economy both in Europe and beyond.

The stakes for the Big Tech giants are particularly high because EU regulations often have a global impact — a phenomenon known as the "Brussels effect." Because the EU is one of the world's largest consumer markets, most multinational corporations accept its terms of business as the price of admission. To avoid the cost of complying with multiple regulatory regimes around the world, these companies often extend EU rules to their operations globally.

That is why so many large non-EU companies follow the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) across all of their operations. Unsurprisingly, Big Tech leaders and other critics of EU regulation are pushing back, accusing the EU of regulatory overreach and protectionist motives. But the EU is not unfairly infringing on successful US tech companies' commercial freedom, nor is it undermining US regulators' autonomy. Even if EU regulations do prove costly for big US companies, many smaller US firms will benefit from them. For years, these smaller US players have had to rely on the EU — rather than on their own government — to challenge the giants in their industry.

Likewise, thanks to their global reach, EU regulations have brought significant benefits to American Internet users, many of whom welcome enhanced privacy protections and less rampant online hate speech. The United States' own inaction has paved the way for the EU's rise as a regulatory superpower. Embracing deregulation and techno-libertarianism as its approach to governing the digital economy, the US has long watched from the sidelines as the EU sets regulations for the global marketplace. By abandoning international engagement and regulatory cooperation, the Trump administration reinforced this regulatory isolationism — effectively, albeit

inadvertently, trading globalisation for Europeanisation.

But the winds in the US may finally be changing. Legislators and enforcement agencies are starting to wake up to Big Tech's excesses. Earlier this year, the House Judiciary Committee's report on competition in digital markets issued a powerful call to action and outlined a new vision for revitalizing US antitrust laws.

Moreover, the US Department of Justice is now challenging Google's monopolistic practices (after tolerating them for the past decade), and the Federal Trade Commission — along with 46 of the 50 states, Washington, DC, and Guam — is suing Facebook as an illegal monopoly. It is unclear whether these steps mark the beginning of a progressive antitrust revolution in the US, or whether they will stall in a divided Congress or before conservative-leaning courts that are accustomed to a more limited role for antitrust law.

In any case, the US would do well to abandon its hands-off approach to technology companies. It needs to stop being a rule-taker and start shoring up its own regulations. A federal privacy law would be an ideal place to start, con-

sidering that the idea already has support from leading US companies such as Microsoft, Facebook, and Apple.

A more robust privacy law would help the US reinstate data flows with the EU, which were halted by the European Court of Justice, owing to the lack of privacy protections in the US. It would also allow the US to address its concerns about Chinese government surveillance of American citizens. The Trump administration's haphazard effort to ban the Chinese-owned social-media platform TikTok from the US market is not a substitute for regulations to protect Americans' personal data.

The case for renewed US regulatory leadership is even more compelling in view of China's increasing global influence over tech-governance standards. Chinese companies, all with varying ties to the ruling Communist Party, have supplied critical technological infrastructure to countries around the world. China has also supplied artificial intelligence-driven surveillance technology to numerous governments that are eager to pursue illiberal ends.

Given China's authoritarian vision of the Internet, the US would gain much from working closely with the EU on regulating Big Tech and the digital economy. Their disagreements when it comes to antitrust, privacy, and taxation, are manageable, and should be addressed as part of a broader effort to reset transatlantic relations.

Instead of fighting the EU's legitimate attempts to defend its vision of the digital economy, President-elect Joe Biden's administration should explore how it can work with the EU to advance a shared vision. After all, citizens on both sides of the Atlantic want a human-centric Internet that is grounded in the values of liberal democracy and individual autonomy.

Anu Bradford is a Professor of Law and International Organization at Columbia Law School.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

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

THE MOTHER



Stool pigeons in a skirmish

The battle for the West Bengal assembly elections looms ahead but skirmishes have already started. After the attack on BJP president JP Nadda's convoy in the state, the Centre retaliated against the TMC government by recalling three IPS officers from the state on Central deputation. Further, to perhaps underline the "message", the Ministry of Home Affairs summoned state Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and Director General of Police Virendra to Delhi to explain the law and order situation in Bengal.

A defiant Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refused to comply with the summons. Also, she declined the Centre's demand to send the three IPS officers — Bholanath Pandey, Rajeev Mishra and Praveen Kumar Tripathi — on deputation saying there was a dearth of good officers in the state, and the state could not spare the three officers.

There is a precedent here. The then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu J Jayalalitha had similarly denied the Centre in 1991 when the state police had conducted a raid on the house of former state Chief Minister and DMK leader M Karunanidhi, her arch rival. The Centre had asked the Tamil Nadu government to relieve the three officers involved for Central deputation. Like Mamata now, she had refused to spare those officers.

Apparently, there is little the Centre can do against civil service officers who are posted under the state government. For any action to be taken on an officer, the state and the Centre both need to agree.



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

REBELS FOR A CAUSE?

Outliers are far and few in between in the civil service, which runs on obedience than resistance. But sometimes momentous events reveal "rebels" with a cause. Punjab DIG (Prisons) Lakhminder Singh Jakhar has resigned from service in support of farmers who are in Delhi protesting against the three new farm laws. There are politicians, sports people, even ex-Defence forces officers who have renounced their awards and medals in protest, but an IPS officer resigning from service for the farmers' cause is a first in the state.

Of course, IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan resigned from the service to protest against the restrictions imposed in Jammu & Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. Similarly, Shah Faesal, the young IAS officer from J&K resigned from the service in 2019 to start a political party. And just a few months ago, the DGP of Bihar Gupteshwar Pandey opting for VRS in a bid to contest the state Assembly poll (his position is still vacant), but that was not for a public cause.

Meanwhile, Jakhar who had served the army joined the IPS as a 1994-batch officer and was slated to superannuate in August 2022. Interestingly, he had been suspended in May earlier this year on alleged corruption charges but was reinstated within a month. Clearly, outliers defy easy definition!

TN RELUCTANT TO LET GO OF CHIEF SECRETARY

By seeking the extension of the tenure of Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary K Shanmugam, the state government has stirred a hornets' nest in the upper echelons of the administration. An extension of tenure for Shanmugam could mean that several senior Tamil Nadu cadre officers eligible to succeed him may find their chances fading.

According to sources, Shanmugam, a 1985-batch IAS officer, has already received two extensions. Meanwhile, there are 30 IAS officers in the state in the Additional Chief Secretary rank, including four who are Secretaries to the Central government. For them, the third extension for Shanmugam seems to indicate that the state government doubts their abilities to handle the top job.

Interestingly, when Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami first sought an extension of tenure for Shanmugam, it was for one year, but the Centre granted approval only for three months. The second extension was for another three months. Now the state government has requested a six-month extension for the babu who reportedly is playing a "critical role in Covid management in the state". Will the Centre oblige again?

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

WISDOM CORNER

- Do what you feel in your heart to be right — for you'll be criticised anyway. **ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**
- Happiness is not something readymade. It comes from your own actions. **DALAI LAMA XIV**
- Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers. **SOCRATES**

WORDSWORTH

Between versus among

William Safire commented in the New York Times in 1999 that three style guides — those of his own newspaper, the Associated Press and The Wall Street Journal — all "stand foursquare for the between/among rule" that you cite. He commented that the AP guide included the maxim that "between introduces two items and among more than two", arguing that as a result it was correct to write "between you and me" but "among the three of us". This is still a matter that's capable of arousing controversy in the US. John McIntyre, an editor with the Baltimore Sun, was criticised for saying in a radio broadcast on National Grammar Day in March 2008 that between could be used for more than two. Most US style guides agree with McIntyre that between can be used for more than two. British guides say the same, following the statement by James Murray in the Oxford English Dictionary more than a century ago: "Between has been, from its earliest appearance, extended to more than two", with his earliest example being from the year 971. Noah Webster made the same point in his dictionary in 1828; Sir Ernest Gowers called the rule a superstition in the Second Edition of Fowler in 1965.

LOL

Tired of blonde jokes

Tired of constant blonde jokes, a blonde dyes her hair brown. She then goes for a drive in the country and sees a shepherd herding his sheep across the road. "Hey, shepherd, if I guess how many sheep are here, can I keep one?" The shepherd is puzzled but agrees. She blurts out "352!"



He is stunned but keeps his word and allows her to pick a sheep. "I'll take this one," she says proudly. "It's the cutest!" "Hey lady," says the shepherd, "if I guess your real hair color, can I have my dog back?"

SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE

Agricultural markets in Odisha



Gokul Patnaik

THE RAGING CONTROVERSY OVER THE NEW FARM LAWS AND THE COUNTRY-WIDE PROTESTS OF FARMERS HAVE ONCE AGAIN BROUGHT TO FOCUS THE CRUCIAL ROLE PLAYED BY AGRICULTURAL MARKETS

The raging controversy regarding the new farm laws and the country-wide protest of farmers have once again brought to focus the crucial role played by agricultural markets in economic development. States like Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra have well developed marketing systems which have contributed to their prosperity. Other states have lagged and continued with the traditional systems. Reforms have taken a back seat.

Agriculture market reform in India has historically been a vexatious issue. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1928 noted the need to regulate agricultural markets. The Madras Commercial Crops Act 1933 (which was then applicable to areas of present day Odisha) laid down certain restrictions. The Constitution of India (1950) prescribed that "Agriculture", "markets and fairs" and "trade and commerce within the state" are all State subjects (Entry 14, 26, 28, List II, Seventh Schedule). Agricultural markets have therefore been the responsibility of the states. In fact, Odisha was one of the first states to notify Orissa Agricultural Produce Markets Act 1956. Its main objective was to assure the agricultural producer "of his legitimate share of the price paid

by the consumers" and to regulate unfair trade practices. Similar laws were enacted in other states. But regrettably, the stated objectives of the legislations remain unfulfilled. Sporadic attempts have been made to introduce the much-needed reforms in the agriculture sector. The Central government circulated a new Act in 2003. Model APMC Rules were also framed in 2007 and states were asked to adopt them. Reportedly 11 states adopted them fully and seven states partially. But there has been no significant improvement at ground level and in most cases, it remains business as usual.

Odisha has 66 Regulated Market Committees (RMCs) with 180 sub-yards. A number of markets remain under the control of local bodies. The state has 76 municipal markets and approximately 2000 gram panchayat markets (out of which about 250 are managed by RMCs). The Government of Odisha also tried some piecemeal reforms. In an attempt at disintermediation, it set up 43 Krushak Bazaars where farmers can sell their produce directly to buyers. It has also set up 14 Special Commodity Markets. Yet, the markets have poor infrastructure and most of the transactions take place outside the market yards. Bulk of the market fee is

collected from check-gates.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) sponsored a project in 2016 to study and frame a new law for agricultural marketing in Odisha. Our company, Global AgriSystem, was appointed as the consultant. We conducted extensive survey of the existing markets in the state, held in-depth discussions with the State Marketing Board and other stakeholders and proposed a new law.

This was discussed and approved at a high-level meeting of the state government in the presence of the concerned minister and secretary. The proposed act was designed to pave the way for new age marketing concepts such as e-markets, commodity exchanges, facilitation of buying by bulk buyers (retail chains, processors, exporters, warehousing, and trading companies). It was proposed that the entire state shall be considered as one market and check-gates will be abolished. Producers will be allowed to sell anywhere in the state. It was suggested to have a single point registration for all traders and wholesale buyers and issue unified registration number (URN), which will permit them to buy anywhere in the state. Market fee would be abolished and only service charges will be

levied on users who use market facilities. The Act was designed to attract private investment in a big way to augment government resources in setting up of agricultural infrastructure and reduce post-harvest losses. Private markets would be licensed by the state government provided they had or agreed to build the necessary infrastructure like warehouses or electronic trading platform.

If the state government had adopted these proposals in 2016, Odisha would have been the first state in the country to adopt a progressive modern agricultural marketing act and it would have saved the farmers from suffering the pain points of the new Central farm laws. In view of the persistent doubts about the constitutional validity of the Central laws on agriculture, which is a State subject, many states including Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh have passed new laws on the subject in their state Assemblies. Odisha should consider what is in its best interest. **(Concluded)**

The writer is a retired IAS officer and former Chairman, Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

Unproductive expenditure

Sir, Since a long India has been facing massive unemployment problem. Innumerable educated youths roaming here and there in search of jobs, thousands of factories have been closed and hundreds of public sector companies sold to private owners. Due to lack of health facilities thousands of people are dying, GDP is continuously going downward. In this grim situation the present government has laid the foundation stone of new Parliament building whose estimated cost is ₹971 crore and it is expected to be finished by 2022. Even now the government is unable to provide clean and safe water to the people, for clean water people have to buy Bisleri water. Recent Covid-19 pandemic has shown the real face of our healthcare system. It is a question of concern that how a government can take such steps without solving the basic problems faced by people. If we look at the history of parliaments of different countries, our Parliament is much younger. The Parliament of Holland built was in 13th century, Italy in 16th century, France in 1645 and Britain in 1870 but in India the Parliament was built in just 1927. It is being said that the new Parliament would be a gift to the Indian people on the occasion of 75th anniversary of India's Independence. The government should remember that without solving the basic needs of the people a country can never become developed. Statues, temples and parliaments are not the criteria to become a developed country. **Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR**

Power of one vote

Sir, Many people say, "My vote doesn't matter, it is a waste of time". I also heard people saying, "I feel like my voice doesn't matter. People who suck are still in office, so it won't make a difference". Well I read news where one vote determines the outcome of an election. Congress mayoral candidate N Venugopal lost election by one vote in the state's local body elections. A vote is a power in our fingertips to choose a leader of our nation. One vote can make a difference. You not only decide your fate, but also that of the nation's fate. One person can make a difference and everyone should try. Your vote is not a small or big thing, but it affects the future of your nation greatly. Every single vote cast, impact the overall result of the elections as every vote counts. **Yashi Bairagi, UJJAIN**

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

6 UP farmers get ₹50L notice over protests

FARMERS HAVE BEEN ORGANISING PROTESTS IN THE DISTRICT OVER THE THREE CONTENTIOUS FARM LEGISLATIONS

PM'S VARANASI OFFICE LISTED ON OLX FOR 'SALE'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi (UP), Dec 18: Four people have been arrested for allegedly posting an online advertisement listing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi office for "sale", police said Friday.

The accused had taken a picture of the "Jansampark Kaaryalay (public relations office)" of Modi, who represents Varanasi in the Lok Sabha, and put it "up for sale" on OLX website, they said.

The office is located in the Jawahar Nagar locality of the city, and it falls under the



Bhelupur police station limits, Varanasi Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak said. "Yesterday, it came to our notice that the prime minister's office here has been put up on sale on OLX website. An FIR was immediately lodged at the Bhelupur police station, and the matter is being investigated," Pathak said. "Four people involved in the case have been taken in custody," the SSP said, adding that the person who took the picture and put it on the website is among them. The accused are being questioned, and further legal proceedings are being carried out, he said.



Representative image

persons are inciting farmers and there can be breach of peace, and they should be asked to fill personal bonds," the Sub-Divisional Magistrate Deependra Yadav had earlier told the reporters.

The notices have been issued under Section 111 (magistrate order against any person who is likely to commit breach of peace) of the Code of Criminal Procedure on the basis of a report submitted by police, the official said.

Samajwadi Party (SP) supremo Akhilesh Yadav Friday attacked the Uttar Pradesh government for sending notices to farmers asking them to submit personal bonds assuring there will be no breach of peace during protests against farm laws in Sambhal. "Even though the Supreme Court has given legal acknowledgement to peaceful protests by farmers, the BJP government in UP is lodging FIRs to realise ₹50 lakh from them. There has never been an anti-people government like the BJP," the SP leader said in tweet in Hindi with the hashtag #Nahi_Chahiye_Bhajapa (No more BJP).

farmers with false information, which can lead to the breakdown of peace in the region.

"We are satisfied with the report of the local police station in this regard. It is hereby directed to furnish a reason as to why the farmers should not be providing a guarantee of worth ₹50 lakh and a bail amount of the same money to maintain peace for one year." Farmers have been organising protests in the district over the three contentious farm legislations.

"We have got a report from the Hayatnagar police station that some

AGENCIES

Sambhal (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 18: Six farmer leaders in Sambhal district have been issued notices, asking them to furnish personal bonds of ₹50 lakh in view of the apprehension that their actions may lead to breach of peace.

The six farmers, who were served notices, include Bharatiya Kisan Union (asli) district president Rajpal Singh Yadav and farmer leaders Jaiveer Singh, Brahmachari Yadav, Satyendra, Rohdas and Veer Singh.

However, two days after the notices were served, Circle Officer Arun Kumar Singh, said that the amount was a 'clerical error' and will be reduced.

"The SDM is currently on leave and once he comes back we will correct the error and make it a bond of ₹50,000 since the earlier one was a clerical error," he said.

The notice issued by Sambhal SDM Deependra Yadav stated, "In the context of what is happening in Delhi and other farmer agitations, six persons are going from village to village and inciting the

Delhi Assembly passes resolution for CBI probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Delhi Assembly passed a resolution by voice vote on Friday, demanding a CBI inquiry into the alleged ₹2,500 crore scam in the BJP-ruled municipal corporations.

AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj initiated a discussion on the issue following which the resolution was passed. "Scams come up regularly in BJP-ruled corporations. The new councillors have broken the record of their predecessors in corruption," he claimed.

"The MCD is like a daughter of Delhi which was given to the BJP that has acted as a mother-in-law. The BJP is acting the same by demanding ₹13,000 crore from the AAP. In the 2017 municipal polls, the BJP changed all its sitting councillors because people were unhappy with them," Bhardwaj said.



MCD SCAM

The AAP MLA alleged that the scam runs into thousands of crores of rupees. "The building department of corporations is known for corruption and demanding bribes. A BJP councillor was caught red-handed by the CBI for taking ₹10 lakh for construction of a building," he added.

However, Leader of Opposition in the assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri termed the allegations of misappropriation of funds worth ₹2,500 crore "baseless". BJP MLA OP Sharma boycotted the House when he was not allowed to speak in the debate.

Party legislators displayed placards at their seats, demanding the release of financial dues of ₹13000 crore to the civic bodies. Earlier in the day, AAP MLAs trooped into the well of the House raising slogans against the BJP-ruled MCDs as soon as the session

started. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel had adjourned the house for 15 minutes as the party MLAs continued to wave placards and raise slogans despite his attempt to bring order and continue the proceedings. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the alleged scam of ₹2,500 crore in the BJP-ruled municipal corporations was even bigger than the Commonwealth Games scam.

Addressing a special session of the Delhi Assembly, he claimed that scams of ₹5,000-10,000 crore happen every year in municipal corporations while giving required permissions for buildings. "It's a very painful day as we are discussing the biggest scam in MCD. ₹2,500 crore scam is bigger than the Commonwealth Games scam. Even people on the street say there is corruption in MCD and the same people say the Delhi government is honest," he said.

Icy winds, cloudy Saturday, fog ahead

COLD WAVE IN DELHI



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 18: The MET Friday sounded an orange alert for the national capital for two days till Sunday after icy winds blowing from the snow-clad Himalayas brought down the city's mercury to nearly 3 degrees Celsius. It will be a cloudy Saturday with fog causing trouble for traffic till Monday.

The IMD has four colour-coded warnings as per the intensity of any weather system - green, yellow, orange and red. Orange alert is given to authorities to be prepared.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data, recorded a minimum temperature of 4.4 degrees Celsius, while Ayanagar and Lodhi Road weather stations registered 3.5 and 3.8 degrees Celsius. The city is likely to record another "severe" cold day Friday.

"Cold day to severe cold day at a few places and cold wave to severe cold wave conditions at many places. Ground frost at isolated places," stated IMD in its bul-

letin. The city will witness partly cloudy sky Saturday and shallow fog for the three subsequent days.

According to the head of the India Meteorological Department's regional forecasting centre, Kuldeep Srivastava, the icy winds are blowing towards the national capital region from Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal, which had witnessed heavy snowfall on December 12.

Besides this, the whole northern plains is in the grip of a severe cold wave. Navdeep Dahiya, founder of Live Weather of India stated that Halwara in Punjab recorded the lowest temperature at minus 0.6 degree Celsius, followed by Churu in Rajasthan recording minus 0.3 degree Celsius and Amritsar at 0.4 degree Celsius.

According to the weather department, there will be no significant change in minimum and maximum temperatures over parts of north-west India for the next two to three days till Monday and rise by 2-3 degree Celsius in minimum temperatures and

4-5 degree Celsius in maximum temperatures during subsequent three days till December 24.

"Cold day to severe cold day conditions very likely in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and West Uttar Pradesh. "Cold day conditions in isolated pockets over Jammu division, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, east Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and west Madhya Pradesh during next 24 hours (till Saturday) and decrease thereafter," IMD stated.

The IMD also issued alert for the ground frost over Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, west Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan during the next two days till Sunday. Ground frost refers to the various coverings of ice produced by the direct deposition of water vapour on objects and trees, whose surfaces have a temperature below the freezing point of water.

Not afraid: Youths ink protest tattoos at Singhu border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The whizzing of machines is almost inconspicuous amid the cacophony of slogans, speeches, claps and chatter, but the crowd at the stall attracts eyeballs.

Chetan Sood is busy giving a final touch to a tattoo on the arm of a Sikh youth, who has come from Hoshiarpur, Punjab, to the Singhu border to protest against the Centre's three contentious farm laws.

Sood and his five assistants wanted to contribute whichever way possible. Therefore, the group decided to do what they know best. The six men reached the Delhi-Haryana border on Friday morning carrying ink, tattoo

machines, needles and stencils. It takes 30 minutes to complete a tattoo, the artists say, aiming to complete around 200 such body arts for free in three days.

"The purpose is to send out a message: the common man is with the farmers," says Sood, who runs 'Tattoo Club' in Punjab's Ludhiana district.

The theme for the tattoos is agriculture. It depicts farmers harvesting crops, holding farm equipment, tractor, among others.

There are tattoos with slogans too, such as 'kar har maidan fateh' (win every battle), 'nishchay kar apni jeet karo' (emerge victorious with firm resolve) and 'nirbhau, nirvair' (not afraid, no enemies).

ZILLA SWASTHYA SAMITI, KEONJHAR
CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, KEONJHAR
 Advt. No. 4712 Date: 17.12.2020

TENDER CALL NOTICE

No. E-450: Sealed tenders are invited from registered distributor/firms/agencies for supply of **Voltage Stabilizer for 1 Lr. & DF under RI Programme Keonjhar district**. Interested distributor/firms/agencies should submit their proposals in prescribed format (Technical as well as financial bids) along with Detailed Tender Call Notice with all supporting documents in sealed envelopes separately through Speed Post/Regd. Post/ Courier to the Office of Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, District Head Quarter Hospital, Keonjhar, Odisha, PIN - 758001 on or before **06.01.2021 upto 5.30 P.M.** The Detailed Tender Call Notice, terms & conditions are available in the district website: www.keondjhar.nic.in. Incomplete application in any form will be summarily rejected. The sealed tender shall be opened on **07.01.2021 at 11 A.M. in the O/o. ADPHO(FW), Keonjhar** in the presence of purchase committee members & bidders. The authority will not be responsible for any postal delay. The undersigned has reserves the right to reject or cancel any or all the tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./ Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Keonjhar
 OIPR-10033/11/0030/2021

GRIDCO LIMITED
 Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022, Odisha

PUBLIC NOTICE

Application under Section 86 (1) (a) & (b) and other applicable provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with relevant provisions of OERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004 along with other related Rules and Regulations for determination of Aggregate Revenue Requirement and Bulk Supply Price for the FY 2021-22, filed by GRIDCO Ltd. before the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission, Bhubaneswar-21.

1. GRIDCO Ltd. has filed an Application on 01.12.2020 before the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission for approval of Aggregate Revenue Requirement and determination of Bulk Supply Price (BSP) for the financial year 2021-22 which has been registered as **Case No. 72/2020**. The application has been filed under Section 86(1) (a) & (b) and other applicable provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with relevant provisions of OERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004. The Commission has decided to dispose of the said case through a public hearing.
2. Copies of the aforesaid filing as mentioned in Para-1 above together with supporting materials along with the related documents are available with the office of the CGM (PP), GRIDCO Headquarters, Bhubaneswar. This public notice along with the details of filing and relevant matters may also be downloaded from the GRIDCO's website www.gridco.co.in as well as the Commission's website www.orierc.org.
3. The Bulk Supply Price is applicable for supply of power to the Distribution Utilities of Odisha by GRIDCO. The proposed Bulk Supply Price application for the financial year 2021-22 contains details regarding energy charges, demand charges, charges for over-draw of energy, rebate and delayed payment surcharge etc.
4. The rates and charges proposed by GRIDCO are published herewith for the information of the general public.
5. (a) A summary of the proposal will be posted in the Commission's website after **15.01.2021** for general reference.
- (b) Interested persons may inspect/peruse the relevant records pertaining to the matters enumerated in Para-1 above and take note thereof at the office mentioned at Para-2 above, during office hours on or before **18.01.2021** by making a plain paper application to the aforesaid authority.
6. The salient features of the Bulk Supply Price application as mentioned in Para-1 above shall be available to the interested persons from the office mentioned at Para-2 above, during office hours on or before **18.01.2021** on payment of the photocopying charges of Rs.50/- only. The said salient features shall include;
 - (a) Write up of the BSP application.
 - (b) Proposed Bulk Supply Price schedule.
 - (c) Bulk Supply Price revision proposal (T-17).
 - (d) Revenue Requirement (F-4).
7. A full set of the Aggregate Revenue Requirement and Bulk Supply Price application for the financial year 2021-22 can also be obtained from the office of the CGM (PP), GRIDCO Head quarters, Bhubaneswar during the office hours on or before **18.01.2021** on payment of the photocopying charges of Rs.100/- only.
8. Suggestions/objections, if any, together with supporting materials may be filed before the Secretary, Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission, Plot No. 4, Chunokoli, Sailashree Vihar, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751021 in person or through Registered Post including Courier Services only so as to reach him on or before **18.01.2021** positively. A copy of the said suggestions/objections along with relevant documents shall also be served on the undersigned.
 - (a) The suggestions/objections should be filed in seven copies and should carry full name and postal address with PIN Code including e-mail ID & contact Telephone Number of the person/ organizations/ institutions sending the suggestions/objections and shall be supported by an affidavit.
 - (b) There shall be clear indication if the suggestions/objections are being filed on behalf of any organization/institution representing any category of consumers. It should also be specifically mentioned, if it is to be heard in person by the Commission.
 - (c) Suggestions/objections received after the date mentioned above or those which will prove deficient on any or more of the above points may not be admitted for hearing. Only those objections/suggestions supported through affidavit will be taken up for hearing.
9. As directed by the Commission, the date of hearing shall be duly published in the newspapers and also communicated to the parties whose objections are admitted.

Sd/-
MANAGING DIRECTOR
GRIDCO Ltd.

Dated : 18 /12/2020
 Place : Bhubaneswar

Note: i) The above public notice along with the proposed Bulk Supply Price schedule is also available in GRIDCO's website www.gridco.co.in as well as the Commission's website www.orierc.org.

ii) In case of any ambiguity in the notice published in Odia language, the notice published in English language may be referred for authenticity.

Proposed Bulk Supply Price Schedule of GRIDCO for carrying out Bulk Supply Activity for the FY 2021-22

Bulk Supply Price:

This Bulk Supply Price is applicable for supply of power to Distribution and Retail Supply Licensees. The total charges shall be calculated by summation of following charges stated in Para (A) to (F) below as applicable:

- Energy Charge:** GRIDCO proposes to recover its net Revenue Requirement of Rs.10,745.42 Crore through Energy Charge only from the DISCOM Utilities towards sale of 27315.02 MU. The average BSP is proposed @ 393.39 P/U only for recovery of above proposed net Revenue Requirement.
- Demand Charge:** Demand Charge @ Rs.250/KVA/Month is proposed to be levied from DISCOM Utilities on the excess SMD only when the actual SMD of DISCOM Utilities in a month exceeds the permitted monthly SMD (110% of the approved SMD), to take care of monthly variations subject to year-end adjustment within the permitted annual SMD i.e. 110% of the approved annual SMD.
- Over Drawal and Year End Charges:** The Over Drawal and Year End Charges payable by DISCOM Utilities are presently billed on month-to-month basis (at the corresponding OERC approved applicable BSP in terms of the Judgment dated 07.05.2018 of the APTEL passed in Appeal No.55 of 2015, till intra-State DSM Regulations is pronounced by OERC and implemented in the State). GRIDCO proposes that any excess drawal of energy by a Distribution and Retail Supply Licensee (DISCOM Utilities) during a month over and above the approved energy quantum (Approved MU for FY 2021-22 X No. of days of the relevant month / 365 days) would be payable on provisional basis at the highest OERC approved Power Purchases Rate fixed for a Station for FY 2021-22 (which includes transmission charges and transmission loss) on monthly basis instead of the normal differential BSP applicable to the respective DISCOM Utilities, subject to final Year End Adjustment (YEA) considering the highest Power Purchases rate/ cost including the rate/s of energy drawn through U.I./deviation settlement of the month plus transmission charges and transmission loss.
- Fuel Price Adjustment:** Any excess payment made by GRIDCO towards FPA for a particular / relevant month will be levied on DISCOM Utilities in the succeeding month in proportion to their actual draw during the preceding month along with the BSP bills if the Fuel Surcharge Price of the particular month paid by GRIDCO exceeds by more than 5% of the approved Average Bulk Supply Price subject to maximum of 25% of the approved Average Bulk Supply Price which will be passed on to consumers in the next month onwards in twelve months/in a quarter along with their normal energy bills served to the consumers at a rate which will be arrived at by considering their approved monthly sale quantum to the consumers (approved quantum for the financial year/12 months).
- Rebate:** On payment of the current monthly bills, the Distribution and Retail licensees (DISCOM Utilities) shall be entitled to:
 - A rebate of 2%, in case the DISCOM Utilities make full payment of the current month's BSP dues within two working days (excluding holidays under NI Act) of serving of the BSP invoice by GRIDCO.
 - A rebate of 1%, in case DISCOM Utilities make payment of the current month's BSP dues in full within a period of 30 days of serving of the BSP invoice by GRIDCO.
 - A rebate of 2% on the amount of current month's BSP dues partly paid by the DISCOM Utilities within two working days (excluding holidays under NI Act) and 1% on the balance current BSP dues, if paid after two working days but within a period of 30 days of serving of the BSP invoice by GRIDCO.
 - No rebate, if the DISCOM Utilities have not paid the current month's BSP dues in full within a period of 30 days of serving of the BSP invoice by GRIDCO.
- Delayed Payment Surcharge:** For delayed payment of Bulk Power Supply Bills i.e., payment after the periods of 30 days from the date of submission of bills, the surcharge is to be levied @ 1.50% per month.
- Duty and Taxes:** The Electricity Duty levied by the Government of Odisha and any other statutory levy/ Duty/ Tax/ Cess / Toll etc. imposed under any law from time to time shall be charged over and above the Bulk Supply Price.

OIPR-14069/11/0003/2021



The Central government must focus on resolving its standoff with farmers over three farm laws and keep other issues on hold ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

GOA REVIVES ROPEWAY PROJECT

The Goa Tourism Development Corporation has revived a ropeway project over the Mandovi river, stretching from the banks of the state capital Panaji to the picturesque village of Reis Magos across the river



of the day quote

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has discussed the agricultural reforms with all the stakeholders from the beginning. Model laws were sent to the states and discussions were held with the Chief Ministers



The government is hopeful of resolving farmers' agitation against three new farm laws before the New Year and is continuing its informal dialogue with various groups to diffuse the crisis



Himachal Pradesh will celebrate 50 years of achieving statehood on January 25, 2021 via virtual mode



SHORT TAKES

Music teacher arrested

New Delhi: A music teacher has been arrested for allegedly harassing and molesting his 23-year-old student, police said Friday. The arrest was made after the victim, who was doing her Diploma Honour in Kathak at a centre in Chanakypuri, accused the 52-year-old teacher of harassing her, they said. According to the complainant, the accused -- a 'pakhawaj (rhythm instrument) teacher at the centre -- molested the victim of touching her inappropriately and also harassed her by sending obscene messages on WhatsApp. The matter came to light on December 14 when the girl along with her mother approached officials of the Chanakypuri police station to register a complaint him, police said.

Woman buried alive in Jharkhand

Dhanbad: A 35-year-old woman was buried alive after being sucked into a crater following land subsidence in a colliery area of the Bharat Coking Coal Limited in Jharkhand on Friday, police said. Sindi Deputy Superintendent of Police Ajit Kumar said that the charred body of the woman was brought out from the fire hole, under Bastakola Industry Colliery, after a five-hour rescue operation. Underground fires have been burning under the country's largest coalfield for over a century. The incident occurred at 7.30 am after the woman, a mother of three children, was defecating in the open, police said.

Shops gutted

Jalpaiguri (WB): A major fire broke out at a market in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district in the early hours of Friday, gutting at least 150 shops, officials said. The flames were spotted around 3 am at the Dhupguri market by a shopkeeper, they said. Six fire tenders were rushed to the spot but the firefighting operations could not be started for some time as there were no water bodies nearby, officials said.

Man dies

Aurangabad: One person was killed Friday after a can containing a chemical exploded while being carried to a godown in Beed, some 125 kilometres from here, a police official said. The incident took place around 11:15 am in Masarat Nagar, he added.

LADAKH STANDOFF

India, China resume talks

The talks were held under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Resuming diplomatic talks on their military standoff, India and China Friday agreed to continue working towards ensuring complete disengagement of troops in all friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh at the earliest.

At the virtual talks, the two sides agreed that the next round of military dialogue should be held at an early date so that they can work towards an early and complete disengagement of troops in accordance with the existing bilateral agreements and protocols, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The talks were held under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs. The MEA said the two sides reviewed the developments along the LAC since the last round of the WMCC talks held on September 30. The military standoff erupted in early May.

"The two sides agreed that based on the guidance provided by senior leaders and the agreements reached between the two Foreign Ministers and Special Representatives, they would continue to work towards ensuring complete disengagement in all friction points along the LAC in the Western sector at the earliest," it said in a statement.

"The two sides noted that the seventh and eighth rounds of senior commanders meetings held on October 12 and November 6 respectively had in-depth discussions



in this regard and that these discussions had also contributed to ensuring stability on the ground," the MEA said.

It said both sides agreed to maintain close consultations at the diplomatic and military level. "They agreed that the next round of senior commanders meeting should be held at an early date so that both sides can work towards early and complete disengagement of troops along the LAC in accordance with the existing bilateral agreements and protocols, and fully restore peace and tranquility," it said.

The talks came a day after India hoped that further discussions between the two countries will help to achieve an agreement on a mutually acceptable solution for ensuring complete disengagement in all friction points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

India and China have held several rounds of diplomatic and military talks in the last few months to resolve the standoff. Nearly 50,000 Indian Army troops are deployed in a high state of combat readi-

ness in various mountainous locations in eastern Ladakh in sub-zero conditions as multiple rounds of talks between the two sides have not yielded concrete outcome to resolve the standoff. China has also deployed an equal number of troops, according to officials.

MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava on Thursday said the two sides continue to maintain communication through diplomatic and military channels and these discussions have helped both sides to enhance understanding of each other's positions.

"It is our expectation that the further discussions will help both sides to achieve an agreement on a mutually acceptable solution for ensuring complete disengagement in all friction points along the LAC in the Western sector and full restoration of peace and tranquility as early as possible," he said. The eighth and last round of military talks had taken place on November 6 during which both sides broadly discussed disengagement of troops from specific friction points.

SC issues notice to Kamra, Taneja

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Supreme Court Friday issued notice in the criminal contempt of court cases against stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra and cartoonist Rachita Taneja for posting scandalous tweets and cartoons against the top court.

Earlier, Attorney General K.K. Venugopal had given his consent for filing contempt pleas against Kamra and Taneja. A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan and comprising Justices R. Subhash Reddy and M.R. Shah said the AG in his letter dated November 12, 2020 had granted consent on the request of the applicant to proceed by way of initiating contempt proceedings against Kunal Kamra.

"Issue notice returnable within six weeks. The respondent-contemnor not to appear in person," said the top court, which issued a similar direction in Taneja's case. However, the top court dispensed them from personal appearance.

The plea against Kamra was filed by law students Shrirang Katneshwarkar and Nitika Duhan, and advocates Amey Abhay Sirsikar, Abhishek Sharan Raskar and Sattiyendra Vinayak Muley. "The alleged contemnor (Kamra) has the following of 1.7 million people. The scandalous tweets of the alleged contemnor were seen by his followers and many of them retweeted the same," read the plea.

Citing Section 2 (c) (i) of Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, the petitioners argued that this section is explicit and the tweets published by Kamra clearly showed he allegedly committed gross contempt of the apex court. Granting consent, the AG had said that today people believe that they can boldly



Earlier, Attorney General K.K. Venugopal had given his consent for filing contempt pleas against Kamra and Taneja

and brazenly condemn the Supreme Court of India and its judges by exercising what they believe is their freedom of speech.

"But under the Constitution, the freedom of speech is subject to the law of contempt and I believe that it is time that people understand that attacking the Supreme Court of India unjustified and brazenly will attract punishment under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1972," the top court cited AG's response.

In case of Taneja, the AG had said that he is satisfied that each one of the tweets with the cartoons attached to them is in contempt of the Supreme Court. "Hence I give my consent to initiate proceedings under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 with regard to each one of the tweets," the AG had said.

Dissident MLA Tiwari makes U-turn

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 18: Within 24-hours of his resignation, dissident Trinamool Congress lawmaker Jitendra Tiwari made a U-turn Friday night saying that he is not going anywhere from the party.

Tiwari held a closed-door meeting with senior Trinamool leader Arup Biswas and political strategist Prashant Kishor at south Kolkata's Suruchi Sangha club. "It was my mistake. There were some misunderstandings. Whatever I said it was absolutely wrong on my part. I am told that Didi was hurt at my gesture. I cannot do anything that hurts Didi," Tiwari told media after the meeting.

Tiwari resigned from the post of chairman of the administrative board of the Asansol Municipal Corporation on Thursday. He represented Pandabeswar in the state Legislative Assembly.

"Jitendra Tiwari was, is and will be with the Trinamool Congress. He will fight against the BJP as a loyal soldier of Mamata Banerjee," said Arup Biswas, adding that such small things may happen in a big family.

Tiwari had resigned from the post of Trinamool Congress' district president in West Burdwan. He sent his resignation to Trinamool Congress state president Subrata Bakshi.

"Given the current situation, it is difficult to work and I am stepping down from the post of chairman of the administrative board of Asansol Municipal Corporation. We have been deprived of the smart city. We have also been deprived of the solid waste management system," he wrote in his resignation letter. Tiwari had alleged that Asansol has been deprived of many development works. "I will personally meet Mamata didi and seek her apology. I will continue to work for the Trinamool Congress," he added.

COVID has spread like wild fire: SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: It is a "world war" against COVID-19 and the unprecedented pandemic has spread like a "wild fire" due to lack of implementation of guidelines and standard operating procedure (SoPs) issued by authorities to contain it, the Supreme Court said on Friday while expressing concern that the treatment for coronavirus was not affordable to the common people.

The apex court, which suggested either more and more provisions are to be made by the state governments and the local administrations or there shall be cap on the fees charged by the private hospitals, observed that states must act vigilantly and work harmoniously with the Centre as safety and health of citizens must be the first priority rather than any other considerations.

It said "strict and stern action" should be taken against those who are violating guidelines and SoPs as they cannot be permitted to play with the lives of others. A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan

while noting that right to health is a fundamental right and it includes affordable treatment, said treatment has become costlier and is not affordable to common people at all.

"Even if one survives from COVID-19, many times financially and economically he is finished. Therefore, either more and more provisions are to be made by the state government and the local administration or there shall be cap on the fees charged by the private hospitals, which can be in exercise of the powers under the Disaster Management Act," said the bench, also comprising Justices R S Reddy and MR Shah, which was dealing the matter suo motu.

"Due to unprecedented pandemic, everybody in the world is suffering, one way or the other. It is a world war against COVID-19. Therefore, there shall be government public partnership to avoid world war against COVID-19," it said.

The bench said fatigue of frontline health care workers, including doctors and nurses, is also an issue as they are "already exhausted physically and mentally due to tireless work for eight months" and some mechanism may be required to give them intermittent rest. Advocating that states must work harmoniously with the Centre, it said, "It is the time to rise to the occasion".

WB Speaker rejects Suvendu's resignation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 18: West Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee Friday said that he has not accepted the resignation tendered by TMC MLA Suvendu Adhikari as it does not conform to the provisions of the Constitution and the rules of the House.

Banerjee noted that Adhikari did not hand over the resignation letter to him personally, and maintained that he wasn't aware if his move was "voluntary and genuine".

The Speaker further said that the legislator has been asked to appear before him personally in his chamber on December 21 to make a submission in the matter. "Unless and until I am satisfied that the resignation is voluntary and genuine, it is not possible for me to accept the same in the light of the provisions of the Constitution of India and the rules of procedure and conduct of business in West Bengal Legislative Assembly," he said.

Adhikari, who had earlier quit the Mamata Banerjee cabinet, submitted his resignation as MLA at the Assembly secretariat on December 16. The Speaker was not present in the House at that time. He quit the Trinamool Congress (TMC) Thursday amid speculation that he is set to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Speaker clarified that Adhikari was still a TMC member in the West Bengal Assembly.

FROZEN BEAUTY



A child looks at icicles hanging from trees as temperature dropped below zero, on the outskirts of Shopian in South Kashmir, Friday

PTI PHOTO

Guj man beats COVID after 113 days in hosp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Dec 18: A 59-year-old man was Friday discharged after a stay of 113 days in a city hospital for COVID-19 treatment with Gujarat deputy chief minister Nitin Patel claiming this is to be possibly the longest spell of hospitalisation for a coronavirus patient in India.

Ravindra Parmar tested positive for coronavirus on August 26 and was admitted in a private hospital in the Dholka area of Ahmedabad. However, he had to be shifted to the state-run Sola civil hospital on August 28 after his condition deteriorated.

"Ravindra Parmar's is a rare case of recovery as he was brought to Sola civil hospital in critical

condition. Out of the 113 days here, he was in ICU for 90 days. At one point of time, he had to be given 75 litres of oxygen per minute for survival." Patel, who was present when Parmar was discharged, said. "This is the longest hospital stay for any COVID-19 patient in Gujarat, and, perhaps, even in the country. Doctors have given him the finest treatment," said Patel.

Covid vaccination: Can India deliver that shot to all?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 18: As the wealthy nations like the US and the UK begin vaccinating their public, the road ahead for India does not look very rosy as both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines currently making headlines are yet to reach the country owing to a host of factors including scarce supply, tricky transport and an absence of proper cold chain.

For over 130 crore Indians, two promising vaccines - AstraZeneca and Oxford university developed and Serum Institute of India (SII)-manufactured Covishield, and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech Ltd - are

still a distant dream owing to factors not in the control of the manufacturers or the government.

Sanjay Rai, who is the principal investigator (PI) of Covaxin trial, said Friday that the rollout of Covaxin may get delayed as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), where its Phase-III human clinical trial is underway, is struggling to find takers of the trial shots.

However, Dr Harshal R Salve, Associate Professor at Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS told IANS on Friday that hopefully, we will see approval for an appropriate vaccine in a month or so by a competent regulatory authority. "In Phase 1, India is planning to

vaccinate 30 crore people - healthcare workers, frontline workers such as military professionals, police force, disaster management workers and people with existing diseases aged more than 60 years," Salve said.

India has the world's largest immunization programme in the world with beneficiary of more than 60 million annually. According to Salve, India has also demonstrated outreach and decentralised delivery of public services during general elections.

"These experiences will help India roll out the Covid-19 vaccination at the mass level. The use of IT is crucial in tracking and implementa-



tion of individual-level vaccination. However, administration of vaccine should be kept as a voluntary exercise and should not be made mandatory," Salve stressed.

However, due to scarce data on the Covid-19 vaccination and its mass-level efficacy globally, nothing can be predicted at this crucial moment. An analysis by Duke University's 'Launch and Scale Speedometer', which is updated every two weeks, shows India has made deals for 1.6 billion doses of three global vaccine candidates upon them being ready and certified for use.

Globally, 10.1 billion doses were reserved even before any candidate was approved for market, showed the data. "Countries with manufacturing capacity, such as India and Brazil, have been successful in negotiating large advance market commitments with leading vac-

cine candidates as part of the manufacturing agreements," according to Duke University's Launch and Scale Speedometer.

Dr Neha Gupta who is infectious diseases specialist at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram said that the potency of vaccines depends upon the temperature at the storage level. "Cold chain needs to be properly maintained. The government needs to keep a designated staff for the mass vaccination of healthcare workers, elderly population and patients with common comorbidities like hypertension, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), diabetes and cardio-cerebrovascular disease," she said.

of the day quote

Today the range of a mobile has crossed even the reach of a missile
RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

The government moved forward to resolve the issue through talks. When farmers were also satisfied that what the government was saying was logical and genuine, those people who were indulging in criminal conspiracy thought their game was going awry and they started misleading people
MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | UNION MINISTER

The West Bengal government's move of opposing the transfer of three IPS officers in the state on central deputation is not a good tradition, and clashes between the Centre and states weaken the democracy
PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Tea garden official held

Siliguri: A tea garden official was arrested in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district while a hunt is on for his colleague after an elephant was killed on coming in contact with a live wire allegedly put up by them, officials said Friday. Uday Newar, the assistant manager of the tea garden in the Banarhat area, was arrested in a raid by the Gorumara Wildlife Division and police on Thursday, Chief Wildlife Warden VK Yadav said. The elephant was electrocuted to death on December 4, he said.

Five killed

Ambala (Haryana): Five people were killed and one sustained serious injuries in a head-on collision between a three-wheeler and a truck here Friday, police said. The injured person, whose condition was critical, was taken to PGIMER, Chandigarh, police said. All the deceased belonged to nearby villages of Naraingarh.

Man arrested

New Delhi: A 31-year-old man was arrested for allegedly misappropriating funds to the tune of ₹300 crore availed as loans and credit facilities from various banks and financial institutions, police said Friday. Vaibhav Sharma, Chief Finance Officer (CFO) of a Gurgaon-based company engaged in car dealership, was arrested on Thursday in connection with a 2018 case registered against him and the other directors of the firm for misappropriation of bank money, they said.

Man shot dead

Mau (UP): The husband of a village head in Mau district of Uttar Pradesh was shot dead by some people Friday apparently over an old enmity, police said. The incident took place in Badaugodam village in the Sarai Lakhansi area here, they said. "Shailendra Yadav was shot by Banti Singh, Satyam Singh and Shiva in the village. He was rushed to the hospital in serious condition and was declared brought dead there," Superintendent of Police Sushil Dhule said.

Two detained

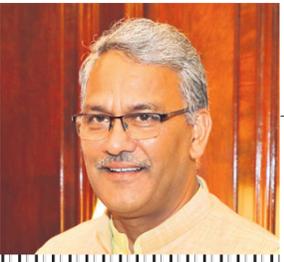
Pratapgarh (UP): A 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped by two teenagers in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district, police said Friday. The incident took place in Lalganj area on the night of December 15 and the boys, aged 15 and 16, were detained on Thursday, SP Anurag Arya said.



There is need to ensure "sanity" in the use of the rapidly expanding social media platforms, given the implications for social harmony, common good, peace and national security
M VENKAIHAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

UTTARAKHAND CM COVID POSITIVE

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat tested positive for Covid-19 Friday



PM defends farm laws, blasts Oppn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Dec 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday stoutly defended the new farm laws, saying they were in the works for decades and those who are opposing these laws now for gaining lost political ground were once votaries of the same reforms.

The opposition parties were against the new laws as they were upset that he would get the credit, Modi said, adding that he did not seek any credit but nobody should mislead farmers. Accusations such as the new laws will lead to the scrapping of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops were blatant lies, the prime minister said, addressing farmers of Madhya Pradesh through virtual mode. The government was willing to hold talks with farmers, the prime minister said, as the agitation against the new farm laws at Delhi's borders entered its 23rd day. "Even after all these government's efforts if anyone has any doubt over the farm laws, we, with folded hands and heads bowed, are ready for talks," he said.

"The new agriculture laws have not been drafted overnight but political parties, agriculture experts and progressive farmers have demanded it for a long time," Modi said. Farming in India should get modernized in the changed global situation, he added, defending the contentious laws.

"In the last 20-22 years, the Centre and the state governments have deliberated on these agriculture reforms in detail. Farmer bodies, agriculture scientists and farmers too were continuously demanding them," he said.

"Farmers should ask the parties which are opposing the new laws why they advocated and promised similar measures in their election manifestos but never im-



plemented them," Modi said.

"They dithered because "it was not their priority", the prime minister alleged. "I feel that they are in pain because what they could not do, Modi has done. They do not want Modi to get credit for it. Give credit to your manifesto and not to me. I just want the progress of farmers, but stop misleading them on the issue," he said.

"We are asking them again and again to point out problems in the new farm laws, but they don't have any answer. Those who have lost their political space in the country are misleading farmers that they will lose their lands," he said.

"When these parties were in power, they sat on the Swaminathan committee's report on the farm sector as they did not want to give farmers higher MSP (which the report had recommended), Modi said, targeting the Congress.

"In the changed global scenario, this should not be accepted. The things (reform) which should have taken place 25 to 30 years ago have been done now. We have already been late," he added.

He also accused the Congress of not fulfilling its promise of loan waiver for farmers in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

SC GRANTS RELIEF TO BJP LEADERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Supreme Court Friday granted interim protection to five BJP leaders, including Mukul Roy and MPs Kailash Vijayvargiya and Arjun Singh, in criminal cases lodged against them in West Bengal and directed the state police not to take any coercive action.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul sought response from the West Bengal government on five separate pleas filed by BJP leaders alleging foisting of criminal cases to deter them from political activities and said interim protection from coercive action will continue till the next date of hearing.

The bench also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and



Mukul Roy

Mrishikesh Roy posted the batch of pleas for further hearing in the second week of January. Besides

Roy, Vijayvargiya and Singh, two other BJP leaders Sourav Singh and Pawan Kumar Singh have moved the apex court for protection in cases lodged against them in the state.

While granting protection to these five leaders, the bench directed the Ministry of Home Affairs to submit in a sealed cover a report regarding alleged scuffle between TMC workers and security staff of West Bengal BJP leader Kabir Shankar Bose, who has filed a separate plea in the apex court.

During the hearing, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for petitioner Arjun Singh said that 64 criminal cases have been filed against the BJP leader in 2019 after he had joined Bharatiya Janta

Party (BJP) leaving Trinmool Congress party.

"I am an MP and these cases have been filed after I left TMC," Rohatgi said, adding, "The first case against Arjun Singh was registered on March 24, 2019 after he left the TMC".

Vijayvargiya's counsel told the bench that the BJP leader is an MP from Madhya Pradesh and false cases have been lodged against him in West Bengal. "I am an MP from Madhya Pradesh and just because I am going to West Bengal due to some party works, false cases have been filed against me," Vijayvargiya's counsel said.

The BJP leaders have also sought investigation by an independent agency into the cases registered against them in West Bengal.

LIVING WITH COVID



A man dressed as Santa Claus sprays disinfectant inside a church ahead of Christmas, amid coronavirus pandemic, in Ahmedabad, Friday

ICMR chief COVID positive

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 18: Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Director General Balram Bhargava has been admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) after he tested positive for Covid-19.

The 59-year-old ICMR chief was admitted to AIIMS's Trauma Centre, a dedicated Covid-19 facility, on December 16, a hospital source said on condition of anonymity.

Bhargava heads the apex medical body which is responsible for formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research in India. It is at the forefront of the Covid-19 outbreak management in the country.

Bhargava is on a three-year deputation as the Director-General of ICMR.

He is also the Secretary of the Department of Health Research, a division under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Gold goes 'missing' from Customs custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jamnagar, Dec 18: Gold worth ₹1.10 crore has gone "missing" from the custody of the Customs department's office here in Gujarat, police said Friday.

The Jamnagar police have lodged an FIR against unidentified staffers of the Customs department, which first conducted an internal probe, that lasted for four years. The FIR was lodged under the IPC section 309, which deals with criminal breach of trust by public servant, at the Jamnagar 'B' division police station on Thursday evening, said police inspector, Kumal Gadhe. "The gold (in form of articles) belonged to the Bhuj Customs division and was kept at the Jamnagar office after the 2001 earthquake. "After taking back the custody in 2016, the Bhuj office learned that 2,156.722 gram of gold worth ₹1.10 crore was missing. "Following an inquiry, the Customs department has lodged an FIR against unidentified staffers," said Gadhe.

Centre, Bengal hold talks

The meeting was first scheduled for December 14, days after an attack on BJP president J P Nadda's convoy in West Bengal, but had to be cancelled after state Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay and DGP Virendra refused to travel to the national capital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla discussed the law-and-order situation in West Bengal with two top civil and police officers of the state through a video-conference on Friday after their refusal to come to New Delhi despite two repeated summonses, officials said.

The meeting was first scheduled for December 14, days after an attack on BJP president J P Nadda's convoy in West Bengal, but had to be cancelled after state Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay and Director General of Police (DGP) Virendra refused to travel to the national capital.

The two officers were again called on Thursday for a meeting on Friday. They again refused to come but offered to attend the meeting through a video-conference. They were asked by the Union home secretary to ex-

plain the law-and-order situation in West Bengal which they did, a home ministry official said.

The home secretary is also believed to have asked the two officers about the political violence in the state and the steps taken to check it.

The attack on Nadda's convoy and the state government's refusal to relieve three IPS officers summoned for central deputation were also understood to have figured in the meeting, another official said.

The chief secretary and the DGP were called by the home ministry on December 14 after receiving a report on December 11 from West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on the law-and-order situation in the state.

Dhankhar was asked to submit a report after Nadda's convoy was attacked with stones and bricks in West Bengal's Diamond Harbour on December 10 during his two-day

visit to the state.

The Centre and the West Bengal government have been at loggerheads since the attack that took place in the Lok Sabha constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

After the attack, the home ministry summoned three IPS officers - Bholanath Pandey (SP, Diamond Harbour), Praveen Tripathi (DIG, Presidency Range) and Rajeev Mishra (ADG, South Bengal) - for deputations at the Centre. The three were responsible for Nadda's security during his visit to the state.

However, the state government refused to relieve them citing a shortage of senior police officers. On Thursday, the home ministry sent a fresh missive to the West Bengal government, asking it to immediately relieve the three IPS officers, saying they were already given new assignments.

India to produce 300mn doses of Sputnik V vaccine

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/Moscow, Dec 18: India will produce about 300 million doses of the Russian Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine in 2021, the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) Kirill Dmitriev said in an interview with a TV channel.

"In India, we have agreements with four large manufacturers. ...India will produce about 300 million doses or more of the vaccine for us next year," he was quoted as saying to Rossiya 24 TV channel by TASS news agency on Thursday. RDIF is Russia's sovereign wealth fund.

Dmitriev noted that out of 110 production sites that negotiated production of Sputnik V, RDIF chose 10 that meet its requirements. "The Russian Sputnik V will be actively produced in the world and we see that this is built on a safe platform based on the human adenovirus," Dmitriev said.



Earlier Dmitriev said that production of Sputnik V began in other countries, in particular in India, Korea, Brazil, and China. Registered by Russia on August 11, Sputnik V became the world's first coronavirus vaccine.

The vaccine was developed by the Gamaleya National Research Center of Epidemiology and Microbiology. Its post-registration trials began in Moscow on September 7, with volunteers receiving the first vaccine on September 9. A total of 40,000 people are involved in the programme. RDIF supports the development of Russia's Covid-19 vaccine by the Gamaleya Center and is investing in mass production of the vaccine by RDIF portfolio companies.

Over 4.5 cr people will be forced to migrate from homes by 2050

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Over 4.5 crore people will be forced to migrate from their homes in India by 2050 due to climate disasters including floods, droughts and cyclones, three times more than the present figures, according to a new report.

In 2020, the number of people displaced in India is 1.4 crore, it said.

The report 'Costs of climate inaction: displacement and distress migration' assessed climate-fuelled displacement and migration across five South Asian countries - Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - and calculates a devastating likelihood of over 6 crore people being homeless and displaced by 2050 in South Asia alone.

It is based on a study conducted by International agencies ActionAid International and Climate Action

Network South Asia. Quoting figures, the report claimed that 4.5 crore from India will be forced to migrate from their homes by 2050 due to climate disasters.

"Political failure to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius as per the Paris agreement goal is already driving 18 million climate migrants from their homes in 2020," the report said.

The report released on Friday, estimates that climate migration will treble in South Asia alone, a region badly affected by climate disasters, including floods, droughts, typhoons and cyclones. The research was undertaken by Bryan Jones, one of the authors of the inaugural Groundswell Report on internal climate migration in 2018.

The report called for strong leadership and ambition from developed countries to cut emissions and support for developing countries



NEW REPORT

to adapt to climate change and recover from climate disasters. It recommended a holistic approach that places the onus on rich countries to provide support and urges developing countries to scale up efforts to protect people from climate impacts. Harjeet Singh, Global Climate Lead at ActionAid,

said, "We are facing melting glaciers in Nepal, rising seas in India and Bangladesh, cyclones and inhospitable temperatures.

Climate change is increasingly forcing people to flee their homes in search of safety and new means to provide for their families.

"Rich countries need to take

The report released Friday, estimates that climate migration will treble in South Asia alone, a region badly affected by climate disasters, including floods, droughts, typhoons and cyclones

of household chores, agricultural activities, look after children and elderly and manage livestock. Women who migrate to urban settlements are often then forced to take up work in precarious settings where workers' rights violations are rife," it said.

Sanjay Vashist, Director, Climate Action Network South Asia said, "South Asia is geographically vulnerable to climate disasters and is regularly lashed with floods and cyclones, but poverty and environmental injustice are also determining factors in this climate migration crisis.

"South Asian leaders must join forces and prepare plans for the protection of displaced people. They must step up and invest in universal and effective social protection measures, resilience plans and green infrastructure to respond to the climate crisis and help those who have been forced to move," he said.



As for the origin (of coronavirus), there are a lot of rumours. I would not like to talk about them all while addressing the country and the whole world
VLADIMIR PUTIN | RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

SL ENDORSED AS VICE-CHAIR OF INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION

Sri Lanka has been endorsed as the Vice-Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers from 2021 to 2023 and will take over the position from 2023 to 2025, e Foreign Ministry in Colombo said in a statement Friday



of the day quote

If no agreement (on Brexit trade deal) could be reached, the UK and the EU would part as friends, with the UK trading with the EU on Australian-style terms
BORIS JOHNSON | UK PRIME MINISTER



You (migrant workers) are welcomed members of our society. If you fall ill, we will make sure you get medical care
LEE HSIEN LOONG | SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER



We are willing to discuss any issue (with the US), what we are not willing to negotiate and what we will not give in on is the revolution, socialism and our sovereignty
MIGUEL DIAZ-CANEL | CUBAN PRESIDENT



SHORT TAKES

Five killed in US winter storm

Washington: At least five people died after a massive winter storm hit the US Northeast this week, the Weather Channel reported. In New York state, two deaths connected to the storm were reported. Xinhua news agency quoted Governor Andrew Cuomo as saying Thursday. Shocking photos showed at least 66 vehicles, including 11 passenger ones, were involved in a pileup on Interstate 80 in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, Wednesday. One person was killed and several others were injured in the pileup.

Abducted boys released

Katsina (Nigeria): Over 300 Nigerian schoolboys were released Thursday after being kidnapped in an attack claimed by Boko Haram, officials said, although it was unclear if any more remained with their captors. The assault last Friday on a rural school in Kankara, Katsina state in northwest Nigeria, was initially blamed on criminals, known as bandits, who have terrorised the region for years. But Tuesday Boko Haram, the brutal jihadist group behind the abduction of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014, claimed responsibility for the raid.

UNHCR rescues 126 immigrants

Tripoli: The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said that 126 illegal immigrants were rescued off the coast of Libya. Up to "126 persons among them eight women and 28 children were returned to Libya this morning after their boat was rescued/ intercepted at sea", the UNHCR said in a Twitter post. Several hundred immigrants, mostly Africans, chose to cross the Mediterranean from Libya towards Europe, due to the state of insecurity and chaos in the North African nation following the fall of former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Rickshaw bomb kills 15 kids

Kabul: A bomb rigged to a rickshaw killed at least 15 children and wounded 20 others in a Taliban-controlled area in eastern Afghanistan Friday, a provincial official said, as violence in the war-weary country continued to surge. The bomb went off after a man driving a motorized rickshaw entered a village in the Gilan district to sell goods and was soon surrounded by kids, according to Wahidullah Jumazada, spokesman for the Ghazni provincial governor.

For years, the Pentagon sits on racial discrimination data

WASHINGTON, Dec 18: Army Sergeant Major Das'Chara Champ couldn't have known that the answer to her question about racial discrimination survey data was sitting in an office somewhere in the vast Defense Department bureaucracy. Few people do. "Has there been any kind of survey done on the perceived level of racism or racial discrimination in the Army," Champ, who is Black,

asked in a video played at a Pentagon town hall September 24. On the other end of the question were some of the most senior leaders in the US military: Then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, Army General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Milley's senior enlisted advisor, Ramon Colon-Lopez. Virtual town halls like this have been a way for the Pentagon's top brass to address concerns in 2020 about racial discrimination in a military - America's largest employer - which

is diverse in lower ranks but largely white and male at the top. Apparently unbeknownst to Colon-Lopez, who responded only indirectly to Champ, the Defense Department not only carries out granular surveys about discrimination but has been legally required to do so since the 1990s. The last survey of the active duty force, conducted every four years, was for fiscal year 2017. However, the Defence Department denied repeated requests from Reuters to release the 2017 survey



data, including through a Freedom of Information Act request. It has also not released a separate report about the 2017 survey data or clearly explained why the data has been

withheld for so long. Maryland Rep. Anthony Brown, a retired Army Reserve colonel and the only member of the Congressional Black Caucus on the House Armed Services Committee, said the failure to release the data was troubling. "It concerns me tremendously," Brown said, adding Congress had established a clear reporting requirement and the public had a right to know. In its final response to Reuters this month, rejecting the Freedom of

Information Act request, the Department of Defense said the survey data constituted "information of a pre-decisional, deliberative nature." If released, the Pentagon asserted it could "reasonably be expected to interfere with the government's deliberative process." Still, the data is already so old that the Pentagon is now in the awkward position of having to start planning for another survey in the ongoing 2021 fiscal year, which ends September 30.

Khalistan is Pak project: Canadian report

OTTAWA, Dec 18: In an eye-opening report, Terry Milewski, one of Canada's veteran journalists, has warned that the Khalistan project is sponsored by Pakistan and it is detrimental to the national security of not only India but Canada as well. An award winning journalist, Milewski reported from 52 countries during four decades as a correspondent for Canada's most watched CBC TV News.



Terry Milewski, one of Canada's veteran journalists, has warned that the Khalistan project is sponsored by Pakistan and it is detrimental to the national security of not only India but Canada as well. The Milewski report published by Macdonald Laurier Institute reveals how Pakistan launched the Khalistan insurgency using Indian Sikhs in Indian Punjab to avenge its own defeat in the Indo-Pak 1971 war

He was CBC's first Middle East bureau chief and also covered at least three former US administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. In 1985, he covered the Air India bombing in which 329 people were killed aboard from Montreal to Heathrow. He has chased that story for the last 35 years, covering the entire investigation and inquiry into the case. Milewski retired as CBC's senior correspondent in 2016, returning occasionally as a guest host on the network's Power and Politics. The Milewski report published by Macdonald Laurier Institute, a reputed think tank based in

Ottawa, reveals how Pakistan launched the Khalistan insurgency using Indian Sikhs in Indian Punjab to avenge its own defeat in the Indo-Pak 1971 war. India had intervened in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) to stop the genocide perpetrated by Pakistani Army and consequently helped it to liberate from West Pakistan. Interestingly, the report points out how Pakistan viewed the Khalistan project as a strategic buffer and how an independent Khalistan would end India's land access to Kashmir to north, another key interest of

the Pakistan Army since 1947. Highlighting the logical fallacy of the Khalistan project, Milewski reveals how separatist Sikhs complain loudly and properly about the massacre of several thousand Sikhs by Hindus in 1984, but do not hold rallies to demand justice for at least a quarter-million Sikhs massacred by Muslims in 1947 in the name of Islam during the Partition of India. The Milewski report claims that the western democracies with large Sikh communities like Canada, the UK and the US are aware of this absurdity and therefore, skeptical of the Khalistan referendum, planned for November 2020. Canada's government has already said it won't recognise it. Questioning the Khalistan referendum, the veteran journalist in his report has asked why the separatist Sikhs seek India's "occupation" of Indian Punjab, but never asked Pakistan to end its occupation of Pakistani Punjab. Majority of Sikhs, the report points out, are happy with India and those who live in Indian Punjab even cheer for their regional government headed by Captian Amarinder Singh.

TRANSITION TROUBLES

Biden's bond with Capitol Hill tested

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, 18: President-elect Joe Biden brings more Capitol Hill experience than any President in decades, but his transition has stumbled in ways large and small, exposing the challenges of navigating a Congress that is a different place than when he last served in 2009. He rolled out an almost all-white national security team when allies were expecting diversity. He filled top posts with familiar Washington hands rather than newcomers. His team clumsily floated some names and retracted others for the Cabinet. None of the setbacks has been politically devastating. In fact, key Republicans are reaching out for personal calls with Biden, and Democrats are excited about the skilled and savvy professionals poised to join the administration as it battles the Covid-19 crisis and withering economy.

But taken together, the slights and slip-ups of Biden's interactions with Congress leave the impression his team is misreading the Capitol Hill audience he'll be relying on for legislative outcomes. And it calls into question one of the incoming president's most prized attributes - his presumed ability to work with an often unruly Congress. Biden last walked the marbled halls as a senator more than a decade ago. Only one-third of the senators with whom he served remain in office, forcing the president-elect to create new relationships. "A strong belief that my dad drilled into my head: First impressions are lasting, and you don't get a second chance to make a first impression," Rep. James Clyburn, the highest-ranking Black lawmaker in Congress and a top Biden ally, said in an interview Thursday. Clyburn said people were "raising hell" over what he called the "herky-jerky" rollout of the initial, predominantly white Cabinet.

FOR A CAUSE



Aquarist Felipe Luna dressed in a Santa Claus costume swims inside a tank at the AquaRio aquarium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday to raise awareness of the importance of protecting marine life, staff dressed as Santa Claus will dive daily to feed the sharks until Christmas Day

Iran builds new nuclear facility amid US tensions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Dec 18: Iran has begun construction on a site at its underground nuclear facility at Fordo amid tensions with the US over its atomic programme, satellite photos obtained Friday by The Associated Press show. Iran has not publicly acknowledged any new construction at Fordo, whose discovery by the West in 2009 came in an earlier round of brinkmanship before world powers struck the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran. While the purpose of the building remains unclear, any work at Fordo likely will trigger new concern in the waning days of the Trump administration before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden. Already, Iran is building at its Natanz nuclear facility after a mysterious explosion in July there that Tehran described as a sabotage attack. "Any changes at this site will be carefully watched as a sign of where Iran's nuclear programme is headed," said Jeffrey Lewis, an expert at the James Martin Center



for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies who studies Iran. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The International Atomic Energy Agency, whose inspectors are in Iran as part of the nuclear deal, also did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The IAEA as of yet has not publicly disclosed if Iran informed it of any construction at Fordo. Construction on the Fordo site began in late September. Satellite images obtained from Maxar Technologies by the AP show the construction taking place at a north-west corner of the site, near the holy Shiite city of Qom some 90 kilometers southwest of Tehran.

US to revise Covid vax guidance after allergic reactions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Dec 18: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has said it was working with Pfizer to revise a fact sheet for recipients of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine after two people had allergic reactions. The two people, both health workers, were vaccinated in Alaska and one of them had a serious or "anaphylactic" reaction resulting in hospitalization. Doran Fink, deputy director of the FDA's division of vaccines said: "All of these individuals were treated with appropriate medical intervention and thankfully, all are recovered or recovering." Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are shown in the image.

Airstrikes kill 30 militants in Afghan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kabul, Dec 18: At least 30 militants were killed in an airstrike targeting a gathering of Taliban fighters Afghanistan's Ghazni province Friday, a government official said. "A group of Taliban insurgents had gathered in Qarsi area of

Qarabagh district to storm security checkpoints but the security forces' planes attacked the gathering in the wee hours of Friday, killing 30 on the spot," provincial government spokesman Wahidullah Jumazada told Xinhua. Ten more insurgents were injured in the raid, the official added.

No security personnel or civilians were harmed in the attack, Jumazada said. There have so far been no comments made by the Taliban militants who are active in parts of the Ghazni province with the Ghazni city as its capital, 125 km south of Kabul.

ONE NIGHT IN WUHAN

Covid-19's original epicentre re-learns how to party

NIGHTLIFE IN WUHAN IS BACK IN FULL SWING ALMOST SEVEN MONTHS AFTER THE CITY LIFTED ITS STRINGENT LOCKDOWN

REUTERS

Wuhan, Dec 18: In a crowded Wuhan beer hall, Zhang Qiong wipes birthday cake from her face after a food fight with her friends. "After experiencing the first wave of epidemic in Wuhan and then the liberation, I feel like I'm living a second life," says Zhang, 29, who works in a textiles shop in the central Chinese city that was the original epicentre of Covid-19. Outside, maskless partygoers spill onto the streets, smoking and playing street games with toy machine guns and balloons. Nightlife in Wuhan is back in full swing almost seven months after the city lifted its stringent lockdown and



The revival of the city's hard-hit nightlife offers a glimpse into a post-pandemic lifestyle. The city's young partygoers are embracing the catharsis. In scenes unimaginable in many cities around the world reeling under a resurgence of the pandemic, young Wuhan residents during a recent

night out crowd-surfed, ate street food and packed the city's nightclubs as they looked to make up for lost time. The revival of the city's hard-hit nightlife economy offers a glimpse into a post-pandemic lifestyle that many hope will become a reality in 2021, after the global rollout of Covid-19 vaccines. Wuhan hasn't reported a new locally transmitted case of the disease since May 10, after undergoing one of the strictest lockdowns worldwide. The city of 11 million was shut off from the rest of China in a surprise overnight lockdown beginning January 23, with road blocks erected and planes, trains and buses barred from entering the city. Almost 3,900

of China's 4,634 recorded Covid-19 deaths occurred in the industrial city. Students, musicians, artists and young workers - the backbone of the city's nightlife scene - told stories of being stuck in their homes for months, many using the opportunity to prepare for a time when the city would recover. "Some of my new music will definitely be about the pandemic time," said Wang Xinghao, frontman of Wuhan pop rock band Mad Rat, which drew a crowd of over 100 people to a local venue on a recent Wednesday night. He said one of the new songs was inspired by the three months he spent living in close quarters with his mother.

To this end, he said, "FDA is working with Pfizer to further revise the fact sheets and prescribing information for their vaccines to draw attention to CDC guidelines for post vaccination monitoring and management of immediate allergic reactions." The revision will include the current warning for people who have a history of allergic reactions to the vaccine's ingredients to avoid getting the shot for now. It will also include the warning that facilities where vaccines are being administered should ensure that medical treatment for managing serious allergic reactions is immediately available.

business

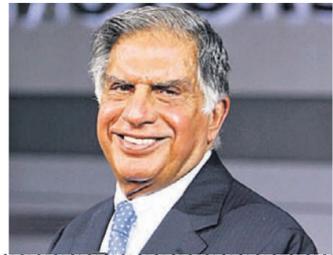


We are going through one of the biggest digital transformations in the history of fintech and the adoption has been accelerated further amid the pandemic

HARSHIL MATHUR
CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, RAZORPAY

TATA TO BE HONOURED

Veteran industrialist Ratan Tata will be honoured by the Indo-Israeli Chambers of Commerce for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians



of the day quote

Given the fact that lot of people lost their jobs, some had to take salary cuts, some industries were badly affected that will have some impact on delinquency and portfolio collections. But these numbers are much lower than what we had anticipated

SUMIT BALI
HEAD OF RETAIL LENDING, AXIS BANK

Addressing climate change is an urgent global priority and one that we think we can do a better job of accelerating progress on—starting now—not decades from now

SCOTT STRAZIK | CEO, GE GAS POWER

The real estate sector has been working on wafer thin margins and is battling unsold inventory on one hand and unfinished projects due to lack of funds on the other. With a stagnant demand, developers have not increased the prices and are selling projects at affordable rates

JAXAY SHAH | CHAIRMAN, CREDAI

SHORT TAKES

Bank credit grows by 5.73%

Mumbai: Bank credit grew by 5.73% to ₹105.04 lakh crore while deposits increased by 11.34% to ₹145.92 lakh crore in the fortnight ended December 4, the RBI data showed. In the fortnight ended December 6, 2019, bank credit had stood at ₹99.35 lakh crore and deposits at ₹131.06 lakh crore. In the previous fortnight ended November 20, credit grew by 5.82% to ₹104.34 lakh crore and deposits by 10.89% to ₹143.70 lakh crore.

IT stocks gain up to 3%

New Delhi: IT stocks were in demand Friday rising up to 3% amid better-than-expected results from Accenture Plc. Shares of Infosys gained 2.64%, Wipro jumped 1.89%, MindTree 1.58%, HCL Technologies 1.32% and TCS 0.87% on the BSE. Following gain in these counters, the BSE Information Technology index gained 1.70% to close at 23,226.73.

Renault to hike vehicle prices

New Delhi: Automaker Renault India Friday said it will increase price of its entire model range by up to ₹28,000 from next month. The company, which sells models like Kwid, Duster and Triber, said the price hike from January would vary across variants and products. "The price increase is a result of the steadily increasing input costs across the spectrum, including input costs for steel, aluminium, plastics and other affiliated cost increases during the pandemic," Renault India said in a statement.

Flipkart sees 35% rise in sellers

New Delhi: Walmart-owned Flipkart Friday said it has registered close to 35% increase in sellers onboarded in 2020 as compared to last year, and has seen strong adoption of its platform by sellers as well as customers from tier II regions and beyond. With the need for social distancing and prioritising safety, the pandemic has led to millions of people turning to e-commerce this past year, not only in metros but also in tier III regions and beyond, Flipkart said in a statement.

'India Inc's foreign investments stand at \$12.25bn'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 18: Corporate India has invested \$12.25 billion overseas during the first eight months of the current fiscal, most of which has gone into the firms' wholly-owned subsidiaries in the US, Singapore or the Netherlands, according to data collated by Care Ratings.

In the whole of FY20, total foreign direct investment (FDI) by domestic companies was \$13 billion, while FDI inflows had hit a record \$76 billion, according to the ratings agency.

Of the total \$12.25 billion outward FDI during April-November this fiscal, the actual outflow was \$6.35 billion, of which \$2.97 billion was through equities and \$3.38 billion in loan commitments and the balance \$5.90 billion was in the form of guarantees, the agency said quoting RBI data.

As against this, during the first five months of the current fiscal, total FDI inflows rose to \$35.73 billion, the highest-ever for the period, and 13% higher than same period in FY20 when it stood at \$31.60 billion. This was primarily



In the whole of FY20, total FDI by domestic companies was \$13 billion, while FDI inflows had hit a record \$76 billion

driven by the string of deals that Reliance Industries clinched for its telecom and retail arms.

For the full FY20, inflows stood

at \$76 billion, which after adjusting for repatriation of around \$18 billion, meant \$56 billion of FDI, which was the highest achieved on record.

In FY20, around \$13 billion was invested outside, which was the second successive year of double-digit overseas investment since FY13. But the peak was \$19 billion in FY09 and \$18 billion in FY08.

From a sectoral point of view, 90% of the money invested overseas was in financials, insurance and business services (\$3.89 billion),

followed by manufacturing at \$3.45 billion, agriculture and mining (\$1.90 billion) and wholesale, retail trade and hotels (\$ 1.73 billion).

Destination-wise, the US topped the list by attracting \$2.36 billion, followed by Singapore (\$2.07 billion), the Netherlands (\$1.50 billion), British Virgin Islands (\$1.37 billion) and Mauritius (\$1.30 billion). These five countries accounted for nearly 70 per cent of total FDI outflows from the country.

As much as 76% or \$9.25 billion of the total \$12.25 billion was pumped into wholly-owned subsidiaries and the balance \$3 billion into joint ventures.

Leading the companies' chart was ONGC Videsh, which invested \$1.85 billion in various oil fields.

The second was JSW Steel which invested \$865 million, followed by Haldia Petrochemicals (\$599 million), HCL Technologies (\$587 million), Mahindra & Mahindra (\$551 million), Adani Properties (\$391 million), Lupin (\$382 million), Piramal Enterprises (\$312 million), Cadila Healthcare (\$222 million), Infosys (\$221 million) and Tata Steel at \$200 million.

SELF-RELIANT INDIA

'MSME sector can play crucial role in realising the vision'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Union Minister Pratap Chandra Sarangi Friday said the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector can play a crucial role in realising the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' or self-reliant India.

The MoS for MSMEs said the government fully understands the importance and contribution of MSMEs for the nation, and is fully committed to support the growth of the sector to reach its full potential.

Emphasising that the strength of Indian supply chains should be utilised to full capacity, Sarangi said the MSME sector can play a "crucial role" in realising the vision of a 'self-reliant India'.

Addressing a virtual conference organised by ASSOCHAM, the minister said, "The MSME sector plays a pivotal role in the growth of the nation. Corona, because of which lockdown had to be enforced, gave a massive blow to the industry including MSMEs, and to deal with this PM Narendra Modi announced a package of ₹20 lakh crore."

"The Indian government revised the definition of MSMEs, bringing it in line with global standards, a move that will help MSMEs to scale up and generate more employment," he added.

He observed that with the government increasing opportunities for local MSMEs, the Indian MSMEs will be able to scale up operations.

UK, US among top 5 employers for Indian tech contractors: Survey

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 18: The United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United States and South Africa are among the top countries attracting and retaining high-skilled Indian workers in the contracting market place, says a survey.

The survey titled 'Global Demand for Indian IT Contractors' has been done by contractor hiring platform Techfynder that a majority of companies from these regions on the platform have shown an interest in hiring for core domains that include cloud, cyber and digitisation.

The findings are based on the survey of 52,000 contractors from across the country between January and December 2020, to find out the trends in the contractual job mar-



ketplace in India.

Due to the pandemic, many businesses are going online to offer their products and services, which has further increased the demand for IT contractors in roles such as software engineers, senior java developers, cyber security engineers, data scientists, web developers, and UI/UX designers, it noted.

As per the survey, the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, the US, and South Africa are the top five countries

attracting and retaining a highly-skilled Indian workforce in the contracting market place.

Further, it said since March this year there was a staggering 610% growth in job postings for IT contractors across the Philippines, Netherlands, Nigeria, Canada, Kenya and Brazil.

IT sector tops the charts with 48% hiring of the contractual workforce. It is followed by insurance (18%), banking and finance (16%), telecommunications (12%) and pharmaceuticals (6%), the survey said. "The IT contractual job market has always seen good traction. However, the growth for contractors in India has only been exemplified during the pandemic, which massively impacted the global job market."

FICCI suggests rationalising of GST slabs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 18: As the Finance Ministry prepares for the upcoming Union Budget for the FY21-22, it has been speaking to several stakeholders; industry body FICCI has come up with a number of suggestions, including support for infrastructure projects and rationalisation of GST slabs.

The industry body has asked government to incentivise investments in infrastructure. A stimulus to investments in infrastructure can provide a major fillip to the growth engine, creation of jobs and spur in demand, it said.

"Erstwhile Section 10(23G) of the Income Tax Act exempted income by way of dividend, interest and long-term capital gains arising out of investments made in an enterprise engaged in the business of developing, maintaining and operating an infrastructure facility," said a statement by FICCI.



A benefit similar to section 10(23G) of the Act to incentivise investments in infrastructure may be provided in the upcoming budget, it added. It noted that measures to revive the growth cycle, creation of jobs are of paramount importance in the current scenario.

On rationalisation of GST slabs, it said that currently there are seven rate slabs for goods and five

rate slabs for services. In addition, compensation cess applies on select goods.

"Government should consider converging the existing band of GST rates to three in line with international standards. This will help resolve interpretation issues, reduce complexity and probability of disputes," it said.

The FICCI has also recom-

US to blacklist dozens of Chinese cos: Report

The move is seen as the latest in President Donald Trump's effort to cement his tough-on-China legacy



REUTERS

Washington, Dec 18: The United States (US) is set to add dozens of Chinese companies, including the country's top chipmaker SMIC, to a trade blacklist Friday, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters Thursday.

The move, which has not previously been reported, is seen as the latest in President Donald Trump's effort to cement his tough-on-China legacy. It comes just weeks before Democratic President-elect Joe Biden is set to take office January 20.

The Commerce Department is expected to add around 80 additional companies and affiliates to the so-called entity list, nearly all of them Chinese.

China's foreign ministry said that if true, the blacklisting would be evidence of US oppression of Chinese companies and that Beijing would continue to take "necessary measures" to protect their rights.

"We urge the US to cease its mistaken behaviour of unwarranted oppression of foreign companies," ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular news conference in Beijing Friday.

SMIC and the Commerce Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The designations by the Commerce Department are expected to name some Chinese companies that Washington says have

ties to the Chinese military, including some helping it construct and militarize artificial islands in the South China Sea, as well as some involved in alleged human rights violations, the sources said.

The Trump administration has often used the entity list - which now includes more than 275 China-based firms and affiliates - to hit key Chinese industries.

These include telecoms equipment giants Huawei Technologies Co and 150 affiliates, and ZTE Corp over sanction violations, as well as surveillance camera maker Hikvision over suppression of China's Uighur minority.

FRAYING TIES

Shares in SMIC, formally the Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp, fell 5.2% in Hong Kong Friday, while its Shanghai-listed shares declined 1.8%. The benchmark indices in the two markets were down less than 1%. SMIC has already been in Washington's crosshairs.

In September, the Commerce Department mandated that suppliers of certain equipment to the company apply for export licenses after concluding there was an "unacceptable risk" that equipment supplied to it could be used for military purposes.

Last month, the Defense Department added the company to a blacklist of alleged Chinese military companies, effectively banning US investors from buying its shares starting late next year.

Retail inflation for agri labourers eases to 6% in November



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: Retail inflation for farm labour and rural workers eased to 6% and 5.86%, respectively, in November, mainly due to lower prices of food items.

"Point-to-point rate of inflation based on the CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers) and CPI-RL (Rural Labourers) decreased to 6% and 5.86% in November, 2020, from 6.59% and 6.45%, respectively, in October 2020," the labour ministry said in a statement.

The retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers were at 9.41% and 9.23%, respectively, in November last year.

Inflation based on food index of CPI-AL and CPI-RL stood at 6.88% and 7.06%, respectively, in November, compared with 12.03% and 11.85% in the corresponding month of the previous year.

The all-India CPI-AL and CPI-RL indices increased 8 points each to stand at 1,060 and 1,065, respectively, in November 2020.

Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said, "The inflation based on CPI-AL and RL have dipped to 6 per cent and 5.86 per cent, respectively, which will have a positive impact on the income of labourers working in rural area."

Labour Bureau Director General DS Negi said, "The inflation based on CPI-AL and RL eased during November 2020, owing to a decline in the prices of wheat-atta, chillies-green, ginger, poultry, gurbajra, fresh fish, kerosene oil and vegetables."

'Media industry has potential to grow to \$100bn in 10 yrs'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: The media and entertainment industry has "humongous" potential in India and can grow up to four times to \$100 billion in the next 10 years, said Star & Disney India Managing Director K Madhavan.

The audience demand for entertainment is only going up and the mode of distribution has changed for the industry, he said in his valedictory address in the 'Big Picture Summit' organised by industry body CII.

Currently, the media and entertainment industry stands at \$24 billion and is about one per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), he added.

"The industry has the potential to grow from \$24 billion to \$100 billion by 2030, which is what our vision is and our target should be. The potential of the media industry is untapped and humongous,"



said Madhavan.

However, he also added that the industry needs 'light-touch regulation' and need to be able to experiment with content and technology.

"The regulatory framework has to be supportive to grow the sector. We hope that through continued discussion and collaboration with the policymakers, we will be able to fully implement the principles of the 'ease of doing business,'" he said adding that the industry needs to be able to invest in growth.

While talking about the industry

potential, Madhavan said television penetration in India is only 70% and has huge space to grow.

"We have 300 million households and even today barely 200 million households are connected to TV. That is another positive thing for the industry, one-third of the market is still away from the television," he said.

Moreover, television and streaming platforms' average revenue per user in India remains much lower compared to developed markets.

"Out of 1.2 billion mobile phones, only half of them are smartphones,

The industry has the potential to grow from \$24 billion to \$100 billion by 2030, which is what our vision is and our target should be. The potential of the media industry is untapped and humongous

K MADHAVAN | MD, STAR & DISNEY INDIA



which is 600 million. Mobile phones act today as personal screens and play a major role in content consumption," said Madhavan, who is also chairman of the CII National Committee on Media and

Entertainment.

He added that the number of screens has gone up dramatically from 200 million to 600 million screens, and is growing.

While talking about the film industry, Madhavan said it is passing through a "critical" phase.

It has suffered in theatrical revenue in 2020 but they grew in digital and non-linear space, which is expected to grow at 30% CAGR (compound annual growth rate) in the coming two years.

"The film industry has to take full advantage of new forms of distribution, to expand to new markets," he added.

However, he also added that the content must be created with a global appeal for global audiences and distributed around the world.

"For example, Hollywood has been earning almost 50 per cent of its theatrical revenues from outside the United States. Whereas in India, it is just 10-12%," he said.

AFTER BATSMEN'S DISMAL SHOW, BOWLERS TAKE CHARGE TO HELP INDIA TAKE CONTROL OF D/N TEST

Ashwin spins web around Oz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Dec 18: Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin produced one of his most memorable overseas performances as Indian bowlers collectively terrorised Australia into submission, bowling them out for 191 on the second day of the opening Day/Night Test here Friday. Courtesy Ashwin's 18-3-55-4, India successfully managed to neutralise a sub-par first innings score of 244. Rival skipper Tim Paine (73) was the only home batsman to show stomach for a fight.

With a handy first innings lead of 53 runs, India found their opener Prithvi Shaw's defence being breached again before ending the day at 9/1 - with an overall lead of 62 runs.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah (2/52) played the night watchman's role after Shaw's dismissal, giving company to Mayank Agarwal (5 batting) when stumps were drawn.

Indian magnificent bowling effort during the day could be segregated into three phases. In the early afternoon, Bumrah bowled the fuller length to make the first inroads.

Ashwin then took charge of late afternoon with his perfect length and made use of the additional bounce to blow away the middle-order.

And then under lights, Umesh Yadav (3/40) was brilliant with the old pink kookaburra as he bowled back of the length to get rid of the dangerous Marnus Labuschagne and Pat Cummins.



Mohammed Shami (0/41) was also immaculate with his length but he was let down by the fielders as the only glitch in their second day's performance was a poor catching effort.

But Virat Kohli wouldn't mind even four dropped chances as his bowlers forced the Australian batsman to go into a defensive shell in their 72.1 overs on second day.

It was one of the most 'Un-Australian' batting by a team that prides itself on intent. Save for

Labuschagne (47 off 119 balls), who couldn't capitalise on three reprieves, and skipper Paine, no other batsman seemed to know how to bat on a surface, which picked pace on the second day.

After Bumrah removed the two openers in the first session, Ashwin did the star turn in the second session. Ashwin set up Smith with a few that were flighted with the angle and then bowled one that straightened and bounced a touch more. Smith, expecting turn, squared up and Ajinkya Rahane at first slip made no mistake.

Travis Head (7) wasn't reading Ashwin well and the left-hander got a flighted one that took the leading edge of his bat, which ended in a chest-high return catch for the bowler.



LEADING FROM FRONT: Australia skipper Tim Paine cuts one through the point region during his innings against India

Debutant Cameron Green (11) would curse himself as his was a long hop asking to be pulled but the extra bounce got the top edge and captain Virat Kohli pulled off a fabulous catch at mid-wicket, diving full-stretch to his right.

This was after, Bumrah bowled a brilliant opening spell to send back the Australian opening pair of Joe Burns (8) and Matthew Wade (8) for identical scores. The two were ready to stay put and wait but Bumrah angled a fuller one into Wade, which rapped him on the pads while he was trying to whip it to mid-wicket.

Burns, the man going through a bad patch, had changed his stance to a more open-chested one. He also did all the hard work but he was susceptible to being leg before. Bumrah fired one fast and full into the block-hole and got the decision in his favour as 'Umpire's Call' in the DRS went India's way.

Labuschagne was insanelly lucky when Bumrah dropped a dolly at fine leg after the batsman had mistimed a pull shot off Shami. Before that it was a diving Wriddhiman Saha, who missed a tough but gettable edge off Bumrah's bowling.

After the dinner break, Labuschagne on 21, was dropped by

Shaw at square leg and that was also a mistimed pull-shot. Umesh was fantastic in the twilight as he trapped Labuschagne with a delivery that kept low and then a short ball saw Cummins awkwardly fending it to gully. A run-out and the fourth wicket by Ashwin saw Paine waging a low battle to reduce first innings lead.

At the start of the day, India's tail-enders contributed precious little and the visitors' first innings folded in just 93.1 overs.

Mitchell Starc (4/53) and Pat Cummins (3/48) dismissed the last four batsmen for an addition of only 11 runs to the overnight score.

Day 2 play's reactions

Ravichandran Ashwin

About comparisons: Sometimes comparisons and the way we look at things are very skewed. Do we ask batsmen to go and watch Steve Smith bat and replicate that all the time when we tour Australia? Nobody does that to Alastair Cook or Joe Root. I think we are all aware that everybody skins cat differently. Obviously, you can learn. There is no stoppage or anything. You can always learn from people as to how they go about their business.

Jobs in hand: I have always maintained especially when you play abroad, passages of play needs to go your way because you are doing a twin job, and doing it against conditions. As far as I am concerned, I see if I can learn and put in earnest effort is all that I can do. How people perceive it is for them to do.

Enjoy the game: Things can be blown out of context and I have put those things in the shelf in the backyard. I really want to enjoy my trade and want to have all the fun I possibly can. For me, I don't want to sit back and think whether it's my best performance or not as there is still an innings to go and looking forward to entire Test series.

TIM PAINE

Facing pink ball: Definitely the quality of the fast bowling is exceptional. Pink ball that is probably another factor. It takes time to adjust and it is not as easy to pick up and I will tell you, it is harder for the player.

Team's show: Yes, (it is) certainly not our best performance but credit to them. They (India) bowled really well, put us under pressure, we just could not get any momentum or any partnerships together, we couldn't quite do that today, but our top order has done a good job for a fair while now.

Hopeful of a comeback: At the end of the day, we have got to chase, we know it is going to be a challenge, the quality of bowling is exceptional, anything can happen tomorrow. We know our fast-bowling attack and Lyon. We have got the ability to take quick wickets, and obviously we will try and do that tomorrow, keep the scoreboard under control and hopefully one of our great bowlers has bit of run-on and somewhat momentum and I think and hopefully keep that score as low as possible.

RICKY PONTING

Approach against Ashwin: (Australian) batsmen have looked to be quite aggressive against Ashwin. I think they've just underestimated Ashwin and how good he is. They've looked to score their runs from him, and it's been their undoing.

SCORECARD

INDIA 1ST INNINGS (OVERNIGHT 233/6)

Wriddhiman Saha c Paine b Starc 9, Ravichandran Ashwin c Paine b Cummins 15, Umesh Yadav c Wade b Starc 6, Jasprit Bumrah not out 4, Mohammed Shami c Head b Cummins 0; **Extras:** 18 (b-2, lb-8, nb-7, w-1); **Total: 244 all out (93.1 overs).**

FALL: 1/0 (Shaw), 2/32 (Agarwal), 3/100 (Pujara), 4/188 (Kohli), 5/196 (Rahane), 6/206 (Vihari), 7/233 (Ashwin), 8/235 (Saha), 9/240 (Yadav), 10/244 (Shami).

BOWLING: Mitchell Starc 21-5-53-4, Josh Hazlewood 20-6-47-1, Pat

Cummins 21.1-7-48-3, Cameron Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.

AUSTRALIA 1ST INNINGS

Matthew Wade lbw b Bumrah 8, Joe Burns lbw b Bumrah 8, Marnus Labuschagne lbw b Yadav, Steve Smith c Rahane b Ashwin 1, Travis Head c & b Ashwin 7, Cameron Green c Kohli b Ashwin 11, Tim Paine not out 73, Pat Cummins c Rahane b Yadav 0, Mitchell Starc run out 15, Nathan Lyon c Kohli b Ashwin 10, Josh Hazlewood c Pujara b Yadav 8; **Extras:** 3 (lb-3); **Total: 191 all out (72.1 overs).**

FALL: 1/16 (Wade), 2/29 (Burns), 3/45 (Smith), 4/65 (Head), 5/79 (Green), 6/111 (Labuschagne), 7/111 (Cummins), 8/139 (Starc), 9/167 (Lyon), 10/191 (Hazlewood).

BOWLING: Umesh Yadav 16.1-5-40-3, Jasprit Bumrah 21-7-52-2, Mohammed Shami 17-4-41-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 18-3-55-4.

INDIA 2ND INNINGS

Prithvi Shaw b Cummins 4, Mayank Agarwal batting 5; **Total: 9/1 (6 overs).**

FALL: 1/7 (Shaw).

BOWLING: Mitchell Starc 3-1-3-0, Pat Cummins 3-2-6-1.



POOR START: Prithvi Shaw is castled by Pat Cummins (not in pic) in the second innings, Friday

PICS: ESPNCRICINFO

Rashford brace seals Man United victory

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sheffield, Dec 18: Hours after being honored for his impact off the field, Marcus Rashford also delivered in front of goal. The striker scored twice to lead Manchester United's recovery to beat Sheffield United 3-2 in the Premier League Thursday.

The evening began with Rashford — in a pre-recorded segment at the FIFA Best awards — receiving the fair play accolade from world football's governing body for his campaign to combat child poverty and pressure the British government into providing free meals.

His goals at Bramall Lane lifted United to sixth in the league, five points behind leader and champion Liverpool with a game in hand. For the sixth successive away game in the league, Man United fell behind before winning. But it started badly for Dean Henderson in the United goal at the club where was previously on loan.

There was no sign of danger when United captain Harry Maguire played a return pass to Henderson but he dawdled enough for Oliver Burke to close him down and flick the ball into the path of

David McGoldrick to score from close range after five minutes.

But Rashford raced onto a superb ball by Victor Lindelof from his own half and took a sublime touch before slotting in the equaliser in the 26th minute.

It was a gut punch followed by a 33rd-minute uppercut. Paul Pogba found Anthony Martial with a clipped ball into the box and goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale failed to deal with the forward's initial effort, allowing him to convert the rebound in front of the empty stand. Rashford was on target again six minutes into the second half. Pogba cut out a misplaced throw-in, turned smartly and produced a smooth pirouette to start a break from deep in the United half.

Referee Michael Oliver allowed play to continue when Mason Greenwood was fouled in the middle of a fine team move that ended with Rashford all too easily beating Ramsdale.

Sheffield United found find a way past their former goalkeeper again in the 87th minute as John Fleck swung in a corner and Lindelof's header ricocheted back off McGoldrick into the goal.



Marcus Rashford wheels away in celebration after scoring against Sheffield United, Thursday

BOXING WC: SIMRANJEET ENTERS FINALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: World Championship bronze-medallist Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) stormed into the finals of boxing's Cologne World Cup in Germany, defeating Ukraine's Marianna Basanets Friday. The Asian silver-winner prevailed 4-1 to assure herself of a place in the summit bouts to be held Saturday.

Earlier, Sonia Lather (57kg) set up a clash against compatriot Manisha in the semifinals by beating Ukraine's Snizhana Kholodkova 3-2. Manisha got a bye into the last-four stage.

Satish Kumar (+91kg) kicked off his campaign with an impressive 5-0 win over Moldova's Zavanin Alexei to make the last-four stage and be assured of at least a bronze. Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) defeated Germany's Umar Bajwa 5-0 to also enter the semifinals. In two other 57kg bouts, Gaurav Solanki got the better of another local hope in Murat Yildirim.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Goa, Dec 18: NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) slumped to their first defeat in their Indian Super League (ISL) campaign as they went down 0-1 to Jamshedpur FC at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here, Friday.

Aniket Jadhav's strike (53rd minute) was the difference between the two sides in what was the 500th game of the ISL. TP Rehmesh also pulled off a terrific penalty save in the second-half to keep Jamshedpur's unbeaten

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Geneva, Dec 18: Robert Lewandowski won his biggest personal prize, showing that a forward not named Messi or Ronaldo can be voted the world's best football player.

The Poland captain was named the FIFA Best Men's Player for 2020 after his 55-goal season lifted Bayern Munich to a sweep of international and domestic trophies.

Lewandowski topped a three-player shortlist that included Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Voting was by a global jury of national team captains and coaches, plus selected journalists and fans.

Though FIFA hosted the virtual ceremony in Zurich, its president Gianni Infantino went to Munich to present the trophy in person.

Lewandowski joined Luka Modric, the Croatia and Real Madrid midfielder who won in 2018, as the only players in the past 13 years to deny both Messi and Ronaldo the victory.

Lucy Bronze was voted the best women's player to give England its first individual victory at the FIFA awards. A Champions League win-

KLOPP, BRONZE AMONG FIFA AWARD WINNERS

Lewandowski 'The Best' among men



ner with Lyon, she has since joined Manchester City.

Bronze won the vote ahead of her former Lyon teammate Wendi Renard and Pernille Harder, who helped Wolfsburg to the Champions League final.

Lewandowski is also the first men's winner from a club outside Spain since Ronaldo won the 2008 award as a Manchester United player.

A Bayern player had not won since FIFA created a world player

award in 1991. The club twice saw its stars relegated to third place by Messi and Ronaldo: Franck Ribery in 2013, and Manuel Neuer in 2014.

Jurgen Klopp denied Bayern a sweep of the FIFA men's awards by being voted the best coach for a second straight year.

Klopp, who guided Liverpool to become champion of England for the first time in 30 years, won more votes than Hansi Flick, who took over at Bayern mid-season. Marcelo Bielsa of English second-tier cham-

OTHER AWARDS

Best Women's Goalkeeper: Sarah Bouhadid (France, Lyon)

Best Men's Goalkeeper: Manuel Neuer (Germany, Bayern Munich)

Fair Play Award: Mattia Agnese

FIFA Puskas Award: Son Heung-min (Spurs)

FIFA FIFPRO Women's World-XI: Christiane Endler, Lucy Bronze, Wendie Renard, Millie Bright, Delphine Cascarin, Barbara Bonansea, Veronica Boquete, Megan Rapinoe, Pernille Harder, Vivianne Miedema, Tobin Heath.

FIFA FIFPRO Men's World-XI: Alisson Becker, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Sergio Ramos, Virgil van Dijk, Alphonso Davies, Kevin de Bruyne, Thiago Alcantara, Joshua Kimmich, Lionel Messi, Robert Lewandowski, Cristiano Ronaldo.

panion Leeds was third.

Sarina Wiegman, who led the Netherlands to the 2019 World Cup final, was voted the best coach in women's football. She will take over the England team next year.

Jamshedpur hand NEUFC season's first defeat

POST NEWS NETWORK

streak against NorthEast intact. Both sides were unable to break the deadlock in the first half as they managed to cancel out each other's threat. As a result, no shots on target were registered.

NorthEast started the second half with great intensity in pursuit of the opening goal. But a quick counter-attack from Jamshedpur saw them concede first.

Isaac Vanmalsanwma and Jackichand Singh linked up well in the opposition box. The latter

then swung in a cross for an unmarked Jadhav, who found the back of the net with ease.

But despite conceding first, the Highlanders too had their chance to make amends soon after the hour mark through a penalty. The referee pointed to the spot when Eze brought down Benjamin Lambot in the box. Sylla stepped up to take the spotkick but Rehmesh dived the right way and produced a fine save to ensure his side remained in the driver's seat.

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Aniket Jadhav celebrates his goal with a teammate

PICS: ISL