

Work for welfare of people: Naveen's mantra for BJD workers on party foundation day

Puri (KCN) : Governing Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which has been in power since 2000, is eyeing to serve the people of Odisha for 100 years. This was indicated from BJD Supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's address to BJD workers on party' 25th Foundation Day celebrated here on Monday.

The ruling party has celebrated its silver jubilee Foundation Day here at Talabania ground in a massive way. Thousands of BJD leaders, functionaries and workers have attended the meeting.

Addressing the workers, the BJD President said that the Biju Janata Dal will continue to serve the people of Odisha for the next 100 years.

"My sincere request to mothers and sisters to come forward and take responsibility. With the blessings of our mothers, BJD will be able to serve the people of Odisha for 100 years and not just 25 or 50 years. Conch

symbol will continue to be a victory for the pride of Odia," the Chief Minister said.

Beginning his speech with chanting Jai Jagannath, Patnaik said, today, BJD is celebrating 25 years of service to the people of Odisha. "I am grateful to the four and a half crore people of Odisha for giving us the opportunity to serve them for 25 years. BJD is always indebted to the people of Odisha," he said

"In Parliament and various meetings, leaders of other parties always told me that BJD is the most successful regional party ever. BJD has been working for many years in the service of the people based on the faith of the people," he said.

If we consider what is the reason behind BJD's continuous victory in the State, then some specific aspects or reasons will emerge.

On this occasion, Patnaik gave four mantras to BJD workers. First – the main duty of a regional party is to work on one agenda, to



serve the people of the state. And, the BJD will never depart from the agenda.

"Our primary duty is – to work for our state and its people, its interest, development, glory, language and culture. BJD has been working for the interest of Odisha," the CM said.

He said the second one is – Biju Babu's ideology. "I have always said that Biju Babu was not a leader, he was a phenomenon and he was completely futuristic – way ahead of his times. And every drop of his blood was filled with the prosperity of Odisha and

the pride of Odisha," Shri Patnaik said.

The third one is clean and transparent governance. BJD's vested interest is the development of Odisha, improvement of the people of Odisha. The ruling party does not have a second vested interest.

He said the fourth reason is women empowerment. Since 2000, when the people of Odisha have blessed BJD, the party has been giving importance to the empowerment of women.

"It is our firm belief that the development of women will take Odisha forward. That is why

Mission Shakti today has become a people's movement towards women empowerment," said the BJD Big Boss.

He further said, if women will be empowered, families will be strong. If women are strong, the State will be strong. If women are strong, that country will be strong. If not, there will be no other.

Stating development of all categories of people in society is important for the BJD, Naveen said, "Let him be our tribal brother and sister, be a dalit brother and sister, or be Christian/Muslim brothers and sisters.

Odisha will prosper if everyone prospers."

And, the BJD has always worked for the development of every village, every city and every region spread from Malkangiri to Mayurbhanj and from Bargarh to Puri.

"It is our duty to eliminate inclusive growth and regional imbalance. BJD stands for the entire Odisha. Not just one group or one region or one class," he added.

The BJD is working in a professional manner to resolve the problems and issues of Odisha. Whether it is floods or cyclones, Odisha got praise all over the world for its disaster management.

A day was there when Odisha was depending on other states for food security. Now, the State provides rice to other States. Look at our infrastructure and good governance – a lot of investment is coming to us – children will get jobs.... the state will witness immense development.

For his Government every life is precious, the CM said, "That's why testing for treatment was given free of cost during the Covid epidemic. Odisha supplied oxygen to other States."

Stating that BSKY, like a revolutionary scheme, was implemented in the State, he said, "Our commitment is – every life is precious. We are working on that basis. Everyone is praising our government and our governance model abroad."

"It's a professionally run Government. Which runs on the principles of 5T. It's a Government sensitive to people's aspirations and needs, which has initiatives like Mo Sarkar to get citizen feedback," he further stated.

He said that workers are the soul of BJD, adding, "You are giving strength to the BJD. You are fighting the opposition at the grassroot level and have been able to convey the message of our party to the people. That's why this party has become a

source of people's trust."

In a strong message to the party workers, Naveen said BJD has never depended on one or two people and will never do so in the future. It is a social movement. A movement to carry forward the hopes, beliefs and values of the people of Odisha, he told the BJD workers.

"Every house should participate in this movement. Help build the Odisha of our dreams," he appealed.

He appealed to all those who have faith in the development of Odisha, want to serve Odisha, come in large numbers, join the Biju Janata Dal. Be it professionals, social workers, artists, sports persons, farmers, whoever they are, in any field, should join the BJD. He termed BJD as the own party of Odisha and said, "Because, the national party will have their agenda on national politics and Odisha is not in their focus. However, the BJD has no vested interests apart from the progress of Odisha.

Drugs Worth 50 Crore Seized From Clandestine Labs In Hyderabad

New Delhi: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officers have seized about 25 kg of stimulant drug Mephedrone worth about ? 50 crore from two clandestine manufacturing labs in Hyderabad, the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

Acting on the basis of specific intelligence, DRI started an operation on December 21, 2022, and busted the two clandestine labs. Seven persons carrying out the manufacturing in these two locations were arrested and remanded to judicial custody.

"Officials of the DRI seized 24.885 kg of Mephedrone in finished form, valued at ? 49.77 crore in the grey market,



along with in-process materials, sale proceeds of ? 18.90 lakh, key raw materials, machinery and vehicles used for trafficking," the ministry said.

The mastermind and main financier of this activity was arrested in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, as he was attempting to flee to Nepal with a cash of ? 60 lakh, the Ministry added. The ministry said that

some of the arrested persons are also accused in a 2016 DRI case for the clandestine manufacture of 236 kg Ephedrine at Indore; a July 2022 DRI case for the clandestine manufacture of 667 kg mephedrone at Yamuna Nagar; a case of escape from prison at Indore; a murder case in Hyderabad; and robberies in Vadodara. "Neutralising of the

clandestine labs and apprehending of the entire drug syndicate has dealt a blow to their plans for committing nefarious activities in the wake of the new year and thereafter," the Ministry said.

This is the second such factory bust carried out by DRI in the current financial year, following a similar case at Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, in July-August 2022.

Between April-November, 2022, officers of DRI seized about 990 kg of heroin, 88 kg of cocaine, 10,000 methamphetamine tablets, 2,400 litres of phensedyl cough syrup and various other harmful NDPS substances.

New India Correcting Mistakes Of Bygone Decades: PM Modi

New Delhi: In the name of history, "concocted narratives" were taught to infuse inferiority and there is a need to break free from the "narrow views" of the past to move forward, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said today, underlining that new India is correcting the mistakes of the bygone decades by restoring its long-lost legacy.

Speaking at the first 'Veer Bal Diwas' event, PM Modi paid tributes to Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, Guru Gobind Singh's sons who laid down their lives while defending their faith.

"On the one hand there was terrorism and on the other spiritualism. On one hand, there was communal violence and on the other there was



liberalism. On one hand, there were forces of lakhs while on the other there were just 'Veer Sahibzaade' who did not budge at all," he said referring to the two martyred children of the Guru. "Aurangzeb and his people wanted to convert the religion of Guru Gobind Singh's children with the force of a sword and that is why he decided to kill the two

innocent children. Imagine that era when against the terror of Aurangzeb, against his plans to change India, Guru Gobind Singh ji stood like a mountain," he said. Modi said in the name of history, people were being taught versions that promoted an inferiority complex among them. To move forward in the 'Amrit Kaal' and to take India to

the heights of success in the future, "we have to break free from narrow views of the past", he added.

"Any country with such a glorious history must be full of self-confidence and self-respect, however, concocted narratives are taught to infuse inferiority. There is a need to get free from the narrow interpretation of the past to move forward," he stressed.

The Prime Minister said the new India is correcting the mistakes of the bygone decades by restoring its long-lost legacy. On the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary on January 9 this year, Modi had announced that December 26 will be observed as 'Veer Bal Diwas'.

BSKY Care For 6.31 Lakh

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY), the unique universal health programme of Odisha Government strides success with noticeable progress during the current calendar year. This was known from a performance review meeting taken by Secretary Health and Family Welfare Shalini Pandit. Recent Review showed that around 6.31 lakh persons

from the poor families having either BSKY smart card or PDS card were provided high quality clinical treatment in different specialty hospitals under private sector free of cost during the current calendar year up to 25 December. State Government paid around Rs.1389 cr to the empanelled private sector hospitals towards cost of their treatment. Chief Executive Officer of State Health



Assurance Society Dr Brundha D. appraised that these patients were from all 30 districts of Odisha.

Cent percent of the patients coming to hospitals with BSKY eligibility were

counselled through telephonic call from 104. The patients were also provided handholding support by the Swasthya Mitras engaged by State in these hospitals. These patients were treated through either of the total number of 2056 clinical packages provided through BSKY. The problems and grievances relating use of cards, cashless treatment etc were immediately attended to and resolved in a

time bound manner keeping in view emergency requirement of the patients. Secretary Health & FW Shrimati Pandit directed to intensify IEC and awareness building activities on BSKY in remote rural areas of Gajapati, Kandhamal, Sonepur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Nabrangpur, Koraput and Malkangiri districts so that people get required information and

assistance for high quality clinical care. Discussions in the meeting showed the patients or their attendants could make pre-contact with toll free number 104 for treatment in any of the empanelled hospitals of their choice. They could get their BSKY card related problems resolved through telephonic call to 155369. People could also communicate their need and

grievances through toll free number 14545, Twitter @bskyodisha and Facebook account bskyodisha. Shrimati Pandit directed to create wide awareness among the people about all the facilities provided under BSKY. District Coordinators and Swasthya Mitras were asked to handhold the people with missionary spirit

Demand for faster action to railway link of Barbil -Banspani in rise



Barbil(KCN) The residents of Barbil ,press for its demand for faster completion of the rail link between the two places of Barbil-Banspani . Members of the outfit said though SER collects crores of rupees as freight charges towards transportation of iron ores from a number of railway sidings operating in the mining belt, the passenger service is dismal. Since 2009, a passenger train is running from Puri to Barbil on Jakhpura-Banspani route. But as there is no direct rail line between the 17-km stretch from Banspani to Barbil stations, the train has to run an extra 70 km via Jharkhand, causing inconvenience to passengers. Notably, a rail project to connect Barbil station with Barsuan and Kharagpur-Rourkela main line was placed in 2016-17 Railway budget. Proposed to be implemented in SPV

mode, the project was included in Odisha Rail Infrastructure Development Ltd. the ministry of Railways has accorded in principle approval to Banspani-Barbil rail line project for taking up pre-investment activities subject to 100 per cent funding of the project by the Odisha government. Though this link will reduce road traffic pressure and would stand as convenient way of ore transportation ,why State Government is lacking interest to start the project soon ,they questioned. This will not only reduce road congestion ,but would help mining industry to reduce transport cost burden .Still, it is yet to make any progress, the members alleged.Inorder to show their discontent they staged protest at Barbil railway station at the departure time of Barbil Puri passenger.

ECoR General Manager inspected Bhubaneswar New Railway Station

Bhubaneswar (KCN): East Coast Railway General Manager Shri Roop Narayan Sunkar today inspected the Bhubaneswar New Railway Station and took stock of various ongoing works. During the inspection,

the esteemed passengers and advised officials to focus for the speedy completion of various project works. The primary focus is on development of circulating areas, concourse, platform lightings, waiting

Manager also advised officials to coordinate with State Government project works going in Odisha and also is monitoring the devel-



officials for improving the road connectivity for the benefit of rail users. Hon'ble Minister of Railways Shri Ashwini Vaishnav is giving priority for the Development of railway infrastructure of the region along with various opmental works regularly. During the inspection, ECoR Principal Chief Engineer Shri N. S. Uikay, Chief Engineer (Construction) Shri Akshay Saxena and other Senior officials were present during the inspection by General Manager Shri Sunkar.



Shri Sunkar emphasised upon the need and significance of facilities provided to rooms, toilets, etc., which are much needed for the comfort of passengers. General

Give Up Smoking, Stay Away from Frightful Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Bhubaneswar(KCN): If you have a penchant for smoking, it's time to give up. According to the doctors at the Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS-Bhubaneswar), 80-90 percent of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients have had a history of smoking in developing coun-



tries such as India. COPD is usually associated with symptoms such as breathlessness which increases on exertion, cough with or without expectoration, chest tightness and wheezing. Other associated symptoms could show up in the form of fatigue, weight loss, swelling of the legs etc. The cure lies in quitting smoking, said Dr Saswat Subhankar, Assistant Professor in the Department of Pulmonology at KIMS. COPD is seen in patients above the age of 40 years and the prevalence increases with age. It is more common in men than women though recent studies have found a

similar prevalence in both sexes in many countries. "Overall, the prevalence rate of COPD among the population aged 30 years and above was 7 percent. Risk factors like active and passive smoking, biomass fuel exposure, environmental tobacco smoke, occupational exposure to dust, indoor and outdoor pollution, and increasing age are reported to have a significant association with COPD among the Indian population", he said. Smoking cessation plays a crucial role in altering the natural history and progression of COPD, he said. Across the world, COPD Day was observed on November 16 with renewed pledge and encouragement to eschew smoking and maintain and sustain a clean and pollution-free environment. The diagnosis of COPD is based on a proper clinical history and physical examination, and spirometry. The latter is a test in which the patient is asked to breathe into a tube attached to a device called a "spirometer". A chest X-ray may be useful in ruling out an alternate diagnosis or the presence of any complication, said Associate Professor, Respiratory Medicine, Dr Amrut Kumar Mohapatra. KIMS offers advanced treatment with the assistance of state-of-art equipment and a team of specialists that can help a patient overcome the disease with confidence. Bronchodilators are the most important medications in the treatment of COPD that improve the smooth muscle tone and dilate the airways, Dr Subhankar said. They are provided as inhalers. Long-acting agents are commonly used. Other than bronchodilators, several other classes of drugs like methylxanthines, corticosteroids (inhaled or oral), mucolytics etc. are also available but are used as add-ons.

Lajpat Rai DAV Public School celebrates annual function



CUTTACK(KCN): Lajpat Rai DAV Public School in Cuttack celebrated its annual function on December 24. The event held at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, Gov-

ernor Ganeshi Lal said it is the duty of the teachers to guide the students in a spiritual way and make them understand the primary duty of their lives. Cuttack MP

Bhartruhari Mahtab pointed out that the tradition of students and teachers is very old. Regional director KC Satapathy asked the students to focus on their attitude, behaviour and

character. The founder principal of the school, Namita Mohanty, was awarded on the occasion. Chairman Deepak Malviya and principal Niranjan Swain were present.

Odisha: Security beefed up to check poaching in Bhitarkanika during holiday season

KENDRAPARA(KCN): To curb the increasing wildlife poaching during the ongoing festive season, forest officials of Bhitarkanika national park have been asked to be on high alert in areas within and near the park premises. Sources said poaching of wild boars, spotted deer and migratory birds are particularly high during Christmas and New Year celebrations. "The venison of deer and wild boars are high in demand during the holiday season for which security within and near the park has been beefed up. Forest personnel have been asked to be extra vigilant and night patrolling too, intensified," said range officer Manas Das adding movement of villagers in the nearby areas is being monitored. Large number of migratory birds have already arrived for their annual winter sojourn. Awareness camps are being organised in the nearby villages to sensitise locals on the protection of migratory birds and food outlets warned not to purchase bird meat from anybody, the officer added.



According to information, poachers trap wild boars and spotted deer by spreading nylon ropes or lay live wires to kill them. Some of them also use trained dogs to hunt the animals. "Around six years back, forest officials had arrested poachers with their trained dogs. The animals often stray into nearby villages in search of food and water during which the poachers kill them," said Hemant Rout, secretary of Gahirmatha Marine Turtle and Mangrove Conservation Society, Rajnagar. At least 450 poachers were arrested within the past two decades on the charge of killing spotted deer, wild boars, birds and crocodiles. Despite the high incidents of animal poaching, conviction rates continue to be nil due to the slipshod attitude of forest officials and other agencies running their cases, he alleged. "Three years back, two persons were convicted for killing birds but around 70 cases are still pending. The long delay in prosecution is the main reason for the increasing rates of animal poaching," Rout added.

Barbil BJP unit intensify demand for neutral probe into Govind Sahu death

Barbil(KCN): The opposition BJP intensified their demand for a neutral inquiry into the death of Govind

need of the hour as the incident has raised many questions. Sahu, who was the president of the school managing

court. His body was found hanging from a tree behind the jail's kitchen on Tuesday leader Dillip Mishra said

suspicion including Dilip misra,Dhamru mohanta, Sunil Das, S a p n a Sahu,Sradhanjali Kar,Sanyasi majhi



Sahu, the prime accused in the Kalahandi woman teacher Mamta Meher's kidnap and murder case. They demanded a CBI probe into Govind Sahu's death is the

committee where the teacher worked, was arrested and lodged in Kantabanji sub-jail in Bolangir district died in suspicious circumstances hours before his production in a local

the jail administration needs to answer how Govind died inside the prison and the manner in which he was found dead raises many questions and

sini konar,Mani balmuch,Payal Devgan, Barbil Municipality party president Babula sahu and many other party workers participated in the protest.

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Three films with India connect chosen for 2023 Sundance Film Festival

MUMBAI: Three films with an India connection have been selected for the 2023 edition of the Sundance Film Festival -- "Poacher", a drama directed by Richie Mehta of "Delhi Crime" fame, Reema Maya's short "Nocturnal Burger", and Shalini Adnani's "White Ant". The boost for Indian independent cinema circuit comes after Shaunak Sen's "All That Breathes" won the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Documentary at the 2022 Sundance. The upcoming edition will be held from January 19 to January 29 in Park City, Utah, in the US.

It is presented by Sundance Organisation, a non-profit that discovers and supports independent artists, and introduces audiences to their work.

According to the gala's website, Mehta's "Poacher" will have its world premiere in the Indie Episodic segment.

Inspired by true events, the film features "The Great Indian Kitchen" breakout Nimisha Sajayan, "Darlings" star Roshan Mathew and "Rocket Boys" actor Dibyendu Bhattacharya. "A group of Indian Forest Service officers, NGO workers, police constables and Good Samaritans risk their lives trying to track down the biggest elephant ivory poachers in

the history of India and bring them to justice," reads the official logline of the film.

An India-US production, "Poacher" is backed by Mehta, Sean McKittrick, Raymond Mansfield, and Edward H Hamm Jr.

Maya's "Nocturnal Burger" will receive its world premiere on January 21 in the 'US Fiction Short Films' section.

It stars Bebo Madiwal, Millo Sunka, Trupti

Maya, who previously went to the 2018 edition of Sundance with her acclaimed short "Counterfeit Kunkoo", said she is grateful to the festival organisers for their continued support. "Getting nominated the first time was a life-long dream come true, I never even imagined being a two-time Sundance nominated filmmaker.

It has helped me believe more in my voice and the stories I want to tell.

Sundance 2018 was life-changing. I can't wait to see what Sundance 2023 has in store for us!" the filmmaker said in a statement.

"Nocturnal Burger" is a Catnip film presented by XRM Media and produced by Maya and Michael Y Chow and executive produced by Surekha Sengupta and Sue Turley.

Adnani's "White Ant" is selected to have its world premiere under the 'International Fiction Short Films' programme.

Denzil Smith, Harish Kesariya, Pushpa Madam Singh Chauhan, and Sushant Sapare round out the cast of the film.

"A man is summoned from Mumbai to his village to deal with a termite infestation threatening to destroy his childhood home," reads the official synopsis of the movie.

The producers on the project are Sara Bonakdar, Michael Graf, Kaarthekeyen Santhanam, and Mrunalini Havaldar.

Previously, Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh's documentary "Writing with Fire", India's 2022 entry to the Academy Awards, had received the Audience Award at the 2021 edition of the Sundance Film Festival.



The 27th edition of the International Film Festival of Kerala commenced two days ago and the curation for this year couldn't get better for our film enthusiasts! Featuring American legend Scorsese to the hostage drama inspired by events in Kerala, check out some of these films that will be showcased at the fest.

Netflix series on 1997 Uphaar Cinema fire tragedy coming in January

MUMBAI: "Trial by Fire", a limited series based on the 1997 Uphaar Cinema fire which had claimed 59 lives, will start streaming on Netflix from January 13.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Nair said the Krishnamoorthys are inspiring examples of the kind of resilience and fortitude it takes to move the

loss of 59 victims and 100 injured filmgoers as a fire took over the Uphaar Cinema in South Delhi. "Trial By Fire" will depict their endless trials and tribulations



Inspired by the bestseller book "Trial by Fire: The Tragic Tale of the Uphaar Fire Tragedy" by Neelam and Shekhar Krishnamoorthy, the upcoming show is directed and showrun by Prashant Nair. Rajshri Deshpande and Abhay Deol play the roles of Neelam and Shekhar, the couple who lost their two children to the tragedy and fought a long legal battle for justice.

needle even slightly in this country. "What happened to them and the way they have been forced to fight for justice is truly horrific and, unfortunately, there are countless other people today in similar situations. We are grateful to Netflix for being such courageous partners in telling this story," the director added. The fateful evening of June 13, 1997 saw

in the pursuit of justice over twenty-four years while also looking at the other lives touched and destroyed by the fire," read the official synopsis of the series. Produced by Endemol Shine India and House of Talkies, the show also stars Rajesh Tailang, Ashish Vidyarthi, Anupam Kher, Ratna Pathak, Shilpa Shukla and Shardul Bharadwaj.

Anurag Kashyap-produced 'Lords of Lockdown' heads to Rotterdam 2023

Mihir Fadnavis' Lords of Lockdown will next play at the International Film Festival of

Antifa Films and Atraxia Films. Navin said, "Lords of Lockdown" shall al-

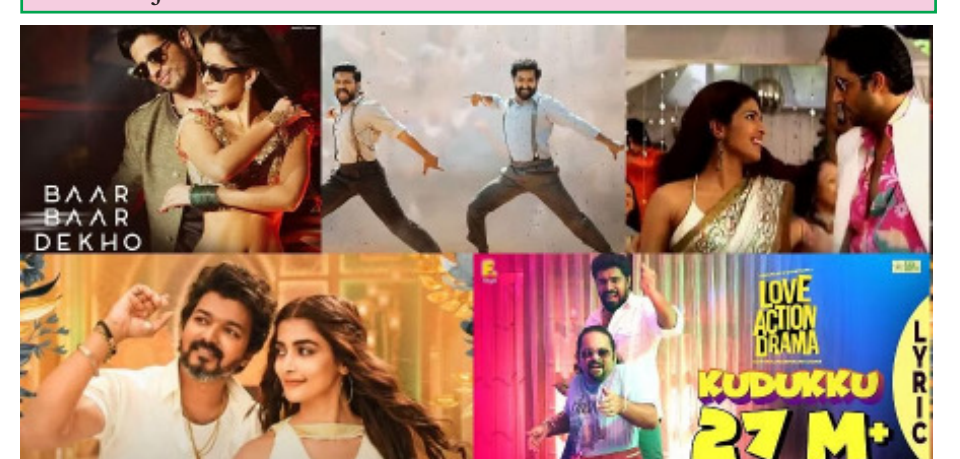
national circuit. Such global recognition is really encouraging." Mihir describes



Rotterdam, in 2023. The film depicts the heroism and resilience of daily wage workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. It premiered at the New York Indian Film Festival in April this year. It was also selected for the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne in July. Lords of Lockdown is produced by Navin Shetty and presented and co-produced by Anurag Kashyap. It's the first joint ven-

ways be a special film. The catastrophe brought newer challenges for mankind. It taught us the values of selflessness. Our film is a tribute to all the frontline workers, all the policemen, and all the common people who went out of their way to defy the odds and reinstated faith in humanity. I would like to congratulate the entire cast and crew for yet another selection in the inter-

Lords of Lockdown as a reflection of how 'the common man of India took the baton in his own hand' and 'not only helped himself but others too. "The pandemic taught us the eminence of helping each other selflessly which is also the essence of the film," Mihir said. "I'm elated over the recognition that Lords of Lockdown has been receiving. It is really humbling for all of us."



From the Punjabi hit 'Gallan Goodiyaan' to Thala Ajith's 'Aaluma Doluma,' check out these dance numbers to play for your Diwali party this year.

A Day to be as Humble as the Soil



In December of 2013, the United Nations designated December 5th as World Soil Day. For those of us who may not be immediately familiar with the significance of soil, it may be a wonder why countries around the world would commit to a day to recognize and celebrate something there seems to be no shortage of in the world today.

The rate at which soil is becoming degraded and depleted could very well turn it into the new black gold. While soil formation does occur in nature, the process is so slow that soil may as well be regarded as a non-renewable resource. Consider this – it takes up to 1,000 years to form one centimeter of top soil, but this one centimeter can be lost with just one heavy rainfall. It should not come as a surprise then, that the United Nations has been raising the alarm bells of an impending catastrophe. Ninety per cent of the Earth's precious topsoil is likely to be at risk by 2050. By that year, the impact of soil degradation could have already caused \$23 trillion in losses of food, ecosystem services and income worldwide. These are staggering figures.

Yet, many people still hold the false perception that there is an infinite supply of arable soil, and few realize how precious it really is. While the land beneath our feet provides for 95 per cent of our food, the significance of soil spans over and above agriculture. Soil is the habitat for over a quarter of the planet's biodiversity. Each gram of soil contains millions of cells of microbes and fungi, making it one of nature's most complex ecosystems. Soils are also home to many other organisms like insects that lay and hatch eggs there.

Healthy soil is also necessary for preventing water scarcity. The majority of the world's water – up to 97 percent – is found below. This groundwater is the result of melted snow and ice, and rain that has seeped into the soil through a process where the soils filter dust, chemicals, and other contaminants. Today, groundwater supplies are directly responsible for providing around 50% of the world's freshwater used for human consumption. Groundwater also accounts for 40% of the water used for irrigated land, and 50% of the water used for the urban population.

What's more, soil can help protect the planet from climate change. According to an estimate by Columbia University's Earth Institute a few years ago, soil was found to remove about 25 percent of the world's fossil fuel emissions each year.



Better land management and agricultural practices can enhance the ability of soils to store carbon and help combat global warming. Indeed, the importance of maintaining and managing the quality of our soil cannot be overstated. Our food supply, clean drinking water, biodiversity and the viability of life on earth itself depends on it. Thailand is a country with many different types of soil, some of which are good for farming and some of which are troublesome in terms of quality, physical state, and chemical composition, leading to low yields, crop failure and unprofitable returns. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, who committed his reign to improving the standard of living for all Thais,

and in particular for Thai farmers, placed a high priority on agricultural development and the study of soils. He directed Royal Initiatives towards the revitalization of soil through natural methods. Eventually, through extensive research and experimentation at Royal Project sites, practical and cost-effective solutions were found for various problem soils such as sandy soil, laterite soil, erosion-prone soil, saline soil, and acidic soil. They were solutions intended for ease of implementation by farmers.

One of these methods was the use of vetiver grass, which behaves like a living wall that prevents soil erosion and retains moisture. In 2009, His Majesty gave a Royal Speech in which He explained the value of his 17 years studying vetiver grass which revealed its many

Dr. Apichart Jongskul

vetiver offers coverage on the ground surface which can prevent soil erosion. The soil under the covering vetiver will also be strong and can be used for anything. For example, the soils along the road bank will be protected and will not slide down the slopes of the hills. This can be seen on the road to Doi Tung. Vetiver growing on the banks of the road makes the road safe and stable. It is the miracle of the vetiver grass. Moreover, it will make tree planting along the road side feasible. In addition, the soils along the roadsides have stopped eroding which had damaged the cropland below in the past." (translation as found in "Soul of the Thai People: The Great Philosopher in Soils, His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Land Development

at the core was established to serve 22 member countries of the Pacific Rim in order to disseminate information on the Vetiver System. To date, member countries have produced over 70,000 publications which are accessible through the website administered by the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board. Humanitarian Soil Scientist award for his dedication to soil resource management. The award was presented to His Majesty by Stephen Northcliff, Chairman of the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) on April 16th, 2012. This was a decade after the IUSS first recommended an international day to celebrate soil in 2002. Thereafter, Thailand has consistently demonstrated her leadership on soil conservation, including supporting FAO's efforts to raise awareness on this important issue at the global level by promoting the formal establishment of World Soil Day within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership. In June 2013, the FAO Conference unanimously endorsed World Soil Day and six months later, in December, the UN General Assembly

campaigns to date, with hundreds of events held worldwide and huge social media and digital impact. The momentum gained has been spectacular, from a modest beginning of 42 events in 2014 to an impressive 781 celebrations across 125

be the father of wildlife ecology, said that "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." In this aspect, I believe

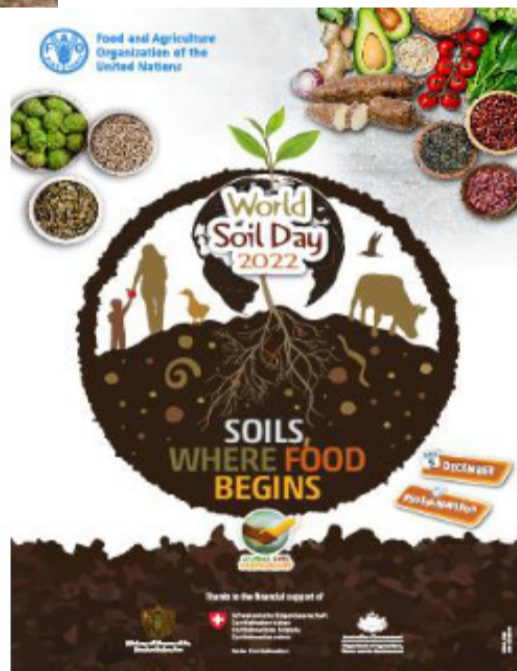
conservation and sustainable development, and to honour the work of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great on soil management. On December 15th, the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations and the



countries in 2021. The celebration period last year also witnessed the hashtag #WorldSoilDay reaching 330 million users and was trending on December 5th. In relation to World Soil Day, Thailand also sponsors the annual King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award to recognize individuals or institutions that organize impactful World Soil Day celebrations. Recipients of these awards have come from several corners of the world, namely, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, India and Nigeria. However, despite the laudable efforts of numerous organizations, scientists, environmentalists and others who raise awareness about the importance of healthy soil, we are still not out of the danger zone. Intensive farming practices, the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, deforestation, industrial activity and rapid urbanization continue to aggravate the loss of soils in almost every country in the world.

that 5 December, the birthday of the late King, also has something invaluable to offer. When the late King was born His Majesty King Prajadhipok bestowed upon the newborn the name "Bhumibol Adulyadej" and explained that the two words mean "Strength of the Land, Incomparable and Unparalleled Power". It was recounted that at the time the Princess Mother said to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, "In fact, your name Bhumibol means Strength of the Land as I want you to be on the ground of soil." The late King later explained that when looking back to what his Queen Mother said, what she probably meant was that she wished for His Majesty the late King to be humble and work for His Thai subjects. True to the blessing of his Queen Mother, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great became an exemplar of humility. During Royal Visits to the countryside, the late King would often be kneeling or sitting down on the ground to listen to his people's hardships, for hours on end. I am sure it never bothered Him to have a bit of soil on his clothes.

Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations, together with the FAO and the United Nations Convention on Combat Desertification, organized a World Soil Day celebration in New York, to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems through soil health, while also recognizing farmers who are "soil heroes." Indeed, every one of us can have a meaningful role to play and I believe it begins with taking the time to understand and appreciate the importance of healthy soils in our lives. At the end of the day, it is my sincere hope that people around the world take inspiration from the important work that has already been done and continues to be advanced on this issue, so that we can multiply our efforts globally, to protect our soil for future generations.



benefits: "Some grasses may be useful in some places. The vetiver grass, on the contrary, is very useful in different landscapes not only on flat land but also in mountainous areas. Vetiver can grow in both deep and shallow soils. Vetiver roots can penetrate up to five or six meters which was never expected in grasses before. More importantly, vetiver roots only grow vertically up to five meters without spreading horizontally. Therefore, it will not disturb the roots of the crops cultivated nearby. Some kinds of vetiver can penetrate their roots very deep – about four or five meters. Some roots are as deep as six meters. For the other grasses, their roots can also go deep in the soil but only three meters deep. The long root system of

Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, 2017) In 1993, the World Bank presented His Majesty with a specially-commissioned sculpture of a vetiver plant made of bronze, together with an Award of Recognition "for technical and development accomplishment in the promotion of vetiver technology internationally." As a leader of research in vetiver grass, Thailand was chosen to host the first International Conference on Vetiver (ICV) in 1996 in collaboration with the World Bank and the FAO. Subsequently, the Pacific Rim Vetiver Network with Thailand

designated December 5th, 2014 as the first official World Soil Day, which has since been celebrated on an annual basis. Since the launch of the World Soil Day in 2014, its celebration has become one of the most influential FAO communication

soils in almost every country in the world. understanding alone may not be enough to cause a change in behavior. We should also think about how to change hearts, that is, the way people feel about soil. Aldo Leopold, considered by many to

This year, many important activities have been organized to celebrate World Soil Day both in Thailand and abroad. On December 5th, the Ministry of Interior organized a "World Soil Day 2022" event in every province in Thailand, to raise public awareness on the importance of soil for environmental

The author has been working on soil management and land development for decades and has previously served as the Director General of the Land Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. In 2015, he became an advisor to the Chaipattana Foundation – a foundation established by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great to contribute to national development – and has since assumed the position of Deputy Secretary General of the foundation from 2018 to the present.

Letter To Editor

Sir

Chhattisgarh government has excellently shown how cow dung can be used for various purposes. In a move said to be an eco-friendly initiative by the state, government buildings will now be painted with organic paints made from cow dung.

The manufacturing of 'prakitik (natural) paints' has been started in gauthans located in Hirapur Jarway village in Raipur district and Saradhu Nawagaon village in Kanker district. Carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC) is the

main ingredient of natural paint manufactured from cow dung. About 10 kg dry CMC is prepared from 100 kg cow dung.

According to government sources it has been proved that this natural paint has anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties. This paint has anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, non-toxic, eco-friendly, and fragrance-free properties. It is affordable too as the distemper and emulsion - two variants being manufactured from cow dung, are moderately priced.

The natural paint has been used for government buildings, veterinary hospitals, schools and hostels. In future it will be

used in all government establishments.

The government is planning to expand the shelters to all districts by the end of January 2023.

The initiative is part of the state government's ambitious Suraji Gaon Yojana, launched two years ago, under which more than 8,000 gauthans were set up where cow dung and urine are being procured from cattle-rearers.

The use of 'prakitik' paint will not only contribute towards environmental conservation, but also help strengthen the rural economy as cattle rearers and local women are associated with its manufacturing in gauthans.

Besides this initiative, the state had earlier signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) for technical support for producing electricity from cow dung.

Units to generate electricity from cow dung has become operational in three gauthans in Raipur district.

The use of natural paint will not only protect the environment, but also provide a new employment opportunity to farmers, which will benefit the cultivators.

This cow dung initiative is worth emulating **M PRADYU KANNUR**

Opposition demands Maharashtra minister Abdul Sattar's resignation over Rs 150 crore land scam

After Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde's NIT land scam, incumbent state government's another minister Abdul Sattar's 37 acres alleged land scam worth Rs 150 crore has surfaced. The opposition demanded the resignation of the minister on Monday.

Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Abdul Sattar allegedly allocated the 37 acres of Gayran – common grazing land to private person Yogesh Khandare in Washim district of the state. Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar said that the Bombay High court, Nagpur bench passed the critical remarks against Abdul Sattar over his illegal allocations of 37 acres land to a private person.

Pawar said that Sattar has to resign first and then face the inquiry.

The court in its order said that the issue raised in this petition, which puts a question mark over the manner in which public utility land – Gayran land is allowed to be ushered by private individuals.

"The Washim district collector informed that this 37 acres of Gayran land cannot be allocated to the private person. Meanwhile a PIL was filed and the court also passed the stay order. Despite the court stay order and negative report by the respective district collector, Sattar went ahead and illegally allocated the government owned Gayran land to private

land. This is serious therefore the minister has to resign," said former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan.

Ajit Pawar said that as per the Supreme Court order, no one can allocate the Gayran land to private persons. "Prima facie there is strong evidence of corruption against Abdul Sattar. He has no right to remain as a minister. Sattar blatantly violated the Supreme Court and High Court order to benefit some individuals," Pawar said.

Abdul Sattar refused to comment over these land scam allegations. He said he will reply over these allegations in the Maharashtra state assembly.

NCP MLA and former minister Dilip Walse Patil said that if the court makes serious remarks against the minister over corruption, then the minister has to step down.

"Earlier, two ministers resigned when such allegations were made against them. The court has also passed scathing remarks against Sattar. This is also a violation of the oath that the minister took when he was inducted into the cabinet. If Sattar does not resign, then he should be immediately sacked from the cabinet and an FIR should be registered against him and a probe committee should be set up," demanded Walse Patil.

Ukraine to call for Russia's removal from UN Security Council

KYIV: Ukraine is planning to call for Russia to be removed as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council on Monday, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

"Tomorrow we will officially express our position. We have a very simple question: Does Russia have the right to remain a permanent member of the UN Security Council and to be in the United Nations at all?" he said, speaking late Sunday during a national television marathon.

"We have a convincing and reasoned answer -- no, it does not."

Kuleba said the question of Russia's veto-wielding permanent seat in the UN Security Council -- also held by the United States, Britain, France and China -- was already being discussed around diplomacy circles.

"These issues are not yet discussed at press conferences and in public statements by the lead-

ers of states and governments, but at a lower level, people are already

the end of World War II. Countries have long

supported an expansion of the Security Council and for it to "become



asking the question -- what Russia should become like in order not to pose a threat to peace and security," he said.

The powerful Security Council consists of 15 members tasked with tackling global crises by enacting sanctions, authorising military action, and approving changes to the UN charter.

But the permanent five -- who all carry veto power that can block any resolution -- reflect the power dynamics at

pleaded for reform of the Security Council, with some criticising the lack of representation when it comes to permanent seats for African and Latin American countries.

The body can also be rendered impotent by a single veto-wielding member -- as was shown in February when diplomats carried on reading pre-written statements just as Russia started bombarding Ukraine.

US President Joe Biden in September said he

more inclusive" -- a rare call for action from Washington, given that it famously bypassed the Council to invade Iraq during George W. Bush's administration. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Western powers have pored through UN procedural rules to ensure Russia not block Security Council meetings. They have turned to another UN body -- the 193-member General Assembly -- to seek condemnation of the Kremlin's actions.

China: Packed ICUs, crowded crematoriums as COVID-19 ravages several towns

BAZHOU (China): Yao Ruyan paced frantically outside the fever clinic of a county hospital in China's industrial Hebei province, 70 kilometres southwest of Beijing.

Her mother-in-law had COVID-19 and needed urgent medical care, but all hospitals nearby were full. "They say there's no beds here," she barked into her phone. As China grapples with its first-ever national COVID-19 wave, emergency wards in small cities and towns southwest of Beijing are overwhelmed. Emergency rooms are turning away ambulances, relatives of sick people are searching for open beds, and patients are slumped on benches in hospital corridors and lying on floors for a lack of beds. Yao's elderly mother-in-law had fallen ill a week ago with the coronavirus. They went first to a local hospital, where lung scans showed signs of pneumonia. But the hospital couldn't handle serious COVID-19 cases, Yao was told. She was told to go to larger hospitals in adjacent counties.

As Yao and her husband drove from hospital to hospital, they found all the wards were full. Zhuozhou Hospital, an hour's drive from Yao's hometown, was the latest disappointment. Yao charged toward the check-in counter, past wheelchairs frantically moving elderly patients. Yet again, she was told the hospital was full, and that she would have to wait.

"I'm furious," Yao said, tearing up, as she clutched the lung scans from the local hospital. "I don't have much hope. We've been out for a long time and I'm terrified because she's having difficulty breathing." A hospital worker prepares to perform tests after placing electrodes on the chest of a man sprawled out on a stretcher outside the emergency ward at the Langfang No. 4 People's Hospital in Bazhou city in northern China's Hebei province, Dec. 22, 2022. (Photo | AP)

ALSO READ | China races to vaccinate elderly, but many are reluctant

Over two days, Associated Press journalists visited five hospitals and two crematoriums in towns and small cities in Baoding and Langfang prefectures, in central Hebei province.

The area was the epicentre of one of China's first outbreaks after the state loosened COVID-19 controls in November and December. For weeks, the region went quiet, as people fell ill and stayed home. Many have now recovered. Today, markets are bustling, diners pack restaurants and cars are honking in snarling traffic, even as the virus is spreading in other parts of China. In recent days, headlines in state media said the area is "starting to resume normal life." But life in central Hebei's emergency wards and crematoriums is anything but normal. Even as the young go back to work and lines at fever clinics shrink, many of Hebei's elderly are falling into critical condition. As they overrun intensive care units and funeral homes, it could be a harbinger of what's to come for the rest of China.

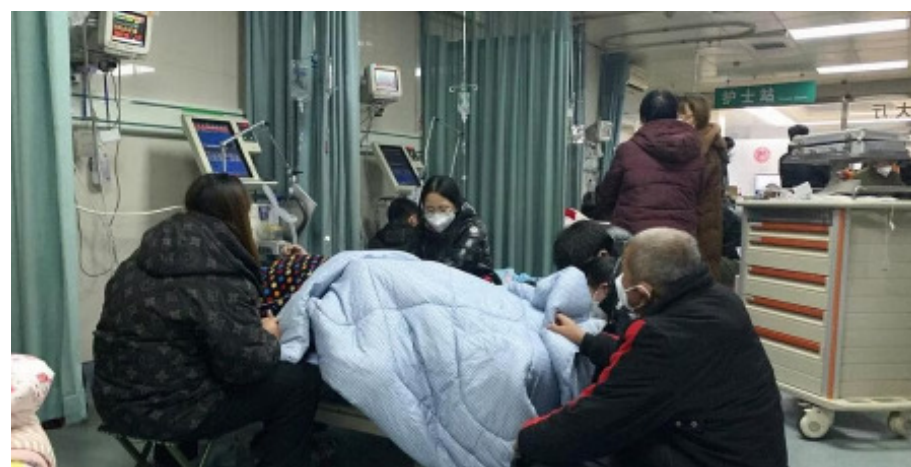
"Underestimating true death toll" The Chinese government has reported only seven COVID-19 deaths since restrictions were loosened dramatically on Dec. 7, bringing the country's total toll to 5,241. On Tuesday, a Chinese health official said that China only counts deaths from pneumonia or respiratory failure in its official COVID-19 death toll, a narrow definition that excludes many deaths that would be attributed to COVID-19 in other places.

Experts have forecast between a million and 2 million deaths in China through the end of next year, and a top World Health Organization official warned that Beijing's way of counting would "underestimate the true death toll."

At Baoding No. 2 Hospital in Zhuozhou on Wednesday, patients thronged the hallway of the emergency ward. The sick were breathing with the help of respirators. One woman wailed after doctors told her that a loved one had died. The ER was so crowded, ambulances were turned away. A patient is turned away from the emergency room due to full capacity at the Baoding No. 2 Central Hospital in Zhuozhou city in northern China's Hebei province, Dec. 21, 2022. (Photo | AP)

A medical worker shouted at relatives wheeling in a patient from an arriving ambulance "There's no oxygen or electricity in this corridor!" the worker exclaimed.

"If you can't even give him oxygen, how can you



save him?" "If you don't want any delays, turn around and get out quickly!" she said. The relatives left, hoisting the patient back into the ambulance. It took off, lights flashing.

In two days of driving in the region, AP journalists passed around thirty ambulances. On one highway toward Beijing, two ambulances followed each other, lights flashing, as a third passed by heading in the opposite direction. Dispatchers are overwhelmed, with Beijing city officials reporting a six-fold surge in emergency calls earlier this month.

Some ambulances are heading to funeral homes. At the Zhuozhou crematorium, furnaces are burning overtime as workers struggle to cope with a spike in deaths in the past week, according to one employee. A funeral shop worker estimated it is burning 20 to 30 bodies a day, up from three to four before COVID-19 measures were loosened. "There's been so many people dying," said Zhao Yongsheng, a worker at a funeral goods shop near a local hospital. "They work day and night, but they can't burn them all."

Liang from Beijing (C) looks on as his 82-year-old grandmother is brought in a casket to the Gaobeidian Funeral Home in northern China's Hebei province, Dec. 22, 2022. (Photo | AP)

At a crematorium in Gaobeidian, about 20 kilometres south of Zhuozhou, the body of one 82-year-old woman was brought from Beijing, a two-hour drive, because funeral homes in China's capital were packed, according to the woman's grandson, Liang.

"They said we'd have to wait for 10 days," Liang said, giving only his surname because of the sensi-

tivity of the situation. Liang's grandmother had been unvaccinated, Liang added when she came down with coronavirus symptoms and had spent her final days hooked to a respirator in a Beijing ICU.

Over two hours at the Gaobeidian crematorium on Thursday, AP journalists observed three ambulances and two vans unload bodies. A hundred or so people huddled in groups, some in traditional white Chinese mourning attire. They burned funeral paper and set off fireworks.

"There's been a lot!" a worker said when asked about the number of COVID-19 deaths before funeral director Ma Xiaowei stepped in and brought the journalists to meet a local government official. As the official listened in, Ma confirmed there were more cremations, but said he didn't know if COVID-19 was involved. He blamed the extra deaths on the arrival of winter. "Every year during this season, there's more," Ma said. "The pandemic hasn't really shown up" in the death toll, he said, as the official listened and nodded.

Even as anecdotal evidence and modelling suggest large numbers of people are getting infected and dying, some Hebei officials deny the virus has had much impact.

"There's no so-called explosion in cases, it's all under control," said Wang Ping, the administrative manager of Gaobeidian Hospital, speaking by the hospital's main gate. "There's been a slight decline in patients." Wang said only a sixth of the hospital's 600 beds were occupied but refused to allow AP journalists to enter.

Two ambulances came to the hospital during the half-hour AP journalists were present, and a patient's relative told the AP they were turned away from Gaobeidian's emergency ward because it was full.

ALSO READ | China's COVID-19 surge raises odds of new coronavirus mutant

Moving to bigger cities for survival Thirty kilometres south in the town of Baigou, emergency ward doctor Sun Yana was candid, even as local officials listened in. "There are more people with fevers, the number of patients has indeed increased," Sun said. She hesitated, then added, "I can't say whether I've become even busier or not. Our emergency department has always been busy."

The Baigou New Area Aerospace Hospital was quiet and orderly, with empty beds and short lines as nurses sprayed disinfectant. COVID-19 patients are separated from others, staff said, to prevent cross-infection. But they added that serious cases are being directed to hospitals in bigger cities, because of limited medical equipment.

The lack of ICU capacity in Baigou, which has about 60,000 residents, reflects a nationwide problem. Experts say medical resources in China's villages and towns, home to about 500 million of China's 1.4 billion people, lag far behind those of big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Some counties lack a single ICU bed.

A patient rests in a wheelchair at the emergency

department of the Langfang No. 4 People's Hospital in Bazhou city in northern China's Hebei province, Dec. 22, 2022. (Photo | AP)

As a result, patients in critical condition are forced to go to bigger cities for treatment. In Bazhou, a city 40 kilometres east of Baigou, a hundred or more people packed the emergency ward of Langfang No. 4 People's Hospital on Thursday night.

Guards worked to corral the crowds as people jostled for positions. With no space in the ward, patients spilt into corridors and hallways. Sick people sprawled on blankets on the floor as staff frantically wheeled gurneys and ventilators. In a hallway, half a dozen patients wheezed on metal benches as oxygen tanks pumped air into their noses.

Outside a CT scan room, a woman sitting on a bench wheezed as snot dribbled out of her nostrils into crumpled tissues. A man sprawled out on a stretcher outside the emergency ward as medical workers stuck electrodes to his chest. By a check-in counter, a woman sitting on a stool gasped for air as a young man held her hand.

"Everyone in my family has got COVID," one man asked at the counter, as four others clamoured for attention behind him. "What medicine can we get?" In a corridor, a man paced as he shouted into his cell phone. "The number of people has exploded!" he said. "There's no way you can get care here, there's far too many people."

It wasn't clear how many patients had COVID-19. Some had only mild symptoms, illustrating another issue, experts say: People in China rely more heavily on hospitals than in other countries, meaning it's easier for emergency medical resources to be overloaded.

A man pulls a cloth to cover up the face of an elderly woman whose vitals flatlined as emotional relatives gather silently around her for a final farewell before her body is taken away at the emergency department of the Langfang No. 4 People's Hospital in Bazhou city in northern China's Hebei province, Dec. 22, 2022. (Photo | AP)

Over two hours, AP journalists witnessed half a dozen or more ambulances pull up to the hospital's ER and load critical patients to sprint to other hospitals, even as cars pulled up with dozens of new patients. A beige van pulled up to the ER and honked frantically at a waiting ambulance.

"Move!" the driver shouted. "Let's go, let's go!" a panicked voice cried. Five people hoisted a man bundled in blankets out of the back of the van and rushed him into the hospital. Security guards shouted in the packed ward: "Make way, make way!"

The guard asked a patient to move but backed off when a relative snarled at him. The bundled man was laid on the floor instead, amid doctors running back and forth. "Grandpa!" a woman cried, crouching over the patient.

Medical workers rushed over a ventilator. "Can you open his mouth?" someone shouted. As white plastic tubes were fitted onto his face, the man began to breathe more easily.

Others were not so lucky. Relatives surrounding another bed began tearing up as an elderly woman's vitals flatlined. A man tugged a cloth over the woman's face, and they stood, silently, before her body was wheeled away.

Within minutes, another patient had taken her place.

'BJD will be in power for next year if women continue to bless party': CM Patnaik

PURI: In a bid to keep the party rank and file election ready, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday said that the Biju Janata

and called upon all professionals, litterateurs, and sportsmen to join the party if they want to serve the state.



Emphasising Odisha's identity and BJD's state-centric priority, the chief minister said that the focus of national political parties can never be on the state. "A state will never feature in any national party's agenda," he said.

Naveen's speech was being keenly watched

Dal will be in power for the next 100 years if women continue to bless the party as they have done during the last 22 years.

"If our mothers and sisters want, the BJD will be there for not 25 or 50 years, but for the next 100 years," Naveen said during the silver jubilee celebrations of the party's foundation day.

On the occasion, the chief minister made a strong statement that the party neither depends on one or two persons nor will it depend in the future. The BJD has become a social movement, he added.

Besides focusing on women empowerment during his speech, Naveen also called upon partymen to work for the betterment of tribals, Dalits, and farmers. Emphasising that service to people is the mantra of the party for its survival for such a long period, he said that the party should keep the good work going.

Stating that the BJD wants inclusive growth by involving all sectors of society, the chief minister said that the regional outfit has now grown into a social movement and is not confined to any region or section of people. "The BJD is a party of Odisha with 4.5 crore people not confined to any region or class," he said

as this may be the last speech to the party workers before the next elections and in view of the visit of BJP national president JP Nadda to the state on December 28. However, he avoided taking the names of any political party during his speech.

"There are three basic things for which the party has become a success and is around for a long 22 years. These are service to people, a clean and transparent government, and Biju Babu's ideals," he said.

Stating that Odisha's governance model is being praised both in the country and abroad, the chief minister said that it is a professionally run government that runs on the principles of 5T. "It is a government sensitive to people's aspirations and needs, which has initiatives like Mo Sarkar," he added.

Talabania, the venue of the celebration, was prepared with huge tents, banners, gates, flag cards, and posters. Over 50,000 BJD workers including office-bearers of district and block units, MPs, MLAs, and other elected representatives from all over the attended function. The district administration made elaborate security arrangements for the day with the deployment of a large number of police forces.

BJP OBC Morcha demands separate department, budget for other backward classes in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR: BJP OBC Morcha on Saturday urged meeting of the the state govern-

at the state executive committee meeting of the morcha, president

stituted 39.98 per cent are cornering the major budgetary allocation.



ment to create a separate department for other backward classes which constituted 52 per cent of the total population of the state. Passing a resolution

of the state unit of the Morcha Surath Biswal said the scheduled tribes (22.85 per cent) and scheduled castes (17.13 per cent) which together con-

The morcha urged the government to segregate the OBCs from welfare department and a separate department with separate budgetary allocation should be

made to ensure that the backward classes get justice. Since the state government has not given judicial power to the Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes, a large number of applications for inclusion in the OBC list are pending for a long time. In a separate resolution, the morcha requested the state government to provide adequate financial assistance through the OBC Finance and Development Co-operative Corporation.

Congress to start Bharat Jodo Yatra's second phase in Odisha from January 4

BHUBANESWAR: The state Congress facing large scale resentment in its ranks after miserable defeats in bypolls, has decided to restart its Bharat Jodo Yatra from January 4. The focus will be on western Odisha districts and second phase will start from Sundargarh district and move through

Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur and Koraput. The party has decided to adopt a different strategy in western Odisha and coastal Odisha districts. While the Bharat Jodo Yatra will move through western region, the 'Haat Se Haat Jodo' will be in coastal Odisha dis-

tricts. Sources said that a mega rally is being planned at Bhubaneswar in February in which either Rahul Gandhi or Priyanka Gandhi will attend. Observers will be sent to all the districts to mobilise party workers to attend the meeting. Meanwhile, new office-bearers of the state Congress will

be announced very soon. OPCC president Sarat Pattanayak who returned from New Delhi is reported to have got clearance from the national leadership for announcement of the names of office-bearers. The state unit of Congress is functioning without any office-bearers for more than one year now.

Christmas congestion hits Bhubaneswar roads, police clueless

BHUBANESWAR: It seems people's inconvenience matters little to Commissionerate Police. On Sunday, denizens looking forward to a

looking the other way.

At Rasulgarh Square, the traffic moved at snail's pace for over three hours as there was a beeline of vehicles

For the handful of traffic personnel on duty, the mess that ensued was beyond control. As a result, a huge congestion built up. People who

programme as it was a government event," said a commuter.

Many vehicles passing through Cuttack-Puri road wanted to take a U-turn to visit the mall. Buses coming towards Rasulgarh Square on the service road and vehicles approaching from Bomikhal flyover made the traffic situation even worse.

Besides, the vehicles having queued up on the road to enter the mall and those exiting it from Rasulgarh Industrial Estate added to the traffic woes. "Over 15 personnel were engaged to clear the traffic," said an officer of Saheed Nagar police station.

It was not just along this stretch. People experienced similar traffic snarls near Patia too. The Patia-Damana segment saw another massive stuck-up on the day, prompting two-wheelers to ride on pedestrian tracks to escape the congestion.



celebratory evening had a harrowing time as the some of the major roads witnessed massive traffic congestion.


Thousands of commuters were stranded along Rasulgarh-Kalpans square road as vehicular traffic came to a standstill for at least three hours with none able to address the problem. People had to spend much of their early evening trying to get out of the traffic jam as police was happy

from Rasulgarh Square along Cuttack-Puri Road and vice-versa. The police attributed the massive rush to hundreds of people visiting a mall in Rasulgarh.

Interestingly, earlier in the day, the Men's Hockey World Cup trophy was taken to the mall for putting it up for public display. Once the event was over, police arrangement thinned down but the footfall to the mall jumped for Christmas cel-

had booked cabs found it difficult to coordinate with the drivers and board the vehicles because of the traffic snarls.

Some people stuck near Rasulgarh Square drew comparison of the heavy traffic with the rush witnessed during Rath Yatra in Puri. "It s e e m s Commissionerate Police has left people to suffer since their responsibility was over with the hockey world cup trophy




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Rupee gains 17 paise to close at 82.65 against US dollar

MUMBAI: The rupee appreciated 17 paise to close at 82.65 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking positive domestic equities and the weakening of the American currency in the overseas market.



At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.79 and touched an intra-day high of 82.63 and a low of 82.83 against the greenback. It finally settled at 82.65, registering a rise of 17 paise over its previous close of 82.82.

According to Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the rupee appreciated on Monday on a surge in domestic equities and a soft US Dollar.

Domestic indices gained by around 1.5 percent. The US Dollar softened amid improved global risk

sentiments and softer inflation in the US.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on weakness in the Dollar and positive domestic markets.

The decline in safe-haven appeal on the rise in risk appetite in global markets may also put pressure on the dollar.

However, the surge in crude oil prices caps the sharp upside in the rupee. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82 to Rs 83.30," Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined 0.11 percent to 104.31.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 3.63 percent to USD 83.92 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 721.13 points or 1.20 percent to end at 60,566.42, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 207.80 points or 1.17 percent to 18,014.60.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in the capital markets on Friday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 706.84 crore, according to exchange data.

If you thought budgets are high drama, read about the two months after it

February 1 is the single-most important day in India's fiscal calendar.

The much-awaited Union Budget is presented amid cheers and jeers, but what follows next rarely gets the spotlight.

From the day of presentation till they are approved,

recommendations, which in turn help MPs understand the implications of the budget proposals. This is essential and allows for informed debate before approving the expenditure proposals. For instance, this year, the Standing Committee on Defence met four times between February 16 and March 14 to scrutinize budget proposals and Ministry of Defence's Demand for Grants. It observed a shortfall of approximately Rs 1 lakh crore in FY23 budget allocations for defence and recommended that a method be put in place by the Ministry of Defence in consultation with the Ministry of Finance to ensure pragmatic budgetary projections.

Usually, Lok Sabha holds a detailed discussion on a handful of Demands for Grants, and the ministries identified for discussion vary every year (see box below) and are decided by the Business Advisory Committee of Lok Sabha. This is followed by voting, which brings us to the most-important leg of the Parliamentary procedure.

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MPs are empowered to express their disapproval via a tool called the 'cut motion'. If it's passed, it signifies loss of confidence in the government, forcing the Cabinet to resign. MPs can move cut motions to reduce the grant amount for a given Ministry -- to Rs 1 to signify their disapproval, or by a specific amount (an 'Economy cut') or by a token amount of Rs 100 to express a specific grievance. Fortunately, a cut motion was never called in at least in the last two decades.

The demands, which have not been discussed and voted on by the last day are 'guillotined,' i.e., they are voted upon together. Curiously, in 2005, 2014 and 2019, all Demands for Grants were guillotined, or passed without discussion.

After the Demands for Grants are passed, they are consolidated into an Appropriation Bill, which authorises the government to spend money from the Consolidated Fund of India comprising receipts and borrowings. Finally, the Finance Bill, including changes in tax rates, is also taken up for consideration and passing. Once Lok Sabha passes the budget, Rajya Sabha only has a recommendatory role in passing the Appropriation and Finance Bills as they are Money Bills.

ALSO READ | For RBI the battle is still against the big I, will keep an 'Arjuna's eye on inflation' During the year, if the government needs to spend additional money, it introduces Supplementary Demands for Grants. Though presented in the Parliament, they aren't scrutinised by Standing Committees. For instance, the supplementary demand this fiscal stood at 8% of the total FY23 Budget of Rs 39.4 lakh crore, as against 19% in FY21.

Box: -- In 2022, Demand for Grants related to Ministries of Railways, Road Transport and Highways, Civil Aviation, Commerce and Industry and Ports, Shipping and Waterways were discussed and adopted individually in the Lok Sabha, while the rest were put to vote on March 24, 2022.

-- The related Appropriation Bill was also introduced, considered and passed on March 24, while the Finance Bill, 2022 was passed the next day in Lok Sabha.

-- A few days later, the Rajya Sabha returned the Finance Bill, 2022 and the Appropriation Bill, 2022 on March, 29 -- just days before the beginning of the new financial year.



budget proposals remain just that. They are mere projections and assume legal sanctity only about two months later, when both the houses namely, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha give the stamp of approval.

Though often considered procedural, the two-month wait-period is like a loaded pistol in hand, as the Members of Parliament (MPs) hold a lethal weapon that can shoot down not just the budget proposals, but the government itself.

India, modeled on the Westminster style of governance, empowers the MPs to keep an eagle eye on how the nation's finances are raised and spent. And their financial oversight is a two-stage process.

The first involves MPs scrutinizing and sanctioning the government's expenditure and taxation proposals presented in the Union Budget with assistance from parliamentary committees. The second and the most powerful oversight mechanism involves the Comptroller Auditor General (CAG), which audits the government's accounts every financial year and tables nearly 40 audit reports that are further examined by the Public Accounts Committee.

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The first step sets into motion soon after the budget presentation with a general discussion in both the houses. But the discussion is procedural and the Finance Minister concludes it with replies on clarifications sought by the MPs. This year, a general discussion was held in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for about 15 and 11 hours respectively.

No voting takes place at this stage and Parliament goes into a recess for a few weeks. Behind the scenes though, this break time is when the 24-odd department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees are pressed into action to analyze the detailed expenditure estimates of respective ministries, called Demands for Grants.

The Committees are entitled to seek additional information from ministries, and also from industry experts and submit reports with views and

AI Express, AirAsia India exploring synergies ahead of merger

NEW DELHI: Air India Express and AirAsia India, which has changed its name to AIX Connect, are exploring synergies in terms of having unified customer touch points ahead of their proposed merger, according to an official.

Express. AirAsia India has changed its name to AIX Connect Pvt Ltd, according to data available from the corporate affairs ministry. The official said the name of the budget airline has been changed as part of

AirAsia India was launched in 2014 while Air India Express, which is the international low-cost arm of Air India, started operations back in 2005. Tata group is in the process of consolidating its airline operations,

CEO will provide the clarity and singular accountability necessary to navigate the process," Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson said in an internal communication last week.



Both the low-cost airlines and full-service carriers -- Air India and Vistara -- are owned by Tata group.

On November 2, Air India said an operational review process is underway to integrate budget carrier AirAsia India with Air India Express, and the merger is likely to be completed by the end of 2023.

Post-merger, the entity will be branded as Air India

the ongoing merger process.

Both airlines are looking at synergies concerning customer touchpoints, such as having a common website, social media handles, and call centres.

Other aspects, including common boarding cards and baggage tags, are also being looked at, the official added.

Specific details could not be ascertained.

as part of which the low-cost carrier business will comprise Air India Express and AIX Connect.

Air India Express CEO Aloke Singh will be the chief of the low-cost airline business from January 1 next year.

"The two constituent airlines will continue to have the full complement of regulatory post-holders until the merger is complete but, for now, a single

Last month, Tata group also announced the merger of Vistara with Air India under a deal wherein Singapore Airlines will also acquire a 25.1 percent stake in Air India. Subject to regulatory approvals, the transaction, which will make Air India the country's largest international carrier and second-largest domestic airline, is expected to be completed by March 2024.

President Droupadi Murmu to inaugurate MIDHANI's wide plate mill



NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu will on Tuesday inaugurate a wide plate mill of state-owned special steel manufacturer MIDHANI in Hyderabad.

In a regulatory filing on Monday, Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI) said the plate mill was installed at its existing facility in

Hyderabad at an investment of around Rs 500 crore for rolling of slabs of various alloys.

"The wide plate mill will be inaugurated by President of India, Droupadi Murmu on December 27, 2022, in the presence of eminent dignitaries and distinguished guests," the filing said.

The wide plate mill facility will meet the requirements of special steel plates for national strategic programmes and also facilitate import substitutes.

"Due to its very high capacity of rolling force, this mill can roll ultra-high strength steel to very low thickness. Technology for processing of

superalloys plates has been established in a very short period," the company said.

MIDHANI, under the Ministry of Defence, is among the few modern metallurgical plants in the world manufacturing a wide range of superalloys, titanium, alloys, special steel, etc.

Ankarlal Chakraborty relying on youth to salvage Sudeva Delhi's campaign

NEW DELHI: With no points in the first seven matches and the threat of relegation increasing with every passing week, Sudeva Delhi FC desperately required a quick turnaround to salvage their Hero I-League season. In mid-December, Japanese head coach Atsushi Nakamura was let go and in came Sankarlal Chakraborty, as the club placed its faith in a renowned Indian name. The former Mohun Bagan head coach had an instant impact as Sudeva Delhi opened their account for the season with a 1-1 draw against Mohammedan Sporting in their last match before the winter break. Although conceding an

injury-time equaliser denied the capital side all three points, Chakraborty was reasonably pleased with his team's performance, where they netted just their fourth goal of the campaign.

Interestingly, this is the third time Chakraborty has taken over a club mid-season. After learning his trade as Sanjoy Sen's assistant coach at Mohun Bagan for three seasons from 2014-15 to 2016-17 (winning the Hero I-League title in the first season), he was promoted to head coach in the middle of the 2017-18 campaign and led the Mariners to a third-place finish. Later that year, he won his first piece of silverware – the Calcutta



Football League – as Mohun Bagan emerged unbeaten champion.

Chakraborty's last Hero I-League assignment came in 2020-21 with Mohammedan Sporting. He actually began the season as the club's technical director before being named head coach for the last seven matches, where he helped the Black and White Brigade qualify for the championship stage.

"After that, I took a break from coaching to fully concentrate on my Pro-Diploma. Just when I completed the course, Sudeva Delhi co-owner Anuj Gupta, who is also a close friend of mine, approached me for the head coach position at the club," said Chakraborty.

"I took my time, watched some videos and learned about the players. I was impressed with how youngsters formed the majority of the squad. Coaching a team filled with young Indians was a challenge that attracted me, and it made me return to the Hero I-League dugout with Sudeva Delhi," he added.

The winter break has come at the right time for Sudeva Delhi, giving Chakraborty a sort of mini pre-season to plan his strategy for the new year. "I've been here for only over a week now, and I'm still getting to know the players. I'm also aware that reinforcements to the squad are an urgent requirement. We are in

talks with a few players and are awaiting their arrival at the club. We hope they can join us as soon as possible, so we can come back strong after the break."

In their short history, Sudeva Delhi FC have been known to promote young Indian talent, as evidenced by their all-Indian squads in the previous two Hero I-League seasons. Replicating that, Chakraborty named an entirely domestic line-up in his first match in charge with an average age of just 22 years, the lowest in the league this season. "As an Indian, I'm strongly in favour of giving youth chances in big games, which will ultimately benefit Indian

Football. We have plenty of youngsters in the team along with a few senior and mature players. The right mix of youth and experience is always helpful," he stated.

Right now, Sudeva Delhi are at the foot of the table, nine points away from safety, with just 14 matches left to play. And while ensuring Hero I-League football for next season is a big ask, it is not the only ask, according to Chakraborty. "Of course, avoiding relegation is our prime objective for the remainder of the season. But we also cannot overlook the development of young players, which is central to the philosophy of Sudeva Delhi," he affirmed.

With bat or ball, I believe I can control things: Ashwin

New Delhi: R Ashwin, who played a crucial role with the bat in India's nerve-wracking win against Bangladesh in Mirpur on Sunday (December 25), strove to play down his contribution but insisted that he would not have gone down without a fight. His man-of-the-match display included an unbeaten 42 in an unbroken 71-run eighth-wicket association with Shreyas Iyer that raised comparisons with the more accomplished batters in the side. "Oh no," he quipped, refusing to be drawn into parallels with the other batters. "It was just my day," he told Cricbuzz. Skipper KL Rahul said the Indian dressing room was tense while the batters were negotiating with a difficult pitch and marauding Bangladesh



bowlers while chasing a tricky 145-run target. But Ashwin revealed that he was unaware of the tensions and believed in things that are in his control. "I went and sat outside (of the dressing room), so I had no idea (what was happening inside). I am a nervous watcher of others' batting but once I have the ball or bat I always believe I can control things." After the match, Ashwin praised Iyer for handling

the situation deftly. "It was one of those games where we let the game drift whenever we could have shut it off. Shreyas batted beautifully. Sometimes in these situations you feel like you have to get ahead of things, they bowled good lines and I felt that we didn't trust our defences enough. Loved the way Shreyas batted," he told the host broadcaster. Ashwin, a proven match-winner with the ball,

wriggled India out of tight situations with the bat twice in the recent times, more famously against Pakistan at the MCG in the Twenty World Cup where he held his nerves in a pressure-cooker like situation and ensured India beat their arch-rivals in a last-ball finish. "I don't like to go down without a fight. I have always put myself in tough situations from the age of 8.

PCB's interim selection committee adds three players to Test squad

Karachi: The Pakistan Cricket Board's newly appointed interim selection committee has added three players to the Test squad for the upcoming series against New Zealand, the board confirmed on Saturday (December 24).

The selection committee, headed by former skipper Shahid Afridi, stamped their authority on the very first day after being appointed by making the additions to the 16-man squad that was already announced three days ago. Mir Hamza, Sajid Khan and Shahnawaz Dahani are the players added ahead of the series that commences on Monday. Hamza's only Test



appearance came in October 2018 against Australia whereas Sajid's most recent appearance in the format came earlier this year against the same opposition. Dahani is uncapped in

the format but has played two ODIs and 11 T20Is so far for Pakistan. "We had a good discussion on the squad and agreed we needed to strengthen our bowling department to

give ourselves the best chance of taking 20 wickets in a match," Shahid Afridi said. "As such, and taking into consideration recent form and performances, we have added fast bowlers Mir Hamza and Shahnawaz Dahani, and off-spinner Sajid Khan." Squad: Babar Azam (C), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Kamran Ghulam, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Noman Ali, Sajid Khan, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Saud Shakeel, Shahnawaz Dahani, Shan Masood and Zahid Mehmood.

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