



## COMPETITION AT HOME

Netizens start comparing newcomer Isabelle Kaif to her sister Katrina after seeing the first look of her maiden film

LEISURE P2



## SETBACK TO JAGAN

Andhra HC gives green signal to the gram panchayat elections, which were recently cancelled

TWO STATES P7



## DRAGON COZIES UP

China warmly congratulated new US Prez Joe Biden and hoped for better bilateral ties

INTERNATIONAL P10

# 5 killed in Serum Institute plant fire

AGENCIES

**Pune, Jan 21:** At least five persons suffocated to death as a major fire broke out in an under-construction building in a plant of global vaccine giant, the Serum Institute of India (SII), here Thursday afternoon, shocking the country.

Health Minister Rajesh Tope and Pune Mayor Murlidhar Mohol announced that five persons, including one woman, had perished in the blaze and their bodies were found during the cooling operations. Another four persons were rescued from the blaze which erupted on two upper floors of the SII building which was being readied for a BCG vaccine plant.

Allaying nationwide concerns over the fate of the Covid-19 vaccines being manufactured by the company, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray held a press conference while SII CEO Adar Poonawalla issued a personal statement of reassurance.

"I would like to reassure all governments and the public that there would be no loss of Covishield production due to multiple production buildings that I had kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies at SII," Poonawalla said, seeking to quell anxieties among the company's global clientele. After speaking with top officials, Thackeray said that he had re-



Smoke billows from a fire at Serum Institute of India, which is involved in producing Covishield, in Pune, Thursday

viewed the situation and was informed that the Covid-19 vaccine production was not affected in any manner, and the priority was to bring the blaze under control and save people.

Similarly, Union Minister Information & Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Health Minister Tope, FDA Minister Rajendra Shingne, and others called up the SII top brass

to apprise themselves of the exact scenario. Though sabotage has been ruled out, in view of the national and global concerns, Pawar announced a thorough probe into the incident, while reiterating that the Covidshield line was unaffected.

The fire, which broke out around 2.15 pm, was brought under control within three hours by a team of firemen and around a dozen fire tenders, while

Mayor Mohol, PMC Commissioner Vikram Kumar, Collector Rajesh Deshmukh and other official minutely monitored the situation.

Police Commissioner Amitabh Gupta, who rushed to the site, said that the affected building was an upcoming SII facility for its BCG vaccines, scheduled to be operational in a month or so.

Meanwhile, Cyrus Poonawalla, SII



## COVID VACCINE SAFE

Though sabotage has been ruled out, in view of the national and global concerns, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced a thorough probe into the incident

Police Commissioner Amitabh Gupta said that the affected building was an upcoming SII facility for its BCG vaccines, scheduled to be operational in a month or so

SII officials said that Covishield vaccine is produced and stocked at its Hinjewadi manufacturing facility, which is located around 30 km away from Manjari

Chairman and Managing Director said families of each deceased will get a compensation of ₹25 lakh.

As thick clouds of dark-grey smoke billowed out of the nearly-ready Manjari complex, social media went wild with speculation whether even the crucial Covid-19 vaccines had also been snuffed out in the flames, but the clarifications by the SII and authorities scotched all conjectures.

# Biden reverses key policies of Donald Trump



AGENCIES

## China sanctions Trump officials

**BEIJING:** A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson announced Thursday that the government has decided to impose sanctions against former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and 27 other high-ranking officials of the Trump administration, accusing them of "prejudice and hatred" against Beijing. The announcement came a day after Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th President of the US Wednesday.

**Washington, Jan 21:** On day one in office, US President Joe Biden has signed 15 executive orders, reversing some of the key foreign policies and national security decisions of his predecessor Donald Trump. The executive orders ranged from rejoining the Paris agreement on climate change, halting America's withdrawal from the World Health Organisation (WHO), revoking Muslim travel ban and stopping immediate construction of Mexico border wall.

"I'm proud of today's executive actions, and I'm going to start by keeping the promises I made to the American people. A long way to go. These are just executive actions. They are important, but we're going to need legislation for a lot of the things we're going to do," Biden told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House as he signed the first lot of executive orders Wednesday.

The President said he will be signing a number of executive orders over the next several days of the week.

"And I'm going to start today on the compounding crisis of Covid, along with the economic crisis following that, and climate crisis, racial equity issues," he said.

His first executive order was launching his 100-day

masking challenge, asking Americans to mask up for 100 days.

The President signed an executive order reversing Trump's decision to withdraw from the World Health Organisation, she said. "This will strengthen our own efforts to get the (coronavirus) pandemic under control by improving global health, and tomorrow we are not wasting any time," she said.

Biden also officially appointed a Covid-19 response coordinator, a position and team that he had already previously announced but made it official today to create a unified national response to the pandemic. He re-established the national security team responsible for global health, security and bio-defence.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I've stopped going to comedy shows. I spend that time following news related to our judiciary!

# Protesting farmers reject Centre's proposal to put farm laws on hold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** Protesting farmer unions Thursday rejected the government's proposal to suspend three farm laws for 18 months, and said they want nothing but a complete repeal of all these contentious legislations.

"In a full general body meeting of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha today, the proposal put forth by the government yesterday, was rejected. A full repeal of three central farm acts and enacting a legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement," Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting unions, said in a statement.



The government, during their tenth round of negotiation with the agitating farmer leaders Wednesday, proposed to suspend the three farm laws for 1-1.5 years and set up a joint committee to find an amicable solution in the interest of the farming community. The two sides had also decided to meet again Friday after the union leaders told the three Central government ministers that they will hold their own internal consultations on Thursday to decide on the Centre's new proposal.

During the internal meeting, which lasted for over four hours, the farmers also asserted that they "will not go back to their homes until their demand to repeal the three contentious farm laws is accepted by the government".

"The SKM pays homage to the 143 farmers who have been martyred in this movement so far. These companions are separated from us while fighting this mass movement. Their sacrifice will not go in vain and we will not go back without the repealing of these farm laws," the statement said.

# Naveen unveils draft Konark Heritage Area Development plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** As part of its 5T initiative, the state government has conceptualised Konark Heritage Area Development Plan (KHADP) to transform the physical infrastructure in and around the temple complex and enhance the visitor's experience.

The Works department Thursday made a detailed presentation of the KHADP before Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who asked the officials to develop the Konark temple area as world class tourist destination.

The main goals of the project are to celebrate the grandeur of the Sun Temple, enhance visitor's experience and provide economic boost to local businesses and tourism-based economy not only in Konark, but in the entire Puri district and whole state, official sources said.

The conceptualised plan aims to improve and develop the physical infrastructure around the Konark complex and integrate it seamlessly with the ancient heritage. About 35 acres of areas near the Sun Temple will be beautified with landscaping and other tourist amenities.

Under the project, the government plans to construct a 3.4 km long 6-lane



An artist's impression of the open theatre at the re-developed Konark Heritage Area

outer ring road to divert all traffic and boost connectivity of Konark with the main urban areas and tourist destinations such as Puri, Kakatpur and Bhubaneswar, sources said.

All access roads from the outer ring road to the Konark Heritage Zone will be improved to facilitate movement of visitors by creating pedestrian-friendly streets. All major junctions leading to Puri, Kakatpur and Bhubaneswar will be improved to facilitate smooth traffic movement, while dedicated drop-off and pick-up points will be developed for the convenience of tourists as well as traffic management.

While street vendors will be relocated to one corner through systematic planning and uniform construction, the existing parking area in the north-east corner of the temple will be extended and improved to accommodate buses, 4-wheelers along with para-transit services and e-vehicles with charging points.

Similarly, the existing open-air theatre near the temple will be developed to provide round-the-year visitors' experience.

The government has appealed to everyone to submit their suggestions on this master plan to konark.obcc@gmail.com by next February 17.

# In a first, BMC engages transgender group to collect parking fees in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** As a part of an initiative to include the transgender community in the mainstream of society, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has assigned an NGO to employ them for collecting parking fees. The NGO is run solely by transgenders. The BMC is of the view that this initiative will help the transgenders lead a normal life.

In the presence of officials, BMC commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary Thursday assigned NGO TG Swikruti to collect fees at two main parking lots in the city. After handing over of the assignment, the NGO has started working with immediate effect.

The first parking lot covers the area between Raj Mahal Square and Master Canteen Square. There are four parking lots between these



BMC Commissioner handing over identity cards and jackets to members of the transgender-run NGO TG Swikruti Group to collect parking fees in Capital City on an experimental basis

two junctions. The first one extends from Khadim's showroom to Sreeleathers showroom, while the second one is between Royal Midtown Hotel and Arya Palace Hotel. The third parking lot extends from Ashok Market to City Residency Hotel, while the fourth

is spread between the Royal Midtown Hotel and Narayan Ayurved Bhawan showroom.

The second parking lot covers the area from Master Canteen to Shriya Square. The parking zones in this lot include Kharvel Nagar (off-street) opposite Hotel Swosti, Kharvel Nagar

parking zone (off-street) in front of Epari Sadashiv Jewellers, Kharvel Nagar parking zone (off-street) from Narula General Stores to PC Chand Jewellers, Kharvel Nagar parking zone (off-street) in front of at Godabarisha Sahitya Sansad and Kharvel Nagar parking zone (on-street) in front of Hotel Keshari.

Dressed in uniform and with handbags, members of TG Swikruti have already started collecting fees from two-wheeler and four-wheeler owners at the above-mentioned parking lots. According to BMC Deputy Commissioner Shrimanta Mishra, that the duty has been assigned on an experimental basis for two months. The monthly fee for the first parking lot has been earmarked at ₹2.23 lakh per month, while it is ₹1.46 lakh for the second one. The NGO has submitted a security deposit of ₹7,380 to get the job at the two parking lots.

# Two persons suffer adverse reactions post vaccination

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Two health workers in the state developed visible adverse reactions after receiving the Covid-19 vaccination Thursday.

The state Health department said that one of them is a staff nurse from Bargarh district, while the other is an ASHA worker from Jagatsinghpur district. One of the patients developed fever, while another fainted following the inoculation.

Bijay Panigrahi, state Health and Family Welfare Director, said that both are stable and there was nothing serious about their health conditions. "Two health workers Thursday developed adverse effects following Covid-19 immunisation (AEFI). When an individual requires hospitalisation post vaccination, he/she is classified as 'AEFI serious,'" Panigrahi said.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	49624.76	↓ 167.36
NIFTY	14590.40	↓ 54.30
DOLLAR	73.58	↓ ₹0.10
EURO	88.73	↑ ₹0.48
GOLD	₹49,438	↓ ₹96
SILVER	₹67,200	↑ ₹210

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	29.8°C	29.6°C
TEMP MIN	20.2°C	18.0°C
Humidity	89%	74%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning	



## ROAD SAFETY

An awareness programme in progress at a private hotel in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, to mark the National Road Safety Month



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	9,74,48,856	7,00,10,271	20,86,697
India	1,04,95,816	1,01,28,457	1,51,564
Odisha	3,33,866	3,30,545	1,903

# Vaccinate servitors, kin: SJTA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** With strict rules mandating Covid negative report for entry into Srimandir lifted, the temple administration urged the state government to vaccinate all servitors and their family members.

In view of this, the chief administrator of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Krishan Kumar has urged Odisha health department to consider the inclusion of Srimandir servitors and their family members for inoculation on a priority basis, so that daily rituals at the temple do not get affected.

This apart, SJTA has urged the health department to also vaccinate around 500 temple officials who run the risk of contracting the virus during this period.

"It is expected that a large number of devotees will be visiting daily. The chances of servitors getting infected cannot be ruled out," said Kumar. The chances of Sevayats getting infected on account of Covid-19 virus cannot be ruled out as they will be coming in close contact with the devotees," Kumar said in his letter to the ACS.

For uninterrupted performance of various rituals of the Trinity inside the temple, the SJTA has urged the government to conduct

### Need of the hour

The SJTA has further proposed that all 500 temple staff should also be inoculated along with the temple servitors

Earlier, the matter had been raised at the Chhatisha Nijog meeting and it was unanimously decided to put forth such a proposal

At least 18 servitors including three members of the temple management committee have already died of Covid-19

vaccination of the temple servitors and their family members on priority basis.

Kumar has further proposed that all 500 SJTA employees should also be inoculated along with the temple servitors and their kin. Earlier, the matter had been raised at the Chhatisha Nijog meeting and it was unanimously decided to put forth such a proposal before the state government.

At least 18 servitors including three members of the temple management committee have already died of COVID-19 during the pandemic, while about 200 of them have tested positive for the virus so far, a senior servitors said seeking safety for the community.

## Over 25K devotees visit shrine



**LORD'S DARSHAN:** Devotees in large numbers throng Srimandir, Thursday

On the opening day of the entry into the temple without a mandatory COVID negative report, more than 25,000 devotees visited the world-famous shrine, temple management committee said.

The temple management, however, has issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) as part of which a devotee has to wear masks at all times, inside and outside of the temple premises.

The SOP also prohibited chewing of tobacco/pan (betel leaf) and spitting in the temple premises, besides devotees have to maintain social distancing and also sanitise their hands before entering the temple.

It further disallowed taking flowers/bhoga/deepa inside the temple. There will be no lighting of deepa inside the temple, the SOP highlighted.

The temple will remain closed for public darshan on all Sundays in order to sanitise the shrine premises, it added.

A separate queue was made for the senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

The Puri temple is one of the four "Dhams" or most sacred places of pilgrimages for the Hindus in the country.

The four Dhams are Jagannath Puri in the East, Dwarka in the West, Badrinath in the North and Rameswaram in the South.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# State to provide free guide books to 6.2 lakh students

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** The state government Thursday announced to provide guide books to students appearing for the annual High School Certificate examination (HSC) this year free of cost to help the students prepare for examinations.

students and waived the examination fee of the students in view of the Covid 19 pandemic."

The annual High School Certificate Examination being conducted by the Board of Secondary Education Odisha is scheduled to commence from May 3 next.

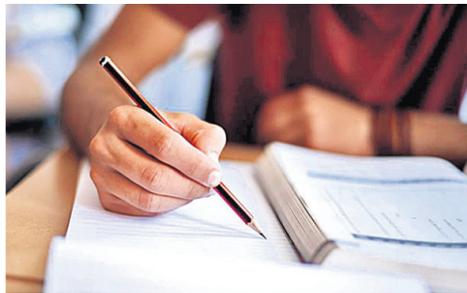
Highlighting the importance of the book, Dash said, "Due to vari-

medium government, aided and private school students as the cost of the book is solely borne by the state government.

As per the notification, Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) will bear the cost of paper and printing of the books.

The manuscript of the book has

## PRINTING ON PRIORITY BASIS



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The manuscript of the book has been prepared by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and the Text Book Production & Marketing (TBP&M) will print the book on priority basis

The 700-page guide book titled as 'Pariksha Darpan' will contain probable questions with answers. This year, over six lakh students are scheduled to appear for the exam

State School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said the 700-page guide book titled as 'Pariksha Darpan' will contain probable questions with answers. This year, over six lakh students are scheduled to appear for the examination.

Dash said, "Earlier, the government had condensed the syllabus of the students by 30 per cent to reduce the stress of the

ous reasons, the students were not able to utilise online education properly for which they lost many crucial days. To help them, we decided to provide this book which contains probable questions and answers exclusively meant for the Class X Annual Matric Exams-2021 to be conducted by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE)."

The books will be provided free of cost to all the students of Odia

been prepared by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and the Text Book Production & Marketing (TBP&M) will print the book on priority basis.

In this regard, the OSEPA has directed all the District Education Officers (DEOs) to submit the enrolment figure of Class X students in a prescribed format by January 22. Accordingly the books will be printed and supplied to the students.

# ₹2 CRORE AGRI SUBSIDY EMBEZZLED IN CAPITAL

EMPLOYEE OF A BANGALORE-BASED AGROTECH FIRM MISUSES POSITION TO MISAPPROPRIATE AGRI SUBSIDY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** A local representative of a Bangalore-based agriculture technology firm has reportedly misappropriated agriculture subsidy amount to the tune of ₹2 crore through details of ghost farmers and forged documents of agricultural equipment.

The company, Varushapriya Agrotech private limited, Wednesday registered a complaint with the Bharatpur Police here in this regard.

According to sources, the company, which has been empanelled with Odisha government, supplies various agricultural machineries including paddy-transplanters to farmers under various government schemes. The company has its local office at the Housing Board Colony in Baramunda area here.

The accused employee, Srinath Rana was authorised by the company to register the sale of equipment on the state government's website on behalf of the company. He also used to claim subsidies offered by the



Varushapriya Agrotech Pvt Ltd, which supplies various agricultural machineries to farmers under govt schemes, has approached the police alleging fraud

state government on the equipment. Subsequently, he would check the status of claims, monitor the disbursement of subsidies and upload the Aadhaar and other documents of farmers who had purchased the equipment from the company.

Taking undue advantage of the authorisation, Rana misrepresented the machine and chasis numbers of the equipment and also fake documents, savings bank accounts of the company to misappropriate the subsidy amount. Rana allegedly duped the state exchequer of over ₹2 crore.

According to the complaint, the company authorities came to know about the fraud committed by Rana after the state directorate of Agricultural and food production suspended the authorised log in credentials of the company in July 2020. The company immediately removed Rana from services and initiated enquiry to know the reasons for suspension.

The Bharatpur police have started probe into the matter after registering a case on the basis of the complaint lodged by the Director of the agrotech company.

## 'Disclose tuition fees'

**BHUBANESWAR:** Odisha Parents Federation (OPF) Thursday wrote a letter to Chief secretary Suresh Mohapatra urging him to ensure proper implementation of a notification of Department of School and Mass Education on the fee waiver issue as per the directions of Orissa High Court. As per the notification, district collectors are directed to take necessary steps to implement it. The federation also wrote a letter to all 30 district collectors to comply with the court's judgment and call a meeting with officials of private schools of the districts. OPF chairman Basudsv Bhatt expressed his gratitude to the Orissa High Court and the state government on the fee waiver decision. "The high court clarified that the state government indeed has power over private schools. It is victory for all the parents of Odisha. We are also obliged by all friends from print and electronic media for their support," he said.

# GUV APPOINTS AK DAS MOHAPATRA AS NEW OSOU VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Following the appointment of Sambalpur University's vice chancellor (VC) Wednesday, Governor Ganeshi Lal appointed Arka Kumar Das Mohapatra as the new VC of Odisha

State Open University Thursday.

He will serve for a period of three years with effect from the date he assumes office as such or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Mohapatra was working as a Professor of Business Administration in Sambalpur

University.

Earlier, Professor Sanjiv Mittal was appointed as the VC of Sambalpur University by the state government.

In exercise of powers conferred by Sub Section(1) with Sub Section(7) of Section 6 of Odisha

Universities (Amendment) Act 2020, Odisha Governor and Chancellor of Universities Professor Ganeshi Lal appointed Professor Mittal as the VC of Sambalpur University for a period of four years with effect from the date he takes over.

## STAGE SET FOR ADIVASI MELA



Preparation for the annual Adivasi Mela (tribal fair), which is scheduled to kick-start at Adivasi Ground in Bhubaneswar January 26, in full swing Thursday. The fair not only provides the City dwellers a platform to know about the lifestyle, culture, tradition and practices of various tribes residing in Odisha, but also offers a chance for the denizens to buy authentic tribal and forest products from the native people

PHOTOS: BIKASH NAYAK

# Anti-airfield weapon test fired

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** State-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Thursday successfully test fired a Smart Anti Airfield Weapon (SAAW) from the Hawk-i aircraft off the coast of Odisha.

The aircraft flown by HAL test pilots Wing Commander (Retd) P Awasthi and Wg Cdr (Retd) M Patel executed the weapon release in a text book manner and all mission objectives were met.

The indigenous stand-off weapon, developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation's Research Centre Imarat (RCI), is the first smart weapon fired from an Indian Hawk-Mk132, the HAL said in a statement.

The telemetry and tracking systems captured all the mission events confirming the success of the trials. "The Company owned Hawk-i platform is being extensively used for certification of systems and weapons developed indigenously by DRDO and CSIR labs," R Madhavan, CMD, HAL, said.

Arup Chatterjee, Director, Engineering and Research and Development, HAL said HAL is indigenously enhancing the training and combat capability of Hawk-i.



The Company owned Hawk-i platform is being extensively used for certification of systems and weapons developed indigenously by DRDO and CSIR labs

R MADHAVAN | CMD, HAL

The indigenous stand-off weapon, developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation's Research Centre Imarat (RCI), is the first smart weapon fired from an Indian Hawk-Mk132

The aircraft flown by HAL test pilots Wing Commander (Retd) P Awasthi and Wg Cdr (Retd) M Patel executed the weapon release in a text book manner and all mission objectives were met

into a potent combat platform during conflict.

The SAAW is an aircraft launched, advanced, precision strike weapon of 125 kg category used to attack and destroy enemy airfield assets such as radars, bunkers, taxi tracks, runways within a range of 100 kms. SAAW has been earlier successfully test fired from Jaguar aircraft.

Top cop to pay ₹1 lakh fine

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha Information Commission (OIC) Thursday directed a former Balasore superintendent of police to pay Rs 1 lakh for failing to supply information under the RTI Act. The commission imposed the fine as the senior IPS officer did not appear before the OIC despite issuance of a number of notices. The commission also reportedly apprised the state Home Secretary of the irresponsible behavior by the official. According to sources, the complainant, Banaja Manjari Mishra, had sought information in connection with the arrest of an accused in a fraud case in 2016. Though the applicant received a reply to her queries from some police stations, she failed to get any reply from the SP office in response to a specific query sought from it. After failing to get the answer, Mishra moved the OIC in 2017. The commission issued several notices to the top cop for personal appearance, but he ignored. Finding no other way, the OIC Thursday ordered the top cop to pay Rs 1 lakh fine.

Organ donation fraud: CP to take accused on 3-day remand

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Commissionerate Police was Thursday granted permission to take Himanshu Bhushan Nanda, the accused of organ donation fraud, on a three-day remand from Friday. The court had earlier allowed Nayapalli police to take Nanda on remand for three days in a case lodged by Pratap Chandra Mishra for allegedly duping him on the pretext of arranging a kidney donor. Later, another victim of Kendrapara also lodged a complaint with police against Himanshu and his associate of defrauding him.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

Before the Notary Public, Sambalpur, I Ramehar, S/o. Sher Singh Choudhary, R/o- C/o. Pramod Mistry, P.O.- Bareipali, Dist.- Sambalpur declares that my true and correct name is Ramehar. But in SBI Pass Book my name has been wrongly mentioned as Rambir Choudhary instead of Ramehar. That above both the names belongs to one and same person.

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary Public, Bhubaneswar dated 21.01.2021 that I Malpa Reddy Upendar Naidu, Age-46, S/o Malpa Reddy Ramamurthy of Bhubaneswar, Khurda that my name has been wrongly written Malpa Reddy Upendar Rao on SSC Certificate. Now I want Aadhaar name M.R. Upendar Naidu for all purposes.

LOST

I, M.P. Prithviraj, S/o. Late M.B. Pyariraj, R/o. Ganesh Nagar, P.O./P.S.- Rengali, Dist.- Sambalpur would like to inform general public that I have lost my original sale deed No. 452/2003 dated 24.10.2003 relating to Khata No. 116/194 of Mouza- Pandaloi, P.S.- Katarbaga, Dist.- Sambalpur. If anyone finds kindly contact me at 9078002001.

I, Gitanjali Das, W/o. Simanchal Das, At: Simanchal Marg, P.O.- Buguda, Dist.- Ganjam, inform that my land document having Khata No. 29/42, Plot No. 190/205, Registered No. 288/1997, dated 18.04.2007 has lost somewhere. If any kind person get it, may contact with mobile No. 9437561557 / 8763651634.

VIRUS DEATH TOLL AT 1,903

BHADRAK, DHENKANAL, KANDHAMAL, MALKANGIRI, NAYAGARH, NABARNGPUR AND RAYAGADA DID NOT REGISTER ANY FRESH CASE IN THE PAST 24 HOURS

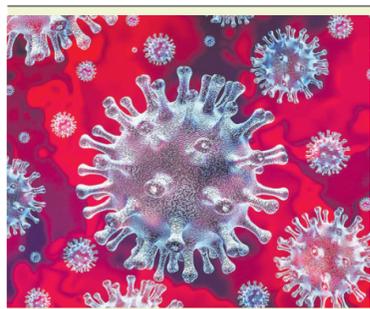
PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Odisha's Covid-19 caseload climbed to 3,23,866 Thursday after 143 people tested positive for the virus, while one more fatality pushed the coastal state's toll to 1,903, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the fresh cases detected in 23 of Odisha's 30 districts, 84 have been reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining are local-contact cases.

Puri district recorded the highest of 23 new infections followed by Sundargarh (17) and Sambalpur (16). Seven other districts—Bhadrak, Dhenkanal, Kandhamal, Malkangiri, Nayagarh, Nabarnpur and Rayagada—did not register any fresh case, said the official, adding that the lone fatality was reported from Cuttack district.

As many as 53 other Covid-19 positive patients have also died due to comorbidities, the official said. Khurda district, comprising state



IN A NUTSHELL

- Puri recorded the highest of 23 new infections followed by Sundargarh (17) and Sambalpur (16)
- The lone fatality was reported from Cuttack
- Khurda has accounted for 334 Covid-19 deaths followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (171), Cuttack (141) and Puri (119)
- Odisha has thus far conducted over 74.77 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 25,737 Wednesday
- The positivity rate stands at 4.46 per cent

Capital Bhubaneswar, has accounted for 334 Covid-19 deaths followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (171), Cuttack (141) and Puri (119).

Odisha now has 1,589 active case, while 3,30,321 patients have recovered from the disease, said the official.

It has thus far conducted over 74.77 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 25,737 Wednesday. The positivity rate stands at 4.46 per

cent, data released by the H&FW department said.

The state intensified the ongoing inoculation drive by setting a target of administering Covid-19 vaccines to 37,076 frontline workers, comprising health and sanitation workers in 436 session sites.

In a span of four days till Wednesday, 68,743 people have received the jabs, Health director Bijay Kumar Panigahi said.

Meanwhile, India's Covid-19 caseload crossed 1.06 crore with a total of 15,223 infections being reported in a day, while the recoveries have surged to 1,02,65,70, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Thursday.

The total cases have increased to 1,06,10,883. The death toll mounted to 1,52,869 with 151 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8am showed.

Panel to examine environment issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** House Committee on Environment headed by Speaker Surya Narayan Patro Thursday held a meeting to discuss how to control environment pollution in the state.

The panel has decided to form three Sub-Committees to study environment pollutions caused by various sources including industries and make necessary recommendations to control it.

It was decided at the meeting to hold the next meeting of the panel February 1 where reports of Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water, Housing & Urban Development and Forest & Environment departments on environment pollution will be discussed. The committee will also examine the orders issued by National Green Tribunal (NGT) to control pollution in the state.

A sub-committee headed by Opposition chief whip Mohan Charan Majhi will study the release of waste water to rivers and



The committee will also examine the orders issued by NGT to control pollution in the state

other water bodies while another panel led by Congress leader Narasingha Mishra was formed to give necessary recommendations to control environment pollution in villages, cities and other urban areas.

Besides, the third House Sub-Committee headed by BJD legislator Badri Narayan Patra will study release of charcoal by sponge iron factories. The three Sub-Committees will submit its report to the Assembly before beginning of the Assembly session.

ATTACK ON OPCC CHIEF

Patnaik has 'proof' against saffron party

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik Thursday apparently furnished proof of involvement of a BJP worker in the recent attack on the Congress leader.

Patnaik refuted the allegations of the BJP that the saffron party had no links with the attack. He identified one among the attackers and claimed that he was a local BJP worker. In a press conference conducted at the Congress Bhavan here, the leader showed pictures of the alleged BJP worker.

The OPCC President cited several instances with the help of the pictures showed by him where the alleged attacker was seen participating in BJP sponsored events, taking pictures with BJP MLA Mohan Majhi besides pasting pro-BJP posters. He also reportedly admitted to be a BJP worker.

"There have been allegations from the BJP that I am indulging in drama and trying to politicise the issue. BJP MLA Mohan Majhi claimed that the attacker was not a BJP worker. But we have enough proof to show that one of the attackers was an active BJP worker," he said.

"There are several photos of BJP events where he was seen participating with full enthusiasm. His photos with the BJP MLA have also been taken more than once. Such evidence is enough to counter the baseless arguments of the BJP. They cannot discredit the attacker who is an active BJP worker. This shows direct link of the attack on me and the BJP," he added.

Patnaik said that during the initial phase of the attack, there was little clue on the attackers but slowly it was revealed that there was involvement of a BJP leader.

Earlier, BJP leader Mohan Majhi had claimed that there was no link of the party to the attack.

NETAJI BIRTH ANNIV AHEAD



Netaji Birthplace Museum at Odia Bazar in Cuttack being decked up ahead of the 125th birth anniversary of the legendary freedom fighter, January 23; district Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani, DCP Prateek Singh and other senior officials check arrangements at the museum and a state-level art expo organised by Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi and Odia Language, Literature & Culture department in progress on the museum premises, Thursday



Netaji Birthplace Museum at Odia Bazar in Cuttack being decked up ahead of the 125th birth anniversary of the legendary freedom fighter, January 23; district Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani, DCP Prateek Singh and other senior officials check arrangements at the museum and a state-level art expo organised by Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi and Odia Language, Literature & Culture department in progress on the museum premises, Thursday

BJD MPs urge Goyal to lift surplus rice

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** A delegation of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MPs Thursday met Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Piyush Goyal through video-conferencing and discussed about lifting of surplus parboiled rice and release of pending subsidy dues.

The delegation led by BJD Parliamentary Party leader in Lok Sabha, Pinaki Misra urged Goyal to release the pending subsidy claims of Rs 6039 crore payable to

Odisha from the Centre. The other MPs are—Chandrasekhar Sahu, N Bhaskar Rao, Sarmistha Sethi, Anubhav Mohanty and Sasmith Patra. Goyal assured that the pending subsidy claims would be transferred at the earliest and advised his senior officers present in the meeting to take early steps in this regard, BJD said in a press statement.

The delegation comprises of members from both the Houses of Parliament apprised the Union Minister about the recent letter of Food Corporation of India (FCI)

limiting the delivery of parboiled rice from Odisha and stopping it entirely for the Rabi season.

During the talk, Goyal assured that there would not be any immediate stoppage of procurement of rice from Odisha despite the FCI letter that was sent to the state government in early January.

For the Rabi season, he said, there would be a consultation meeting in mid-February, 2020 between the FCI and the state government officials to work out solutions to ameliorate this situation.

Kala Parishad gets new chairman

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Eminent painter Keshu Das was appointed as the chairman of Biswa Odisha Kala Parishad by Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro at Assembly conference hall here Thursday.

Interacting with **Orissa POST**, Patro said, "Odisha's culture, art, craft, food and lifestyle should be propagated across the globe in the coming days. Getting a GI tag for Odisha Jhoti art is an important step to popularise our art."

Das said, "The indigenous and ancient art of Odisha, Jhoti should have a GI tag, and Utkaliya Jhoti Diwas should be celebrated every year to popularise the craft. Diverse competitions at state, national and international levels will be organised to benefit Jhoti artistes financially."

Odisha Sahitya Akademi member and Poet Bahadur Pattasani said, "To celebrate Jhoti Diwas every year, we must appoint Goodwill ambassador in various nations across the globe according to the suggestion of Patro."

State suspends 15 PACS officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** The state government Thursday suspended 15 officials including secretaries, assistant secretary and chief executive officers of various Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) for violating government orders and misconduct in procurement of paddy.

Cooperation department has suspended the secretaries while a data entry operator has been sacked from service. As part of the 5T principle of government, the department will ensure zero tolerance towards corruption, said Cooperation Minister RP Swain.

The suspended secretaries are—Radhakanta Bhoi of Nuamara PACS, Saroj Das of Dahama society, Asit Pradhan of Charamala, Krupasindhu Sahu of Sahaspur, Pramod Bhoi of Samarbag, Pradeep Saa of Lakhampur, Dillip Suna of Baidyanath, Rabi Mishra of Mahuli & Khari, Netrananda Purohit of Baghiapada, Nirod Patra of Ramagarh and Dinabandhu Jena of Sodha.

Similarly, the assistant secretary Sukadev Rout of Sadha PACS was also suspended while data entry operator of the society Manoj Kumar Nayak was removed from the service.

Chief executive officers Ghanashyam Pradhan (Jatesingh PACS), Ramakrushna Padhi (Ulunda) and Prabhat Sahu (Murasundhi) have also been suspended.

Naveen inaugurates crafts fair amid huge fanfare

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** The 15th edition of Toshali National Crafts Mela was inaugurated by chief minister Naveen Patnaik virtually amid huge fanfare at Janta Maidan here Thursday.

The event was organised by Odisha Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts Department and planned by SIDAC.

Padmini Dian, Minister, HT&H, Ashok Chandra Panda, Minister, Science & Technology, Public Enterprises, Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disability, Bhubaneswar Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, additional secretary HT&H Subha Sharma and Kailash Chandra Sahoo, Additional Secretary to Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts Department, attended the event.

While inaugurating the event,



CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Toshali National Crafts Mela virtually; people checkout sarees at the fair



CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Toshali National Crafts Mela virtually; people checkout sarees at the fair

Patnaik said, "Odisha is the land of unbelievable artisan work and Konark is a living example. Our artisans are beyond comparison and Toshali National Crafts Mela is the biggest fair in East India. Therefore, I request all to follow Covid guidelines rigidly and make the fair a grand success."

In her speech, Dian said, "It's

quite an amazing feat by the state government to organise such a craft mela while following Covid guidelines. All weavers and artisans will definitely recoup from their financial crunch during the mela. This year, we are hopeful to earn more than ₹23 crore."

Panda stressed on buying swadeshi and encouraging the ar-

tisans who have participated in the fair. He also appealed each artisan and craftsmen to offer their finest so that buyers from the state and others may appreciate their crafts.

The winner of State Handicraft Award 2019, sculptor Dibyajyoti Behera from Balasore crafted Samudra Manthan and Vispaan by Lord Shiva with Khadipathara

(short stone).

Interacting with Orissa POST, Behera said, "It has come as a surprise to me, but now I am relieved that my hard work of eight months has finally paid off. I am now eyeing a national award in sculpture work."

Other participants who have won prizes were Dillip Kumar Swain for Taaipatra carving stating Jain story and Priyanka Patra from Khordha for Patta Hati work in Mrutika Shilpa.

The fair features 250 stalls out of which 170 stalls were from Odisha and 80 stalls were from other states. The fair doesn't feature any food court or cultural programs keeping the pandemic situation in mind.

The fair will continue from January 21 to February 4. The vote of thanks was given by Basanta Kumar Das director Handloom and Cottage craft Odisha government.

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# FAKE SPICES MANUFACTURING FACTORY BUSTED IN BERHAMPUR

# WODC chief vets Boudh, Sonepur projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Chief adviser to the Chief Minister and Chairman of Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) Asit Tripathy reviewed the progress of development in Boudh and Subarnapur districts at the conference hall of the Boudh Collectorate, Thursday.

Tripathy asked local officers to identify the youths with entrepreneurial talent and handhold them to start their ventures. He said, "Boudh district has proven potential for horticulture, fishery, handloom, handicraft, poultry, rice bran oil and vegetable processing units.

The local entrepreneurs could be linked with various bulk purchasers and online marketing platforms to sell their products at profitable rate. "WODC funds would be



used for creating the infrastructure in maintaining the supply chain in these sectors," he said.

The progress of the projects under WODC fund was reviewed at the meeting. These include establishment of an agro polytechnic institute at Boudh, construction of

cultural auditorium, construction of new library in Boudh Panchayat college, piped water supply scheme in Boudh block, children's park at Khaliapali, Biju Patnaik stadium at Kantamal, improvement of Harbanga-Dhalpur Road, improvement of Jagati village-

Pherihat road, Tileswar-Ramgarh road and other road projects. Similarly, around 1985 projects worth ₹100 crore sanctioned under WODC fund in Subarnapur district were also reviewed. Against this as of now 1,505 projects have been completed with investment of around ₹84 cr and the balance 480 projects are in different phases of implementation.

Tripathy also inspected the district museum at Boudh and directed Collector Lalatendu Mishra to develop it in coordination with INTACH and the State Museum.

Lalatendu Mishra and his Subarnapur counterpart Manisha Banarjee, Boudh SP V Raghunath Rao, CEO, WODC SK Patel, project director Babita Dalabehera along with senior officers of the concerned departments participated in the review meeting.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 21:** In another busting of a fake sauce, turmeric and chili powder, pan masala and ghee making unit, Berhampur police Thursday swooped down on a fake chili and turmeric powder manufacturing unit at Pandabnagar under Badabazaar police limits here in Ganjam district.

The police had the information that a fake chili and turmeric powder manufacturing unit was running in Pandabnagar area. On the basis of the tip-off, a police team was formed and the team conducted raids at the location.

During the raid, the police seized a huge quantity of fake chili and turmeric powder packets, chemicals, artificial colours, machineries, packaging materials and other ancillary items.

The police have detained one in this connection, it was learnt. Notably, a joint squad of the Odisha Police and Food Safety officials had busted an adulterated sauce and pickle-manufacturing unit at Pahal, on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar city Wednesday.

The team raided the unit and seized a huge quantity of adulterated sauce and pickles. The officials also seized packaging machines, chemicals, artificial colour, essence and raw materials intended to make the edible commodities. A joint team of the Quick Action Team (QAT) and Airfield police had busted a fake ghee-manufacturing unit at Trilochan Vihar in Sundarpada area here January



## SPURIOUS PRODUCTS

POLICE HAD THE INFORMATION THAT A FAKE CHILI AND TURMERIC POWDER MANUFACTURING UNIT WAS RUNNING IN PANDABNAGAR AREA. ON THE BASIS OF THE TIP-OFF, A POLICE TEAM WAS FORMED AND THE TEAM CONDUCTED RAIDS AT THE LOCATION

A JOINT SQUAD OF THE ODISHA POLICE AND FOOD SAFETY OFFICIALS HAD BUSTED AN ADULTERATED SAUCE AND PICKLE-MANUFACTURING UNIT AT PAHAL, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BHUBANESWAR CITY WEDNESDAY

CUTTACK SADAR POLICE HAD ALSO BUSTED AN ADULTERATED TOBACCO-MAKING UNIT AT SASOL VILLAGE UNDER THE POLICE LIMITS IN THE MILLENNIUM CITY AND SEIZED SUBSTANDARD TOBACCO PRODUCTS WORTH ₹22 LAKH BESIDES ARRESTING THE UNIT'S OWNER

The team seized a huge quantity of adulterated ghee packets from the spot. Earlier January 15, Cuttack Sadar police busted an adulterated tobacco-making unit at Sasol village under the police limits in the Millennium City and

seized substandard tobacco products worth ₹22 lakh besides arresting the unit's owner.

Barchana police in Jajpur district had busted an adulterated sauce manufacturing unit January 8 night.

## BJP PROTEST



Police had a tough time controlling crowds as BJP party workers tried to enter the RDC office in Sambalpur during a 'Chasi Adhikar' rally, Thursday. Over 50 party leaders and workers courted arrest during the meet

## Daughter-in-law of min draws salary sans duty for 2 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Jan 21:** Minister of Steel & Mines and BJD MLA from Kamakhyanagar Prafulla Mallick has courted a controversy after it was alleged that his daughter-in-law drew salary from a college without attending office for two years.

The matter came to the fore after a response to an RTI query revealed that the minister allegedly abused his powers and compelled the authorities of Kamakhyanagar College in Dhenkanal district to show undue favours to his daughter-in-law.

Mallick's daughter-in-law Lipsa Pradhan had allegedly received her salary every month from 2016 to 2018, even during her absence from the college during this period.

According to RTI activist Jayakrushna Behera, Pradhan is pursuing her PhD with Utkal University in Bhubaneswar.

However, the Controller of Examinations at Utkal University denied the existence of Pradhan's name in the PhD registry.

"This is to inform you that on verification of records on the subject regarding PhD registration of Lipsa Pradhan, Lecturer in Zoology, Kamakhyanagar Mahavidyalaya, no such name is found in the PhD registration register for the academic session 2015-16 and 2016-17," mentioned the reply of the Examination Controller.

On the other hand, the Minister rubbished the allegations while dubbing them 'baseless'.

"My daughter-in-law has conducted classes at the college regularly and also evaluated examination answer sheets. The records of her evaluating the sheets cannot be falsified. The allegations are concocted and baseless," Mallick said.

## Rourkela police bust sex racket, 4 including kingpin held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Jan 21:** In a major crackdown, the Rourkela City police busted a sex racket here Wednesday afternoon which was operating from an abandoned staff quarters of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) in Sector-13 area under Sector-15 police limits in Sundargarh district.

According to sources, police arrested four persons in this connection including the kingpin of the sex racket, two sex workers and a pimp. The four were forwarded to a local court in the city.

Acting on a tip-off regarding illegal flesh trade, a team of Sector-15 police conducted simultaneous raids on the abandoned staff quarters (A/191 and A/192 in Sector-13 area), a police official stated.

However, one person managed to escape during the raid and two sex workers from neighbouring West Bengal were apprehended. Police seized objectionable items like condoms, two mobile phones, one motorcycle, cash of ₹1,600, Aadhaar cards and debit cards.

The pimp of the sex racket was identified as Manas Ranjan Mohanty. Following interrogations of Manas and the two sex workers, the kingpin of racket Bharati Patra of Sector-17 area was arrested.

## Nayagarh school students win hearts for music video on traffic awareness

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, Jan 21:** The students of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya at Notar in Nayagarh district have earned nation-wide recognition for their music video on traffic awareness.

At a time when the state observes Road Safety Week under this year's theme 'Sadak Suraksha-Jeevan Raksha', the school students have created sensation among the netizens with their video. The short music video was appreciated by



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari. Taking to their respective Twitter

accounts, both Patnaik and Gadkari appreciated the students for their creativity.

Notably, the music video has secured the first position in Online Idea Competition-2020. The school students had garnered admiration in the past by creating awareness videos on various social issues.

Song for the music video was penned by a music teacher of the school Bibhu Prasad Sahu. Another teacher Kuresh Sahu composed its music, a student who has participated in the video said.

## 5 killed in road mishap



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh, Jan 21:** In a tragic road mishap, a woman and her daughter died on the spot and her husband seriously injured after the bike they were riding on had a head-on collision with a sand-laden tractor. The incident occurred near Burda under Bheden block in Bargarh district Thursday.

The deceased have been identified as Saptanjali Barik, 40, daughter Pratiksha, 4, of Bendra village in Bolangir district. The deceased's husband—Mandhata Barik, who was riding the motor cycle—has been hospitalized.

Source said, the trio was coming towards Bheden. As they were approaching Burda, Mandhata lost control over his vehicle and collided head-on with the tractor coming from opposite direction.

In a separate incident, tragedy struck a family after three of its members were killed and another

sustained grievous injuries in a fatal mishap near Gopalmal Chhak on Kantamal-Manmunda Road in Boudh.

According to an eyewitness, a woman along with her two children, including a minor, was on her way to Palasagora area in the district in an auto-rickshaw. Near Gopalmal Chowk, a pitch-laden hyva truck coming from the opposite direction hit the auto-rickshaw (OD-31 F-7726) leading to the mishap.

The three deceased were identified as Suresuta Nag (45), Sarojini Nag (25) and Babula Nag (13). The auto driver identified as Ganesh Tandi (40) was seriously injured.

## Man's murder case cracked

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Jan 21:** One and a half months after recovering the body from a pond near Sunapali village under Dhanupali police limits in Sambalpur district, the police cracked the case.

Informing about the investigation, Sambalpur SP Battula Gangadhar informed journalists at a presser here Wednesday that the police have arrested two persons for their involvement in the crime. He said the accused duo had murdered one Md Aftar (45) for just ₹90.



The accused have been identified as Ajay Munda (25) and Rakesh Khamari (30), residents of Dikshitpali area.

According to police, Ajay and Rakesh were returning home from Gengutupal, December 5. Md Aftar was also returning to his home along the same road.

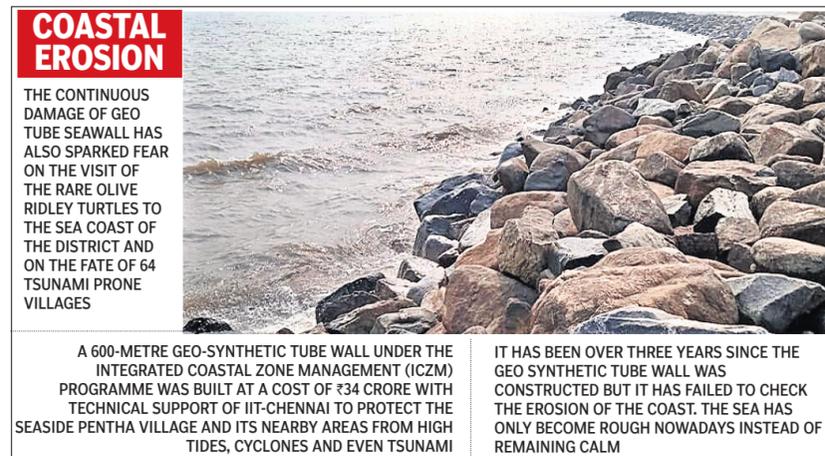
At a secluded place, they stopped Md Aftar and asked him to give them some money for liquor. It was when he denied that they beat him up and forcibly took ₹90 from his pant pocket and left the spot leaving Aftar injured. As Aftar cried for help, they returned and attacked him with a brick on his head. It was when he dropped on the ground that they threw him on the pond bank and fled from the spot. On the basis of family members' allegation, the police had registered a murder case (Case No- 492/20) and launched an investigation.

## Geo-tube seawall at Pentha coast fails to deliver goods

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Jan 21:** The fear of tsunami to 64 seaside villages under Rajnagar block in this district has come to haunt the residents as the geo synthetic tube sea walls built at Pentha coast have failed to check coastal erosion due to onslaught of high tides, a report said.

The pounding tidal waves have become very rough nowadays. The sea waves have gnawed away at a large volume of the rocks and stones packed inside the gabion nets and threatened to topple the tube. The gabion nets have also been torn in the high tides. As a result, the 200 mtr long sea beach has been reduced to 20 mtrs over last one and half years. The continuous damage of geo tube seawall has also sparked fear on the visit of the rare Olive Ridley turtles to the sea coast of the district and on the fate of 64 tsunami prone villages. The damage of the geo tube seawall has proved the fear of naturalists true. In 2019, attending a workshop on sea erosion in Kendrapara town, marine expert Dr K Nageswar Rao of Andhra University had said the geo-tube walls are not the long-term solution to save the coastlines from erosion. The geo tube walls can only be a temporary anti-erosion meas-



### COASTAL EROSION

THE CONTINUOUS DAMAGE OF GEO TUBE SEAWALL HAS ALSO SPARKED FEAR ON THE VISIT OF THE RARE OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLES TO THE SEA COAST OF THE DISTRICT AND ON THE FATE OF 64 TSUNAMI PRONE VILLAGES

A 600-METRE GEO-SYNTHETIC TUBE WALL UNDER THE INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM) PROGRAMME WAS BUILT AT A COST OF ₹34 CRORE WITH TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF IIT-CHENNAI TO PROTECT THE SEASIDE PENTHA VILLAGE AND ITS NEARBY AREAS FROM HIGH TIDES, CYCLONES AND EVEN TSUNAMI

IT HAS BEEN OVER THREE YEARS SINCE THE GEO SYNTHETIC TUBE WALL WAS CONSTRUCTED BUT IT HAS FAILED TO CHECK THE EROSION OF THE COAST. THE SEA HAS ONLY BECOME ROUGH NOWADAYS INSTEAD OF REMAINING CALM

ure. Now his fear has come true a year later.

Social activist Kshitish Kumar Singh said the coastlines at Pentha were eroded by 13 mtrs in 1999. Prior to this, the coastline was getting eroded by six to eight mtrs. The state government decided to check the sea erosion by constructing geo synthetic tube walls in 2008. He apprehended that 64 villages which are tsunami prone will soon be extinct from the map of the district

if the coastal erosion continues at this rate. Notably, A 600-metre geo-synthetic tube wall under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) programme was built at a cost of ₹34 crore with technical support of IIT-Chennai to protect the seaside Pentha village and its nearby areas from high tides, cyclones and even tsunami. It was then expected that the geo synthetic tube sea walls will protect over 35,000 residents re-

siding in 64 villages near Pentha coast from the onslaught of tidal waves. It was even claimed that a new beach will be created after the construction of the geo synthetic tube wall. It has been over three years since the geo synthetic tube wall was constructed but it has failed to check the erosion of the coast. The sea has only become rough nowadays instead of remaining calm.

The high tidal waves have washed

away the large stones and rocks packed inside the gabion boxes of the geo synthetic tube walls. It has even sandcast over 2 sq km of area nearby during this period.

The construction of the geo synthetic tube wall at Pentha was the fallacious effort of the authorities to save the areas from the onslaught of the marching sea. Geo-synthetic tubes have failed in the past in Pondicherry, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Digha in West Bengal and even at Pentha, said Hemant Rout, secretary of Gahirmatha Marine Turtles Conservation and Mangrove Protection Society. He claimed that the area was not witnessing much erosion before the construction of Paradip Port but the coastal erosion has only intensified in recent days following the stone packing undertaken for the Paradip Port.

He said there is a need for more assessment of the sea coast and growth of mangrove forests is the primary solution to the problem. The area which was earlier opened for tourists now stands closed after two youths drowned in the sea. He demanded to invite the marine experts and find a solution to the problem. When contacted, ADM Basant Kumar Rout said that the coastal erosion has been informed to the state government.

No. B-660- **GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,**  
**PHULBANI (R&B) DIVISION, PHULBANI**  
e-mail- eep1brb@gmail.com  
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**'e' procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No. EE-R&B-PLB-16-2020-21**

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Estimated Cost : Rs.26.55 lakhs- Rs. 28.38 lakhs
- Period of Completion : As notified in Tender Call Notice
- Date & Time of availability of : From 25.01.2021, 10.00 A.M. to  
Bid documents in the portal 03.02.2021 5.00 P.M.
- Last date/time for receipt of : Up to 5.00 P.M. of dated  
bids in the portal 03.02.2021.
- Name and address of the : Executive Engineer,  
O.I.T. Phulbani (R&B) Division.

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Corrigendum if any shall be published only in the above website.  
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- Name of the Work : Civil and Electrical work as mentioned in DTGN
- No. of Work : 03 Nos.
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- Last date & time for receipt of : 16.00 hours of 04.02.2021.  
bids in portal
- Bids received online shall be : 11.00 hours of 05.02.2021.  
opened on
- Name and address of the : Executive Engineer,  
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Never seek support elsewhere than in the Divine. Never seek satisfaction elsewhere than in the Divine. Never seek the satisfaction of your needs in anyone else than the Divine - never, for anything at all.

THE MOTHER



## A good move

The tenth round of talks between farmer unions and the Centre has offered a distant ray of hope for an eventual end to the ongoing impasse over the three new farm laws. The government Wednesday suggested that it would suspend operation of the three laws for one and half years. It has also proposed to set up a joint committee to find an amicable solution in the interest of the farming community. The farmer unions have not accepted the government's offer. However, pending their response, the latest move by the government on the contentious laws needs to be welcome. It has not come a day too soon. We can now safely assume that the Republic Day celebration in Delhi would pass off smoothly. But, it is disconcerting to note that a section of the protesting farmers has cold-shouldered the government's offer. Their stand is they will not settle for anything short of a complete repeal of the three laws. The two sides have decided to meet again Friday after the union leaders hold internal consultations Thursday to decide on the government's offer. The three laws have already been stayed by the Supreme Court till further order and a committee of experts has been formed to resolve the deadlock. The panel has been asked by the apex court to submit its report within two months after consulting all stakeholders.

The government's offer to suspend the implementation of the three laws assumes a lot of significance. This is first time that the Modi government, ever since it came to power in 2014, has agreed to revisit a legislation that it has brought in. It has always withstood pressure to roll back its laws, be it goods and services tax and demonetization, among others. Suspension of the implementation of the laws will give a good deal of time to reorient the discussions. One and half years is a pretty long time to iron out the sticking points. Both sides need to be accommodative of each other's view points. A zealous determination by the farmer unions for nearly two months brought the government down to its knees. However, having said that, the farmer unions should not take it as a victory. Give and take is intrinsic to the success of any dialogue process. The government has done the right thing by conceding to suspend the laws. The ball is now in the court of the farmer unions to reciprocate the move. Talks at different levels must continue. The Supreme Court has rightly shown its disappointment to the aspersions cast on its four-member panel. Doubting the integrity of the members of a committee even before they start hearing the case is premature. The farmers have demanded a legal guarantee to the minimum support price (MSP) of food grains. The Centre is not willing to do that even as they assure that they will never tamper with the MSP. There is no harm in bringing in some sort of a mechanism that could inspire confidence among farmers with regard to operation of MSP. The minimum support price has always been an upwardly mobile subject. Therefore, giving a written assurance that it will remain so should not be a problem. The climb down by the Centre is a good move but it is just the first step. A lot needs to be done by both the sides before the impasse over the three farm laws goes for good.

## WISDOM CORNER

You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching, love like you'll never be hurt, sing like there's nobody listening, and live like it's heaven on earth. **WILLIAM W. PURKEY**

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten. **NEIL GAIMAN**

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us. **HELEN KELLER**

## WORDSWORTH

### Bright

It's a noun, not an adjective. If you say, "I'm bright", that's an immodest (and possibly inaccurate) statement. But "I'm a bright" says that you don't believe in God, more strictly that your view of the world is naturalistic, free of what its inventors describe as "supernaturalism and mystical elements of all kinds". The term has only recently been coined by Paul Giesert and Mynga Futrell, two educators from Sacramento, California. They modelled it on gay, to provide an umbrella term for a potential coalition of all those who felt themselves isolated and without political influence in the USA because they professed no religious belief. The philosopher Daniel Dennett has taken it up and publicised it in newspaper articles, from two of which the quotations below have been taken. Somehow, I don't think it's going to catch on.

### Bringing Home the Bacon

It's also been said that 'bringing home the bacon' refers to the old fairground contest of catching the greased pig, whose prize was the pig, so the winner brought home the bacon. Your story reminded me at once of one of the tales told in that infamous e-mail about life in the 1500s that endlessly circulates online. That claims "it was a sign of wealth that a man could 'bring home the bacon'." That's true today, though usually in a broader sense of supplying material support to one's family or achieving success, but it's hard to assert with a straight face that it was so back in 1500 or 1300. We can't absolutely prove it wasn't around then - proving a negative is always difficult - but its total absence from the historical record before 1906 rather gives a pointer to its being modern. The first recorded user of the expression was Mrs Gans, mother of Joe. He was a famous boxer at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the first native-born black American to win a world title. That was in 1900, when he was 26. Six years later he fought Oscar "Battling" Nelson in Goldfield, Nevada, now virtually a ghost town but then a booming community, the largest in the state. The match has been rated as the greatest lightweight championship bout ever contested, whose fame has endured enough that its centenary was recently marked in the area. Various stories say that after he won the fight (it ended in Gans's favour after 42 rounds when his opponent hit a low blow and was disqualified) he sent a telegram back to his mother in Baltimore: "Bringing home the bacon". Other reports claim that what he really said was that he wasn't only bringing back the bacon but the gravy, too. These are probably later elaborations of what clearly soon became a widely known story. Was Mrs Gans repeating a saying that was already well known to her? Perhaps, even probably.

## LOL

### Lawyer in heaven

On their way to get married, a young Catholic couple is involved in a fatal car accident. The couple found themselves sitting outside the Pearly Gates waiting for St. Peter to process them into Heaven. While waiting, they began to wonder: Could they possibly get married in Heaven? When St. Peter showed up, they asked him. St. Peter said, "I don't know. This is the first time anyone has asked. Let me go find out," and he left. The couple sat and waited, and waited. Two months passed and the couple were still waiting. While waiting, they began to wonder what would happen if it didn't work out; could you get a



divorce in heaven? After yet another month, St. Peter finally returned, looking somewhat bedraggled. "Yes," he informed the couple, "You can get married in Heaven." "Great!" said the couple, "But we were just wondering, what if things don't work out? Could we also get a divorce in Heaven?" St. Peter, red-faced with anger, slammed his clipboard onto the ground. "What's wrong?" asked the frightened couple. "OH, COME ON!" St. Peter shouted, "It took me three months to find a priest up here! Do you have any idea how long it'll take me to find a lawyer?"

# MERKEL MINUS ANGELA

## FOCUS GERMANY

The election of a European party leader - one of roughly 200 in the European Union - is normally not big news. But it is when the party is the strongest political force in the EU's largest and richest country.

Over the weekend, Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) anointed Armin Laschet, the unassuming, friendly-faced Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, as its chairman. Laschet is not exactly a star on the world stage. But remember the name. Statistically, a Christian Democrat is the odds-on favorite for the Chancellor's job.

Five of Germany's eight postwar Chancellors have hailed from the CDU - from Konrad Adenauer to the current incumbent, Angela Merkel. And Merkel's party currently leads in national polls by a wide margin, making it a safe bet that Merkel's successor will again hail from the conservative camp after the general election in September.

Laschet faces a two-step process: first CDU chair, then Chancellor candidate. Historically, the party chair has had first dibs as standard-bearer, but not necessarily a lock on the nomination, which is scheduled for March.

But, before we get to the complications, let's look at Laschet, who went into the convention predicted to lose. With his surprise victory, he is now the front-runner for the Chancellor candidacy. So, let's posit that he will form the next government. What is to be expected?

In three words, "Merkel minus Angela" - maximum continuity. Laschet does not promise a new dawn, or a break with 16 years of Merkel's centrism and its creeping leftward tilt. That shift has now been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which is driving a massive expansion of government spending and redistribution across the West. Trillions of euros are being showered on individuals and "system-relevant" corporations.

Expect "Merkelism" in foreign policy as well. In the three-way



As Chancellor, Laschet would not defy Russia by cutting the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that will pump Russian gas directly into the country, circumventing Poland and Ukraine and increasing German energy dependence on the Kremlin. Nor will Germany exclude Chinese 5G technology from its networks

race for the top party job, Laschet's two rivals - Friedrich Merz and Norbert Röttgen - promised to rebalance German interests in favor of "Westernism": more for defense and NATO, fewer goodies for Russia and China. Laschet, though, would follow in Merkel's footsteps.

Call it "diplomatic centrism." Don't let the United States drag Germany into conflicts with the two giants to the East. Keep your distance from Washington. Try to be on good terms with each and all, as befits Berlin's position in the heart of Europe.

As Chancellor, Laschet would not defy Russia by cutting the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that will pump Russian gas directly into the country, circumventing Poland and Ukraine and increasing German energy dependence on the Kremlin. Nor will Germany exclude Chinese 5G technology from its networks.

A sign of things to come is the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, concluded under German leadership just three weeks before US President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. With the CAI, Biden's hope of recruiting the EU into a strategic coalition against China evaporated. Indeed, together with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership - which 15

Asian countries, including China, concluded the previous month - the EU-China deal has left the US out in the cold.

On Europe, the future under Laschet also promises continuity. That means open spigots for the European Central Bank, together with an ever-larger shift of spending and taxing powers to the European Commission, the EU's unelected executive.

In her early years as chancellor, Merkel fought massive transfers of clout and cash to the EU tooth and nail. Now, the debt and transfer union is locked in, never mind who the next chancellor is. Even out of power, Merkel will thus continue to shape the EU's future.

Although probability suggests that Laschet will be Chancellor once the Federal election ballots are counted September 26, he will have to strain hard to unify the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). Coming from behind at the convention last weekend, he barely made it on the second ballot, winning just 521 of 1001 votes.

Worse, in nationwide polls, just one-third of respondents thought Laschet might "make a good chancellor candidate." Some 55% opted for the CSU's boss Markus Söder, who is sure to challenge Laschet

for the nomination. Indeed, Söder has been angling nonstop for the top prize.

What does Söder stand for? A more accurate question would be, "What doesn't he stand for?" Söder has been shifting his positions with great alacrity, moving smoothly from right to left and back, be it on domestic security, immigration, "family values," lockdowns, industrial policy, or a German version of the "Green New Deal." Söder has insisted on Russia sanctions, but he has also made nice with Russian President Vladimir Putin while visiting the Kremlin.

Is there much of a difference between the two leaders of the two wings of German Christian Democracy? Laschet, to repeat, is "Merkel minus Angela." Söder is a politico who tries to project charisma and fortitude, though his past suggests relentless flexibility, also known as indecisiveness or opportunism.

For the rest of the world, it matters little whom the party nominates in March. German multi-party coalition politics is not designed for sudden lurches, as in the case of Donald Trump following Barack Obama in the US. It is always a few degrees to the left or the right, plumbing the depths and steering clear of treacherous shoals - all while remaining finely tuned to the changing moods of the electorate.

Laschet or Söder for Chancellor? Merkel-plus or a Bavarian posing as a strongman? The third player, of course, is Covid-19. Last year, the efficient Germans excelled at holding the pandemic at bay. Today, the country is staggering from lockdown to lockdown as infections soar. If the crisis continues, the German electorate might prefer a roly-poly, predictable uncle from the Rhineland to the unbridled ambition of a would-be king from Bavaria.

The writer, a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, serves on the editorial council of the German weekly Die Zeit. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Josef Joffe

THE ELECTION OF A EUROPEAN PARTY LEADER - ONE OF ROUGHLY 200 IN THE EUROPEAN UNION - IS NORMALLY NOT BIG NEWS. BUT IT IS WHEN THE PARTY IS THE STRONGEST POLITICAL FORCE IN THE EU'S LARGEST AND RICHEST COUNTRY

## SPECTRUM THE HUMAN BRAIN

# Why we read headlines first

Why we look at the newspaper headlines and then proceed to read the contents if it seems interesting? Why we read the first and the last page of a newspaper as soon as we pick it up? Or for that matter why we jump into our favorite section like Crossword or Sudoku puzzle?



Shivaji Mohinta

WHY IS HEADLINE MANAGEMENT SO IMPORTANT IN NEWSPAPERS? OUR PRIMAL BRAIN RESPONDS FAVORABLY TO SOME SELECT STIMULI AND NOTABLE AMONGST THEM IS THAT THE MESSAGING SHOULD BE CONTRASTABLE AND MEMORABLE

This is due to the supremacy of our primal brain (or reptile brain) in our day to day behavior which determines almost 85% of our decision making. Our primal brain, which has been referred to as System 1 by Nobel Prize winner and noted behavioral economist Daniel Kahneman, generally looks for quick gratification with minimum effort. System 1 has is intuitive and has very little attention span. Therefore, it gets hooked on to something which it finds interesting, self-centered or memorable. If these basic conditions are met then it activates System 2, (thinking part of the human brain) to read the relevant article in detail and comprehend the same. Otherwise, it shuts off and shifts attention to something else. Taking this framework forward, Patrick Renvoise and Christophe Morin have done some invaluable work in the field of Neuro-Marketing, suggesting that human decision making behaviour in choosing some-

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thing over something else is controlled by our primal or old brain rather than what we generally believe as our rational or left brain. In their book "The Persuasion Code" they say primal brain always looks for WIIFM (What's In It For Me) due to its selfish nature and latches on to those articles which attracts us. More than 80% of our decisions are influenced by our reptile brain and thereafter we try to rationalise it, not vice-versa.

If we take the analogy of newspaper reading with the behavior of primal brain then it is quite worthwhile to observe that we spend some time in the first page and then roll over to the second page and then to the last page. Many, in fact, start from the last page, the sports page, which I normally do. This is called the Regency-Primacy effect. We are primed to capture only what is mentioned in the beginning and

at the end. The middle pages are generally not seen with the same level of intensity or forgotten altogether unless our primal brain is aware of something worthwhile is there due to past awareness or habits (like Crosswords or quiz etc.). This is due to the limited storage capacity of our Primal brain (System 1). It remembers only the opening and the closing news items.

This brings to an interesting question. Why the editorial columns are on the middle pages? If they carry important views of the experts which is intended for the readers then is the positioning correct? The primal brain will generally miss the middle part as the total number of pages is around 14-16. There is every chance that this article of mine will also get missed!

Next, why is headline management so important in newspapers? Our primal brain responds favor-

ably to some select stimuli and notable amongst them is that the messaging should be contrastable and memorable. An attention-grabbing headline which is different (or sensational) will capture System 1 attention instantaneously and then it will prompt System 2 to go into the details. Primal brain loves short, crisp, visual descriptions or rhyming sentences which has high impact. As the primal brain deletes, filters and generalises information constantly the "Contrastable & Memorable" information gets retained by the primal brain. System 1 avoids waking up System 2 which is otherwise lazy and for this reason the former decides all by itself what to read or avoid. Reading and understanding long text messages requires System 2 participation which requires additional effort and intensity. This is the reason why we selectively read the newspaper and not the whole contents.

Due to the dominance and nature of our primal brain it is quite understandable why we are keen to manage headlines and why we read "Headlines First!"

The author is the Country Head of Greenlam Industries Ltd & a Master NLP coach. He can be reached at shiv\_9807@hotmail.com

## Welcome news

Sir, It is really wonderful to learn that the state government plans to connect all the blocks and gram panchayats with broadband connectivity by May end. It is really a good attempt to provide Internet services in every nook and corner of the state because Internet connectivity is a basic requirement for maintaining high growth rate in the rural sector. It will also help empower the citizens and in capacity building besides adding to quality education and healthcare services. It was found that the students were facing problems in attending online class due to the poor network connectivity. Students were found sitting on the trees, roaming in the forest and hilly areas and on the highways risking their life to get access to the Internet facilities. All government offices and schools, medical facilities, banks, telemedicine centers and agriculture kiosks will be connected with broadband connectivity for facilitating healthcare e-learning and profitable e-commerce. In Phase-1, 3,770 gram panchayats and 175 have been provided with connectivity and in Phase-2 work is being executed under joint collaboration of Odisha Computer Application Centre, Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited and Tarasoftm. Kamal Lochan Dash, JAJPUR

## Doubts on vaccination

Sir, The Union Health Secretary Rakesh Bhushan has said that the Covid vaccine was completely safe and there was no need to fear or panic. So far, only 0.18% of those who have been vaccinated in India have had a mild side effect. But there are some facts that are worth discussing. Scientists have trusted the Prime Minister that the vaccine is safe and the effect is good. But reports say that people cannot trust this vaccine. RML Hospital health workers in Delhi have asked for a Covishield to be taken by the Serum Institute instead of Covaxin. Of course, people don't have faith, faith is a big thing. People who are weak and uneducated have to believe that it is safe and effective that it has not yet happened. The new US President, Joseph Biden, has been vaccinated for this belief. In fact, trust increases from work and transparency. The vaccine is causing reactions around the world, as is the Oxford vaccine. Scientists there call it a normal vaccine reaction. Now the question is why there is growing skepticism in the public? No "screening and consent form" is required for the Covishield vaccine, but it is required for the Covaxin vaccine. Why is this? The government should elucidate on this. Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

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## SHOOTING IN FRONT OF LIVE AUDIENCE NERVE WRACKING: ELIZABETH OLSEN

Hollywood star Elizabeth Olsen says shooting in front of a live audience really messed with her brain. Olsen along with Paul Bettany shot the first episode of their web series, *WandaVision*, in front of a live studio audience.

## MONSTER HUNTER TO HAVE 3D RELEASE FEBRUARY 5

The Milla Jovovich and Tony Ja-starrer action adventure *Monster Hunter* will have a big screen release February 5. The film will be the first 3D releases post the reopening of cinemas in India, in the aftermath of the lockdown closure.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, you may want to wear your power suit, says Ganesha. If you notice people bending and bowing a bit, understand that your hard work has paid off! If not, then you need to get more organised. Either way, there's work to be done.

**TAURUS**  
You will win the heart of your family members today, forecasts Ganesha. Try and delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Job aspirants may look forward to belated success in interviews.

**GEMINI**  
Interactions with member of the opposite sex may yield positive and pleasurable results today. Public servants will get the much-needed encouragement and moral support from bosses and family members. In academics, you will be able to solve whatever problem you set your mind to.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to remain open-minded while dealing with others. However, it doesn't mean that you will always be soft on others. Later in the day, your approach may be different and stubborn. In the evening, you will enjoy the company of family and friends.

**LEO**  
Pack your bags, and don't forget the sunscreen and the shades. Look at the stars today — Ganesha foresees for you a strong prospect of going on a tour. If not an individual backpacking adventure, then an elaborate family holiday, but travel you shall.

**VIRGO**  
You will pen down the things to be done today. However, Ganesha suggests that just making a note of them is not enough; you need to set practical goals according to priority. Moreover, Ganesha warns that items you mark on the top of the list will demand immediate action.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that your day today will be extremely busy and as a result you will be agitated today. Your happy nature will have to bear the brunt of the sad circumstances and situations that life will shower on you but you will be able to face the situation with your inner strength.

**SCORPIO**  
Negative thoughts are likely to surround you today, try to avoid it. You may feel lonely and left-out when the day begins. However, a long list of activities and responsibilities will keep you occupied throughout the day.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Beauty therapies or a new hair do, pick one; makeover and personal grooming is on your mind. Once you decide to shop, nothing in the world can stop you. You have decided to de-stress yourself with shopping. Clothes and jewellery is what your wardrobe is awaiting for, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
The day will sail smooth, but your mind will wreak havoc by forcing you to act on the spur of the moment, says Ganesha. However, this will not ruin your reputation with bosses and peers. You may also see some of your dreams come true, but don't fly too high; you may climb up the ladder of success but with every step you leave behind there is always one more to go.

**AQUARIUS**  
With no major highs or lows, you will have a balanced day today. You will handle everything with great efficiency and Ganesha gives you a pat on your back for that. Continue to work hard for the day as your efforts will get noticed and not only that, you will also understand the value of your hardships.

**PISCES**  
A good day awaits you. You will finish your work and beat your deadlines by miles on account of the luck favouring you. There are chances that in a family holiday, which has been in the planning for a long time, will eventually come to fruition today, says Ganesha.

## Alaya F sets the floor on fire

**Mumbai:** Actress Alaya F set temperatures soaring Thursday with her dance moves on the title track of *Kalank*.

Twinkle toes Alaya posted a video of her dancing on Instagram. Alongside the clip, she wrote: "Decided to make a dance reel on one of my favourite songs!?? hope you guys enjoy this so all the bruises on my leg today are worth it. Choreographed by

(and dancing with me): @utkarshc21 #kalank."

Daughter of actress Pooja Bedi, Alaya made her Hindi film debut with *Jawaani Jaaneman* earlier this year. She has a three-film deal with producer Jay Shewakramani. IANS



## Fans compare Isabelle to Katrina

**Mumbai:** Budding actress Isabelle Kaif Thursday shared the first look of her upcoming film *Suswagatam Khushaamadeed* with actor Pulkit Samrat, and social media could not stop noticing how much she resembles her sister, top star Katrina Kaif.

"Namaste - Aadaab Ab hogi jaldi aapse mulaqaat (We will meet soon). So excited to share with you guys the first look of #SuswagatamKhushaamadeed," Isabelle posted on Instagram along with photos in which she and Pulkit are seen in black and golden traditional outfits.

Netizens couldn't stop comparing her to her sister Katrina. One commented: "Wow! Looking good. Just like your sister."

Another wrote: "Ditto Katrina."

Directed by Dhiraj Kumar, *Suswagatam Khushaamadeed* is being billed as an entertainer with an underlying message on social harmony. It will have Pulkit essaying the role of a Delhi boy, Aman, with Isabelle playing the role of Noor, who hails from Agra. IANS

## Nila Madhab's next based on environment set in future

**Panaji:** Filmmaker Nila Madhab Panda, acclaimed for projects like *Kadvi Hawa* and *I Am Kalam*, says he is currently scripting his next, a crime environment film set in the future.

Panda said the yet-untitled film will further his drive to chronicle stories of climate change on screen.

"My next is a crime investigative en-

vironment project, set in the future. It's a new genre for me. It's almost like how would you survive without rivers? The writing is going on, it'll take at least a year to go on floors. The idea was with me for a long time but I'm finally working on it," Panda said on the sidelines of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI).

At the festival, Panda's Odia film *Kalira Atita*, which deals with the impact of climate change, was screened in the Indian Panorama Non feature film section.

The 46-year-old filmmaker is known for highlighting social and environmental causes through his work. PTI



## Proud to see response to BAFTA initiative in India: Rahman

**Mumbai:** Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer AR Rahman is proud to see the response to the BAFTA Breakthrough India initiative in the country, and says he wants to encourage more individuals from across film, games and television to get involved in the project.

It was announced Thursday that British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) has extended the deadline for

submission of applications for BAFTA Breakthrough India by two weeks, from January 25 to February 8.

"I am extremely proud to see the response that BAFTA Breakthrough India has received from across the country. We have received applications from across the nation, proving that talent can be found in all corners of India," said Rahman, who has been roped in as ambassador of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India.

"We are so pleased with the uptake and I am delighted to see BAFTA extend the deadline to February 8. I encourage talented individuals from across film, games and television to get involved and submit their application for what could be a life changing experience," he added. The initiative marks BAFTA's first steps into India. The talent hunt initiative will enable the Academy to identify and nur-



ture up to five talents working in film, games, or television in India.

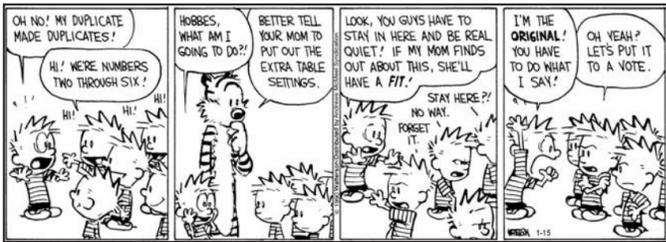
The exercise, known as BAFTA Breakthrough India initiative, is

part of the Academy's year-round effort to support new talent, operating alongside their Awards ceremonies, and is supported by Netflix. IANS

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

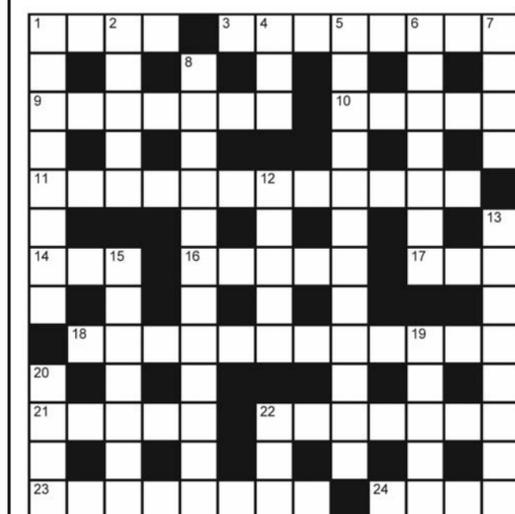


### BREVITY



### FUN post

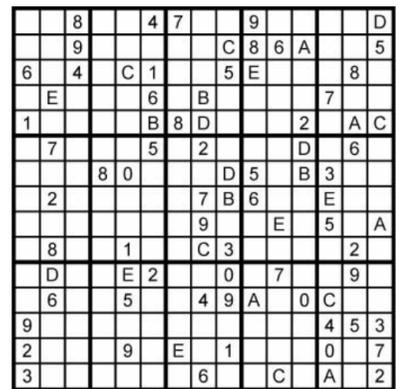
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Pigeon's home
  - 3 Tooth type
  - 9 Wriggles person,
  - 10 Blood line
  - 11 Like some movies (6-6)
  - 14 Nile reptile
  - 16 Underground network
  - 17 Golfer's gadget
  - 18 Wedding party member (4,2,6)
  - 21 Top dog
  - 22 Staff
  - 23 Forgetful person,
  - 24 Initial stake
  - Down**
  - 1 Shipwrecked person
  - 2 Needle
  - 4 Psyches
  - 5 Unfamiliar with
  - 6 Utopian
  - 7 Bargain
  - 8 Money movers (8,4)
  - 12 Validation
  - 13 Condemned man's hope
  - 15 Nursery item
  - 19 Frequently
  - 20 Spanish sparkling white wine
  - 22 Jacuzzi

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.

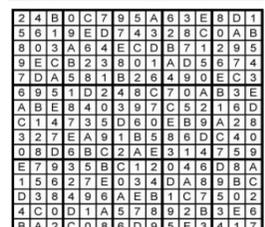


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# Andhra rural local bodies polls to go ahead

THESE ELECTIONS WERE ORIGINALLY SUPPOSED TO BE HELD IN 2018 WHEN THE TENURE OF THE LOCAL BODIES EXPIRED

AGENCIES

**Amaravati, Jan 21:** In a major setback to the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government Thursday, a Division Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, headed by Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, gave green signal to the Gram Panchayat elections, which were recently cancelled by a single bench judge.

"The Division Bench of AP High Court headed by the Chief Justice cleared the decks today vide its judgment, to hold gram panchayat elections in the state," said a statement from the State Election Commission.

According to the SEC's office, the state government had already submitted a binding undertaking to a division bench of the high court that they shall do everything possible for holding the elections and also not seek change of dates.

"The State Election Commission accordingly is going ahead with gram panchayat elections as per the already notified programme.



## SETBACK TO JAGAN

The Division Bench of AP HC headed by the Chief Justice clears the decks Thursday vide its judgment, to hold gram panchayat elections in the state

Conduct of the rural local bodies' elections has emerged as a major bone of contention between the government and the State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar

The elections will take place in four phases - February 5, February 9, February 13 and February 17," said the statement.

Following the Court order, the SEC statement highlighted that the model code of conduct has come into effect, directing ministers not to be associated with the distribution of welfare benefits in rural areas so as not to influence the electorate.

It said that the chief secretary had already been addressed in this mat-

ter to notify the collectors.

"The commission will hold a meeting with the chief secretary and the director general of police and with district collectors and superintendents of police regarding poll arrangements at the earliest," said the statement. However, the commission highlighted that it is particularly concerned about the safety of poll staff as well as voters.

"Comprehensive safety protocol has already been incorporated in its proceedings by way of guidance to

government. Government in turn shall take all the necessary measures to ensure safety of poll staff as well as the voters fully," it said.

Without elaborating, the statement said that law and order continues to be a focus area for the commission in the light of past experiences.

Conduct of the rural local bodies' elections has emerged as a major bone of contention between the government and the State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda

Ramesh Kumar.

These elections were originally supposed to have been held in 2018 when the tenure of the local bodies expired back then but were not held. However, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy thought of going to the polls in March 2020 but Kumar did not give the green signal citing the Coronavirus pandemic, leading to a major standoff between the two.

Reddy accused Kumar of acting at the behest of opposition leader Nara Chandrababu Naidu and even tried to replace him, which backfired as the SEC has Constitutional protection similar to a Supreme Court judge.

With just two more months left as the SEC, Kumar is keen on conducting the polls which the state government is opposing, citing the Coronavirus pandemic and the gigantic vaccination drive.

It remains to be seen what new developments will transpire as some stakeholders have already given feelers that the apex court will be approached to halt the elections.

# Factionalism hits Saffron's Raj unit

AHEAD OF BY-POLLS IN FOUR CONSTITUENCIES, THE PARTY PROMOTES ANTI-RAJE CADRES ON MANY SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS



AGENCIES

**Jaipur, Jan 21:** Amid factionalism, feuds and tussle over leadership status, the opposition BJP in Rajasthan has started campaigning for the Assembly by-elections to be held in four constituencies, however, the dates for the same are awaited.

Assembly by-polls shall be held in Sujangarh, Rajsamand, Sahara (Bhilwara) and Vallabhnagar (Udaipur) after the deaths of the members of legislative assembly following illness in last four months.

The by-polls shall be held during interesting times when frictions within BJP have come out open recently. Former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje's followers recently announced the formation of an outfit supporting her and demanded that she be declared as the chief ministerial candidate for the 2023 Assembly election.

The BJP has however officially maintained silence on the issue and downplayed any further attempts to project any individual as the CM. However, the party has promoted anti-Raje cadres on many significant positions.

Meanwhile, BJP state president Satish Poonia, starting the by-poll campaigning after offering prayers at Salasar Balaji temple, said, "We shall make a strong win in by-polls due to the people-friendly policies launched by PM Narendra Modi and

Sahara MLA Kailash Trivedi died in October last year

The Sujangarh Assembly seat further fell vacant after the death of Congress MLA

Later, BJP MLA from Rajsamand Kiran Maheshwari died in November 2020, leaving her constituency vacant

January 20, Vallabhnagar (Udaipur) Gajendra Singh Shaktawat passed away

Eventually, the strength of the legislators in the 200-member Assembly has been reduced to 196

with the hard work of party workers." He further said that the party shall break the trend of Rajasthan under which BJP and Congress passes power to alternate hands after tenure of five years.

"We shall break this trend and ensure that BJP emerges as an undefeated and unconquered party forever in the state in coming elections," he added. Poonia was supposed to travel to Chittaurgarh, Pratapgarh, Banswara and Dungarpur on Thursday on his election campaign. However, he cancelled it in the wake of last rites for MLA Gajendra Singh Shaktawat being performed in his home town. However, his visit to Rajsamand is scheduled on January 22 and to Bhilwara on January 23.

He shall also visit Shaktawat's residence on Friday, said party sources.

## SONTHABOMMALI NANDI ROW

# Andhra cops see conspiracy angle

AGENCIES

**Sonthabommali (Andhra Pradesh), Jan 21:** Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam district police are investigating the angle of conspiracy and continuing the hunt for more people involved in illegally shifting a Nandi idol from a temple after arresting six persons.

Srikakulam superintendent of police Amit Bardar said a group of people shifted a Nandi (cow) idol from a local temple and tried to place it on a nearby pedestal on the middle of the road Thursday.

"Somebody wanted to have something there (on the pedestal) and these people in order to lay claim over that have taken out one of the idols from inside the premises," said Bardar. He said the people involved ignored the due process and hurriedly did this act, which was all caught on camera, right from the time they took the idol out of the temple and also at the pedestal.

"It gives an impression that these persons would disturb the harmony in this village. So this is the complaint we got. Subsequently we have taken up the investiga-

tion. We are taking a legal view if this comes under the purview of idol desecration," said the IPS officer. Based on the opinion of the archaeological department and sculptors, he said the police would proceed accordingly.

Though Bardar did not invoke the names of any political parties, reportedly the pedestal was being readied to set up a statue of former chief minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

"There are signs of it which do point out towards this angle as well," he said, observing that a closer examination of their social media profile points to their affiliation to a particular political party.

In the video footage, the accused were seen taking photographs of the idol, raising suspicions as to what they would use those im-

ages and footage for. "Even if you ignore the things happening in the state, just this incident itself is so disturbing to see," said Bardar.

According to the SP some of the accused were members of the temple committee, who were told only a couple days ago what precautions to take to secure the religious place.

**Somebody wanted to have something there (on the pedestal) and these people in order to lay claim over that have taken out one of the idols from inside the premises**

**AMIT BARDAR**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE,  
SRIKAKULAM

## MASK UP & NO FEAR



With their masks on, students in an Ajmer school attend classes with strict Covid protocols in place

PTI PHOTO

# 2.5K vehicles flagged off for doorstep ration delivery

AGENCIES

**Amaravati, Jan 21:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy Thursday flagged off a fleet of 2,500 'Mobile Dispensing Units' (MDUs) as part of the public distribution system. The vehicles will supply ration and quality rice at the doorstep of the beneficiaries across the state.

"Starting February 1, quality rice and ration provisions will be delivered by 9,260 vehicles at the doorsteps. The government will be spending Rs 830 crore more on this scheme," an official said.

The Civil Supplies department has incorporated changes in procuring rice to reduce husk and chipped rice. It will also supply sortex rice to beneficiaries without stones or damaged grains.

"Using the volunteer system, quality rice will be distributed at the doorstep of the cardholders by tak-

THE STATE GOVT HAS BOUGHT 9,260 VEHICLES IN TOTAL AT A COST OF RS 539 CRORE

THE RATION WILL BE SUPPLIED TO THE ELIGIBLE RATION CARD HOLDERS AT A SUBSIDY OF 60 PC THROUGH VARIOUS CORPORATIONS UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

ing their fingerprints and supplying ration in reusable bags with precise weight. Every rice bag is sealed and tagged with a unique code which leaves zero scope for adulteration," he said.

Besides, the delivery vehicles are also fitted with GPS devices, requiring each of the vehicles to deliver goods within 18 days of each month.

The state government has bought the 9,260 vehicles at a cost of Rs 539 crore to supply ration and qual-



Andhra Pradesh CM Jagan Mohan Reddy flags off the vehicles, Thursday

ity rice at the doorstep of the beneficiaries. These will be supplied to the eligible ration cardholders at a subsidy of 60 per cent through various corporations under the employment guarantee scheme for unemployed youth.

With each vehicle costing Rs 5.8 lakh, the subsidy works out to Rs 3.48 lakh. As many as 700 vehicles will be allotted through ST corporation, 2,300 through SC corporation, 3,800 through BC corporation, 660 through minorities

corporation and 1,800 through the EWEB corporation.

Civil Supplies Minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao and other senior officials accompanied the Chief Minister during the flagging off ceremony.

# BOY, SET AFIRE BY FATHER OVER STUDIES, SUCCUMBS

The accused, inebriated, first beat up the Class 6 student even as the boy's mother tried in vain to save him. An infuriated Balu then poured turpentine oil on Charan and set him ablaze



Representative pic

Police said Charan's labourer father R Balu had set him afire Sunday night at their shanty in a private school campus in Kukatapally Housing Board Colony under Cyberabad police commissionerate. Balu's wife worked as an attendant at the school.

A police officer said that an inebriated Balu first beat up the Class 6 student over his educational activities even as the boy's mother tried in vain to save him. An in-

riated Balu then poured turpentine oil on Charan and set him ablaze.

The boy ran out of the house, where area residents doused the flames and rushed him to a hospital. Police later arrested Balu, originally hailing from Nagarkurnool.

Police said that the boy was rescued in 2019 under 'Operation Smile' while he was working at a bike-repair shop, following which police had counselled his parents.

# Rajasthan's unemployment index touches record high

CMIE data: The desert state is placed second in the unemployment index behind Haryana at 32.5 pc

AGENCIES

**Jaipur, Jan 21:** The unemployment index of Rajasthan, as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, touched the highest ever rate of 28.2 per cent in January 2021, same as December 2020, which is four times higher than the country's average national unemployment rate of 7.3 per cent.

The desert state is placed second in the unemployment index behind Haryana at 32.5 per cent.

The national unemployment index touched its highest mark in April 2020 following the imposition of nationwide lockdown to check the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. However, in Rajasthan, the unemployment rate touched a peak of 28.2 per cent in December 2020, nearly 10 months after the imposition of lockdown.

While the national unemployment index showed up and down movement after April 2020, the



Rajasthan unemployment index did not reflect a very sharp fluctuation during this period.

In March 2020, Rajasthan's unemployment rate was 11.9 per cent against a national rate of 8.75 per cent, in April it was 17.7 per cent against a national average of 23.5 per cent, while in May it was 15.7 per cent in Rajasthan against a national average of 21.73 per cent.

In September 2020, Rajasthan's unemployment rate was 15.3 per cent

as against the national average of 6.68 per cent, in October it was 24.1 per cent in the state against a national rate of 7.02 per cent, in November it was 18.5 per cent in Rajasthan against a national average of 6.50 per cent, while in December it was 28.2 per cent in the desert state against a national rate of 9.06 per cent.

While many in the political circles blame it on the poor governance by the Congress government

in the state, the travel industry too put the onus on the ruling party, accusing it of ignoring the plush travel and tourism industry which supports 22 per cent of the workforce in Rajasthan, generating 30 per cent of the state's GDP.

"As many as 22 per cent of the workforce in Rajasthan is supported by tourism, while 30 per cent of the state's GDP comes from it. The tourism sector has been badly hit since March 2020, but the government did not come out with any significant plan to improve the scenario, thus giving rise to rising unemployment in the state. The promises made to us were great, but nothing was done," said Randhir Vikram Singh, President of the Indian Heritage Hotels Association, adding that neighbouring states like Madhya Pradesh are giving subsidies on film shoot, but despite having all the assets, Rajasthan is left behind because of no similar initiative by the government.

# national

## of the day quote

The BJP government has extended a proposal to defer the implementation of the farm laws for the next one and a half year. The move is illogical and without any rationale

**AKHILESH YADAV** | SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

Health workers in few numbers have come up for vaccination. This is also due to the rhetoric between the two vaccine manufacturers for commercial reasons. Yesterday, Bharat Biotech released guidelines regarding its vaccine. If these guidelines were already issued, people would have had more trust in the vaccine

**ASHOK GEHLOT** | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

This place (Raigarh) is famous for its hot springs. However, in those days this had also resulted in non-availability of cool water for the locals who had sought Guru Nanaks help when he came here

**NITISH KUMAR** | CHIEF MINISTER OF BIHAR

## SHORT TAKES

### Six wanted criminals held

**Gurugram:** In a major breakthrough, the crime branch unit of Gurugram police has arrested six most-wanted criminals carrying a reward of Rs 5,000 each, from Dwarka Expressway, officials said Thursday. The arrested accused were involved in around 60 cases of murder, attempt to murder, dacoity, kidnapping, loot, snatching, NDPS Act and Arms Act registered against them in Delhi, Gurugram and Jhajjar.

### Woman kills son, commits suicide

**Hamirpur (UP):** A 30-year-old woman allegedly killed her five-year-old son by giving him milk laced with powdered glass to drink and then committed suicide by consuming the same at her parental house in Hamirpur district of Uttar Pradesh, police said Thursday. Soni Nishad along with her son Shani was living with her parents in Sahurapur village in Lalpura police area for the past six-seven months after differences with her in-laws.

### Man robbed at gunpoint

**Mumbai:** A case has been registered against four unidentified persons who allegedly robbed a businessman at gunpoint at his home in the western suburb of Andheri here, police said on Thursday. According to the police, four robbers entered businessman Ebrahim Sanaullah Chowdhary's flat at Viraj Tower in Andheri January 17. The unidentified accused allegedly assaulted him, tied him up and threatened him at gunpoint, an official said.

### Assailants slit girl's throat

**Patna:** Soon after the murder of Indigo Airlines state head Rupesh Kumar Singh, unidentified men slit the throat of a 14-year-old girl in Patna's Jakkanpur area, an official said Thursday. The deceased, Anshu Kumari, was alone at home when some unidentified men entered the house and attacked her with sharp-edged weapons. As per the statement of the deceased's father, his wife and he had left for work and Anshu was alone at home Wednesday.

## Bird flu confirmed in more places in Maha, MP, Chhattisgarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** The Centre Thursday said bird flu cases have been confirmed in poultry birds in a few more districts of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. So far, avian influenza in poultry has been confirmed in six states - Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab. In a statement, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said bird flu has been confirmed in poultry samples from Thane (Kalyan), Yavatmal (Dhunki, Pusad), Wardha (Chakni, Hingaghat), Gondia (Nimba, Goregaon), Ahmednagar (BhumirChavan) and Hingoli (Pimpri Khurd) districts of Maharashtra.

The disease has also been confirmed in poultry birds in Raisa (Gairatganj) district of Madhya Pradesh as well as Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

However in Uttar Pradesh, the disease has been confirmed in geese in Hadha, Sikanderpur, Karan of Unnao district. According to the ministry, the control and containment operations are going on in the affected epicentres of Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The central team formed for monitoring the situation in the affected areas of the country has visited Parbhani district of Maharashtra to monitor the epicentres of the outbreak and to conduct epidemiological studies.

The viral disease in crow/migratory birds has been confirmed in 10 states so far - Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The Central government is taking continuous efforts to generate awareness about the disease through multiple platforms, including social media, it added.



## Maha Cong to agitate for Arnab's arrest

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Jan 21:** Terming the recent revelations of WhatsApp chats of two media personalities Arnab Goswami and Partho Dasgupta as "extremely serious and violative of the Official Secret Act, 1923" the Maharashtra Congress on Thursday announced state-wide protests on Friday (Jan. 22) demanding their arrest and prosecution.

State party President and Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat said that the chats between the Republic TV Editor and the ex-BARC head had some serious revelations related to national security and pertaining to the retaliatory surgical strike by India in Balakot, Pakistan.

"How did Goswami get the information on the air-strikes of Feb. 23, 2019, three days before the action was taken? Who is the 'Big Name' in the government that he refers to? With whom did Goswami share such sensitive information that is violative of the OSA, 1923," Thorat

## 'SELF-RELIANCE A STRATEGIC NECESSITY'

Army Chief Gen Naravane said red-tapism has made the defence acquisition process a 'vicious cycle'



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** Self-reliance is a strategic necessity but to achieve it a revolution is needed in bureaucratic affairs, Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane has said while pointing out that defence modernisation is often held hostage to the processes and procedures involved.

Gen Naravane said red-tapism has made the defence acquisition process a "vicious cycle".

"We need a revolution in bureaucratic affairs to realise the vision of self-reliance," he said while speaking on the occasion of 25 years of Army-industry partnership at a virtual conference.

Talking about the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020, he said it has been aligned to empower domestic industry. He appreciated the government's initiative to increase the FDI in defence production to 74 per cent from the existing 49 per cent. But he made a point that more needs to be done.

"While all these initiatives are quite appreciable, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done," said Gen Naravane. He also quoted late Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar as saying that the "entire procurement process is based on distrust". "There are certain inherent procedural lacunae that have crept into the acquisition process which primarily arises due to the overbearing nature of our rules, regulations and guidelines in trying to ensure zero error," said Gen Naravane adding, "This is also aggravated by our own interpretation of rules." He said DPP 2016 which is about 450 pages and DAP

**The MPs should meet the Prime Minister also on the issue of Karnataka-occupied areas and the long-standing demand of the people there to be incorporated in Maharashtra**

**UDDHAV THACKERAY** | MAHA CHIEF MINISTER

**VACCINE HESITANCY 39% IN DELHI-NCR**

COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy is as high as 39 per cent in the Delhi-NCR with about one-fifth of the respondents saying that they will not take the jab, according to a telephonic survey conducted by the NCAER



## IMA announces relay hunger strike of doctors from Feb 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** The IMA on Thursday announced a pan-India relay hunger strike of doctors starting February 1, in protest against a notification issued by the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) that authorises post-graduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda to perform general surgical procedures, stating that it will lead to "mixopathy".

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) is giving immediate directives to all members across the country to launch the "Save Healthcare India Movement", the doctors' body said in a statement.

Under the campaign, the IMA will launch a massive awareness drive across the country as this is a clear threat to the safety of healthcare of people.

Doctors will take turns to sit on the hunger strike 24x7 from February 1 and the IMA will release posters and banners to raise



awareness on the issue across the country, the statement said. "All IMA members shall update their Members of Parliament and MLAs regarding the true picture of the notification and the integration policy. The IMA will also give its representations to all state governments. Under this movement, all NGOs will be updated about the core issues," it added.

Besides, all IMA members will write and convey their feelings to the prime minister, the association said. Representatives of the IMA shall visit various places across the country to raise awareness

among the public and apprise various associations from different countries of this "unscientific" notification, it said, adding that the global voice of modern medicine shall echo the feelings of the Indian Medical Association and its members. The IMA has condemned the notification issued by the CCIM, a statutory body under the AYUSH Ministry, authorising post-graduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda to be trained to perform surgical procedures such as excisions of benign tumours, amputation of gangrene, nasal and cataract operations.

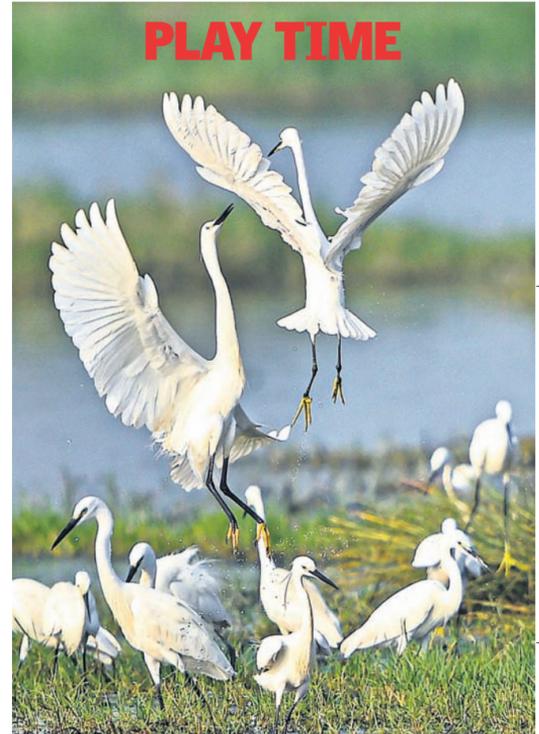
## BSF threatening voters in border areas: TMC complains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 21:** Ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal Thursday met the full bench of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and alleged that the BSF is threatening people in the border areas of the state to cast their votes in favour of a particular political party.

The Border Security Force (BSF) is yet to issue a reaction to the TMC's allegation. The full bench of the ECI, led by Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, arrived in the state Wednesday evening on a three-day visit ahead of the assembly polls, the dates of which are yet to be announced.

"We have informed the CEC and other ECI officials that the BSF is threatening voters in the border areas. We have received inputs that officers of the paramil-



A flock of White Egret at Perumbakkam marshland, near Chennai PTI PHOTO

## CRPF inducting women warriors in CoBRA force

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is in the process to induct women warriors of the force into its elite CoBRA Battalion to engage in the fight against the Maoists - the first of such kinds of initiatives taken in the Maoist warfare duties.

Outgoing CRPF Director General A.P. Maheshwari, who is to retire on February 28, made the announcement while addressing the media in his first interaction during the Covid crisis. "We are inducting women warriors in the CoBRA force, the anti-Naxal wing," Maheshwari said. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had accorded approval

for setting up of sanction of 10 unattached battalions of the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) for guerrilla and jungle warfare type operations for dealing with extremists and insurgents. Two Battalions of CoBRA force were raised in 2008-09. In 2009-10, the number of the Battalion was increased to four. Later, four more Battalions of the force were raised in 2010-11. This is the first time when women are being inducted into the CoBRA force.

Currently the 3.25 lakh strong Central Armed Police Force (CAPF), have 246 Battalions that include 208 executive, six women, 15 RAF, 10 CoBRA, five Signal, one Special Duty Group and one Parliament Duty Group.

## Nearly two-third Indians want Bharat Ratna for Dalai Lama

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** Two thirds of respondents in the IANS C Voter Tibet poll have endorsed the demand for conferring India's highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna on the Dalai Lama.

More than 62 per cent respondents (62.4 per cent) support the conferment of highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna to The Dalai Lama.

As per the poll, 21.7 per cent re-

spondents said no to this question. Among the age groups, the support is higher in the 55 plus age group with 73.1 per cent supporting the Bharat Ratna for Dalai Lama.

Among the regions, the support is highest in North India with 67.6 per cent supporting the idea.

Two third of respondents acknowledge Dalai Lama as an important cultural and spiritual influencer of modern India. In fact, the qualitative response from the sample suggest a huge number of



them consider Dalai Lama as an Indian Spiritual leader, not as a foreigner.

On one hand this could be considered a great achievement of assimilation, but on the other hand it also tells that not being aggressive on China front has diluted the Tibetan brand identity of Dalai Lama, the survey said.

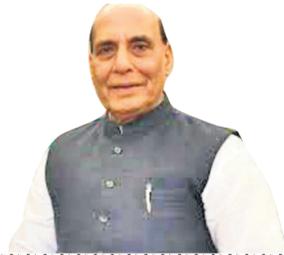
Therefore, a similar number support the conferment of highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna to The Dalai Lama. This emotion is just an extension of the emotions expressed in previous question by the respondents.

Indians are willing to risk worsening ties with China on the issue of human rights in Tibet. This is the most significant finding of this survey. Almost two-third of Indians want to support the issue of Tibet even at the cost of worsening relationship with China. The brand equity of China has taken a beating over last one year and majority of Indians have further become anti-China in their perceptions.

Nearly 80% Indians support free Tibet. This is significant and needs

no further elaboration. It took just about ten odd questions in the survey and 5 minutes discussion from the respondents to recalibrate the moral compass of the respondents. The good part of this finding is that majority of Indians will support the cause if they are informed enough and start thinking about it. Bad part of this information is that they actually need to be pushed into this conversation. Worst part of this information is to know that virtually nobody if doing it.

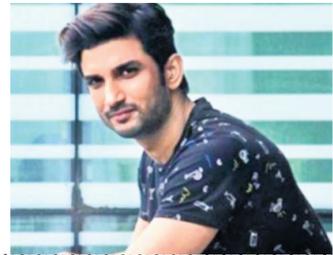
# national



**India is committed to enhance the defence engagements with Indonesia as part of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**  
**RAINATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER**

## STREET IN DELHI TO BE NAMED AFTER SSR

A stretch of road in Andrews Ganj in south Delhi will soon be named after the late actor Sushant Singh Rajput as the area's civic body has cleared a proposal for it, officials said Thursday



## of the day quote

People are opposing projects everywhere. The Tamnar project has seen opposition too. As you know it is a 400 KV line which is coming from Karnataka to Goa. If the Tamnar (power) line is not drawn over the next two years, then we will not be able to use ACs and fans



The way in which our BJP Government is undertaking housing projects in the country in rural as well as urban areas, I have full assurance that by August 15, 2022 everyone in the country will be facilitated with a house to live in



The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines, while a section of our own is fomenting misinformation and doubt for narrow political ends



## SHORT TAKES

### Protests against Tandav in Jammu

**Jammu:** The Rastriya Bajrang Dal and some other organisations staged separate protests against web series 'Tandav' in Jammu Thursday, accusing its cast and crew of depicting Hindu deities in an objectionable manner and hurting religious sentiments. Hundreds of Rastriya Bajrang Dal activists led by its president Rakesh Kumar took out a rally in the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir and demanded that the makers of the series be arrested. "The makers and artistes of 'Tandav' have hurt religious sentiments by depicting Hindu gods in an objectionable manner," Kumar told reporters.

### 3 BJP activists held

**Chandannagar (WB):** Three BJP activists including its Hooghly district youth wing chief Suresh Shaw have been arrested for allegedly raising 'goli maro...' (shoot the traitors) slogan at a roadshow of party leader Suvendu Adhikari here, police said Thursday. Some BJP activists had allegedly raised the slogan at a party programme in West Bengal's Hooghly district on Wednesday, following which the district police registered a suo motu case and arrested them late at night, an officer said.

### Jawan killed

**Jammu:** An Army jawan was killed when Pakistan violated the ceasefire and resorted to firing on forward positions along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district Thursday, officials said. The Pakistan Army resorted to unprovoked firing along the LoC in the Krishna Ghati sector of Poonch, the officials said. The Indian Army responded to the enemy fire in a befitting manner, they added.

# 92 countries post request for Made-in-India vaccines

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** Ninety-two countries have approached India for Covid-19 vaccines, bolstering New Delhi's credentials as the vaccine hub of the world.

In a letter to PM Modi Tuesday, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit of the Dominican Republic, has also requested for inoculation, signalling that the demand for Indian jabs has acquired a transcontinental appeal. "As we enter 2021 and persevere in our fight against Covid-19, Dominica's population of 72,100 is in urgent need of enough doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. I, therefore, request, with great humility and respect, that you assist us by donating the doses we need to make our population safe (optimally 70,000 first and second doses)," wrote Skerrit.

In other parts of Latin America, Brazil, which has the second highest number of coronavirus cases in the world next only to the United States, has sent a special plane to pick up Indian vaccines from Pune. A Brazilian plane is expected to fly the first 2 million doses of a Covid-19 vaccine purchased by the government's Fiocruz biomedical institute. According to a Reuters report from Sao Paulo, Health Minister



Boxes of COVID-19 vaccines arrives in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Eduardo Pazuella said the documentation is ready for bringing the AstraZeneca-Oxford University vaccine being produced at the Serum Institute of India. Brazil's Anvisa has scheduled a meeting for next Sunday to decide on the emergency use of the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford as well as one by developed by China's Sinovac Biotech. Meanwhile the Bolivian government had also signed a contract with India's Serum Institute for the supply of 5 million doses of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine. President Luis Arce said that combined with a recent deal to buy 5.2 million Sputnik V vaccine doses from Russia, Bolivia now expected

## UNITED WE STAND

Highly placed sources said that scores of countries are approaching India, as the word spreads that Indian vaccines are showing negligible side-effects, since the immunisation drive in the country began Saturday

India is sending its domestically developed vaccines to several neighbouring countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar

to be able to inoculate all of its vaccineable population.

The sources said that in tune with Prime Minister Modi's message that India's vaccine approach are intended to heal humanity, India would not be averse to provide vaccines to Pakistan, as part of a drive to eliminate the virus globally.

And in the course of time if the Chinese vaccine does not work, India would not hesitate to supply jabs to Beijing as well. The sources pointed out that India's vaccine exports to China may go a long way in addressing India's adverse trade balance with the Middle Kingdom.

So far, China's vaccine has shown patchy results.

# Key data of over 3.25L Indian users leaked in BuyUCoin hack

*The data leak includes names, e-mails, mobile numbers, encrypted passwords, user wallet details, order details, bank details, KYC details (PAN number, passport numbers) and deposit history*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** In yet another data breach, sensitive data of nearly 3.25 lakh users of India-based global cryptocurrency exchange and wallet, BuyUCoin, have been exposed on the Dark Web.

The data leaked include names, e-mails, mobile numbers, encrypted passwords, user wallet details, order details, bank details, KYC details (PAN number, passport numbers) and deposit history.

According to independent cyber security researcher Rajshekhar Rajaharia, the 6GB file on MongoDB database contains three backup files containing BuyUCoin data.

"This is a serious hack as key financial, banking and KYC details have been leaked on the Dark Web," Rajaharia told IANS and shared some screenshots of the leaked data. Researchers at cyber security firm Kela Research and Strategy Ltd first discovered the stolen data, linked on the same forum, from Wongnai Media Co Ltd, Tuned Global Pvt Ltd, BuyUCoin, Wappalyzer, Teespring Inc and Bonobos.com, which looks the handiwork of infamous hacking group ShinyHunters.

"Over this past summer, ShinyHunters was seen publishing leaked data for free, exposing millions of personal records from



all over the world," Victoria Kivilevich, threat intelligence analyst at Kela Research, told SiliconANGLE.

"We have seen collaborators of Shiny Hunters selling and leaking other dumps in the recent months," BuyUCoin was yet to react to the report. ShinyHunters has also leaked 1.9 million user records stolen from free online photo editing application Pixlr. According to Rajaharia, the hacker is the same who earlier leaked BigBasket and JusPay data in India.

In November last year, one of India's popular online grocery stores BigBasket found that its data of over 20 million users had been hacked and were on sale on the dark web for over \$40,000.

# WOMEN'S GROUP SET UP SOLAR PANEL MAKING UNIT IN MAHARASHTRA VILLAGE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Wardha, Jan 21:** A women's self-help group has set up a solar panel manufacturing unit at a village here in Maharashtra, as part of a project aimed at encouraging women to take up jobs and sustain their livelihood, officials said.

Talking to PTI Thursday, Wardha Zilla Parishad's Chief Executive Officer Dr Sachin Ombase claimed it to be the first such unit set up by a rural women's self-help group in the state.

"The project is aimed at helping women in rural areas towards sustainable employment and to raise their standard of living," he

said. The unit, set up by the Tejaswi Solar Energy Backward Women's Industrial Society, comprising 214 members which include 200 from backward classes, will be inaugurated by district Guardian Minister Sunil Kedar on January 26, he said.

These women, who are uneducated, took up the project and made efforts towards gaining technical proficiency in solar panel construction and manufacturing, the official said. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay has provided technical support for the project, he said.

"Through this project, we are trying to be entrepreneurial in a vil-

lage where majority of the women belong to backward classes," the women's industrial society's director, Sangita Wankhede, said. "We received training under the zilla parishad's UMED campaign and now, we are manufacturing solar panels, street lights and lamps in our village," she said.

The Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission-UMED Abhiyan aims at creating efficient institutional platforms for the rural poor for a sustainable livelihood. Wankhede said they recently received an order of street lights worth Rs 40 lakh from the zilla parishad.

# NCB unearths Dawood link in drugs factory raid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Jan 21:** In a mega action against the drug cartels in Mumbai, the Narcotics Control Bureau has found the links of fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar after the agency busted a drugs factory in Mumbai's Dongri, which was being operated by Karim Lala's grandson Parwez Khan aka Chinku Pathan.

The NCB sleuths also recovered cash to the tune of Rs 2.18 crore from the premises of his associate Arif Bujhwala, another kingly. An NCB official connected to the probe, requesting anonymity told IANS, "Chinku Pathan, who was nabbed by the NCB yesterday is the grandson of Lala, who was the mentor of

Dawood Ibrahim." The official said that Lala was the original underworld don of Mumbai. "This cartel was basically being run by the Pathani gang and they were also having relations with the Dawood gang," he said.

The official said that Chinku Pathan's partner Bhujwala is the biggest supplier of drugs in Maharashtra. It began Wednesday morning, when the agency sleuths arrested Chinku Pathan along with his associate Zakir Hussain Fazal Huk Shaikh and seized 2.9 grams of heroin and 52.2 grams of mephedrone or 'MD' from his residence at 7th Floor, 'B' Wing, Progressive Signature CHS, Ghansoli. The NCB team also recovered one 9 mm pistol from

Chinku Pathan's residence. The official said that in a parallel raid, Rahul Kumar Verma, a DJ and rapper by profession, was intercepted in Mumbai's Bhiwandi area. The official said that the DJ is suspected to be one of the suppliers of mephedrone of Chinku Pathan. The official added that after the arrest of Lala's grandson, the NCB achieved a major breakthrough as the drug law enforcement team carried out raids at the residence of Bhujwala in Dongri area on Wednesday evening which continued till early morning Thursday.

During the raids, the NCB team recovered one revolver and unaccounted cash amounting to Rs 2.18 crore, which is believed to be the sale proceeds from drug trafficking.

study in detail the tourists' sensitivity towards pricing and incorporate that; and food companies could open outlets at the places where negative comments have been posted owing to the non-availability of any food joint in the vicinity."

Speaking to IANS, Nilesh Shah of the Travel and Tourism Association of Goa said, the association has been requesting the Goa government for years for carrying out a detailed data-based study of the tourism sector. "We have been telling the Goa government to set up a data centre in Goa to track tourism-related data. We had even suggested that experts in the Goa University or the Goa Institute of Management could be roped in to analyse the data collected," Shah said.

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# Mumbai police summon Kangana



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 21:** Mumbai police have summoned Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut in a defamation case filed by veteran writer-lyricist Javed Akhtar, an official said.

Kangana has been asked to appear before the Juhu police here on Friday, the police official said. Akhtar filed a criminal complaint against Kangana in November last year before the Andheri metropolitan magistrate for allegedly making defamatory and baseless comments against him in television interviews.

He claimed that she dragged his name while referring to a "coterie" existing in Bollywood, in TV interviews after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June last year.

The complaint said Kangana had falsely claimed that Akhtar threatened her to keep silent about her alleged relationship with actor Hrithik Roshan. It noted that Kangana's remarks had tarnished Akhtar's public image. The court on January 17 allowed the police time till February 1 to file a report of their probe into the defamation complaint.

# Top court grants bail to actress Ragini Dwivedi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** The Supreme Court Thursday granted bail to Kannada film actress Ragini Dwivedi in the drugs racket case.

A bench of justices R F Nariman, Navin Sinha and K M Joseph set aside the November 3 order of the Karnataka High Court refusing to grant bail to Dwivedi and others in the case registered under various provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

During the hearing conducted through video conferencing, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra appearing for Dwivedi said the 31-year-old actress is in jail while three other co-accused are on bail. He said that September 2 last year, acting on information allegedly received by the police, she was arrested but no recovery of contraband was made from her.

# Poor roads, high prices, garbage hit Goa tourism: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Panaji, Jan 21:** Safety issues, poor roads and garbage management, as well as exorbitant prices and theft are some of the key reasons for the decline in tourist growth in Goa, a big data study conducted by the Goa Institute of Management has revealed.

The study authored by Shikha Aggarwal and Alekh Gour, faculty members at the state's top B-school specialising in operations management and big data analytics, respectively, have also said that big data analytics could help address the coastal state's tourism travails by quick assessment of real-time data uploaded to the internet and social media by visiting tourists.

The study published in the latest

edition of the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management is based on 31,295 reviews posted to the Tripadvisor portal by tourists visiting the coastal state.

"The results show that top reasons for the decline of tourism in the state in recent years were safety, roads, and garbage; while other reasons were high prices, theft, food, etc," the study states describing the reasons as "major concerns leading to negative sentiments" about tourism in Goa.

The study coincides with the findings of a white paper released by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on the Goa economy which warns of declining growth rate in tourist footfall in Goa. The big data study compiled by Aggarwal and Gour may well



help the tourism industry spot lacunae - many of them glaring - in the functioning of the tourism sector; through the study of spontaneous and first hand responses and reviews made by tourists themselves through novel methodology based on web analytics tools.

"This is unprecedented and can lead to an understanding of overall tourist behaviour and patterns for a given city or country. Henceforth, a comprehensive model is developed that can be used to investigate the trends in tourism over a period and detect changes in sen-

# international



I believe that we need to ensure that the committee begins to move from 'preparing' a constitutional reform to 'drafting' one, as it is mandated to do  
GEIR PEDERSEN | UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR SYRIA

## GAS EXPLOSION IN MADRID BUILDING

A powerful gas explosion tore through a residential building in central Madrid, killing four people and ripping the facade off the structure



## of the day quote

As we begin our new Council term eight years later, it is indeed disheartening to note that the ongoing crisis in Syria still has no end in sight and the political process is yet to take off



Our new business plan involves strong interventions in the companies' debt structure and the inflow of 4 to 5 billion kroner in fresh capital. The plan appears more robust than the one we said no to in October



All countries must do this, and if a neighboring country doesn't do this we can hardly protect ourselves against the mutation; and then even tougher entry measures on our internal borders are unavoidable



HELGE BRAUN | ANGELA MERKEL'S CHIEF OF STAFF

# Arunachal part of southern Tibet: China

Reacting to a report about China building a new village in Arunachal Pradesh, the country says development and construction activities "within its own territory" is "normal" and beyond reproach

AGENCIES

Beijing, Jan 21: The Dragon nation Thursday reiterated that it does "not recognise" the "so-called Arunachal Pradesh" and "the region is part of southern Tibet."

China's development and construction activities "within its own territory" is "normal" and beyond reproach, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said here Thursday, reacting to a report about China building a new village in Arunachal Pradesh.

"China's position on the Zangnan region (South Tibet) is consistent and clear. We never recognised the so-called Arunachal Pradesh," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a media briefing while responding to a question.

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet, while India's consistent stand has been that the northeastern state is an integral and inalienable part of the country.

Hua said China's development and construction activities "within



our own territory is normal." "This is beyond reproach as it is in our territory," Hua added.

In a report, NDTV news channel showed two images of the area in Arunachal Pradesh where it said a new village has been set up by China and it consisted of about 101 homes.

According to the channel, the first image dated August 26, 2019 did not show any human habitation but the second one of November 2020 shows a row of structures. In a cautious reaction to the report, India Monday said

it keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on the country's security, and takes necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi said India has stepped up the construction of border infrastructure, including roads and bridges for the improvement of livelihood of its citizens.

"Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all the necessary measures to

## PASS FOR TRESPASSERS?

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safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," it said.

The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC). The report about China setting up a new village in Arunachal Pradesh comes amid a military standoff in eastern Ladakh for over eight months.

India and China have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the face-off in eastern Ladakh, but no significant headway has been made so far.

# Dragon is hopeful of a 'better' future with US

AGENCIES

Beijing, Jan 21: A visibly relieved China Thursday warmly congratulated new US President Joe Biden and urged him to heal and rebuild the severely damaged bilateral ties by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, known for fiery retorts against the US, welcomed Biden's first moves to join the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organisation (WHO) which was trashed by Trump as a puppet of China over its conduct to deal with the COVID-19.

"We express congratulations on the inauguration of President Biden. I noted many US media say this is a new day in America... After travelling an extraordinary period, we believe our two peoples deserve to embrace a better future. We hope Biden will be successful in governance," she said.

"I noticed the word unity has been mentioned several times in his inaugural speech. This is what is urgently needed in our bilateral relations," she said, adding that over the past four years "a handful



of US politicians made so many lies and incited so much hatred and division."

"Chinese and Americans have fallen victims to this," she said and asked the new US administration to bring the damaged China-US ties on the right track.

"We have different social systems, development stages and historical culture. It is only natural for us to have differences. Just as Biden said democracy should allow the right to dissent and disagreement must not lead to disunion, this should also be true to international relations," she said.

"Countries with different ideologies, social systems and culture can live in harmony and achieve the goal of common development and peace and development for the world," she said.

## SHORT TAKES

### D'Souza receives Trump's pardon

New York: Donald Trump in one of his last acts as President has pardoned Dinesh D'Souza, an Indian American writer, filmmaker and conservative political activist convicted of making illegal political contributions. Trump said that D'Souza had been "treated very unfairly by our government." He was one of 73 people whose pardons were announced Wednesday morning. Seventy others had their sentences commuted. Last month, Trump pardoned Charles Kushner, the father-in-law of his daughter Ivanka Trump.

### Tighter Covid norms in S'pore

Singapore: Singapore may introduce new restrictions and safeguards against COVID-19 ahead of the Chinese New Year period when large community intermingling is expected, a media report Thursday quoted the co-chair of the country's coronavirus multi-ministry task force as saying. Lawrence Wong, who is also Singapore's Education Minister, said the restrictions are being planned as the number of community cases has been "creeping up".

### Ahmadis' website to face ban in Pak

Islamabad: Pakistan has ordered a US-based website propagating the faith of Pakistan's minority Ahmadis shut down over allegedly blasphemous content, one of the site's managers said Thursday. Harris Zafar said Pakistan's Communication Authority earlier this month issued a legal notice for him and fellow American Amjad Mahmood Khan, who also manages TrueIslam.Com, demanding that the site be shut down. Zafar said the website is based in the US, where both he and Khan live and work.

### Strong quake hits Philippines

Manila: A powerful earthquake shook parts of the southern Philippines Thursday night, but authorities said it was too deep to cause major damage and no tsunami warning was issued. The quake measured a preliminary 7.0 magnitude and was located 95.8 kilometers (60 miles) below the sea and about 210 kilometers (130 miles) southeast of Pondaguitan in Davao Occidental province.



The Aurora Borealis is seen in the sky over Muonio in Lapland, Finland

REUTERS

# IRAN TRADERS SEEK LIFELINE IN IRAQ

Iran's economy is in tatters amid crippling US sanctions

AGENCIES

Dohuk (Iraq), Jan 21: Piles of plush carpets line the floors of a northern Iraq shopping centre hosting traders from neighbouring Iran who hope the spangle of their ornate handicrafts might offer a lifeline out of poverty.

In their own country, the economy is in tatters amid crippling U.S. sanctions.

"Our money is so devalued, so when we come to this side — apart from the cultural exchange that we share — from a financial perspective it's more profitable for us," said Iranian Ramiyar Parwiz, the organizer of the exhibition who is originally from Sanandaj. "The money we receive... whether in dollars or dinars has a higher value on our side and it's worth a lot." At least 24 businesses from 15 Iranian cities set up shop this week in the city of Dohuk in the Kurdish-run northern region of Iraq. From Sanandaj to Bijar, they brought luxurious carpets. From Isfahan, Yazd and Hamadan, precious gems, copper and pottery.

Iran is among Iraq's largest trading partners and this cooperation has deepened since 2018 amid the

Trump administration's maximalist policy on Iran that has seen the U.S. pull out of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and levy punishing sanctions on the country. Tens of thousands of Iranian pilgrims visit holy sites in Najaf and Karbala every year, boosting Iraq's fledgling tourism sector. Over 100 trucks ferry construction materials, food, medicine and appliances into Iraq every day.

The dependence on Iraqi markets has only deepened as economic conditions worsen in Iran. U.S. sanctions bar American companies and foreign firms from dealing with Iran affecting Iran's energy, shipping and financial sectors, causing foreign investment to dry up. Oil exports have been the hardest hit and Iran's economy contracted with dreary forecasts for the future. Unemployment rose and rural populations were disproportionately affected.

The exhibition of Iranian businesses is typically held every year in the city of Sulimaniyah, which borders Iran. This is the first year the traders have ventured to Dohuk, which shares closer economic ties to neighboring Turkey, in hopes of enticing new customers.



# India gifts over 2mn vax doses to Bangla

AGENCIES

Dhaka, Jan 21: India Thursday officially handed over 2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine as a gift to Bangladesh.

The vaccines were provided to Bangladesh at a crucial time when the number of coronavirus cases in this country was rising.

"India had stood by Bangladesh during the (1971) Liberation War, and today, when the pandemic is rattling the world, India again came with gifts of vaccines," Bangladesh foreign minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said.

A chartered Air India plane, carrying the Covishield vaccine landed at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport Thursday. Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami handed over the vaccines formally to Momen.

# World leaders laud US return to climate fight

AGENCIES

Berlin, Jan 21: World leaders breathed an audible sigh of relief that the United States under President Joe Biden is rejoining the global effort to curb climate change, a cause that his predecessor had shunned.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron were among those welcoming Biden's decision to rejoin the Paris climate accord, reversing a key Trump policy in the first hours of his presidency Wednesday. "Rejoining the Paris Agreement is hugely positive news," Johnson wrote on Twitter. Britain, which is hosting this year's U.N. climate summit, looked forward to working with the Biden administration on the issue, he said.

Macron likewise tweeted his joy at the U.S. rejoining the Paris pact, saying that with Biden, "we will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our



future. Stronger to protect our planet." The accord, forged in the French capital in 2015, commits countries to put forward plans for reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, which is released from burning fossil fuels. Former President Donald Trump had questioned the scientific warnings about man-made global warming, at times accusing other countries of using the Paris accord as a club to hurt the U.S.

By contrast, Biden put the fight against climate change at the center of his presidential campaign and on Wednesday immediately launched a series of climate-friendly

efforts to bring Washington back in step with the rest of the world on the issue. "A cry for survival comes from the planet itself," Biden said in his inaugural address. "A cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear now."

Experts say any international efforts to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), ideally 1.5C (2.7F), as agreed in the Paris accord would struggle without the contribution of U.S., which is the world's second biggest carbon emitter.

Scientists say time is running out to reach that goal because the world has already warmed 1.2 C

(2.2 F) since pre-industrial times.

Italy said the U.S. return to the Paris accord would help other countries reach their own climate commitments. "Italy looks forward to working with the U.S. to build a sustainable planet and ensure a better future for the next generations," Premier Giuseppe Conte tweeted. The Vatican, too, was clearly pleased given the decision aligns with Pope Francis' environmental agenda and belief in multilateral diplomacy. In a front-page editorial in Wednesday's L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican deputy editorial director Alessandro Gisotti noted that Biden's decision to rejoin Paris "converges with Pope Francis' commitment in favor of the custody of our common home."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was more muted in her reaction, noting merely that her government would "probably have a more similar opinion" with Biden on issues such as the Paris climate accord, migration and the World Health Organization.

# business



Online learning is paving the way for digital transformation. NSDC is facilitating the acquisition of online skills, which can help realise the immense potential of youth to leverage existing as well as emerging opportunities

**MANISH KUMAR** | MD AND CEO, NSDC

## HERO MOTOCORP SURPASSES 100MN

Two-wheeler major Hero MotoCorp has surpassed the significant milestone of 100 million (10 crore) units in cumulative production. The 100 millionth bike, the Xtreme 160R, was rolled-out of the company's manufacturing facility in Haridwar



## of the day quote

The government should simplify requirements under GST by allowing companies to adjust input credit of one state against the tax payable situation in another state as GST is a central levy

**ASITAVA SEN** | CEO, CROPLIFE INDIA

The pandemic caused a significant number of smartphone owners to avoid or delay new purchases. Key secondary markets India and Latin America saw 20% and 24% declines, respectively, during H1-2020 due to strict and extended lockdowns

**GLENN CARDOZA** | SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST

Retail sales in the US and China have grown by about 3-5%, which would provide the industry sustained momentum over the medium term

**SUBODH RAI** | CHIEF RATINGS OFFICER, CRISIL RATINGS LTD

# India not far from attaining positive growth, says RBI

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Jan 21:** India's GDP is within the striking distance of attaining positive growth, the Reserve Bank said observing that the letter 'V' in the V-shaped recovery stands for vaccine.

The Indian government launched the world's biggest vaccination drive January 16 to protect people from Covid-19.

"What will 2021 look like? The shape of the recovery will be V-shaped after all and the 'V' stands for vaccine," said an article on the 'state of economy' in the RBI's January Bulletin.

India has launched the biggest vaccination drive in the world, backed by its comparative advantage of having the largest vaccine manufacturing capacity in the world and a rich experience of mass inoculation drives against polio and measles.

"If successful, it will tilt the balance of risks upwards," said the authors who among others include RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

The RBI, however, said the views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the central bank.

E-commerce and digital technologies will likely be the bright spots in India's recovery in a world in which there will be rebounds for sure, but pre-pandemic levels of output and employment are a long way off, they said.

The article further said: "Recent shifts in the macroeconomic land-



**e-Commerce and digital technologies will likely be the bright spots in India's recovery in a world in which there will be rebounds for sure, but pre-pandemic levels of output and employment are a long way off**

scape have brightened the outlook, with GDP in striking distance of attaining positive territory and inflation easing closer to the target."

India's GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during 2020-21 as the Covid-19 pandemic severely hit the key manufacturing and services segments, as per government projections released earlier this month. The economy contracted by a

massive 23.9 per cent in the first quarter and 7.5 per cent in the second quarter on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The article further said that in the first half of 2021-22, GDP growth will benefit from statistical support and is likely to be mostly consumption-driven.

With Rabi sowing surpassing the normal acreage way before the end of the season, bumper agriculture production is expected in 2021.

"India being the global capital for vaccine manufacturing, pharmaceutical exports are expected to receive a big impetus with the start of vaccination drives globally. Agricultural exports remain resilient and under the recent production linked (PLI) scheme, food processing industry has been accorded priority," it said.

Harnessing the synergies by transforming low-value semi-processed agri-products through food processing would not only improve productivity but also boost India's competitiveness, it added.

## BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** BMW India has launched the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine in the country. Locally produced at BMW Group Plant Chennai exclusively for the Indian market, the car is available in both petrol and diesel variants at all BMW India dealerships from today onwards.

The long wheelbase 'Gran Limousine' is a new addition to the BMW 3 Series family. It is the long wheelbase version of the highly successful BMW 3 Series. It has been launched in India considering the clientele's preference for long sedans. The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine takes on the position of the longest, most spacious and comfortable car in its



segment and sets a new benchmark in the class.

The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine is available in one diesel variant (BMW 320d Luxury Line) and two petrol variants (BMW 330Li Luxury Line and BMW 330Li M Sport 'First Edition') which are locally produced.

The ex-showroom prices of BMW 330Li Luxury Line, BMW 320d Luxury Line and BMW 330Li M Sport 'First Edition' are ₹51,50,000, ₹52,50,000 and ₹53,90,000 respectively. Customers enjoy hassle-free ownership with low monthly payments starting ₹59,999, assured buy-back up to four years and flexible term-end options. Exclusive interest rates will also be applicable for a limited period.

## WHATSAPP PRIVACY POLICY

# Parl panel flags concerns

WhatsApp representatives who appeared before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT said the proposed changes are aimed at bringing in more transparency and the chat and calls on platform still remain end-to-end encrypted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** Members of a parliamentary panel Thursday flagged the issue of proposed changes in the privacy policy of WhatsApp and highlighted concerns of Indian citizens, sources said.

WhatsApp representatives who appeared before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology said the proposed changes are aimed at bringing in more transparency and the chat and calls on platform still remain end-to-end encrypted, some of the members said.

Some other members who attended the meeting maintained that the company was "evasive" in its reply on the issue of how it can bring in changes which are not conducive for Indian users. "They had no reply," said a member.

The member also claimed that company representative agreed that data was being monetised.

The committee interacted separately with representatives of Facebook, Twitter and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

After the meeting, a WhatsApp spokesperson said in a statement, "We wish to thank the Honorable Parliamentary Committee for giving us an opportunity to appear before them and provide our views. We look forward to assisting the Hon'ble Committee in future as well." In a strongly-worded letter to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathcart, the



Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had earlier this week said the proposed changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, without giving users an option to opt-out, "raise grave concerns regarding the implications for the choice and autonomy of Indian citizens".

The letter noted that with over 400 million users in India, the changes will have a disproportionate impact on the country's citizens. WhatsApp had earlier this month begun asking its 2 billion users worldwide to accept an update of its privacy policy if they want to keep using the popular messaging app. The new terms caused an outcry among technology experts, privacy advocates and users and triggered a wave of defections to rival services such as Signal and Telegram.

In the updated policy, it got a right to share data it collected from WhatsApp users with the broader Facebook network, which includes Instagram, regardless of owning any accounts or profiles there. Some businesses, as per the new policy, were to use Facebook-owned servers to store messages.

## SHORT TAKES

### Sebi slaps ₹1 cr fine

**New Delhi:** Sebi Thursday imposed a penalty of ₹1 crore on HDFC Bank for invoking securities pledged by stock broker BRH Wealth Kreamators in violation of the regulator's interim directions. In addition, the bank has been directed to transfer ₹158.68 crore along with 7 per cent interest per annum into an escrow account till the issue of settlement of clients' securities is reconciled, Sebi said in an order.

### Morgan Stanley invests ₹180 cr

**Mumbai:** Morgan Stanley India Infrastructure Thursday said it has invested ₹180 crore to acquire stake in LEAP India. Founded in 2013, LEAP India is an asset pooling company dedicated to providing dependable and cost-effective solutions to supply chains across India, according to a statement. The company has an asset pool of approx 4 million units, including pallets, foldable large containers (FLC), crates and utility boxes, it said.

### Bajaj Auto's PAT jumps 23%

**Mumbai:** Bajaj Auto Thursday reported a 23% jump in profit after tax (PAT) at ₹1,556 crore for the December 2020 quarter. The company had posted a PAT of ₹1,262 crore in corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Bajaj Auto said in a statement. Its sales from operations during October-December 2020 rose 17% to ₹8,910 crore, compared with ₹7,640 crore in the year-ago period. The firm sold a total of 13,06,810 vehicles during the December 2020 quarter.

### CRED invests in new venture

**New Delhi:** Kunal Shah, the founder of fintech company CRED, has invested in OnePlus co-founder Carl Pei's new venture. The amount invested has not been disclosed. Pei had co-founded OnePlus, which now ranks among premium smartphone companies, in 2013. He quit OnePlus in October last year to start a new venture. "Carl Pei has now received seed investment from India with Kunal Shah, founder of CRED, adding Carl's London based venture into his portfolio," a statement said. Details of Pei's new venture will be announced January 27, it added.

## INDO-US RELATIONS

# ECONOMIC TIES TO BE OF HIGH PRIORITY FOR BIDEN ADMIN

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Thursday said it believes that India-US bilateral economic ties would be a high priority for President Joe Biden-led administration in America.

"The Indian industry feels that with President Biden and Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi at the helm, the two countries would play a strong role in re-shaping the global economic agenda together," CII President Uday Kotak said.

Congratulating Biden on assuming charge as the 46th President of the US, Kotak said, "President Biden's experience in re-building the US economy during the Great Recession would help strengthen the US and global economic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic."

He added that Biden has long been a supporter of the India-US relationship and "we believe that bilateral economic ties would be a high priority for the new administration".

Kotak said Biden was directly in-



involved in many of the achievements in the India-US partnership, including the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, the designation of India as a US 'Major Defense Partner', and the US' support of India's permanent membership on the UN Security Council.

He also congratulated Kamala Harris on taking oath as the new vice-president of the US and said, "Vice-President Harris has made history as the first woman, as well as the first person of South Asian heritage, to take the office." "We look forward to working with her to strengthen India's multi-dimensional partnership with the US," Kotak said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Bharat Road Network Limited (BRNL), one of India's leading road developers, signed an agreement with India Highway Concession Trust, an infrastructure investment trust set up by Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ), a global institutional investor, for the sale of a BOT road project in the state of Odisha. BRNL is currently the largest shareholder with a 40% stake in this project.

The Share Purchase Agreement provides for the complete transfer of ownership of Shree Jagannath Expressway Private Limited, the special purpose vehicle (SPV) engaged in the development, operation and maintenance of a 67-kilometre toll road project from Bhubaneswar to Chandikhole, in Odisha. Project operations started in December 2011, with an initial concession period of 26 years.

Managing Director of BRNL Bajrang Kumar Choudhary said "The transaction is in line with BRNL's strategic plan for stake-



**The SPA provides for the complete transfer of ownership of Shree Jagannath Expressway Private Limited, and its operation and maintenance of a 67-km toll road project from Bhubaneswar to Chandikhole**

holder value creation through portfolio assets reallocation while focusing on enhancing operational excellence and increasing financial efficiencies in existing assets. The

## PE investments in real estate down 40% in 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** Private equity investments in real estate fell 40% year-on-year to \$4.06 billion in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Knight Frank India. Private equity (PE) investments in 2019 stood at nearly \$6.8 billion.

"India attracted private equity investments to the tune of \$38,149 million in the calendar year 2020. Of the total PE investment, the real estate sector claimed 11% share in 2020 with \$4,068 million, closing 21 deals during the year," Knight Frank said in a statement.

As per the data, investments in office assets fell to \$2,509 million last year from \$3,258 in 2019.

In retail real estate, the inflows declined to \$220 million from \$922 million. PE investment in warehousing decreased to \$971 million from \$1,895 million.

## 'Diamond industry expected to cap revenue loss at 20%'



AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Jan 21:** Recovery in key export markets and pent-up demand are likely to arrest the decline in revenue of the country's diamond industry to 20 per cent at \$15 billion, according to a report.

Crisil Ratings in the report said that when the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, the industry was expected to see a third of its revenue shaved off this fiscal. "However, this could now get arrested at around 20 per cent."

The recent upsurge in spending on diamonds, riding on a combination of pent-up demand and recovery in retail offtake in key markets such as the US and China, is expected to help India's diamond industry contain its decline and close this fiscal with a revenue of over \$15 billion, Crisil Ratings said in the report.

# Biden, Budget to power markets' bull run further

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

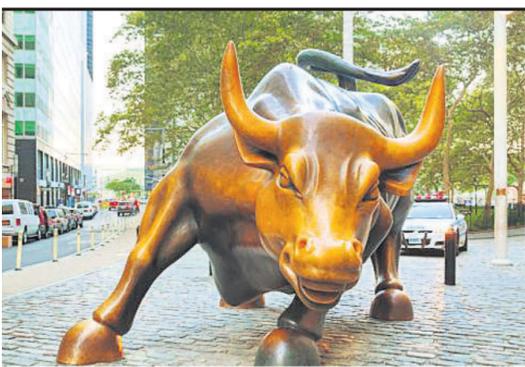
**Mumbai, Jan 21:** The bull run in India's equity market will last at least till the Union Budget FY'22, even as the barometer index S&P BSE Sensex mounted the 50,000-level mark. Accordingly, the Union Budget FY'22 is widely expected to be expansionary in terms of massive stimulus spending to aide the economy's faster recovery.

Even positive global cues such as a massive stimulus plan being proposed by the new US administration under President Joe Biden and the ongoing global vaccination programme are seen as solid signs by investors to hold on to their current positions.

In fact, a faster-than-anticipated macro recovery has remained intact. It has been supplemented by the vaccine roll-out programme.

Consequently, market participants' expectations have soared, especially of healthy Q3 results.

Other factors such as an abundant global and domestic liquidity as well as rising consumption trend will



continue to power the bull run. Notably, the FIIs are expected to continue pumping up the never ending bull run during the unusual pandemic period.

Till now in the fiscal, they have pumped in ₹2,38,527 crore or \$32.15 billion. Analysts across the board opined that such a scenario was visible during last several month. The search for a decent RoI has

brought these FIIs to India's shores even in December. Earlier, the lockdown induced market crash led to cheaper valuations which attracted foreign investors.

"Post the forthcoming Union Budget we may witness a temporary brake to the uptrend and further up-moves from hereon will depend on the pace of economic and corporate earnings growth and the tra-

**A FASTER-THAN-ANTICIPATED MACRO RECOVERY HAS REMAINED INTACT. IT HAS BEEN SUPPLEMENTED BY THE VACCINE ROLL-OUT PROGRAMME**

**OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS AN ABUNDANT GLOBAL AND DOMESTIC LIQUIDITY AS WELL AS RISING CONSUMPTION TREND WILL CONTINUE TO POWER THE BULL RUN**

jectory of inflation and interest rates in India and the world," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

According to Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services: "This trend is likely to last as expectations of better Q3 results, company's outlook commentary and the build up to Budget will boost both Nifty and Sensex to new highs."

Besides, India Inc is widely expected to come out with healthy third quarter results on the back of

higher-than-expected sales during the festive season.

"If the recovery in growth and corporate earnings, currently underway in India, gathers momentum, the markets may further surprise on the upside. But it is important to appreciate that the market is overvalued from the short-term perspective," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

"At high levels, the market is vulnerable to a correction. Investors can utilise the current euphoria to get rid of low-grade stocks from the portfolio."

Furthermore, S Hariharan, Head of Sales Trading, Emkay Global Financial Services said: "We expect strong margin expansion for consumer facing companies, as efficiency gains and savings on A&P spends continue to drive earnings."

Moreover, a strong festive season has driven sales growth well above earlier expectations. Hence, the consumer universe can be expected to deliver more than 20 per cent earnings growth."



Rahane, with his daughter and wife, during his welcome celebrations

Rohit Sharma walks out of the Mumbai Airport

PTI PHOTOS

# Red carpet welcome FOR TEAM INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai/New Delhi/Hyderabad, Jan 21:** Chants of 'Aala re aala Ajinkya aala' headlined a red carpet welcome for Ajinkya Rahane on his triumphant return from Australia with some other teammates but the mood was sombre in Hyderabad as one of his warriors, Mohammed Siraj, headed straight to his father's grave.

The chants (meaning here comes our Ajinkya) were heard amid the beating of the traditional dhol tasha and showering of flower petals at Rahane's residential complex.

Besides stand-in captain Rahane, also arriving in Mumbai were coach Ravi Shastri, star batsman Rohit Sharma, pacer Shardul Thakur and opener Prithvi Shaw, while Brisbane Test hero Rishabh Pant landed in the

national capital early this morning.

T Natarajan, who was originally picked as a net bowler but became the first Indian cricketer to make his international debut across all three formats during the same tour, landed in Bangalore and then took off for his village in Tamil Nadu's Salem.

The players from Chennai, including veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, rookie Washington Sundar and bowling coach Bharat Arun are currently in Dubai and are expected to reach the country early morning Friday.

On arrival in Mumbai, Rahane, Shastri, Rohit, Shardul and Shaw were felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) officials, including President Vijay Patil and Apex Council members Ajinkya Naik, Amit Dani and Umesh Khanvilka. Rahane also cut a cake to celebrate the team's win.

However, more surprises awaited the reticent batsman after he drove straight to his housing society in suburban Matunga, where residents had made elaborate preparations to accord their hero a royal welcome.

Rahane was welcomed with the beats of dhol, while others showered the cricketer with flower petals. Rahane was also joined by his wife and two-year-old daughter in the celebration.

Soaking in the carnival-like atmosphere, Rahane acknowledged the love and adulation showered on him by the people of the city, many of whom waited for his team at the airport wearing masks amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his society, residents and videographers jostled to capture the moments and the unassuming batsman posed happily for them.

Rahane was then greeted in a tra-

ditional manner as he walked towards the entrance of the building. Dhol tasha is usually played to celebrate special achievements and during joyous occasions.

An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the series-deciding fourth Test in Brisbane Tuesday to clinch the rubber 2-1 and retain the Border Gavaskar Trophy.

Stepping in after the catastrophe in Adelaide in the absence of Virat Kohli, Rahane led by example with a classic century in the second Test at Melbourne, guiding India to a series-levelling victory.

There was no looking back after that as Rahane inspired a heavily-depleted Indian team to an unbelievable series triumph against a full-strength Australian team that possessed the world's best bowling attack.

## Pant wants a name for himself Siraj heads straight to father's grave from airport, offers prayers

**NEW DELHI:** The comparisons with the iconic MS Dhoni are flattering but young Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant Thursday said he wants to carve his own identity in the game after playing a key role in the side's historic Test series win in Australia.

Pant is often compared with the two-time World Cup winning former captain and wicketkeeper batsman, who retired last year after a glorious international career.

"You feel amazing when you are compared to someone like MS Dhoni and you compare me with him," Pant told reporters after landing here from Australia where his match and series-winning effort of 89 in the second innings of the fourth Test won him all-round praise.

"It's amazing but I don't want to be compared with anyone, I want to make myself as

a name in Indian cricket, because it's not good compare some legend with some youngster."

The 23-year-old also scored a 97 in the drawn third Test in Sydney. And he wants to savour the triumph for now. "I think the whole team is very happy with the way we played the series in Australia," he said.

India made a stupendous fight-back after being bowled out for a record lowest score of 36 in Adelaide and went on to win the series despite their captain not being available for the remainder of the contest and many key players lost to injuries.

They won the second Test in Melbourne and drew the next at the SCG before pulling off a remarkable victory at the Gabba - where Australia had not lost since 1988 - to clinch the series.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, Jan 21:** Mohammed Siraj went straight to the graveyard on his return from a historic tour and paid his last respects to his father who died two months ago while the India speedster was doing national team duty in Australia.

As Siraj stood and prayed in front of his father Mohammed Ghouse's grave, his two-month long wait finally came to an end. He laid flowers at his father's grave while offering prayers before heading to his home in Al-Hasnath colony.

Siraj's 53-year-old father, who was an auto driver, had died November 20 due to a lung ailment - barely a week after his son landed in Australia with the Indian team.

He was given the option of returning home but the pacer chose to stay back with the team for the tour. He made his Test debut in the

second match in Melbourne and finished the Border-Gavaskar series with 13 wickets - the most by any Indian bowler as the team came from behind to script a memorable 2-1 series win.

Having got the backing of his family, Siraj's brave decision to stay back not only saw him make his India debut but also play an instrumental part in the team's victory while fulfilling his father's dream of representing the country in the highest form of the game.

"It was my (late) father's dream that Siraj should represent India in Tests. He always wanted to see him (Siraj) in blue and white jersey to represent the nation, so the dream got fulfilled," Siraj's brother Mohammed Ismail had told this agency.

Siraj bowled his heart out and picked up a maiden five-wicket haul (5/73) at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia's fortress which was



breached on Tuesday after 32 years. "It was a great achievement by the Indian team and my brother Siraj has achieved what our father dreamt. We are happy that Siraj was able to contribute to the victory," Ismail said.

## Thailand Open: Satwik-Ashwini, Sameer in last 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangkok, Jan 21:** India's Sameer Verma continued his impressive run at the Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament, stunning World No.17 Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in a second round match to advance to the men's singles quarterfinals, here Thursday.

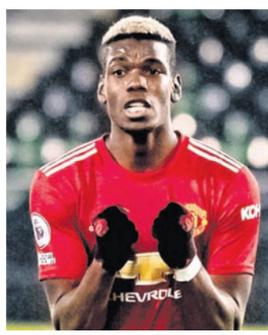
The World No.31 Indian, who had shocked Malaysia's eighth seed Lee Zii Jia in the opening round, needed just 39 minutes to see off Gemke 21-12, 21-9.

This was Sameer's third victory over Gemke. The Indian had defeated the World No.17 Danish shuttler in their previous two clashes. Sameer will face third seed Anders Antonsen of Denmark, who received a walkover, in the quarterfinals.

The mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa also made it to the quarterfinals with a stunning 22-20, 14-21, 21-16 win over World No.17 German duo of Mark Lamsfuss and Isabel Herttrich in a match that lasted close to an hour.

HS Prannoy, however, failed to cross the second hurdle, going down 17-21, 18-21 to Malaysia's Daren Liew, a day after battling through pain to upstage Asian Games champion Jonatan Christie in a gruelling three-game match.

## EUROPEAN FOOTBALL AT A GLANCE



### Man Utd back to top of Premier League

**LONDON:** Paul Pogba scored a long-range winner for the second time in a week as Manchester United came from behind to beat Fulham 2-1 and move back to the top of the Premier League. Pogba created space for himself just outside the corner of the penalty area and bent a powerful shot past Fulham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola and into the far corner of the net in the 65th minute. Fulham had taken the lead in the sixth minute when Ademola Lookman slotted home

after beating United's offside trap and running clean through, only for Edinson Cavani to capitalize on a mistake from Areola to bring the visitors level. Leicester and Manchester City - with a 2-0 win over Aston Villa hours before kickoff of the Fulham-United match - had moved to the summit in the past 24 hours.

### CR7 helps Juve claim Italian Super Cup title

**MILAN:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored to help Juventus win a record-extending ninth Italian Super Cup by beating Napoli 2-0. Napoli missed the chance to take the match to extra time when captain Lorenzo Insigne missed a late penalty and Alvaro Morata sealed the result with the last kick of the game. It was Juve's ninth Super Cup title, taking it two above AC Milan, which is the team with the second most victories in the competition. It was a cagey match, with few genuine scoring opportunities, but Juventus eventually broke the deadlock in the 64th minute. A Juventus corner took a couple of ricochets before landing in the path of Ronaldo, who didn't miss from close range.



### Third division club Alcayano upset Real

**MADRID:** Third-division club Alcayano came from behind to eliminate Real Madrid 2-1 in the round of 32 of the Copa del Rey. The small club from eastern Spain scored in the 80th minute to force extra time and again in the 115th to make it to the last 16. Alcayano had gone a man down because of a red card just minutes before Juanan Casanova scored the winner from close range after a quick counterattack. Based in eastern Spanish city of Alcoy, the small club of Alcayano made it to the Copa quarterfinals in 1946. It has played four seasons in the first division, but not since 1950-51. Real were seeking their first Copa title since 2014, which was the last time it reached the final. It was eliminated by Zaragoza in the round of 16 last season.

### Lewandowski lifts Bayern Munich

**BERLIN:** Robert Lewandowski's penalty was enough for Bayern Munich to consolidate its Bundesliga lead at the halfway stage of the season with a 1-0 win at Bavarian rival Augsburg. Lewandowski's spot-kick in the 13th minute was Bayern's only reward for dominating the first half, while the visitors had to hold on in the second with Augsburg missing a host of chances - including a penalty of its own. Lewandowski scored his 22nd goal of the season - a league record after 17 games - from the spot after a foul from Augsburg midfielder Rani Khedira on Lucas Hernandez. Serge Gnabry and Thomas Muller both missed chances before the break, when Khedira made way for Tobias Strobl.



## Williams helps ATKMB edge past Chennaiyin



AGENCIES

**Goa, Jan 21:** ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) claimed a well-deserved win against Chennaiyin FC, thanks to super-sub David Williams' header from a corner-kick right at the end of their ISL match, Thursday.

The Mariners close the gap to league leaders Mumbai City to just two points. The Islanders play their game in hand Friday against SC East Bengal.

ATKMB dominated the game from the word go and created quite a few opportunities. However, some wayward finishing and some quality defending from Chennaiyin players deny them from breaking the deadlock. The first half remained goalless without any close calls. The first major chance ATKMB

created only in the 74th minute. In a goalmouth action, Bagan had a free-kick on the right side just outside the box. Javier Hernandez struck a stupendous set-piece and Vishal Kaithi dived to his left to make a brilliant reflex save.

However, it set the stage for Bagan, who finally penetrated the Chennaiyin defence in dying minutes of the game. But, in the closing seconds, Bagan defence almost conceded the equaliser before a goalline clearance by Tiri saved their day.

Arindam came out in an attempt to get to a ball into the box but failed to get the ball. Sipovic met it first and headed it towards an empty net. Tiri covered for his keeper and cleared the ball just before it going in.