

## Odisha govt asks people to follow Covid norms amid global surge in cases

**Bhubaneswar(KCN):** The state government will soon issue an advisory for people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour in Odisha in the wake of global surge in infection recently.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the Health and Family Welfare department today to review the Covid-19 situation in Odisha. An advisory shall be issued for people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour including use of face masks, hand washing and self isolation for symptomatic persons voluntarily.

"Countries like Japan, Republic of Korea, USA, France, Brazil, Germany and China are showing rise in Covid cases in last two weeks. However, the situation in Odisha has



remained stable with below fifteen cases per day since November this year. The new Omicron variants are associated with high transmissibility, but there is no evidence to suggest that they can cause disease severity or escape vaccine induced immunity in our country," said a senior official of the Health department after the meeting. The state government has decided to continue with the testing and surveillance strategy as

per the ICMR guidelines. The surveillance at airports and seaports will be done as per the guidelines issued by the Centre from time to time, said the official. "The genome study of all new positive cases will be done at the Institute Life Science and RMRC in Bhubaneswar to find out any mutation in the virus," said the official. SCBMCH in Cuttack, MKCGMCH in Berhampur and VIMSAR in Burla will continue with the present 20 bed capacity (15

oxygen support and five ICUs) till March, 2023. These health institutes may raise the bed capacity as per the requirements, said sources in the Health department.

All district headquarters hospitals (DHHs) have been asked to keep 10 beds with oxygen support ready to meet any eventuality. This apart, the DHHs have been asked to mobilize manpower and infrastructure to meet the emergency, they added. All DHHs, government-run medical college and hospitals, Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar and RGH in Rourkela will conduct a mock drill on December 27 to check the operational readiness of their oxygen plants, ventilators, logistics and human resources, said the official.

## Sixteen Army jawans killed as vehicle falls into gorge in North Sikkim

**Gangtok:** Sixteen Army jawans were killed and four others injured when their vehicle skidded off the road and fell into a gorge at a remote location in North Sikkim near the India-China border on Friday.

According to a senior police officer, the injured have been airlifted to an Army hospital in North Bengal. The mishap took place at around 8 a.m. at Zema 3, about 15 kms away from Lachen, located at a distance of around 130 km away from State capital Gangtok. Chungthang Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Arun Thatal informed that the Army vehicle was heading towards the border posts with



20 occupants. The vehicle seemed to have veered off the road while negotiating a curve in the Zema 3 area and crashed hundreds of feet down. All the 16 bodies have been recovered from the crash site. The condition of the four critically injured Army personnel remains unknown, said Thatal, who was at the spot with a police team from Lachen.

The bodies are being taken to State-run STNM Hospital in Gangtok for post-mortem and later will be handed over to the Army. The regiment of the victims is yet to be ascertained, he added.

## Curran, Green, Stokes hit jackpot as IPL franchises target all-rounders in mini-auction



**New Delhi:** When it comes to spending, Indian Premier League franchises have always been generous, especially when it comes to premier all-rounders. There is no surprise in it, each auction the ceiling keeps getting higher and at the mini-auction ahead of IPL 2023 held in Kochi, the story was no different.

In fact, each of the top three buys were the most expensive in IPL history, overtaking the Rs 16.25 crore spent by Rajasthan Royals on South African Chris Morris in 2021. The only surprise was how Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings – two teams which entered the auction with a purse of Rs 20.55 crore and Rs 20.45 crore respectively – took a gamble by going for Green and Stokes. Punjab

Kings, with Rs 32.20 crore in their kitty, were always going to have an edge. Apart from the all-rounder trio, Nicholas Pooran went for Rs 16 crore to Lucknow Super Giants, which showed how teams were not hesitant to invest in those players who they think will provide them with an edge. Last season, playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad, Pooran scored 308 runs at an average of 38, with a strike rate of 144.

The price raised eyebrows, but Gautam Gambhir, who is the mentor for the Lucknow franchise, gave a peek into what they saw in Pooran. "We didn't care about the previous season. He is 27 and could be having his best years ahead of him. Look at his numbers... he is someone who can bat at

the top as well as at 6 or 7. There are not many like him. And he is a 'keeper too and offers a back-up to Quinton (de Kock)."

Mini-auctions tend to throw up the most expensive buys. Morris, Yuvraj Singh (Delhi), Pat Cummins (Kolkata) and Kyle Jamieson (Bangalore), have all hit jackpots in mini-auctions. Teams that usually come into the auction with a big purse have shown their propensity to outbid others. That story continued here. Take Royal Challengers Bangalore, for example, who entered the auction in Kochi with a purse of Rs 8.75 crore. They raised the paddle for Harry Brooks, Mayank Agarwal, Curran, Green, Stokes, but couldn't go beyond a point. But since they hadn't released any of their first-choice players, their strategy was to try their luck with some big names, and when it failed, made some smart buys such as England left-arm pacer Reece Topley at a price of Rs 1.90 crore.

## KIIT & KISS Founder Dr. Achyuta Samanta Conferred Honorary Doctorate Degree by Utkal University



**Bhubaneswar, (KCN):** Eminent Educationist, social activist, Founder of KIIT & KISS and Lok Sabha MP from Kandhamal Dr. Achyuta Samanta has been conferred the honorary D.Litt degree by Utkal University in recognition of his immense contribution to the field of education and social service. This is the 50th honorary

degree conferred on him.

Utkal University, which is also Dr. Samanta's alma mater, presented the honour to him at its 52nd convocation on 23rd December 2022. He received the degree from the University Chancellor and Governor of Odisha Prof. Ganeshi Lal in the presence of Former Judge, Supreme Court of

India Justice V. Gopala Gowda; Vice Chancellor, Utkal University, Prof. Sabita Acharya and Principal Secretary, Higher Education, Govt of Odisha, Bishnupada Sethi, among others.

Addressing the august gathering, the Governor made a special mention of Dr Samanta while beginning his address and described him as a "leading legend of the convocation". He said

that Dr Samanta embodies key human attributes such as simplicity, humility, gratitude, courage, perseverance, generosity, equanimity, peace and goodness.

Dr Samanta expressed his deepest gratitude to the Chancellor for the honour, besides the VC and the University Syndicate. "All are aware of my life dedicated to the service

of others. As a recognition of my life, work and accomplishments, I have been conferred many accolades and awards. However, some awards are extra special, like this one. I am elated that Utkal University, my own alma mater is conferring Honorary D.Litt. Degree on me, thereby making it my 50th Honorary Doctorate, the highest for any Indian. I dedicate this award to my hero, my mother, and all her struggles and sacrifice. The Almighty's blessings and good wishes of the people have helped me reach where I am today. Their wishes continue to give me strength to dream more for the betterment of society," Dr Samanta said in his comments.

He was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from Birla Global University and an honorary degree from Berhampur University.

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# Barbil Tiger bagged Championship under 19 category organised by OCA



Barbil(KCN): The Cricket Tournament-in the category below 19 years age' organised by Orissa Cricket Academy (OCA) concluded recently where Barbil Tiger Foundation team bagged championship. Barbil Tigers Foundation, which is known as the epicentre of cricket in

Keonjhar district, has got another success. The best players of this tournament are expected to get a place for the state level game. Prashant Chauhan, who scored highest 315 run in the whole tournament and adjudged as the man of the tournament. Prashant has been

practicing for Barbil Tigers for the last two years. The founder of Barbil Tiger Rampal Choudhary is quite hopeful for Prashant to get a place in State team. A total 6 teams competed in the tournament where Barbil Tigers have shown good performance in all departments and

have caught the attention of OCA. Earlier, two players from this foundation have already been selected for state level play and many more have gone to state level earlier. It is to note that Mr Chowdhury has been providing all shot of support to promote cricket and other sports in the area.

# Tech for facial recognition

New Delhi(KCN): Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar has said that the policies of the Union Government are aimed at ensuring an Open, Safe and Trusted and Accountable Internet for its users.

Shri Chandrasekhar in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today said that with the expansion of the Internet, more and more Indians coming online, there is an increase in the facial recognition of biometric information, including information generated for purposes for facial recognition technology.

Section 43A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 provides that a body corporate which possesses or deals or handles any sensitive personal data or information in a com-

puter resource owned or controlled or operated by it is liable to compensate an affected person for causing wrongful loss or wrongful gain to any person due to negligence in imple-

menting and maintaining reasonable security practices and procedures. The Union Government, in exercise of its powers under the said section, has prescribed the rules regarding sensitive per-

sonal data or information as well as the reasonable security practices and procedures to be complied with. As per these, sensitive personal data or information includes biometric standard IS/ISO/IEC 27001 or Government-approved codes of best practices for data protection, and a comprehensive documented information security program and information security policies that contain managerial, technical, operational and physical security control measures that are commensurate with the information assets being protected with the nature of business. Thus, law to regulate facial recognition technology and manage data related to such technology is in place, said he.



Further, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has prepared a draft Bill, titled the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 and has invited feedback from the public as part of its public consultation exercise, pointed out Shri Chandrasekhar.

information, and biometrics include technologies that measure and analyze facial patterns. The reasonable security practices and procedure include implementation of the international

# Efforts for Good Governance



New Delhi(KCN): Cabinet Secretary, Rajiv Gauba today said that good governance is all about improving outcome and ensuring deliverables with while trusting citizens. Speaking during a workshop on 'Good Governance Practices', as a part of Good Governance Week, from 19-25 December, 2022, Shri Gauba said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a call for concerted efforts towards making a New India by 2047, and, it is possible through good governance only. Shri Gauba said that good governance provides greater efficiency, people-friendly government and higher level of transparency. Shri Gauba said, Prime Minister has

articulated his vision of good governance, which includes 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' and Whole of Government approach. He said that in last few years, more than 3,500 minor violations have been decriminalized and this is also part of the good governance, which includes trusting the citizens. Shri Gauba highlighted the advantages of reducing levels in decision-making and said that it will only improve efficiency and save precious time in taking decisions in public interest. He emphasized on delayering, delegation of power and digitalization in governance. He also advocated increased use of E-Office 7.0

and listed its benefits for the Ministries / Departments and said that though its adoption has increased significantly, remaining Ministries / Departments must start using it for greater benefits. Appreciating the efforts of Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in completing a successful Swachhta Special Campaign 2.0, Shri Gauba said that what has been done during this Special campaign, should be done regularly. Earlier, in his welcome address, Secretary, DARPG, V Srinivas said, 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' 2022 is a nation-wide campaign for redressal of public grievances and improving Service

Delivery which is being held in all Districts, States, and Union Territories of India. Over 700 District Collectors are participating in this special campaign. He said that the Special Campaign 2.0 became a huge success due to the participation of all Ministries / departments and advocated that the best practices should be shared by the Departments. Shri Srinivas also informed that 373 Best Good Governance Practices identified were discussed in detail in District Level Workshops today across the country. He said, 43 Success Stories in Public Grievances will also be shared during the Good Governance Week - 2022. "Sushasan Saptah" from 19-25 December, 2022.

# Package plea for Koraput

New Delhi(KCN):: Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday urged Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy for sanction of a special package for the development of tourism infrastructure and facilities in the Koraput district. Writing a letter to his Cabinet colleague, Shri Pradhan said, tourism and hospitality were one

of the hardest hit sectors during the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic, due to nationwide lockdowns. As we resume normalcy, the time is ripe for unleashing massive growth in the tourism sector due to the strong domestic spending and unrestricted movement of air traffic. Under the Dekho Apna Desh vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, the Tourism and Cul-

ture Ministry has undertaken massive efforts towards increasing tourist footfalls through the development of tourist facilities and infrastructure. This has not only garnered appreciation from citizens but has also resulted in a massive increase in footfalls from both domestic and international tourists, he pointed out. Highlighting the massive potential

good rail connectivity and boasts of Vistadome coaches on the Koraput—Rayagada rail route. "While the Araku Valley tourism circuit is well developed and now world-renowned for its coffee plantations, drawing lakhs of tourists from Vizag and nearby areas, Koraput has not been able to capitalize on the huge tourist catchment area," Shri Pradhan said. historic, environmental, ecological and spiritual circuits of the Swadesh Darshan scheme. Stating that tourism in the Korput region suffered recently due to the impact of the cyclone Hudhud in Vizag, he said a special package would go a long way in resuscitating the tourist foot fills in Koraput, which will certainly translate into a huge economic multiplier for



for tourism development in the historically ignored Koraput district of Odisha, the Education Minister said Koraput is situated in the picturesque Eastern Ghats in Southern Odisha, at a distance of about 200 KM from Vizag. It is located close to the well-known tourist site Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh, with similar topography, natural beauty, and cultural wealth. Koraput also enjoys

To briefly touch upon some of the exquisite attractions in Koraput, tourists can enjoy the historical sites at the city of Jeypore, marvel at the Duduma waterfalls, enjoy boating at the Kolab Dam, trek and camp at Deomali and pay their obeisance at the Shri Jagannath Temple. In a nutshell, Koraput offers a fantastic opportunity for tourism development along the

the people in the region and adjoining areas. Keeping in mind the massive untapped potential of the tourism sector in Koraput, and the welfare of the people living there, Shri Pradhan sought personal intervention of Reddy for sanctioning a special package for the development of tourism infrastructure and facilities in the Koraput district.

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## 10th North East Festival begins with promise to boost MSME sector in region

NEW DELHI: The 10th edition of the North East Festival began here at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Friday with focus on small and medium enterprises as well as the startup ecosystem in the region.

The cultural event was inaugurated by Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Narayan Rane, who said that the festival will help create more job opportunities and boost the startup ecosystem of the northeast.

"The primary goal of this festival organised in Delhi is to showcase the best of northeast India's cultural resources and act as an enticing gateway for the exceptional talents of the region," Rane said.

He added that there is an emerging startup

Northeast region," the minister said.

the coronavirus pandemic, features a

sical bands, 16 fashion designers, 60

Trance Effect (Nagaland), Taba Chake (Arunachal Pradesh), and Jessie Lyndoh (Meghalaya) will participate in the festival.

"North East Festival is all about creating a synergy between people and celebrating life.

And, through this festival, we are sensitising the multicultural population of Delhi about the beauty, diversity, and integrity of North East India.

"We are happy to report that people are now aware of our traditions and culture through this festival, which has given the much requisite platform to many local entrepreneurs," Shyamkanu Mahanta, chief organiser of the festival said in a statement.

The event will come to an end on December 26.



culture in the northeast and they should take "maximum advantage of technology to boost their businesses".

"The government is also leaving no stone unturned to educate the entrepreneurs about emerging technologies to augment the startup ecosystem in the rich

There are more than 100 MSME businesses taking part in the festival, featuring northeast's handloom, handmade jewellery, handicrafts, agricultural-horticultural products, and processed food items.

The festival, which is returning after a two-year hiatus caused by

number of events, including the MSME exhibition, multi-cuisine food court, art exhibition, photography exhibition, rock battle, tourism B2B meet, musical evening, and fashion show.

The North East Festival will see participation of over 500 artists across 30 mu-

food stalls, and a number of tour operators over the course of four days. Musical bands including Klanjan (Assam), Innocent Eyes (Manipur), Traffic Jam (Manipur), Flying Cupid (Assam), Bipul Chettri & The Travelling Band (Sikkim/Darjeeling),

## Raveena Tandon wraps shoot of film 'Patna Shukla'



MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Raveena Tandon on Friday said she has finished

shooting for her upcoming movie 'Patna Shukla'. Backed by actor-pro-

ducer Arbaaz Khan, the social-drama is directed by Vivek Budakoti.

The 48-year-old actor took to Instagram to share the update about her film.

"An Arbaaz Khan Production's Patna Shukla wrap up bash with cast and crew,"

she wrote alongside a video clip featuring her and the cast and crew from the party.

## People were more sensible earlier, says Honey Singh on 'Besharam Rang' controversy

MUMBAI: Singer-rapper Yo Yo Honey Singh believes the controversy around the song "Besharam Rang" from upcoming Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Pathaan" shows that audiences have become way too "sensitive".

"Pathaan" has been receiving backlash for showing lead star Deepika Padukone in a saffron bikini alongside Khan in "Besharam Rang".

Protests have been staged in various parts of the country alleging a community had been offended by the song's content.

Those who have demanded a ban on the film include Madhya Pradesh minister Narrantam Mishra and Vishva Hindu Parishad spokesperson Vinod Bansal.

The Madhya Pradesh Ulema Board has also sought a ban on the film for "misrepresenting Islam". Singh, who has worked with Khan on popular song "Lungi Dance" from 2013

film "Chennai Express", said artists had much more creative freedom in the past.

"Freedom was much more earlier. People may have been less educated but they were far more sensible. They were intellectually



wiser and would take things as entertainment. They wouldn't take anything to heart," the rapper told PTI here.

ALSO READ | 'No matter what the world does, all positive people are alive': SRK amid 'Pathaan' song row

Citing example of music maestro AR Rahman's song "Rukmani Rukmani" from the

1992 feature "Roja", Singh said if the track had released in current times there could have been a huge controversy.

"Rahman sir had a song, 'Rukmani Rukmani shaadi ke baad kya kya hua'. People accepted it. I grew up listening to it, but when I made such lyrics, people started protesting. Now it's even worse, people have become way too sensitive. I can't fathom why. It's just entertainment," the rapper said.

"Pathaan" is directed by Siddharth Aanand and produced by Yash Raj Films. Billed as 'a high-octane spy thriller', the film also features John Abraham.

It will hit the theatres on January 25. Singh believes people in the past had a better understanding of shayari and poetry.

"People were so intelligent at that time. They understood shayari and never saw it as something dirty. Nowadays, if someone makes songs like 'Choli ke peeche kya hai', people will sit on their head and ask, 'What's happening?'"

On the work front, Singh recently released a recreation of Rahman's song "Yai Re". Produced by Tips Music, the new track features Iulia Vantur as the female voice.

## BIRTH OF A KING AND HIS MESSIANIC KINGDOM

As the world celebrates the birth of Lord Jesus Christ on December 25 with pomp and pageantry people are in celebratory mood. The advent of Christmas season or yuletide ushers in world wide celebration not only among the Christians but also among the people of other religions giving it a secular and cosmopolitan character. The Bible describes the divine birth of Jesus Christ from the womb of a virgin named Mary at Bethlehem in Judea (Palestine), 10 Kms south of Jerusalem, through immaculate conception. He was born between 6 B.C and 4 B.C during the reign of King Herod, the Great, the Ruler of Judea. Judea was in the Roman Empire at that time and the contemporary Ruler was Augustus Caesar who ruled from 27

B.C to 14 A.D. Roman historian and Senator Publius Cornelius Tacitus (A.D 56- c120) and Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (A.D 37 - 100) have testified to the historicity of Jesus and chronicled the events of his life. Jesus Christ is believed to be the Messiah whom God had promised to give to Israel.

Centuries before the birth of Christ prophets like Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah had predicted about the miracle birth of a Messiah for the Jewish nation Israel. Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ prophet Micah wrote: "But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose going forth

are from of old, From everlasting." (Micah 5:2). Furthermore, Prophet Isaiah in 740 B.C predicted: "For

unto us a child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the Government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of

### Dr. Pradeep Kumar Nayak

Jesus Christ was born in a poor Jewish family and his adopted father

Kings of the East named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar to pay a visit to Bethlehem with gifts of gold

of His birth. The name Bethlehem means "The House of Bread" in Hebrew while one of the appellations of Jesus is "the Bread of Life". According to Christologists it is no accident, but a divine plan.

Jesus (means the Anointed One) was undoubtedly the Messiah, the God Incarnate who took a human birth voluntarily to redeem the world from the sin. He is the King of Kings of the Kingdom of God which his followers believe would come soon. The Bible has given a beautiful imagery of the Kingdom of God that will be established by Lord Jesus. He says, "the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe." (Mathew 4:17). The Messianic Kingdom will be founded on the principles of justice, morality, equality

, love, forgiveness and sympathy. Wickedness, sorcery, idolatry, hatred, violence and bloodshed, hypocrisy, selfishness and greed have no place there. Many Bible scholars opine that it is a future period of time on earth in which the Messiah will reign and will bring about universal peace and brotherhood, without any worldly evil. On the other hand, some believe that such a kingdom will come in future. While some others contest this view and state that the Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21) that is in the hearts of man. Anyway, the believers in Jesus rejoice over the birth of Lord Jesus and are looking forward to His Second Coming in full glory.



unto us a child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the Government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of

Jesus Christ are "the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Bread of Life, the Creator, The Bread of Life, the King of Kings the Son of God, the Word of God, the Messiah, the Son of Man."

Joseph was a carpenter by profession. There appeared a bright and radiant star in the sky as a heavenly sign of wonder at the time of his birth. It facilitated the Magi, the Wise Men or

and frankincense to see the new born king or Messiah who was kept in a manger. What was most baffling and wonderful was the unusual connection between the name of Jesus and the place

**Principal (Retired)**  
**Kalinga Vihar,**  
**Bhubaneswar**

### Letter To Editor

Dear Editor,

#### Country needs Mushroom packaging

Carbon dioxide emissions, fossil fuels, and the use of plastics are all major concerns when it comes to reducing carbon footprint. Now a days packaging is also a big threat of greenhouse gas emissions.

When you add up the production, transport, and use of packaging items, it can be a lot like using a car. Some foreign country businesses are looking for eco-friendly packaging solutions that can help them lower their carbon footprints, meet their sustainability goals, and help them compete in a competitive market. Some countries are looking into a new, more environmentally friendly packaging solutions which are being developed, including boxes made from corn starch. This was really noticed in a renowned furniture company during 2019 in USA. In 2022, mushroom packaging is becoming a popular choice for sustainable packaging. Mushroom packaging is a new type of packaging made from mushrooms. It is a biodegradable and environmentally friendly solution that uses less plastic than traditional packaging. Mushroom packaging can help businesses grow and prosper, as well as help the end consumer get the best possible product, plus it helps the environment by reducing waste. This type of packaging is made in a short span of time and is custom-made to fit a range of products. It is resistant to flame and water, and can be used for shipping needs both in the short-term and long-term. It is also biodegradable, so it is a good choice for businesses which are looking for exploring a cost-effective sustainable packaging options. According to research mushroom packaging is made of just two natural ingredients, so it can be composted in just 40-45 days. Just it is needed to do is break it up and add it to compost bin or scatter it on flowerbeds. The mushroom packaging recycling process is a better way to use packaging materials than creating new packaging from scratch. This process uses waste products to create new packaging that can be used again and again, helping to reduce waste and protect the environment. Unlike styrofoam, Mushroom Packaging consists of 100 percent biodegradable and renewable material that can be recycled directly in and by nature. Mushroom Packaging therefore contributes to up-cycling by providing new value to agricultural waste that otherwise has few other uses and low economic value. So therefore our country needs imperatively to go for mushroom packaging wherever possible rather than traditional packaging to reduce carbon footprint.

**Vijay Kumar H K**  
**Raichur, Karnataka**  
**Environmentalist**

## The Farmer has always been the backbone of our country and will continue to be so

'National Farmer's Day' is celebrated on 23rd December. It is the birthday of Former Prime Minister of India Charan Singh. Charan Singh, the Jat icon belonged to a peasant family, which made him relate himself with the problems of the farmers. Consequently, he did his best to support them. He was a son of the soil and his efforts towards the improvement of an Indian farmer are unparalleled.

India is basically an agricultural-dependent nation with nearly half of its population residing in villages. Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy that contributes to the overall economic growth of the country and determines the standard of life for more than 50% of the Indian population. Agriculture employs more than half of the Indian population. Though, there was a time when

approximately 75% of the Indian population was living on agricultural income. Charan Singh contributed a lot to improve the condition of Indian farmers by understanding the real problems of farmers and he did his best to help them. His passionate appeal and magnetic persona united all the farmers against the moneylenders and landlords. As a writer, he was also a very effective writer and penned his thoughts on farmers and their problems and solutions. He served as the Prime Minister of India from 28 July 1979 until 14 January 1980 but he had never faced the Lok Sabha.

Sustainability in agriculture is of utmost importance as many problems faced by farmers. According to figures from the Ministry of Agriculture, the total number of suicides committed by farmers for agrarian reasons in

### Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit



the last three years stands more than 3500. Farmers' distress is financial and the impending struggles. Farmers' suicide is a national phenomenon though most cases go unreported. Farm suicides, whether owing to purely agricultural reasons like crop failure, or the complex pressures on an Indian farmer, must be tackled seriously on the basis of a comprehensive

examination of the causative factors, and the context.

Farmers who feed us toil in the sun and rain all days of the year, but reap little benefits. They are least respected in society that eats their fruits. Lack of proper understanding of the need to grow crops sustainably will push farmers into a vicious circle - of debts, heavy use of fertilisers, water mismanagement,

low productivity and thus more debts for the next cycle. Agriculture has always been a high risk business in our country and crop failure is very common because very much depends upon nature. Agricultural credit and farm mechanisation for small and marginal farmers will continue to be difficult unless pooling of farm resources and/or a joint usage of farm technology are employed.

Today, Banks are too willing to lend money to a village consortium which can be utilised to boost farm productivity, employ sustainable farming methods, reduce over-dependence on fertilisers and thus solve many problems. What is needed is safe but remunerative farming. We need to think of organic farming and avoidance of large scale wastage of agricultural productions. Creation of good

surface irrigation and maintenance of tank systems so as to improve underground storage and remunerative prices are the most important.

Farmer's endless hard work has been an example to all of us. Farmers are the backbone of the nation. He played a major role in shaping and implementing some crucial laws like the Zamindari Abolition Act (1952), Consolidation of Holdings Act of 1953, and the Imposition of Ceilings on Land Holdings Act of 1960. He also introduced an Agricultural Produce Market Bill for the welfare of the farmers. He worked very hard for the development of farmers. Charan Singh will always be remembered as Kisanon Ke Neta or farmers' leader.

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## Environment & Tribes: CUO Organises the 13th Odisha Environment Congress- 20

Koraput (KCN): The three days Odisha Environment Congress was inaugurated at the Central University of Odisha with the

Programme was held on 21st December 2022 at its Sunabeda Campus based on the theme "Environment and Tribes". The

Ghiuria, Tribal custodian of the Landraces from Koraput, Mr. Surendra Naik, Bonda Community leader from

and Co-chairman of Odisha Environment Congress and Dr. Mr u t u n j a y a Mohapatra, Director General Meteorology, IMD, New Delhi was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Other members present on the dais were Prof. Kamala Kanta Mishra, former Vice Chancellor, Utkal University of Culture, Dr. Babu Ambat, Director, C E D , Thiruvananthapuram, Mr. Sudarsan Das, eminent environmentalist and organizing secretary, OEC, Mr. Bhrugu Baxipatra, Secretary, OEC and Dr. Shishirakanta Behera, Professor, SOA University.



presence of dignitaries all over India. Prof. Chakradhar Tripathi, Vice Chancellor of the University conveyed his best wishes on the occasion. The inaugural session of the

Programme was inaugurated by three eminent persons from the tribal community who contribute a lot towards the development of the society. They are Ms. Raimati

Malkangiri and Ms. Sumani Jhodia, Jhodia-Paraja Community leader from Rayagada. The Programme was presided over by Dr. Arabinda Behera, Retd. IAS officer

## Centre to provide free ration to poor people for one year under food law

NEW DELHI: The central government on Friday decided to provide free ration to 81.35 crore poor people under the Na-

month at Rs 2-3 per kg. The families covered under Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) get 35 kg of food

ter Piyush Goyal said the Centre will bear the entire burden of providing free food grains under NFSA. The annual cost to the exchequer is estimated at Rs 2 lakh crore. Meanwhile, the government decided not to extend the free ration scheme Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), which ends on December 31. Under PMGKAY, five kilograms of food grains per person per month is provided free to 81.35 crore beneficiaries

covered under NFSA. This is over and above the monthly distribution of highly subsidised food grains under NFSA. Government officials described the latest Cabinet decision as a "new year gift for the country's poor," saying that over 80 crore people will now get free food grains under NFSA. The beneficiaries will not have to pay a single rupee to get food grains. The Centre will now spend around Rs 2 lakh crore per year on this scheme, they added.



tional Food Security Act (NFSA) for one year. Under NFSA, also called the food law, the government currently provides five kilograms of food grains per person per

grains per month. Rice is given to poor persons under NFSA at Rs 3 per kg and wheat at Rs 2 per kg. Briefing reporters about the decision taken by the Union Cabinet, Food Minis-

## UN urges rescue of 190 people believed to be Rohingya refugees adrift in Andaman Sea

BANGKOK: The United Nations and other groups urged countries in southern Asia on Friday to rescue as many as 190 people believed to be Rohingya refugees aboard a small boat that has been adrift for several weeks in the Andaman Sea. Most of those on board are thought to be Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar who had lived in crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh for as many as five years and are seeking a better life in Malaysia and Indonesia. Messages they reportedly sent by satellite phone to their families describe their situation as desperate. "Reports indicate those onboard have now remained at sea for a month in dire conditions with insufficient food or water, without any efforts by States in the region to help save human

lives," the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, said in a statement. "Many are women and children, with reports of up to 20 people dying on the unseaworthy vessel during the journey." "All States have a responsibility to rescue those on the boat and allow them to safely disembark in line with legal obligations and in the name of humanity," it said. Malaysia and Indonesia both have Muslim majorities, even though groups seeking refuge risk detention on arrival. The UNHCR said unverified reports indicated the boat is currently north of Aceh in Indonesia. The journeys are often made this time of year, when seas are usually calmer but remain treacherous, especially because the vessels used by human traffickers are often dilapidated. Earlier this month, an oil

exploration support vessel rescued more than 150 Rohingya after their boat started taking on water and handed them over to Myanmar authorities. On Dec. 18, the Sri Lanka navy rescued 105 Rohingya refugees whose boat was adrift and sighted by fishermen. More than 700,000 Rohingya have fled from Buddhist-majority Myanmar to refugee camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, when the Myanmar military launched brutal counterinsurgency operations in response to attacks by a rebel group. Myanmar's security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes. On Thursday, the U.N. special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, urged governments in South and

Southeast Asia "to immediately and urgently coordinate search and rescue for this boat and ensure safe disembarkation of those aboard before any further loss of life occurs." "While many in the world are preparing to enjoy a holiday season and ring in a new year, boats bearing desperate Rohingya men, women and young children, are setting off on perilous journeys in unseaworthy vessels," Andrews said in a statement. The boat is running out of food and water and its engine has failed, he said. UNHCR said information on Rohingya boat people is difficult to verify, but if the latest reports are true, they bring "the number of dead and missing in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea to nearly 200 this year," or about 10% of the estimated 2,000 people who have

## Ireland's PM Varadkar keen to visit India and meet PM Modi: Envoy Brendan Ward

NEW DELHI: Ireland's Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, would like to visit India at the earliest possible, however with the ongoing events under G20's Presidency, it is not likely for him to get any scheduled dates for the coming year, Ireland's Ambassador to India,

years on completion of their studies and most of them manage permanent placements," Ward added.

The bilateral trade between India, Ireland stood at \$6.5 billion in 2022. The export of goods from India is in the range of \$2 billion



which includes textiles, pharma, chemicals and agricultural products. Exports from Ireland to India includes machinery, pharma products. Nearly 30 Irish companies are present in India. Besides, there is exchange of services like banking, insurance and tourism. Ireland is hoping that

Brendan Ward told The New Indian Express "Varadkar is eager to visit India. However, with the tight schedules due to G20, it may not be possible soon. Since his father hails from Maharashtra he has made many trips to India, the last one was in 2019 with his partner. Whenever he comes, he not only visits Delhi but also Mumbai and Bengaluru," Ward said. Ireland is not involved with G20 directly, so will not make a presence in the events, though it is a part of EU.

The India-EU FTA is a comprehensive trade deal that benefits India and the member states of the EU - which Ireland is a part of.

"Both India and EU are important markets for each other and there should be a comprehensive trade agreement covering all sectors. The investment procedure agreement would cover 27 member states. The Indian side would be happy with an early harvest agreement like some limited wins in some sectors. However, we would like to push for a comprehensive agreement," Ward said. Meanwhile, one of the major roadblocks between India and Ireland is no direct flight services. "We are hoping that in 2023 Air India would commence direct flights to Dublin. With them revamping their services, and a large Indian diaspora, it would be great to have a direct flight which will take less than nine hours - from the over 14 hours it takes at present as we have to take connecting flights," Ward added.

Indians are one per cent of the population in Ireland and are close to 50,000 in numbers. Indian students too are increasingly opting for Universities across Ireland to pursue their graduate and undergraduate studies.

"Our visa services haven't got impacted to the pandemic and it takes maximum of two weeks for a visa to come through. Close to 45,000 Indian visas are issued each year. Besides, Indian students can work in Ireland for two

## Delhi: Kamal Haasan, freedom fighter families likely to join 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' on Saturday

NEW DELHI: Actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan, family members of freedom fighters and top Congress leaders are expected to join Rahul Gandhi in the Delhi leg of his Bharat Jodo Yatra on Saturday, party sources said.

"Senior Congress leaders and parlia-

pate in the yatra in the national capital.

Gandhi and some of the yatriis will visit



taken risky sea journeys in the region during the year.

Chris Lewa, director of the Arakan Project, a private organization that monitors the Rohingya crisis, said Thursday her group has collected information received by satellite phone by families of those aboard the boat.

According to the information, Indian authorities at one point provided the drifting ship with food and water but then pushed it in the direction of other countries instead of bringing it ashore, she said in a telephone interview.

Asked about the report, Indian navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said Thursday, "I don't have any inputs on this."

The messages sent to the families also suggested that a second boat is adrift in the region.

mentarians, families of freedom fighters and Makkal Needhi Maiam (MKM) president Kamal Haasan are likely to join the Bharat Jodo Yatra in the national capital," a source told PTI on Friday. Addressing the MKM office-bearers last week, Haasan had said he has been invited by Rahul Gandhi and that, he would participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra on December 24 in the national capital. Delhi Congress president Anil Chaudhary said at least 40,000 to 50,000 yatriis are expected to partici-

"People from different fields will be joining the yatra that will enter Badarpur border at 6 am. We will then walk towards Ashram via Apollo hospital and thereafter, the yatriis will have a lunch break and will rest for a while. We will resume our yatra at 1 pm from Ashram," Chaudhary said. After the lunch break, the yatra will resume and head towards Nizamuddin and then to the India Gate Circle ITO, Delhi Cantt-Darya Ganj and before heading towards the Red Fort. Thereafter, Rahul

Rajghat, Veerbhumi and Shantivan by car and pay floral tributes.

After a short break beginning Saturday night, the yatra will resume from January 3 from Uttar Pradesh, then again head to Haryana in the second phase and then to Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

The yatra, which was launched on September 7 in Kanyakumari, has covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. It completed 100 days on December 16.

## Odisha Hockey World Cup: BMC holds on 'beautification' drive as protests erupt against eviction

BHUBANESHWAR(KCN): A large number of street vendors on Friday staged protests over the ongoing eviction drive to beautify Odisha's state capital Bhubaneswar ahead of

rehabilitation for vendors.

"The livelihoods of hundreds of vendors have been affected due to the eviction drive. Goods worth lakhs of rupees were destroyed as the BMC bulldozed our makeshift shops," association president Pratap Sahu claimed.

Sahu said the affected vendors must be rehabilitated as per law before being evicted. "The BMC has violated all laws and illegally demolished the shops in Damana and Patia area in the city," he alleged. Earlier in the day, the agitators had gheroad the BMC office, leading to a minor scuffle with security personnel, officials said.

"There was no planning by the BMC for the world cup. It should have given sufficient time for the traders to move to a different place," said Minati Behera, whose small shop near Patia Chak was evicted.

She also claimed that the government was forcing vendors to migrate to other states. Sahu added that there are around 30,000 roadside vendors, out of whom 15,000 traders' stalls have been demolished by the BMC. The men's Hockey World Cup will take place from January 13-29.



the men's Hockey World Cup next month. The agitation prompted the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) to temporarily postpone the exercise, with officials assuring the protesters that the next course of action will be decided following a discussion with the vendors' representative body.

"We have decided to stop the eviction drive for some days. It will be carried out after talks with the vendors' association," BMC North Zone assistant commissioner Suresh Chandra Lenka told reporters. The agitators, under the banner of All Odisha Roadside Vendors' Association, alleged that BMC conducted massive eviction without any prior notice or ar-

## Dharmendra Pradhan backs BJP demand for CBI probe into Gobinda Sahu death



BHUBANESHWAR(KCN): Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday justified his party demand for a CBI probe into the alleged suicide by Gobinda Sahu, prime accused in the murder of Mamita Meher.

Prior to attending an all-party meeting convened by Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik on the forthcoming hockey World Cup, Pradhan told mediapersons that the alleged suicide of Sahu inside a sub-jail has raised many questions and suspicion.

In a democratic set up, responsibility and public conduct of the government of the

day assume significance. The transparency of the government largely depends on a fair and impartial probe into the case.

The union minister said that two things have come to the fore after the unnatural death of Sahu. The most important issue now is how an under-

trial prisoner took the extreme step inside a jail. The other issue is the mismatch in the DNA test report of Mamita.

"The investigation into the Sahu suicide case should be as per the law. My party has already demanded a CBI probe and I fully support the demand," Pradhan said.

## Dairy sector to create more jobs: Naveen Patnaik

BHUBANESHWAR/BALANGIR: Dairy sector in India is witnessing a big growth and it has the potential to create huge job opportunities in rural ar-



reas and provide additional income support to farmers, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at the opening ceremony of the two-day Dairy Summit-2022 organised in Balangir district recently.

The chief minister in his message highlighted that with new technologies, products and processes in place, the dairy sector is also attracting young entrepreneurs to set up startups. The state government is also promoting this sector with suitable policies and the summit which has brought in experts, veterinarians, research institutes, dairy farmers and startups to a single platform, will create immense possibilities for the sector in the district as well as the state, he said.

Balangir collector Chanchal Rana said the conference will be an inspiration for the farmers. He said Balangir district aims to be considered as the first district in the country in the field of milk production in the next five years.

## Mamita Meher murder case: Congress seeks Orissa HC monitored SIT

BHUBANESHWAR(KCN): Congress on Thursday demanded a high court monitored probe by special investigation team into the alleged suicide of Gobinda Sahu,

The memorandum rejected the government claim that Sahu's death is a case of suicide. "The question arises that when the prisoners are under the watchful eye of the



the main accused in the Mamita Meher murder case. A delegation of Congress leaders submitted a memorandum to Governor Ganeshi Lal at the Raj Bhavan in this regard.

The memorandum said as this a highly sensitive case, a SIT probe monitored by the high court can only bring out the truth. The Congress team maintained that registration of FIR lodged by the wife of Sahu, a thorough investigation on her complaint is required to unearth the truth and ensure justice to the family of the victim.

jail warders and when every activity is under CCTV surveillance, how could Sahu come out and hang himself?" it asked.

Stating that Sahu's death took place under suspicious circumstances, the Congress memorandum said it is a case of gross negligence of jail administration for which the chief minister cannot run away from accountability as he happens to be the home minister. Congress said that police had registered a case against Gobinda under section 120B. But there has been no investigation till now on the conspiracy aspect in the case.




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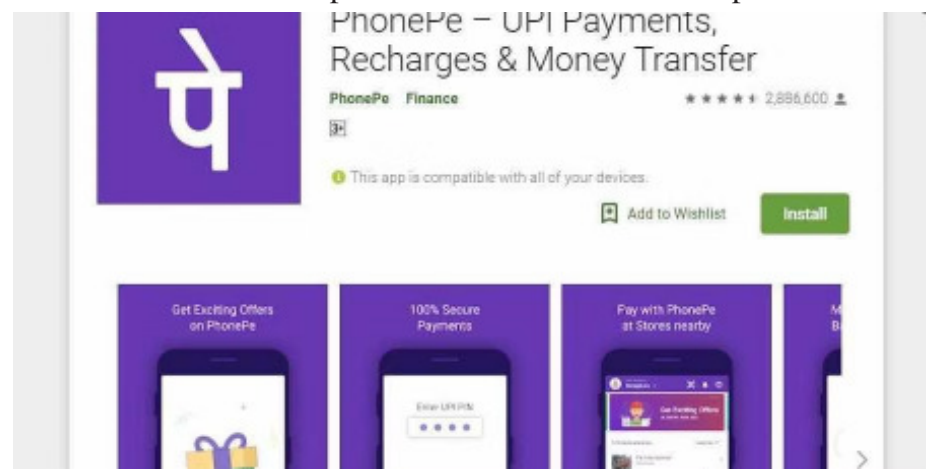
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## PhonePe completes separation from Flipkart

NEW DELHI: Flipkart and PhonePe have

shareholders, led by Walmart, have purchased shares of PhonePe - UPI Payments, Recharges & Money Transfer



completed their separation and both entities will continue to operate under US-based retail giant Walmart, a joint statement said on Friday. PhonePe was acquired by Flipkart Group in 2016.

"As part of this transaction, existing Flipkart Singapore and PhonePe Singapore

directly in PhonePe India. This completes the move to make PhonePe a fully India domiciled company, a process that started earlier this year," the statement said.

Walmart will remain the majority shareholder of both business groups. "Flipkart and PhonePe are proud,

homegrown Indian brands with a user base upwards of 400 million each. We are looking forward to the next phase of our growth as we invest in new businesses - like insurance, wealth management and lending, while also enabling the next wave of growth for UPI payments in India. This will help propel our vision to provide billions of Indians with financial inclusion,"

PhonePe Founder and CEO Sameer Nigam said.

This year, PhonePe changed its domicile from Singapore to India.

Since its launch, PhonePe has successfully digitized more than 35 million offline merchants spread across tier 2, 3, 4 cities and beyond, covering 99 per cent of pin codes in the country, the statement said.

"We are proud to see PhonePe grow and thrive as a successful organization in its own right. We are confident PhonePe will continue to scale and achieve its vision of providing financial inclusion to millions of Indians," Flipkart Group CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy said.

## FTX boss Bankman-Fried freed on bail over fraud charges

FTX co-founder Sam Bankman-Fried was released on \$250 million bail Thursday while he awaits trial on criminal fraud charges over the spectacular collapse of his crypto exchange. US magistrate judge Gabriel Gorenstein made the ruling during Bankman-Fried's arraignment hearing in federal court in Manhattan following his extradition from the Bahamas.

Lawmakers quick to unload FTX founder's contributions. FTX and its sister trading house Alameda Research went bankrupt last month, dissolving a virtual trading business that at one point had been valued by the market at \$32 billion. Prosecutors allege Bankman-Fried cheated investors and misused funds that belonged to FTX and Alameda Research

But Roos recommended bail with "highly restrictive" conditions in light of the defendant's lack of criminal history and the fact that he had voluntarily agreed to be extradited. ALSO READ! FTX collapse: US asks companies to disclose exposure to beleaguered crypto firms. Defense attorney Mark Cohen told Gorenstein that Bankman-Fried "voluntarily" came to

and FTX co-founder Gary Wang -- had pleaded guilty to charges related to the FTX collapse and that they were cooperating with authorities. ALSO READ! Size, scope of FTX failure gets clearer as users fear worst. Their charges were "in connection with their roles in the frauds that contributed to FTX's collapse," he said, without providing further details. Separately, the SEC and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) announced Wednesday they had filed civil suits against Ellison and Wang.

The CFTC estimates that \$8 billion in funds were misappropriated from FTX customer accounts. After its founding in 2019, FTX rose spectacularly to become a leading player in the crypto world. Bankman-Fried appeared on the covers of finance and tech magazines, and drew in huge investments from prominent fund managers and venture capitalists. But it all imploded dramatically in November when a media report said Alameda's balance sheet was heavily built on a token created by FTX with no independent value -- and exposed Bankman-Fried's companies as being dangerously interlinked. Bankman-Fried was arrested at his Nassau apartment on December 12 at the request of the federal prosecutors in New York. A Bahamas permanent resident, he spent nine days in prison, weighing his choices before telling the Nassau magistrate court Wednesday that he would not fight extradition.



Bankman-Fried, who recently claimed to have only \$100,000 left in the bank, will have to live at his parents' home in Palo Alto, California, which has been put up as collateral under the terms of release, the judge ruled.

Bankman-Fried, who entered the courtroom in shackles and appeared unshaven, did not enter a plea. He looked down as the judge reviewed the indictment's eight criminal counts and made only a brief statement to accept the conditions of bail.

The parents, Stanford Law professors Joseph Bankman and Barbara Fried, sat silently throughout the 40-minute hearing. Bankman-Fried was later seen leaving the court carrying a brown paper bag.

Under the deal, the 30-year-old ex-billionaire, once touted as a possible future Warren Buffett, will be subjected to electronic monitoring. ALSO READ!

customers. The plane carrying Bankman-Fried from the Bahamas, where FTX is headquartered, arrived in the United States late Wednesday after he waived his right to challenge the US government's extradition request.

ALSO READ! FTX's Bankman-Fried charged by US for 'scheme' to defraud Gorenstein determined that Bankman-Fried posed minimal risk of flight because he did not challenge extradition and has no prior convictions, accepting a recommendation from prosecutors. Dramatic collapse

Nicolas Roos, an Assistant US Attorney in the Southern District of New York, described Bankman-Fried's alleged schemes as of "epic proportions," with the government already holding "very strong" evidence from more than a dozen cooperating witnesses and encrypted text messages.

New York. "He wants to address these charges," Cohen said. "We think that's a very compelling factor." Federal prosecutors last week charged Bankman-Fried with conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering and election finance violations. He "was orchestrating a massive, years-long fraud, diverting billions of dollars of the trading platform's customer funds for his own personal benefit and to help grow his crypto empire," they said. Five of the eight counts against Bankman-Fried carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison each. The US Securities and Exchange Commission has separately accused him of violating securities laws. Bankman-Fried's appearance came after US attorney Damian Williams announced late Wednesday that two key figures in the case - Alameda Research CEO Caroline Ellison

## RIL buys METRO for Rs 2,850 crore

NEW DELHI: Reliance Industries Ltd's (RIL) retail arm - Reliance Retail Ventures Limited ('RRVL') - on Thursday signed definitive agreements to acquire 100 equity stake in METRO Cash & Carry India ('METRO India') for a total cash consideration of Rs 2,850 crore. The transaction is expected to complete by March 2023.

Through this acquisition, Reliance Retail gets access to a wide network of METRO India stores located in prime locations across key cities in the country, a large base of registered kiranas and other institutional customers, a strong supplier network and some of the global practices implemented by METRO in India, RIL said in a statement.

This big acquisition by India's second-richest

billionaire- Mukesh Ambani comes after Reliance's failed attempt to acquire Future Retail, one of the country's biggest retailers with a massive offline footprint. The Reliance-Future deal, where Reliance would have acquired 19 Future Group companies operating in retail, wholesale, logistic and warehousing segments, was called off by the oil-to-telecom conglomerate in April this year after it failed to get lenders' support. METRO, the top international retailer, started operations in India in 2003 and currently operates 31 large format stores across 21 cities with about 3,500 employees. In the financial year 2021/22 (FY ended September 2022), METRO India generated sales of Rs 7700 crore, its best sales performance since its market entry into India.

## Dark clouds of global economic uncertainties may cast shadow on India's exports in 2023

NEW DELHI: India's exports may have touched an all-time high of USD 422 billion in 2021-22 but the recession in key western markets and the geopolitical crisis due to the Russia-Ukraine war is expected to impact the growth of the country's outbound shipments in 2023. All the global trade-promoting factors like political stability, movement of goods, adequate availability of containers and shipping lines, demand, stable currency and smooth banking systems are in disarray.

Adding to the woes, COVID cases have again started rising in countries like China, Japan, South Korea and the US. Before the COVID-hit global economies could come out of the woods, the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in February severely disrupted the supply chains worldwide and hardened the global commodities prices.

The war also impacted the movement of goods through the important black sea route. Taking note of the worsening geopolitical situation, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has projected that global trade would grow by only one per cent in 2023. The Geneva-based multilateral trade body has said the world trade is expected to lose

currency started depreciating and touched an all-time low of 83 to a US dollar in October. The rupee at present is hovering at over 82.

Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said that given the global trade dynamics, India's exports are likely to moderate although the depreciated rupee against the dollar may cushion the impact partially.

"More than 85 per cent of the trade is done in USD so a depreciated INR will help. Several initiatives of the government are being instrumental in boosting exports. However, last mile connectivity and logistics challenges have to be addressed to improve efficiencies, reduce delays, and reduce costs associated with trade," Majumdar said.

Nischal S Arora, Partner- Regulatory, Nangia Andersen LLP, said that while global trade may not grow at a fast pace, given the growth of India's share in global trade, "we are bullish" on India's exports for 2023.

"In the immediate short-term, yes, currency depreciation does help boost exports of services and some goods which do not rely on high cost of raw materials import.



momentum in the second half of 2022 and remain subdued in 2023, as multiple shocks weigh on the global economy.

"WTO economists now predict global merchandise trade volumes will grow by 3.5 per cent in 2022, slightly better than the 3 per cent forecast in April. For 2023, however, they foresee a 1 per cent increase down sharply from the previous estimate of 3.4 per cent," it has said.

According to experts, amid these developments, it would be difficult for India to insulate itself from the dark clouds.

However, they added that India has managed the growth rate in exports so far and healthy growth in services exports too would help the country's overall outbound shipments in 2023.

Services exports in 2021-22 too touched an all-time high of USD 254 billion and according to the industry experts, it may touch USD 300 billion this fiscal year.

In July, August and September this year, exports rose by 2.14 per cent, 1.62 per cent and 4.82 per cent, respectively.

It contracted by 12.12 per cent in October and recorded a flat growth rate in November. During April-November 2022, exports rose by 11 per cent to USD 295.26 billion as against USD 265.77 billion in the same period last year.

Imports however rose 29.5 per cent to USD 493.61 billion during the eight-month period of this fiscal year. It was USD 381.17 billion during April-November 2021, according to the data of the commerce ministry. According to the ministry, the reasons for the decline in merchandise exports include slowdown in some developed economies due to COVID and Russia-Ukraine conflict and the consequential slowdown in demands and certain measures to contain domestic inflation.

The bigger problem for India would be the widening trade deficit (difference between imports and exports), which has implications on the value of rupee and current account deficit. The merchandise trade deficit jumped to a record high of USD 30 billion in July.

Due to ballooning of the deficit and repeated hike of interest rates by the US Fed, value of the Indian

However, as India moves away from being a services-driven export economy to exporting goods, the incremental impact of the depreciation of rupee on exports will diminish relatively over a period of time," Arora said. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said the slowdown of

global trade to 1 per cent in 2023 may have an adverse impact on Indian exports also.

"However, we are conscious of the fact that our share in global trade is still less than 2 per cent and therefore, the global trade graph should not affect us more.

Moreover, certain positive developments will also help India in 2023," Sahai added.

He said effective utilization of recently finalised free trade agreements with the UAE and Australia would help exports grow in the coming months.

New agreements with the UK and Canada are also expected in the first half of 2023 to provide further push to exports, he added.

On rupee depreciation, Sahai said that in the last 52 weeks ended December 14, the local unit has depreciated by 8 per cent but Chinese Yuan has depreciated 8.3 per cent, Japanese Yen (15.7 per cent), Pakistan Rupia (20.9 per cent), Argentina Paso (40.9 per cent).

"In a way, this is good for the Indian economy particularly as our imports are about 50 per cent more than the exports. Little volatility in currency is good for exporters but huge volatility is risky and adds to the hedging cost as well," he added.

Mumbai-based exporter and Chairman of Technocraft Industries, Sharda Kumar Saraf said though all the major economies of Europe, the US and Japan are showing signs of recession, Indian exports are still likely to clock 8-10 per cent growth in 2023.

"This will be spurred by the various FTAs that the government has signed with several strategic countries," Saraf said.

The government has taken measures to boost exports and reduce the overall trade deficit and that includes extension of existing foreign trade policy till March 31, 2023; extension of interest subsidy scheme on pre and post-shipment rupee export credit up to March 31, 2024; and rollout of Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme since January 2021. Rollout of the production-linked incentive scheme, the announcement of logistics policy and PM Gati Shakti initiative for integrated development of infrastructure too would help in promoting exports.

# Najam Sethi set to replace Ramiz Raja as PCB chairman

**Karachi:** The move to have Ramiz Raja ousted as the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board has been formally initiated by Shehbaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan who is also the Patron of the board. A new 14-member committee headed by Najam Sethi and including former Pakistan cricketers Shahid Afridi and Sana Mir will now be placed before the Pakistan cabinet for approval ending days of speculation about the future of the current board. Raja's position had been

on flimsy grounds ever since Imran Khan was removed as Prime Minister in April this year. Raja, 60, was elected unanimously and unopposed as the board's 36th chairman in September 2021 with the 1992 World Cup-winning captain nominating his former teammate on the PCB Board of Governors (BoG). During Raja's tenure, Pakistan made the semifinals and finals of successive T20 World Cups, played the final of the Asia Cup and welcomed Australia and England to their shores, signalling the full-

fledged return of international cricket at home. Pending a legal vetting of the change, Raja will be replaced by Sethi, who has served as the head of PCB in multiple positions between 2003 and 2018. He was also the first chairman of the Pakistan Super League and oversaw the conception of the league in 2016. His committee will now have a four-month period during which they'll be tasked with restoring the PCB constitution to its 2014 version. The cricket regime headed by Ramiz Raja



@iramizraja is no more. The 2014 PCB constitution stands restored. The Management Committee will work tirelessly to revive first class cricket. Thousands of cricketers will be employed again. The famine in cricket will come to an end. One of the main reasons for the constitutional revamp is to have departmental teams like WAPDA, PIA and SNGPL back in the country's first-class circuit. In the Imran Khan-ratified version of the constitution in 2019, the PCB chose to do away with the

departments that have historically been associated with the game in the country so as to streamline the cricketing structure into six regional sides - Northern, Sindh, Central Punjab, Balochistan, Southern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - mirroring that of Australia's. While the original move to abolish the historic structure in domestic cricket had its merits, the PCB was also criticised for the move for it rendered several cricketers employed by these departments jobless in a beat. Meanwhile, Babar

Azam's position as captain of the senior men's team is unlikely to be affected by the management restructuring just yet, even though murmurs of a change have grown since the team's 3-0 whitewash by England in the just-concluded Test series. Historically in Pakistan cricket, a change in PCB administration has been followed by new leaders in the team but Azam has been named to lead the side for the forthcoming New Zealand series and will be expected to continue into the new year.

## Australian and English players available for entire 2023 IPL

**New Delhi:** The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has informed the franchises about the availability of the players for the 2023 Indian Premier League (IPL), and it turns out that barring Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis, players from other countries will partake for the entire duration of the tournament.



The Australian and English players, in particular, will be available fully for the IPL. That is despite the looming Ashes series starting mid-June. The news could be a big relief for the IPL teams who were predicting limited or conditional no-objection certificate (NOC) for the players from England and Australia because of the Ashes series, which is of high importance for the traditional and oldest cricket rivals. "Full Availability. Players selected for ODI series against

Afghanistan will be available from 30 March. Players playing final of Sheffield Shield to be available from 28 March," the BCCI mail says of the Australian players. About the England players, the communicate has only two words: "Full Availability." Ben Stokes, it has emerged now, will play full IPL, unless there is a last-minute change. According to the mail, the Bangladesh players, selected for the Ireland series, will come for the IPL for a limited time.

"Players selected for Ireland series will be available from 8 April to 1 May," the mail says. The Sri Lankan players, the BCCI notes, will come from April 8, which means a team like Royal Challengers Bangalore will have to do without their key bowler Wanindu Hasaranga for the first few games. Players from other countries, mainly New Zealand, South Africa and West Indies, should be available right through the tournament. The IPL, as previously

reported, is expected to take off on April 1. Meanwhile, the franchises have been informed that Tanush Kotian, a key bowler for Mumbai Indians, is in the list of players with suspect action. Incidentally, the off-spinner played a crucial role in Mumbai's innings win in their just-concluded Ranji game against Hyderabad. The BCCI has said that apart from the MI spinner, Rohan Kunnammal (Kerala), Apoorv Wankhede (Vidarbha), Chirag Gandhi (Gujarat) and Ramakrishna Ghosh (Maharashtra) have been reported for suspect action, and face the risk of being banned if called once again. The players banned from bowling are Manish Pandey (Karnataka), Arman Jaffer (MCA), Wriddick Chatterjee (CAB) and Azim Kazi of Maharashtra.

## FIFA Rankings: Lionel Messi's Argentina climb to second after World Cup win



**New Delhi:** Lionel Messi's Argentina lifted the FIFA World Cup 2022 trophy beating France in the finals. However, that was also not enough for the nation to become the number 1 in FIFA rankings. Brazil, who were eliminated by Croatia in the quarterfinals are still the number 1 nation in world football. Argentina moved up one place to No. 2 and beaten finalist

France also rose one to No. 3. Where does India rank in FIFA? Indian men's football team is ranked 106th in the world while the women's team is ranked 61. (Why FIFA World Cup is a distant dream for India? Read here) Belgium is still at No. 4, a fall of two places, despite winning only one game in Qatar and failing to advance from the

group stage. England and the Netherlands, both beaten quarterfinalists, stay at Nos. 5 and 6 respectively. Croatia climbed five places to No. 7. European champion Italy is at No. 8 despite failing to qualify for the World Cup. Morocco is the best-placed African nation at No. 11, up 11 places, for its historic run to the semifinals. The United States at

No. 13 is the best of the CONCACAF region teams, rising three places after advancing to the round of 16. Mexico is No. 15. Japan leads the Asian confederation teams at No. 20, up four places, and Australia rises 11 places to No. 27. Both reached the round of 16. Cameroon, which beat Brazil in the group stage, rose 10 places to be No. 33.



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