

5.5 lakh people of 19 urban areas get drink from tap facility

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik today inaugurated the 24x7 drink from tap facilities in 19 urban areas of Odisha under the 5T initiative of the state government.



The Chief Minister inaugurated the round-the-clock drink from tap facilities in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Nimapara, Berhampur, Gopalpur, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Biramitrapur, Rajgangpur, Keonjhar, Joda, Barbil, Champua, Anandapur, Baripada, Rairangpur, Udala, Karanjia and Vyasanagar through videoconference

from the Convention Hall of the Lok Seva Bhawan here. "The drink from tap facilities inaugurated by the Chief Minister today will benefit at least 5.5 lakh people in 19 urban areas of Odisha. With the today's inauguration, Gopalpur in Ganjam district became the second city in Odisha and also in India after

Puri to get drink from tap facility for its entire population," said an official. The drink from tap facilities were launched in 18 wards of Bhubaneswar, 16 wards in Berhampur, seven wards in Champua, four wards each in Rourkela, Gopalpur and Keonjhar, three wards each in Cuttack,

Nimapara, Anandpur and Udala, two wards each in Joda, Barbil, Baripada, Rairangpur and Karanjia, and one ward each in Sundargarh, Biramitrapur and Vyasanagar, added the official.

The work for drink from tap facilities in Khurda, Jatni and Hinjilicut urban local bodies was also

launched on the occasion. Once finished, the facilities will benefit 1.5 lakh people in the three towns, said the official.

"Our priority is to provide good quality drinking water to each and every family in Odisha. Today is a historic day as drink from tap facilities were inaugurated in 19 towns of the state," said the Chief Minister.

Among others, Housing and Urban Development Minister Usha Devi, departmental secretary G Mathi Vathanan, Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, 5T Secretary VK Pandian, Minister Ashok Panda and Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das were present on the occasion.

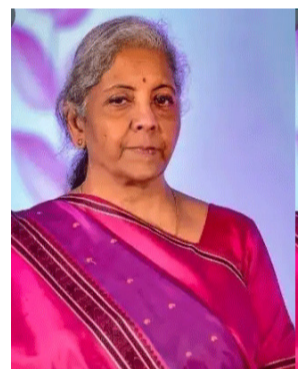
KL GST Withdrawal Urged

New Delhi: A delegation of BJD MPs on Wednesday met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here and demanded withdrawal of 18 per cent GST imposed on kendu leaf.

The delegation of BJD members from both the Houses of Parliament including Dr Amar Patnaik, Dr Sasmit Patra, Pinaki Misra, Achyut Samanta, Sulata Deo, Niranjini Bishi and Mamata Mahanta has submitted a memorandum to the Union Finance Minister to put forth their

demand. In their memorandum, the MPs said Kendu (tendu) leaf, a minor forest produce (MFP) is the financial backbone of about 8 lakhs kendu leaf Pluckers, binders and seasonal workers of Odisha, mostly belonging to the tribal community and poorest of the poor of the society.

The tribal people collect the leaves as part of their right defined under Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest



Rights) Act, 2006. They have the right to procure and sell these products.

Imposition of GST (18%) on Kendu (Tendu) leaves is adversely affecting the Kendu leaves trade. This in turn affects the livelihoods of Kendu

leaves Pluckers, binders and seasonal workers and Implementation of social security and welfare measures for them, the MPs told Sitharaman.

In the interest of the livelihoods of the Kendu leaves dependent community, they urged upon the Union Minister to withdraw the imposition of GST on Kendu leaves for the greater interest of the State of Odisha.

"We, the Biju Janata Dal MPs from Odisha, as public

representatives of the tribal communities in Odisha are seeking withdrawal of the imposition of GST on Kendu (Tendu) leaf. The withdrawal will strengthen the lives and livelihood of 8 lakhs Kendu leaf Pluckers, binders and seasonal workers of Odisha, mostly belonging to the tribal community and poorest of the poor of the society and will also strengthen the intention of empowering tribals through Forest Rights Act, 2006, and PESA Act, 1996," they said in the memorandum.

Private buses in Odisha to halt indefinitely over 8-point charter of demands from Jan 17

Bhubaneswar(KCN): The State Private Bus Owners' Association decided today to halt the vehicles in Odisha for an indefinite period over an 8-point charter of demands starting from Jan 17 coming year. Movement of the private

buses will be completely ceased, in case the outfit's demands are not met before the stipulated date. This was decided in the general body meeting held here. An office-bearer of the association said that the 8-point charter of demands

includes the withdrawal of the State government's scrap policy, expediting delay in the issuance of permits to fit buses as per the deadline previously determined by Odisha Transport Commissioner, accordance of sleeper

coaches to run during day hours and early completion of the Manguli-Sambalpur and Balangir-Bargarh road expansion works. The association will get down to roads in the days ahead, the office-bearer warned.

50years of Establishment of Diplomatic Relationship between India and Vietnam celebrated

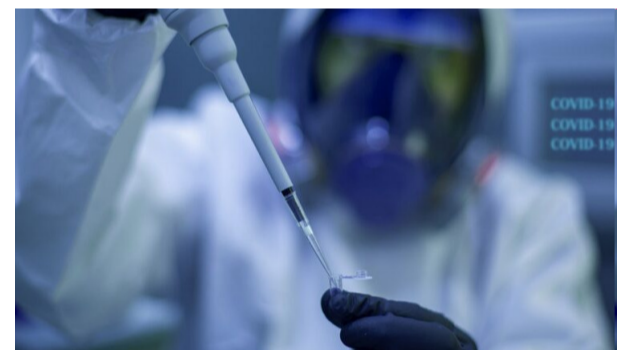
Kolkata(Partha Roy): The 2nd Viet Nam Forum has organised conference on theme "Enhancing Viet Nam - India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Towards 2030" in commemoration of 50 years of diplomatic relations between India and Vietnam. This conference was held at the



Vietnamese Embassy, New Delhi on 21 December 2022. India is the third country to have Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Vietnam; the other two are China and Russia. This conference was aimed to take stock of the progress of the bilateral relations and brainstorm on how to increase the depth and breadth of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the

two countries and to cope with new complexities and uncertainties of today's world.

In his introductory remark, Mr. Nguyen Thanh Hai, Vietnamese Ambassador to India has emphasized about the relevance of having strong relations between Vietnam and India and the contemporary geopolitical scenario, specifically with reference to Indo-



Medical Research Centre (RMRC), Bhubaneswar, conducted the genome sequencing of the sample, added the official. During the testing, it was found that the sample was neither a Variant of Concern (VOC) nor a Variant of Interest (VOI). No other sample of Omicron BF.7 subvariant

was detected in Odisha in the last three months, said the official.

"The woman tested positive for Omicron BF.7 was asymptomatic at time of test. She underwent Covid test before her travel to the USA. She and her family have been staying in the USA since October.



Dr Pabitra mohan samantaray, Editor in chief, Paryabekhyak and The Kalinga chronicle Group at the Ekadashaha Ceremony (11th Day Rituals) of Late smt S Jamunamani satpathy, Mother of Prof (Dr) Rabinarayan Satpathy, Director, Sri Sri Ravishankar university, Bhubaneswar

published by The World & Viet Nam.

Ambassador Dr. Mohan Kumar, Dr. Do Thanh Hai, Deputy Chief of Mission, Prof. G. Jayachandra Reddy, Dr. Prabir De, Dr. Le Thi Hanh Nga, Dr. Vu Le Thai Hoang, Dr. Nguyen Tran Tien, Dr. Anand Mishra, Dr. Pankaj Jha, Dr. Om Prakash and Dr. Abira Bhattacharya participated in the deliberations.

Irony

Sreeta Sikruti Kuanr

Every poem I write
Does not rhyme
Every prayer I repeat
Does not live
Every fear I intake
Does not exist
I question my colours
To rainbows that never
To the skies that never rained
I love my lover
Who did not return after his promise
Who stayed like a shelter to my profits
I write to my friend
Thrusting blood on paper
When she died by the window, by grenades
When she smiled her last, to tasting smoke
By uncut red blades
I still trust
After the sun came up on a rainy funeral
After my mother left on my brother's arrival
And I still do believe human
After and before all the past and future
Sacred at its best, purest at the heavenliest
To call is kind, to rumor around is foolish
But to write is madness.



Dagarpada, BIs

Heat of Christmas oven

Dwit David Philip

Christmas is the birth day of a crucified,
Called foolish if JESUS is worshipped.

His-story is 0 time in History,
His birth and death is historic reality,
Islam proclaims, yes it's reality,
Veda says He is the Prajapati.

Romanians were neither Jew nor disciples of Christ,
They hanged him on cross for Jews to be satisfied.

Christians are those who are condemned and ashamed always in History,
Not only in India, in states of Islam, every where we see.

Jews were hated, Christ was accepted,
Now Christ is hated, Jews are accepted,
Mystery is not clear, but He only knows, who is in Christ,

Without Good Friday, no Easter,
Without suffering no resurrection,
Without abiding the scripture of Christ,
Can't approach the tomb opened by Christ,

Without Nazareth, No Bethlehem,
Without Gabatha, No Golgatha in dream.

Heat of Christmas oven,
Test it, at least once, in life time.

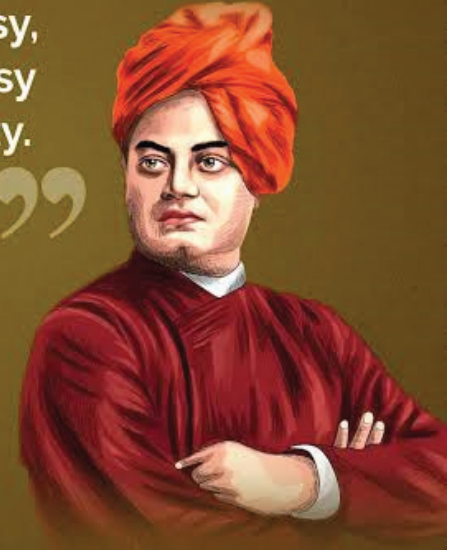


Dwit David Philip
12 December 2022
LD House
Amlatola, Chaibasha
Jharkhand

Quotation of the Day

“
Everything is easy
when you are busy,
but nothing is easy
when you are lazy.
”

- Swami Vivekananda



Culture of Odisha – Explore the Varied and Ancient Heritage of Utkala Region

Odisha is a cultural treasure trove, with ancient monuments, archaeological sites, indigenous arts, sculpture, dance, and music. It is the 8th largest state in terms of land and the



11th largest in terms of people. The state is home to India's 3rd largest number of Scheduled Tribes. It is bordered on the north by West Bengal and Jharkhand, on the west by Chhattisgarh, on the south by Andhra Pradesh, and on the southwest by Telangana. Along the Bay of Bengal, Odisha has a 485-kilometre (301-mile) coastline. Utkala is another name for the region, which is featured in India's national song "Jana Gana Mana." Lets take a deep look in to the culture of Odisha and it's heritage.

History of Odisha

Odisha's early history can be traced back to references in ancient literature such as the Mahabharata, Maha Govinda Sutta, and a few Puranas. Due to marine trade links, the region was also known to other kingdoms in the East Indies region. The land's first occupants belonged to the Sabara tribe, which had



its own culture. When the Aryans arrived in Odisha from the northeast, there was initially hostility between the two civilizations, but over time, reciprocal give and take resulted

in cultural integration. Odisha is famous for being the birthplace of King Ashoka, who began to practice and preach Buddhism there.

The Sultanate of Bengal's troops, headed by the iconoclast leader Kalapahad, captured the province in 1568 CE. The region's political identity was shattered. The region's subsequent rulers were more like tribute lords than true kings. For over a half-decade after 1751, the Marathas controlled the region. The region was ceded to the British Empire in 1803. The British partitioned the area into sections of various provinces. Odisha was established in 1936 as a province based on the population of Odia-speaking people.

Language of Odisha

Oriya is the most widely spoken language in the state and its outlying areas, and it is one of the country's oldest languages with Sanskrit roots. It is spoken by approximately 84% of Orissa's population. Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and Telugu are commonly spoken and understood. Only a few educated people speak English.

Traditional Dress of Odisha

Women in Odisha wear many varieties of saris, which enhances their natural beauty. Katakari Sari, Sambalpuri Sari and Salwar Kamiz are popular women's outfits in Odisha. Dhoti is a popular traditional attire for males in Odisha. During the festival and other cus-

Cscope Staff

This highly accomplished art form dates back over 500 years and is expertly performed by local artists.

Pattachitra is a traditional painting based on Hindu mythology that is one of Odisha's oldest and most popular art forms. Raghurajpur village in Puri is well-known for its artists, and it's fascinating to note that practically every family has at least one member participating in the art form.

Palm Leaf Painting, also known as Talapatra Chitra in Odisha, is an old style of art. This is regarded as one of the sacred art forms in the state.

Odisha is also known for its sand sculptures. Sand Art is clearly one of the world-famous artworks that can be found in Puri, Odisha. In fact, the state conducts an International Sand Art Festival every year.

The appliqué work is a frequent thing in every dwelling, street, and shop in Pipli, a tiny village located near Puri. In the hamlet itself, visitors may watch the process of creating umbrellas and canopies, as well as see the finished products. Artists weave small mirrors on the appliqué motifs to make it more eye-catching!



tomary festivals, they also wear Kurta and Gamucha.

Suggested Read –
Traditional Dresses of Odisha Reflecting Culture of Odia People Arts and Crafts of Odisha Tarakasi, Odisha's most distinctive and fin-

Dokra is a very old style of craft that originated approximately 4500 years ago. It is currently done in many parts of Odisha but the craft is particularly famous in Dhenkanal. Many of its people use the lost wax process to create boxes, sculptures of Gods and Goddesses, and lamps.

Culture of Odisha, Folk Art

est handcraft, is a type of silver filigree work popular in Cuttack.

The black stone sculpting art of Khiching in the Mayurbhanj area, which has a long history and a regal past, is one of the most well-known crafts. Khiching is also recognized for its spectacular temple of Maa Kichakeswari Devi, which attracts a large number of tourists because it is constructed entirely of black stone and is adorned with exquisite decorations that are unique to the state!

Most of Odisha's arts have received international acclaim, and Papier Mache is one of them. The art involves the use of discarded cloth, natural fibers, and papers and is practiced in practically every region of the state. Ikat, also known as Bandha, is a textile art form in which patterns are formed by dyeing cotton or silk before weaving the fabric. Though it is available in a variety of locations, Sambalpur is a popular destination for this type of art. While Ikat works may be found all over India, single ikat, double ikat, and a combination ikat of both warp and weft threads are very popular in Odisha.

Architecture of Odisha

Culture of Odisha is characterized by a plethora of temples and monuments. These temples are proof of the region's beautiful architecture. The first monuments were constructed in the third century B.C. The lion capital of an Ashokan pillar, now in the State

Museum, and the fragment of an Ashokan pillar, converted into a Shiva Lingam and enshrined in the Bhaskareswara temple in Bhubaneswar, tell eloquently of Odisha's previous splendor. The second phase of Odisha art is represented by the rock-cut caves of Khandagiri and Udaygiri, as well as inscriptions documenting Kharavela's brief but eventful rule in the first century B.C. The Naga and Yaksha images discovered in Bhubaneswar are from the post-Kharavela period. During the seventh to thirteenth centuries A.D., Odisha was at the pinnacle of her creative grandeur, the Temple Architecture in Odisha. The temples of Orissa have a distinct design that has evolved through time to include a more complicated plan, highly ornamental plastic figurines, and higher sikharas. (To be continued)

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15 years of 'Welcome': Anil Kapoor on his iconic character Majnu bha



Anil Kapoor's art-enthusiast gangster Majnu Bhai became an iconic character since Welcome was released in 2007. Anees Bazmee's family-comedy, even after over a decade, retains its hilarity and can serve as a lesson for contemporary writers in slapstick. Sharing why Majnu is one of his favourite characters, Anil Kapoor said, "Majnu bhai's character was indeed fun to portray. I didn't

feel like I was acting and it came to me naturally. With Anees Bhai's writing and direction and with Nana being the perfect co-star, the role became easy and lots of fun." Talking about the fandom Majnu bhai has among members and Gen Z, Anil said, "I see so many recreations on social media of his dialogues and it's amazing how he is still relatable even to Gen Z. The character will in-

stantly lift your mood with his dialogues and swag." Welcome was released on December 21, 2007. The film was directed by Anees Bazmee and had an ensemble cast consisting of Anil Kapoor, Nana Patekar, Katrina Kaif, Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, Malaika Sherawat, Feroz Khan, among others.

Ajay Devgn's 'Bholaa' gets release date



Ajay Devgn on Tuesday dropped a new motion poster for his upcoming directorial, Bholaa. The film will release on March 30, 2023. Directed by and starring Ajay, Bholaa is an action drama about one man's quest to reunite with his daughter. The film is a remake of the 2019 Tamil film Kaithi. The motion poster depicts Ajay as a

menacing convict. His face is smeared in saffron ash. The three horizontal lines on his forehead (also known as the "tripundra") is a mark of Shiva devotees. According to a press communiqué, Bholaa has been styled as 'the story of a one-man army, set in one night, fighting a multitude of enemies in various forms, human and otherwise.' It follows

Ajay's character as he 'sets out to combat drug-lords, corrupt forces and a multitude of setbacks that crop up in his 24-hour rough-ride.' "Ek Chat taan, Sau Shaitaan Iss kalyug mein aa raha hai #Bholaa (one rock, hundred demons In this age #Bholaa is arriving) 30th March 2023," #BholaaIn3D #Tabu," Ajay tweeted, sharing the poster.



A total of 183 movies will be screened in 10 theatres across Kolkata from December 16-22. An exhibition on Amitabh Bachchan's life and works will be showcased during the film festival, with the inaugural movie being 'Abhimaan'.

Homage to Ramanujana Mathematical Phenomenon of the twentieth Century



Every year, 22 December is observed as National Mathematics Day to mark the birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan, a legendary Indian mathematician. Mathematics plays a crucial role in understanding all sorts of subjects such as science, music, social studies and even art. Srinivasa Ramanujan was a famous Indian Mathematician who lived during the British rule in India. Ramanujan was born on 22nd December 1887 into

a Tamil Brahmin family in Erode, Madras. His father, Kuppusamy Srinivasa Iyengar hailed from Thanjavur district and worked as a clerk in a saree shop. His mother, Komalatammal, was a housewife and used to sing at a local temple. They lived in a small traditional home. He became well versed with the Brahmin culture and followed particular eating habits. Just before turning ten, he passed his primary education in English, Tamil, geography and arithmetic. His scores were the best in the district. Ramanujan was one of the greatest mathematicians of India whose

contribution to the theory of numbers has been profound. He was indeed a mathematical phenomenon of the twentieth century. He made some important contributions to the discipline, including number theory, infinite series, mathematical analysis, and continued fractions. He was deeply religious and united spirituality and mathematics. For him the zero represented the Absolute Reality. Researchers are still struggling to understand the source of his remarkable genius in mathematics. Since childhood, he was drawn towards maths and took a

Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit



particular interest in learning the subject. He did not receive formal education in mathematics but had mastered maths in various sections. During his time in Cambridge, he grew close to the great mathematician named Hardy. He had been dealing with health problems since childhood. However, around 1918, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis after which he returned to his family in India and died in 1920. Ramanujan found mathematics as a profound manifestation of the Reality. He was such a great mathematician and

genius as transcends all thoughts and imagination. He was an expert in the interpretation of dreams and astrology. These qualities he had inherited from his mother. After his marriage, he took up a job as a researcher at Madras University. He graduated to working as a clerk based on his work in mathematics that he continually upgraded. He was the maths genius who said that "An equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God." He always had a vision of scrolls of complicated maths unfolding before him.

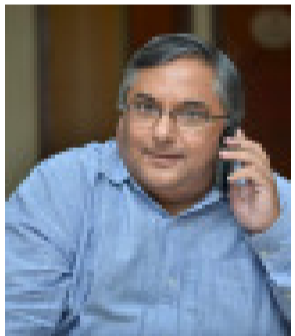
A journal editor M . T .

Narayana Iyengar has written that Mr Ramanujan's methods and presentation was terse and lacked precision and clearness. An ordinary person could hardly follow him. In England, he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts by Research degree. In the year 1994, he died due to Tuberculosis and left the world. In the words of Hardy, Ramanujan had produced groundbreaking theorems and defeated him many times. He had never seen such theories in his life before. One of his famous quotes, "An equation means nothing to me unless it expresses a thought of God."

Still lingers in our memories and thoughts. Even after his death, his contributions were important, especially when a lost notebook of his was found more than 50 years after his death, in 1976. Though he had almost no formal training in pure mathematics, his substantial contributions to mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series, and continued fractions will always be remembered. His theories are still alive in a lot of people's brains and in school textbooks.

B-15 Jyoti-Kalash Society, Jodhpur Tekra Satellite Ahmedabad

MP stands tall at centre of incredible India with History, Nature, Spirituality & Adventures



Think of a place where history and heritage haunt you, culture and cuisine call you, adventures await you and spirituality soothes your soul and Madhya Pradesh, at the centre of 'Incredible India' would come to your mind immediately.

And now 'Film tourism' seems to be the new mantra when it comes to Madhya Pradesh Tourism. The Shivraj Singh Chouhan government has come up with a comprehensive and attractive film tourism policy to woo filmmakers from Bollywood, Tollywood, Mollywood and from outside India. MP possibly is the first state to come up with such concrete and comprehensive policy in this regard. Especially in the post

Covid-19 era, the MP government is harping on such policy measures to hardsell various locations to movie makers cutting across countries. "And it is not just handholding and offering various permissions and clearances through a single window system, but what are new on offers include various financial sops, financial support (of paying

back 30-40 per cent of total spent on movie making in MP) so on and so forth. At different levels and on different grounds we offer these financial incentives and subsidies- for choosing MP as shooting location, for promoting some location/s of MP as a destination (there is another round of incentive or subsidy), for roping in principal actors from

Ritwik Mukherjee

the state, for roping in supporting actors from the state, for hiring crews and technicians, for weaving stories/script around something to do with MP and it goes on like this," said Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary Tourism and Culture Department and Managing Director, MP Tourism Board. And that's not all. If some department takes some fee for some clearance/approval, the department reimburses that.

It suits the state's purpose of promoting various parts of MP as tourism destinations. Movies play a very important role in the lives of Indians, especially the actors and actresses. Movie is a force that is capable of driving the decision of consumers and little wonder therefore that the MP government

prefers being supportive of movie makers to make MP an important shooting destination for the industry. The pristine forests, the rippling rivers and waterbodies, the scenic islands, the rich history and heritage of the forts and palaces, the culture and exotic cuisine and the hospitable people- all go to make it the heart of 'incredible India', anyways, said Shukla.

Along with film tourism, the MP government is also promoting village tourism, sustainable tourism and what is known as 'responsible tourism'. The central Indian state has lined up an ambitious plan of throwing open as many as 1000 home stays across various hinterland and rural areas. Nearly 60-70 home stays are already operational. The state government has identified 15 more sites and 25 more



waterbodies for these purposes. District level committees and state level committee have been formed to work on these. Moves are afoot to provide sustainable livelihood, develop entrepreneurship among the local people by way of upskilling, training, handholding, financial schemes. The state is also engaging architects and sending these entrepreneurs wannabes to see some of the successful homestay models elsewhere, so that the upcoming home stays are

globally benchmarked, said Shukla. The much-hyped Jal Mahotsav at the Hanuwantiya island located on the backwaters of Indira Sagar Dam is a case in point of how the state government is coming up and promoting newer destinations with modern facilities, adventure tourism and MICE facilities and at the same time adding a dash of ethnicity and local flavours, he said. Adventure activities such as scuba diving, night safari at Boriyamal Island, luxury Regal series boat, 40 feet high

rope swing, zip cycle, paramotoring, parasailing, speed boat, jet-ski, hot air ballooning, motor boat riding and much more are there to lure in tourists. With green and clean tourism at the core of everything, the state is also coming up with the largest floating solar plant at the Sailani Island. The state is also working on solar and wind power (if possible and viable) at other locations as well, said Shukla.

The Author is a Kolkata based Freelance Journalist



DfT in 19 towns

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has said that providing good drinking water to every family has been his dream for a long time and always the priority of his Government.

CM launched the Drink-from-Tap (DfT) service in 19 new towns and said, "Today is a historic day. Water is precious to all of us. Therefore, do not waste even a single drop of water, and we should use it properly."

He said that clean water is the most important need for public health, the Chief Minister said that this facility will significantly im-

Rourkela, Sundergarh, Birmittapur, Rajgangpur, Keonjhar, Joda, Babbil, Champua, Anandpur, Baripada, Rairangpur, Udla, Karanjia and Vyas Nagar.

Earlier the scheme was launched in Puri. In Gopalpur too, the second city in the state, 100 percent people will have access to the drink-from-tap system from today. Chief Minister Mr. Patnaik on the occasion announced the launching of the facility in Khurda, Jatni and Hinjili towns which will benefit nearly 1.50 lakh people of these three towns.

Housing and Urban Development Minister



prove the standard of living of the people under the 5T initiative.

"Today these cities of Odisha have been added to the list of big cities of the world and are getting good and clean water according to the standards of Bureau of Indian Standards.

CM said there is a smile on everyone's face, and relief from waiting for clean water. The users expressed their happiness and said that they have got rid of all the hassles of waiting in queues for hours and waiting for water. Thanks to the Chief Minister for this.

The Urban Zones where 'Drink from Tap' facility was launched are - Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Nimapada, Berhampur, Gopalpur,

Usha Devi said that due to the vision and strong leadership of the Chief Minister, the people of Odisha are getting better quality services today.

OMB DAC Oversight Authority Chairman Justice Anang Patnaik said that he often visited the mining areas and felt the problem of people for potable water.

"Today in those areas, remarkable work has been done in the field of drinking water," he said, lauding the initiative of Chief Minister. Principal Secretary of Housing & Urban Development Department G Mathivathanan complimented WATCO CEO Pradipta Kumar Swain for launching the scheme.

'Tell us how many drug mafias you caught through Pegasus': Congress MP asks Shah

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday took exception to Congress member Gaurav Gogoi's allegation that government snoops on

check the entry of contraband into the country.

The Congress member also sought to know from the Home Minister as to what kind of

gress member's remarks, Shah asked Gogoi to submit in the house the proof of his accusation. "He has levelled a very serious allegation that Pegasus has

Om Birla to issue an order if he made any mistake in asking the government to tell the House if it uses Pegasus for surveillance or not. "He has said (Pegasus



politicians with Israeli spyware Pegasus and asked him to give proof of the claim, saying the house was not meant for "reckless politics."

Congress member Gaurav Gogoi, while participating in a discussion in Lok Sabha on drug menace on Wednesday, sought to know from the government about the kind of surveillance mechanism it has in place on the country's land and sea borders, as well as international airports, to

surveillance and intelligence mechanisms are in place to check the arms smuggling, human trafficking, and smuggling of animal parts at the India-Myanmar border.

"You snoop on us again and again, install Pegasus on our phones and that of the journalists," Gogoi charged. "You tell us how many drug mafias you have caught through Pegasus so far," Gogoi asked Shah.

Objecting to the Con-

been installed in his mobile. He must submit here the basis (of his accusation) in the House. Either his words are removed or he must submit the basis," Shah said.

"The House is for serious discussion, not for reckless politics," he added. ALSO READ | No proof that Pegasus spyware used in phones examined: SC; says Centre didn't cooperate in probe

Gogoi urged Speaker

was) used on him. He must submit facts. He can't just talk like this. Rest the Supreme Court has decided," Shah said referring to the apex court's decision on the Pegasus spyware matter. "What can we do if you also do not read like your leader," he also said, hitting out at Gogoi over his remarks. Intervening, the Speaker told the members that it will enhance the dignity of the House if they make their points with facts and proof. "This is my request," he added.

Deaths, controversies for BJD lawmakers

BHUBANESWAR: Even as the opposition rejected Crime Branch probe into Gobinda Sahu suicide calling it a conspiracy, some of the cases in recent years have found Biju Janata Dal lawmakers dragged into controversies. From Mahanga to Mahaling; Puri to Nayagarh, there is an eerie similarity in some of the cases in the recent times in the state.

The killings of BJP leader and former

circumstances in a road accident a month after the incident, Gobinda Sahu, prime suspect in Mamita murder allegedly died by suicide in Kantabanji sub-jail where he was lodged on Tuesday.

Though Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had not acted immediately, both Jena and Mishra were dropped from the council of ministers when the cabinet was reshuffled earlier in June this year. Earlier, similar suicides had



Mahanga block chairman Kulamani Baral and associate Dibyasingh Baral over political rivalry on January 2, 2021 and murder of Kalahandi school teacher Mamita Meher in October the same year rocked the state with the opposition demanding the scalp of the then ministers Pratap Jena and Dibya Shankar Mishra for their alleged involvement respectively.

A year later, prime accused in both the cases are no more. While Prafulla Biswal, one of the key accused in Mahanga double murder - who was on the run - died under mysterious

also sparked controversy with the Opposition demanding stringent action against School and Mass Education Minister Sameer Ranjan Dash and former minister Arun Sahoo.

After a zilla parishad member from Puri district Dharmendra Sahoo was found hanging from the balcony of his house, a telephonic conversation recorded prior to his death surfaced in which Dash was mentioned. In 2006, one Chhabi Bardhan (35) of Ratanpur village in Nayagarh district and a BJD supporter, had died by suicide in the official residence of Nayagarh MLA Sahoo.

Zelensky to address Congress in Washington in first trip outside Ukraine since Russian war

WASHINGTON: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky will meet US leader Joe Biden and address Congress in Washington on Wednesday, a visit the White House said will send Russia a strong message of Western unity.

The secretly arranged trip comes on the same day Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to meet his top military officials to assess the conflict in Ukraine and set goals for next year in what the Kremlin described as an "important, voluminous speech".

The visit will "underscore the United States' steadfast commitment to supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes," White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

It will be Zelensky's first trip outside Ukraine since Russian forces invaded in February, when they planned for a rapid takeover of Kyiv and much of the country.

Instead, the visit to Washington comes on the 300th day of a war that has seen Russian forces halted by a stubborn Ukrainian army backed by Western arms, forced to retreat from captured territory and struggling to avoid further setbacks.

"On my way to the US to strengthen resilience and defense capabilities of (Ukraine)," Zelensky tweeted, also confirming that he will make a speech to Congress.

Patriot missiles for Ukraine Zelensky will visit the White House where Biden is to announce a new arms package worth almost \$2 billion that a senior administration official said includes Patriot air defense missiles.

Patriot missiles are seen as crucial to help Kyiv fend off Russia's punishing missile and drone attacks on its infrastructure. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that new weapons deliveries would lead to an "aggravation of the conflict" and do not "bode well for Ukraine".

He added that Moscow does not expect Ukraine to change its stance on peace talks -- including refusing to negotiate while Putin is in power -- during the visit.

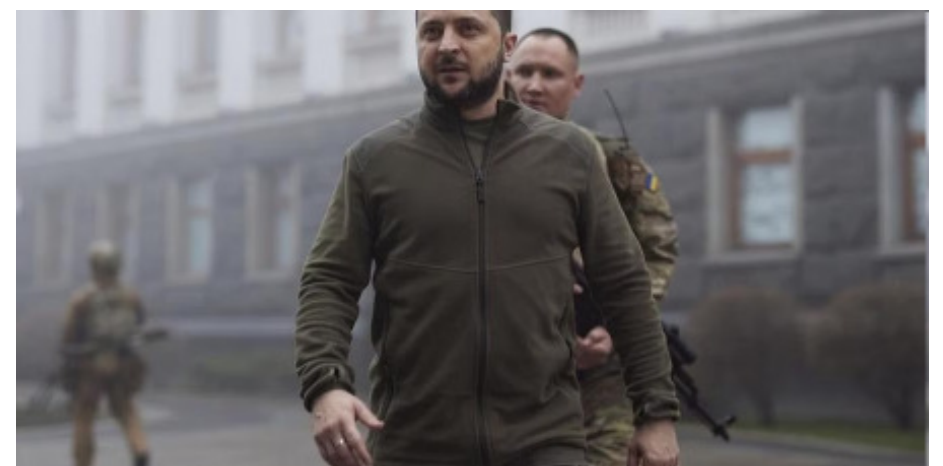
Zelensky is also expected to address a joint session of Congress, which House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said would be "a very special focus on democracy."

The visit was quietly planned, beginning with a phone

call between Biden and Zelensky on December 11, followed by a formal invitation one week ago and confirmation of the visit on Sunday.

Details of the visit leaked on Tuesday afternoon, with officials stressing to US media that there were still security concerns over Zelensky's travel.

In White House talks, Biden and Zelensky will discuss the arms and training provided by the United States and allies, sanctions and other pressure on Russia, and economic and humanitarian aid that



Ukraine needs, the senior White House official said. "They will discuss every element of this conflict, including the situation on the battlefield and including the question of where the war goes from here," the official said.

The visit will send Putin "a strong message of unity and resolve from the White House, from Washington, from the free world, on behalf of all the nations supporting Ukraine," the official added. But that does not include pressuring Zelensky into talks with Putin, the official stressed.

Frontlines visit Zelensky flies to the United States after a risky visit to the frontlines in Bakhmut, where both sides have endured heavy tolls in constant shooting and shelling over the past two months.

Brutal trench warfare and artillery battles around Bakhmut -- once known for its vineyards and salt mines -- have flattened large portions of the city and its surroundings.

"Here in Donbas, you're protecting all of Ukraine," Zelensky told Ukrainian fighters.

"This is not just Bakhmut, this is fortress Bakhmut," he said, handing out honors to Ukraine servicemen.

Soldiers gave Zelensky a Ukrainian flag with their names signed on it and asked him to present it to Biden and the US Congress.

Zelensky said they told him: "We have a difficult situation, the enemy is increasing their numbers. Our guys are braver but we need more weapons."

First Bilasuni Mahotsava Became a Massive Success NMA chief inspects Srimandir Parikrama project works

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Two Days long First Bilasuni Mahotsava was held at village Bilasuni in Block Niali of Cuttack District with much pomp, splendour and fanfare. The Grand Sports cum cultural Jambhori was witnessed by a mammoth crowd of ten thousand local people. Organised by Social Development Council, Bilasuni (SDCB) an offshoot Organisation of Voluntary Empowerment, Development and Action (VEDA), The Mega Maiden Festival was a massive success. SDCB has been engaged in the overall enhancement of quality in Education, Healthcare, sports, Culture and Religious activities in Bilasuni. Since the Grand Ceremony having rural elevation as Central theme has been taken place after a gap of two years due to Corona disruption, unusual interest, unprecedented enthusiasm and unexpected excitement were marked among the participants.

Attending the Mahotsava as Chief Guest Minister for Food Supplies, Consumer Welfare and Co – operation Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak lauded the efforts of SDCB in carrying out several noble and innovative initiatives to el-

Other participating teams were Jagatsinghpur, Rourkela, Keonjhar, Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur and Cuttack. Leading singer Anindita Das and Troupe presented a spectacular Cultural extravaganza during the Festival. The Comedy Master Junior Papu thoroughly entertained the audiences with his outstanding humorous oratorical skill. Rashmita Nayak did the compering of cultural programmes. Other highlights of the first Bilasuni Mahotsava were Snacks and Food Stall by Rosy's Kitchen, Handloom stall by Nilamani Meher, Handmade Food products stall by Binapani Sahu and Newspaper Exhibition by Guinness World Book record holder Shashanka Sekhar Dash. Guinness World Award winner Keshab Swain enthralled the audiences with his exceptional accumen of breaking green coconuts by his elbow and head. The entire arrangement of Bilasuni Mahotsava was smoothly managed by the residents of Bilasuni Gram Panchayat with active support of the members of Gopabandhu Evergreen Local Youth Council. The notable organisers include Swadhin Mohanty, Prakash Mohanty, Upendra Mohanty, Niranjan Roy,

Manabhanjan Behera, Bishunu Charan Dalua, Pradipta Nanda, Lalatendu Sahoo, Chakradhar Raj and Sampad Mohanty.

The First ever Bilasuni Sammans were presented to both stalwarts and promising personalities as a mark of recognition to their exemplary services. This year's coveted Bilasuni Samman

awardees were Rakshak Nayak, Brahma Mishra, Bhabani Shankar Tripathy, Manas Ranjan Sahu, Krushna Nayak, Anindita Das, Ashok Kumar Satpathy, Ashok Nayak, Shashanka Sekhar Dash, Keshab Swain, Saroja Choudhury, Binapani Sahu, Apsara Rani, Tapati Raj, Dr. Abhishek Das, Trilochan Raj, Brundaban Jena, Khirod Pradhan and Ranjan Acharya.

A colourful Souvenir was also released during the Function by Guests. The Guests Inaugurated Emergency Ambulance Service of SDCB.

Earlier day the Bilasuni Mahotsava was inaugurated by the President of SDCB Badri Mahapatra. Other dignitaries present during Inaugural Ceremony were Umesh Chandra Behera, Chairman Niali Panchayat Samiti, Shashikant Lenka, Vice - President District Congress Committee, Cuttack, Kavita Rout, Member Zila Parishad, Sabita Nanda, Sarapanch, Sampad Mohanty, Member Panchayat Samiti and Charulata Behera, Head Mistress, Shree Gopaljew Government High School. Chakradhar Raj conducted the proceedings of both the day's meetings. Local Odissi dancers presented a scintillating performance under the guidance of Odissi Guru Rakesh Bhoi during the inaugural evening.



evate the economic conditions of poor and marginalised families in Bilasuni. In his speech Chief Speaker Former Minister Debi Prasad Mishra congratulated VEDA for its series of endeavours to make Bilasuni an ideal and smart village. Delivering his welcome address, the main Organiser and President of SDCB Badri Mahapatra sought everybody's support and co – operation to build Bilasuni as a Model Village in Odisha. Speaking on the Occasion Guests of Honour M.P. Dr. Rajashree Mallick, M.L.A Dr. Pramod Kumar Mallick, Chairman, World Odisha Society Kishore Dwivedi, Senior Bureaucrats Hare Krushna Dash, Samarendra Sahu, President Utkal Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brahma Mishra, Editor Shree Sahitya Krushna Nayak, Convenor Bhasha Andolan Pabitra Maharatha, Chairman, Niali Panchayat Samiti Umesh Chandra Behera, Sarapanch, Bilasuni Gram Panchayat Sabita Nanda and Samiti Member Sampad Mohanty expressed their appreciations for the concept of SDCB to empower village community. The major attraction of the Bilasuni Mahotsava was the Mahadev Mahapatra Inter Districts Football Tournament among eight teams. The winner of the Cup was Sundargarh. Deogarh became runners up.

Residents outraged as thick dust continues to constrict in Barbil area

Barbil(KCN): As thick dust crept over the mining city Barbil in the district of Keonjhar in Odisha these days and the continual suffering from pollution compelled residents to outrage against the administration. Increase

in smudged dust in air, soil and water get them frustrated at the lack of meaningful action by authorities. Air quality typically gets worse at this time. There should be a comprehensive plan for all sources of pollution," so that pollution can be reduced. But no such plan by the administration is seen says some resident. The dust like plowing the road, dust inside the house, dust in the drinking water has disrupted the life of the people. They condemn the way the government has thrown people's lives into the sphere of poison in the hope of revenue. The concerned department has flouted all the rules of pollution control. Neither the state government nor the central government have forgotten their responsibilities. The central government need to take necessary steps to reduce pollution and to create a green zone in surrounding area of railway sidings, but it is not visible anywhere. Being the area under Barbil Municipality has moral responsibility to look into the matter. The inaction of the Barbil municipality has bothered the people of Barbil more, they alleged. People from Sundara Basti, Jagannath Bihar, CESS Colony and other places near railway siding agitated before municipality office. They demanded quick action by Municipal authority to reduce pollution in the area. They also submitted a demand letter to the executive officer of the municipal council and asked for action.



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PURI: A team of the National Monuments Authority (NMA) led by its chairman Kishore Kumar Basa reviewed the ongoing

Yadav on construction of a reception centre beyond 100 metre from the temple. The NMA has granted permis-

place to construct the 13-metre-high temple administrative building for which the NMA has granted

Das said they are hopeful that the NMA will allow renovation of their religious establishments. "We were



works of the Srimandir Parikrama project here on Tuesday. Basa inspected the NOC issued for constructions inside the restricted zone. These included the cloak room, toilets, shelter pavilion and electrical station building centre.

Basa held discussion with chief administrator of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Vir Vikram

sion to the state government for the purpose.

The NMA team also inspected the work being carried out beyond the 100 metre prohibited area known as the regulated zone. These include construction of an information centre, first-aid centre, police outpost, donation cell and ATM counters.

The SJTA chief also sought to know from Basa the suitable

permission. Interacting with the NMA chairman, Mahants requested him to renovate the mutts which were demolished during creation of the 75-metre heritage corridor project around the Sri Jagannath temple.

Mahants of 20 mutts, which were evicted for the project, placed their grievances before Basa. Mahant of Uttarparswa mutt Narayan Ramanuj

asked to submit development plans of our respective mutts to the NMA for consideration within a week," Das added.

Basa was accompanied by NMA director Sabyasachi Morwa. Among others, Puri collector Samarth Verma, sub collector Bhabataran Sahu, officials of the Archaeological Survey of India, engineers of OBCC and TATA consultancy were present.




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Crypto could cause next financial crisis: RBI governor

MUMBAI: India's central bank governor warned Wednesday that cryptocurrency markets risked causing the next global financial crisis, saying the recent collapse of FTX was proof of the sector's "inherent risks".

The comments close out a challenging year for India's millions of crypto

owners, who are already reeling from a global market collapse and steep domestic taxes. "Unlike any other product, our main concern about crypto is that it doesn't have any underlying (value) whatsoever," Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das said at an industry event. "Our view is that it should be prohibited because ... if you try to regulate it and allow it to grow,

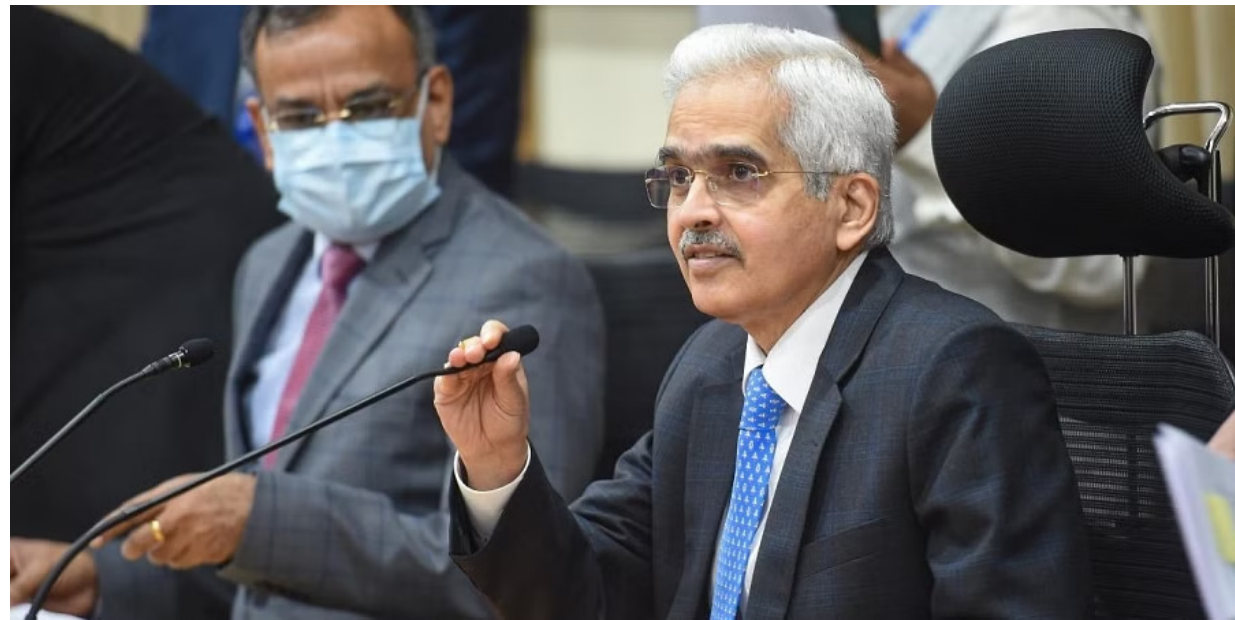
please mark my words: the next financial crisis will come from private cryptocurrencies." ALSO READ | Satyajit Das: Global reckoning is unavoidable; we will now have to sit down to a banquet of consequences Cryptocurrencies have been under the scrutiny of Indian regulators since first entering the local

currencies" this year has resulted in trading volumes shrinking to a tenth of their previous size. A sharp fall in the prices of leading tokens like bitcoin - dubbed a "crypto winter" -- has wiped out more than \$2 trillion from their global market value since its peak of \$3 trillion in November 2021, further

spooking traders. ALSO READ | 'Available data on crypto is misleading', says RBI Deputy Governor The sudden collapse of FTX -- a cryptocurrency exchange worth \$32 billion before it filed for bankruptcy last month -- and US fraud charges against its one-time billionaire founder Sam Bankman-Fried has intensified scrutiny of the sector.

Das said the fall in crypto prices and recent developments around FTX validated his long-held view that cryptocurrencies have "huge inherent risks for our macroeconomic and financial stability". The Reserve Bank of India this year introduced its own digital rupee based on blockchain technology, intended

to bring down the costs of commercial transactions as the Indian economy becomes less reliant on paper currency. Last month, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for increased regulation of private currencies to stamp out terror funding. Modi also said last year that bitcoin presented a risk to younger generations and could "spoil our youth" if it ended up "in the wrong hands".



market nearly a decade ago, with a rise in fraudulent transactions leading to a central bank ban in 2018. India's Supreme Court lifted the restrictions two years later and the market surged, backed by burgeoning local trading platforms and glitzy celebrity endorsements. But the introduction of a 30 percent tax on profits from trading "private

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Car industry can't grow at 50% tax rate: MSIL Chairman

NEW DELHI: India's largest carmaker-Maruti Suzuki - Chairman RC Bhargava late on Monday said the passenger vehicle (PV) industry can't grow with a 50% tax rate as it makes ownership unaffordable for the

domestic market with developed markets such as Europe and Japan, where per capita income is high but taxes on cars are much lower. "Now, somebody needs to think about that, should cars be charged more than the average



common people.

Chairman RC Bhargava "Policymakers and government treat cars as luxury items and that is why they are not affordable to a majority of the population," said Bhargava. "You can't grow an automobile industry with 50% taxation. Where in the world has an industry like automobiles grown with 50% taxation, but it's the wisdom of the policymakers and the political leadership." Bhargava's comment comes days after the GST Council clarified on the definition of SUVs (sports utility vehicles) for the levy of 22% compensation cess. He compared the

rate of taxation... If it is, then we are, in some way, accepting the thing that cars or luxury products should be taxed more than non-luxury products, which is the old socialist way of thinking and taxation," he said. Bhargava said due to low affordability and sluggish growth of the automobile industry, India will take at least 140 years to catch up with China's penetration of car ownership. He said the regulatory burden is the highest on small cars, a key segment of the Indian automobile industry and having a uniform tax structure across all segments of vehicles will not augur well for the sector growth.

Airtel launches 5G services in Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Imphal

NEW DELHI: Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Wednesday announced the launch of high-speed 5G services in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.

The company also announced the roll out of 5G services in Imphal.

In a statement announcing that 5G services have gone live in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, the company said that the services are currently operational at SG Highway, Memnagar, Satellite, Navrangpura, Sabarmati, Motera, Chandkheda, South Bopal, Gomtipur, Memco, Bapunagar in Ahmedabad and Koba, Raysan, Sargasan, Pethapur and other key locations in Gandhinagar town. Airtel said it plans to augment the network making its services available across the city over time.

"Airtel 5G Plus services will be available to customers in a phased manner as the company continues to construct its network and complete the roll out," the telco said. Customers with 5G enabled devices will enjoy the high speed network at no extra cost until the roll out is more widespread.



Airtel '5G Plus' will bolster the full portfolio of services that the company offers. In addition, it will allow superfast access to

high-definition video streaming, gaming, multiple chatting, instant uploading of photos and more.

In a separate statement on the launch of 5G in Imphal (Manipur), Airtel said the high speed services are currently operational at Akampat area, War Cemetery, Dewlahland area, Takyelpat area, RIMS Imphal area, New Secretariat, Babupara area, Nagaram, Ghari, Uripok, Sagolband and other select locations.

"Airtel will augment its network making its services available across the city in due course of time," the company said.

Two life threats, atrocious nights: Emotional Becker recounts life in prison

BERLIN: Former tennis superstar Boris Becker said he relied on "blood brothers" to protect him in a British prison and said his life was threatened twice in his first interview since being released.

The 55-year-old German was deported to Germany after being released last week having served eight months of a two and a half years sentence for flouting insolvency rules by hiding £2.5 million (\$3.1 million) of assets and loans to avoid paying debts.

He had been declared bankrupt in June 2017, owing creditors £50 million over an unpaid loan of more than £3 million on his estate on the Spanish island of Majorca.

In an often emotional three hour interview with German broadcaster Sat.1, the former tennis world number one said the nights in Wandsworth Prison - not far from where he won the Wimbledon title three times -- were "atrocious."

He said he was fortunate to have forged close ties with a group of inmates he termed "blood brothers" as two prisoners he called 'John' and 'Ike' on separate occasions had threatened him.

'John', serving 25 years for multiple murders, threatened to harm him if he did not give him money.

'Ike' got him on his own and Becker says 10 prisoners "saved my life" rescuing him when he yelled out.

"And then the next day, Ike asked if I would accept his apology," said Becker.

"I could have rejected it.

"I encountered him in the laundry. He threw himself down to the ground and begged me for forgiveness.

"I raised him to his feet and hugged him.

"And I told him that I had great respect for him," added a tearful Becker.

Tennis legend Becker transforms into 'Yoga instructor' in prison

Becker says he would remain in contact with those who protected him.

"When you have fought for survival together, that brings you together," he said.

"We needed each other."

"The best beer"

Becker says the sound of the cell door closing will stay for him for the rest of his life.

"When the cell door closes, then there is nothing left. The loneliest moment I've had

in my life."

"The nights were atrocious.

"You could hear the screams from people trying to kill themselves or harm themselves, and people trading swear words.

"You don't sleep."

He described the prison as "extremely dirty and extremely dangerous . . . there were murderers, child abusers, drug dealers, every kind of criminal you can imagine".

The six-time Grand Slam champion claims it required the German ambassador to intervene to obtain an international phone card so he could contact his 87-year-old mother Elvira and other family abroad.

Gradually his conditions improved. He taught English and mathematics to a class of 30 inmates and then gained a move to the lower

security

Huntercombe prison near Oxford, southern England.

However, the governor there declined to permit his friend and compatriot

Liverpool manager

Jürgen Klopp to visit him.

"Jürgen Klopp and Johannes B Kerner (German TV presenter) -- they wanted to visit me in Huntercombe prison," he said.

"So I gave the names -- but the governor said: 'Jurgen is not allowed to visit you, he is too well known. We are concerned for his safety.

So we have to reject that."

Becker qualified for deportation after being released as he is not a British citizen and received a custodial sentence of more than 12 months.

Becker says a friend had chartered a private plane to fly him to Stuttgart once they knew he would be released and he had gone to stay with a married couple near Heidelberg not far from his home town Leimen.

"Then I drank my first beer," he said.

"Believe me, it was the best beer of my life."

Becker said the traumatic saga had taught him lessons and prison was the last step on his path to becoming a "cleverer and humbler" man.

As for what the future held and where he would live Becker said it was unlikely to be Germany.

"I can't say where I'm going now," he said.

"I don't think it will be Germany. I don't know if I'll stay in Europe -- perhaps Miami. I'm also a big fan of Dubai.

"I've become cautious with my statements about the future."



Stokes, McCullum hail England's 'tactical' win; Babar rues bowlers' fitness

New Delhi: England captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum have praised the "perfect" series win in Pakistan and lauded the team for overcoming diverse challenges posed by the three Test venues. While Rawalpindi was very flat, Multan spun and the pitch in Karachi dished up low bounce to contend with.

"I've learned a lot in terms of the tactical side of playing in these conditions. That's the best thing to come out of it for me... having to think about the game differently, trying out a few different things that might not have been seen before, and just assessing the conditions and having to be a bit out there. Everything we tried came off," Stokes said after the series win. "[In Karachi] losing the toss and having to bowl

first, everyone is aware of how important the toss can be in the sub-continent. Being under a different kind of pressure of having to bowl a team out and play with runs on the board. The most impressive thing was how we still stuck to how we played. We still managed to apply ourselves in the same way we did in the first two Tests. And to be able to come out victorious batting last on a subcontinent wicket was very good.

Stokes, who registered his ninth Test win as captain this year, said that "releasing the fear of failure" seems to have worked wonders for the players.

"It's a great place to be as a team where everyone wants everyone to succeed. Just going out and enjoying every moment whatever

situation we find ourselves in," Stokes said. "It won't really sink in until we get home or in the new year but we understand what we've done is pretty special. To win 3-0 out here, it will be something to be really proud of.

"I think just releasing that fear of failure is why we've produced the results. When you take that burden off individuals and the team, you see players excelling and showing more within themselves.

"No one is worried about getting out. You don't want to get out... but when that fear of failure isn't there, you're not tentative and you make better decisions.

"It is a great time to be in this dressing room and playing for England. I'm just encouraging everyone to turn up every day and enjoy what



you're doing. Obviously, it is easier to do when we are winning the way we are at the moment. We've had Jimmy Anderson smiling, which is an impressive thing in

itself." McCullum, speaking to Sky Sports, sang a similar tune and praised the team's tenacity in conditions that the team hasn't seen since 2005.

"Every ground has challenged us in different ways," said McCullum. "Some challenged us tactically, some challenged us technically and some challenged us

mentally." Then you add in the guys who were really ill during this tour. To think they have been able to play the style of cricket in those conditions we have on those three different grounds, we got pretty close to perfect."

The opposition captain, Babar Azam, rued the absence of his main fast bowlers at one point or other during the series. Shaheen Afridi missed the entire series while Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah could only feature in the opening Test.

"We were unfortunate that our main fast bowlers were not fit," Babar said. "The new players did perform but couldn't execute the way we wanted. When things were in our hands we had soft dismissals in those times and due to that we couldn't win matches which we should have won." Fitness

has the main role because if you are not extra fit you cannot compete in all the three formats. You get two to three days to switch from one format to the other and you have to be mentally ready as well," Babar added. "When you don't have the backbone of your bowling, then new bowlers find it difficult to adjust quickly. The way England played, they did not let us settle down." Our strength was our batting, but we played well in patches and couldn't finish the games. It's a big disappointment that we couldn't apply ourselves in the series, but we must praise England for the way they played their cricket, we must appreciate that." Pakistan now have a five-day break before they take on New Zealand for two Tests in Karachi and Multan.

French federation to go after online racist abusers of Kylian Mbappe and Kingsley Coman

New Delhi: The French football federation wants to go after social media users who targeted some of the national team's players with racist comments following France's loss to Argentina in the FIFA World Cup 2022 final. The federation said on Tuesday (December 20) that some players were hit by 'unacceptable racist and hateful comments on social networks' and that it planned to file a complaint against those that posted abuse.

"The French soccer federation condemns with the utmost firmness these intolerable behaviors and abuses," it said in a statement. French government officials have expressed their indignation following the insults.



Isabelle Rome, the minister in charge of gender equality, said Kylian Mbappe and Kingsley Coman were among those abused. Mbappe and Coman are Black.

Coman's club, Bayern Munich, also condemned the racist comments targeting the winger, one of the French players who missed during the

penalty shootout that decided Sunday's final. "The FC Bayern family is behind you, King. Racism has no place in sport or our society," Bayern wrote on Twitter. French sports minister Amelie Oudea-Castera tweeted her support to Coman and all the players abused, saying the heinous comments 'have no place in soccer

or anywhere else'. Anti-racism group SOS Racisme said in a statement that some players had to disable comments on their Instagram accounts because of 'a torrent of racist slurs, with hundreds of users on the social network posting comments likening them to apes, slaves, or even urging them to go back to the jungle'.

The NGO said it will file a complaint. France twice fought back for a 3-3 draw through extra time in Qatar before Argentina won a penalty shootout to cap one of the most exciting finals in World Cup history. Coman had an attempt saved by Argentina goalkeeper Emi Martinez and Aurelien Tchouameni then missed for France.

Former rugby player Ross Adair receives maiden Ireland call-up

New Delhi: Former rugby player Ross Adair, who plays for Northern Knights and is the brother of Mark Adair, has received his maiden call-up to the Ireland squad for their tour of Zimbabwe in January. Ross, who played for Ulster in the Pro12 competition in the 2014-15 season, bats right-handed and bowls left-arm spin. He made his List A debut for Northern Knights in 2021.

Ross comes in for Lorcan Tucker, who has been granted a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to miss the T20I games against Zimbabwe and play in the Abu Dhabi International League T20 instead. Tucker, though, will return for the ODIs against Zimbabwe that follow. "I'm absolutely delighted with the call



up, but I'm not sure it's really sunk in yet if I'm honest. It's a huge honour for me and now I just can't wait to get away on tour," Ross said. "I have always wanted to push myself and get to as high a level as possible. I had a fairly open and honest conversation with Gary Wilson a couple of years ago - Gary is someone I trust very much and wouldn't mince his words too often, so when he said that there was a chance - a small chance, but a chance

nonetheless - that's what I wanted. I love my cricket and to have the opportunity to potentially represent Ireland at the highest level with Mark, would mean the world to me."

On Ross's call-up, Andrew White, National Selector, said: "Given the extremely busy year ahead, we have taken advantage of this circumstance to bring in Ross Adair for his first international call up. Ross may be relatively new to representative cricket at this level but

is very familiar with operating in a high performance set-up given his previous professional career in rugby. Since turning his focus to cricket, Ross has not only demonstrated a hard-working and dedicated approach to his game but has successfully adopted a dynamic and positive style of play in T20 cricket that reflects the philosophy that Heinrich and his staff have been instilling in our white-ball squads. "Ross is still early on in his cricket development, and would likely have been selected for the Ireland Wolves first as a stepping-stone to international cricket, but we believe he has displayed the talent, skill and mindset that will hopefully see him make the step up successfully.



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