



POOJA ALL GEARED UP

Pooja Hegde is gearing up for the release of her upcoming pan-India film 'Radhe Shyam' in which she stars opposite Prabhas

LEISURE P2



MASKS ARE A MUST

Face coverings are now compulsory in England, as stricter measures are being introduced to tackle the Omicron variant

INTERNATIONAL P10



ENGLAND FIGHT BACK

Joe Root and Dawid Malan come to England's rescue in the second innings of the first Ashes Test against Australia

SPORTS P12

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53 migrants die in Mexico truck crash

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ: Rescue workers rushing to a highway accident found a horrific scene of death and injury after a freight truck jammed with as many as 200 migrants tipped over and crashed into the base of a steel pedestrian bridge in southern Mexico. The migrants inside the cargo trailer were flipped, tossed and crushed into a pile that mingled the living and the dead. By late Thursday, the death toll stood at 53, and authorities said at least 54 people had been injured. It was one of the worst single-day death tolls for migrants in Mexico since the 2010 massacre of 72 migrants by the Zetas drug cartel in the northern state of Tamaulipas. P10



Assange can be extradited from UK to US

London: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange Friday moved a step closer to facing criminal charges in the United States for one of the biggest ever leaks of classified information after Washington won an appeal over his extradition in an English court. Assange, 50, is wanted in the US over the publication of thousands of classified military and diplomatic documents in 2010 and 2011. Friday's ruling means the US authorities won their appeal against a January UK court ruling that the Australian national could not be extradited due to concerns over his mental health after the court was felt reassured by the US promises to reduce the risk of suicide.

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Srimandir to remain closed on New Year



Puri: The famed Shree Jagannath temple in Puri will remain closed for devotees from December 31 to January 2, an official said Friday. The decision was taken at a meeting of the 'Chhattish Niyog' (the temple's apex body), said Krishan Kumar, the chief administrator of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration. The decision was taken in view of the possible rush on New Year's day amid the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the state, he said.

Bargarh Dhanu Yatra postponed



Bargarh: In view of the pandemic situation and fear of a possible third wave, the district administration has postponed the world famous Dhanu Yatra in Bargarh this year. Dhanu Yatra is the largest open theatre festival in the world. A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the Dhanu Yatra Mahotsav Committee Friday, keeping in view the guidelines of the state government. The meeting was presided over by the District Collector. On the other hand, the district administration is waiting for the government guidelines for Covid-19 for January, 2022. P5

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



At the rate we journalists were getting exposed I am happy the farmers have called off the agitation!

Complete washout

Winter session of Odisha Assembly adjourned sine die 20 days before schedule as Opposition parties create uproar over the sensational Mamita Meher kidnap and murder case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The winter session of the Assembly was adjourned sine die by the Speaker Friday, 20 days ahead of its scheduled end (December 31).

Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro announced sine die adjournment of the House in the absence of Opposition BJP and Congress members after passing the Appropriation Bill for the Supplementary Statement of Expenditure, 2021-22 of ₹19,833 crore.

Amid uproar by the Opposition, the Appropriation Bill was passed in the House. Soon after that, Government Chief Whip Pramila Mallick moved a motion proposing sine die adjournment of the session considering the Covid-19 situation and no legislative business left to discuss before the House.

Protesting the move, BJP and Congress members staged walk-out and sat on dharna near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the



Opposition members show placards and raise slogans in the House, Friday

Assembly premises.

Out of 26 business days of the winter session that started December 1, the House was assembled for only nine working days. However, the session was completely washed out over the Mamita Meher kidnap and murder case. The Assembly was unable to conduct business smoothly even for a single day.

From the very beginning, BJP and Congress were demanding the removal of Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra for his alleged link with the prime accused in the Meher murder case.

As the government was not in a

mood to accept their demand, the Opposition continued to create ruckus in the House till Friday.

On the other side, the treasury bench members also created uproar in the House targeting the Centre over several issues including price rise. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had made a statement in the Assembly over the Mamita issue assuring the House that his government is committed to give justice to the victim. The Speaker has also conveyed all party meetings several times. However, all such attempts of the government failed to bring normalcy in the House.

The Assembly witnessed inno-

quate protests like beating of gongs and sprinkling of 'Ganga Jal' during the session.

Except the Appropriation Bill, not a single Bill was either introduced or passed in the Assembly during the nine days. The House had passed a resolution authorising the state government to move the Centre for declaring the 1817 'Paika Bidroha' as India's first war of Independence.

BJP legislator JN Mishra slammed the government for ending the session much before the scheduled date. "This has become a habit of this government to adjourn the Assembly sessions much before the time. Sometimes, they adjourn it before 20 days and some other time 25 or 30 days," Mishra alleged.

Congress leader Narasingha Mishra said, "Though there was no official business to discuss in the House, we had moved notice to discuss the Mamita murder case and those who were involved in it. However, Opposition parties were not given opportunity to discuss."

BJD legislator Debi Mishra said, "We had invited them for a debate. The Opposition parties should have taken a lead in the debate as adjournment motion is their prerogative. It is unfortunate that they have not taken advantage of this."

REPEAT VIOLENCE



Police lathi charge at a protester in Bhubaneswar, Friday.

OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: A day after a bloody clash between security personnel and the Bharatiya Janata Party workers, the capital city Friday witnessed similar confrontations between the police and Congress workers who demanded the resignation of Minister of State for Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra, for his alleged involvement in the Mamita Meher murder case.

Several NSUI members sustained severe injuries as police resorted to baton charge to disperse them. Sources said hundreds of NSUI members descended at Lower PMG to gherao the Assembly demanding the resignation and arrest of Mishra. The security personnel intercepted NSUI workers moving towards the Assembly near the barricade. Some Congress workers managed to reach the Assembly gate after breaching

the security cordon. Police arrested several agitators that irked the Congress workers who pelted eggs and tomatoes at police. The scuffle later turned violent after NSUI members reportedly tried to set two police vans on fire. Alert fire and police personnel doused the fire. Following this, police started using baton on protesters that left many of them injured.

Meanwhile, police chased the protesters into Congress Bhawan. Later, Congress leaders including Tara Prasad Bahinipati staged a sit-in alleging police excess at Master Cantonment. They relented after DCP Umashankar Dash's assurance of a probe into the incident. Speaking to **ORISSA POST**, Dash said, "The police were forced to use force after the protesters tried to set two police vans on fire. We will inquire into the reasons that led the police to enter the Congress Bhawan."

Use of masks declining in country, warns govt

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: The government Friday warned about the declining compliance to mask usage in the country amid concerns over the Omicron variant of the coronavirus and urged people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and get vaccinated to prevent surge in cases.

Referring to an assessment by the Institute of Health Metrics, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr VK Paul at a press conference said the usage of masks in the country has declined to pre-second wave levels and "in a way we have again entered a danger zone."

The use of masks is declining, he pointed out, and said "from the point of view of protection capability, we are now operating

at a low level...At a risky and unacceptable level." "We have to remember that both vaccines and masks are important," Paul emphasised. He said people must learn from the global situation.

Referring to a recent analysis by the WHO, Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry, Lav Agarwal, said the WHO has highlighted that Public Health and Social Measures (PHSM) compliance is declining with increase in vaccination rate.

"We need to diligently adhere to these public health measures in order to safeguard ourselves and those around us against Covid-19, the WHO has said," he said.

He said citizens must strictly follow Covid-appropriate behaviour to prevent surge in cases as being seen in European countries.

BIDDING ADIEU



Kritika and Tarini, daughters of late Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and Madhulika Rawat, look on during the cremation of their parents at Bar Square crematorium in New Delhi, Friday. (REPORT ON P7)

PTI PHOTO

ROW OVER NON-VEG FOOD IN GUJARAT

How can you decide what I eat?: HC to civic body

Gujarat HC slams BJP-ruled Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for its drive against handcarts selling non-vegetarian food items on streets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Dec 10: The Gujarat High Court has questioned how people could be stopped from "eating what they want" outside their house as it slammed the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) for its drive against handcarts selling non-vegetarian food items on streets.

The HC made the remarks Thursday while disposing of a petition filed by nearly 20 street ven-

dors claiming the AMC's recent anti-encroachment drive was targeted at handcarts selling non-vegetarian food items, an allegation denied by the civic body. At one point, Justice Biren Vaishnav, who was hearing the petition, got agitated and asked the AMC "What is your problem? How can you decide what I should eat outside my house? How can you stop people from eating what they want? Suddenly because someone in power thinks that this is what they want to do?"

Rights activists welcomed the order, saying no one has the right to infringe upon personal liberty of others. Through the petition, street vendors from Ahmedabad, whose handcarts were seized by the BJP-ruled AMC, alleged the



drive against vendors selling egg and non-veg food items was launched in the city after an elected representative in Rajkot city gave a negative opinion about such food being sold on roads.

Advocate Ronith Joy, appearing

for petitioners, termed the AMC's move as an act of 'bigotry' and claimed the civic body has removed the handcarts selling non-veg food on the ground they are not maintaining hygiene. Joy stated that non-veg vendors were singled out

for eviction on the ground that the food they were serving is not vegetarian food.

Agitated by the submission, Justice Vaishnav said, "Will the Municipal Commissioner decide what I will eat? Tomorrow they will tell me not to drink sugarcane juice because it will cause diabetes. Or tell me that coffee is bad for health."

When advocate Satyam Chhaya, appearing for the AMC, denied allegations saying the drive is meant only to remove encroachments, Justice Vaishnav said, "You are doing it in the garb of encroachment because you don't like non-veg. It's always about the convenience of the respondent. Don't do it to satisfy someone's ego."

DOUBLE MURDER

Mahanga IIC finally appears in JMFC court

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nischintakoili, Dec 10: IIC of Mahanga police station Nihar Ranjan Mohanty has finally deposed before the court of the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) in Salepur Friday in connection with the sensational double murder of former Mahanga block chairman and BJP leader Kulamani Baral and his associate Dibyasingha Baral.

The court had earlier issued a show-cause notice to IIC Mohanty as to why disciplinary action should not be taken against him for not submitting the reinvestigation status report and Call Detail Records (CDRs) of the accused persons in the case.

November 20, the JMFC court, Salepur, had expressed displeasure over the slow pace of investigation into the Mahanga double murder case in which State Law Minister Pratap Jena's name had figured in the FIR.

Kulamani and Dibyasingha were murdered January 2, this year.

Based on the protest petition filed by Ramakant, son of deceased Kulamani Baral, the court had directed Mahanga police for fresh investigation and asked it to submit the status report and CDRs of the accused persons - the minister's assistant Bapi Biswal, Block Chairman Sharat Naik and late Prafulla Biswal - by November 25.

When the case was heard November 25, the Mahanga IIC sought more time. The court expressed displeasure and directed him to take immediate steps to collect and preserve CDRs of all accused persons and submit an updated case diary of the reinvestigation by November 29.

Challenging the decision of JMFC court, Mahanga police had filed a petition in the Additional District-Cum-Sessions Judge court, Salepur. However, the court Wednesday rejected the petition.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	58786.67 ↓ 20.46
NIFTY	17511.30 ↓ 5.50
DOLLAR	76.07 ↑ ₹0.13
EURO	85.89 ↓ ₹0.07
GOLD	₹48,056 ↑ ₹117
SILVER	₹61,019 ↑ ₹221

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	29.0°C	29.0°C
TEMP. MIN	17.6°C	16.8°C
Humidity	79%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather very likely	

leisure



JUSSIE CONVICTED OF LYING ABOUT HATE CRIME ATTACK

Former *Empire* star Jussie Smollett was convicted of five counts of lying to the police about the incident, where he claimed to have been the victim of a racist, homophobic assault. He was however, acquitted on a sixth charge. At trial this week, Smollett, 39, stood by denials that he staged the hoax attack against himself.

'FILM BUSINESS ISN'T AS GLAMOROUS AS IT ONCE WAS'

Actress Jennifer Aniston, who shot to global fame as Rachel Green in *Friends*, believes the industry has changed dramatically over recent years. She said, "It's not the same industry that it used to be. It's not that glamorous anymore."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Expect the unexpected. You may not understand everything that happens, but that's okay, says Ganesh. Avoid too much activity, as you may be too tired to go out in the evening. Put on your sequins and gloss, the stars predict some music and dancing coming your way!

TAURUS
You will wake up feeling adventurous today, says Ganesh. Experimentation and an unusual attitude will manifest itself in how you think today. Your subordinates may influence some of your decisions at work this afternoon. On the whole, you will take time to think things out before making any vital decisions, predicts Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will be busy involved in planning for and activities related to travelling. Exposure to various types of people and cultures will provide you with food for thought. You need to guard against being arrogant and be humble, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Ganesh oversees a good news from abroad. You will get pleasant surprise from known or unknown sources. A sage counsel from elders will prove useful all your life. You tend to be quite emotional today.

LEO
A good deed is never wasted. Remember this as today, you shall find yourself in the incredible position of being of invaluable assistance to someone in need, says Ganesh. So lend out that helping hand and be assured that your generosity will not be forgotten.

VIRGO
You will be smitten by the love bug today. And Ganesh says make the most of it. In matters regarding your career, you will soon sight your destination, and make renewed efforts to reach it as fast as you possibly can. A candle-light dinner will put you in high spirits.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you will find happiness and enhanced vigor today. You will make plans to go with your friends or family members for a short trip or excursion. You will be confused about something in the day which will drive you to seek answers in religious or philosophical discourses.

SCORPIO
You may come across unexpected monetary gains today, says Ganesh. You are likely to be tagged as a 'reliable' employee of the company and you may be entitled for many other benefits that your company has to offer. This may increase your energy and enthusiasm towards work.

SAGITTARIUS
Time and tide waits for none, they say. To make the most of the present times, you need to pull up your socks. You will soon take up the challenging task of getting organised in your ways and focusing on the goals of life.

CAPRICORN
If you are a civil servant, good times are ahead for you. Also, you may have to deal with the government for your business and it will turn out to be a fruitful transaction, says Ganesh. If you are a lawyer, doctor, or any other professional, you will need to prove you metal and ensure that you utilise the every opportunity coming your way.

AQUARIUS
Explore the world today, as luck is standing by your side and everything you touch will turn into gold, be it in your business or profession, foresees Ganesh. You are trying too hard to succeed, and you may get tempted to compromise on your moral values.

PISCES
You will find yourself in a good mood today. Your co-workers will also enjoy being around you. You will be able to influence people for the positive with your respectful demeanor and your sense of humor. You could find yourself splurging on yourself at a spa or a beauty parlor, says Ganesh.



Anushka confirms 'KatVic' will be her new neighbours

Mumbai: Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif, who became husband and wife Thursday, will soon move into a new plush apartment in Mumbai's Juhu neighbourhood, where Anushka Sharma and her husband, Team India's Test captain, Virat Kohli, will be their neighbours. Even as Bollywood celebrities showered their best wishes on the newly-wed couple, Anushka, too, congratulated 'KatVic' and confirmed

that they will indeed be her neighbours. Anushka, who has worked with Katrina in Yash Chopra's 2012 romantic drama *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, took to Instagram and shared Katrina's post with pictures of the couple. Anushka wrote in the caption: "Congratulations to both of you beautiful people! Wishing you guys a lifetime of togetherness, love and understanding."

She continued in the caption: "Also glad you are finally married so that now you can move into your house soon and we can stop hearing construction sounds." Anushka tagged both Vicky and Katrina in the story. Vicky and Katrina, according to sources, have rented a sea-facing apartment, the security deposit of which is said to be close to Rs 1.75 crore and the rent is around Rs 8 lakh a month.

COMPLAINT AGAINST DEEPIKA AND MAKERS OF '83

Mumbai: Ranveer Singh starrer '83 is facing legal trouble and his wife Deepika Padukone has also been dragged into this controversial case since she is one of the producers of this movie. The UAE-based financier reportedly has filed a complaint against the makers alleging that his company was promised good returns by Vibri Media after they invested approximately Rs 16 crores. Since he did not get what was promised, the businessman approached the Andheri Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Mumbai and filed a complaint.

The report added that their funds were directed into multiple agreements involving filmmakers Kabir Khan, Sajid Nadiadwala, and Deepika Padukone, who is one of the producers, among others. It is being said that the money was used for the production of '83 without getting any written consent from the businessman. In his statement, Advocate Rizwan Siddiquee claimed that his client has filed a criminal complaint against all the producers of '83 on the grounds of cheating and criminal conspiracy.

'83 is directed by Kabir Khan and narrates the story of Indian cricket team's victory at the 1983 World Cup. With Ranveer step-

ping into the shoes of Kapil Dev for this real life drama, Deepika will be seen essaying his onscreen wife, Romi Bhatia. This entertainer also stars Pankaj Tripathi, Tahir Raj Bhasin, Jiiva, Saqib Saleem, Jatin Sarna, Chirag Patil, Dinker Sharma, Nishant Dahiya, Harry Sandhu, Sahil Khattar and Ammy Virk among others. '83 will hit the screens December AGENCIES



'Soch liya introduces roller-coaster chemistry shared by lead characters'

Mumbai: Actress Pooja Hegde, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming pan-India film *Radhe Shyam*, says the song *Soch liya* from the movie introduces the chemistry her character Prerana shares with Prabhas's. The film will be released in four languages — Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam. The latest song is sung by Arijit Singh and composed by Mithoon. Pooja's avatar in *Soch Liya* has classic European get-up and vintage charm written all over it. Talking about the number, Pooja said: "*Soch Liya* presents many shades of Prerana in *Radhe Shyam*. I'm thrilled that the song is out now. What's special about it is that

it takes viewers through a mixed bag of emotions. "It introduces the roller-coaster of the chemistry the lead characters share. I'm happy to have a song I can hear on the loop." The song shows Pooja staging a plethora of emotions while she reacts to flirtation by her co-star Prabhas, evades him and seems immune to his charm. Her expressions hint at separation and spur curiosity about her role in the epic saga. *Radhe Shyam* is slated for release January 14, 2022. Being a Radha Krishna Kumar's directorial, *Radhe Shyam* is billed as an epic love story made under UV Creations banner.

Kartik & Kriti turn gym partners

Mumbai: After *Luka Chuppi*, Kriti Sanon and Kartik Aaryan are all set to reunite for Rohit Dhawan's *Shehzada*. Recently, the stars took to their social media handles to share a selfie from the gym. In this picture, we can see the stars spending time with each other in the gym. The

co-stars can be seen waving the victory symbol and they are all smiles for the camera. While Kartik wore a black hoodie, Kriti opted for a matching trendy athleisure. The post was captioned as, "Arjun Pathak aur Mimi Sanon," along with heart emoji and hashtag *Shehzada*. As soon as he shared the post, Rohit Bose Roy commented, "So great to be back on set with you my lil mastikhor." Warda Khan commented, "Mere dono dono fav hain."



Most recently, Kartik spoke about aiming to become the topmost actor. He said, "My dream is to be the number one actor in this industry. This film gave me that opportunity. I can see that the fraternity has taken notice of me as an actor. I'm certain this will give me an opportunity to work with filmmakers that I always aspired to team up with and a chance to showcase my

talent. Steadily, the options are opening up." Earlier, Kartik had shared first poster of the movie which will hit the screens November 4, 2022.

PEANUTS



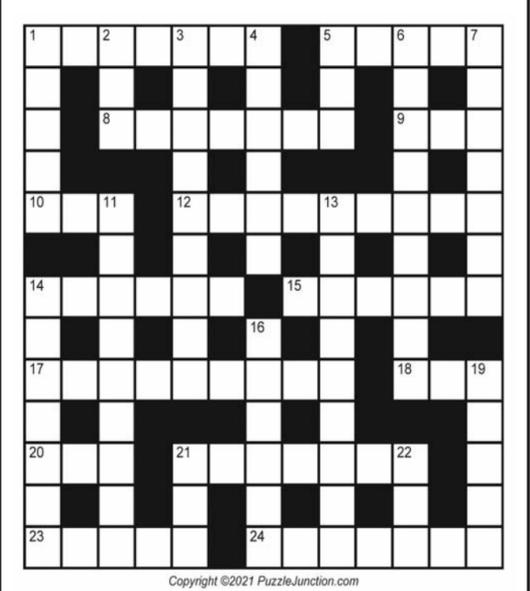
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



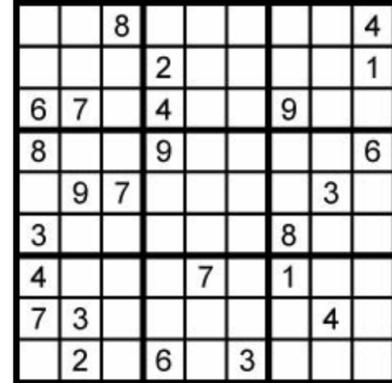
FUN post CROSSWORD



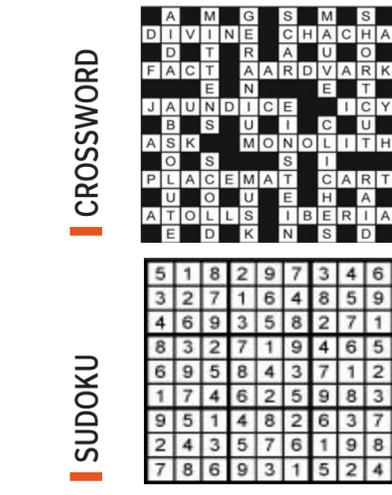
- Across**
- 1 Wardrobe
 - 5 Thicket
 - 8 Hot-air item
 - 9 Court divider
 - 10 Fly catcher
 - 12 Howling
 - 14 Chinese soup ingredient (3,3)
 - 15 Quatrain
 - 17 Squeeze box
 - 18 Dead letters?
 - 20 Kimono tie
 - 21 Bugle display, possibly
 - 23 After the wedding words
 - 24 Bowl over
 - Down**
 - 1 Permit
 - 2 Unruly crowd
 - 3 Irritability (3,6)
 - 4 Mass flight
 - 5 Hoodwink
 - 6 Retiree
 - 7 Baltic Republic
 - 11 Fine porcelain (4,5)
 - 13 Steward
 - 14 Exhaust (4,3)
 - 16 Old maid flower
 - 19 Beseech
 - 21 Portly plus
 - 22 Ratite bird

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



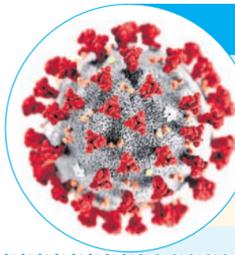
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



HOMAGE TO RAWAT

Cadets of 1(O) Bn NCC pay homage to CDS Gen Bipin Rawat and 12 others who lost their lives in a chopper crash December 8



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	26,90,02,825	24,20,49,578	53,07,163
India	3,46,74,744	3,41,05,066	4,74,735
Odisha	10,51,241	10,40,927	8,431

Prafulla Majhi joins BJD

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Expelled former Congress MLA Prafulla Majhi joined the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) at party headquarters here Friday.



A three-time MLA from Talsara Assembly constituency in Sundargarh district, Majhi had resigned from the party last week but the Congress party expelled him for indulging in anti-party activities.

Majhi joined the BJD in presence of the party's Organizational Secretary Pranab Prakash Das.

'KBC Winner', new way to trap gullible

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Of late, Odisha has been witnessing a significant rise in cybercrimes with the fraudsters adopting numerous modus operandi to lure the gullible victims, and the latest being the one through instant messaging platform WhatsApp.

Of the several tricks, the most common is messages regarding winning of lotteries or awards. The cyber fraudsters in several cases target the victims through messages regarding selection of their names and numbers for awards in popular TV quiz programme, KBC.

Recently, the fraudsters started deceiving people through WhatsApp groups. The cyber criminals are randomly adding contact numbers of victims in some groups without their permission. They are sending alluring messages on the group to trap the members. The number of

Recently, the fraudsters started deceiving people through WhatsApp groups

The cyber criminals are randomly adding contact numbers of victims in some groups without their permission

the admin of the WhatsApp group is +99 4408230313 which appears to be of an Arabian country.

A youth from Nayapalli here who is working in a media house found his number added in a group called 'KBC Winner'.

Speaking to **Orissa POST**, the victim said, "I have not received any phone call or message. However, recently I found my name added in the KBC Winner WhatsApp group. They used to post messages about some numbers winning KBC awards on the group. The numbers have been added serially which they might have collected from the sources in the telecom service provider companies."



DANCE FEST ENDS

Girls perform at the concluding ceremony of a state-level dance festival organised by the Bharat Scouts and Guides in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Actor Mihir Das hospitalised

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 10: Veteran Odia actor Mihir Das has been hospitalised after suffering a mild heart attack, sources in the medical establishment said.

The 55-year-old actor, a chronic renal patient who has been undergoing dialysis for the last few years, is on ventilator support in a hospital in Cuttack, a treating doctor said.

The actor's son Amlan said that Das is recovering fast and urged everyone to pray for his well-being.

"The heart attack was very mild in nature, and there is absolutely no problem. Blood pressure fluctuation is pretty common among kidney patients," he said.

The actor's son Amlan said that Das is recovering fast and urged everyone to pray for his well-being

Prominent members of the Odia film and television industry wished for his speedy recovery.

In a career spanning over three decades, Das has won the Best Actor Award from the state government for his performance in 'Laxmi Protima' in 1998 and 'Pheria Mo Suna Bhaumi' in 2005. His acting in 'Pua Mora Bholashankar' brought him to the limelight.

Das has also received the Best Comedian Award for 'Mu Tate Love Karuchi' in 2007 and Best Supporting Actor Award for 'Prema Adhei Akhyara' in 2010. He is also a popular anchor in socially relevant programmes on television channels.

HC, lower courts heard 3.99L cases through VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 10: As many as 3.99 lakh cases were heard by the Orissa High Court and district courts in the state from March 2020 to October this year through videoconferencing following the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

Replying to a question of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Anubhav Mohanty, Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju informed the Lok Sabha that videoconferencing emerged as the mainstay of the courts during the Covid-induced lockdowns as physical hearing and normal court proceedings in the congregational mode were not possible.

"Since the beginning of the lockdown, the district courts heard 1,01,77,289 cases through the country while High Courts heard 55,24,021 cases (total 1.57 core) till October 31 this year through videoconferencing only. The Supreme Court heard 1,50,692 cases since the lockdown up to October 29 this year. The High Court of Orissa heard 2,18,073 cases from March 23, 2020 to October 31 while the district courts in Odisha have heard 1,81,653 cases from March 2020 to October 31 this year (total to 3,99,726)," the Law Minister informed the LS.

The BJD MP sought to know the status of e-courts in the country and also asked the minister whether the government has any plans to set up e-courts in Odisha.



THE ORISSA HIGH COURT CONDUCTED HEARING OF 2,18,073 CASES THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCE FROM MARCH 23, 2020 TO OCTOBER 31 THIS YEAR

THE DISTRICT COURTS HEARD 1,81,653 CASES THROUGH VIRTUAL MODE DURING THAT PERIOD

THE SUPREME COURT HEARD 1,50,692 CASES SINCE THE LOCKDOWN UP TO OCTOBER 29 THIS YEAR

The Union minister said that 15 virtual courts have been set up in 11 states - Odisha, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and

Kashmir, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh to deal with traffic offences.

"Till December 3, these courts have handled more than 1.07 crore cases and realised more than Rs 201.96 crore in fines.

The virtual Court in Odisha was started in August 2021," the minister said.

In order to handle the Covid-19 challenges effectively and make the transition to virtual hearings smoother, funds have been provided for setting

up 235 e-Sewa Kendras at court complexes to facilitate lawyers and litigants needing details like case status, judgments/orders, court/case related information and e-Filing facilities, said the minister.

"Rs 5.01 crore has been allocated for providing equipment at videoconferencing cabins in various court complexes to facilitate virtual hearings. Rs 12.12 crore has been allocated for 1,732 helpdesk counters for filing in various court complexes," he added.



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

Odisha MPs raised law & order, disaster in Parl

Unlike the first week, the second week of the Winter Session of the Parliament saw less number of adjournments of daily business, and both Houses held proceedings amidst sloganeering by opposition parties.

During the second week, concern related to law and order situation in Odisha was raised by BJP MP Suresh Pujari. He also sought a CBI probe into several high-profile cases in the state.

Pujari, while speaking on the High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill

2021, requested the Centre for setting up a permanent bench of Orissa High Court in Western Odisha. Senior BJD MP Pinaki Misra urged the Union government to proactively focus on filling up of almost 40 per cent vacancies in the High Courts.

BJD MP Pramila Bisoyi in the Lok Sabha urged the government

to take steps for providing employment to women, who lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

The BJD MPs also submitted a memorandum to the Union Culture Ministry seeking first war of Independence tag to Paika Rebellion. The Centre, however, refused to give the status to Paika Rebellion.

BJD MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu urged the Union government to make modification in the sharing pattern under SDRF as 90:10. Citing the highest risk of natural calamities, the Berhampur MP requested the Centre to consider Odisha as a special category and a special focus state. Rajya Sabha MP Prashanta Nanda sought development of disaster resilient power infrastructure in coastal districts.

Significantly, the state MPs asked 157 starred and unstarred questions during the second week of the Winter Session. While the Lok Sabha MPs asked 96 questions, the members in the Upper House asked 61 questions. Rajya Sabha MP Sujet Kumar asked the highest 15 questions in the second week followed by Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik (14) and Lok Sabha MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu (13).

Spinal Muscular Atrophy patient's kin seek help

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: City-based Rana family approached Crowdfunding platform ImpactGuru.com to raise fund to save their son Rajveer Rana, who is suffering from SMA Type 1 (Spinal Muscular Atrophy).

An 18-month-old Rajveer is fighting against this disease which is preventing him from doing basic activities like moving, eating, breathing and swallowing.

His muscles are also slowly deteriorating. Till date, over 200 people have come forward to donate more than Rs 8.5 lakh on Crowdfunding platform ImpactGuru for Rajveer.

While Rajveer's father Kulamani Rana is an employee at a food delivery company, his mother Tamalika Rana is a housewife in Bhubaneswar.

They are unable to afford the expensive treatment of Rs 16 crore.

"Rajveer's best hope for the cure and a relatively normal life is Zolgensma, produced by Novartis which costs Rs 16 crore. The cost for this gene therapy treatment of SMA is completely beyond our means. Contributions such as yours along with our savings will enable us to buy the injection needed for little Rajveer," said Tamalika and Kulamani.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



A mock drill underway at CDA in Cuttack to deal with gas explosion like situations, Friday

OP PHOTO

Booking of social events in City now a click away

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Following the launch of online Kalyan Mandap bookings, the Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) Friday started online module to facilitate permissions by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for all social functions.

As per sources, permissions can now be obtained by registering on the Bhubaneswar.me application or website by logging through OTP authentication system. After filling the basic details in the application



form such as name, age, date of functions and others one needs to submit the application form. The application shall undergo scrutiny by officers concerned of BMC and it shall be approved after due compliance of norms.

The approval notification shall be shared with the applicant through SMS, e-mail and notification on the application and once the application is approved, the permission letter can be downloaded through the link shared through the e-mail and SMS.

Managing Director and CEO of BSCL and BMC Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Singh said, "Online module of issuing permissions for social functions by the BMC through the technology support from the Smart City will help the citizens immensely. After making the booking of BMC Kalyan Mandaps online, this would pave a new way for the citizen-friendly IT interventions under the Smart Governance system."

CAG picks holes in water quality mgmt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has found several loopholes in water quality management in urban areas of the state.

In its latest report on General and Social Sector for the year ended March 2020, the CAG said as per Odisha Urban Water Quality Monitoring Protocol (OUWQMP) issued in September 2015, there is a requirement of 115 water testing laboratories in the urban areas of the state. However, there are only 22 such labs in the state.

The audit has noted that of the 114 urban local bodies (ULBs) in the state, 62 were sourcing water from surface sources (rivers, lakes and others) thus, requiring water treatment plants (WTPs) for purification purpose. There were 93 WTPs in these 62 ULBs.

Though a basic water testing lab (WTL)

Though a basic water testing lab is required for each WTP, there were only 12 basic WTLs in 19 civic bodies

is required for each WTP, there were only 12 basic WTLs in 19 civic bodies. Thus, 81 WTPs did not have any testing lab to ensure quality of drinking water supplied, the CAG observed.

The Odisha State Urban Water Supply Policy 2013 envisaged preparation of an action plan, which, inter alia, included establishment of WTLs to achieve 100 per cent water quality by 2016-17. However, no such action plan was prepared so far, it said.

As per norms, there is a requirement of a mobile water testing laboratory for disaster management and special assigned tasks. This mobile laboratory was to move and operate in areas affected by calamities and visit reference

stations at regular intervals to perform on-site analysis.

Audit however, noticed that the state has neither established any mobile water testing laboratory nor did it have a plan to create the same to meet emergencies arising out of disasters.

Odisha witnessed two major cyclones during 2018-19 and 2019-20 disrupting the water supply and contaminating drinking water. Had the mobile WTL facility been available, water analysis could have been carried out in these disaster affected areas to ensure supply of safe drinking water, the auditor said.

The only state level laboratory had started functioning from March 2018 in PPP mode. As per terms of agreement, the private partner (SAL) was responsible for collecting water and waste water samples from bore wells and other sources at regular intervals for testing water quality.

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DEMAND NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002

You, the under mentioned Borrower / Mortgagor is hereby informed that the company has initiated proceedings against you under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and that the Notice under 13 (2) of the Act sent to you by Registered Post Ack. Due for Borrower/s has been returned undelivered. Hence, you are hereby called upon to take notice and pay the outstanding loan amount mentioned against the said account with interest accruing there from within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the company will proceed against you by exercising its right under Sub-Sec (4) of Section 13 of the Act by enforcing the below mentioned security to realize its dues with interests and costs. It is needles to mention that this notice is addressed to you without prejudice to any other remedy available to the company.

Sl. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower/s	Loan Amount	Date of Demand Notice & Amount Outstanding	Description of the Property / Secured Assets
1.	Loan A/c Nos. X0HEBHU00003065228 & X0HECHU00003144097 & HE02BHUU0000005964 Borrower & Co-borrowers : 1. Narayan Mohanty Tolapada Panabaraj, Khordha, Khurda - 752 056.	Rs. 38,00,000.00 + Rs. 1,00,000.00 and Rs. 7,65,000.00 (Total Rs. 46,65,000.00)	16.11.2021 & Rs. 36,76,167.01 + Rs. 99,066.48 and Rs. 7,75,556.00 Total Rs. 45,50,789.49 as on 15.11.2021 with further interest there on	Item No. 1 : All that piece and parcel of the land comprised in Khata No. 866/36, Plot No.899, Mouza - Palla, Tahasil-Khorda, P.S. - Khordha and No. 128, Dist - Khordha, measuring an Area of Ac.0.090 Decimal having KISSAM-Gharabari and bounded as follows On the North - Basanta Manjari Pattanaik, On the South - Bhuban Bihari Pattanaik, On the East - Self (Plot No.894/1900) (NH-16), On the West - Village Road.
2.	Sujata Das Konark Nagar, Jagannathpur, Pallahat, Begunia, Khorda Khurda - 752 056.			Item No. 2 : Dist - Khurda, Tahasil Khurda No. 458/1, P.S.- Khurda No. 128/1, Mouza - Palla Khata No. 127, Plot No. 894/1900 Area Ac.0.146 dcs, Type:Homestead, Status : Free Hold.
3.	M/s. Sri Khetra Gurukul Educational Trust Khordha Odisha, Khurda - 752 056.			
4.	M/s. Indira Public School Tolapada Panabaraj, Khordha, Khurda - 752 056.			

Date : 11.12.2021
Place : Bhubaneswar / Odisha

Authorized Officer
Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited

HC seeks replies on film awards row

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 10: The Orissa High Court Friday heard a case pertaining to the 31st Odisha State Film Awards-2019. The bench of Justice Arindam Sinha directed all concerned parties to submit their replies before December 13, the date finalised for the final hearing on the case.

Odia film director Bobby Islam had filed a petition in the HC alleging irregularities in the selection process for the awards. The petitioner had made the state government, secretary to Odia Language, Literature and Culture department and members of the jury as parties to the case. Notably, the awards would be distributed in a two-day event starting December 14.

Curtains go up for Kalinga Lit Fest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Odisha Tourism Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi inaugurated the Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) in the Capital city Friday.

Ram Prasad Subedi from Nepal Embassy, Padma Vibhushan Sitakanta Mohapatra, and Padma Bhushan Ramakanta Rath graced the inaugural ceremony.

Padma Shri Srinivas Udgate was awarded Kalinga Literary Award and Arun Kamal was felicitated with Kalinga Literary International Award at the inaugural day of the festival.

The Tourism minister said in his inaugural speech that for the last eight years, Kalinga Literary Festival has set a national benchmark. The festival is well known for its socially relevant themes and in a way compels all 'creative' people to think and articulate 'the contemporary'.

The KLF has emerged as one of the leading literary platforms in India, attracting both experienced and young litterateurs.

Bigger than ever before, the eighth edition of the festival will bring nationally and internationally acclaimed names to one platform to discuss, debate and explore commonalities in the diverse voices in literature, said Rashmi Ranjan Parida, the founder director of KLF.

A total of 30 awards were given away to eminent authors and translators by the organisers of KLF during its eighth edition.

State-level workshop on handicrafts in City

Bhubaneswar: The Directorate of Handicrafts under state Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department organised a two-day state level workshop-cum-sensitisation programme on handicrafts Friday. The workshop focused on changing the guidelines of various schemes of the department and new schemes for the development of handicrafts in the state. In addition, district officials were alerted to the successful implementation of schemes such as capacity building, market assistance, sample development, and the development of handicrafts capital. The workshop discussed in details the management of the Urban Haat, popularisation of the Odisha Handicrafts Museum and other existing schemes.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- 6th annual festival of Odisha Art Teachers' Association, Soochana Bhawan, 10am
Inauguration of state-level carrom championship by Maa Bhubaneswari Club, near Saheed Nagar Durga Mandap, 9am
Odisha Education Award-2021 by Odia Media, hotel Excellency, 6:30pm

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

Srimandir servitor nabbed for sexually harassing minor boy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 10: Singhadwar police Friday arrested a senior servitor of Srimandir here on the allegations of sexually assaulting the minor son of another servitor on the shrine premises.

The victim's father has lodged a complaint in this regard with police. He has also lodged written complaints with the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and the Puri district Superintendent of Police (SP), sources said.

"We have arrested accused Laxminarayan Khuntia of Harchandi Sahi after registering a case under various Sections of the IPC and Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The accused was admitted to a hospital after he complained of certain health complications. He was referred to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack after his health deteriorated," said Singhadwar police in-charge Sunil Kumar Pradhan.

The medical examination of the victim has been conducted and his

The accused was admitted to a hospital after he complained of certain health complications

He was referred to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack after his health deteriorated

statements have been recorded, Pradhan added.

As per the complaint, the minor boy used to escort his visually-impaired father into Srimandir. The accused had sexually assaulted the minor boy near Bhubaneswari temple on Srimandir premises around two months ago.

The accused also sexually harassed the minor boy near Goddess Laxmi's temple when the latter refused to accompany him to a hotel. He had threatened the victim of dire consequences if he reveals the incident to anyone, said the complainant.

Since then, the accused has been harassing the minor boy physically and mentally, said the victim's father in his complaint.

The victim's father also urged the administration to provide security to him and his family.



Jharsuguda youth gets new lease of life in rare surgery

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Anil Mahanandia's happiness knew no bounds as the 28-year-old Jharsuguda resident, who was unable to eat, sleep or even stand properly for years now, walked out of the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital here Friday after recovering from a surgery—claimed to be the first-of-its-kind in India and seventh in the world—for Myoclonic Epilepsy and Brainstem Cavernoma.

Noted neurosurgeon and vice chancellor of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University, that manages the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital, Ashok Kumar Mahapatra said Mahanandia was experiencing frequent hiccups and trembling besides abnormal body movements affecting his face, tongue, abdomen and thigh with

the frequency of more than 30 per minute. He was unable to eat, sleep or stand properly for years now. He could not get any relief after being treated in several hospitals within Odisha and outside.

"Senior neurologist Surjyaprakash S Choudhury diagnosed it to be a case of Myoclonic Epilepsy and started the treatment. Further investigations revealed that the patient had a tumour deep inside the brain (Brainstem Cavernoma) which was a rare condition and it required surgery that was too complicated and risky. However, a team, led by neurosurgeon Atmaranjan Das, conducted the seven-hour-long surgery November 26 to successfully remove the tumour," said Mahapatra.

Mahapatra said, "This is a rare disease and if the procedure was not done, it could have led to brain haemorrhage. We have conducted this rare surgery on the patient suc-

cessfully."

According to research publications, this surgery was the seventh such case in the world and first in India. The surgery was not attempted anywhere in the country for addressing such cases before, said Das.

"It was a surgeon's intuition that led me to take up the surgery. It was extremely challenging. However, our team was willing to take the risk. We opted for brain mapping and 3D modelling technique used to visually represent nerve tracts using data collected by diffusion MRI. And it worked," added Das.

Just a day after surgery, the patient was absolutely free from hiccups and was able to walk which could be said to be a miracle in medical science.

The expensive surgery was conducted free of cost as the patient was covered under the state government's Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana, said an official.

UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' STIR



University Teachers' Association holds a silent rally at OUAT in Bhubaneswar, Friday, to press for their various demands including recruitment to the vacant teaching posts

State logs 286 fresh nCoV cases, 3 deaths

ON THURSDAY, THE COASTAL STATE HAD RECORDED 195 NEW COVID-19 CASES AND TWO FATALITIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Odisha's Covid-19 caseload rose to 10,51,241 Friday as it reported 286 new infections, the state Health department said in its bulletin.

The coastal state's Covid death toll rose to 8,431, with three patients, two in Khurda and another in Bargarh, succumbing to the disease. According to official data, 53 Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities in the past.

Of the 286 new patients, 40 are

Odisha now has 2,137 active Covid-19 cases, while 10,40,620 people have recuperated from the highly infectious disease



children and adolescents in the age group of 0-18 years.

Khurda district, of which state Capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest number of new infections at 147. Fourteen out of 30

districts in the state did not report any new case, the Health department bulletin stated.

Odisha now has 2,137 active Covid-19 cases, while 10,40,620 people have recuperated from the

5 DEER SKINS SEIZED; 2 HELD



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Five deer skins have been seized and two persons arrested in Puri district, police said Friday.

Acting on a tip-off, the Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch along with forest officials conducted a raid near Pipli floyver Thursday and nabbed the two alleged smugglers who hail from Puri district, an officer said.

Five deer skins were seized from their possession, he said, adding that the arrested persons were handed over to the Forest Department for legal action.

Kallola releases films by kids

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: A children's film festival 'Kallola-2021' was organised by Unicef and AAINA in the state Capital Friday. The festival showcased films made by children on issues related to periods.

The films, created by 26 children, were developed, shot and edited at Tapoban High School here and Manikeswari High School in Kalahandi. Odisha Film Development Corporation chairperson and actor Kuna Tripathy said the initiative of Kallola is really praiseworthy.

"This should be continued round the year. I would like to request everyone to be a part of the awareness message and co-operate in the initiative. The films produced by these children will touch every heart," he said.

Monika Nielsen, Chief of Field Office, Unicef Odisha said, "These films made by children deal with the complex issues of periods including lack of awareness and gender discrimination very well. We believe these films can support our efforts to normalise periods and remove the shame associated with it."

Woman found dead; son alleges murder

Bhubaneswar: Shree Lingaraj police Friday recovered the body of a 51-year-old woman from her rented accommodation at Kunjapatna Sahi here. Police identified the deceased as Namita Sahoo, who hailed from Bideipur village in Bhadrak. Namita's son Tapan Kumar Sahoo, meanwhile, approached the police alleging that Samarendra Biswal of Badahabelisahi in Bhadrak has murdered her Thursday. "Namita had an illicit affair with Samarendra. There was a quarrel between the two. Soon, a mountain was made out of a molehill and, in a fit of rage, Samarendra strangled the woman to death before fleeing the spot Thursday," a police official said quoting Tapan's complaint. A case (321/21) has been registered in this regard under Sections 304B, 498A and 302 of the IPC. Probe is in progress, said an official of Shree Lingaraj police.

Convictions in OHRC up each passing year: Patel



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Chairperson Justice BK Patel Friday said that convictions in the commission on the right to life with dignity have grown each passing year and it has tried to address the issues that are responsible for the deprivation of these rights of the people.

The statement came on the oc-

casation of World Human Rights Day that was being celebrated by the rights body presided over by Patel in the presence of members Justice Raghuraj Dash and Asim Amitabh Dash.

Patel said since its inception in 2003, the commission has endeavoured to discharge the responsibility casted on it and to fulfil the aspirations with which it was created.

He also said that the OHRC has focused its attention particularly on

protecting those who cannot help themselves - whether children, women in distress, people in custody or under treatment, the elderly and infirm, the physically handicapped, the mentally challenged, the socially disadvantaged or those living with deadly diseases.

The commission's intervention has resulted in noticeable im-

provement in many illustrative areas where protection of human rights and fundamental freedom of individuals or groups are to be addressed, he mentioned.

Human Rights Commission is meant to facilitate governance. It is there for the help of the administration and the people to achieve their social, economic

and cultural rights. People are gradually coming to realise that violation of human rights is a matter which can be enforced into by the Human Rights Commission.

"This is evident from the fact that during 2021 (till December 1), about 2,891 petitions have been received by the commission," he said.

40-day OSCPCR child rights campaign concludes

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) observed Human Rights day at Soochana Bhawan here Friday. The event also marked the culmination of the commission's 40-day child rights campaign which covered the entire state.

The aim of this 40-day campaign was to spread awareness about child rights and other un-



just practices such as child marriage, child labour and sexual harassment, and to create safe en-

vironment for children.

The campaign reached out to more than 1 lakh people, said OSCPCR chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan.

The commission had earlier written to all the district Collectors to ensure Covid testing and adherence to Covid protocols for all school and college students under their respective jurisdiction

BGU observes Int'l Human Rights Day

Bhubaneswar: The Birla Global University (BGU) in the Capital city celebrated the International Human Rights Day Thursday. The event was graced by KG Balakrishnan, former Chief Justice of India and Former Chairman of National Human Rights Commission on virtual mode. Balakrishnan said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted 73 years ago December 10, was a watershed moment in history because it established the basic requirements with regard to equality, justice, dignity, along with cultural, social, and economic rights that all the countries of the world must adhere to. The welcome address was delivered by Vice Chancellor of BGU PP Mathur while LK Deb, Dean of the Birla School of Law, proposed the vote of gratitude.

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SHORT TAKES

Man hacks cousin to death in Jajpur

Jajpur: A man hacked his elder cousin to death at Brundabanpur village under Jajpur police limits in the district Friday morning. The deceased was identified as Prakash Chandra Das. Das was outside his house Friday morning when his cousin Deb Mallick arrived at the spot and had an argument with him over the issue of street light connection in the village. Subsequently, Mallick attacked Das with a sharp weapon. Das was rushed to the district headquarters hospital where he was declared dead. Villagers have handed over Mallick to the police.

Two held with silver biscuit

Sonepur: Police arrested two people for theft in Sureswari temple in Subarnapur district, Friday and recovered a silver biscuit of 120 gm from them. The accused identified as Mahadev Thappa of Dhibarapada and Sushant Behera of Kumbharpada were produced in court. The police investigation revealed that four people had stolen ornaments of the goddess. The accused had melted the ornaments after theft, said SDO Puspajali Ningi at a presser. Two others are absconding. The theft was committed November 20 night.

Death anniv of Rendo Majhi held

Bhawanipatna: The 166th death anniversary of tribal freedom fighter Rendo Majhi was observed in Kalahandi district Friday. Floral tributes were paid at the statues of Majhi and public meetings were organised in Bhawanipatna, Urladani, Rangapadar and Lubangarh areas. A torch rally was held amid beating of tribal musical instruments at Urladani where he was hanged in 1855.

₹2,200 crore worth projects to Ganjam



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Dec 10: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will visit Ganjam December 12 when he may announce projects worth ₹2,200 crore for the district.

His visit assumes importance for the district ahead of the panchayat and civic body elections. The Chief Minister will visit Taratarini shrine where he would

partake of prasad with representatives of the panchyati raj institutions.

Sarpanchs, samiti members of 509 panchayats, 22 block chairpersons and 69 zilla parishad members would attend the programme.

In view of the pandemic, the administration has made RTPCR tests mandatory for officials, police personnel, PRI members and reporters. RTPCR negative reports can only ensure participation of the people, it was learnt.

The Chief Minister would inaugurate 659 new projects worth ₹580 crore, lay foundation stones for 645 projects worth ₹1,582 crore and launch new schemes worth ₹127 crore.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT



Firefighters dousing a fire that broke out at a ricemill in Angul, Friday

OP PHOTO

PANDEMIC EFFECTS

Bargarh Dhanu Yatra postponed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Dec 10: In view of the pandemic situation and fears of the third wave, the district administration has postponed the Dhanu Yatra in Bargarh this year. Notably, the festival is the largest open theatre festival in the world.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of Dhanu Yatra Mahotsav Committee Friday, keeping in view the existing guidelines of the state government. The meeting was presided over by the Collector.

On the other hand, the administration is waiting for the government guidelines for Covid-19 for January, 2022.

It was stated that if Dhanu Yatra is possible as per fresh guidelines, another meeting will be held in this regard. Next course of action will be taken by the administration.

The *tithi* for Dhanu Yatra is from January 7 to January 17, 2022. As per tradition, 'subha stamba' establishment for the festival should be held January 19. The preparations for Dhanu Yatra are made at



FILE PHOTO

Dhanu Yatra is usually an 11-day festival that chronicles the birth of Lord Krishna and his childhood leelas, visit to Mathura and killing of Kansa

least a month or two in advance. However, organizing the festival

depending on the January guidelines may not be possible, it was said.

Dhanu Yatra is usually an 11-day festival that dramatically chronicles the birth of Lord Krishna and his childhood leelas, visit to Mathura and killing of demon Kansa.

During the festival, Bargarh is decorated as Mathura and Ambapalli village on the outskirts of the town as Gopapura. River Jira is treated as Yamuna. The drama is hosted in 14 open air theatres.

Missing sarpanch's body found in forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kamakshyanagar, Dec 10: The decomposed body of the sarpanch of Kadua Panchayat in Dhenkanal district, who went missing a few days ago, was found hanging from a tree in a forest Friday. The deceased was identified as Bibekanand Mahakud, a native of Kadua. His kin said Bibekanand was upset after falling into a debt trap and later committed suicide.

He went missing November 7. Kamakshyanagar police registered a missing report in this connection. Police seized the body in Mahulpal Bijadiha forest, 7 km from his village. His bike was found a few metres away from the spot. The body was sent for post mortem. The police have started an investigation into it.

Whale's carcass found

Berhampur: The carcass of an endangered Bryde's whale washed ashore near the border of Puri and Ganjam districts, an official said Friday. The 48-foot-long female whale was buried near the shore Friday after conducting a post-mortem. The exact cause of its death will be known only after getting the autopsy report, range officer Narasingh Behera said.

Lokayukta orders Vigilance probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur Town, Dec 10: Taking serious note of large-scale irregularities in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Lokayukta has ordered an investigation by the Vigilance department into the scam in Jajpur, a report said.

According to reports, there were allegations of irregularities in rural job scheme in Nandipur and Biruhan panchayats under Dasrathpur block. Some locals had taken up the issue with the Lokayukta.

Lokayukta has directed the Vigilance to look into the irregularities and furnish details to it by February 1, 2022.

Earlier, locals of both the panchayats had intimated the block, district administrations and the state government about the scam in the

two panchayats. Acting on allegations, former PD Vishal Singh had finalised to look into the irregularities.

However, ahead of the administrative investigation, those involved in the scam – sarpanchs, gram sevaks, panchayat executive officers and other staff had reportedly set panchayat offices on fire to destroy evidences. The fire

SCAM IN MGNREGS

personnel after dousing the fires had stated that the fires were man made, but later the administration asserted that the fires were the outcome of electric short circuits.

Locals, who decried large-scale irregularities, lost faith in the administration. Locals like Bijay Ketan Mohapatra, Pratap Nayak, Laxminarayan Pati and Sukadev moved the High Court and later the Lokayukta in this connection.

Coffee farming to get boost in Koraput courtesy SHGs

IN VIEW OF CLIMATE CONDUCTIVE TO CASH CROP, TARGET IS TO EXPAND PLANTATION IN 5000 MORE HECTARES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 10: The Odisha Livelihood Mission, the District Watershed Mission and Coffee Board have initiated efforts to promote coffee cultivation in Koraput with the help of various SHGs.

A two two-day training programme has started at the Coffee Board office on how to nurture coffee saplings. It was decided that coffee cultivation will be taken up in 5,000 hectares over next five years in the district.

"The climate of the district is conducive for coffee farming. Now, focus is given on training of SHG members. In next five years, coffee cultivation will take a big leap,"



POST NEWS NETWORK

As for coffee cultivation, director of the District Watershed Mission, Arun Das, said coffee farming will be accorded industry status in the district while a target has been set to expand this farming to 5,000 more hectares.

In the first phase, 20 members of four SHGs from Machhakund and Kujamba under Lamtaput block are being imparted training on raising of saplings so that they can yield quality saplings. Das stated that saplings raised by the SHGs will be sold for ₹12 each across the district.

Edu, leadership key to BJD tickets

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 10: With the three-tier panchayat elections round the corner, the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has decided to pick up women candidates for the polls on the basis of their educational qualification and leadership efficiency in Ganjam.

According to reports, about 50 per cent of seats for sarpanchs, zilla parishads and samiti members have been reserved for women of different categories.

There are 503 panchayats and 69 zilla parishad zones under 22 blocks in Ganjam. Over 250 seats of sarpanchs and an equal number of samiti members and 36 zilla parishad members have been reserved for women.

Both the ruling party and opposition have, meanwhile, started the process to pick up women candidates. In 22 blocks, women will be elected for 12 posts of chairperson. Since 2002 to 2017, the BJD has made clean sweeps in four panchayat elections by establishing itself as a dominant power at the grassroots level in the district.

In fact, there are instances of



POST NEWS NETWORK

women sarpanchs and block chairpersons having failed to perform properly for lack of political and leadership expertise. In most cases, their family members or husbands have to work on their behalf. This has often led to conflicts at the grassroots level. The BJD has taken such issues into account and given priority on educational qualification and leadership ability of women candidates who can discharge their duties without dependence on their kin. Some senior BJD leaders have hinted about the party's yardstick for choosing women candidates.

Even, the party will give priority on the education and leadership ability of the male candidates this time.

PANCHAYAT POLLS
The party has assigned the candidate selection on the party's block level functionaries, MLAs of their respective areas and MPs

The party has assigned the onus of candidate selection on the party's block level functionaries, MLAs of their respective areas and MPs. Besides, views of the leaders of youth, students and women wings of the party will be taken into account in the candidate selection. Candidate selection will be finalised after approval of the district and state leaders of the party. Party circles said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has given importance to women in various sectors with a host of welfare schemes being executed for them.

Some district level leaders have confirmed that efficient women leaders will be given priority by the BJD this time.

120-yr old royal era library gets short shrift

THE STATE GOVT HAD PROMISED FOR RENOVATION OF THE HERITAGE LIBRARY, BUT NO FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 10: Sriram Chandra Bhanjdeo Library, also known as Jubilee Library at Baripada is in a dilapidated state for lack of maintenance. Culture lovers have decried the sorry state of the library, an epitome of royal patronage for education. The library is as old as 120 years.

The roof of the library is leaking at various points while books are melting away.

A year ago, the state government had announced renovation of the library, but no step has been taken in this regard till date. Local people and students have demanded its renovation. The up-keep of the library has been assigned to a temporary executive committee. But the panel has not been formed for last 13 years.

December 23, 2020, the BJD had given three major proposals for the district. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had approved two of the



proposals – naming the North Odisha University as Sriram Chandra Bhanjdeo University and declaring the 120-year old library as heritage library.

BJD spokesperson Sasmit Patra

had then said the government will renovate the heritage library in such a way that it would set an example in the country. Revenue Minister Sudam Marndi and Rajya Sabha MP Mamata Mohant had

also hinted about renovation of the heritage library.

However, it was alleged that while the Chief Minister has focused on development of the district, officials of the district administration

lack the will power to carry ahead with the projects.

About six months ago, the district culture department and the works department had estimated an outlay for renovation of the library and intimated the Collector about it.

"But no funds have been sanctioned for the purpose," said district culture officer Tanuja Sirka.

BJP leader Kandra Soren slammed the state government on this count, saying that changing the name of institutions is easy but taking no step to sanction funds for the library is very unfortunate. The BJD leader accused the state government of misleading people by giving promises.

Congress leader Hemanta Das said that ahead of every election, the state government sells dreams to the people of the district by announcing projects worth crores of rupees, but later it forgets to work on its announcements.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-1298
"e" Procurement Notice
e-mail ID: rw_sambalpur@yahoo.co.in, Phone No. 0663-2401850
Bid Identification No. TENDER ONLINE SBPR - 14 of 21-22
No. 4897 Dated: 09.12.21
1. Name of the Work : Building works as per DTCN available in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in
2. Total No. of Work : 02 (Two) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.14.66 lakhs to Rs.27.66 lakhs
4. Period of Completion : 03 (Three) Calendar Months
5. Period and time of availability of bid document in the portal for bidding : 09.12.21 at 11.00 A.M. to 19.12.21 upto 5.00 P.M.
6. Date and time of opening of tender : 20.12.21 at 11.00 A.M.
7. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : E.E.R.W. Divn., Sambalpur
(1) Other details can be seen from detailed notice inviting tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
(2) Corrigendum if any shall only be published in the website: www.tenderodisha.gov.in.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division, Sambalpur
OIPR-25076/11/0015/2122

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RENGALI DAM DIVISION, RENGALI DAM SITE, ANGUL - 759105
E-mail: rengalidam@gmail.com
No. A-722 **"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**
1 Nature of the works : Repair and Maintenance of Building Work Gallery Calculations Cleaning, Construction of Drain
2 No. of works : 07 (Seven)
3 Value of works : Varies from Rs.4.85 lakh to Rs.16.61 lakh
4 Period of Completion : 03 (Three) Calendar months
5 Class of Contractors : 'D' or 'C'
6 Procurement Officer : Superintending Engineer, Rengali Dam Division, Rengali Dam Site.
7 Bid Identification No. : RDD-04/2021-22
8 Availability of tender for Online bidding : From 10.00 hrs. of 14.12.2021 to 26.12.2021 upto 15.00 hrs.
9 Last date/Time of seeking tender clarification : 20.12.2021 upto 15.00 hrs.
10 Date and time of opening of Bid : 27.12.2021 at 11.00 hrs.
Further details conditions can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Rengali Dam Division, Rengali Dam Site
OIPR-32028/11/0002/2122

No.C-1561
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE PURI MUNICIPALITY, PURI
Email- purim.hud@nic.in
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Identification No. P.M. 08/2021-22
Notice No. 1561 Dated: 8.12.21
1. Type of Work: **Civil Work**. 2. Total No. of works: **22 Nos. of Individual Works**. 3. Estimate Cost: **Rs.651832/- to Rs.1761155/-**. 4. Period of completion: **30 Days**. 5. Date & time of availability of bid document in the Portal: **from 03 P.M. of 10.12.2021 to 05 P.M. of 20.12.2021**. 6. Last date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal: **Upto 05 P.M. of 20.12.2021**. 7. Date of Opening of bid: **11 A.M. of dt.21.12.2021**. 8. Name & address of the Officer inviting Bid: **Executive Officer, Puri Municipality, Puri**. Further detail can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Officer
Puri Municipality, Puri
OIPR-13159/11/0017/2122

FOCUS ECONOMY

THE BIG ISSUES FOR 2022



Nobody knows what turn the pandemic will take or whether recent price increases will be transitory, which means that economic forecasting has become even more hazardous than usual

With the calendar year drawing to a close, the parlour game of pretending to know what will happen in the next 12 months has begun. Yet when it comes to 2022 (and beyond), I am not sure whether it is worth even pretending. I cannot recall a previous time when there were so many big question marks looming over so many key economic issues.

This deep uncertainty is especially intriguing with respect to financial markets. Should any of several developments to watch take a negative turn, the implications for today's elevated markets could be dire.

Among the most urgent and topical issues, other than COVID-19, is inflation. Are this year's price increases transient, or do they represent something more ominous? My useless answer is, "I don't know." Although I did suggest at this time last year that inflation would become a bigger issue than weak GDP growth, now, as I look ahead to 2022, I am far less sure.

Much of today's inflationary pressures could still relate to the speed of the recovery in many economies, and, of course, to large, still-persisting supply disruptions. But the supply shortages themselves may be symptoms of bigger problems, such as economic overstimulation, ineffective monetary policies, or weak productivity growth. The implications for financial markets would be quite different depending on which of these factors are at work, and to what extent.

Many other big questions for 2022 are related to inflation as well. What is the purpose of monetary policy in today's economy? Should we still worry about government debt levels, or have we discovered (by some fluke) that we never needed to worry about this? I am generally open-minded, but I do have some strong suspicions in this particular debate.

On fiscal policy and the idea that government debt becomes problematic at some precise level, the events of 2020-21 have demonstrated that much of the conventional thinking was wrong. Far

more important is what the debt is for: Debt incurred to prevent a collapse in economic activity is quite different from debt incurred simply to fund an overly ambitious government's agenda.

On monetary policy, it was clear even before the pandemic that the post-2008 world of endless central-bank generosity had outlived its usefulness. We have long needed to get back to a relationship where inflation-adjusted interest rates bear some resemblance to potential GDP growth rates.

While excuses can be made for a brief suspension to manage a major shock like COVID-19, the persistence of ultra-loose monetary policies seems misplaced. As acolytes of Milton Friedman contend, these policies may even be responsible for the recent surge of inflation. It is rather convenient that after years of struggling to achieve higher inflation rates (near or above their stated targets), central banks now have chosen to regard inflation as temporary.

In fact, central bankers have no better idea than you or I do about whether inflation will last. But even if it does turn out to be transitory, the justification for a generous monetary policy is increasingly dubious. After all, by creating loose financial conditions, central banks are contributing to the growing suspi-

cion that the fruits of modern capitalism are primarily for those privileged few who own assets.

Quietly looming over these issues is the central question of productivity growth, which has been disappointing across most advanced economies for many years. Do pandemic-driven behavioural changes and innovations herald the long-awaited return of robust productivity gains? I have one foot in the optimistic camp, which is partly why I do not see the need for so much monetary stimulus. But, given the persistent disappointments of the past decade, I cannot confidently plant both feet there. As always, policymakers are touting an intention to do more to boost productivity. One hopes they are more serious now than they have been in the past.

As if these challenges and unknowns were not tricky enough, there is also a long list of non-conventional macro issues to consider. Whether the increasingly important Chinese economy can be better integrated into the global economy remains to be seen. It is anyone's guess what twists and turns the pandemic will take. Will Omicron quickly become the new dominant variant, or will it be supplanted by yet another one?

And what about other major threats such as the silent pandemic of anti-microbial resist-

ance or the risks associated with climate change? As matters stand, it seems unlikely that voters - particularly older cohorts on limited or fixed incomes - will tolerate repeated hikes in energy price, even if they are a necessary feature of the transition to cleaner alternatives. As I recently suggested, policymakers will need to think creatively about how to deal with this problem.

Yet another major issue is global poverty, which has started to increase again over the past two years. Eliminating this scourge would appear to be an even bigger challenge than the energy transition.

Finally, there is the pervasive uncertainty about global governance. Unlike in the 2008-10 period, when the G20 proved so effective, there has been almost no meaningful progress on global economic cooperation in 2020-21. Let us hope that 2022 brings a vast improvement on this front.

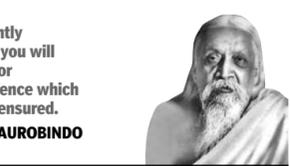
The writer, a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK Treasury Minister, is a member of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Jim O'Neill

MUCH OF TODAY'S INFLATIONARY PRESSURES COULD STILL RELATE TO THE SPEED OF THE RECOVERY IN MANY ECONOMIES, AND, OF COURSE, TO LARGE, STILL-PERSISTING SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS



Watch the too indignantly righteous. Before long you will find them committing or condoning the very offence which they have so fiercely censured.

SRI AUROBINDO

Shadow boxing?

R S Sharma has a lot on his plate. As CEO of the National Health Authority (NHA) he is responsible for spearheading the country's efforts to provide Covid-19 vaccines to the public. The emergence of the Omicron variant has only added to the challenge. India is still far behind in achieving 100 per cent vaccination by December as the government had assured the Supreme Court some months ago.

So, it is indeed odd of Sharma to slam his former organisation - the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), which issues the 12-digit Aadhaar card to all eligible residents of the country. Not only was he the founder chief of the UIDAI, but also authored a book lauding the virtues of the Aadhaar card. Yet recently Sharma slammed UIDAI questioning why it was issuing physical Aadhaar cards and allowing offline verification when Aadhaar was essentially a digital artifact.

Some observers see in Sharma's diatribe perhaps a dig at the current dispensation at UIDAI led by CEO Saurabh Goel or perhaps even as far as Nandan Nilekani, who was the first chairman of the organisation and led the development of the Aadhaar card. They may have inferred this from Sharma's remarks when he went on to cite the example of the NHA, which he now heads, and which is issuing digital health IDs to people. Clearly, promoting this over the Aadhaar ID is not helpful to anyone. Such shadow boxing can only harm both causes.

Who will be Delhi's next Chief Secretary?

The current NDMC chairman Dharmendra is the natural choice for the post of Delhi Chief Secretary, but as we've often seen, the selection process is always a complicated one. The need has arisen because the current chief secretary Vijay Kumar Dev has been appointed as Election Commissioner of Delhi. Sources have informed DKB that Dev may take VRS in January 2022 to prepare for his new assignment.

Curiously, with the Centre stuck in a tussle with the Mizoram government over the appointment of a Chief Secretary, Dharmendra's elevation to the top post in the Delhi government may not be the shoo-in many expect. The Mizo state government wants the Centre-appointed AGMUT cadre officer Renu Sharma replaced by an officer who is versed in the Mizo language. It has instead named its own Chief Secretary JC Ramthanga (reported here, November 3). Sources say that the Centre, not wanting to be seen as imposing an officer on the state government, may accede to the state Chief Minister's request. In case Ms Sharma returns, the Centre will have to find a respectable slot for her, which may well be the CS post in Delhi. After all, she's equally capable and qualified for the position.

However, she may not be the only other choice that the Centre has. The buzz is that Arunachal Pradesh Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar is also said to be in the running. Punters are also taking bets on senior IAS officers Manoj Kumar Parida, Satya Gopal and additional Chief Secretary of Urban Development PK Gupta. It may finally come down to the officer who has the longest residual service. Here, Dharmendra scores over the others. But the final call will obviously be by the PMO.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

The suspension of Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer Bennichen Thomas by the Kerala government (as reported by DKB in this column, November 17) has created a row between the Centre and the Pinarayi Vijayan government. Thomas was suspended for reportedly defying the state government's directive on the sensitive Mullaperiyar Dam issue. Thomas had granted permission to Tamil Nadu state for cutting 15 trees growing in the vicinity of the dam.

Centre stands up for suspended Kerala IFoS officer

Sources have informed DKB that the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has written to the state Chief Secretary VP Joy, seeking an explanation on why Thomas was suspended without clearing it with the ministry, which is the cadre controlling authority. The letter written by Inspector General of Forests, AK Mohanty, states that the ministry learned about Thomas' suspension only from media reports.

Clearly, the Kerala government has come under pressure after ordering the suspension of the officer. Not just the Centre, but even the IAS and IPS associations have rallied behind the officer and have taken strong exception to the order. They are demanding that it be reviewed and revoked. With the Centre jumping in, the Kerala CM has not just the dispute with the Tamil Nadu government over the dam to deal with, but also the miffed officials of the Environment Ministry.

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

WISDOM CORNER

I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.'

MUHAMMAD ALI

Keep your feet on the ground, but let your heart soar as high as it will. Refuse to be average or to surrender to the chill of your spiritual environment.

ARTHUR HELPS

My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.

MAYA ANGELOU

WORDSWORTH

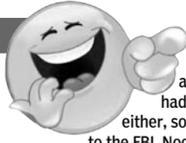
Carnal

When the word carnal turns up nowadays, most people immediately think of sex - a link that goes back almost as far as the word itself. As long ago as 1450, the phrase carnal knowledge appeared in the anonymous romance Merlin, or the Early History of King Arthur, and it and similar phrases have been around ever since. So you may imagine the images conjured up by the phrase carnal art. It was referring to an art movement based on body modification, linked especially to the French artist Orlan, who invented the term in 1990 as L'Art Charnel. The English version is rather a poor translation. A better term might have been body art, but that had already been grabbed for art on the body, not art that transforms the body. The word has also been applied to several artists who, in the words of one critic of the movement, "exploit, plunder or injure their own bodies to seduce the contemporary art market". Seduce - we're back to sex again.

LOL

OSAMA'S LETTER

After numerous rounds of, "We don't know if Osama is still alive," Osama himself decided to send Ted Kennedy a letter in his own handwriting to let him know he was still in the game. Kennedy opened the letter which appeared to contain a single line of coded message, 370HSSV-0773H. Kennedy was baffled, so he e-mailed it to John Kerry. Kerry



and his aides had no clues either, so they sent it to the FBI. Noone could solve it at the FBI, so it went to the CIA, then to the NSA. With no clue as to its meaning, the FBI finally asked Marine Corps Intelligence for help. Within a few seconds the Marine Corps cabled back with this reply, "Tell Kennedy he's holding the message upside down."

SPECTRUM NAGALAND

Time to repeal AFSPA

The massacre of 14 civilians, including six coal mine workers, in Nagaland's Mon district by the Indian Army has shaken the conscience of the nation. The workers were murdered on the evening of December 4 while travelling from their place of work in Tiru area to their village Oting. Though the Army quickly tried to cover up these murders as an "undercover operation gone wrong", eyewitness accounts have exposed the entire episode. Even Nagaland Police, in its preliminary report on the civilian killings, have hinted at a possible cover-up of the gruesome action by security forces. The local Tizit police station has lodged an FIR of planned murders. The case has been promptly taken over by the state Crime Branch and a SIT is set up to investigate the incident.

The Union Home Minister has expressed regret over the killings in the Parliament. On the other hand, from what the Army said, one may infer that the Centre and the Army would have no regret if the killed belonged to any outlawed Naga outfit irrespective whether there was any provocation or any reason considering the killed were

traveling in an open vehicle.

Several questions arise from this barbaric incident. One thing is clear that without having any credible intelligence inputs of terrorist in the vehicle, the Army unit has carried out the ambush. Even if there was no retaliation from the other side, the jawans fired proactively. Why didn't the Army observe constraint? This is nothing but the cold blooded murder by the men in uniform, shielded by the AFSPA for their heinous crime.

The cold-blooded killing of civilians has resulted in serious wave of anger sweeping through Nagaland and Naga inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam and other neighbouring states. Villages have put signboards outside their villages prohibiting entry of Assam Rifles, operationally a part of Indian Army. One protester was killed in police firing outside Assam Rifles office in Mon district. Such is the anger sweeping Nagaland and other states of Northeast that Chief Ministers of Nagaland and Meghalaya have demanded repeal of AFSPA.

Though AFSPA was enacted in 1958 by the Government of India, it has colonial root. It is based on the Armed Forces (Special Powers)

Ordinance of 1942, which was issued during the Quit India movement to suppress the freedom movement. It gives armed forces special powers to control "disturbed areas", designated by the Centre. Under its provisions, the armed forces have been empowered to open fire, enter and search without warrant and arrest any person who has committed a cognisable offence, all while having immunity from being prosecuted.

There has been continuous demand from different people's organisations and civil liberty organisations to repeal this draconian law. They blame AFSPA for the killings, alleging that the law gives blanket protection to the Army to kill with impunity. In 2016, hearing the petition of Extra Judicial Execution Victims Families Association, the Supreme Court also ruled that over 1,500 cases of alleged fake encounters in Manipur in the last 20 years "must be investigated". Of course these are just the recorded cases and that instances of people simply disappearing have gone unreported over the years.

The Jeevan Reddy Committee formed in 2004 had recommended

a complete repeal of the law. It said, "The Act is a symbol of hate, oppression and an instrument of high handedness." This draconian law was upheld by the Supreme Court albeit with some directions to prevent its abuse in the judgment delivered by Justice Madan Lokur. But the law is itself an abuse of the process of law and hence these directions have obviously remained pious wishes on paper. Nothing short of repeal will do.

It is also significant that the Centre, especially under RSS-BJP rule, has abandoned the 'peace process' which was being pursued with National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M). Since the abandonment of this process even after signing a framework agreement in 2015 repression on the people of Nagaland has been intensified. It is time that the Government of India resumes meaningful dialogue with NSCN(I-M) to further the agenda of peace in Naga Hills and not try to 'solve' the issue with the use of armed forces.

The writer is an Odisha-based social activist and columnist. Views expressed are personal.



Bhalachandra Shadangi

THE AFSPA IS BASED ON THE ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ORDINANCE OF 1942, WHICH WAS ISSUED DURING THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT TO SUPPRESS THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Paika Rebellion

Sir, Paika Rebellion (Paika Vidroha) that took place in Khurda in Odisha in 1817, sounded the death knell of the British empire. It happened 40 years before the Sepoy Mutiny in 1847. Led by Buxi Jagabandhu, the valiant leader of Paikas, this rebellion was a watershed development in the history India's freedom struggle. It was an armed rebellion. Buxi Jagabandhu mobilised all the leaders of the society in this historic rebellion. It was the mother of all uprisings against the colonial British empire and unjust land revenue policy of the British rule. It laid the foundation of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, when Mangal Pandey took the centre stage. However, it is indeed pathetic that the Centre does not acknowledge the Paika Rebellion as the first war of Indian Independence. Politics can be done on many issues, but, it should not be done with the martyrdom of freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the emancipation of our Motherland from the yoke of British rule. It will be an affront to the patriots of Paika Rebellion and their families. Odisha demands its rightful place in the history of India's freedom struggle. It is a fervent appeal of more than four crore Odias before the Centre to recognise the Paika Rebellion as the first war of Indian Independence.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR

Fuel of the future

Sir, The last two years have witnessed increased momentum for use of green hydrogen, with many countries across the world implementing national hydrogen strategies. India is moving ahead with its hydrogen policy. Green hydrogen is being hailed as a potential miracle fuel that could help India's worst polluting industries to reduce carbon emissions. The environmental impact of using green hydrogen is anticipated to be tremendously positive. Hydrogen, a zero-carbon fuel and a promising alternate to fossil fuel, is available in abundant and it gives off no emissions. It can make a real contribution to the fight against climate change. Though we have various renewable energy sources, the perfect one to use for vehicles is hydrogen. Hydrogen, when used in a fuel cell, the only exhaust it emits is clean water. A big advantage of hydrogen and fuel cells is that the cycle is fully sustainable. Big changes are needed to utilise green hydrogen in various industrial establishments. A holistic approach is needed to develop infrastructure and formulate policies to encourage the use of hydrogen-based energy sources.

Dr Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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



The Centre is not bothered about Jharkhand's development. It intends to loot the state's mineral resources
HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CHIEF MINISTER

WELCOME STEP

Amid deteriorated winter air quality in the city, the Delhi government has introduced bus service for its employees from 14 destinations to the Secretariat



of the day quote

The central government is working towards making use of stubble in making biofuels and manure in an exercise aimed at reducing incidents of its burning, seen to be a source of air pollution in the region, including the national capital

BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE MINISTER

When you go to vote this time, first of all think about yourself, your state and your family. Vote for the party that will solve your issues

PRİYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

The Pinarayi Vijayan government must take strong action against those making defaming and derogatory remarks in the social media against country's first Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat

K. SURENDRAN | KERALA BJP PRESIDENT

Seven fresh Omicron cases in Maharashtra



AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 10: After a gap of four days, seven new cases of the Covid-19 variant Omicron have been detected in Maharashtra - three in Mumbai and four in Pune, taking the state's total to 17, health officials said Friday.

The cases confirmed in Mumbai are three males aged 25, 37 and 48 years, all with a recent travel history to the UK, South Africa and Tanzania. In Pune, the four new patients, including a three-and-half-year-old child, are the close contacts of the Indian-origin Nigerian woman who was detected Omicron positive last Sunday.

Of the new cases, 4 are fully vaccinated while one has taken a single jab, one has not been inoculated, and the child is not eligible for the vaccine.

Three of them are having mild

symptoms and the others are found asymptomatic, but all have been isolated and undergoing treatment at various hospitals in Mumbai and Pune. Surveillance at the international airports in Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur has been further intensified with 9,678 passengers landing here from the "high risk" countries from the total 61,439 travellers.

From these, the samples of 25 found positive have been sent from genomic sequencing, including 20 from the "at risk" nations and five from other countries, said health officials. A total of 89 samples have been sent for genomic sequencing of which results of 47 are awaited, and so far 17 have been found infected with Omicron.

Last week on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, a total of 10 Omicron cases were detected among passengers arriving in the state.

'Health ministry must assess requirement'

New Delhi: The Health Ministry in coordination with the agencies concerned should assess the requirement of vaccine booster shots to tackle different variants of the coronavirus, a parliamentary committee has recommended. Taking note of the threat posed by the new COVID-19 variant Omicron, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs recommended that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in coordination with the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) and the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC) should assess the requirement of booster doses in India to address the different variants of the virus. "The committee would like to know whether any research has been conducted by ICMR and other concerned institutions regarding the efficacy of the vaccines that are being given or administered in the country against various variants," it said in a report tabled in Lok Sabha Friday.

Jayalalithaa's legal heirs take possession of her residence

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 10: Late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's legal heirs, J. Deepa and her brother J. Deepak, took possession of her Poes Garden residence 'Veda Nilayam' on Friday, as Chennai District Collector, Dr. Vijayarani handed them the keys.

The residence of late Jayalalithaa was mired in a court case after the duo moved the Madras High Court on the decision against the AIADMK government under K. Palaniswami to convert 'Veda Nilayam' into a memorial for the late Chief Minister.

Deepa and Deepak, the children of Jayalalithaa's elder brother Jayakumar, in separate petitions, prayed that they were the legal

heirs of Jayalalithaa and that the residence was rightfully theirs.

A bench of Justice N. Seshasayee, on November 25, ruled in their favour and directed the Chennai District Collector hand over possession to the rightful heirs, within three weeks of the ruling. After Deepa and her husband Mahadevan, Deepak and other family members opened the gate of the residence and entered the house, an elated Deepa told media persons: "This is a great win for us. We have got a positive result after a long legal battle. AIADMK is a big political party and they have a lot more other things to do rather than focus on this and not fight for this home, but if they are for a fight, I can continue with the legal measures."



Deepa Jayakumar, niece of late AIADMK supremo J Jayalalithaa, along with her husband in Chennai, Friday

SHORT TAKES

Five killed

Kheda: Five persons were killed when a truck collided with their car on Kapadvanj-Kathlal road in Gujarat's Kheda district Friday, police said. The incident took place near Porda village in the early hours of the day, when the victims were heading towards Jeira village of Viramgam taluka from Kapadvanj town, an official said.

₹16 lakh stolen

Jaipur: Unidentified persons allegedly stole Rs 15.94 lakh from an ATM of a private bank in Jobner area of Jaipur district, police said Friday. The incident took place on Thursday night when the accused cut the ICICI Bank's ATM installed at Jobner Agriculture College with a gas cutter and took away the cash kept in it, police said.

Four arrested

Palghar: Four persons have been arrested for allegedly breaking into a warehouse and stealing laptops worth over Rs 30 lakh in Maharashtra's Palghar district, police said Friday. The theft took place in Valiv area of the district on December 6, when the accused broke into the warehouse of an electronics company and decamped with 96 laptops worth Rs 31, 77,600, Deputy Commissioner of Police Crime Dr Mahesh Patil said.

2 die in accident

Mathura: Two men were killed and three others injured, when the car they were travelling in fell into a rivulet near Nagla Devia, police Friday said. The incident happened Thursday night, when they were returning from Parkham village of Mathura after attending a family function, police said.

Six arrested

Thane: Six persons have been arrested in connection with a case of dacoity in Navi Mumbai, in which a jeweller was allegedly robbed of cash to the tune of Rs 19 lakh, the police said Friday. The accused allegedly robbed a jeweller from Ambejogai of Beed district at Kalamboli in Navi Mumbai on November 27, an official said. The accused threw chilli powder on the victim, when the latter alighted from a bus and robbed him at gunpoint, he said. Following the incident, a case was registered at Kamoth and the police zeroed in on the accused based on technical and intelligence inputs and arrested them, the official said.

Rawat, wife cremated with military honours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: The plaintive strains of bugles sounding the last post broke through the hush, men in uniform clicked their heels and a 17-gun salute rang out as Gen Bipin Rawat and his wife were cremated Friday evening - the sun setting on a day written into India's military history and on the life of its most senior military officer.

India's first chief of defence staff (CDS) and his wife Madhulika Rawat were given a send-off with full military honours at the Brar Square crematorium in Delhi Cantonment, two days after they were killed with 11 others, all from the armed forces, in a helicopter crash in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu.

As millions watched on television and hundreds packed into Brar Square, the couple's two daughters Tarini and Kritika conducted the last rites of their parents taken away from them so brutally.

On a day of barely held back tears framed by the solemnity of the formal pageantry of a tri-services ceremony, thoughts were also with the families of those whose last rites could not take place because their bodies are at the Army Base Hospital awaiting identification.

Only three of the 13 bodies have



Chief of the Army Staff Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane pays his last respects to late CDS Gen Bipin Rawat and his wife Madhulika, at their residence in New Delhi, Friday

been identified so far. Earlier in the morning, Brigadier L S Lidder, who was also on the Russian made Mi17V5 chopper and was defence assistant to the CDS, was cremated with honours at Brar Square.

Underscoring the enormity of the tragedy that had befallen the armed forces - and India - the evening was for the Rawats' last rites. About 800 service personnel were in attendance for the military funeral of their CDS.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju as well as politicians, diplomats and others paid their last respects to Madhulika Rawat and

63-year-old Bipin Rawat, who was tasked to bring in theatre command and jointness among the three services and was pushing it with a tough approach and specific timelines. As a priest chanted Sanskrit shlokas, the 17-gun salute rang out in accordance with protocol and the twin pyres were lit. Outside the Brar Square, where the funerals were conducted with military precision, huge crowds of mourners gathered to say their goodbyes.

People showered flower petals and as the flower-bedecked gun carriage carrying the late general's mortal remains, wrapped in the tricolour, entered the cremato-

India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and his wife Madhulika Rawat were given a send-off with full military honours at the Brar Square crematorium in Delhi Cantonment

rium, the only sounds that could be heard were slogans and chants in praise of him.

The final journey of CDS Rawat and his wife began from his official Kamraj Marg residence amid chants of "Jab tak suraj chand rahega, Rawat ji ka naam rahega". As the cortege wound its way through the streets of Lutyen's Delhi towards Brar Square, about 10 km away, surging crowds jogged alongside. It was a sea of people, some holding the tricolour aloft and others their mobile phones to capture the moment.

At one point, a man in a white kurta pyjama was seen running along the biers trying to take a selfie. Slogans of "Vande Mataram", "Gen Rawat Amar Rahe" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" could be heard too. Military personnel drawn from all the three services marched on the streets as drummers played along in tribute to India's first CDS.

NO KIDDING



BSF personnel show weapons to schoolchildren at an exhibition at Hili in South Dinajpur district

India has 21.03 judges per million people, LS told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: India has 21.03 judges per million people, Lok Sabha was informed Friday.

In a written reply, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "The judge to population ratio (judge per million population) with respect to sanctioned strength of judges is 21.03 as on October 31, 2021."

In order to calculate the judge-population ratio per million population in a particular year, the Department of Justice uses the criterion of using the population as per Census 2011 and as per available information regarding sanctioned strength of judges in



Supreme Court, the high courts and district and subordinate courts in the particular year, he explained. The data pertaining to the number of judges per million of pop-

ulation is not maintained state or union territory wise, he said.

He said the Law Commission had not considered the judge population ratio to be a scientific criterion for determining the adequacy of the judge strength in the country.

"The Law Commission found that in the absence of complete and scientific approach to data collection across various high courts in the country, the 'rate of disposal' method, to calculate the number of additional judges required to clear the backlog of cases as well as to ensure that new backlog is not created, is more pragmatic and useful," he said.

Aryan Khan moves HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: Aryan Khan, son of Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, on Friday approached the Bombay High Court seeking modification of a condition imposed on him when he got bail in the drugs-on-cruise case.

Aryan's application sought waiver of the condition that he shall appear before the Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB) south Mumbai office every Friday to mark presence. As the investigation has been now transferred to a Special Investigation Team of Delhi NCB, the condition that he appear at the Mumbai office could be relaxed, said the plea.

The application also said that he has to be accompanied by police personnel every time he visits the NCB office here due to the large number of mediapersons waiting outside. The application is likely to be heard by the high court next week, his lawyers said.

Aryan Khan was arrested by the NCB on October 3 on charges of alleged possession, consumption and sale/purchase of drugs following a raid on a cruise ship off the Mumbai coast.



He was granted bail by the high court on October 28. The high court also imposed 14 conditions on him. He was asked, among other things, to appear before the NCB each Friday, not to leave Mumbai without informing the agency and not to leave India without permission from the special NDPS court.

Farmers' unions to honour locals who lent a helping hand

Farmers' leaders said locals offered "immense help" to the protesters in different ways such as providing electricity and water connections from their homes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: After over a year of braving extreme weather, the COVID-19 pandemic and living in tents on highways, farmers' unions have decided to honour locals who helped farmers during their protest at Delhi's Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders.

Farmers' leaders said locals offered "immense help" to the protesters in different ways such as providing electricity and water connections from their homes. They said now it is time for them to show their gratitude towards

such people and honour them.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which spearheaded the farmers' protest, on Thursday decided to suspend the long-drawn agitation after the government agreed to consider all its other demands, days after the repeal of the three contentious farm laws.

The SKM leaders announced that the stir will be suspended and the farmers would go back home in a victory march on December 11. Farmer leader and a member of the SKM's empowered committee, Shiv Kumar Kakka said the SKM will honour those lo-



locals who helped farmers selflessly during the course of the agitation and strengthened the movement. "We have formed a com-

mittee to make a list of such locals so that we can honour them. Before going home, a ceremony will be held at the Singhu border tomorrow to honour them. We will garland them and present shawls and sweets," Kakka said. Kakka said that some local residents and traders became good friends with farmers and their bond will remain intact. He said the SKM used to hold all its important meetings at the Kajarja Tiles showroom at the Singhu border. The shop owner gave the entire space to farmers. "So we all became good friends. We can never

forget this gesture," he added.

Kakka said locals helped the agitating farmers in many ways such as providing water, electricity shelter, places for holding meetings, tents and food etc. "So we have decided to thank and honour them. A similar ceremony is also likely to be held at other border points of Delhi," he said.

SKM member Sudesh Goyat said at the Tikri border that a ceremony has been planned near the KMP (Kundali-Manesar-Palwal) Peripheral Expressway to honour locals who helped farmers during their protest.

NCP minister reveals Pawar's 'state secret'

THE REVELATION WAS GREETED WITH SMUGNESS BY SENNA LEADERS; THE CONGRESS SMELT A RAT WHILE THE BJP WAS LEFT RATTLED THOUGH IT HAS NOT YET REACTED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 10: State politics heated up again with Nationalist Congress Party Minister Dr Jitendra Awhad declaring that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) would return to power and NCP president Sharad Pawar was keen to continue Uddhav Thackeray as the Chief Minister again after 2024 Assembly polls.

Contending that it was Pawar's "secret desire" which he had expressed in close circles, Dr Awhad said at a party meeting in Navi Mumbai that the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress would once more unitedly contest the 2024 Assembly elections and come back to power, relegating the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the Opposition benches again. The NCP minister's statement assumes significance, coming months after Sena MP and chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut had also said the same, but it was scornfully ignored as a "tall claim".

Dr Awhad's statement was greeted with smugness by Sena leaders; the Congress smelt a rat while the BJP was left rattled though it has not yet reacted.

This time, the state Congress working president Arif Naseem Khan made it clear that the MVA experiment was born (in 2019) owing



to the peculiar political situation then and functions on the basis of a Common Minimum Programme. "The Congress is growing stronger in the state, particularly at the grassroots level. Our firm endeavour is to win the maximum seats and also elect our CM," Khan said.

However, he declined to comment on Dr Awhad's statement or whether the party would adopt a solitary path and said the "Congress will take a call depending on the political situation in 2024".

Sena's former face and Vasant Naik Sheti Swavalamban Mission chairman Kishore Tiwari - accorded

a MoS status - said Pawar's sentiments are "a testimony to the performance of CM Thackerayji, as compared with the dismal tenure of BJP with Devendra Fadnis as CM."

"It is also the people's open wish to vote the MVA back to power with thumping 200-plus seats in 2024. The masses have not forgotten the treatment the BJP meted out to the farmers, the inflation, fuel prices, unemployment, and false promises and hounding of non-BJP governments by letting loose central agencies on them," Tiwari said.

Despite repeated attempts, top BJP leaders were not available for

their comments, but sources indicated a sense of despair as the party repeatedly missed its "deadlines" predicting the MVA collapse in the past 25 months.

Coming barely 10 days after the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote "RIP" for the Congress-led UPA, the Congress was buoyed by the Sena-NCP's response then.

Now, the Congress anticipates the possibility of new permutations and combinations emerging with "turncoats" defecting from the BJP ranks, both in the state and national levels, prompting the party (Congress) to adopt a wait-and-watch policy.

For the present, despite the occasional hiccups, things appear hunky-dory among the three allies and cracks are sealed, at least, temporarily with high-level confabulations - like the recent ones between Sanjay Raut with Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi - that ensure the three-tier government remains accident-free.

A senior NCP leader reiterated that the priority for the three-parties is "to ensure the BJP is kept out at any cost," starting with the upcoming civic elections in early-2022, followed by the 2024 Lok Sabha and then the 2024 Assembly polls.

Nawab Malik apologises to HC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 10: Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik Friday tendered an unconditional apology in the Bombay High Court for "wilfully breaching" his undertaking to the court to refrain from making any statements against Narcotics Control Bureau Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede and his family.

In his affidavit in response to an explanation sought by the court why action should not be taken against him as prima facie, Malik had "wilfully breached" its order, he tendered an "unconditional apology" to Justice SJ Kathawalla and Justice Milind Jadhav.

"At the outset, I tender my unconditional apology to this Honourable Court in respect of the breaches of my undertaking given to this Honourable Court as recorded in the orders dated November 25 and 29, 2021. I had no intention to disrespect, dishonour, overreach or breach the said order," said Malik.

He also said that his utterances were not any press releases or statements but were part of interviews with the media outlets when he was merely replying to questions asked by journalists.

"These responses were made by me in the belief that such responses made in the course of interviews were not within the ambit of his undertaking before the court," said Malik, in refer-



THE NCP MINISTER TENDERED AN UNCONDITIONAL APOLOGY IN THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT FOR "WILFULLY BREACHING" HIS UNDERTAKING TO REFRAIN FROM MAKING ANY STATEMENTS AGAINST WANKHEDES

ence to the defamation case filed by the NCB officer's father,

Dnyandeo Wankhede. The NCP leader assured that he would not make any more personal comments on the Wankhede until the pendency of the defamation suit, and the apology was accepted by the court.

"I, however, believe my statement will not prevent me from commenting on the political misuse of central agencies, and the conduct of their officers in the course of performance of their official duties hereafter," Malik said in the affidavit.

Following the undertaking by Malik's lawyer Aspi Chinoy, Wankhede's counsel Birendra Saraf urged that the Minister must not misuse the (above) statement to continue making defamatory utterances against the NCB officer.

Sameer Wankhede, wife move court against Google, FB

THE COUPLE IS SEEKING A DIRECTIVE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES TO BLOCK INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE TRYING TO "MALIGN" THEM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: Mumbai zonal director of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Sameer Wankhede, and his wife have approached a sessions court seeking a directive for social media companies to block individuals who were trying to "malign" them.

In the plea filed before the Dindoshi sessions court, Wankhede has sought a permanent injunction against Google India, Facebook, including its sub-organisations Instagram and Whatsapp, and Twitter. The suit seeks that they be restrained from allowing "unsubstantiated and baseless posts" against him, his wife, actor Kranti Redkar and any of their relatives on any of the channels being hosted by the companies. The petition also seeks action against them under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

The case is scheduled to come up for hearing December 17.

The suit, along with a notice of motion filed through Rex Legalis, said that "sponsored misinformation" is being spread by various "unscrupulous elements" at the behest of individuals against whom Wankhede has acted in his professional capacity and those af-

ected by his investigations. The plea adds that during his career, his postings have been in Mumbai and "most of the offenders are either connected to politics or the film industry". He has claimed that such people are connected with local authorities and social media channels run by the companies he has named.

"The modus operandi is such that the defendants and mainstream media interchangeably feed off each other, such that gossip, wilful rumours and character assassination done on the defendants' channels are picked up by the mainstream media..." the plea reads, while adding that various users of the sites "blow out of proportion", the unsubstantiated gossip and rumours.

The couple also accused the companies of having not taken any steps against such "smear campaigns". The suit read that while an SIT has been formed for an inquiry into allegations against him, "it is only just and fair" that the defendants are directed to prevent misuse of their platforms to defame a government servant "who has no other remedy".

It added that there are now attacks not only against him, but his wife and distant relatives.



A staffer conducts thermal screening of a passenger at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

AMC terminates contract of 1,100 workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Dec 10: Around 1,100 contractual health workers and other staffers roped in by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) last year for Covid-19 duty were relieved of duty recently.

An AMC notice, issued on a directive from the National Health Mission (NHM) director dated October 29 states that "in light of the reduced burden of Covid-19 cases", temporary medical, paramedical and Class IV staff be relieved of duties.

NHM director Remya Mohan

A notice by AMC stated that in light of the reduced Covid-19 cases, temporary medical, paramedical and Class IV staff be relieved

said that an order to the effect of relieving contractual staffers was made "months ago by the CPO (chief personnel officer)", to which the NHM mission director only "drew attention" with a letter.

Explaining that the staffers were

recruited during the peak of the pandemic, Mohan added that districts can justify and take permission for retaining staff by extending their contract. Mohan said one such need was during the surge of mucormycosis cases in the state and when districts with a large number of cases could justify the need for contractual employees. With negligible Covid-19 cases, the department said it cannot justify retention of hundreds of attendants at the cost of public money.

According to an AMC health official, the immediate termination order was issued "in accor-

dance with communication from NHM". The official said, "They were taken on an 11-month contract initially and this continued to be renewed in light of the Covid situation. With less than 100 active cases at present and good coverage of vaccination where we have covered more than 100 per cent with the first dose, it was decided that the government is not going to fund this extra manpower and decided to terminate them. We do not plan to reconsider their demands... If the Covid situation worsens, we will recruit again on government guidance."

Last year in December, she had received death threats on telephone which was received by her aide when she was subjected to abuses and warnings to kill her; and after her complaint, the accused was nabbed from Gujarat in January this year.

This week, Pednekar complained to Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil and Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale and filed the plea with Marine Drive Police Station against BJP legislator and ex-minister Ashish Shelar.

GODHRA RIOTS

'Nobody raised questions before, Setalvad driving plea'

ROHATGI SAID THAT THE SIT HAD GIVEN ONE REPORT IN 2010 CONCLUDING THAT THERE WAS NO COGNISABLE MATERIAL

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, Dec 10: The Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) which probed the 2002 post-Godhra riots said that Zakia Jafri, wife of slain Congress MP Ehsan Jafri who was killed in the riots, and others who were now blaming it of siding with the accused had never pointed fingers at it in the past though they had ample time to and reiterated that the charges were now being driven by her co-petitioner, activist Teesta Setalvad.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi submitted this before a bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheshwari and CT Ravikumar which reserved its judgment on Jafri's appeal challenging the Gujarat High Court order upholding the decision of the Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Ahmedabad, to



Zakia Jafri

accept the closure report filed by the SIT giving a clean chit to the then state Chief Minister Narendra Modi and others in riot related cases.

Rohatgi said that the SIT had given one report in 2010 concluding that there was no cognisable

material. "The Amicus Curiae was there. The petitioner was there. Amicus then said to do some investigation", which was done and two more reports given, he pointed out.

Rohatgi added, "Nature of investigation and report which was

given between 2009 and 2011 qua this complaint (of Zakia), not a single averment before or during hearing before this court that investigation was slipshod or sided with accused or done something wrong".

"At the end of the day, where do we stand? SC stayed trial, then vacated in 2009. We did our job. We were commended first by Justice Arjit Pasayat and then Justice JS Khehar. Nobody has raised a finger against us... It is petitioner No 2 who is driving this petition for the last 10 years," said Rohatgi.

Appearing for the petitioners, senior advocate Kapil Sibal had argued that the SIT was using statements of witnesses recorded under section 161 to give clean chit to those behind the incidents.

Countering this, Rohatgi pointed out that the procedure adopted by the SC in the matter

was an Article 142 (which gives it power to pass orders as may be necessary to do complete Justice in a case) procedure and not something mandated by law. The senior counsel said he did not want to go into the fairness of the approach but added that the statements recorded were not section 161 statements.

"It is later in 2013 that SC gave the imprimatur of Section 161. It was therefore a procedure adopted by court that nobody can say it did not listen to the voice of an aggrieved widow".

Rohatgi added that the "Idea is to keep the pot boiling for the ulterior purposes of the petitioner".

He urged the SC to approve the decision of the trial court and HC saying that otherwise, it will go on endlessly just to further the ulterior motives of the petitioner number 2".

Antilia bomb scare accused to stay in jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: Antilia bomb scare and businessman Mansukh Hiran death case accused Naresh Gaur will be in prison for five more days despite getting bail as the Bombay High Court will hear the National Investigation Agency or NIA's appeal December 15.

Gaur, an alleged cricket bookie from Bhuj who is accused of arranging fake SIM cards for the other accused in the February-March 2021 case, had been granted bail November 20. However, the special NIA court which had granted him bail stayed its order for 25 days so that NIA could appeal against the order.

Gaur's lawyers Shirish Gupte, Aniket Nikam, Ashraf Diamondwala and Noorain Patel had approached the single bench

of the Bombay High Court against the stay. Advocate Sandesh Patil representing the NIA had opposed the maintainability of the plea, saying that cases related to the NIA Act have to be heard by a division bench. However, the single bench of Justice Sandeep K Shinde set aside the stay and asked for Gaur to be released from prison.

However, the NIA's appeal filed against Gaur being granted bail came up for hearing before the division bench of Justices Nitin Jandmal and Sarang Kotwal Friday. The bench noted that Patil was standing on the side where the prosecution generally stands. The bench reminded him, "You are for the appellate; perhaps as a matter of habit, you are standing there." Patil went on to the other side of the bar and informed the court about the case.

national

of the day quote

A booster dose against COVID-19 comes into picture only when the eligible population is fully vaccinated against the viral infection

AJIT PAWAR | MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

The subject of compensation to the families of the deceased farmers in the farmers' movement is with the concerned state governments. No farmer died as a result of police action during the farmers' agitation

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

Chabahar port project not affected by US sanctions

S. JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Seven injured

Patna: Seven members, including five children, of a family suffered burn injuries in a fire that broke out in a house in Bihar's Munger district Friday morning. According to police, the mishap took place in one Arun Kumar Tanti's house in Balia village under Sangrampur police station around 9 a.m. In a statement to the police, Tanti said that his wife Bindu Devi was cooking on an LPG stove. Suddenly there was a leakage and the gas spread all over the house. As the gas stove was on, it caught fire which soon engulfed entire room.

Man arrested

Mysuru: Karnataka police have arrested a man for repeatedly breaking and vandalising idols of Hindu Gods in Saligrama village near K.R. Nagar in this district of Karnataka, police said Friday. The accused has told police that he was breaking idols as he thought people were being deceived as they worshiped idols of stones. The police are keeping his identity confidential for security reasons.

Racket busted

New Delhi: Delhi Police have busted a gambling racket in the southern area of the city and arrested 16 people in this connection, an official said Friday. On the instance of the accused, the police recovered 1,000 playing chips, 37 playing bricks and Rs 1,95,000 cash stake money. Three among the arrested accused are Chartered Accountants by profession and were running the gambling racket to lead a lavish life and to earn easy money.

Elephant kills two

Malbazar (WB): Two persons were killed by a wild elephant in northern West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district in the early hours of Friday, officials said. The incident happened in Batabari in Malbazar subdivision's Meteli block, they said. The elephant is suspected to have strayed from the Gorumara forest in search of food, they said. The tusker first went to the courtyard of Agun Orao (42) in Indong Bustee's Kustudhara area in search of recently-cultivated paddy, locals said.

Leopard found dead in MP

Mandla (MP): A leopard was found dead on a road near a village in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla district, a forest official said Friday. Villagers found the carcass of the feline on Sahastadhara road near Manadei village, following which the forest department was alerted, the official said.



India has been able to save millions of lives by adopting a policy of free and universal availability of COVID-19 vaccine

RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

NO PROPOSAL TO SCRAP SEDITION LAW: RIJJU

Law minister Kiren Rijju Friday said in Lok Sabha that the Ministry of Home Affairs has no proposal under consideration to scrap Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) dealing with sedition



Shape global norms for emerging technologies: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday called for united efforts to shape global norms for emerging technologies like social media and cryptocurrencies so that they are used to "empower" democracy and not to "undermine" it.

In a virtual address at the Summit for Democracy hosted by US President Joe Biden, Modi said India would be happy to share its expertise in holding free and fair elections and in enhancing transparency in all areas of governance.

Referring to Abraham Lincoln's famous quote on democracy, the prime minister added that democracy is also about being "with the people, within the people."

"The structural features like multi-party elections, independent judiciary, and free media are important instruments of democracy. However, the basic strength of democracy is the spirit and ethos that lie within our citizens and our societies," he said. "Democracy is not only of the people, by the people, for the people but also with the people, within the people," Modi said.

The prime minister also called for joint efforts to shape global norms for emerging technologies like social media and cryptocurrencies. "We must also jointly shape



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This is for the second time in the last three weeks that Modi called for working together on the need to regulate cryptocurrencies. In his virtual address at the Sydney Dialogue on November 18, Modi urged democratic nations to work together to ensure that the cryptocurrency does not end up in the wrong hands

global norms for emerging technologies like social media and cryptocurrencies, so that they are used to empower democracy, not to undermine it," he said.

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tocurrency does not end up in the wrong hands.

In his remarks at the Summit for Democracy, Modi said the democratic spirit is integral to India's civilisational ethos and that the centuries of the colonial rule could not suppress the democratic spirit of the Indian people.

"It again found full expression with India's independence, and led to an unparalleled story in democratic nation-building over the last

75 years," he said. "It is a story of unprecedented socio-economic inclusion in all spheres. It is a story of constant improvements in health, education, and human well-being at an un-imaginable scale," he said.

"The India story has one clear message to the world. That democracy can deliver; that democracy has delivered, and that democracy will continue to deliver," he added. Modi said by working together, democracies can meet the aspirations of the citizens and celebrate the democratic spirit of humanity.

"India stands ready to join fellow democracies in this noble endeavour," he said. Modi began by saying that he is proud to represent the world's largest democracy at the summit. "India would be happy to share its expertise in holding free and fair elections, and in enhancing transparency in all areas of governance through innovative digital solutions," he said.

The prime minister said different parts of the world have followed different paths of democratic development and there is much to learn from each other. "We all need to constantly improve our democratic practices. And, we all need to continuously enhance inclusion, transparency, human dignity, responsive grievance redressal and decentralisation of power," he said.

Air pollution: Expert group formed, SC told



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) has told the Supreme Court that an "expert group" has been constituted to finalise an air quality forecast model in terms of the air quality index (AQI).

In an affidavit, the CAQM Director said: "The Expert Group, constituted by the commission, having domain knowledge and data in the field of meteorological conditions impacting air quality, statistical modelling besides historical scientific data on air quality related parameters in Delhi-NCR along with the IITM and the IMD are in the process of finalising an air quality forecast model in terms of the Air Quality Index (AQI), using WRF-Chem Forecasting model."

In an earlier hearing, a bench comprising Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant had

asked the Centre to develop future models on air pollution, and then devise steps in advance to act on factors leading to pollution.

The affidavit said: "The model takes into account local/nonlocal, natural and anthropogenic sources from emission inventories over Delhi-NCR developed by TERI and MoES. The air quality forecast model is coupled with all the meteorological parameters such as wind speed & direction, humidity etc at surface and at different vertical levels."

Elaborating on steps taken to curb air pollution, the commission said a total of 1,534 sites were inspected by the flying squad and a total of 228 sites were issued notices of closure by the enforcement task force (ETF).

"After meticulously reviewing all the sites in question physically, it has been confirmed by the flying squads that as on December 9, a total of 111 industry/factory/sites etc stand closed until further notice," it added in the affidavit.

TN makes Covid-19 jabs mandatory for students above 18

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 10: The Tamil Nadu Health Department has made Covid vaccination mandatory for students above 18 years of age to attend college classes, Health Minister Ma Subramanian said Friday.

Addressing media persons after attending a high-level meeting of educationists here, he said that the Secretary, Higher Education will write letters to all the educational institutions directing them to make it mandatory for students above 18 years of age to get at least one dose of the vaccine administered to them.

He said that only 46 per cent of engineering students above 18 years have taken the first dose of vaccine and only 12 per cent of the students have taken both the doses of vaccine.

Subramanian said that college administrators should verify the student list and ensure that 100 per cent double doses have been administered.



Tibetan vendors stage a protest demanding the boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics 2022 on the occasion of Human Rights Day, in Ranchi

SP engaging other castes to defeat BJP in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: The Samajwadi Party (SP), under its new strategy for the early next year Assembly polls, has stitched alliances with small parties besides eyeing the Muslim-Yadav (MY) equation.

The 2022 Assembly polls are important for the SP as it has faced defeat thrice in the elections in the state. In the 2017 polls, the BJP had worked even on booth levels, formed alliances with smaller parties, managed the caste equations and reaped its dividends.

Taking cue from the BJP, the SP has so far formed alliances with small parties Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, Mahan Dal, Janwadi Party and the Apna Dal (kammeravadi). Recently, Aam Aadmi Party

The 2022 Assembly polls are important for the SP as it has faced defeat thrice in the elections in the state

Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh met SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.

Akhilesh said that the situation was entirely different in 2014, 2017 and 2019, but in 2022, it has changed a lot. He claimed that the people of the state will root out the BJP in the polls. In the 2017 polls, the BJP and its allies bagged 3.59 crore votes and emerged victorious on 325 seats, the SP got 1.89 crore votes and won on 47 seats while the Congress got 54 lakh votes and won on seven seats only.

Political situation is, however, dif-

ferent this time. Om Prakash Rajbhar's Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, which was a coalition partner of the BJP, has allied with the SP this time. The Congress has also not allied with the SP this time.

The biggest challenge the SP is facing is to bridge the gap of almost 1.7 crore votes. SP's former MP and an important family member of the Yadav family claimed that "vote difference is not a big issue as we had made the government in 2012".

Dharmendra accused the BJP of fooling the people in the 2017 polls, saying the saffron party projected members of all castes as the chief minister's candidate, but after winning the polls, it made someone else the Chief Minister. This time, these parties will not get influenced by the BJP, he opined. Akhilesh said

104 people return from Afghanistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: India has evacuated 104 people, including 10 Indian nationals, from Kabul in a special charter aircraft on Friday.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the flight was arranged under India's operation Devi Shakti. The operation was launched to evacuate Indians from Afghanistan after it fell to the Taliban on August 15.

"Under Operation Devi Shakti, a special Kam Air flight arranged by India has arrived in New Delhi from Kabul," Bagchi tweeted. "It has brought 10 Indians and 94 Afghans

including members of the Afghan Hindu-Sikh minority community. Among the evacuees are 9 children, including 3 infants," he said.

The flight brought three copies of the Guru Granth Sahib and Hindu religious texts from the ancient Asamai Mandir in Kabul.

Puneet Singh Chandhok, president of Indian World Forum, in a statement earlier, said it's a matter of pride that the "three holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji from historical Gurdwaras in Afghanistan and Hindu religious scriptures, including Ramanaya, Mahabharat and Bhagavad Gita," from the fifth century Asamai Mandir in Kabul are being brought to Delhi.

Destruction of wetlands leading to decline of dragonflies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: The destruction of wetlands is leading to the decline of dragonflies worldwide, according to an update of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

The number of species at risk of extinction on the Red List has exceeded 40,000 for the first time. Their decline is symptomatic of the widespread loss of the marshes, swamps and free-flowing rivers they breed in, mostly driven by the expansion of unsustainable agriculture and urbanisation around the world, a global release from Gland (Switzerland) said on Friday.

With today's update, the number of species at risk of extinction on the Red List has exceeded 40,000 for the first time. The IUCN

Red List now includes 142,577 species of which 40,084 are threatened with extinction.

"By revealing the global loss of dragonflies, today's Red List update underscores the urgent need to protect the world's wetlands and the rich tapestry of life they harbour. Globally, these ecosystems are disappearing three times faster than forests," said Dr Bruno Oberle, IUCN Director General.

"Marshes and other wetlands may seem unproductive and inhospitable to humans, but in fact they provide us with essential services. They store carbon, give us clean water and food, protect us from floods, as well as offer habitats for one in ten of the world's known species."

The assessment of the world's

dragonflies and damselflies reveals that 16 per cent out of 6,016 species are at risk of extinction, as their freshwater breeding grounds increasingly deteriorate. In South and Southeast Asia, more than a quarter of all species are threatened, mostly due to the clearing of wetland and rainforest areas to make room for crops such as palm oil.

In Central and South America, the major cause of dragonflies' decline is the clearing of forests for residential and commercial construction. Pesticides, other pollutants and climate change are growing threats to species in every region of the world, and are the greatest threats to dragonflies in North America and Europe.

"Dragonflies are highly sensitive indicators of the state of fresh-



water ecosystems, and this first global assessment finally reveals the scale of their decline. It also provides an essential baseline we can use to measure the impact of conservation efforts," said Dr Viola Clausnitzer, Co-chair of the IUCN SSC Dragonfly Specialist Group. "To conserve these beautiful in-

sects, it is critical that governments, agriculture and industry consider the protection of wetland ecosystems in development projects, for example by protecting key habitats and dedicating space to urban wetlands."

The Pyrenean desman (Galemys pyrenaicus), a semiaquatic mammal found only in rivers in Andorra, France, Portugal and Spain, has moved from Vulnerable to Endangered. This unusual species is related to moles and has a long, sensitive nose and large webbed feet. It is among the last of its evolutionary line; one of only two remaining desman species in the world, the release said.

The Pyrenean desman population has declined throughout its range by as much as 50% since 2011, largely due to human impacts on its habitats. Disruption to river flow and reduced water levels as a result of hydropower plant, dam and reservoir construction and water extraction for agriculture make significant areas inhospitable to the desman, isolate populations, and markedly reduce desman prey and shelter.

international

of the day quote

Ukraine will never become a part of Russia. If we have to prove it to the Kremlin that Ukraine has the right for freedom and independence, we are ready for it

The United Nations General Assembly has granted Observer Status to the International Solar Alliance (ISA)

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are paramount for the enjoyment of human rights by all. We call upon the Taliban to make this principle a day-to-day reality in Afghanistan

DEBORAH LYONS | THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN

SHORT TAKES

US consumer prices soared 6.8%

Washington: Prices for US consumers jumped 6.8% in November compared with a year earlier as surging costs for food, energy, housing and other items left Americans enduring their highest annual inflation rate since 1982.

NZ card spending rises in November

Wellington: New Zealanders used their credit and debit cards to spend more in November, particularly on furniture, electrical and hardware, the country's statistics department Stats NZ said Friday.

Silent strikes in Myanmar

Bangkok (Thailand): Opponents of military rule in Myanmar Friday held one of their biggest nationally coordinated protests in months, successfully calling on people across the country to shut their businesses and stay at home on International Human Rights Day.

SL mulling to make vax card mandatory

Colombo: Sri Lanka is mulling to make the Covid vaccine card mandatory for those entering public places, the President's Office announced. The Special Committee on Covid-19 Control stated that it has decided to make the vaccination card mandatory when entering public places in the future.

16 killed in mosque attack

Lagos: Gunmen attacked a rural village in northern Nigeria, killing 16 worshippers at a mosque and kidnapping others, said a local official. The assault on Ba'are village in the Mashegu area of Niger state lasted for hours Thursday.



The country could be forced to take extraordinary measures if the virus (Coronavirus) doesn't slow soon

KIM BOO-KYUM | SOUTH KOREAN PM

JAPAN'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION DOWN 5.1 PER CENT

Japan's greenhouse gas emissions dropped 5.1% year-on-year in fiscal 2020, down for the seventh consecutive year, reflecting lower energy consumption by companies amid Covid as per the government data



New UK mask rules start as Boris under fire over parties

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 10: Tighter restrictions to curb the coronavirus came into force in Britain Friday, as the government faced new allegations that officials flouted rules they had imposed on the nation with lockdown-breaking parties last Christmas.

Face masks are once again compulsory in indoor public spaces in England under the measures British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced this week to slow the spread of the new omicron virus

variant. Vaccination passes will be needed for nightclubs and large events starting next week, and residents will be told to work from home, if possible.

The emergence of omicron, which is spreading quickly in Britain, has shaken the government's hopes that vaccinations would be enough to keep the virus in check. British scientists and officials say omicron spreads more quickly than the currently dominant delta variant and likely is more resistant to current vaccines. It is not yet clear whether it causes

more severe, or milder, cases off Covid-19. Along with the new restrictions, the British government is offering everyone 18 and up a third, booster dose of vaccine to try to slow the spread of the virus.

The return of restrictions is unwelcome for many, and revelations of apparent rule-breaking by government officials during tough lockdowns last winter have heightened opposition to the new measures. The government has asked Britain's most senior civil servant to investigate several gatherings, including a December 18, 2020,

event at the prime minister's 10 Downing St. Offices, where staff reportedly enjoyed wine, food, games and a festive gift exchange at a time when pandemic regulations banned most social gatherings.

Multiple media outlets reported Friday that one of Johnson's most senior advisers, Director of Communications Jack Doyle, attended the Dec. 18 party and gave awards to staff members. At the time, he was the deputy communications director. In his current role, Doyle has directed the government's public statements about

the party allegations. For several days, Johnson's office denied a party had taken place and insisted rules had been followed at all times. That claim unravelled when a leaked video showed senior staff members joking about the alleged party.

The most senior official in the video, Allegra Stratton, apologized and resigned Wednesday.

The Christmas party claims are the latest in a string of allegations of rule-breaking and ethics violations by Johnson and government officials.

Nobel Peace Prize winners call for journalists' protection

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Copenhagen, Dec 10: The two journalists who shared this year's Nobel Peace Prize received their awards Friday during a pomp-filled ceremony in Norway, where both warned that the world needs independent reporting to counter the power of authoritarian governments.

Maria Ressa of the Philippines and fellow laureate Dmitry Muratov of Russia gave their Nobel lectures at Oslo City Hall.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded them the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize for their separate fights for freedom of expression in countries where reporters have faced persistent attacks, harassment and killings. "Yes, we growl and bite. Yes, we have sharp teeth and strong grip," Muratov said of journalists.

"But we are the prerequisite for progress. We are the antidote against tyranny," Muratov also used his speech to give a dire warning about the potential for a war between Russia and Ukraine.

A massive Russian troop buildup near Ukraine's border has led to Western diplomatic efforts to prevent an invasion, which the Kremlin has denied it is planning.

Olaf Scholz holds talks in Paris, Brussels

AGENCIES

Paris, Dec 10: New German Chancellor Olaf Scholz Friday held his first meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron as both nations are making efforts towards the de-escalation of tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

The leaders spoke in a joint news conference in Paris, during Scholz's first visit abroad after his coalition government was sworn in earlier in the week. The German Chancellor is then heading to Brussels to meet with European Union and NATO officials.

The talks come as US President Joe Biden this week moved to take a more direct role in diplomacy between Ukraine and Russia. In recent years, France and Germany have played the mediator role in the conflict.

53 killed after truck smuggling migrants crashes in Mexico

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tuxtla Gutierrez (Mexico), Dec 10: Rescue workers rushing to a high-way accident found a horrific scene of death and injury after a freight truck jammed with as many as 200 migrants tipped over and crashed into the base of a steel pedestrian bridge in southern Mexico.

The migrants inside the cargo trailer were flipped, tossed and crushed into a pile that mingled the living and the dead. By late Thursday, the death toll stood at 53, and authorities said at least 54 people had been injured.

Volunteer rescuers hauled bodies off the pile by their arms and legs, while some migrants scrambled and limped to extract themselves from the twisted steel sheets of the collapsed container. One young man, pinned in a heap of unmoving bodies, wriggled to free the lower half of his frame from the weight of the dead piled atop him, his face wrenched into a grimace of life extracting itself from the clutches of death.

Nearby, a man blinked his eyes, unable to move as he lay on the shoulder of the road. Next to him was a fellow migrant, stouter and older, whose eyes no longer needed shading — they stared, startled and lifeless, unblinking, into the setting sun. At the Vatican, Pope Francis, who visited Chiapas in 2015 and has made the plight of



AP PHOTO

It was one of the worst single-day death tolls for migrants in Mexico since the 2010 massacre of 72 migrants by the Zetas drug cartel in the northern state of Tamaulipas

migrants a hallmark of his papacy, sent a telegram of condolences Friday to the archbishop of Tuxtla Gutierrez. In the note, he offered prayers for the victims, their families and for the injured.

While the Mexican government is trying to appease the United States by stopping caravans of walking migrants and allowing the reinstatement of the "Remain in Mexico" policy, it hasn't been able to stop the flood of migrants stuffed hundreds at a time into freight trucks operated by smugglers who charge thousands of dollars to take them to the US border — trips that all too often lead them only to their deaths. The most severely injured, many streaming blood, were carried by their arms and legs to plastic sheets set on the road.

BIDEN CALLS ON LEADERS TO END 'BACKWARD SLIDE' OF DEMOCRACY

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 10: President Joe Biden expressed alarm at a "backward slide" of democracy around the globe Thursday, calling on fellow world leaders to work with him to bolster democratic institutions as his administration grows increasingly concerned about China's and Russia's push for global influence.

Biden's comments to more than 100 leaders at the White House's first virtual Summit for Democracy came as they pointed to a host of challenges confronting democracies, including corruption, inequality, and limitations on press freedom.

The leaders also expressed increasing worry about the perils of disinformation and strengthening autocracies. "Will we allow the backward slide of rights and democracy to continue unchecked?" Biden asked. "Or will we together — together — have a vision ... And courage to once more lead the march of human progress and human freedom forward?"

He didn't mention either China or Russia by name. But he has repeatedly made a case that the US and like-minded allies need to show the world that democracies are a far better vehicle for societies than autocracies. It is a central tenet of Biden's foreign policy outlook — one that he vowed would be more outward looking than his predecessor Trump's "America First" approach. Biden underscored that even long-established democracies, like the United States, haven't been immune to the strains, and he called the moment an "inflection point in history."



Biden's comments to more than 100 leaders came as they pointed to a host of challenges confronting democracies, including corruption, inequality, and limitations on press freedom

The leaders also expressed increasing worry about the perils of disinformation and strengthening autocracies

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, said in its annual report that the number of countries experiencing democratic backsliding "has never been as high" as the past decade, with the US added to the list along with India and Brazil

lished democracies, like the United States, haven't been immune to the strains, and he called the moment an "inflection point in history."

Local elected officials are resigning at an alarming rate amid confrontations with angry voices at school board meetings, elections



FOR A CHANGE

Activists push an effigy of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, center, with his daughter Davao city mayor, Sara, right, and Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos Jr., the son of the late dictator, during a protest to commemorate International Human Rights Day in Quezon City, Philippines

Court permits challenge to Texas 6-week abortion ban

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 10: The US Supreme Court Friday allowed abortion providers to pursue a legal challenge to a ban on most abortions in Texas, with the fate of the Republican-backed measure that allows private citizens to enforce it now hanging in the balance.

The justices, who heard arguments on the case November 1, lifted a block on lower court proceedings, likely paving the way for a federal judge to formally block the law.

The conservative-majority court September 1 had declined to halt the law. The court in a separate case dismissed a separate challenge brought by President Joe

Biden's administration.

The abortion providers and the Biden administration had asked the Supreme Court to block the Texas law while the litigation continues, but the justices opted to leave it in place for now.

The Supreme Court has yet to decide another major abortion rights case from Mississippi that could lead to the overturning of the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized the procedure nationwide.

The Texas measure is the nation's most restrictive abortion law. It bans abortions at around six weeks, a point in time when many women do not yet realize they are pregnant, and has no exception for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest.

Terror threat looms again as TTP declines ceasefire extension

The end to the ceasefire has come as a major blow to the Pakistan government as it brushes aside efforts to secure a peace agreement and closes doors for positive engagement between the TTP militants and the government going forward

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, Dec 10: Pakistan is bracing for a new wave of increased terror outbreak from the dreaded Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani faction of the Afghan Taliban, which had agreed for a month-long ceasefire with the Imran Khan-led government, as the militant outfit has now refused to give any extension to the agreement.

In a statement, the TTP has accused the Pakistan government of failing to honour the decisions mutually agreed in the ceasefire agreement.

"The Pakistan government has not only failed to implement the decisions reached between the two sides but to the contrary, the security forces conducted raids in Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Swat, Bajaur, Swabi and North Waziristan and killed detained mil-



IANS

itants," the statement says.

"Under the circumstances, it is not possible to extend the ceasefire," it added. Previously, the Pakistan government and the TTP had been in negotiations and had come down to a month-long ceasefire agreement, in which, both sides agreed on a six-point agreement. Both

sides had accepted that the Taliban-led Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan (IEA) would play the role of a mediator and that both sides would form a five-member committee each, which would be the talking points of negotiations for the next course of action and demands of both sides. An agreement was

reached to enforce a month-long ceasefire from November 1 to 30. The Pakistan government agreed that it would release at least 102 improvised mujahideen and hand them over to the TTP, under the supervision of the IEA.

It was expected that the month long ceasefire would be extended further after successful talks with the TTP. But that has not happened.

In an audio message, Taliban commander Mufti Noor Wali Mahsud announced an end to the ceasefire and asked all TTP fighters to resume attacks.

"Since the TTP has not heard back from the mediators or the government, therefore, past midnight, our fighters reserve the right to resume attacks wherever they were," Noor Wali Mahsud was heard as saying in the audio message. While the ceasefire had a

visible impact, as TTP-led militant attacks inside Pakistan, which saw a major surge in the recent past, declined considerably.

It was also made clear from both sides that there would be some red lines, that would not be crossed. This included grouping, re-grouping, safe havens, movements of militants from the Pakistani side.

On the other hand, the TTP had set its condition to enforce Shariah Islamic law and re-enforcement of the tribal areas as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which was merged into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2017.

But with the current end to the ceasefire, Pakistani security forces and the locals brace for increased targeted attacks by the TTP militants, a problem that the country has been fighting for decades.



India has to do a lot of things to try and get the growth it truly deserves. Where we should be growing is at 8-9%. That's what is necessary to create jobs for the young people coming out

RAGHURAM RAJAN | EX-RBI GOVERNOR

TOYOTA HALTS PRODUCTION IN JAPAN

Toyota Motor Co Friday expanded production stoppages at some factories in Japan because of a shortage of components shipped from parts plants in Southeast Asia. The latest halts will cut car output by 9,000 vehicles when added to curbs announced Thursday, affecting production of Lexus models and its four-wheel-drive Land Cruiser, Toyota



of the day quote

MG is geared up to expand its footprint across the other south Asian countries, starting with Nepal

RAJEEV CHABA | PREZ AND MD, MG MOTOR

Viable green steel production could be more than a decade away even though several of the world's major steelmakers, including us, are actively developing plans to adopt the process to meet carbon-neutral goals

SAJJAN JINDAL | CHAIRMAN, JSW GROUP

Under our latest MoU, we will support ISRO with our industry-leading R&D capabilities to provide a seamless experience to the users of the NavIC application. In line with our vision towards Make In India

TASLEEM ARIFF | VP (R&D HEAD), OPPO

Covid spoiled economies: BRICS Bulletin

THE BRICS GROUPING COMPRISE BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA AND SOUTH AFRICA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: The Covid crisis has led to significant economic losses and made the social fabric of the BRICS countries fragile by amplifying unemployment, poverty, gender disparity and migration risks, according to the BRICS Economic Bulletin released Friday.

The Reserve Bank of India released bulletin prepared by the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) Research Group with members from BRICS central banks. The CRA Research Group was set up to enhance research, economic analysis and surveillance capacity of the BRICS.

While China could largely contain the spread of the debilitating infection, other BRICS countries have witnessed multiple waves of infection, it said.

As per the bulletin, there is convincing evidence of a recovery of the BRICS from the deep, pandemic-induced contraction in 2020. However, the recovery shows significant divergence amongst the



The bulletin noted that the BRICS were seriously hit by the pandemic and are trying to recover from it

China's ability to control the infections aided in its quick recovery while other BRICS nations are gradually picking up

The bulletin also said that BRICS countries should seize the opportunities that might emerge amid the crisis by planning for and working towards a bright post-pandemic future

BRICS members.

"China has been able to control the infections effectively which has aided its quick recovery. While the pace of economic growth is gradually picking up in India and Brazil, Russia and South Africa are yet to return to their pre-pandemic levels of economic activity," it said. Further, the bulletin said that since the threat of Covid remains unabated in the BRICS, it is difficult to estimate the robustness of this recovery.

The bulletin addresses the theme of 'Navigating the Ongoing

demographic levels of economic activity," it said. Further, the bulletin said that since the threat of Covid remains unabated in the BRICS, it is difficult to estimate the robustness of this recovery.

The bulletin addresses the theme of 'Navigating the Ongoing

POST SEVEN-MONTH HIGH

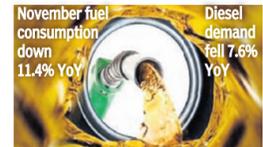
Fuel consumption plummets in Nov

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: India's fuel consumption fell in November after scaling a seven-month peak last month, government data showed Thursday, as demand eased in the world's third biggest oil consumer after festival season.

Fuel consumption, a proxy for oil demand, totalled 17.13 million tonne, down 4% from October and was 11.4% lower than a year before, data from the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell showed. Fuel demand rose in October to a seven-month peak, while petrol sales surged to an all-time high, as festivals boosted mobility and economic activity.

"Drop-off in demand points to seasonal factors," said Ed Moya, senior market analyst at brokerage OANDA. "However, fuel demand outlook remains upbeat going into 2022 as Covid is not really impacting the country and good growth outlook on



continued reopening momentum." Consumption of diesel, which accounts for about 40% of India's refined fuel sales, also eased 1.7% month-on-month to 6.51 million tonne and was down 14% compared with November 2019.

Sales of petrol decreased by about 0.7% to 2.65 million tonne year on year, but was 4.4% higher from November 2019. They were down 3.6% from October.

India, Asia's third-largest economy, last month said it will release 5 million barrels of oil from its strategic reserves in coordination with other buyers including the United States, China, Japan and South Korea.

SHORT TAKES

Forex reserves dip

Mumbai: India's foreign exchange reserves declined for the second consecutive week, ending \$1.783 billion down at \$635.905 billion for the week ended December 3, RBI data showed Friday. In the previous week, the reserves had slid by \$2.713 million to \$637.687 billion. In the reporting week ended December 3, the dip in the forex kitty was mainly on account of a decline in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

Videocon resolution: DoT moves NCLAT

New Delhi: The Department of Telecommunication (DoT) has moved the insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT against the NCLT order approving the consolidated resolution plan for 13 companies of Videocon Group, including Videocon Telecommunications. The DoT, in its petition, has requested the appellate tribunal to set aside the order passed by the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) June 8, 2021 allowing the ₹2,962-crore takeover bid by Anil Agarwal's Twin Star Technologies.

NITI Aayog, Airtel partner for Convoke

New Delhi: NITI Aayog in partnership with Bharti Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Bharti Enterprises, launched Convoke 2021-22. Convoke is a National research Symposium which aims at addressing challenges in imparting education and strengthening its quality with special focus on all teachers, educationists, and heads of schools across India. Through this platform, school teachers/ heads/principals of government schools and teachers from Bharti Foundation network will be encouraged to use research-based solutions through scientific approach, and showcase their efforts taken at the grass-root level in improving learning outcomes.

LIC to up stake in IndusInd Bank

New Delhi: Private bank IndusInd Bank Friday said the RBI has given approval to Life Insurance Corporation to increase stake in the bank to nearly 10 per cent. The bank has received an intimation from the RBI on December 9, 2021, that it has granted its approval to Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), shareholder of the bank to acquire up to 9.99 per cent of the total issued and paid up capital of the bank, the bank said in a regulatory filing on stock exchanges.

Growth cycle not durable, will peak in H1 2022: Nomura

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: The current growth cycle being witnessed in the country is not durable and will peak by the first half of 2022, a Japanese brokerage said Friday.

Higher inflation and wider current account deficit, which are the side effects of the loose policies adopted to push growth during the pandemic, will come into play, forcing the RBI to act even as the scarring effects cast doubt on growth's durability, Nomura said in its yearly outlook.

It said the recovery has been uneven, hurting consumption of lower-income households, and a sustained capital expenditure up-cycle is also not in sight.

"Overall, we do not see the current growth cycle as durable. With mixed growth, high inflation and wider twin deficits, we expect India's risk premium to rise and the RBI to catch up as it falls behind the curve," its analysts said.

A further recovery has been

The brokerage said growth grew by 2 percentage points after the damage caused by the second wave of the Covid virus in mid-2021 but remains below the pre-pandemic trend

hampered by supply-side bottlenecks, like the energy crunch and chip shortages, evidenced by the weak economic normalisation in the December quarter, but production should bounce back once these are resolved.

"In our base case, India's business cycle peaks in H1 2022 and then momentum starts to moderate in H2, reflecting cyclical factors and the impact of the scarring effects, which we believe have lowered the potential growth rate," it said.

Factory output rises 3.2% in Oct

IN OCTOBER 2021, THE IIP STOOD AT 133.7 POINTS COMPARED TO 129.6 POINTS IN THE SAME MONTH LAST YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: India's industrial production growth remained subdued for the second straight month and expanded by 3.2 per cent in October, mainly due to the waning low base effect while mining, power and manufacturing sectors performed well.

The manufacturing sector, which constitutes 77.63 per cent of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), grew two per cent in October, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) Friday. The mining sector output rose 11.4 per cent in October, while power generation increased 3.1 per cent. The factory output recorded double-digit growth in the four months from May to August this year. Then it slipped to 3.3 per cent in September this year and further to 3.2 per cent, mainly due to waning low base effect.

Thus, the data showed waning of the low base effect. The IIP growth witnessed double-digit growth from May onwards this year, mainly due to the lower base effect. The IIP had grown by 4.5 per cent in October 2020.

During April-October this year, the IIP grew 20 per cent against a



17.3 per cent contraction in the same period last year.

The data showed that industrial production recovered in September 2020 and surpassed the pre-pandemic level of September 2019. The IIP had grown by one per cent in September 2020.

Industrial production plunged 18.7 per cent in March last year following the COVID outbreak and remained in the negative zone till August 2020.

With the resumption of economic activities, factory output rose 1 per cent in September 2020 and grew 4.5 per cent in October. In November 2020, the factory output fell 1.6 per cent and then entered the positive territory with a 2.2 per cent growth in December 2020.

The manufacturing sector had recorded a growth of 4.5 per cent in October 2020. The mining sector output contracted one per cent in the same month. The electricity generation had grown by 11.2 per cent in October 2020.

The output of capital goods, which is a barometer of investment, contracted by 1.1 per cent in October 2021. It had witnessed a growth of 3.2 per cent in the year-ago period. Consumer durables manufacturing contracted 6.1 per cent in the month under review against a growth of 18.1 per cent in October 2020.

Consumer non-durable goods production grew 0.5 per cent in October against a 7.3 cent rise in the year-ago period.

'LEI must for ₹50cr plus cross-border deals'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: Firms will have to quote the 20-digit legal entity identifier (LEI) number for undertaking cross-border transactions of ₹50 crore or more from October 1, 2022, the Reserve Bank said Friday.

LEI is a 20-digit number used to uniquely identify parties to financial transactions worldwide to improve the quality and accuracy of financial data systems.

"In order to further harness the



benefits of LEI, it has been decided that AD Category I banks, with effect from October 1, 2022, shall obtain the LEI number from the resi-

dent entities (non-individuals) undertaking capital or current account transactions of ₹50 crore and above (per transaction) under FEMA, 1999," RBI said in a circular.

As regards non-resident counterpart/ overseas entities, in case of non-availability of LEI information, banks may process the transactions to avoid disruptions, it added. RBI also said banks may encourage concerned entities to voluntarily furnish LEI while undertaking transactions even before October 1, 2022.

BIZ BUZZ

NTPC Darlipali ranks 7 in All India Plant Load Factor

Bhubaneswar: NTPC Darlipali secured 7th position in terms of Plant Load Factor, environment management, R&R, and community development activities. The company announced the achievement during a press meet at NTPC Darlipali Township, Friday. NTPC Darlipali is currently running with 1600 MW. AK Samaiyar, Chief General Manager (NTPC Darlipali) addressed the media personnel and briefed about the status of NTPC Darlipali and acknowledged the stakeholders for their consistent support in the growth and development of NTPC Darlipali. While interacting with journalists and media personnel, Samaiyar emphasised upon various community development initiatives in nearby villages and environment management. Amongst several of its community development initiatives, NTPC Darlipali had recently sponsored 13 candidates for two years full time ITI course at CIPET, Bhubaneswar.

Shipping costs likely to remain abruptly high until '23

A UN report said last month that high freight rates were threatening the global recovery, suggesting they could boost import prices by 11% and consumer prices by 1.5% between now and 2023

AGENCIES

London, Dec 10: Much like the coronavirus pandemic, and the economic disruption that it has caused, a global shipping crisis looks set to go on delaying goods traffic and fuelling inflation well into 2023.

Shipping rarely figures in economists' inflation and GDP calculations, and companies tend to fret

more about raw materials and labour costs than transportation. But that might be changing.

The cost of shipping a 40-foot container (FEU) unit has eased some 15% from record highs above \$11,000 touched in September, according to the Freightos FBX index. But before the pandemic, the same container cost just \$1,300.

With 90% of the world's merchandise shipped by sea, it risks exacerbating global inflation that is already proving more troublesome than anticipated.

Peter Sand, chief analyst at the freight rate benchmarking platform Xeneta, does not expect container shipping costs to normalise before 2023.

"This means the higher cost of logistics is not a transitory phenomenon," Sand said. "For inflation, that means trouble. The ele-

ANOTHER DANGER FOR INFLATION



ment of shipping, in overall prices, small as it may be, is much bigger than ever before, and it could be a permanent lift to prices going forward."

Ocean transport costs initially leapt after a six-day blockage of the Suez Canal in March caused

The problem could get worse if smaller companies are unable to meet their commercial obligations and struggle to stay afloat. These time bombs are riddled through large enterprises' supply chains and will present many problems for their customers who rely on their goods and services

JAMES GELLERT | CEO, RAPIDRATINGS

avirus lockdowns, while dockyards were struggling with COVID-related labour shortages.

In early November, 11% of the world's loaded container volume was being held up in logjams, down from August peaks but well above the pre-pandemic 7%, Berenberg an-

alysts estimate.

BACKLOG UNTIL 2023
In late October at Los Angeles/Long Beach, one of the world's biggest container ports, ships were taking twice as long to turn around as before the pandemic, RBC Capital Markets estimates.

Although the worst may be past, RBC analyst Michael Tran does not see freight prices returning to pre-pandemic levels for another couple of years.

"Even if plans to unload an extra 3,500 containers each week are implemented, the Los Angeles/Long Beach backlog is unlikely to clear before 2023," he said.

"The softening in prices we saw at the end of September is a false dawn. What we see from a big-data perspective is that things are not getting materially better."

ROOT, MALAN LEAD FIGHTBACK

VVS Laxman praises Mayank's self belief

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brisbane, Dec 10: Joe Root (86 batting, 158b, 10x4) set a record for most runs in a calendar year by an England Test batter and shared an unbroken 159-run stand with Dawid Malan (80 batting, 177b, 10x4) Friday to lead a rally in the Ashes series opener against Australia. England reached 220/2 at stumps on Day 3.

The England skipper has 1,541 runs so far in 2021, beating Michael Vaughan's record of 1,481 runs in 2002. Mohammad Yousuf holds the Test record with his 1,788 runs in 11 matches for Pakistan in 2006.

England is still 58 runs behind. But after being dismissed for 147 on Day 1 and conceding a 278-run first-innings deficit, the third-wicket pair finally gave England a session of dominance.

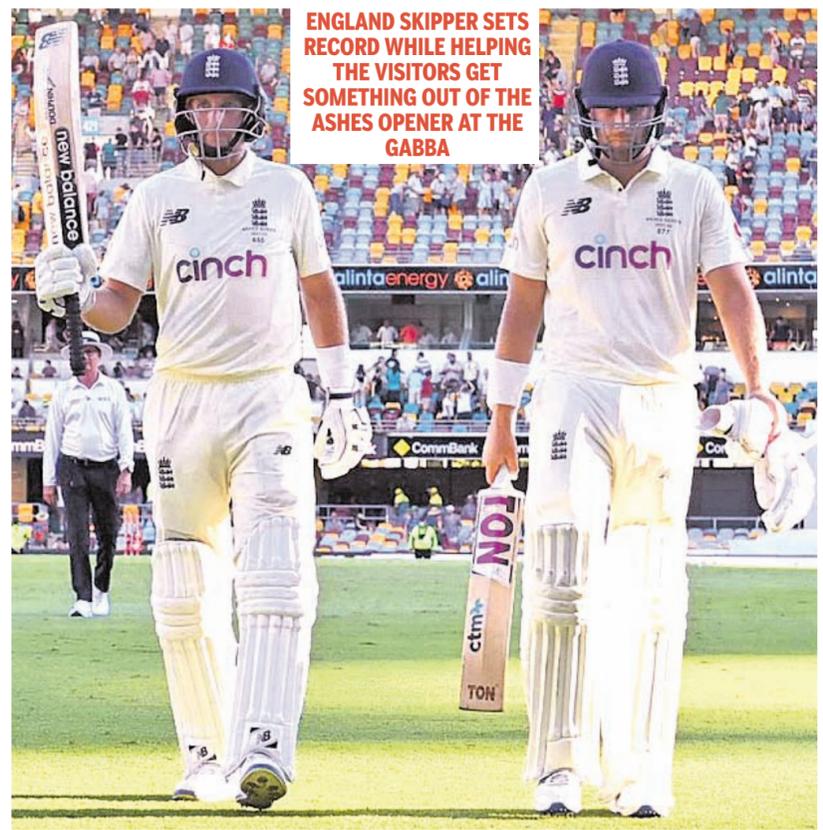
Root was one run shy of his highest previous score in an Ashes Test Down Under when umpires removed the bails.

Malan said the only way for England to go forward was to forget the first innings, not be "sitting ducks" and just take the attack back to the Australian bowlers. But he said the job was only half done, and England needed at least another 250-300 runs to pressure Australia. With Root still there, it's possible.

Australia resumed Friday at 343/7 and added 82 for the loss three wickets in the morning session, with Travis Head bowled for 152 (148b, 14x4, 4x6) by Mark Wood (3/85) to end the innings at 425.

England's openers survived to reach 23 without loss at the first interval but both were out early in the afternoon session and the total was 61/2 when Root joined Malan at the crease.

Opener Rory Burns narrowly avoided an unwanted pair, getting a reprieve after being given out lbw to Mitchell Starc (1/60) without scoring in the first over of England's second innings two



ENGLAND SKIPPER SETS RECORD WHILE HELPING THE VISITORS GET SOMETHING OUT OF THE ASHES OPENER AT THE GABBA

RESCUE ACT: England skipper Joe Root raises his bat in acknowledgement as he walks off the field with Dawid Malan after the end of third day's play at the Gabba, Friday

Joe Root became England's highest run-getter in a calendar year in Tests. The skipper has 1,541 runs so far in 2021, beating Michael Vaughan's record of 1,481 runs in 2002. Mohammad Yousuf holds the Test record with his 1,788 runs in 11 matches for Pakistan in 2006

days after being bowled out by the Australian left-arm pacesman on the first ball of the series.

This time, a successful review showed the ball may have gone over the stumps. But he was out in the first over after lunch without addition to his score or the England total when he was caught behind of Australia captain Pat Cummins (1/43) for 13.

Haseeb Hameed compiled 27 from 58 deliveries before he gloved

a leg-side catch off Starc to wicket-keeper Alex Carey in the only other England wicket to fall on Day 3.

Conditions were perfect for batting on the middle day at the Gabba, which started with Head marshalling Australia's lower order. He put on 85 for the eighth wicket with Starc (35) and 29 for the ninth with Nathan Lyon (15) to prolong Australia's innings and keep England in the field in

“He (Joe Root) seems to somehow find a way of putting the pressure back on the bowlers. It's great signs for us as a team that Joe is playing well out here and leading from the front”

DAWID MALAN

subtropical humidity. Lyon was out to Mark Wood when Head was on 147 and Australia was on 420, leaving No.11 Josh Hazlewood to hang around long enough to help his teammate cross 150.

Head reached the milestone with a boundary against left-arm spinner Jack Leach. It also took Leach beyond 100 runs conceded in 12.1 overs.

But with the batters trying to keep the run-rate up, paceman Wood bowled Head to finish the innings. Ben Stokes, playing his first Test since March, had 0/65 off 12 overs and appeared to be struggling with his fitness.

Veteran Australian opener David Warner didn't field Friday after being hit in the ribs while posting his 94 in the home team's first innings of 425. Team officials said his absence was because of bruising.

England haven't won a Test in Australia in a decade and haven't won a Test at the Gabba since 1986, while Australia's loss to India here in January was their first at the Brisbane venue since 1988.

BRIEF SCORES
England 147 & 220/2 (Joe Root 86 batting, Dawid Malan 80 batting); Australia 425 (Travis Head 152, Mitchell Starc 35; Mark Wood 3/85). Match to continue.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: Mayank Agarwal's stellar performance in the second Test against New Zealand was a reflection of his self belief, feels former batting great and soon-to-be National Cricket Academy (NCA) head VVS Laxman.

Agarwal, who played the series in the absence of KL Rahul and Rohit Sharma, failed in Kanpur but regained his form to score 150 and 62 in the second Test to win the 'Player of the Match' award.

"He has given a lot of importance to self-belief and it was great to see him coming in and expressing himself. I think he played with a mind-set, which is similar to what he used to play in first-class and international cricket," Laxman said on StarSports' show 'Follow The Blues'.



Villarreal enter last 16 in CL

Jonathas helps Odisha FC beat NEUFC



IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY: Villarreal players celebrate a goal against Atalanta in their Champions League match, Thursday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 10: Villarreal clinched the final place in the last 16 of the Champions League on Thursday, while Leicester failed to advance in the Europa League. Villarreal beat Atalanta 3-2 away in a game postponed on Wednesday because of heavy snow in northern Italy.

The Spanish side only needed a draw to advance as runner-up from Group F but jumped out to a 3-0 lead by the 51st minute, with Arnaut Danijuma scoring twice. Atalanta answered with goals from Duvan Zapata and substitute Ruslan Malinovskyi but it was too late to turn things around.

Atalanta finished third in the group and will enter a playoff to get into the last 16 of the second-tier Europa League, the competition Villarreal won last season.

Leicester faced a must-win game at Napoli to advance in the Europa League but lost 2-3. Spartak Moscow secured top spot of Group C with a 1-0 away victory at Legia Warsaw.

Also, Eintracht Frankfurt, Galatasaray and Red Star Belgrade made the next round while Bayer Leverkusen, Lyon, Monaco and West Ham had already qualified with a game to spare.

Only the eight group winners go straight into the round of 16 — the runners-up enter a playoff with the eight teams who finish in third place in the Champions League groups.

In the inaugural Europa Conference League, Jose

Mourinho's Roma reached the next round after a 3-2 win at CSKA Sofia and Basel was the last to reach the round of 16.

Another big team in the competition, Tottenham, had its game against Rennes postponed after a coronavirus outbreak at the English club that would have deprived manager Antonio Conte of at least eight players who have tested positive. A new date for the match has not been announced.

AZ Alkmaar, Copenhagen, Feyenoord, Gent, LASK, and Rennes had already won their groups in the third-tier competition. The draw for the next stage is scheduled for Monday.

EUROPA LEAGUE
In the tightly contested Group C, all four teams could still qualify for the round of 16 ahead of the final round. Leicester had a disastrous start to the game at Napoli.

Forward Adam Ounas gave Napoli early lead four minutes into the game with a low shot. Twenty minutes later, Eljif Elmas doubled the advantage.

Leicester pulled one back three minutes later when defender Jonny Evans found himself at the right spot in the area to reduce the lead and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall equalized in the 33rd after a rebound. But Napoli recovered with Elmas scoring again in the second half.

A 1-1 away draw against Fenerbahçe was enough for Eintracht Frankfurt to claim Group D. Olympiakos finished second

after a 1-0 loss to host Antwerp.

Galatasaray held Lazio to a 0-0 draw in Rome to advance from Group E, leaving its Italian opponent in second.

Red Star drew 1-1 with Braga after Aleksandar Katai converted a penalty kick to equalize after the Portuguese club took the lead through Galeno's spot kick. The result meant Red Star stayed one point ahead of Braga atop Group F.

Lyon's perfect record in Group A ended with a 1-1 draw against Rangers. The Scottish side took the lead shortly before the break but Calvin Bassey scored an own goal to level in the 49th.

Rangers finished second in the group, with Sparta Prague third after a 2-0 win over Brondby. Real Sociedad clinched second place in Group B with a 3-0 win over 10-man PSV, getting two goals from captain Mikel Oyarzabal. West Ham recorded their first loss of the group stage, 1-0 to Dinamo Zagreb which finished second in Group H.

EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE
Roma leapfrogged previous leader Bodø/Glimt of Norway, which was held 1-1 at Zorya Luhansk in Group C. Roma was 3-0 up after Tammy Abraham netted his second goal in the 53rd, before CSKA netted two consolation goals.

In Group G, Vitesse beat Mura 3-1 to sit second, leading Tottenham by three points. Arthur Cabral scored twice for Basel in a 3-0 victory against Qarabag to advance as winner in Group H.

AGENCIES

Goa, Dec 10: Jonathas Cristian scored a second-half goal to help Odisha FC jump to second place in the points table with a 1-0 win over NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) in the 2021-22 Indian Super League (ISL) at the Tilak Maidan Stadium in Vasco Friday.

Odisha now have nine points from four matches, three behind league leaders Mumbai City FC who have 12 points from five games. NorthEast, meanwhile, dropped to ninth with four points from five games.

NorthEast United started on the front foot with Deshorn Brown dribbling past two defenders early on and firing wide from an acute angle. It was all about the Highlanders in the opening exchanges barring an Aridai Suarez curler that skimmed the crossbar and went out.

Five minutes to halftime, the brilliant Brown left Odisha defenders in his wake with a bucca-

Yash Dhull to lead India in U-19 Asia Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Delhi batter Yash Dhull will lead a 20-member India squad in the upcoming U-19 Asia Cup scheduled to be held in the UAE from December 23, the BCCI announced Friday.

There will be a preparatory camp in Bangalore ahead of the tournament. Two-time defending champions India have won the event six times in the last eight editions, while sharing the trophy with Pakistan in 2012.

THE SQUAD: Harnoor Singh Pannu, Ankrish Raghuvanshi, Ansh Gosai, SK Rasheed, Yash Dhull (C), Anshwar Gautam, Siddharth Yadav, Kaushal Tambe, Nishant Sindhu, Dinesh Bana (wk), Aaradhya Yadav (wk), Rajangad Bawa, Rajvardhan Hangarkekar, Garv Sangwan, Ravi Kumar, Rishith Reddy, Manav Parakh, Amrit Raj Upadhyay, Vicky Ostwal & Vasu Vats (subject to fitness clearance).

Standby: Ayush Singh Thakur, Uday Saharan, Shashwat Dangwal, Dhanush Gowda, PM Singh Rathore.



Jonathas Cristian is ecstatic after scoring against NEUFC

neering run into the box but his effort was off target as he took one touch too many.

In the second period, Odisha scuffed a golden opportunity to draw first blood when Javier Hernandez headed wide of the target after being fed by a lovely through ball from Aridai. Frenchman Mathias Coureur then failed to make the most of a free header, nodding wide from close range.

The deadlock was finally broken in the 81st minute when two substitutes Thoiba Singh and Jonathas combined for a well-drilled goal.

Thoiba, who came in place of Isaac Chhakhhuak in the 62nd minute, did well to cross for Jonathas whose drop header left a diving Mirshad with no chance. Liridon Krasniqi had made way for Jonathas in the 62nd minute.

In the dying exchanges, NorthEast tried hard to draw level but Odisha kept them at bay and ensured they keep their good run going.

3 OTHER OLYMPIC SPORTS TOO EXCLUDED FROM PROVISIONAL LIST

No cricket at 2028 Olympics!

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Geneva, Dec 10: Cricket's bid for an Olympic spot received a jolt when it was excluded from the provisional list of 28 sports for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, along with three other sports, by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Cricket, which has featured at the Olympics just once in 1900 Paris Games, weightlifting and modern pentathlon have failed to make the cut for the LA Games Thursday.

The IOC has given boxing and weightlifting federations 18 months time to set their house in order to be considered for the LA Games as these sports were plagued by issues of corruption and doping. In modern pentathlon's case, the Olympic body has asked it to remove equestrian jumping from the event.

Athletics, archery, badminton, basketball, tennis and wrestling are some of the sports that have been provisionally added to the Los Angeles Olympics programme.

In 1990 Paris Games, cricket made its maiden and only appearance where it was played between just two countries. Besides



The IOC has given boxing and weightlifting federations 18 months time to set their house in order to be considered for the LA Games

In modern pentathlon's case, the Olympic body has asked it to remove equestrian jumping from the event

Skateboarding, surfing and sports climbing, which made successful Olympic debuts in Tokyo, have managed to retain their spots

Olympics, the other multi-sport in which cricket featured was only in the 1998 Commonwealth Games. Cricket, however, will make its return to the Commonwealth Games in next year's Birmingham CWG in the form of a women's T20 event.

sport's popularity, cost, complexity, uniqueness and relevance towards young people as factors before including them in the Olympic programme.

The ICC, cricket's governing body, currently has 12 full members and 94 associate members. Skateboarding, surfing and sports climbing, which made successful Olympic debuts in Tokyo, have managed to retain their spots.

The provisional list of 28 sports will be submitted for approval at the IOC session in February next year.