

## Odisha collectors told to open more mandis for paddy purchase

BHUBANESWAR (KCN): The State government on Monday, December 20, 2021, directed district collectors to open mandis (paddy purchase centres) as per requirement and engage more women self help groups (WSHGs) for smooth procurement of paddy under the minimum support price (MSP) scheme. Reviewing paddy procurement in districts with collectors and officials of Supplies and Cooperation departments through video conference, Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra asked them to ensure farmers car-

rying paddy to mandis are not harassed. The Chief Secretary's directive came in the wake of large scale complaints from dis-



tricts on mismanagement in the paddy procurement. Reports from western Odisha districts suggest mandis have not been opened in places as

decided at the district level paddy procurement committee meeting chaired by collectors concerned. With cold wave pre-

ailing in the State and farmers spending nights in the open to sell their paddy, the Chief Secretary asked the Food Supplies, Cooperation and Agri-

culture departments to mobilise adequate field staff and engage data entry operators of other departments to monitor the procurement process. He emphasised the need for involving more women SHGs in paddy procurement to address the issue of overcrowding at the mandis.

Principal Secretary of Food Supplies and Cooperation V V Yadav said paddy procurement is in full swing in the districts of Bargarh, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Sonepur, Kalahandi, Balangir, Nuapada, Rayagada,

Boudh, Koraput and Malkangiri. Though procurement was started late in coastal districts, the process has already begun in Balasore. Around 5.13 lakh tonne of paddy have been procured under the price support system from nearly 98,000 farmers till date, he said. Yadav said purchase of paddy under paddy procurement automation system (P-PAS) is being carried out smoothly without any hassles. He offered all assistance to the district administrations for smooth procurement of paddy from farmers.

## Queen Elizabeth II cancels traditional Christmas plans amid Omicron surge

LONDON (KCN): Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has been forced to call off traditional Christmas

being driven by the Omicron variant of COVID-19. On Monday, she took what Buckingham

church on Christmas morning. The 95-year-old monarch had already called off an annual

COVID-19. "It reflects a precautionary approach," Buckingham Palace aides were quoted as

and the first without her husband Prince Philip, who passed away in April. The couple had spent Christmas together last year at Windsor Castle in Berkshire, south-east England.

This year, family members are expected to visit the monarch over the Christmas period at the castle and "all appropriate guidelines" will be followed, the palace said. Though it is unconfirmed which members of the family would be visiting over the course of this weekend.

The change of plan is in response to growing concerns about the pandemic and the Omicron variant, amid calls for limiting contacts during the Christmas festival. CONTINUED ON: P-7

## Cold wave warning for Odisha districts

BHUBANESWAR (KCN): Pull out all your warm clothes. For, many Odisha are likely to witness a severe cold wave over the next few days of the week. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued cold wave warning for 14



western, central and northern districts with cold wave gripping the north western parts of the country. The caution came on the day when Daringbadi recorded the season's lowest minimum temperature of 4 degree Celsius, followed by Jharsuguda (5.6 degree), Phulbani (6.5 degree) and Sonepur (6.9 degree). The Twin Cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack recorded 13.8 degree Celsius and 12.4 degree respectively. "Cold wave conditions are expected to continue in some parts of Odisha till Thursday morning under influence of northerly and north-westerly dry and cold winds blowing towards the State," said Scientist of Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre Umasankar Das. Night temperature is likely to remain four to six degree below nor-

mal in the State in the next two to three days. The weather office cautioned that dipping mercury levels can lead to runny nose or nosebleed if a person is exposed to cold for a prolonged duration. Livestock might also get affected.

It has advised citizens to stay indoors during night and early morning and keep livestock in shaded shelters. A warning has been issued for cold wave to severe cold wave conditions in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh and Kandhamal districts on Tuesday night and in the wee hours of Wednesday. Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Bhadrak, Sambalpur, Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Cuttack, Khurda, Nayagarh, Sonepur, Boudh, Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi and Deogarh districts will also report cold conditions during the same period. Meanwhile, dense fog occurred at one or two places in Kandhamal and Koraput districts and shallow to moderate fog prevailed at isolated places in Gajapati, Kalahandi and Malkangiri districts on Monday morning.

**COLD WAVE WARNING**  
Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Sonepur, Boudh, Kandhamal, Bhadrak, Angul, Dhenkanal, Deogarh and Sambalpur



plans at her Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, and will stay on at Windsor Castle amidst a surge in coronavirus cases

Palace referred to as a 'personal decision' to also call off plans to travel to Sandringham, where members of the royal family gather for

pre-Christmas lunch tradition for royal family members due to a surge in coronavirus cases being driven by the Omicron variant of

saying. It is the second year the pandemic has caused the cancellation of the Queen's traditional Christmas trip to Sandringham

## UP polls: Amit Shah to hold programmes to scale up BJP's campaign; Modi to visit Varanasi

NEW DELHI (KCN): To scale up the BJP's campaign for the Uttar Pradesh

said on Tuesday. During his trip, which will span over a week starting December

seven cluster constituencies, they said. Keeping caste equations in mind, each

dominated constituency and one minority-dominated constituency, they said. Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh are due early next year.

Among the key features of Shah's visit will be his late evening meetings with party workers to deliberate on strategies for the upcoming elections, they said. It was under the leadership of Shah as BJP chief that the party had won a massive majority in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, and won 67 Lok Sabha seats out of 80 in 2019. CONTINUED ON: P-7



assembly polls, Union Minister Amit Shah will tour the state in the coming days and will cover more than 140 constituencies, sources

24, Shah, the party's key strategist will travel to at least 21 different locations in the state and in each location, he will hold a programme for

programme will be attended by people from three OBC-dominated constituencies, two urban constituencies, one scheduled caste-

## CM declares House Repairing aid

Bhubaneswar (KCN, Bureau): Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday announced house repairing assistance for the people who have availed houses under State Schemes and who

The Chief Minister has announced this decision taken by his Cabinet, while addressing the people of Odisha.

Stating that Odisha is facing cyclones almost



are waiting to get houses under PMAY. All the beneficiaries, who have availed houses under state schemes—Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana (BPGY), BPGY (Mining) and Nirman Shramik Pucca Ghar Yojana will get house repairing assistance of Rs 3,000 each, he said. Similarly, Rs 5,000 will be given for the repair of houses to the needy families who have been deprived of a house under the central scheme Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Grameen).

each year, he said shelter is a basic need for security of all. Odisha is the first state in the country to make such a decision, he stated. "Biju Babu's dream was to have a roof over the heads of all the families. To realize his dream, we have launched the Biju Pucca Ghar Yojna. In the first Cabinet of my government after the 2014 election, we had decided to convert all kutchha houses to pucca and good work has been done in this direction," he said. He further said, Odisha CONTINUED ON: P-7



**2 Kolkata Metromen among Six Win Asia & Middle East Bridge Championship Prizes**

Kolkata (KCN): Two Kolkata Metro employees and four others won the Asia & Middle East Bridge Championship recently, defeating the United Arab Emirates. The Championship was held at Noida. With this, the Indian

of Indian Railways Bridge team. He won the bronze medal in the Zakarta Asian Games in 2018. This apart, both Sumit and Debabrata have won several national and international titles. The General Manager, Metro Railway has congratulated both the



Team qualified for the World Bridge Championship to be held in Italy in March 2022. The two Metromen are Shri Sumit Mukherjee and Shri Debabrata Majumder. Shri Mukherjee is presently the captain

sportstars and wished them for the forthcoming World Bridge Championship. He also hoped that both these young men will continue bringing laurels for the country as well as for the Indian Railways.

**Freedom Fighter Raj Krishna Bose's 121 Birth Anniversary Celebrated by UVP**

Cuttack (KCN): Cuttack Sadar Kishorenagar beloved son of motherland freedom fighter, Ex-minister late Raj Krishna Bose 121th

worker Sujata Sethi, Social worker Dilip Mohanty, Hindu jagarana mancha abahak Tanmay Das, Lecture Dharani dhar Jena, Ex-



birthday anniversary held on at Kishorenagar with the meeting presiding by leading social organisation Utkal Vikash Parisad(UVP) president Er.Prakash Chandra Sethi the guest of honour social

Sarpanch Chatrapati Singh and all team member are present. Cultural organisation Saraswati Kalaparisad Kandarpur actors are presented there cultural program under guidance of natyakar Ashok Kumar Pattnik.

**Tamil Nadu farmer's daughter wins scholarship worth Rs 3 crore from University of Chicago**

CHENNAI(KCN): A-17 year old girl from Erode district in Tamil Nadu has received a full scholarship worth Rs 3 crore to pursue a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Chicago in the US. Swega Saminathan, daughter



of a farmer, hails from Kasipalayam village in Erode, a release from Dexterity Global, where she received training under its leadership development and career development programs, said in a release. She was identified and groomed by Dexterity Global when she was 14, it said. Expressing joy over the scholarship, Swega credited the organisation and its founder Sharad Sagar for the same.

**Dr.Sanjeeb Patjoshi IPS joined as Chief Executive and Managing Director of Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation, Government of Kerala**

Kerala (KCN): On Monday,13th December 2021, Dr Sanjeeb Patjoshi IPS



holds PhD in Economics from Odisha Govt Sambalpur University, MBA from IIM Bangalore & Syracuse University USA, Post Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Development from TERI University Delhi, M Tech from IIT Kanpur, B Tech from NIT Nagpur. Earlier he was Joint Secretary to Government of India, Ministry of Panchayati raj in which he implemented 100% digitization of panchayats, national panchayat awards, large finan-

cial devolution to panchayats all over India including Odisha Previously he held profiles of Joint Secretary & Director of National Institute of Cooperative Management and SAARC International Centre of Agricultural Banking, Ministry of Co-operation Pune, Joint Director to Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs New Delhi, Managing Director and Chief Executives of 3 PSUs of Kerala State Dairy Milk Cooperative Federation which

Kerala State Film Development Corporation having 12 Cinema theatres, 3 film shooting studios. He also had done 3 district postings as Commissioner and District SP. He has United Nations deputation as Communication officer in Kosovo Europe. He has visited Cambridge University United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand School of Governance, Duke University USA for training. He is Distinguished Alumnus awardee of IIT



turned around to profit by him after 5 years continuous loss before his joining, Kerala State Road Transport Corporation in which he did operating profit,

Kanpur in year 2011, NIT Nagpur in year 2019. He has received President of India medal for meritorious service in year 2016, and United Nations medal in year 2001.

**IIT Kharagpur is recognised as Post-independence Temple of Learning: Dharmendra Pradhan**

Kolkata (KCN): The Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan stated IIT Kharagpur as the first centre of Excellence in the country after independence. While addressing the 67th Convocation on last Saturday (December 18, 2021), the Union Education Minister added that Indian Knowledge system was established on the grounds of Hijli Detention Camp which enriches the historic culture of IIT Kharagpur and is recognized as the post-independence temple of learning.

Shri Pradhan said, IIT Kharagpur will be the epicentre of change that traverses around the world in the coming years as it has a heritage and sacraments of sacrifice. He added that today we need new ideas to originate from India in the global scenario and India will be the fastest growing economy in the coming years. He also lauded the institution, stating that successful 100 crore vaccinations were possible because of the IITs and NITs of this country. In the 21st century, the economy of the world will be run by those who have the market, the qualitative low cost workforce and the critical minds, he stated. He also added that India can produce clean energy at one fourth of the cost compared to European countries which would be made possible by the IITians that is already proven in many verticals. He also added that India needs to build a low cost energy attracting manufacturing units of the world which will lead to economic empowerment of the country.

The Minister said that IIT Kharagpur should become the epicentre of major research initiatives that can make India a global power like America, and that IIT Kharagpur should innovate ways for incorporating MSMEs and implement alternate energy into a localized funded grid. He also informed about the leadership role IIT Kharagpur has taken in the area of VLSI chip design. He concluded saying that there should be "Purva Uday" (Rise of Eastern India) leading to investments in innovation for community welfare.

For the first time IIT Kharagpur bestowed a

Lifetime Achievement Award to Prof. M A Ramlu, who served as the founder Head of the Department of Mining Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and retired as an Officiating Director of IIT Kharagpur. Along with Prof Ramlu, five awardees including Prof. Sadhan Kumar De, Prof. Biswa Nath Chatterji, Puran Chand Dang, Shri Gopal Rajgarhia and Dr. Asoke Kumar Deysarkar were conferred the Life Fellow Awards of IIT Kharagpur 2021. Five pioneers comprising Prof. Suresh Chandra Mishra, Commander V K Jaitly, Dr. Mohan Rao, Dr. Krishan Mohan Khanna and Dr. Mukund Padmanabhan were also honoured with the Distinguished Alumnus Awards.

This year, IIT Kharagpur conferred the Doctor of Sciences (Honoris Causa) to three eminent personalities namely Dr. Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, Dr. Tessa Thomas and Professor Harish Chandra Verma.

This year, the President of India Gold Medal for the best academic performance among the outgoing B. Tech. (Hons.) and B. Arch. (Hons.) students went to Shri Gurjot Singh Suri, Department of Computer Science and Engineering who hails from Assam. A district topper in high school, he was awarded a scholarship by the Government of Assam on being selected for IIT Kharagpur. He is currently working as a Software Engineer in Uber India. The President of India Gold Medal for the best all-round performance among the B. Tech. (Hons.) and B. Arch. (Hons.) outgoing students are awarded to Shri Manthan Patel, Department of Mechanical Engineering. An avid robotics enthusiast from Ahmedabad, he represented the institute multiple times at various International and Inter-IIT Tech competitions. He is a recipient of the DAAD-WISE Research Scholarship (Completed at Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems, Germany) as well as the OP Jindal Engineering and Management Scholarship. He is currently pursuing M Sc in robotics at ETH Zurich, Switzerland. The Prime Minister of India Gold Medal for the

**Barbil Vikas Parishad repeats demand to link Barbil- Banspanirailway link**

Barbil (KCN): An agitation held at Barbil Rail way station demanding linkage of Barbil to Banspani 16km stretch railway line in the district of Keonjhar by Barbil Vikas Parishad.It is to note that the similar demand was raised in 2016 and latter this has got administrative approval from the railway ministry. In an agreement on railway infrastructure development the Odisha state government has agreed to bear financial burden at a ratio of 49/51.But in the present context Railway ministry has said to have total



financial expenditure by the state.This procedure may create hurdles in project execution The project cost around 364 crore . While the central government spends thousands crores of money in other states towards different projects,why a step motherly attitude is being sought to Odisha said Indramani Behera.Knowingly and deliberately central government used this as an weapon to delay the process adds Ashok Thakar.Who ever spend does not worth to the people of Barbil,but project must be executed without delay said Dillip Mishra.The passenger train comes from Tata should extend to Bolani and Hatia -Puri passenger must be resumed said Badri Kumar .The demand must be felt and filled up by the concerned at the earliest possible ,otherwise Barbil Vikas Parishad will go for a economical blockade said KapilMohanty.

best academic performance among the Dual Degree and Integrated M Sc. Outgoing students are awarded to Shri Omar Eqbal, Department of Computer Science and Engineering. A topper, a NTSE scholar, selected for KVPY fellowship from Patna, Shri Omar Eqbal is currently working as a software engineer at Nutanix.

The Dr. Jnan Chandra Ghosh Memorial Gold Medal for the best all-round performance among the Dual Degree and Integrated M.Sc. outgoing students are being given to Shri Harsh Maheshwari from the Department of Electrical Engineering. Among the others are Shri Chirag Arora of the Department of Chemistry, who is awarded the Professor Jagadish Chandra Bose Memorial Gold Medal for the best academic performance among the outgoing students of all two-year M. Sc. courses in the Science disciplines, Shri Arshdeep Singh of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering is awarded the Director's Gold Medal for the best academic performance among the students completing M. Tech. and MCP courses and Shri Jaskaran Singh of Reliability Engineering is awarded the Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal for the best all-round performance among the M. Tech. and MCP outgoing students. The Chairman, Board of Governor's Gold Medal for PG category is awarded to Shri Naveen Narasimhachar Joshi and for UG category to Shri Buddhadeb Mondal.

Prof V. K Tewari, Director IIT Kharagpur said, the institute hopes to bring life back to normal by calling back all students by next session notwithstanding the next variant OMI-CRON. He said, IIT KGP was successful in incorporating the provisions of NEP 2020 by revising its curriculum in UG/PG level be it credit bank or seamless movements of students in any discipline. He also pointed out that the faculties as well as the students have dedicatedly designed and developed several equipment related to healthcare including COVIRAP, Painless needle, telemedicine, social distancing device etc.



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# Maara Movie Review: A grounded remake of Charlie with quite a bit of heart

If you didn't know that Maara is the remake of the Malayalam film, Charlie, the opening shot of fireflies fluttering about is a strong hint of the magic contained within the universe of this film. Shortly, you see little Paaru in rapt attention, as a nun narrates to her the story of a soldier who's travelling across seas and jungles in a quest to find his soul. This is pretty much the story of this film as well, as Paaru (Shraddha Srinath) grows up to find herself in a similar quest for her soul, well, soulmate, in Maara (Madhavan). There's another quest for a soulmate in this film, one undertaken by Vellaiyan (a wonderful Mouli), one that is later taken over by Maara. The film is a reinforcement of the power of stories, of the stories each of our lives are. This is why there are multiple characters with their own short stories, including those of Selvi (Abhirami), the sex worker, and Kani (Sshivada), the guilt-ridden doctor. The implication is that no one story is necessarily more important than another. I got the sense that Maara doesn't think of himself as a hero or a saviour, even if those around him seem to believe that. He's merely a tool, a person who breezes through life hoping to repay the extraordinary help that Vellaiyan has done to him. I loved this touch because shorn of it, Maara, the character, could have felt idealistic and

unrelatable—which would have gone against the point of the film itself. This way, there's a reason for why Maara is the way he is, why he can't afford to stay at one place for too long. I quite enjoyed that Madhavan plays this character without

kites, in the sketch-book and its pencil illustrations... hell, even in the blotches of Maara's acid-wash hoodies. There's a call through this film, through its characters, to refuse to fall into the trap of mundanity and indif-

small community. Maara, the film, suggests that perhaps, just perhaps, his way of life could also come down to the courage to choose to step away from the norm. Realise the magic of life in you, it seems to be saying... notice the al-

speaking about Maara says, "destiny". Another likens him to a mythical character, Santa Claus, while commenting on Maara's habit of sudden appearances that usually result in joy to whoever he meets. Maara himself, as he

about Meenakshi; watch his eyes grow wide in surprise, and almost well up under the weight of decades of mourning. Ghibran's background music and Thamarai's evocative lyrics add so much to such scenes as well. It's wonderful that films like Maara are able to offer elderly characters like Mouli's as much purpose and are able to see them for the individuals that they are, instead of simply as a crutch for a lead character. Of course, much of this credit must go to the original film, Charlie. In a world that is in a tearing hurry, at a time when films and stories are designed to be rapid for fear of making audiences impatient, films like Maara come as a welcome relief. In this film, at least two important exchanges—between Vellaiya and Paaru, and later, between Maara and Kani—happen as wood slowly burns to ember, as tender faces are lit by the warm glow of a fireplace. It's for such moments that I'll remember this film, even if some inconsistent performances and some synthetic moments stop it from being truly great. Nevertheless, it's a film that has heart and that encourages empathy towards those around us, and if possible, to note that magicity doesn't need to be thought of an otherworldly trait, if only we cared to pay more attention to the beauty around us.



a sanctimonious flavour—and more importantly, in a way that shows that Maara isn't above vulnerability. There's no moral superiority in that ascetic laughter of his—which probably can be thought of as even the desperate attempt of an unhappy man to be happy, chained as he is to his lifelong quest.

**Director: Dhilip Kumar**  
**Cast: Madhavan, Shraddha Srinath, Mouli**

The film is almost a homage to art—and the dreaminess inherent in it. This can be spotted throughout the film: In the pretty wall murals, in the art plastered across and drawn all over the walls of Maara's home, in the designer

ference, into routine and repetition. Maara is pretty much the film equivalent of 'Follow the white rabbit'. That's perhaps why during a conversation between Maara and a thief (Alexander Babu), you can see a neon sign in the background that reads 'White Rabbit'. The usual response to such a call is to cite a lack of financial security, and while that is a reason to be empathetic about—especially given the enviably cushy work-free existence Paaru seems to be leading in this film—we could also note how Maara, who's hardly a wealthy man (as a thief realises), makes the choice to get by, winning and returning favours in his

most mystical beauty of existence. It's also likely that this is why the film's many shots are lit as they are, with many faces often aglow, as though in the presence of a halo. This is why the coincidences in this film become palatable. The central idea at the heart of this film is of two lonely souls in search of each other. Take note of that inexplicable attraction little Paaru feels as she sees a speeding train from within her bus. Or take note of that instinctive smile from Maara as he steps into his room, a room that Paaru has lived in briefly. In such a film, coincidences are to be thought of as divine providence, or as one character, when

does many times in this film, underplays this notion that he's a mystical being. It's his understanding—and you will see it from his eyes when he's engaged in conversation with every single character—that each of us is magical, as are our stories. In this film with performances that range from great to over-the-top, I loved Mouli in particular, who plays Vellaiya, an old man consumed by his unrequited love. Watch him in that scene with Paaru as he brings to her an old photo of his beloved, Meenakshi, but hesitates after seeing her be so charmed by photos of Maara instead. Watch him in another scene with Paaru as she tells him

## Shooting for third season of 'Four More Shots Please' to begin soon: Kirti Kulhari

**MUMBAI(KCN):** Bollywood actor Kirti Kulhari on Thursday said shoot for her series "Four More Shots Please!" is set to commence in coming days. The Amazon Prime

Taking to Instagram, Kulhari shared her excitement to team up with her co-actors again for the new season. "And we are back #fourmoreshotsplease #season3 shoot begins su-

tions, the show was recently nominated in the best comedy series category at the 48th International Emmy Awards. On the film front, Kulhari is currently awaiting the release



Video series, which also features Sayani Gupta, Maanvi Gupta and Bani J, follows a quartet of friends who deal with their relationships, work-life conflicts, ambitions and anxieties in a male-dominated society.

per soon. Lovely to be back with the crazy 3," Kulhari wrote alongside a series of candid photos with Gupta, Gagroo and Bani. Created by Rangita Pritish Nandy and produced by Pritish Nandy Communica-

of the Hindi remake of Hollywood blockbuster "The Girl on the Train", starring Parineeti Chopra. The movie, which premiere on streamer Netflix on February 26, will feature Kulhari as a British cop.

## Vijay Sethupathi, Katrina Kaif in Sriram Raghavan's next?

It was recently revealed that Sriram Raghavan's upcoming film, Ekkis, has been put on hold. A big-budget military drama starring Varun

Santosh Sivan, is a Hindi remake of Maanagaram (2017). He is also rumoured to star in an upcoming web series directed by Raj and

Sriram Raghavan's last film was Andhadhun (2018) with Ayushmann Khurrana and Tabu. The film is getting a Tamil and Telugu re-



Dhawan, the film was delayed due to Covid-19.

Now, rumour has it that Sriram has signed Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi for his next. If true, this is the latest Hindi project Vijay Sethupathi is attached to—the others being Laal Singh Chadha and Mumbaikar. The latter, directed by

DK. The unrevealed series will also star Shahid Kapoor.

Banita Sandhu clarifies on COVID-19 diagnosis, says she 'continues to test negative'  
**MUMBAI(KCN):** "October" actor Banita Sandhu on Thursday said she has continued to test negative for COVID-19 since her arrival to the country in January 3, contrary to what is being reported in media.

make with Prashanth and Nithiin, respectively, in the lead.

According to health department sources, Sandhu had tested positive for COVID-19 on January 4 in Kolkata after flying from United Kingdom and was admitted to a private hospital after she refused to be treated in a government facility.



# How Hydras Regenerate Decapitated Heads

From salamander tails to deer antlers, the innate ability of some animals to regenerate lost body parts has captivated scientists for centuries and driven research into the molecular mechanisms of such healing in the hopes that humans might someday be able to do the same.



Even amongst regenerating organisms, hydras—not the mythical beasts, but aquatic animals

in the genus *Hydra*—stand out for their ability to regrow any part of their body after it's lopped off, including their heads. Now, a study published last week (December 8) in *Genome Biology and Evolution* sheds new light on the genetic and epigenetic mechanisms that allow these animals to achieve this regenerative feat.

*Hydra vulgaris* are 1- to 3-centimeter-long, tube-shaped, freshwater organisms that adhere to objects such as sticks and rocks and, much like their relatives the sea anemone and jellyfish, hunt using stinging tentacles. They are considered to be immortal. Unless something comes along and kills them, they will continuously replenish lost tissues and body parts. They can also clone themselves through an asexual reproduction process called budding in which a new hydra grows out of the original and detaches, “kind of like the way petals would come out” from a flower, University of California, Irvine, cell biologist Ali Mortazavi tells *The Scientist*.

Mortazavi led a team of researchers who set out to answer a long-standing question in the field: whether the genetic and epigenetic processes guiding reproductive growth and regenerative regrowth are similar. “It’s a very interesting question because it’s one of the mysteries of cnidarians in general: they have all these fantastic modes of reproduction, and the big question is, are they recapitulating some process? Is regeneration like budding? But we don’t really know so much,” says Chiara Sinigaglia, a developmental and evolutionary biologist at the Institut de Génomique Fonctionnelle de Lyon who didn’t work on the study.

This mystery is “a question that people have been trying to address from different angles” for years, Sinigaglia adds. “It’s very tricky because you see the same genes used over and over” in both processes.

Typically, researchers studying *Hydra vulgaris* regeneration have focused on the activity of one specific gene or biological process at a time. For instance, research published in *eLife* in March highlighted the role of the Wnt signaling pathway in rebuilding a *Hydra vulgaris*’s mouth after decapitation. In contrast, Mortazavi and his colleagues took a more comprehensive approach, mapping out which genes were activated and upregulated at different points in time and in various tissues throughout the budding and regeneration processes.

The scientists conducted multiple experiments in which they decapitated the *Hydra vulgaris* to determine which genes were expressed as part of the head regeneration process. They also employed ChIP-sequencing, a technique that reveals epigenetic changes in the form of histone modifications, to determine which promoter and enhancer regions were actively upregulating the expression of different genes at various points in time for both regenerating and budding hydra. The team followed that up with ATAC-sequencing, a technique that identifies open-chromatin regions of a genome, to find out which genes were accessible to those candidate transcription factors.

For both reproduction and head regeneration, *Hydra vulgaris* rely on their head or-

ganizer, a cluster of 50 to 100 cells at the apical tip of the head

that signals nearby cells to differentiate into either part of the head or the tentacles. When the head is cut off, the researchers found, a cascade of genetic and epigenetic activity rapidly triggers the growth of a new head organizer from whatever cells remain, allowing the *Hydra* to regenerate the rest of its head as well. The study identified hun-

**Dan Robitzski**

didn’t contribute to the new study, tells *The Scientist* that the real importance of the paper is in those datasets.

See “When Severed, This Solitary Tunicate Regrows as Three New Animals” “This paper, it’s not giving us the exact answer, but it’s generating the raw material,” Srivastava says. “This is a powerful dataset

Mansi Srivastava, who studies regeneration in worms and

velop a head again? But this is a different process because you need to do it very quickly and stop it at some point.”

First you want to look at it one head at a time, and then you want to look at it with thousands of cells per head.

—Ali Mortazavi, University of California, Irvine

However, the study can only go as far as identifying candidate genes and transcription factors and generating hypotheses about which ones drive regeneration, budding, or both, Srivastava notes. In order to test and confirm the genes’ roles, as well as those of the candidate promoters and enhancer regions, researchers will need to conduct functional knockdown or knockout studies, Macias-Muñoz explains.

Some of that work is already underway. Macias-Muñoz says she’s nearly completed follow-up research that supplements this bulk analysis with single-cell studies in hopes of learning how cells take on different roles in response to decapitation versus normal development. Single-cell analysis, she explains, will allow her to “better trace these connections that we have identified.”

“First you want to look at it one head at a time, and then you want to look at it with thousands of cells per head,” Mortazavi says.

Benham-Pyle is particularly interested in seeing single-cell studies that identify how individual cells of different types communicate with one another to contribute to the signaling cascades that set off budding versus regeneration—in particular, which cell types existing head organizers signal and recruit into head development.

**Unraveling evolution**

The heatmaps and datasets generated by the new study provide an “important part of the story” of how regeneration first emerged in evolutionary history, says Srivastava.

*Hydra* has been part of that story for a long time: researchers first began studying its regenerative capabilities in 1744, when Abraham Tremblay first discovered the bizarre property. But other organisms have garnered more attention and detailed study, and many questions about *Hydra* regeneration remain unanswered.

Experts still don’t know whether regeneration is a shared ancestral feature that emerged in some ancient organism, or whether creatures such as *Hydra*, the worms studied by Srivastava and Benham-Pyle, mammals, salamanders, and others that can regenerate some or all of their lost body parts developed the capacity independently. The paper notes that some of the tools necessary for regeneration must have emerged before the phyla to which *Hydra* belongs, Cnidaria, split off from the rest of the animal kingdom. One likely possibility, Sinigaglia adds, is that both regenerating and nonregenerating organisms inherited a broadly similar toolkit—Wnt3 is expressed during embryonic development even in nonregenerating species, for example—which regenerating organisms then independently adapted to their own brands of regrowth.

“It’s kind of nice that we’re seeing similarities across all these different organisms,” says Benham-Pyle, “because it makes it more likely that we might be able to leverage that biology to help humans.”



dreds of genes that are expressed differently in this process than in reproduction, as well as thousands of open-chromatin regions—candidate gene promoters and enhancer-like regions—that seem to be remodeled in response to injury in order to drive the regeneration process, creating a different genetic landscape than what exists during

that is part of this longer-term effort” to unravel regeneration.

“It is really an incredible resource for the hydra field,” agrees Blair Benham-Pyle, a cell biologist studying flatworm regeneration at the Stowers Institute for Medical Research who didn’t work on the study. “I think it’s great for hypothesis generation.”

**Hydra vulgaris constantly replenish the cells in their heads and grow new ones to reproduce asexually. But gene expression analyses reveal that regenerating a head after an injury is a very different process.**

budding.

Those epigenetic changes and the dynamic modeling of enhancers and promoters seem to trigger genes at different points in time depending on which form of head generation the *Hydra* is undergoing, according to the study. Sinigaglia says one takeaway is “that the two processes converge on the same output—a little hydra complete with tentacles—but the trajectory, the time course, they are not really aligned.”

The study produced a dataset of unprecedented scale on the gene expression of *Hydra* regeneration and development. Harvard University evolutionary biologist

Emergency reconstruction

As the March *eLife* paper indicated, a decapitated *Hydra* will quickly reassemble its mouth as a survival mechanism. Mortazavi speculates that same urgency is what drives the expression of some genes over others during regeneration. In contrast, a budding *Hydra* clone undergoing normal development doesn’t need to prioritize wound healing or survival, he says, and can progress at its own pace.

“Even though the processes are different, they still use the same developmental factors or genes, just in different ways,” lead study author and University of California, Irvine, evolutionary biologist Aide Macias-Muñoz tells *The Scientist*. “I think that’s because it’s easier to coopt things that are already doing something. They’re already being used in development to develop a head, so why not use similar things to de-

Dan joined the team at *The Scientist* in 2021. Ironically, Dan’s undergraduate degree and brief career in neuroscience inspired him to write about research rather than conduct it, culminating in him earning a master’s degree in science journalism from New York University in 2017. Dan’s work has appeared in *CRISPR*, *Medicine News*, *Undark*, *Popular Science*, *IEEE Spectrum*, and elsewhere, and he spent several years as a senior reporter at *Futurism*.



# Opposition takes out march to demand sacking of MoS Ajay Mishra in Lakhimpur case

NEW DELHI: Opposition leaders on Tuesday took out a protest march here demanding action against Union Minister Ajay Mishra in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi saying they will not rest till the minister is sent to jail. Gandhi also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of not taking any action against Mishra, who he alleged is involved in the conspiracy of crushing farmers under his jeep in Lakhimpur Kheri. Leaders of several opposition parties took out the protest march from

Gandhi statue inside Parliament Complex to Vijay Chowk demanding that the minister, whose son has been arrested in the Lakhimpur violence case, be immediately sacked and action taken against him.

They also demanded that the suspension of 12 opposition members of Rajya Sabha be immediately revoked. MPs of various parties raised slogans against the government and held placards and banners demanding the immediate sacking of the minister.

Talking to reporters at Vijay Chowk, Gandhi said the entire opposition was united in raising its demand for the sacking of Union Min-



ister of State (MoS) for Home Affairs Mishra. Referring to the SIT report on the violence which left eight people including four farmers dead, Gandhi said a report has come out that it was a conspiracy and not an isolated incident.

"We will not spare him (Ajay Mishra) and continue our struggle till he is sent to jail, today or tomorrow," Gandhi told reporters.

"The prime minister has not done anything on this. Neither the government nor the media is doing its job," he charged.

"The prime minister on the one hand apologises to farmers, but on the other hand he keeps the minister in his cabinet, who is involved in the crushing of farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri. We will not accept what is being done against farmers," Gandhi said.

On the minister giving clarifications, Gandhi said he will do so just like a thief or a murderer will never admit to his crime.

"The truth is that the entire country has seen the crushing of farmers and all know whose jeep was it and whose son was involved."

"These clarifications will not help, as on one side is the truth where we are standing and on the other is lies," he said. The former Congress chief also shared a video of his remarks on Twitter saying there is no truth or explanation with the government on Lakhimpur Kheri.

"The BJP is trying to divert attention from Lakhimpur issue. The truth is that the Modi government has a hand in protecting the killer, otherwise the minister would have been sacked by now. But remember - we will get justice!" he said in a tweet in Hindi.

"I am telling you today, we will ensure that this man goes behind bars and we will not spare him, today or tomorrow," he said and added it will happen just like the government had to give in to the demand for repeal of farm laws. Opposition leaders said they will con-

tinue to raise the demand even if many more of their MPs are suspended.

Tiruchi Siva of the DMK said the government has very cleverly repealed the farm laws as if nothing has happened, but what about the 700 farmers who lost their lives and a minister's son crushing farmers under his jeep in Lakhimpur. "The government has not taken any action and not removed MoS Ajay Mishra from his position. It is a black spot in history of Indian politics," Siva said. Sanjay Raut of the Shiv Sena alleged that even if the government suspends all opposition MPs, they will continue their fight for the farmers of Lakhimpur Kheri who were killed under a jeep. "The home minister comes and asks us questions in Maharashtra. But what is happening in your state -- murder, and you will not even take action," he said. Asserting that the united opposition will continue to ask questions from the government, Raut said, "We will not be silent till the minister is sacked, you may suspend as many MPs of ours."

Earlier in the morning, leaders of several opposition parties met in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and discussed their further strategy.

Opposition parties have been protesting against the suspension of MPs, which they have termed undemocratic and against the rules of the House. Proceedings of the Rajya Sabha have been disrupted repeatedly on the matter. Kharge and Congress MP Deepender Singh Hooda also gave adjournment notices in the Rajya Sabha on the Lakhimpur matter.

Congress MP Manickam Tagore gave a similar adjournment notice in Lok Sabha on the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. Eight people, including four farmers, were killed in the Lakhimpur violence on October 3.

"I have given a suspension of business/notice under Rule 267 to discuss the recent SIT report on the manslaughter of Lakhimpur. We demand that MoS Ajay Mishra be immediately removed from his position to ensure a free and fair trial," Kharge said on Twitter.

"In order to ensure a free and fair trial of the murder case of innocent farmers, the Mos, who is father of the accused, must immediately be removed from his position," Kharge said in his adjournment notice under Rule 267.

The notices were, however, disallowed by Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla also did not allow any adjournment notice.

## Smart Street Lighting in Urban Zones

Bhubaneswar: Work- shop on Smart LED lighting projects in 114 ULBs in Odisha was organised by Housing & Urban Development Department today at the Convention Hall, Lokseva Bhawan here today.



G Mathivathanan, Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development inau-

gurated the Work- shop and briefed on the implications of both retrofitting and greenfield LED public street lighting projects being implemented by Government of Odisha in the nook and corner of the State.

Sangramjit Nayak, Director, Municipal Administration, Sanjay Pramanik,

Special Secretary and Sarada Prasad Panda, Joint Secretary and other Senior Dignitaries of H&UD Deptt. graced the occasion. The Workshop was attended by all the Deputy Commissioners of Municipal Corporations and Executive Officers of Municipalities and Notified Area Councils along with City Mission Managers, Accountants and Nodal Officers / Engineers for Public Street Lighting Projects of the ULBs.

At the outset DMA presented a brief outline of public street lighting projects and its different facets. He insisted on proper co-ordination between the ULBs and the Implementing Agencies to ensure that the objective of the state-wide retrofitting and greenfield Projects valued at around Rs. 590 crore is fulfilled. Agreements were also executed with

113 Urban Local Bodies and respective Project SPVs for the Phase-II of Greenfield LED Public Street Project covering 270 km of new stretches with 13505 poles and 14805 LED luminaires for an aggregate value of Rs. 56.48 crore. The Project is scheduled to be completed by March 2022.

Thereafter, a detailed presentation was made by the Joint Secretary highlighting the various issues in both retrofitting and greenfield public street lighting projects in all ULBs including the need of proper Operations & Maintenance for smooth functioning of the street lighting projects. -

All the participants have acknowledged the need of the public street lighting project and have assured their full support and cooperation to make it a success.

## State issues Cold Wave warning

Bhubaneswar: The State Government on Tuesday alerted all the District Collectors and Municipal Commissioners about the cold



wave situation prevailing in several parts of the State and to continue for next three days. As per India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the minimum temperature will be below normal by 5 to 6 degree Celsius in the districts of interior Odisha and by 4 to 5 degrees in the districts of coastal Odisha during the next 3 days.

The north westerly/ northerly dry and cold wind at lower levels is penetrating over Odisha and under its influence isolated cold wave to

severe cold wave with isolated cold day conditions very likely over some parts of interior and coastal districts of Odisha during next 3 days.

The IMD has also issued an 'Orange warning' for isolated cold wave to severe cold wave conditions for seven districts in the State. These districts are Sundergarh, Jharsuguda, Mayurbhanj, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sonepur and Boudh. Further, the Met department has already issued yellow warning for cold for many districts of Odisha in the next three days. In its letter to the Collectors, Office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) advised the people to remain indoors during the night and morning as there is likely to be cold related illness which might be aggravated by continuous exposure to the cold.

The Collectors were requested to ensure that school buildings, community buildings and other available buildings are opened for use as shelter during night by homeless and needy people. Cold wave conditions continued to sweep across the State with the minimum temperature significantly remaining below normal in many places.

Daringbadi in Kandhamal district is the coldest place in the state with a minimum temperature of 3.5 degree Celsius on Tuesday.

As many as 19 places in the State recorded a minimum temperature below 10 degree Celsius. Phulbani registered a minimum temperature of 4 degree Celsius followed by Bhawanipatna (6) Keonjhar (6.2), Sundergarh (6.5), Titilagarh (6.8), Boudh (7) Bolangir (7.8), Sonepur, Sambalpur, Baripada, Koraput (8.5 each) Anugul (8.6), Baragarh and Talcher (9 each), Chandbali (9.2) and Balasore 9.8 degree Celsius.

The Indian Meteorological Department here clarified that during the last two days frost not snow is seen on the ground in certain pockets of Kandhamal and Sundergarh districts.

## 350 Cr Livelihood Assistance released

Bhubaneswar: Ahead of Three Tier Panchayat Polls, the State Government has released Rs 350 crore for disbursement of special livelihood assistance of Rs 1,000 to all eligible beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and State Food Security Scheme (SFSS).

In view of the prevailing Covid situation, the State Government has decided to distribute the special aid to all people under the PDS, officials said.

Vir Vikram Yadav, Principal Secretary Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW) Department after taking review of the requirements has directed officials in this regard.

Accordingly, Additional Secretary FS&CW, M Q Haque has asked Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCSC) Limited to release the funds to all 30 Districts im-

mediately. The OSCSC has been asked to complete

Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) card will be used as the primary



distribution of the amount within just seven days from the date of start.

The Department has also fixed modalities for disbursement of the fund to the beneficiaries. As per the letter, Biju Swasthya

download the Block/ULB-wise NFSA and SFSS card list for January 2022 allotment from Ration Card Management System (RCMS) dashboard & prepare Block/ULB-wise funds requirement. Accordingly, Collectors shall credit funds to the concerned Bank Accounts of Blocks/ULBs," Mr.Haque said.

The BDOs have been asked to collect proof of disbursement statements of livelihood assistance from the concerned cash distributing officials through the marketing inspectors & submit for necessary reconciliation of accounts.

After that, the concerned District Collector will forward the Utilization Certificate to FS & CW Department/OSCSC Ltd for record.

The field level officials asked to deposit the un-disbursed amount to the Bank Account of OSCSC Ltd online



# Brown Sugar Seized in Khordha. One Arrested

Khordha(KCN): Excise Squad Seized brown sugar worth 2.20,000/ lakhs following a raid of

raid and seized 22 grams of brown sugar. The raid was carried out and the accused has been arrested and



Khordha Excise Squad in by pass Khordha near Maa Dhaba and arrested One person in this connection. The accused has been identified as Abid Khan (32) a resident of Mukund Prasad, Khordha. Acting a tip-off the Excise Squad Khordha conducted a registered one NDPS case vide P. R. No-48/2021-22 of Inspector of Excise Khordha Range u/s-21(b) of NDPS Act. 1985 and forwarded to the court. Further investigation in this matter is going on said Inspector of Excise Khordha Range Bhairab Sahoo.

# India may be heading towards Stagflation: Amit Mitra

Kolkata (KCN): India may be heading towards Stagflation as both inflation and unemployment are rising steadily as said by former West Bengal Finance Minister Shri Amit Mitra . Rising of inflation and unemployment simultaneously is rare event . Speaking at CFO Leadership Summit 2.0 organized by The Institute of Cost Accountants of India ,Mitra said , " Inflation ( wholesale



price index) is growing at 14.2% while unemployment is increasing by 10.48% ( year on year). This is worrying scenario that I had witnessed in the USA during 1970s. We may be heading towards Stagflation of the economy and I am worried about that . " Mitra said " Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had admitted decline in investment. She ,herself, said private investment is

# Murder of a youth stirred Rourkela

Rourkela (KCN): There was an atmosphere of panic and tension in the area due to the murder of alleged youth Pintu Srivastava by adopting a knife in broad daylight near Shaw Mill in Naya Bazar area of Rourkela city. In this incident that took place on Tuesday afternoon, the attacker killed the youth with a knife in the throat. Some people have been arrested by the police in this case. Police is interrogating some youths by taking them into cus-

tody. The deceased is a resident of Fatapipe area of Bondamunda road. The deceased has been identified as Pintu Srivastava. A youth named Mahendra Jena of Gopabandhu Pali Timber Colony has been taken into custody and police action is on. The family members of the deceased seemed at Rourkela Government Hospital praying administration for quick action and tough punishment to the culprit in this regard.

# IIC Barbil extends help for the poor to envisage slanting winter

Barbil (KCN):The winter solstice in Barbil in the district of Keonjhar is on the rise. The whole of Barbil is trembling in winter. The mercury has dropped to 7 degrees Celsius.



Wealthy people are getting rid of this bone-chilling winter, but the poor people is still sitting surrounding wood fire to escape . Meanwhile, Sushant Dash IIC,Barbil police station has extended a helping hand. He appeared as an angel in the Tata Hatting area under Barbil Municipality for the poor, the homeless and especially for the disabled. He has distributed blankets to more than 100 people. With the help of some of his colleagues and local volunteers, he distributed blankets. It is need not to say that he has been working to meet the needs of these poor people every year in various way possible on his part.His kind gesture to help the poor is highly praised.

not taking place and has asked government departments to increase capital expenditures to create infrastructure. But roads and bridges take time to be built . The demand has to be created,'now' ." Citing from ' The World Inequality Report 2022 ',Mitra said " 50% population at the bottom had 13% share of national income. The top 1% has 22% share. Inequality of this nature will increase tension in the society."

Addressing the august gathering, CMA P. Raju Iyer President of ICAI mentioned that institute has developed Agricultural Cost Management accounting systems to help farmers across India and to increase farmer's income as well as improve financial health of farmers. CMA Debasish Mitra mentioned that there is permanent shift to hybrid work processes involving Office and Work From Home.

ICAI has been working on full digitisation of cost accounting processes for nearly all sectors of the economy in line with technology evolution. The Institute, itself has been shifting many of its operations in digital mode.

To make Indian economy Cost efficient in the age of digitization, the Institute has launched several Advanced Cost Management Training Programs to train Cost Account professionals in all sectors of the economy. CMA Chittaranjan Chattopadhyay Council member mentioned that the Institute is trying to incorporate processes for inclusive growth and created dedicated Task Forces to develop efficient Cost management processes for all sectors of economy.

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them into custody. The deceased is a resident of Fatapipe area of Bondamunda road. The deceased has been identified as Pintu Srivastava. A youth named Mahendra Jena of Gopabandhu Pali Timber Colony has been taken into custody and police action is on. The family members of the deceased seemed at Rourkela Government Hospital praying administration for quick action and tough punishment to the culprit in this regard.

# Consistent approach will lead to positivity in Players-Jayanti Das

Rourkela (KCN): 1st CITE cup tennis ball cricket tournament organised by team city institute

committee was Adil mehmoor the Assistant Director of City Institute Of technical Education.



Mahmood Ahmad the Director of CITE,kuarmunda, Rourkela Congratulated to team CITE. Eminent Social Worker of Rourkela and President of Sagarika Welfare Trust Jayanti Das was the Chief guest of the tournament. She said that there should be continued approach

of technical education, kuarmunda of Rourkela (C.I.T.E) at sector 17,tata field . Total 16 Nos. of team had participated from entire rourkela. The final match was played between CITE and Vijay 11,Traffic gate . CITE team was winner in the tournament. Chairman of the organising

for motivating and encouraging players, she also said that consistent approach will lead to positivity in Players. Santosh Tanti , Prabhakar Choudhary, Motilal mohanta, Sasmita Jena, Salim khan , Nawab akhtar, Abdul Razzak Khan and others were mainly present at the moment.




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# Auto component industry cautiously optimistic for growth in FY22 despite COVID woes

NEW DELHI: The auto component industry remains 'cautiously optimistic' for the growth of the industry in the current fiscal year despite concerns of another wave of the pandemic, industry body ACMA said on Tuesday. The turnover of the automotive component industry stood at Rs 1.96 lakh crore (USD 26.6 billion) in April-September 2021, registering a growth of 65 per cent over the first half of the previous year.

"Despite resurgence of demand for vehicles, supply-side issues of availability of semi-conductors, increasing input costs, rising logistics costs and availability of containers, among others, continue to hamper recovery in the automotive sector," Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of



India (ACMA) President Sunjay Kapur noted.

The auto component industry, against this backdrop, displayed remarkable resilience, he added.

"Increased value-addition to meet regulatory

## Queen Elizabeth II cancels traditional Christmas plans amid Omicron surge

Continued from page-1

ties.

Ahead of Christmas, the Queen generally invites her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to join her at Buckingham Palace in London before she departs for her annual Christmas stay at Sandringham.

This marks the second year when the pre-Christmas and Christmas get-togethers have been called off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It comes as the government said it is monitoring data 'hour by hour' on whether legal restrictions need to be imposed on Christmas gatherings as the UK recorded another daily COVID high of 91,743 infections.

"Obviously, there's considerable uncertainty within" the Omicron data -- we're concerned about the increasing growth in cases, particularly in London, said UK Cabinet Office minister Steve Barclay.

With reference to further lockdown measures, he added: "But there is a considerable time lag between those catching the infection and presenting as cases at hospital and of course, that needs to be looked at...alongside the booster campaign, the increase in treatments, the changes in behaviour as a consequence of Plan B, which will also have an impact on those hospital admissions."

"We're balancing that against the wider economic consequences of any further restrictions which also carry health risks...in terms of the mental health consequences, for example, as well as those wider economic consequences." Current Plan B rules for England include COVID vaccine passes for events, face masks in most indoor settings and people being urged to work from home if they can.

Other parts of the United Kingdom have similar rules, with Scotland asking people to limit social contact to three households at a time in the run-up to Christmas and Wales closing nightclubs from December 27.

Meanwhile, London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced that a New Year's Eve celebration event planned at Trafalgar Square will not go ahead because of the surge in Omicron cases in the UK capital.

He said the event, for 6,500 key workers and members of the public, was being cancelled "in the interests of public safety".

"This will be very disappointing for many Londoners, but we must take the right steps to reduce the spread of the virus," said Khan. "I'm proud that we will still have an incredible broadcast spectacular to watch on our screens, which will showcase our great city to the rest of the world," he said.

Khan said more than 65,500 new confirmed cases have been recorded in the capital in the past seven days.

It has caused a 29 per cent increase in London hospital admissions in the last week, while the city remains under the purview of a "major incident" to aid with the increased load.

compliance, fast recovery in external markets and traction in the domestic aftermar-

ket have contributed to the growth of the sector in the first-half of FY 2021-22," Kapur said.

Going forward, whilst the performance of the vehicle industry during the festive season has not been on expected lines, there are indications that the vehicle demand, in the coming months, will improve, he stated.

"This, together with the increased focus by the auto industry on deep-localisation and the recent announcements of PLI schemes by the Government on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Batteries and Auto & Auto Components will facilitate the creation of a state-of-the-art automotive value chain and developing India into an attractive alternative source of high-end auto components," Kapur said.

He added that according to a recent survey

is cautiously optimistic about the prospects of the Indian economy and the automotive sector for 2021-22.

"Auto component manufacturers have now, by and large, recovered and the investment cycle has also commenced," Kapur noted.

On the subject of the auto component industry preparing to be future-ready, 60 per cent of the respondents mentioned that they were already equipped to be part of the EV supply chain, while the rest would be ready in the next two-odd years, he added.

Commenting on the performance of the auto component industry, ACMA Director General Vinnie Mehta pegged the loss due to semiconductor shortage at around Rs 1,000 crore till now this fiscal. Elaborating further

he

## CM Declares House Repairing Aid

Continued from page-1

is one of the leading states in the country in execution of rural housing schemes. The state government has spent more than Rs 22,000 crore since 2014.

For this purpose, Naveen said, the state government has launched Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana (BPGY), BPGY (Mining) and Nirman Shramik Pucca Ghar Yojana. Central scheme Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Grameen) is also there, for which, the state government is bearing about half of the cost.

"Many eligible families have been waiting for a long time to get a house under the Central scheme. Sadly, people from our tribal areas and western Odisha are mostly affected by this. In this regard, I have been repeatedly drawing the attention of the Union government," the Chief Minister said.

"I know that our poor people are in distress because of Covid. You are facing difficulty even to paint your houses. I can feel your pain. To this end, the state Cabinet has taken this historic decision today to help the poor," he told the people.

About 30 lakh families will be benefited with the decision and the amount will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries, Naveen said.

The State government will bear an additional cost of Rs 1444 crore for this move and the fund will be met from BPGY, he added.

Criticizing the Centre for not sanctioning PMAY houses for the people of Odisha, Naveen said, "As long as my government is there, I will not allow my brothers and sisters in the state to be harassed for a house. I wish everyone to live with dignity. We are trying to get a pucca house for you all from the Central scheme."

"However, no need to worry, if the Central government does not accept yours' legitimate right. The state government is with you. We will take steps to provide pucca houses for you all," the Chief Minister further stated.

stated: "Despite the slow offtake in vehicles sales due to supply side issues, especially in the first quarter, the auto component industry demonstrated a remarkable turn-around in the first-half of 2021-22. With significant growth in all segments -- supply to OEMs, exports as also the aftermarket, the component industry grew to Rs 1.96 lakh crore (USD 26.6 billion) registering 65 per cent growth."

Exports grew 76 per cent to Rs 68.7 lakh crore (USD 9.3 billion) while imports surged 71 per cent to Rs 64.3 lakh crore (USD 8.7 billion) leading to trade surplus of USD 600 million, he added.

The aftermarket, estimated at Rs 38,895 crore also witnessed a steady growth of 25 per cent.

Component sales to OEMs in the domestic market grew 76 per cent to Rs 1.53 lakh crore, he stated.

## UP polls: Amit Shah to hold programmes to scale up BJP's campaign; Modi to visit Varanasi

Continued from page-1

In 2014, when he was Uttar Pradesh in-charge, the BJP had won 73 Lok Sabha seats.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Varanasi on Thursday and launch multiple development initiatives, including inaugurating and laying the foundation stones of 22 projects worth over Rs 870 crore, his office said on Tuesday.

It has been the constant endeavour of the prime minister to work for the development and economic progress of his Lok Sabha constituency, Varanasi, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Moving ahead in this direction, he will visit Varanasi and launch multiple development initiatives at around 1 pm on Thursday, it added.

The prime minister will lay the foundation stone of the "Banar Dairy Sankul" at the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority Food Park, Karkhiyaon, Varanasi. Spread across 30 acres of land, the dairy will be built at a cost of about Rs 475 crore and will have a facility for processing five lakh litres of milk per day, the PMO said.

This will strengthen the rural economy and help the farmers of the region by creating new opportunities for them, it added.

Modi will also digitally transfer a bonus of about Rs 35 crore to the bank accounts of more than 1.7 lakh milk producers associated with the Banar Dairy.

He will lay the foundation stone for a biogas-based electricity generation plant for a Milk Producers' Cooperative Union plant in Varanasi's Ramnagar, the statement said.

It will be a key step towards making the plant energy self-sufficient, the PMO said.

Modi will also launch a portal and a logo dedicated to the Conformity Assessment Scheme of milk products, developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) with the help of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). The unified logo, featuring both the BIS logo and the NDDB quality mark, will simplify the certification process for the dairy sector and reassure the public about dairy product quality.

In another effort to reduce the number of land ownership issues at the grassroots level, the prime minister will virtually distribute the rural residential rights record, "Gharauni", under the Swamitva scheme of the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj to over 20 lakh resi-

# India's oil production continues to slide; down two per cent in November

NEW DELHI: India's production of crude oil, which is refined to produce petrol and diesel, continued to decline in November, with lower output from state-owned firms leading to an over 2 per cent drop, official data released on Tuesday showed. Crude oil production in November was 2.43 million tonnes, down from 2.48 million tonnes a year back and 2.5 million tonnes in October 2021.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) produced 3 per cent less crude oil at 1.6 million tonnes in November due to delays in mobilising equipment at western offshore fields. Oil India Ltd (OIL) produced 2,41,420 tonnes of crude oil in November, down from 2,43,200 tonnes a year back and 2,52,990 tonnes in October.

India is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its crude oil needs as domestic output is insufficient to meet demand. During April-November - the first eight months of the current fiscal year - India's crude oil production fell 2.74 per cent to 19.86 million tonnes.

ONGC produced 4.18 per cent less oil at 12.94 million tonnes.

Natural gas production was, however, 23 per cent higher at 2.86 billion cubic meters (bcm) in November, mainly due to output from newer fields in the KG-D6 block, operated by Reliance Industries Ltd and BP plc.

ONGC produced 5.28 per cent less gas at 1.72 bcm, while the output from eastern offshore - where KG-D6 is situated - jumped 1,251 per cent to 581.34 million cubic meters. The data did not give individual field output. Reliance-BP last year started gas production from newer fields in the KG-D6 block, and such output has contributed to the overall rise in availability in the country. Delays in the mobilisation of equipment and the start of output from its eastern offshore fields due to COVID impacting supply chains were the main reasons listed for lower output by ONGC.

Gas production in April-November was 21.78 per cent higher at 22.77 bcm. ONGC produced 6.14 per cent less gas at 13.78 bcm, while eastern offshore output jumped 1,163 per cent to 4.46 bcm.

With the economy rebounding from COVID induced slowdown, fuel consumption has been on the rise, leading to higher crude processing at refineries. Refineries processed 3.38 per cent more crude oil at 21.48 million tonnes in November and 11.7 per cent higher in April-November at 155.73 million tonnes. Refineries operated at 102.7 per cent of their capacity in November as compared to 89.81 per cent a year back. During April-November capacity utilisation was 93.23 per cent as opposed to 83.42 per cent a year back.

dents of Uttar Pradesh, the PMO said.

The programme will also witness Modi inaugurating and laying the foundation stones of 22 development projects worth over Rs 870 crore, it said, adding that this will further strengthen the ongoing 360-degree transformation of Varanasi.

The prime minister will inaugurate multiple urban development projects, including six projects of redevelopment of the Old Kashi wards, a parking-and-surface park at Beniabag, the beautification of two ponds, a sewage treatment plant in Ramna village and the provisioning of advanced surveillance cameras at 720 locations under the Smart City Mission.

Projects in the education sector that will be inaugurated by the prime minister include the Union Education Ministry's Inter University Centre for Teachers Education, built at a cost of around Rs 107 crore, and a teachers' education centre at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, built at a cost of over Rs 7 crore, the PMO said.

Further, residential flats and staff quarters at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and the ITI, Karaundi will also be inaugurated by the prime minister.

In the health sector, a project comprising a doctors' hostel, a nurses' hostel and a shelter home, amounting to Rs 130 crore, at the Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre will be inaugurated by the prime minister.

He will also inaugurate a 50-bed Integrated Ayush Hospital at Bhadrasi, the statement said. The prime minister will lay the foundation stone of the Rs 49 crore Government Homeopathic Medical College in Pindra tehsil under the Ayush Mission.

In the road sector, Modi will lay the foundation stone of two "four-to-six lane" road-widening projects for Prayagraj and Bhadohi, the statement said.

This will improve the connectivity of Varanasi and will be a step towards resolving the problem of the city's traffic congestion, it added.

To give a fillip to the tourism potential of the holy city, the prime minister will inaugurate the first phase of the tourism development project related to the Shri Guru Ravidas Ji Temple, Seer Govardhan, Varanasi.

Other projects to be inaugurated by the prime minister include a speed breeding facility at the International Rice Research Institute, the South Asia Regional Centre, Varanasi, a regional reference standards laboratory in Payakpur village and an advocate building in Pindra tehsil, the PMO said.



## Tamil Nadu too good for Karnataka, storm into Vijay Hazare semifinals after thumping win

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu's resurgence in white-ball cricket continued as they entered the semifinals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, crushing Karnataka by 151 runs in the quarterfinals in Jaipur on Tuesday.

The Vijay Shankar-led side plans went as per the script as they first put a mammoth total of 354/8, and an all-round effort from the bowlers led to Karnataka being bowled out for 203 in 39 overs. Overall, it was a collective performance at the KL Saini grounds.

Having already won the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s, Tamil Nadu are two wins away from winning their second title of the season. "It was a brilliant show by the boys. Every-

thing went as per plans and each one played their roles to the 'T,'" TN's chief coach M Venkataramana said.

"Credit to our batters to first put a good total which in turn gave our bowlers to have a go at the Karnataka top order. Karnataka is one of the tough sides in the tournament and to beat them one has to put up a professional display and I am glad our boys did it," he said.

After a strong start in the group stages, Tamil Nadu lost their way towards the end of the group phase, losing two successive matches to Pondicherry and Baroda. However, the team got a chance to regroup and reflect on the failures during their quarantine pe-

riod in Jaipur. The end result was that they put up a commanding show with opener N Jagadeesan, who lost vice-captaincy to Washington Sundar on the morning of the match, top-scoring with 102. This was his fifty-



plus score of the season.

Batting first, TN lost Baba Aparajith early, but Jagadeesan and R Sai Kishore stitched 147-run stand for the second wicket to set the tone. "It was a splendid effort from Jagadeesan. It was an

important inning for him and also the team. In a knock-out game, it is imperative that someone sticks around and plays a big inning. Jagadeesan was judicious in his shot selection and paced his innings well and this

served our cause well," Venkataramana said.

The 9 AM start and batting first meant TN took the move to send Sai Kishore in at No 3 to stop Karnataka from making further inroads. While the plan was to

see off the initial period, the all-rounder did more than the role assigned to him by scoring 61 runs.

Though TN appeared to lose their way at 252/5 in 40.1 overs, Shahrukh Khan ensured the platform laid by the top-order wasn't going to be wasted. Playing an innings that is becoming a characteristic of his, his whirlwind knock of 79 off 39 balls (7x4s, 6x6) buried Karnataka.

"Shahrukh played a matured innings today to remain unbeaten. Pressure will definitely be there when you are the finisher. But the point is that he understands his role and enjoys it too. We have told him that in the manner in which he plays there will be times when he could get out cheaply.

We have also told him that he has the full backing of the team and he should not change his style of play. This assurance has given him the confidence and he is doing his job," the coach said.

With 354 runs to defend, the bowlers led by R Silambarasan (4/36) and Washington Sundar (3/43) ensured TN made it to the semifinals without any hiccups.

Brief scores: Tamil Nadu 354/8 in 50 overs (N Jagadeesan 102, M Shahrukh Khan 79 n.o, R Sai Kishore 61, Dinesh Karthik 44, Praveen Dubey 3/67) bt Karnataka 203 in 39 ovs (S Sharath 43, R Silambarasan 4/36, Washington Sundar 3/43).

## World's Most Admired: Sachin among top 3 sportspersons alongside Messi and Ronaldo

MUMBAI: Legendary Sachin Tendulkar has been adjudged as the

US president Donald Trump, Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh



world's 12th 'Most Admired Man', as per a survey conducted by YouGov, an internet-based market research and data analytics firm. This year's study surveyed more than 42,000 people in 38 countries and territories to compile the list.

Among sporting heroes, Tendulkar is third in the list behind Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. In the list, the iconic batter is ahead of former

Khan, Amitabh Bachchan and also present India captain Virat Kohli.

Tendulkar has been associated with UNICEF for more than a decade and was appointed the South Asian ambassador in 2013.

Over the years, Tendulkar has supported several initiatives in health, education, and the sports sector in rural and urban areas across various states in India.

## 13 teams, 11 cities: I-League manages to stay relevant as it kicks off under ISL shadow

KOCHI: "We are very optimistic that we are in the right direction to create the right structure for Indian football."

These were the words

kick off on December 26, and once again, questions about the relevance of India's once premier football competition re-surface inevitably.

first time, a team from Rajasthan will be participating in the I-League with Rajasthan United taking part in the tournament having won the

the years has been its tendency to go down to the wire with titles getting decided on the final day of the season. Das suggested that once the



of All India Football Federation General Secretary Kushal Das during a pre-tournament media interaction on Monday ahead of the 2021-22 I-League.

At the onset of the Indian Super League back in 2014, the direction of Indian football, especially the I-League was in serious doubt. Over the years, however, the two competitions have managed to co-exist, thanks largely because the I-League has managed to stay relevant because of its competitiveness and diversity that helped heartwarming narratives. Whether it was Aizawl FC's title triumph or Real Kashmir's emergence.

The new season of the I-League is set to

Das is bullish that the I-League has its own place in the Indian football spectrum, especially with the introduction of promotion to the ISL from 2023 onwards.

"There is a roadmap now which kicks in from the 2023-24 season whereby the winner of the I-League will play in the ISL on sporting merit, thereby increasing the number of teams in the ISL. And two years after that, there is a clear promotion and relegation and that is the plan agreed by all the stakeholders. And at the moment, we are completely in sync with that plan," said Das.

The new I-League will feature 13 teams from as many as 11 cities. And for the

I-League qualifiers earlier this year.

Sreenidi Deccan FC and Kenkre FC also bring added diversity to the I-League as there is representation from across the length and breadth of the country.

"I am extremely excited for the new season and hope it goes down to the wire like last time. The addition of new teams from Rajasthan, Mumbai and the Deccan region will give more chances to players from different regions. We have done well to spread the league across the country after the initial years of multiple teams coming from Kolkata, Goa and Mumbai," said I-League CEO Dhar.

One of the hallmarks of the I-League over

situation improves when it comes to the coronavirus pandemic, the organisers plan to take the league back to stadiums across the country on a home and away basis.

"Having teams from various states and cities would do wonders to that particular state or city. Especially once we are back to normal and have home and away matches, I think it will do great things for fans in that particular city or state and that should really help Indian football," said Das.

The league will be kickstarted with TRAU taking on Indian Arrows followed by defending champions Gokulam Kerala FC facing Churchill Brothers.



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