



## DECISIVE ROLE

Actor Shraddha Kapoor feels women are a major reason behind the evolution of Hindi cinema

LEISURE P2



## NO RESPITE

The Chinese city of Xian, which is under lockdown for the past ten days, continued to reel under a major Covid-19 outbreak in the new year

INTERNATIONAL P10



## EYEING HISTORY

India will be hoping to create history by winning the 2nd Test against the Proteas starting Monday

SPORTS P12

### AVIATION TURBINE FUEL PRICE HIKED BY 2.75%

**NEW DELHI:** Halting a declining trend of last month, jet fuel or aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price has been hiked by 2.75 per cent on firming international oil prices. Aviation turbine fuel price has been hiked by ₹2,039.63 per kilo litre (kl), or 2.75 per cent, to ₹76,062.04 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase in rates comes on back of two rounds of price cuts seen in December that reflected a drop in international oil prices during the second half of November and mid-December. Thereafter, international rates have firmed up, leading to the hike in ATF price. ATF price had peaked to ₹80,835.04 per kl in mid-November before it was cut December 1 and 15 by a total of ₹6,812.25 per kl or 8.4 per cent.



### FIRE AT SOUTH AFRICA'S PARL COMPLEX

**CAPE TOWN:** Firefighters battled a blaze at South Africa's national Parliament complex Sunday that sent a dark plume of smoke and flames into the air above the center of Cape Town. The fire started on the third floor of a building that houses offices and spread to the National Assembly building, where South Africa's Parliament sits, Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille said. "The fire is currently in the National Assembly chambers," De Lille said. "This is a very sad day for democracy for Parliament is the home of our democracy." City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service spokesman Jermaine Carelse said no injuries have been reported.



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# Decision to reopen Classes I-V withheld

Keeping the sudden rise in Covid-19 cases in mind, the state government has decided to put on hold the decision to reopen primary schools



some reservation on reopening of schools," said School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash.

In the meantime, Covid cases are also rising rapidly in the coastal state. In past two days, the number of cases has almost doubled, he added. It is pertinent to mention here that Odisha reported 424 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours.

Keeping above facts in mind, the state government has decided to put on hold the decision for reopening of primary schools for Classes I to V students, informed the minister.

However, classes for VI to X students will continue as usual. The summative-1 examination will be held for Class X students from January 5 to 8 as per sched-

ule by the Board of Secondary Education, said an official of the S&ME department.

On December 28, the state government announced reopening of in-person classes for students of Classes I to V from January 3 in a bid to bring normalcy to school education.

The state government has issued a set of fresh standard operating procedure (SOP) to be followed by schools for students of Classes I to V. Nearly 27,000 schools would have started of-

line classes after remaining shut due to the Covid pandemic for over 21 months.

"Attendance for in-person classes is not mandatory and those who don't want to come to school can attend online classes. Classes for primary students will be held from 9am to noon without any lunch break. Children will be provided dry ration as midday meal instead of cooked food. Assemblies, sports and other events have been prohibited," the state government had said.

### SC suspends all physical hearings for 2 weeks

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** The Supreme Court has reverted to virtual hearings for the next two weeks due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases. All physical hearings have been suspended for two weeks. The move comes due to growing concerns as Omicron infections surge.

After two weeks, the situation will be reviewed again and a further course of action will be decided.

"It is hereby notified for the information of the members of the bar, party-in-person and all concerned that keeping in view the rising number of cases of Omicron variant (COVID-19), the competent authority has been pleased to direct that modified Standard Operating Procedure notified October 7, 2021, for physical hearing (hybrid mode) will remain suspended for the present, and all hearings before the courts for a period of two weeks from and with effect from January 3, shall be through virtual mode."

### 23 new Omicron cases detected in Odisha

**BHUBANESWAR:** The state Sunday registered 23 more Omicron cases, raising the tally of the new variant of Covid-19 in the state to 37, a senior Health Department official said. While 13 of them returned from Finland, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Syria, 10 are local-contact cases, he said. Thursday, the coastal state had logged five Omicron infections and the first such case was reported December 21. Meanwhile, coronavirus tally of the state mounted to 10,55,556 Sunday with 424 fresh cases. The death toll stood at 8,463.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Not only illegal stuff, our job demands that we sniff out party affiliation of those carrying them too!

# State effects major reshuffle in IAS cadre

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** In a major bureaucratic reshuffle, the state government Sunday appointed Raj Kumar Sharma as Additional Chief Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department. He will continue to be the Chairman, OSMCL.

Sanjeev Chopra is the new Agriculture Production Commissioner, and will also continue as the Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, and Additional Chief Secretary, A&FE Department. Principal Secretary of Commerce & Transport Department, Madhu Sudan Padhi will be the new Principal Secretary of Odia Language, Literature & Culture Department. Satyabrata Sahu will now be the Principal Secretary, Revenue & DM Department.

Bishnupada Sethi has been appointed Principal Secretary, School & Mass Education Department, and will hold additional charge of Principal Secretary, Commerce & Transport Department,

and Principal Secretary, I&PR Department.

Ranjana Chopra, Principal Secretary, ST&SC Development and M&BCW Department, will now hold additional charge of Principal Secretary, MS&ME Department. Hemant Sharma is the new Principal Secretary, Industries Department, with additional charge of Principal Secretary SD&TE Department, and Chairman, IPICOL.

Suresh Kumar Vashishth, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, A&FE Department, will be the Officer on Special Duty, GA & PG Department, while Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department, will hold additional charge of Commissioner-cum-Secretary, W&CD Department.

Bhupendra Singh Ponia, MD, IPICOL, will hold additional charge of Additional Secretary, Industries Department, and Executive Director, IDCO and Odisha Film Development Corporation.

### Cold wave warning

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Meteorological Centre here Sunday issued a cold wave warning for some places in the state over the next two days. A yellow warning, predicting cold wave conditions, has been set for Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sundargarh, and Bolangir, from 8.30 am Monday till Wednesday morning. The IMD declares cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to at least 4°C in the plains, or below 10°C with at least 4.5 notches less than normal. Bhubaneswar recorded a minimum of 14°C while it was 13.2°C in Cuttack.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	25.7°C	26.4°C
TEMP MIN	14.0°C	13.2°C
Humidity	73%	80%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL
Forecast	Mainly Clear sky	

# One woman & 30 men to decide raising legal marriage age

NCP MP Supriya Sule said there should have been more women MPs in the panel which will deliberate on issues related to women



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** The parliamentary panel assigned to examine the landmark Bill which seeks to raise the legal age of marriage for women to 21 has only one woman MP out of 31 members.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, which will have wider influence over society especially females, was introduced in Lok Sabha during the Winter Session and referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports.

The Bill, piloted by the Women and Child Development Ministry, seeks to increase the legal age of marriage from 18 to 21. According to the members' list of the parliamentary stand-

liberate on issues related to women.

However, she added that the chairman has the power to invite people before the panel. So for more inclusive and wider discussions, he can invite other women MPs.

The Department-Related Standing Committees are permanent, while joint and select committees are constituted from time to time to deal with Bills and relevant subjects of various ministries. These panels are constituted by both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports is a Rajya Sabha administered committee.

Parties nominate members based on their strength in the House.

The proposed law will apply to all communities in the country and, once enacted, will supersede existing marriage and personal laws.

The legal age of marriage for women is being raised by the Centre on the recommendations of the Jaya Jaitly Committee that was constituted by the WCD Ministry in June 2020.

DSPL-355

## Do you want to be the Sports Star of Odisha?

**SPORTS TALENT SEARCH**

- Students in the age group of 8-18 yrs are invited to register on the website [www.department.sportsodisha.gov.in](http://www.department.sportsodisha.gov.in)
- Coaches or Physical Education Teachers (PETs) are invited to register and support the government in identifying and mentoring the sports talent.

Registration - Last date - 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022

The Sports and Youth Services Department is inviting registrations from the students and the coaches/PETs from Odisha.

The selection will be based on the trials to be conducted in phases.

The selected students can enroll in the Sports hostels or join the coaching programs conducted by the Department (without enrolling in sports hostels).

For any queries - [odsportstalenthunt@gmail.com](mailto:odsportstalenthunt@gmail.com)

social media icons: sports\_odisha, sports.odisha

OIPR-29001/13/0015/2122



## BOBBY BONES WON'T RETURN ON SEASON 20 OF AMERICAN IDOL

The 20th season of the reality show *American Idol* will be without Bobby Bones as the in-house mentor. Bones confirmed Friday on Instagram Stories that he'll be ending his run on the ABC singing competition series after four seasons, reports *deadline.com*.

## REDKNAPP FELT AWKWARD ON STAGE IN FRONT OF SONS

*Lead Me On* singer Louise Redknapp has been playing Violet in *9 to 5*, a musical. She admitted it was weird to see her two sons in the crowd. She said: "I saw them in the front row. I don't know who was more mortified - them or me!"



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, you are raring to go. It's best you put that adrenaline to good use. This is the time to WORK and not plan. It's a day you can lift mountains and cross the seas. You can party hard later, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
Spontaneity, predicts Ganesh, is the need of the hour. Ignore the negative aspects and focus on the positive side. Your action rather than thoughts will yield results today. Listen to some light music to soothe your soul, suggests Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
God helps those who help themselves. Maybe. But He definitely helps those who help others. Support your colleagues and they will be grateful to you. This way, even your bosses will notice your talents, if they haven't already. They will shower praise on you, and favours too.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to address all problems with a human touch, predicts Ganesh. You are likely to play Agony Aunt to one and all. But for that, you will have to learn to leave your problems at the workplace. In relationships, you need to open up to your near and dear ones.

**LEO**  
Something piques the demon within you today, says Ganesh, making you emotional and zealous. But then, we must all wage a war against our personal demons every time they rear their ugly heads. Ganesh foresees you emerging victorious in this battle today, and regaining your happy-go-lucky attitude in the latter part of the day. As for work, it is your expertise that will come in handy.

**VIRGO**  
Helping your colleagues will bring loads of good will. Your superiors will be super-ripley happy with your work. Interaction with friends will be special. Revel in the company of your loved one, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
It's all about family today. In fact, the bigger the better since Ganesh foresees it is quite likely that both close and distant relatives will fill your heart with glee today. It might be some good news worthy of raising a toast to. However, you might be doubtful about getting along with your peers at work. But rest assured, in all probability your business will make satisfying progress at the end of the day. All's well that ends well!

**SCORPIO**  
Today, you are likely to make a fine show of your knack of organising things, predicts Ganesh. At the workplace, you will develop a special liking for your job. Later in the day, you may find lasting solutions to pending problems.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Handicraft business is likely to draw your attention. People around you will marvel at your commitment and dedication to work and family alike. Ganesh advises you to bite the apple of love and share some romantic moments with your spouse.

**CAPRICORN**  
Not many know how stupendous is your wealth of wisdom; today will be a good day to make a display of it, says Ganesh. You will have your wits about you and will impress many with your show of intellect. In the social circuit, you will indulge in spreading the message of love while at work, your excellent managerial skills will ensure that everything is under control.

**AQUARIUS**  
Today, you will speak and everyone else will listen! Your eloquence will bring you recognition. But you must take it a step further. You will also manage to impress someone, and Ganesh sees the beginning of a new relationship. But don't forget to listen sometimes.

**PISCES**  
Good times are coming your way, and this could be in the form of a promotion or a pay hike, says Ganesh. You will devote time equally between your work and family, taking a little time off to take them out on a leisure trip. Enjoy!

## Women are behind growth of Hindi cinema: Shraddha



**Mumbai:** Actress Shraddha Kapoor feels proud that women have been an integral part of our new-age cinematic stories. According to her, women are a major reason behind the evolution of Hindi cinema.

The actress said, "We have seen an absolute evolution in the way we tell stories on the screen, and it warms my heart that women have been a constant part of this process. I have grown up admiring our cinema but one thing that I have personally noticed is how women have shaped the growth trajectory. They have been an integral part of not just cinema but the overall growth of the nation."

Shraddha said this ahead of her performance in Zee Cinema and Zee TV's broadcast of the 52nd edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). The 52nd edition of IFFI was simulcast on Zee Cinema and Zee TV January 2 at 8 p.m.

## Arko shoots with Miss Korea for a song

**Mumbai:** Indian singer-songwriter and music composer Arko Pravo Mukherjee, better known by the mononym Arko, shot for a song with Miss Korea 2021, Tara Hong.

It is an English song written, composed and sung by Arko. The song has been directed by acclaimed director Paul Atkins who has done some creatively aesthetic projects before this.

Arko said: "It's always great to collaborate on content with passionate international artists. We had a cross-over team and it was a ball shooting for it. The language was an issue initially but that's the beauty of it that it strengthens bonds when we try and understand through that barrier."

The musician reminisced about sitting over dinner and discussing things like food, culture, habits and called it "memorable".

Arko added: "The team is great and Paul Atkins is a fantastic director. Can't wait for the project to hit your screens. The result will truly be stunning. I have seen the rushes and they are very encouraging."

## Ajay Devgn to work every day in 2022

**Mumbai:** Actor-filmmaker Ajay Devgn has revealed that he has a very busy year ahead courtesy his projects lined up and that he will be going to work every day.

Talking about what 2022 looks like for Ajay, the actor during an interview said: "I've got a directorial - *Runway 34* scheduled in April; I got an OTT release, *Rudra: The Edge of Darkness* sometime in February-end or March. I'm starting two to three new films."

The actor shared what he wishes for: "I like to just think I'm going to work

every day. That's all I ever want and wish for."

His 2022 also includes special appearances in *RRR* and *Gangubai Kathiawadi*. Ajay will also be seen in *Maidaan* and Indra Kumar's *Thank God*.

He will begin the shoot for the Hindi remake of *Kaithi* and Rohit Shetty's *Singham 3*. The actor has many more projects lined up which will be announced soon.

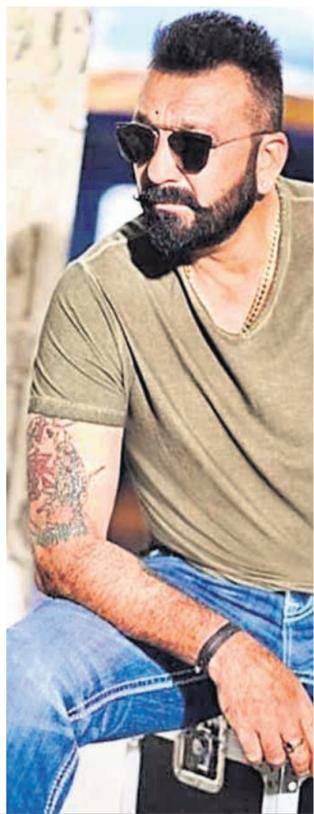


## Sanjay prepping hard to play a blind warrior

**Mumbai:** Sanjay Dutt is geared up to kick off 2022 with mammoth releases like *Prithviraj* and *KGF 2*. The star is excited that the buzz around the historical *Prithviraj* already has fans curious. Rumoured to play a warrior named Kaka Kanha, who would come to life only when he goes to war, fans speculate that Dutt's character in the film will be intriguing.

To play the complex role, the makers required an experienced actor who could switch between the complex layers of the character, and Dutt seamlessly fit in the actioner. Omnipresent in the teaser with his towering presence, Dutt is considered the trump card in the Akshay Kumar-starrer. Playing a character that is battling with rage, the actor aced the part of a hardcore warrior who was decreed to be blindfolded unless he went to battle. A source, in the know, tells us, "He is practically playing blind and that requires guidance."

His character is blindfolded for most part of the film. He trained with a coach who helped him nail the psyche, demeanor and the walk of a blind man."



### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



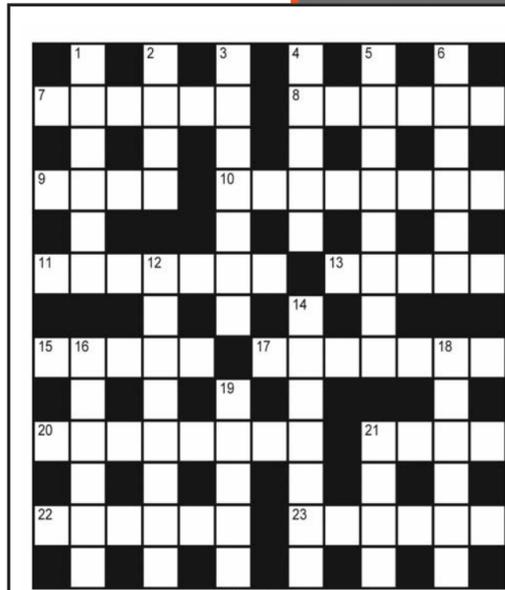
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



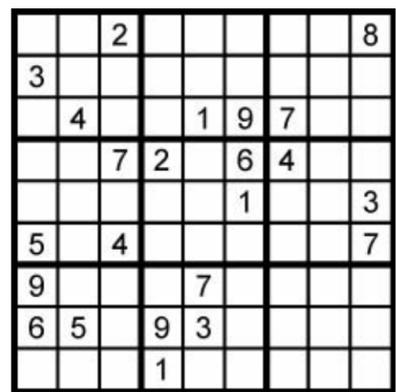
#### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Desolate
  - 8 Vessel holder
  - 9 Soave, e.g.
  - 10 Epidemic
  - 11 Carve, as a sculpture
  - 13 Reddish purple
  - 15 Test, as ore
  - 17 Like some candles
  - 20 Photographic coating
  - 21 Chop up
  - 22 African antelopes
  - 23 Brunch cocktail
  - 4 Ballroom dance
  - 5 Venomous stinger
  - 6 Classical music
  - 12 Siam, now
  - 14 Country's monetary system
  - 16 Comparison
  - 18 Overage
  - 19 Blotto
  - 21 Volcano feature
- Down**
- 1 Cast out
  - 2 Exhort
  - 3 Dignify

#### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

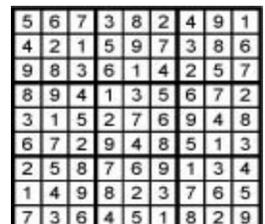


#### SOLUTIONS

##### CROSSWORD



##### SUDOKU



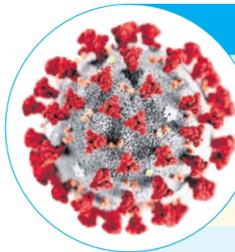
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## BEAUTIFICATION DRIVE

An artist draws murals of sportspeople on a wall near Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	28,97,96,969	25,42,83,943	54,58,766
India	3,48,89,132	3,42,84,561	4,81,770
Odisha	10,55,556	10,45,109	8,463

# Class X students to get vax after Jan 8

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department, along with the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department, held a meeting virtually Sunday to discuss the vaccination process for children in 15-18 age group.

"Adequate vaccine stock has been sent to all districts, and 939 special vaccination centers have been set up for the vaccination drive," said Director of Family Welfare Bijay Panigrahi.

The meeting concluded with the decision of prioritising Class IX and XI students for vaccination, keeping in mind the examination schedule of Class X and XII students. The later will be vaccinated after January 8 and 11 respectively. Children born on or before



**Children who have not registered themselves for vaccination can take the job by doing on-spot registration. Teachers have been advised to help for smooth conduct of the vaccination drive**

**BIJAY PANIGRAHI | FAMILY WELFARE DIRECTOR**

December 31, 2007 are eligible for vaccination. The second dose can be taken within 28-40 days of receiving the first dose of vaccine.

Children who have not registered themselves for vaccination can take the job by doing on-spot registration. Teachers have been advised to help for smooth conduct of the vaccination drive, said Panigrahi.

Amidst growing cases of the Omicron variant, the H&FW de-

partment directed district administrations and municipal corporations to complete vaccination of 15-18 age group at schools by the end of January.

In a directive to district Collectors, Municipal Commissioners and CDMOs, the H&FW department asked to coordinate with the S&ME department and complete the vaccination of the targeted beneficiaries.

Principals of the schools will prepare a list of eligible children

for the vaccination and coordinate with CDMO, the directive added.

The CDMOs have been asked to arrange for vaccination at school on an agreed schedule whereas schools have been told provide support and facility to vaccination camp.

School heads will ensure that all eligible children in the 15-18 age bracket get vaccinated as soon as possible. The H&FW department also stated that registration of the targeted beneficiaries would be made online on Cowin or on site at the time of camp. Only Covaxin will be given to the 15-18 years old. Vaccination of the 15-18 age group across the country is set to kick-start January 3, 2022.

Meanwhile, BMC has opened additional slots at 4 UPHCs at Dumduma, Patia, Unit-IV and BMC hospital.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Three arrested over Dhirkuti slum murder



The accused at Mancheswar PS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The Commissionerate Police Sunday claimed to have arrested three persons, including the prime accused, in connection with the alleged murder of a man at Dhirkuti slum in the City here December 30, last year.

The accused have been identified as Bapuni Naik, 19, the brother-in-law of deceased Sushant Ghadei, Ramesh Mohanty, 22, alias Kanha of Bangali Sahi, and Dipak Kumar Sethi alias Bablu, 20, of Rangamatia under Mancheswar police limits.

The police have seized the weapon used in the murder, sources said. All the accused were produced before a local court here and later sent to judicial custody, police said.

According to police, Ghadei was working as a sweeper at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) while Naik was working at a jewellery shop in the City here.

Naik was reportedly angry with Ghadei for opposing his relationship with a girl. They had been engaged in a heated argument a few months back, sources said.

Naik along with his aides attacked Ghadei with a sword while the latter was asleep at his house Thursday night. Ghadei's wife also sustained injuries while trying to protect the victim from her brother, sources added.

Ghadei was rushed to Capital Hospital, where doctors declared him dead-on-arrival.

# Illegal cracker biz goes unabated at Begunia

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Begunia, Jan 2:** The administration is yet to take any concrete step to check illegal production and sale of firecrackers in Begunia area of Khurda district even though at least seven persons have lost their lives in separate cases of cracker explosion in the locality in last five years.

As many as 20 people, including several children, have sustained injuries in the cracker mishaps in Begunia during the period, sources said.

Five persons, including four from a family, had died in an explosion in a suspected cracker manufacturing unit at Siko under in August, 2017. Four others had sustained injuries in the mishap.



**MANY SOCIAL ACTIVISTS URGED THE POLICE TO RAID THE ILLEGAL CRACKER MANUFACTURING UNITS AND TAKE STERN ACTION AGAINST THEIR OWNERS**

The impact of the blast was such that the asbestos roof and the walls of the building caved in with the dead covered under the rubble. The fire brigade personnel took several hours to retrieve the bodies, sources said.

Five persons, including four from a family, had died in an explosion in a suspected cracker manufacturing unit at Siko under in August, 2017

Similarly, two more persons had died in cracker blasts in two separate incidents in Begunia area in 2014 and 2016

Similarly, two more persons had died in cracker blasts in two separate incidents in Begunia area in 2014 and 2016. Moreover, at least eight persons were injured in a mishap at an illegal cracker manufacturing unit in the locality in 2013.

Four persons had sustained critical injuries while manufacturing crackers illegally in 2015, sources added.

According to sources, unused crackers from wedding processions and other social functions are often dumped on the open fields. Several children usually sustain injuries while trying to burst these unused firecrackers, villagers said.

Three children were maimed in an explosion while trying to burst crackers at Manibandha in November, 2021. Similarly, four minor boys sustained critical injuries while bursting firecrackers at Simor December 30, last year.

It is learnt that some people had burst firecrackers at Simor during the inauguration of a recreational park December 26. They had

dumped a few unused crackers on a nearby field. These boys found the unused crackers while playing on the field.

"Some illegal cracker manufacturing units have been operating from Lekhanpur, Pangarsingh, Siko and Kantabada villages of Begunia for last several years. The administration is aware of these illegal units but no action has been taken in this regard," said Akhaya Kumar Rath, a senior citizen.

Many social activists of the locality, meanwhile, urged the police to raid the illegal cracker manufacturing units and take stern action against their owners.

"The administration should launch a drive against illegal firecracker manufacturing units in Begunia area," said Shiv Kumar Muni, a local.

## Youth hacked to death in Puri

**Puri:** A youth was hacked to death in broad daylight near Jatiababaji Square under Kumbharpada police limits here Sunday, an official said. The deceased was identified as Vicky Nayak, a resident of Raibahadur Lane here. According to the victim's younger brother, the incident took place in the afternoon when Vicky was at his shop near Jatiababaji Square. There was a heated exchange between Vicky and the miscreants. "They suddenly took out sharp weapons and hacked Vicky before fleeing the spot," said a police official quoting the victim's brother. A profusely-bleeding Vicky with deep cuts in his face, neck and shoulder was rushed to the district headquarters hospital, where he was declared dead-on-arrival, added the official.



People buying wool from a vendor near Raj Mahal Square in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

# MeT predicts cold wave for two days

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The Meteorological Centre here Sunday issued a cold wave warning for some places in Odisha over the next two days.

A yellow warning, predicting cold wave conditions, has been set for Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sundargarh, and Bolangir, from 8.30am Monday till Wednesday morning.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) declares cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to at least 4 degrees Celsius in the plains, or below 10 degrees Celsius with at least 4.5 notches less than normal.

The forecast came on the day when Kirei in Sundargarh district recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 7.2 degrees Celsius, followed by Daringbadi hill station (8 degrees Celsius), and Keonjhar (9.6 degrees Celsius). Bhubaneswar recorded a mini-

**A YELLOW WARNING HAS BEEN SET FOR JHARSUGUDA, BARGARH, SUNDARGARH, AND BOLANGIR, FROM 8.30AM MONDAY TILL WEDNESDAY MORNING**

THE FORECAST CAME ON THE DAY WHEN KIREI IN SUNDARGARH DISTRICT RECORDED THE LOWEST MINIMUM TEMPERATURE OF 7.2 DEGREES CELSIUS, FOLLOWED BY DARINGBADI HILL STATION (8 DEGREES CELSIUS), AND KEONJHAR (9.6 DEGREES CELSIUS)

imum of 14 degrees Celsius while it was 13.2 degrees Celsius in Cuttack, it said.

The minimum temperature may witness a further dip by 2-3 degrees Celsius across the state in the next three days, the bulletin said.

Meanwhile, dense fog occurred at a few places in Gajapati, Angul, Koraput, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, and Bolangir districts, and shallow to moderate fog prevailed in Malkangiri district Sunday morning.

# DOES OMICRON ACT AS A NATURAL VACCINE?

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** The notion that Omicron is a natural vaccine is a 'dangerous idea' spread by irresponsible people who don't take into account 'long Covid' about which very little is understood, experts have said.

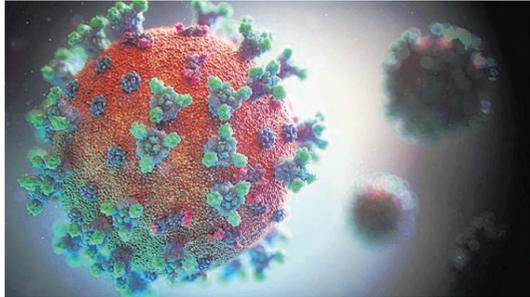
The Omicron variant of Covid-19, which is said to be much more infectious than other variants, is, however, causing milder infections, less hospitalisation and deaths which is leading to the notion that it can act as a natural vaccine.

Recently, a Maharashtra health official also claimed that Omicron will act as a natural vaccine and may help in Covid-19's progression towards the endemic stage.

Noted virologist Shahid Jameel said the notion that Omicron is a natural vaccine is a dangerous idea spread by irresponsible people.

"It breeds complacency and is rooted more in pandemic fatigue and the inability to do more, than in evidence available at this time," he said.

Jameel, the former head of the advisory group to the Indian SARS-COV-2 Genomics Consortia



**The notion that Omicron is a natural vaccine is a dangerous idea spread by irresponsible people. It breeds complacency and is rooted more in pandemic fatigue and the inability to do more, than in evidence available at this time**

**SHAHID JAMEEL | VIROLOGIST**

(INASACOG), said those who advocate this don't take into account 'long Covid' about which very little is understood. "Especially in India, where malnutrition, air pollution and diabetes are rampant, to willingly let people be exposed to a virus about which you understand little is not

good science and public health," he said.

Giridhara R Babu, professor and the Head of Lifecourse Epidemiology at the Public Health Foundation of India, said however mild Omicron is, it is not a vaccine.

"There are deaths and hospitalisations due to this variant. Stay

away from misinformation. Compared to vaccination, natural infection cannot protect the population (against death or hospitalisation) against any variant (Alpha, Beta, Gamma or Delta). Proponents of herd immunity are saying it again that Omicron would provide herd immunity. Evidence matters, not opinions," he said.

Shuchin Bajaj, founder director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, said there may be long term effects of the disease and people need to be careful about it.

"It has been shown that it can be seen persisting for more than six months in various other organs in addition to lungs, like heart and brain and kidneys etc, even after very mild infections. So we don't really know what long term effects it can cause. We are already seeing a lot of long Covid patients with brain fogging, inappropriate sinus tachycardia," he said.

"So, we should not really think of this as a vaccine. It's not really a vaccine, we have had deaths due to Omicron. We have had ICU admissions due to Omicron. So it is a much milder version compared to

Delta but still, it is a virus and we need to be careful," he said.

Yash Javeri, Head, Critical Care, Regency Health, Lucknow, however, said that due to Omicron's higher infectivity coupled with less severity, it may help pause the pandemic.

"As a result, the whole community becomes protected, not just those who are immune. An infection with the Omicron variant not just induces an immune response against this variant but also offers heightened protection against the Delta variant, a South African study has found. Due to its higher infectivity coupled with less severity, Omicron may raise the herd immunity still higher and help pause the pandemic," he said.

Herd immunity occurs when a large portion of a community (the herd) becomes immune to a disease, making the spread of disease from person to person unlikely.

ICMR director general Balram Bhargava last week said that hybrid immunity, which is developed as a result of vaccination and natural infection, mounts a stronger response against Covid-19 and its variants.

**Emerald Mineral Exim Private Limited (in Liquidation)**  
Regd. Off.: Mastan Road Buxi Bazar Cuttack ODISHA 753001 INDIA  
Liquidator: Pratim Bayal  
Liquidator's Address: 18/1 Tarapurkur Main Road, Ghosh Para, Agarpara Kolkata 700109  
Email ID: cirp.emeraldmineral20@gmail.com; pratimbayal@gmail.com  
Contact Person: Ms Shikha Gupta: +91 9051720025

**E-Auction**  
Sale of Assets under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 on as is where is, as is what is and whatever there is basis

**Date and Time of E-Auction: 18th January 2022 at 03:00PM to 05:00 PM IST** (with unlimited extension of 5 min each)

**Date of Inspection: 7th January 2022 to 16th January 2022**

Sale of Assets and Properties owned by Emerald Mineral Exim Private Limited (in Liquidation) forming part of Liquidation Estate formed by the Liquidator, appointed by the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Cuttack Bench vide order dated 04th August 2021. The bidder may bid for standalone basis office space at 'Jasmine Tower', 31, Shakespeare Sarani, Office Space No - 202 & 203, 2nd Floor, P S Shakespeare Sarani, Ward No - 63, within Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Kolkata - 700017 The Sale will be done by the under signed, through the E-Auction platform: <https://ncltauction.auctiontiger.net>

Asset	Block	Reserve Price	EMD Amount
Sale as standalone basis of office premises at unit Nos. 202 and 203 measuring about 691 square feet and 903 square feet respectively super built up area, on second floor of the building commonly known as 'Jasmine Tower' constructed at 31, Shakespeare Sarani Kolkata 700017 belonging to the company M/s Emerald Mineral Exim Pvt Ltd (in liquidation)	Block - 1	Rs. 1,42,00,000	Rs. 14,20,000

Please note the office premise is occupied by a 3rd party since May 2019 without any valid legal authority.

**The EMD (Refundable) shall be payable by interested bidder on or before 17th January 2022 by 2 p.m.** For detailed terms and condition of E-action sale, refer sale Notice & E-auction process information document available on <https://ncltauction.auctiontiger.net>. And can be asked by giving email on email id: [cirp.emeraldmineral20@gmail.com](mailto:cirp.emeraldmineral20@gmail.com); [pratimbayal@gmail.com](mailto:pratimbayal@gmail.com). For any query regarding E-auction, contact: Mr.Praveen Thevarat +91972778828/7968136841, E-mail: [Praveen.thevarat@auctiontiger.net](mailto:Praveen.thevarat@auctiontiger.net) or [ncltauctiontiger.net](mailto:ncltauctiontiger.net) or Liquidator team member, Shikha at 9051720025 or Sreyasi at 7003647606.

# 43% growth in Dec '21 GST collection

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Jan 2:** State's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection has touched new heights with a collection of ₹4,080.14 crore in December 2021 as against ₹2,860.20 crore collected in December 2020, registering a growth of 43 per cent, according to the Commissionerate of CT & GST.

The growth in collection during December 2021 is also the highest amongst major states for the fourth consecutive month. This is also the second highest ever gross collection of GST by Odisha since the launch of GST.

The progressive GST collection till December 2021 is ₹32,113 crore against ₹20,089 crore till December 2020 with a growth of 60 per cent. The corresponding collection till December 2019 was ₹21,750 crore.

The collection of OGST during the month of December 2021 is ₹1,118.65 crore against a collection of ₹765.26 crore during December 2020, recording a robust growth of 46.18 per cent.

The collection of ₹1,118.65 crore during December 2021 is also the third highest ever gross collection of OGST by the state since the inception of GST.

There is also collection of ₹973.79 crore in CGST, ₹1,267.63 crore in IGST and ₹720.07 crore in Cess during December 2021, recording a growth of 65.21 per cent, 31.26 per cent and 33.40 per cent over December 2020 respectively.

Gross GST Collection during the third quarter of 21-22 (Oct-Dec) is ₹11,809.26 crore recording a growth of 51.08 per cent against the corresponding second quarter collection of 20-21.

Growth in GST is mostly driven by mining and manufacturing sectors. Sectoral analysis of top 100 dealers' GST payments in cash reveals that ₹8,595 crore of gross revenue



**THE GROWTH OF COLLECTION DURING DECEMBER 2021 IS THE HIGHEST AMONGST MAJOR STATES FOR THE 4TH CONSECUTIVE MONTH, AND ALSO THE SECOND HIGHEST EVER GROSS COLLECTION OF GST BY THE STATE SINCE THE LAUNCH OF GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**COMMISSIONER OF CT & GST SUSHIL KUMAR LOHANI INSTRUCTED THE FIELD OFFICERS TO ENSURE AT LEAST 90 PER CENT RETURN FILING, RETURN SCRUTINY OF ALL SUSPECTED/BIG TAXPAYERS AS WELL AS PROMPT DEMAND AND RECOVERY IN CASE OF NOTICE OF ANY IRREGULARITIES**

**LOHANI ALSO ADVISED OFFICERS TO ADHERE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF ST AND ATTEND TO THE GENUINE GRIEVANCES OF THE TAXPAYERS WITHOUT FAIL**

CGST+SGST+IGST+CESS) was collected from the mining sector during the current FY vis-a-vis ₹4,714 crore collected from the same dealers during corresponding period of last FY with a growth of 83 per cent. The successful auction of iron ore mines last year by the state government is contributing significantly in increase in tax revenue this year.

Manufacturing sector has also recorded a growth of 142 per cent with a collection of ₹8,157.93 crore during the current FY vis-a-vis collection of ₹3,374.61 crore in last FY from top 100 dealers.

This is largely due to increase in prices of steel and other metal related products in the first two quarters of 21-22.

Similarly, service sector, trading sector and works contract sector have recorded a growth of 72 per cent, 89 per cent and 46 per cent respectively in the current FY over the corresponding period of last year.

The total collection of VAT (Petrol & Liquor) is ₹759.72 crore during December 2021 as against ₹691.47 crore during December 2020 with growth rate of 9.87 per cent. Out of the above, collection from petroleum products is ₹589.04 crore during December 2021 as against ₹558.85 crore during December 2020 with a growth rate of 5.40 per cent.

Similarly, collection from liquor is ₹170.67 crore during December 2021 as against ₹132.61 crore during December 2020 with growth rate of 28.70 per cent.

Growth during the current FY is also a result of better non-filer management and regular return scrutiny by circles combined with enforcement activities which have resulted in better compliance by taxpayers.

A special two-month drive for 'survey and registration' of all potential GST & Profession Tax Payers throughout the state was completed during which nearly 19,000 persons were contacted by State Tax Officers out of which 3,727 eligible taxpayers were bought under the GST fold and 3,305 eligible persons were bought under the Profession Tax fold. During the current FY, 35,724 new taxpayers have been bought under the GST fold.

Further, during the current FY, as many as 11,482 assessments have been initiated against defaulters for non-filing of returns.

The total e-way bill generated during December 2021 was 16.21 lakh as against 14.08 lakh during December 2020, witnessing a growth of 15 per cent.

## LAUDING THE LIBERATORS



Governor Ganeshi Lal along with other dignitaries at the 35th All India Freedom Fighters' Mahotsav held Sunday at Swadhina Sangrami Sadan, Bhubaneswar

## Sambandh Finserve accused of cheating NBFC of ₹5cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Another case of loan fraud involving Sambandh Finserve Private Limited has come to fore as a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) in the city here accused the former of cheating around ₹5 crore by producing fake documents.

The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of state Crime Branch has started investigation into the allegations by registering a case on the basis of the complaint lodged by NBFC Annapurna Finance Private Ltd.

Sources revealed that Sambandh Finserve Private Limited represented by its Managing Director and CEO Deepak Kindo was authorised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to carry on various financial activities in-



**CCS sleuths of Hyderabad Police had arrested Kindo for allegedly defaulting loans to the tune of ₹2 crore, obtained from a subsidiary of NABARD in July 2021**

cluding granting small-size loans to micro finance groups.

The registered office of Sambandh Finserve is located at DLF Cyber City at Chandrasekharpur in the Capital City here while the corporate office was functioning from Rourkela.

The officials of Sambandh Finserve approached Annapurna Finance for loan for its micro finance operations in 2020. Subsequently, two term loans to

the tune of ₹5 crore with 15.50 per cent interest per annum was sanctioned by the NBFC in favour of Sambandh Finserve September 28, 2020, sources said.

However, the authorities of Annapurna Finance later came to know from various news reports that Sambandh Finserve was involved in a number of financial frauds. The official of Annapurna Finance contacted Kindo and asked him to repay the loan as soon as possible.

Kindo's firm gave back only ₹50 lakh after repeated requests, sources added.

During scrutiny, the officials of the NBFC found that not a single pie of the loan amount was given to the women joint liability groups.

Kindo's firm even falsely stated in the bank statement that it had deposits to the tune of ₹17.51 crore. But, the firm had only ₹15.28 lakh in its accounts, sources said.

Notably, the sleuths of Central Crime Station (CCS) of Hyderabad police had arrested Kindo for allegedly defaulting loans to the tune of ₹2 crore, obtained from a subsidiary of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in July 2021.

Kindo allegedly transferred the loan amount into business entities owned by him instead of investing in microfinance activities.

## Bonda weaving showcased in virtual tour

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The ST & SC Development Department took up a virtual tour to Odisha State Tribal Museum Sunday.

Visitors got the opportunity to witness the art of weaving in the Bonda community at the Facebook and Twitter pages of ST&SC Development Department and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI).

Director of SCSTRTI AB Ota said that Bonda women are known for their extraordinary attire and shaven heads. A short multi-coloured skirt called Ringa is the only garment of the Bonda women and is traditionally woven using kerang fibre.

The Bonda loom is a simple device made up of many wooden parts. Earlier, Bonda women collected kerang branches from the forest, process them into fibre and dye them with organic dyes. Nowadays, coloured threads are used to prepare this traditional garment. Weaving a Ringa takes two to three days but the simple loom cloth worn by the men can be woven in a day.

Last Sunday viewers had visited the traditional art and craft of Dharua Textiles. The Dharua community mainly resides in Malkangiri, Koraput and Nabarangpur districts. Their major occupations are cultivation, collection from forests, basketry and agricultural labour.



A meeting underway between Madhupatana Police and people of Bali Sahi Slum as part of the 'Basti Ku Chala' campaign in Cuttack, Sunday

## OUTREACH PROG

## GODSEND FOR GLOBAL SOUTH

# Climate Justice: India to push for 'Samagrata' at home

**T**wo global platforms - UNFCCC COP and UNSC - witnessed India's prowess as not just good negotiator for safeguarding her own interests but also for the global south. In a way, what India has been advocating all along vis-a-vis climate change, came to fruition in November and December 2021.

"Year 2021 saw a steady stream of UN-backed reports reinforcing a stark message: man-made climate change is an urgent and even existential threat to life on Earth. Will the international community's efforts to tackle the crisis, as seen at the Conference of Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Conference (UNFCCC), result in meaningful action?" said the UN release on the last day of 2021.

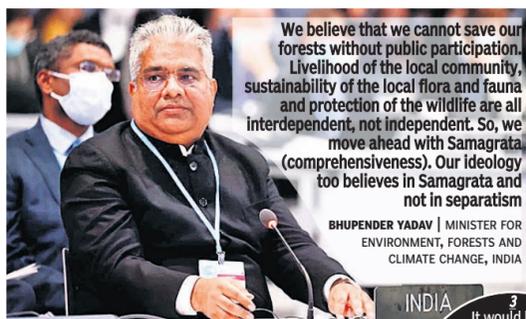
In November at Glasgow, the last day of the COP was when India, led by Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav, insisted on the use of the term 'phase down' coal instead of 'phase out' in the

Glasgow Climate Pact that 190 plus nations agreed to.

It was necessary insertion as the rich nations, the principal polluters and high energy consumers, wanted just the coal to phase out leaving other energy sources in the fossil fuel basket untouched. It would have meant that poorer countries that are dependent on coal will have to forsake it at the same time that richer countries do but sans the option of oil and gas as they have.

It is not that India only preached but not practiced, unlike much of the western world that may have cleaned up their air but have an energy-intensive lifestyle leading to highest per capita energy consumption.

Offering a new mantra and raising its pledge for combating climate change, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced at the COP26 that India will target a net zero goal by the year 2070 and aim at increasing its non-fossil fuel energy to 500 GW in its energy mix by 2030.



**We believe that we cannot save our forests without public participation. Livelihood of the local community, sustainability of the local flora and fauna and protection of the wildlife are all interdependent, not independent. So, we move ahead with Samagrata (comprehensiveness). Our ideology too believes in Samagrata and not in separatism**

BHUPENDER YADAV | MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE, INDIA

- 1- In November at Glasgow, India insisted on the use of the term 'phase down' coal instead of 'phase out' in the Glasgow Climate Pact that 190 plus nations agreed to
- 2- It was necessary insertion as the rich nations, the principal polluters and high energy consumers, wanted just the coal to phase out leaving other energy sources in the fossil fuel basket untouched

Terming it as 'Panchamrut Ki Saugat' - India's contribution to climate action called as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs),

Modi had said that India will reduce its carbon intensity by 45 per cent by 2030 starting with reducing projected carbon emission from now

- 4- INDIA HAD MADE IT CLEAR AT THE UN THAT INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE WITHIN THE UNSC'S MANDATE WOULD EXCLUDE MOST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FROM DISCUSSIONS
- 5- UNLIKE THE UNFCCC - WHICH WORKS ON CONSENSUS AND GIVES EQUAL WEIGHT TO EACH AND EVERY COUNTRY THAT IS PARTY TO IT - THE UNSC IS DOMINATED BY RICH NATIONS

- 6- THEREFORE, INDIA PUTTING ITS FOOT DOWN CAME AS A GOD-SENT FOR GLOBAL SOUTH - COMPRISING MOSTLY POORER AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FROM SOUTH ASIA, AFRICA AND SOUTHERN AMERICA

It would have meant that poorer countries that are dependent on coal will have to forsake it at the same time that richer countries do but sans the option of oil and gas as they have

till 2030 by 1 billion tonnes and committed to have renewable energy component of 50 per cent by 2030. Modi gave a new mantra for sus-

tainable development through sustainable lifestyle, LIFE - 'Lifestyle for Environment' which, he said, can be a mass movement wherein instead of mindless and destructive consumption, there should be mindful and deliberate utilisation.

The other platform was not a regular climate change related one but the prestigious United Nations Security Council (UNSC) where in December, India - with support of Russia and China - shot down a proposal to "Integrate Climate-Related Security Risk into Conflict-Prevention Strategies."

While stressing that India is "second to none" in addressing climate action and climate justice, India stated that the Council is not the place to discuss either issue. "Today's attempt to link climate with security obfuscates a lack of progress on critical issues under the UNFCCC process. The text would constitute a step backward from collective resolve to combat climate change," India's permanent representatives at the UN made clear.

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SHORT TAKES

5-yr-old boy kidnapped

**Bargarh:** A five-year-old boy has been abducted for ransom in Bargarh, Sunday. The incident came to the fore when the miscreants sent a letter to the boy's father demanding ₹10 lakh in exchange for the kid. The abducted minor has been identified as the son of a senior staffer of the cement plant in Bargarh. Sources said that the boy was playing with his friends in the evening. Meanwhile, two miscreants lifted him and took him to an unknown place. They demanded ₹10 lakh ransom to release the boy in the letter. When contacted, Town police station IIC Sadanand Pujahari said he has been informed about the matter. Meanwhile, police has started an investigation into the matter and the accused will be nabbed soon, he added.

BSF jawan held for ditching girl

**Dhenkanal:** Police arrested a BSF jawan on charge of ditching a girl after making promise of marriage in Dhenkanal town Sunday. According to the police complaint, the BSF jawan, Bapi Barik, used to have physical relationship with a girl of Minabazar area on the promise of marriage. Later, Barik snapped the relationship with the girl. The girl was in a soup and took help of a social organisation, which had tried to settle the issue. But Barik did not agree to marry the girl. Subsequently, the girl filed a complaint at the police station against the BSF jawan. Police arrested and produced him in court.

Jumbo calf found dead in Keonjhar

**Keonjhar:** Forest officials seized a carcass of a five year old male elephant calf from Barabanka reserve forest near Badajuli village under Ghatagaon forest range in Keonjhar forest division, Sunday. The forest officials spotted the carcass during patrolling in the forest. On being informed, Dhanaraj H.D, divisional forest officer, Keonjhar, rushed to the spot and took stock of the matter. This is the first elephant death reported in New Year. He said that veterinarians and experts from Ouat are investigating the cause of its death. Sources said that there are 148 elephants moving in different forest areas in the Keonjhar forest division and destroying paddy and vegetables crops. Out of them, four are in Ghatagaon range.

Three test positive for Omicron in Sambalpur



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Jan 2:** Three persons have tested positive for the Omicron variant in Sambalpur. All of them belong to one family and have returned from abroad.

The three were admitted to the Covid Hospital at VIMSAR Sunday. A doctor treating them said that their condition is stable and there is no need to panic.

"People in the district need to be careful in abiding by the safety guidelines," he said.

After their test reports came

The district admin has urged people to observe safety guidelines to prevent spread of the deadly virus

out positive, they were advised to remain in isolation. After their return from abroad, the health officials were keeping a close watch on them.

Reports said, 253 people have returned to the district from abroad.

Reportedly, four members of the family had returned from Ukraine December 28. They had tested positive for Covid at VIMSAR Covid Hospital at Burla. They were kept in home isolation subsequently.

After this development, the district administration has urged people to observe safety guidelines to prevent spread of the deadly virus.



Rural Water Supply and Sanitation department provides three battery-operated vehicles to members of SHGs to transport garbage in three panchayats in Balasore district, Sunday

CHITROPALA IRRIGATION PROJECT

Work stuck; cost escalates ten times over 3 decades

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Jan 2:** About 32 years ago, Chitrotpala irrigation project had been taken up with an aim of providing irrigation to 19,542 hectares of farmland in Garadpur, Marshaghai and Mahakalpara block in Kendrapara district and in Tirtol block of Jagatsinghpur district.

Then, the project had kindled hopes of agricultural growth for farmers of over 300 villages under these four blocks. Unfortunately enough, their dream is yet to be realised.

According to reports, 32 years after its inception, the project work is nowhere near completion while its cost has escalated to 10 times of its original cost estimate in two decades.

The project was initially estimated at only ₹39.94 crore in 1989, but its cost galloped to ₹395.46 crore in 2012. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) had set a deadline for the project at 2019. Since then, the work has been lying undone. Local farmers and residents have held the local leaders and administrative officials responsible for such apathy plaguing the project.

Sribatsa Samal, a farmer of Marshaghai, said that the work of the irrigation project has been halted at main canal of the Paika river. "The project work at Tikhiri, Patalipanka, Takarapanga, Ameipal and Jadupur panchayats is yet to be started. Besides, the work of the main canal coming from the right side of



Although the work was resumed from 2016-17, it is far from completion. The deadline set by the ADB has come to an end. Since then, the work has been lying undone

Chitrotpala river has been halted at Kalabuda. The work should be carried forward through Garadpur, Pakhada, Patakura, Bedari, Talasanga and Garjang," he said.

Moreover, there is need for construction of branch canals and sub-canal in the project areas so that farmlands can be irrigated.

As for the project, Zilla Parishad member (zone 26) Ganesh Chandra Samal said that former Patkura MLA Bijay Mohapatra had initiated efforts for the irrigation project in the larger interest of the farmers.

In 1989, ₹39.94 crore was sanctioned for the project. Bijay Mohapatra was the water resources

minister in the cabinet of the then Biju Patnaik-led government. At that time, project work was carried forward to some extent. Later, its work was suspended.

After repeated agitations by Zilla Jana Suraksha Manch, the cost of the project was revised at ₹395.46 crore while deadline for its completion was set at 2014. Although the work was resumed from 2016-17, it is far from completion. The deadline set by the ADB has come to an end.

"The fund utilised for the project is likely to go down the drain as its work fails to make headway," said Sribatsa Samal.

Social activist Pramod Kumar Swain observed that it was due to the apathy of the local leaders and the administration, the project work has failed to make progress over years. The area is fertile enough to sustain crops, but lack of irrigation has scuttled the scope of agricultural growth, he added.

ADM Pitambar Samal said that a meeting was held on the irrigation project while a decision was taken to hasten the project work.

Bodies of 2 youths fished out of pond

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Jan 2:** Floating bodies of two youths were fished out from a pond in Shyamsundarpur village of Kendrapara district Sunday morning. Later in the day, police launched a probe into the incident.

The deceased youths were identified as Subrat Jena and Sanatan Patnaik - both residents of Talagaon village under Patkura police limits in the district.

"Actual cause behind the death of the two has not been ascertained yet. Prima facie, it appears that they were travelling on a motorcycle which skidded off the road into the nearby pond," a senior official said.

A two-wheeler was also recovered from the pond.

Reportedly, the duo had gone for a picnic on New Year's Day and was untraceable since Saturday night. Subrat is a tractor driver by occupation. He had left home earlier in the day at around noon along

with some of his friends. He had informed his family about the picnic and had assured them of coming back by evening.

At around 8.00pm, Subrat's family contacted him over phone but no communication could be established between them thereafter. The family later started a frantic search, but in vain.

"We lost contact with Subrat after 8.00pm Saturday. My son had earlier informed us that he would come back by evening. Though we tried to contact him, his mobile phone was switched off," deceased Subrat's father Nidhiram said.

A few passers-by spotted two bodies floating in the pond in the morning and informed the local police about it. The bodies were then recovered with the assistance of Kendrapara fire services personnel. "Police sent the bodies to Kendrapara district headquarters hospital (DHH) for postmortem and a report is awaited," the official added.

BUS-POLICE VAN COLLISION

Four Bengal cops critically injured

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Simulia, Jan 2:** Four police personnel from neighbouring West Bengal were critically injured after the vehicle they were travelling in collided with a bus on NH-16 under Simulia police limits in Balasore district Sunday morning.

According to reports, the accident took place at Jamujhadi chowk when a bus travelling from Bhubaneswar to Baripada tried to save the police van with West Bengal registration number and moved onto the divider and later the hit the police van which was on the wrong side.

Four police men were critically injured while the helper of the bus was also injured. The injured were identified as inspector Maukul Maya, ASI Debendranath Panigrahi, constable Joran Dey and driver Babuli Hansda.

Locals shifted the injured police personnel to Simulia hospital, but they were referred to the district headquarters hospital.

Fake note printing unit busted

COUNTERFEIT CURRENCIES WORTH ₹13 LAKH SEIZED

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, Jan 2:** The district police busted a counterfeit currency note printing racket following a raid and seized fake currency notes worth over ₹13,15,500 at Santh Madhav village under Town police limits in Jajpur district, late Saturday night.

A person named Chandramani Bala, a native of Chhana village under Mangalpur police limits and mastermind of the racket was arrested. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in court. This was stated here by SDPO Sarat Kumar Upadhyay and IIC Ajay Kumar Jena to mediapersons at a press meet held Sunday.

During the raid, police seized 900 pieces of fake notes of ₹100 denomination, 4,250 pieces of fake notes of ₹200 denomination, 755 pieces of fake notes of ₹500 denomination, a printing machine, stamp, ink from the house which the accused had taken on rent to run the printing unit.

Earlier, Chandramani has been arrested by Jajpur Road



Police officials apprehend that an organised counterfeit currency racket is operating in Jajpur

and Kaliapani police for the same offence.

Reports said, the raid took place after intelligence inputs warned police about a fake currency note printing unit being operated from the rented house.

Accordingly, a police team raided the house late Saturday night and seized the counterfeit currency notes from inside the house.

Preliminary inquiries indicated the involvement of his wife in printing of the fake currency notes while Chandramani, after printing the notes, used to send them in and outside the state for

circulation among public.

Police officials apprehend that an organised counterfeit currency racket is operating in the area. Police are hopeful of getting some valuable information about the racket from the accused during interrogation.

The house owner might be taken for questioning soon. The state government has issued specific guidelines to all houseowners like keeping the Aadhaar card details and enquiring about the profession of the person before giving a house on rent. Further investigations are on.

Tribals observe anniv of Kalinganagar firing

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kalinganagar, Jan 2:** Tribals from across the state and outside assembled at Ambagadia in Kalinganagar industrial hub of Jajpur district to observe the 16th anniversary of the police firing in which 14 tribals were killed on this day in 2006.

The tribals assembled at the mass cremation site of the tribals at Ambagadia and remembered the victims of police firing observing Kalinganagar Veer Sahid Smriti Divas, Sunday.

The tribal people led by



Visthapan Virodhi Jan Manch (VVJM), the outfit spreading anti-displacement movement since the Kalinganagar firing and the Visthapita Parivar Unnayan Parishad (VPUP) remembered the victims at a simple ceremony due to Covid-19 restrictions imposed

Bhitarkanika closed till Jan 12 for croc census

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara:** Bhitarkanika National Park (BNP) in Kendrapara district will remain closed for a period of 10 days beginning Sunday to facilitate a crocodile census. Entry of foreign and local visitors will be prohibited during this period. The national park will reopen for visitors from January 12, 2022. The objective behind the closure of the national park is to avoid human interference during the days when crocodile census is carried out, Rajnagar Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Jagnyadatta Pati said. The national park is home to 70 per cent of India's estuarine crocodiles or saltwater crocodiles.

However, no meeting was organised fearing a massive turnout of people. The tribals first performed some rituals at the firing site of Champakoila and later took out a rally to the mass cremation site of Veer Bhumi at Ambagadia. There, the leaders of both the groups garlanded the martyrs' memorials and performed rituals in memory of the deceased.

The tribals organised a meeting at Ambagadia in which anti-displacement leaders of several organisations vowed to fight any policy that exploits locals.

YOUTH CLIMBS ATOP TOWER TO PROTEST FOR TUBE WELLS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, Jan 2:** A youth resorted to a novel way of protest as he climbed atop a mobile phone tower demanding drinking water facilities to Ghardhara village under Khariar police limits in Nuapada district, Sunday.

The youth was identified as Hemant Rana of the same village.

High drama was witnessed after Rana climbed atop the mobile phone tower and demanded drinking water facilities in the village.

Reports said that, there are only three tube wells at Ghardhara village. Water of two tube wells is unfit for consumption as they give out fluoride mixed water. The third tube well has remained out of bounds for the residents as it is inside the Anganwadi centre. But the villagers depend upon this tube



well only for drinking and other domestic purposes.

The locals never get water from the tube well inside the village Anganwadi centre as the workers often lock the gate of the centre denying access to the villagers to fetch drinking water from it.

Upset over perennial water woes in his village, Rana climbed atop the tower to lodge his protest before the administration, it was learnt. He finally relented after a large crowd of villagers including his family members pleaded before him to come down.

Kapilash sanctuary to have jungle safari soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Jan 2:** Tourists visiting Kapilash sanctuary in this district will soon have the option of exploring the forest regions in the sanctuary through jungle safari as it is witnessing a major expansion, a report said.

The forest department is making continuous efforts to attract more tourists to this reserve forest of Dhenkanal district through establishment of various tourism facilities.

As part of this effort, facilities for jungle safari and amusement of tourists will soon be available in this sanctuary. Work on these projects is going on at a brisk pace and is expected to get completed by 2022 end.

The jungle safari project, when completed, will help attract more domestic and international tourists

to the sanctuary and bring in more revenue for the state exchequer.

Jungle safari is a nature trail for exploring the forest regions of national park, wildlife sanctuaries and protected reserves on a vehicle, elephant or even a horse.

Reports said that the Kapilash jungle, which received the status of reserve forest April 2, 2021, is spread over 12,559.59 hectare of land. As a result, the population of herbivorous animals like deer, sambar, barking deer has increased in this reserve forest.

The forest department is planning to create a vast pasture land in this sanctuary where it will plant grass on 20 hectare of land to get rid of the food problem of these animals.

The department has identified two specific areas in the reserve forest to create the pasture land. The

Safari work is going on at brisk pace for which a 15-km long road is being built from Sorisiapada and Bania

A watch tower is being built nearby to help tourists see wild animals from a close distance

FILLIP TO TOURISM



The forest department is planning to create a vast pasture land in this sanctuary

A wooden barricade will be constructed to house the rescued elephant calf at the elephant rescue centre of the sanctuary

food chain in the forest has been seriously affected as these two places lack grass for the animals to eat.

Meanwhile, the safari work is going on at brisk pace for which a 15-km long road is being built from Sorisiapada and Bania inside the reserve forest. Here tourists will

have the chance to enjoy the sylvan trail and picturesque surroundings of the reserve forest.

A watch tower is being built nearby to help tourists see wild animals from a close distance. Two vehicles will be purchased to help tourists take a tour of the forest

through jungle safari, for which funds have been sanctioned. The department plans to make the jungle safari operational this year and tourists can explore the jungle by buying tickets.

When contacted, Prakash Chand Gogineni, divisional forest officer (DFO) said that like Similipal and Satkosia sanctuaries, it holds lots of opportunities for tourists. Various works are underway to develop its as a major tourist hub.

The state government has sanctioned ₹1.5 crore for the maintenance of Kapilash and Saptasajya reserve forests in the district but the higher authorities will have to give the order on the manner of spending the fund, he said. Moreover, a wooden barricade will be constructed to house the rescued elephant calf at the elephant rescue centre of the sanctuary.

FOCUS POLITICS

# MAMATA IN GOA



**Mamata has come to Goa as a 'sky-fighter'. She is in the political sky, not on the political ground of Goa. She did not have time to build a strong organisation before making a bid for power in the state. The 2024 clock was ticking. So she decided to build the party from the top**

well as a liability for the party. As a party known for defending the interests of religious minorities it would seem natural for it to start building its base with Christians who are the largest religious minority in Goa. However, there it has to compete with the Congress. The Christians have been largely with the Congress for the past several years, and have come even more closer to it in the years of ascendancy of the BJP.

This ascendancy has unleashed a pestilence of vigilantism whose victims have been Christians in several places across the country, a phenomenon that has alienated even the small section of Goan Christians who voted for the BJP in the past few elections owing to their admiration for the vision and governing ability of Manohar Parrikar. The present Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's declaration that he would restore the temples destroyed by the Portuguese has only deepened their alienation. They know how the BJP has raked up skeletons from history to fill Hindus with fear and hatred of Muslims. They shudder at the thought of the same happening to them.

The threat to the Christians is big, and therefore they are likely to stay on with the Congress which has a wide base in the state, instead of the Trinamool Congress which, despite its strong secular credentials, is a new and small party and has no roots and may end up only with a marginal presence.

An additional disadvantage of the Trinamool Congress is that it is seen as a party of outsiders. Mamata has tried telling Goans, "I may be branded an outsider, but I want to tell you that I have not come here to become your chief minister. Your government will be run by your own people." But it is not working. Also, because the perception is unmistakable among Goans that she has not come to improve their lives but her life. Her Goa campaign is not for Goa, they say, but for adding one more step to the ladder she is making to climb up to the Delhi throne.

*The author is a journalist and writer based in New Delhi.*

hook more leaders. Then there was the Goa Forward Party (GFP), a party with three MLAs, with whom Mamata's negotiators had several rounds of discussions. They could have been a handsome catch, but the GFP leader Vijay Sardesai refused to accept their condition that he merge his party with the Trinamool Congress. He insisted on an alliance, and what was more, on a number of seats Mamata's negotiators were not willing to give him.

At length, by the third week of December, after three months of relentless shopping, the Trinamool Congress had got three MLAs—three precast pillars to build the party's castle in Goa upon. It was not an insignificant gain for a party that had started with zero presence in the state. Yet it remained doubtful how strong and reliable those pillars were going to prove to the party. Other than Luizinho Faleiro, they got Alexio Reginaldo Lourenco from Congress and Churchill Alemao from the Nationalist Congress Party. Both Lourenco and Alemao do not have influence beyond their constituencies.

And all the three MLAs the Trinamool Congress has got are Christians. That is an asset as

Mamata Banerjee's Goa campaign is built less on real strength, more on bravado. She has travelled from the east to the west to prove that if she can defeat the BJP in Bengal she can defeat it anywhere. But every state is not Bengal. And on top of it, she has blazed blindly and brazenly into the battle, without any time on her hands, without much preparation. Who has built a political party in a new state in a hundred days? A political party that claims itself to be capable enough to capture power in the next sixty days? Only Mamata Banerjee can do it. She has the magic wand.

But the way Mamata has used her magic wand in Goa is totally contrary to the way she did it in her state. There she worked hard for years to build an organisation. She was on the street, on the ground. So much so that she acquired the iconic image of a 'street-fighter'. In sharp contrast, Mamata has come to Goa as a 'sky-fighter'. She is in the political sky, not on the political ground of Goa. She did not have time to build a strong organisation before making a bid for power in the state. The 2024 clock was ticking. So she decided to build the party from the top. She would recruit leaders first; workers would follow.

As in the rest of the country, political loyalty in Goa has come to be like gold: some preserve it for life, some sell it when they can get a good price. During the months before an election, the loyalty-gold bazaar gets bustling with more sellers and buyers. There are legislators who find the avenues of upward mobility blocked for them in their party; there are organisational leaders who are denied scope for getting nominated as party's candidates in elections; they sell their gold.

Mamata's men began to hunt for the Goa bazaar. They were overjoyed when in their very initial bargains they got Luizinho Faleiro, a veteran Congressman who had been a chief minister; the party's state president and an all-India general secretary. The price he demanded for his gold was a Rajya Sabha seat, which Mamata agreed to pay, because she saw him as a



Arun Sinha

**WHO HAS BUILT A POLITICAL PARTY IN A NEW STATE IN A HUNDRED DAYS?**

## China & Religion

Since Karl Marx coined the phrase, it has become an axiomatic truth for Communists of all denominations to consider religion as 'the opium of the masses.' The logical corollary to it for Communist countries is to remove all vestiges of religions and subject people following religious faiths to different forms of repression. This has been the case in China too which is now at the centre of an international conflict over its handling of religious groups in the country, including the Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists and Catholic Christians in Hong Kong. The tension between China on the one hand and the USA and Europe on the other has got exacerbated by the USA's recent decision to ban entry of products from China made with the labour of the Uyghurs settled in its Xinjiang province. In response, China has banned internet discussions of religions, rituals such as burning incense and followed it up with an unprecedented move to directly engage with the Christians of Hong Kong. The new measures have clearly spelt out the dos and don'ts in this regard. They stipulate that except for licensed religious groups, religious schools, temples and churches, no organisation or individual may preach on the internet, conduct religious education and training and publish or repost preachers' comments. Organising and conducting religious activities and live broadcasting or recording of religious ceremonies such as worshipping the Buddha, burning incense, chanting, mass and baptism stand banned. Further, no organisation or individual is permitted to raise funds in the name of any religion on the internet.

The new rules, titled Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services, state that anyone applying for a licence to disseminate religious content online must be an entity or individual based in China and recognised by Chinese laws, and its main representative should be a Chinese national. State security authorities will manage domestic organisations and individuals and prevent them from 'conspiring' with foreign bodies to use religion to conduct activities that pose a threat to national security on the internet.

Under the rules, applications must be made to the religious affairs department of the local government for a licence that will be valid for three years. Content prohibited under the rules include those which use religion to "incite subversion of state power; oppose the Communist Party's leadership, undermine national unity and social stability and promote extremism, terrorism or national separatism."

Realising the international build-up against the perceived persecution of religious groups, China's President Xi Jinping early December adopted a persuasive tone to present his views on the state's religious policies that is now known as 'sinicisation' which is religion with Chinese characteristics. His detractors, however, call it 'Xification' of religion, meaning Xi's methods of curbing religious freedom. What is unprecedented is the move by Chinese bishops and religious leaders to brief senior Hong Kong Catholic clergymen on President Xi Jinping's vision of religion. This is being construed as Beijing's most assertive move yet to influence Hong Kong's diocese, which is answerable to the Vatican and has some high-ranking leaders known for their credentials for defending democracy and human rights in the semi-autonomous territory. So long, mainland China contented itself by interacting with Catholic leaders of Hong Kong unofficially. But, it is the first time the two sides have met formally.

The outcome of the meeting is deliberately kept under wraps. Interestingly, as reports suggest, mainland speakers were careful not to mention Xi's name at the meeting or issue any instructions or orders. They craftily explained that Xi's policy of 'sinicisation' reinforces Vatican policies of 'inculturation', which means adapting Christianity in traditional, non-Christian cultures. The diocese has doubts about the wisdom of the Vatican's conciliatory attitude to Beijing. The thrust of China's arguments is that the policy of religion with Chinese characteristics means closer ties between religious groups and the party and state. It includes tying religions more closely to Chinese culture, patriotism and goals of the ruling Communist Party and state to achieve Xi's 'Chinese dream.'

This is a clever ploy to impose China's authority on religious bodies without trying to appear too dogmatic. The political agenda behind it is for all to see and no one seems to be taken in by such pronouncements. The Hong Kong side also reciprocated by not adopting a confrontationalist posturing. The meeting was held just weeks before the ordination this month of the new Hong Kong Bishop Stephen Chow who is a moderate Vatican appointee. Two earlier attempts to fill the post had failed due to pressure and opposition by Beijing. While some of Hong Kong's government and commercial elites are Catholic and pro-Beijing, including the city's leader Carrie Lam, other Catholics have long been active in the pro-democracy and anti-government movements.

The Hong Kong engagement is a desperate attempt by Xi to balance the relationship between religion and politics. An official white paper released in 2019 said China has about 200 million believers - majority were Buddhists in Tibet. Others included 20 million Muslims, 38 million Protestant Christians and 6 million Catholic Christians. There are 140,000 places of worship in China.

Xi, widely expected to remain in power for life, has been trying to reorient religions so that they can function under the guidance of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and he can continue to rule without too much international interference with his religious policies. Cajoling and coddling through internet ban appear to be his tools to push his religious policy.

These moves of Xi cannot be termed as purely Communist reactions towards religious movements. These are his personal requirements to rule over China for an unspecified time. The desire to use religion or to suppress it stem from a similar need. That need is the naked desire to remain in power.

### WISDOM CORNER

**A man can be himself only so long as he is alone, and if he does not love solitude, he will not love freedom, for it is only when he is alone that he is really free.** ARTHUR SCHOENHAUER

**In oneself lies the whole world and if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either the key or the door to open, except yourself.** JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

**Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.** KAHILIL GIBRAN

### WORDSWORTH

#### Raparee

This might look like one of the many words ending in -ee for a person affected in some manner by the action of the associated verb, such as employee, inductee, interneer, interviewee, or licensee. But the ending is accidental, as in dungaree, squeegee and jamboree. A raparee was once an Irish foot soldier, armed with a weapon that in Irish was called a rapaire. This is a cousin of English rapier, though not the same sort of weapon, the Irish one being a short pike. The Irishmen so armed were an irregular soldiery who fought on the Catholic Jacobite side during the war that William III waged in Ireland in 1689-91. During and after the war, many took up thieving and banditry, which is why their name is thought also to contain another Irish word, rapaire or roipaire, a violent person, irregular soldier or robber. Raparees became a menace and in 1695 the government passed An Act for the Better Suppressing Tories, Robbers, and Rapparees. Tory, the nickname of members of the Conservative Party in the UK, is from Irish toraidhe, a highwayman or outlaw, and initially referred to Irish peasants dispossessed by English settlers and living as robbers. It was taken up as a term of political abuse in the 1680s for those who opposed excluding the Catholic James from succeeding to the English crown. Raparee is now solely of historical interest, but this modern example demonstrates that its relevance soon spread far beyond Ireland: We were building a schooner from the wreckage when a horde of ill-favoured raparees attacked us — Dyaks and Malays led by a nasty confident quean, a bloody-minded covetous froward strumpet (The Nutmeg of Consolation, by Patrick O'Brian, 1991).

### SPECTRUM EDUCATION

## Bottlenecks in creative process

A test is conducted to assess or evaluate the performance of the learner, but it's not altogether through objective type questions. Objective type questions in the form of multiple-choice options not only mar divergent thinking but also pave the way for cramming of information. The Term-I examinations conducted by different boards are over and some are underway. This time, question patterns adopted by most of the boards are almost the same. Multiple-choice question patterns have become the way of conducting tests during these pandemic times. It has been experienced that multiple-choice questions in literature subjects like Odia, English and Hindi are not free from ambiguity. Setting the question papers in the form of multiple-choice type is really challenging. This is quite natural as each line in a poem or prose can be interpreted in different ways. Literary interpretations vary from reader to reader and from critic to critic. So setting multiple-choice questions in literature leads only to convergent thinking. The literary creation of any author, writer or poet is quite personal. But

readers and critics interpret the lines and thoughts in different ways even the writers have not thought of. The same has been confessed by writers in many interviews. Rather writers allow critics or readers to interpret what they understand from different perspectives.

The nature of literature is never objective and to give a question with only four options in exam is not at all justified. The creativity and the fecundity of imagination get squeezed. How far are multiple-choice questions in literature justified? Apart from this, setting multiple-choice questions is against the principles of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As a result, the creativity of learners is at stake. The present system of examination and evaluation is urging children to adopt rote learning which hinders free and insightful thinking. Most of the questions in literature should be set as open-ended so that cramming of facts can be strongly discouraged. Learners are expected to appreciate the beauty of the language and critically examine pieces of literary art. With the advancement of sci-

ence, poetry shouldn't decline. The NEP 2020 advocates competency-based learning and strongly discourages the cramming of facts and information. This is the time for inculcation of life skills like self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving and decision making in the Twenty-first Century children. Each child is unique in his/her way. Open ended, essay type and extrapolative questions are the ideal ones in the examinations to justify Bloom's Taxonomy. Human life is not objective and variety in the approach to life adds spice to life. Subjective questions are the only ideal way to tackle knotty problems. Let the learners justify their view point in their own thoughts.

The number of children reading textbooks meant for a particular grade is very less. Cheap kinds of key books available in the markets have taken the place of textbooks on the bookshelves and in school bags. The most embarrassing situation is that children carry these key books even to the classrooms. The learners claim that they don't have time to read the long texts when the shortcut

routes are available. They never realise the direst consequences of shortcuts in the long run. In fact, there is no substitute for textbooks. The contents are elaborate, comprehensive, meticulous and logical in textbooks. On the contrary, the reference books are littered with vague, obscure and objective questions with answers. Instead of blaming children's undue obsession for these so-called objective reference questions, the modalities of questions must be changed. The contents like age-appropriate lessons are usually designed by the panel of educationists. The teachers and learners transact the lessons in the classrooms accordingly. Correct pedagogy is also adopted by the teachers to make the teaching-learning process enjoyable. If all the questions are of objective type that too multiple choice, the classrooms will become monotonous. Blueprints of the question papers should be redesigned for Term-II so that children's creative potential can be judiciously evaluated.

*The writer is a teacher of English. Views are personal.*



Bijaya Kumar Parhi

**OPEN-ENDED, ESSAY TYPE AND EXTRAPOLATIVE QUESTIONS ARE THE IDEAL ONES IN THE EXAMINATIONS TO JUSTIFY BLOOM'S TAXONOMY**

#### Tragic beginning

Sir, The stampede at the famous Mata Vaishno Devi temple in Jammu & Kashmir in which 12 devotees, including two women, perished and 15 others injured, was avoidable. The incident occurred near Gate No 3 in the wee hours when many devotees were queuing up for darshan inside the cave shrine on the Trikuta hills on the New Year. It is believed that a scuffle between two groups and the massive rush triggered the stampede. Unfortunately, most devotees died in a narrow area that witnessed people running helter-skelter without knowing why. While our hearts go out to the dead and their families, the temple authorities would do well to manage the smooth flow of pilgrims and ensure that such incidents do not recur.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

#### Irrational exuberance

Sir, The economy is chugging along nicely, and we should catch up to the levels of 2019 (although we have lost two years in between). While it is good news, the last couple of years have seen the economy tumble. And the growth we are seeing now is on a lower base. It would require a similar almost double-digit growth for us to be on the same level as 2019. One of the biggest positive outcomes of China's role in the pandemic is that the world is looking at alternatives to China and India has emerged as a frontrunner. While this is a good development, it would require political will, industrial drive and quick decision making for us to benefit. Stock market is galloping, notwithstanding any obstacles in its way. Many more millionaires have emerged in India, courtesy the stock exchanges. This is indeed what we call an irrational exuberance. And any irrational act only meets with a disastrous outcome.

MR Jayanthi, MUMBAI

#### Another wave

Sir, After reporting the minimum active cases of COVID-19 for the last 19 months December 27, 2021, India has reported a rise in the cases at a fast pace. The growth in infections in Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh is more than other states. Strict measures are needed to be taken to control a possible third wave of the pandemic.

Gopal Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
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# national

## of the day quote

I am ready to work with Punjab Congress Chief Navjot Singh Sidhu and also ready to make any "sacrifice" for the party  
CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI | PUNJAB CM

During the Samajwadi Party regime in Uttar Pradesh, the famous 'Rampuri' knives were used only for grabbing land of the poor while the present state government is promoting it under the ODP scheme to enrich people  
YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

Students will be given an opportunity to engage with teachers from all across the world during conferences and interactive sessions  
MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CM

## SHORT TAKES

### 13 students test Covid positive

Jammu: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district was closed Sunday till further orders after 13 students tested positive for Covid-19. An order issued by District Magistrate, Reasi, said that the medical officer has intimated that during the Covid tests conducted in the University, Kakryal (Katra) campus on December 31, 2021 and January 1, 2022, a total of 13 students have tested positive.

### Helicopter makes emergency landing

Chandigarh: An Indian Army helicopter made a "precautionary" landing in a field in Haryana's Jind district on Sunday and all the three persons on board are safe, police said. The helicopter, flying from Punjab's Bathinda to Delhi, made an emergency landing in Jajanwala village near Narwana town. Villagers soon gathered at the spot to see the helicopter.

### Car mows down cops

Mathura: A sub-inspector was killed and three policemen sustained injuries when a car, allegedly owned by a criminal, mowed them down while they were checking vehicles in Mathura's Govardhan area. The incident took place on Saturday and the police said one of the five occupants of the car, Chandra Shekhar, 25, was also injured.

### 2 Nigerians held

New Delhi: Delhi police has arrested two Nigerian nationals for allegedly hacking the WhatsApp mobile application of a senior official in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, an official said here Sunday. The accused, identified as Okoye Simeon, 39, and Ugo Chukwu, 35, both presently residing at Uttam Nagar, Delhi, were arrested under sections 170, 420 and 511 of the Indian Penal Code.

### Two arrested

Gurugram: Two suspected drug peddlers were arrested here Sunday and 35 kg marijuana seized from them, police said. They were identified as Usman Gani Sheikh (47) of West Bengal and Rakesh (34) of Uttarakhand. "Usman had come to Rakesh to supply marijuana. Rakesh used to make puddings with the marijuana and sell them," ACP (Crime) Preet Pal Singh Sangwan said. The accused are being questioned, the police added.

## 27 LABOURERS INJURED IN J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 2: At least 27 labourers were injured Sunday when the iron shuttering over an under-construction bridge collapsed in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The major bridge is being constructed by the Border Roads Organisation over the Devika river at Ramgarh-Koulpur, the officials said.

They said the iron shuttering connecting two of many pillars caved in around 4.15 pm, injuring a total of 27 labourers. A rescue operation was immediately launched and all the injured, some of whom also trapped under the debris, were evacuated to different hospitals, the officials said, adding the condition of two of them was stated to be "critical" and they were referred to the Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu for specialised treatment.

Deputy Commissioner, Samba, Anuradha Gupta immediately rushed to the scene of the accident to supervise the rescue operation and later enquired about the condition of the injured undergoing treatment at Community Health Centre Ramgarh and trauma centre Vijaypur.

"The iron shuttering collapsed during the laying of concrete slab. A rescue operation was immediately launched and all the 27 labourers were evacuated to nearby hospitals," she said. Gupta said except two, the condition of rest of the injured was stable and they are under observation in hospitals.

## SIT ARRESTS TWO FARMERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lakhimpur Kheri, Jan 2: A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has arrested two farmers in connection with the alleged lynching of three BJP workers during the violence that took place in Lakhimpur Kheri October 3 last year.

According to SIT sources, the two farmers, Kamaljeet Singh, 29, and Kawaljeet Singh Sonu, 35, were arrested by the SIT Saturday. They had been allegedly hiding from the police for nearly two months. The SIT had earlier released pictures of a few suspects, which included the two.

They will be produced before a magistrate and their remand custody will be sought by the investigating officer. So far, six farmers have been arrested in connection with the death of three BJP workers.

## Hurriyat leaders duped students: Police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar/New Delhi, Jan 2: Some leaders of the Hurriyat Conference, an amalgam of secessionist groups, allegedly "used" Kashmir-based "consultancy" firms to woo prospective students for engineering and medical seats in Pakistan for which a fake 'National Talent Search' examination was conducted, according to a charge sheet filed by the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

The charge sheet, filed by the State Investigation Agency (SIA), has highlighted several instances where parents were taken across the border using valid travel documents but were later compelled to pay extra money for their wards' admission to universities and colleges there.

"During investigation, it also got reflected that the students/parents were duped by the accused. They were made to visit Pakistan for admissions to MBBS, however, (they) would become hopeless after discovering their admission letters as fake." Circumstances were created wherein parents/students were put to absolute state of despondency so as to demand extra money to be either wire transferred or delivered to their persons of choice in Kashmir," the

## In pandemic-hit 2020-21, Rlys earned over ₹500 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: The Railways earned ₹403 crore from tatkal ticket charges, an additional ₹119 crore from premium tatkal tickets, and ₹511 crore from dynamic fares during 2020-21, even as much of its operations remained suspended through most of the year due to the Covid pandemic, revealed an RTI reply.

Passengers in these three categories are usually last minute travellers who avail these services mostly for emergency travel by paying premium charges. In a reply to a RTI filed by Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, the Railways said that it

earned ₹240 crore from dynamic fares, ₹353 crore from tatkal tickets and ₹89 crore from premium tatkal charges in the financial year 2021-22 till September. In the 2019-20 financial year, when there were no restrictions in train operations, the national transporter earned ₹1,313 crore from dynamic fares, ₹1,669 from tatkal tickets and ₹603 crore from premium tatkal tickets. The data from the railway ministry comes a month after a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways remarked that the charges levied on tatkal tickets are "a little unjustifiable" and put a huge burden particularly on those passengers who are financially

## 15-18 AGE GROUP VACCINATION

# Avoid mixing-up of vaccines: Mandaviya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Sunday said states and union territories should take necessary measures, including setting up separate vaccination centres, to avoid mixing-up of Covid vaccines during administration of shots to those in the 15-18 age group.

Inoculation of children in this age category will start January 3. The vaccine option for those in the 15-18 age group would only be Covaxin, according to a set of new guidelines issued by the Union health ministry. Besides Covaxin, the adult population of the country is being administered Covishield and Sputnik V.

To ensure smooth implementation of the guidelines, Mandaviya held an online interaction with health ministers and principal secretaries and additional chief secretaries for health of states and union territories (UTs).

He advised them to ensure orientation of vaccinators and vaccination team members for the inoculation exercise for those in the 15-18 age group and for identification of dedicated vaccination session sites for this category of beneficiaries, a health ministry statement said.

"To avoid mixing-up of vaccines during administration, separate Covid vaccination centres (CVCs), separate session sites, separate queue (if at same session where adult vaccination is ongoing) and separate vaccination team (if at



The vaccine option for those in the 15-18 age group would only be Covaxin, according to a set of new guidelines issued by the Union Health Ministry

To ensure smooth implementation of the guidelines, Mandaviya held an online interaction with health ministers and principal secretaries and additional chief secretaries for health of states and union territories

same session site) are to be strived for," Mandaviya said.

States and UTs were advised to share their requirement of vaccine doses by giving district-wise estimation of beneficiaries, using Co-WIN, and plan for distribution of Covaxin to identified session sites well in advance, the statement said.

Mandaviya reviewed the public health preparedness for COVID-19 and progress of the national vaccination campaign in view of rising cases of the Omicron variant.

The statement said that he also reviewed the recent decisions to roll-out vaccination for the 15-18 age group and "precautionary dose" (third dose) for identified vulnerable categories. The online meeting was officiated by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan.

The minister noted that at the outset, countries are experiencing three to four times surge in Covid cases in comparison to their earlier peaks. The Omicron variant being highly transmissible, a high surge could overwhelm the medical system, Mandaviya noted.

He advised states to leave no stone unturned in ramping up infrastructure to manage a high surge so that India escapes unscathed from this episode of the pandemic, the statement said.

Mandaviya said in this regard, irrespective of Covid variants, measures for preparedness and protection remain the same. He urged states and UTs to re-invigorate their teams to work at the ground level and strengthen monitoring and containment mechanisms.

In the meeting, a detailed dis-

## FLIGHT TAKES OFF SANS ATC NOD

A SpiceJet passenger flight took off from Gujarat's Rajkot without the mandatory clearance from the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) December 30, following which aviation regulator DGCA has ordered a probe into the incident, officials said Sunday



## NEET-PG COUNSELLING

### Centre to retain existing EWS criteria

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 2: For the NEET-PG counselling, the Centre has decided to continue with the existing criteria of Economic Weaker Section reservation for the ongoing admissions made by expert committee.

In the NEET-PG counselling which is pending before the Supreme Court, the Union government told the court that it has decided to retain the existing criteria for EWS as changing the criteria midway will lead to complications.

The government in an affidavit dated on December 31 had informed the Supreme Court that it has accepted the recommendations of the Committee for Revisiting the Criteria Of The Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) Reservation for making candidates of those families whose annual income is up to ₹8 lakh eligible for EWS reservation but excluding a person whose family has five acres of agricultural land and above from EWS irrespective of income.

The expert committee in its report on Review of the Criteria for EWS Reservation has recommended that disturbing the existing system which is ongoing since 2019 would create more complications both for the beneficiaries as well as for the authorities. The expert committee has recommended that the revision should be implemented in the next academic year, adding that changing the criteria midway will lead to more complications.

## SC panel reaches out to victims of snooping

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 2: The Supreme Court appointed committee probing the Pegasus spyware snooping matter has issued a public notice seeking details from people who may have felt their mobile devices may have been infected by Pegasus malware.

The panel has asked the Pegasus victims to send the information before noon of January 7, 2022. On October 27, the top court said it was compelled to take up the cause to determine the truth, as it appointed an independent expert technical committee supervised by a retired top court judge, Justice R. V. Raveendran, to probe the Pegasus snooping allegations.

The committee asked the citizens who have reasonable cause to suspect that her/his mobile has been compromised due to specific usage of NSO group Israel's Pegasus software to contact it with reasons, which led them to believe that the device was infected with the malware. The committee also asked the people to inform it whether they are in a position to allow it to examine the device. "In case, the committee feels your responses for suspicion of the device being infected with the malware compel a further investigation, then the committee shall request you to allow examination of your device," said the notice, which was issued in Sunday's newspapers.

The committee said the collection point would be in New Delhi and the mobile device will be delivered back on completion of the tests/investigation.



THE COMMITTEE ALSO ASKED THE PEOPLE TO INFORM IT WHETHER THEY ARE IN A POSITION TO ALLOW IT TO EXAMINE THE DEVICE  
THE TOP COURT HAS AUTHORISED THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE TO DEVISE ITS OWN PROCEDURE TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT AND ANSWER THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The top court has authorised the technical committee to devise its own procedure to effectively implement and answer the terms of reference.

The committee can hold an investigation it deems fit and take statements of any person in connection with the inquiry and call for records of any authority or individual. Justice Raveendran is overseeing the functioning of the technical committee and is assisted by Alok Joshi, a former IPS officer and Dr Sundeep Oberoi, Chairman, Sub Committee in the International Organisation of Standardisation/International Electro-Technical Commission/Joint Technical Committee.

## HOLY JOURNEY



Devotees walk towards Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Reasi district

PTI PHOTO

charge sheet, accessed by PTI, said. It is the first chargesheet filed by J&K Police, which named nine people, mostly separatists, for allegedly selling MBBS seats in Pakistan to Kashmiri students and using the money to spread unrest in the Union territory, officials said. "Parents would comply with such diktats of these Pakistan-based Hurriyat leaders or terrorists of Kashmiri origin (who had exfiltrated to Pakistan for arms training during the outbreak of militancy) to seek admissions to MBBS at Pakistan. "This accumulated money under a well-knitted conspiracy/secretary would land in the hands of active terrorists, families of killed militants and stone pelters through some Hurriyat leaders and their associates to further terrorist/secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir," the SIA said, adding that in a few cases, students and parents were completely duped by the accused and their hard-earned money was never or partly returned. The SIA submitted the charge sheet in a special court here on Thursday against the nine, including Mohammed Akbar Bhat alias Zaffar Bhat, a constituent of the Hurriyat Conference.



weak and are forced to travel in urgency to meet their kith and kin or so for a very short distance also. The committee desired that the ministry devise measures for a pro

rata fare for distance travelled. Tatkal ticket charges have been fixed as a percentage of fare at the rate of 10 per cent of basic fare for second class and 30 per cent of

basic fare for all other classes subject to minimum and maximum.

Under the premium version, which was introduced in 2014 in select trains, 50 per cent of tatkal quota tickets are sold using the dynamic fare system. The committee also said that flexi or dynamic pricing appeared to be "somewhat discriminatory" given the facts that fares of Rajdhani, Shatabdis and Durgontos are already higher as compared to other mail and express trains and are almost at par and in some instances higher than those of basic fares.

Data also shows that over 52 lakh people who were on wait list after finalisation of seat reservation charts could not travel by

trains in the first six months of the current fiscal. Around 32,50,039 PNRs (passenger name records), against which 52,96,741 passengers had bookings, were auto-cancelled as they were in wait status after preparation of the charts till September of this financial year.

"The problem is that we do not have enough trains to meet the demand of the general public. Those that can afford the premium fares, spend money to get tatkal tickets. Some trains are out of reach for some who cannot pay the dynamic fares. Even if we book in advance, the tickets are wait listed in most trains," said Sujet Rai, who travels to see his parents in Bihar every year.

# TN: Covid patients to get virtual treatment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 2:** The Tamil Nadu government has planned to offer virtual treatment via home isolation to COVID-19 patients who have received both doses of vaccination and have been affected by the Omicron variant, Health Minister Ma Subramanian said Sunday.

The virtual treatment would include the Omicron-affected individuals who have not received the vaccination but are 'asymptomatic'. They would be under constant monitoring by a medical team, the Minister for Health and Family Welfare said here.

Subramanian was talking to reporters after inspecting a medical camp in Chennai as part of the 17th Mega Vaccination Camp being held through 50,000 vaccination camps across the state.

"When there is an increase in Omicron-affected cases (in Tamil Nadu), the vaccinated patients affected by Omicron will be offered treatment under home isolation and those who have not been vaccinated and asymptomatic will be placed under constant monitoring by a team. Virtual treatment will be commenced soon in the state," he said.

Only those who require hospi-



talisation would be admitted to a hospital for treatment, he said.

According to the state health department, Tamil Nadu has officially declared 121 Omicron cases as of Saturday.

Subramanian claimed those infected with the Omicron variant mostly test negative after three days, and require only five days of treatment. "It has been planned to monitor them under home isolation (after they get discharged from hospital post recovery)," he said.

Noting that the medical infrastructure in Tamil Nadu has been strengthened, he said the department has informed the manage-

ment of Victoria Hostel in the city, to vacate the premises for setting up beds to treat COVID-19 patients. The hostel was converted into a COVID Care Centre last year when the second wave of the contagion was at its peak in the state.

Referring to the sharp rise in new cases in the state, the minister reiterated that people should wear a face mask while going out and unvaccinated ones should get themselves inoculated.

He said the vaccination process for those aged between 15 to 18 will be kicked off from Monday by Chief Minister MK Stalin at a government high school in Saidapet.

# Chennai's weather radars in eye of storm

The Tamil Nadu capital and its surrounding districts were pounded by more than 100 cm and 200 cm of rain from Thursday morning till early Friday catching the residents and the administration off guard

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Two days after extremely heavy rains threw life out of gear in Chennai and several areas in surrounding districts, the IMD's radars are in the eye of the storm that has the potential to become state-Centre spat.

Saturday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, MK Stalin and his DMK's Chennai Central MP, Dayanidhi Maran, both raised with Centre the issue about 'non-functional radars' at IMD Chennai, a charge denied by the IMD.

Chennai and surrounding districts were pounded by more than 100 cm and 200 cm of rain from Thursday morning till early Friday catching the residents and the administration off guard and even led to loss of three lives.

The state government had declared a holiday Friday owing to further prediction of heavy rainfall in Chennai, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, and Chengalpattu districts due to heavy rainfall as a precautionary measure. Thursday evening, hundreds of people were stuck either on roads in massive traffic jams due to water logging or in their offices, homes as the low-lying areas were inundated.

Stalin dashed off a letter to Union

Home Minister Amit Shah. "Wrote to Amit Shah requesting to enhance the capacity of IMD, Chennai with advanced weather prediction mechanism and up gradation of technology to make predictions of high alert situations earlier, which is essential to take up pre-emptive efforts to ensure peoples' safety," Maran tweeted Saturday after that.

Maran, in a statement, said: "For over 2 years, I've repeatedly requested the Union Government to expedite repair work on Chennai's radar on a war footing. The delay by the Union Government is solely responsible for putting Chennai in a situation where our technology isn't sufficient to support the people in times of need."

"The Union Government has also not released funds requested by the state government for repair and restoration works despite several reminders. How much more should Chennai suffer before the Union government wakes up to the plight of the countless citizens, whose lives are being put at risk?" he said, and blamed lack of adequate warning from the IMD for people's inconvenience.

Claiming that IMD has admitted that they can only do as much with the available technology, Maran "urged Prime Minister Narendra



Modi once again to take notice of the situation and ensure that our radars are fixed immediately and that the relief funds are given at the earliest."

However, IMD's Head (Upper Air Instrumentation Division), Sai Krishnan denied that any of the radars at Chennai needed repair.

There are three Doppler radars in and around Chennai. One is an almost 20-year-old radar at Chennai (long range radar, 500 km range and used for cyclone monitoring), second too is at Chennai, a new x-band radar (short range, 150 km range, focusing entirely on Chennai region) and the third is at Sriharikota, about 60 km from

Chennai within the ISRO complex (long range, 500 km range).

"Of these three, the 20 years old, had needed repairs. But with the help of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), we had repaired it last month itself. The x-band radar was installed six months ago and now both are functioning absolutely normally," Krishnan told IANS.

Explaining that radar is an observational tool and it cannot on its own issue forecast, he said: "Radar is just one of the things. There are satellite images, there are numerical models etc. All these are used to come up with forecasts by the forecasting team."

# How J'khand's indigenous people defended native forests from exploitation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bokaro, Jan 2:** During their younger days, Khirodhar Mahto and Jodha Mahto, residents of the Upar Ghat area of the Bokaro district in Jharkhand, were deeply troubled by the gradual decline of thick forest cover around their village. They felt that the diminishing green canopy signalled a silent threat to their existence and that of their village. Prompted into action, they rallied together like-minded conservationists among their fellow villagers and started a campaign to save the forests.

Today, both Khirodhar and Jodha (52 and 55 years old, respectively) witness the fruits of their activism, as they are surrounded by lush and dense forests that benefit both the environment and the community.

Khirodhar Mahato is now the chairman of the local forest conservation committee consisting of 11 members and also the convener of the Bokaro District Forest Conservation Committee. He recalled, "The movement gained traction in 1981-1982. When we organised ourselves to salvage and rejuvenate the forests, it brought awareness and sensitivity among the common people."

His companion, Jodha Mahto, added, "At that time, the dense forests were fading. Many trees had become stunted, making us aware of the severity of the situation. We realised that if our forests disappeared, then our fields would also become barren, and in turn, our livelihoods would also suffer."

"We take a pledge once a year to protect the trees and take out a procession in which women are also equally involved," said Pushpa Devi (40) from Kanjakiro.

Meena Devi (30), her fellow villager, said, "We stop anyone from chopping trees and make them understand that it will disturb the environmental balance." Devi is associated with self-help groups

**The movement gained traction in 1981-1982. When we organised ourselves to salvage and rejuvenate the forests, it brought awareness and sensitivity among the common people**

KHIRODHAR MAHTO | ACTIVIST

of the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) and is the chairperson of the village organisation.

Upar Ghat is a sprawling collection of many isolated forests which mainly fall in the Nawadih block area. Until recently, this zone was still a stronghold of Naxalites with numerous instances of unrest. Though not completely eradicated, their presence is receding, with the violence on the ebb for the time being. Nawadih was also in the news when the Bokaro forest division under the Vamardhan, Afforestation and Land Conservation Scheme for 2020-21 planted 5.9 lakh native tree saplings in 616 hectares of forest land. Other prominent villages in Upar Ghat are the villages of Pipilo, Kanjakiro and Pipradih in the Kanjakiro Panchayat limits. People of Kurmi, Adivasi and Turi communities reside in these areas.

The Pipilo forest boasts more than 150 types of trees. Communities in the area benefit by collecting and selling fruits, greens and mushroom varieties from the forests in nearby markets.

Dr M.S. Malik, Dean of the Department of Forestry at Birsa Agricultural University, said there haven't been studies on the Sakhua's capacity for water harvesting but said that they grow on very less water and are prolific across Jharkhand because of the favourable acidic soil. "If you dig a pit next to the tree, it retains water and doesn't dry up," he said. The Sakhua matures over 40-60 years and has medicinal value.



# COVID CURBS



A policeman asks people not to go near shore at the Marina beach as Greater Chennai Corporation has allowed visitors to the beach for walking purposes only, following a sharp increase in Covid-19 infections in Chennai, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

# Jharkhand's traditional tribal jewellery finds urban takers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Ranchi, Jan 2:** The fame of products made from Jharkhand's soil, metal and wood, including jewellery and handicrafts, is spreading worldwide.

In the last four to five years, the talent of Jharkhand's hand craftsmen has opened up new avenues for business and employment generation. The products made by them are being sold on e-commerce websites, branded showrooms and international fairs and exhibitions.

On Dhanteras, to provide a big market for the state's traditional tribal jewellery, government agency Jharkhand State Livelihoods Promotion Society (JSLPS) launched the brand 'Adiva'.

The traditional silver and metal ornaments are being made in villages by a group of women hailing from Dumka and Khunti districts.

Adiva brand ornaments can be purchased online via the Palash Mart application.

In the India International Trade Fair (IITF) held in New Delhi in November, Adiva brand's jewellery enticed people and in four days ornaments worth over Rs 9 lakh were sold. The government has opened 158 Palash Marts for women hand craftspersons.

Over 60 products are available at the Palash Marts, which are getting a good response from Amazon and Flipkart.

JSLPS CEO Nancy Sahay told IANS: "We are very excited with the response our products drew at IITF. During the exhibition, we got orders worth Rs 15 lakh for Adiva and Palash products."

A woman hand craftsperson from Khunti said: "With the launch of Adiva, our handcrafted jew-



ellery got a new identity." To provide employment to the state's craftsmen, weavers and artisans, the state government has established the Jharkhand Silk Textile and Handicraft Development Corporation (JHARCRAFT).

JHARCRAFT's showrooms and emporiums are being run at various places including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore and cities in Jharkhand. In these showrooms, one can see a wide range and variety of tussar silk cloth, dhokra art, lacquer ornaments, terracotta products, leather products and musical instruments, among others.

Jharkhand's 5,000-year-old Sohrai and Kohvar paintings after getting the Geographical Identification (GI) tag, have got global recognition.

In the past decade, exhibitions of Sohrai and Kohvar paintings have been held in New York, Paris, London, among other places.

Padma Shri awardee Bullu Imam has played a significant role in getting this art recognised at the international level.

Every year since 2014, photographer and filmmaker Deidi von Schawen organises exhibitions of Sohrai and Kohvar paintings in various cities of France.

Shobha Kumari, who hails from Ranchi, has been making the traditional ornaments of Jharkhandi tribes since 13 years. The products made by her have been exhibited in the US, New Zealand, among other countries.

Sohrai and Kohvar paintings made by Jaishri Indavar have been exhibited in Germany and Italy via Jharcraft. The state's Dhokra art, wooden craft and bamboo products are available on e-commerce websites. After soil, wood, stone, now plans are being made to prepare jewellery and decorative items from coal which is produced on a large scale here.

This project has been prepared by the Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CIMFR), a Dhanbad-based central agency doing research in the field of coal mining. Under the project being started under corporate social responsibility (CSR)-CIMFR, women in the mining areas of the state will be given training to make jewellery and showpieces from coal.

As per the director of the institute, a technology has been developed on the basis of which after processing coal waste, ornaments and showpieces can be made.

# Rising child labour cause of worry in TN

More than 30 per cent of the children are working in the manufacturing sector, while 26 per cent are working in the service sector

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Jan 2:** Rising child labour is a major issue plaguing Tamil Nadu amid the state chalking out grandiose plans for marching ahead in 2022. Ever since Covid-19 lashed the country, experts on migration studies had warned of the possibility of orphaned children being taken away for jobs either by luring them into traps or being forced out of homes.

A recent study conducted by the Socio-Economic Development Foundation (SEDF), an NGO working on development and migration studies, has found that child labour among vulnerable communities in the state has increased by more than 200% compared to the pre-Covid times. The study that was conducted in 20 districts of Tamil Nadu and was led by Dr R. Padmanabhan, Director of the SEDF, found that the number of children working to support their families has increased from 200 before Covid to around 620 after the pandemic. The study also revealed that most of the children who took up employment were from the poor strata of society and vulnerable communities like the SC/ST.

More than 30 per cent of the children are working in the manufacturing sector, while 26 per cent are working in the service sector. Agriculture and cottage industries including the match factories and firecracker units of Sivakasi are a major source of employment to these children.

Padmanabhan told IANS: "The study revealed some startling data. Several children who were orphaned after their parents died due to Covid were forced into the labour market, either by force or by luring them. Around 90 per cent of the children who were going to school have dropped out and they have started earning. Another aspect we haven't touched is bonded labour which we have to study separately but the inputs we receive from the industry is that bonded labour is rampant among child

labourers and a detailed investigation under risky conditions has to be undertaken for this."

Muralidharan, a 14-year-old boy in Erode who is now a labourer in the agriculture plantation of a nearby wealthy landlord, told IANS: "My mother died and my father has left home. I am living with my grandparents who are not in a position to work and I have opted for agriculture labour near my home. I get money and I am happy." While Muralidharan does not understand the need for education rather than opting for an agriculture labour job at a tender age, the system prevalent is creating an environment where children are forced into the labour market.

Sunitha Maheswari who was part of the survey and study of the SEDF while speaking to IANS said: "Most of the children went for labour following the precarious financial situation at home and the loss of jobs of the parents and guardians due to the pandemic. Pushed to starvation what else can one do. It is alarming and the government has to act. Child protection mechanisms have to work in tandem with the health, education and police departments to prevent the rising child labour or else a large number of bright talents will be lost to the society."

To reduce such forced child labour, village-level child protection committees have to be activated and teachers should ensure that children who were studying prior to the pandemic have returned to the classes, which unfortunately has not happened in several cases. Experts have also suggested that the government machinery must be active and vigilant so that child labour is done away with.

R. Mohanaguruswamy, who retired as a child protection officer in the Tamil Nadu government, said that regular studies of the vulnerable communities must be undertaken and the child protection department must work in tandem with the police and conduct surprise checks in factories and cottage industries.

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## of the day quote

On the first day of 2022 the Modi Government gave a New Year gift to all of us in the form of new inflation. This is coupled with a consistently high unemployment rate of almost 10 per cent for most part of the year in 2021. Should we say 'Thank You, Modi Ji', for this

**RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA** | CONGRESS CHIEF SPOKESMAN

BJP is forming a strong base in the Northeast and the party has "come to stay" in the region

**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CM

I am happy that our police have been doing excellent work in Naxal-affected areas. Naxalism is not just a law and order problem, but also a political and social problem. Security forces have set up camps in Maoist strongholds which pushed the rebels on the back foot

**BHUPESH BAGHEL** | CHHATTISGARH CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Man ends life

**Pune:** A 42-year-old debt-ridden man allegedly killed his ailing mother and then committed suicide in Maharashtra's Pune city, police said Sunday. The man, identified as Ganesh Fartade, in a purported 'suicide note' sent through WhatsApp to a relative, mentioned that he had suffered heavy losses in the share market, which promoted him to take the extreme step, they said.

### Naxals kill man

**Bijapur:** Naxals killed a 38-year-old mentally challenged man in a village in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district while accusing him of acting as a police informer, a senior police official said Sunday. A group of Maoist janmilitia members on Saturday night dragged the victim, identified as Hemant Bandi, out of his house in Timmapur village under Basaguda police station limits, located about 400 km from the state capital Raipur, and brutally killed him with sharp-edged weapons, he said.

### 3 killed, 28 hurt

**Alirajpur:** Three passengers were killed and 28 others injured after a bus fell into a river in Madhya Pradesh's Alirajpur district Sunday morning, police said. The deceased included a one-year-old child, they said. The accident took place at around 6 am near Chandpur village, about 15 km from the district headquarters, when the bus was on way to Alirajpur from Chhota Udepur in Gujarat. Superintendent of Police (SP) Manoj Kumar Singh said.

### 2 cops suspended

**Jhabua:** A police station in-charge and an assistant sub-inspector were suspended after some video and audio clips surfaced in which they were purportedly seen and heard cane-charging and abusing people in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district, officials said.

### AAP leader joins Congress

New Delhi: Working President of the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Uttarakhand unit Anant Ram Chauhan has joined the Congress in Delhi after meeting Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Accompanied by former MLA Nav Prabhakar Chauhan before meeting the Congress General Secretary has met state in-charge Devendra Yadav.



What happened to the Bihar government's promise of providing 19 lakh jobs to the people in a month? The public cannot wait anymore.... There is no double engine government in the state

**TEJASHWI YADAV** | BJP LEADER

## SHIMLA, MANALI TO SEE SNOWFALL THIS WEEK

As snow eluded Himachal Pradesh's capital Shimla and the picturesque tourist town of Manali on New Year's Eve, they along with other high hill destinations may experience widespread rain and snow this week, weather officials said Sunday



# Bengal announces new Covid curbs

AGENCIES

**Kolkata, Jan 2:** In wake of the sudden spike in Covid cases, West Bengal on Sunday announced certain restrictions on the movement of people and public transport from Monday onwards.

Though Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had earlier said that there will not be a lockdown but keeping in view of the rising cases, the government decided to close all educational institutions and restrict the movement of local trains.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Secretary H.K. Dwivedi said: "All academic activities in schools, colleges and universities shall remain closed. Only administrative activities shall be permitted with 50 per cent of employees at a time."

This will continue till January 15. He said local trains shall operate with 50 per cent seating capacity up to 7 p.m., metro services will 50 per cent seating capacity as per usual operational time, while movement of people and vehicles and public gatherings of any kind



shall be prohibited between 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. and only essential and emergency services shall be permitted.

Announcing the closure of all swimming pools, spas, gyms, beauty parlours, saloons, wellness centres, entertainment parks, zoos, tourist places, the Chief Secretary said: "All government offices including public undertakings shall function with 50 per cent of employees at a time. All private offices and establishments shall function with 50 per cent of employees

at a time. Work from home shall be encouraged as far as possible."

"Shopping malls and market complexes may function with restricted entry of people by not exceeding 50 per cent of the capacity at a time and up to 10 p.m. Restaurants and bars may operate with 50 per cent of capacity at a time and up to 10 p.m. Cinema halls and theatre halls may operate with 50 per cent of seating capacity at a time and up to 10 p.m."

Under the rules, meetings and conferences shall be allowed with

## Don't panic: Kejriwal

**New Delhi:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday that although Covid-19 cases were rising, there was no need to panic. "Covid-19 cases are increasing rapidly in Delhi, but there is no need to panic. Currently, the active cases in the city are 6,360. Today, 3,100 new cases are expected," Kejriwal said at a press briefing. He said that only 247 hospital beds were occupied on Saturday and all the cases were mild and asymptomatic. Kejriwal said that in the last three days, cases have tripled.

a maximum of 200 people at a time or 50 per cent seating capacity of the hall, whichever is lower, while not more than 50 persons shall be allowed for any social, religious and cultural gatherings, as well as for marriage related ceremonies and not more than 20 persons for funeral/burial services and last rites.

# INFILTRATION BID ON LoC FOILED



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 2:** A Pakistani national was killed by the Army while trying to infiltrate into Kashmir in Kupwara district, an official said Sunday.

An AK-47 and large quantity of ammunition was recovered from him, the official said. "In a complete breach of the ongoing Ceasefire Understanding between the two armies across the Line of Control, an infiltration or BAT action (Pakistan Army's Border Action Team) was attempted in the Keran Sector of Kupwara district on January 1. Swift action by the troops foiled the bid and eliminated the terrorist," the official said.

The slain man was identified as Mohammed Shabbir Malik, a Pakistani national, equipped with weapons, ammunition and warlike stores, he said. "The incident site is located on the Pakistani side of the Anti-Infiltration Obstacle System, kept under surveillance by the Indian Army to effectively counter any nefarious activity by the infiltrators or Pakistan Army," the official said.

Giving out details, the official said an armed intruder was detected moving from areas under the control of Pakistan Army across the Line of Control at around 3 pm on Saturday.

"Ambushes were laid along likely routes that could be adopted by the intruder and movement was followed till 16.00 hours (4 pm). The ambush was sprung at the opportune mo-

**The slain man was identified as Mohammed Shabbir Malik, a Pakistani national, equipped with weapons, ammunition and warlike stores**

ment and the infiltrator eliminated. The body of the slain infiltrator was recovered along with one AK-47 and large quantity of ammunition, including seven grenades," he said.

The surveillance of the area is in progress, denying any exploitation of the bad weather condition prevailing in the area and the operation is underway, he added. He said the route adopted by the terrorist was similar to the one adopted on April 4, 2020, during Operation Rangadori Bhaikh in which five terrorists were eliminated.

The official said the slain man's national identity card and vaccination certificates, issued by the Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Government of Pakistan, ascertained his identity. "The belongings also include a photo of the infiltrator in Army uniform wearing the name tab of Shabbir," he said.

The official said this clearly establishes that Pakistan continues to sponsor cross border terror: "A hotline communication has been made to Pakistan Army asking it to take back the body of the killed individual," he said.



Artistes from Himachal perform during the five-day-long national level Winter Carnival in Manali

PTI PHOTO

## MP man files complaint against Vicky Kaushal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indore, Jan 2:** A man from Indore has filed a police complaint, alleging his scooter's registration number was illegally used on a motorcycle during the shooting of a film sequence with actors Vicky Kaushal and Sara Ali Khan, an official said Sunday.

The official said no FIR has been registered so far and they are conducting an investigation into the complaint. The complainant, Jai Singh Yadav, who is into photo-framing business, said his scooter's registration number was used on a motorcycle during the recent shooting of the upcoming film's sequence here in Madhya Pradesh.

He said pictures of the shooting, in which Kaushal and Khan are seen on the motorcycle, have surfaced on social media.

Yadav said that people involved in the film's shooting did not take his permission before the use of his two-wheeler's registration number. "I am afraid that if there is any accident or illegal work pertaining the motorcycle concerned, the legal responsibility may fall on me," he said.

Yadav said he has lodged a complaint at the Banganga police station on the alleged illegal use of his vehicle's number and appropriate legal action should be taken against the person responsible for it.

Banganga police station in-charge Rajendra Soni said, "We are conducting an investigation into the complaint. No FIR has been registered so far. Appropriate action will be taken after the investigation."

According to a legal expert, the act of using the registration number of another vehicle with an intention of cheating could attract action under Indian Penal Code Sections 420 (cheating), section 482 (using a false property mark), and other relevant provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act.

# Man lynched, two held Time to speak up against insult of women: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Golaghat (Assam), Jan 2:** A 45-year-old man was lynched by three persons in a remote village of Golaghat district on the suspicion that he had stolen a goat, a police officer said Sunday.

Two persons have been detained in connection with the incident, which took place at Mamarani village in Dergaon police station area on Saturday night, reportedly in the presence of locals.

Prodip Choudhury, the officer in-charge (OC) of Dergaon Police Station, said no complaint was registered in the first 12 hours of the attack. "The family members the victim, identified as Sanjay Das, visited the police station only a while ago. They have filed a complaint. We have just registered a case," Choudhury said.

According to the police, Das was attacked by three persons, who resided in the same village as him. He was first taken to Dergaon Civil

Hospital following the attack, but doctors there referred him to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH).

The 45-year-old, however, succumbed to his injuries early on Sunday. Two accused, who have been picked up by the police, are being interrogated to find out more details about the case.

"As per our information, a goat that belonged to one of the culprits went missing and Das was suspected to have stolen it. The goat owner along with his friends thrashed the victim, leading to his death," Chowdhury explained.

During the recently concluded Winter Session of Assam Assembly the government had said it would discuss and consider a proposal to introduce a bill against mob lynching, in line with few other states. On November 29, AASU leader Animesh Bhuyan was lynched by a mob following a heated argument over an accident in Jorhat city.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday called upon people to raise their voice against insult of women and communal hatred and said it was time to speak up against the menace.

His comments on Twitter came amid outrage by netizens and women rights groups over the dodgy 'Bulli Bai' app that has listed Muslim women for "auction".

Hundreds of Muslim women, with photographs, were listed for "auction" on the app. It has happened for the second time in less than a year. The app appeared to be a clone of Sulli Deals which triggered a row last year.

"The insult of women and communal hatred will stop only when we stand against it in one voice. The year has changed, the situation should also change. It is time to speak up," Rahul Gandhi tweeted using the hashtag 'no fear'. After photographs of at least



100 influential Muslim women were uploaded for auction on the app sparking widespread outrage, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said GitHub, the hosting platform, has confirmed blocking the user and that CERT and police authorities are coordinating further action.

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) is the nodal agency that deals with cyber security threats. The min-

**"The insult of women and communal hatred will stop only when we stand against it in one voice. The year has changed, the situation should also change. It is time to speak up," Rahul Gandhi tweeted using the hashtag 'no fear'**

ister did not elaborate on the action being taken.

Vaishnaw on Sunday tweeted: "Government of India is working with police organisations in Delhi and Mumbai on this matter." Police of both the metropolitan cities have registered cases in the matter. The National Commission for Women has written to the Delhi Police to expedite its action in the case.

# Healthcare in India: Miles to go ahead to realise the dream

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS REINFORCED THE HEALTH SECTOR'S IMPORTANCE AND THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN EFFORTS**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** After the Covid-led unprecedented crisis, the Indian healthcare industry is undergoing a major transformation. The Covid pandemic has brought the inadequacies and pitfalls of India's healthcare system to the light. At the same time, the pandemic has also opened up the way for the digital intervention in the healthcare systems which are supposed to alter the

healthcare landscape in 2022.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the health sector's importance and the need to strengthen efforts. The oxygen-crisis led devastation which India witnessed during the second Covid surge has shown that the nation needs to be better prepared for the health emergencies.

The old schools of healthcare system need a technological push to provide accessible health services to all. The 2021 Global Health Security Index says "all countries remain dangerously unprepared for future epidemic and pandemic threats, including threats potentially more devastating than Covid-19".

It measures the capacities of 195 countries to prepare for epidemic and pandemic. The GHS Index assesses countries across six categories - prevention, detection and reporting, rapid response, health systems, compliance with international



norms and risk environment.

Among 195 nations, India ranks overall at 66 with a score of 42.8 and a decline of 0.8 points since 2019 in the GHS index. The study underlines that India has improved in detection and reporting category, but there has been no enhancement of its prevention protocols, health system or rapid response processes. The study says that although countries built new capacities during the

Covid pandemic, many of them are temporary.

India scores 29.7, slightly above the global average at 28.4 out of 100 in the prevention category. The detection and reporting category that shows major gaps in the reporting capacities for epidemics of potential international concern, India scores 43.5, 11 points above the global average. India scores 30.3 in the rapid re-

sponse category which is below the global average of 37.6. India scores 15 points above the global average in the Health Category system at 46.1 and ranks 56 in the list. India scores at 47.2 and ranks 92 in the Commitments to improving national capacity, financing and global norms category.

However, in the risk environment category, India scores slightly above the global average in this category at 60.2 and ranks 73 in the list.

**Preparation for third Covid wave**

The new Covid variant Omicron led third Covid wave is knocking India's door. However, the government has prepared a plan to establish a PSA plant in each district hospital.

"The PSA plants are being established in each district hospitals, especially in far-flung areas, enabling the hospitals to become self-sufficient in the generation of

oxygen for their needs and reducing the burden on the medical oxygen supply grid across the country," said Dr Bharti Pravin Pawar in the Rajya Sabha during the last session.

She said that the online digital solutions 'Oxygen Demand Aggregation system (ODAS)' and 'Oxygen Digital Tracking System (ODTS)' have been developed to ascertain the demand for medical oxygen from all medical facilities and to track their transportation.

A Covid Drugs Management Cell (CDMC) has been set up in the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) to oversee the management of smooth supply of drugs used in Covid-19 management, she added in her reply on the question of whether the data on Covid-19 deaths is being used by Government to prepare medical infrastructure for efficient management of the possible third wave in the Rajya Sabha.

# international



There are clear indications of the beginning of a new wave of the pandemic amidst a spike in the number of the new cases of Covid's Omicron variant in the country  
ASAD UMAR | PAKISTAN'S PLANNING MINISTER

## WINTER STORM HITS CHICAGO

A winter storm system hit Chicago, with snow accumulations expected to reach four to seven inches and wind gusts up to 30 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service (NWS)



## of the day quote

Increasing Covid infection is likely to push more people to intensive care units in Australia's Queensland in the next 24 hours  
DR JOHN GERRARD | AUSTRALIA'S CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

I would like to thank all those who served alongside me, in politics, public service and all parts of our society, for their dedication and commitment to our country  
TONY BLAIR | FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

How much violence is directed against women! Enough! To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took on our humanity - not through an angel, not directly, but through a woman  
POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## SHORT TAKES

### 37 Houthis killed in Yemen's Marib

Sanaa: Thirty-seven Houthi militia members were killed in a battle with the Yemeni army in the central province of Marib, a government military source said. The ground battle took place in the area of al-Balak al-Sharki in the government-controlled southern Marib, during which the army recaptured several positions of the militia, the source told Xinhua news agency.

### Nigerian cops rescue 21 kids

Lagos: Police in Nigeria said that they have rescued 21 children kidnapped by bandits in the northwestern state of Zamfara. At a press briefing in Gusau, the state capital, Mohammed Shehu, the police spokesperson in Zamfara, said the police received a distress call on Friday night, informing that bandits blocked a highway near the Kucheri village, abducting an unspecified number of commuters from five vehicles, reports Xinhua news agency.

### Myanmar extends entry restrictions

Yangon: Myanmar's Foreign Ministry has announced the extension of entry restrictions for travellers to January 31 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The extension was made to continue its effective response to prevent the risks of import and spread of the virus, Xinhua news agency quoted the Ministry statement as saying. Until the end of January, the issuance of all types of visas and visa exemption services will also be suspended.

### 7 killed in Nepal road accident

Kathmandu: A speeding bus carrying 22 passengers skidded off the road in Western Nepal Sunday, killing at least seven people and wounding 15, police said. The bus, carrying a dead body for the last rites, was heading towards Ridi when it met an accident at Ribdikot in Palpa district.

### Quake jolts China's Yunnan province

Beijing: At least 22 people were injured in a 5.5-magnitude earthquake that struck the county of Ninglang in southwest China's Yunnan Province Sunday, local authorities said. The earthquake struck around 3.02 pm, and its epicentre was about 60 km away from the county seat of Ninglang, in the city of Lijiang, and 3 km away from the nearest township of Yongning, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

# West Bank, Gaza witness renewed tensions

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ramallah/Gaza, Jan 2: Tensions between Israel and the Palestinians have flared up, causing a spate of injuries among Palestinians in the West Bank and damage in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said in a statement that 85 Palestinian protesters were injured during clashes late Saturday night in the village of Burqa, north of the West Bank city of Nablus, reports Xinhua news agency. Palestinian witnesses in the village said that the clashes erupted when a group of Israeli settlers tried to reach the settle-

ment of Homesh, which was evacuated in 2005. The PRCS statement added that five Palestinian protesters were shot and wounded by Israeli soldiers during clashes near the West Bank city of Qalqilya, while dozens fainted after inhaling tear gas fired by the soldiers. Similar clashes also took place in two villages near the city of Jenin in the northern tip of the West Bank between dozens of Palestinian protesters and Israeli soldiers, leaving several protesters injured by rubber bullets and tear gas. The Israeli army has made no immediate comment on the clashes or the Palestinian injuries. In Gaza, Israeli fighter jets and tanks on Saturday night attacked



several military posts and facilities that belong to the armed wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in southern and northern

Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian security sources. Several explosions were heard in the two areas, and flames of fire and smoke were seen coming out from the targeted military posts, the sources said, adding that damage was caused but no injuries were reported. The Israeli strikes and bombing came in response to the earlier firing of two rockets from the Gaza Strip Saturday morning, which landed on the shores of southern Israel, causing no damage or injuries. Israel has accused Hamas militants of launching the two rockets, but no one has claimed responsibility yet.

## Hindus from India, US, UAE pray at 100-yr-old Maharaja Paramhans Ji mandir in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Peshawar, Jan 2: Over 200 Hindu pilgrims from India, the US and the Gulf region prayed at the 100-year-old renovated Maharaja Paramhans Ji mandir in north-west Pakistan Saturday amidst tight security, one year after the temple was demolished by a mob belonging to a radical Islamist party. The delegation of Hindus consisted of nearly 200 devotees from India, 15 from Dubai, the rest from the US and other Gulf states.

The mandir and 'samadhi' of Paramhans Ji in Teri village underwent extensive repair last year after it was demolished by an angry mob in 2020

The mandir and 'samadhi' of Paramhans Ji in Teri village, Karak district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa underwent extensive repair last year after it was demolished by an angry mob in 2020, an incident that was condemned globally. The Indian pilgrims crossed over through the Wagah Border near Lahore, and were escorted to the temple by armed personnel, officials said. The programme has been organised by the Pakistani Hindu Council in collaboration with the national carrier Pakistan International Airlines. On the day, the funerary monument and Teri village at large was fortified with 600 men from the Rangers, Intelligence and Airport Security Force keeping guard, led by a Superintendent of Police rank officer: 'Hujras' or open air reception rooms were converted into shelters for the pilgrims. The markets near the temple were seen buzzing with tourists and the children from the Hindu contingent were photographed playing cricket with the local kids. In-charge, Legal Affairs, Hindu Community Rohit Kumar commended the Pakistan government for the arrangements and the repair works. "Today's prayers at the mandir by yatriis from India is a positive message for India, for promoting peace and religious harmony in the region," he said in a statement.

## Fire ravages SA's Parl complex; 1 detained



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Town, Jan 2: Firefighters battled a major blaze at South Africa's Parliament complex Sunday that sent a dark plume of smoke and flames into the air above the centre of Cape Town and caused some ceilings of the building that houses the national legislature to collapse. The fire started on the third floor of an old building that houses offices and spread to the National Assembly building, where South Africa's Parliament now sits, Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille said. "The fire is currently in the National Assembly chambers," De Lille told reporters at the scene. "This is a very sad day for democracy for Parliament is the home of our democracy." City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service spokesman Jermaine Carelse said no injuries were reported. "We need to go a lot deeper; a lot deeper into how this type of event can take place and what measures we will need to take going forward," President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed media out-

side the parliament. Parliament was closed for the holidays. Security guards first reported the fire at around 6 am, Carelse said, and 35 firefighters were on the scene. Some of them were lifted into the Cape Town skyline on a crane to spray water on the blaze from above. They were still fighting the fire more than six hours later. Parliament speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula cautioned against speculation that it was a deliberate attack. President Ramaphosa and many of South Africa's high-ranking politicians were in Cape Town for the funeral service of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, which took place Saturday at the city's St. George's Cathedral, about a block away from the Parliament precinct. Cape Town has seen arson attacks before. A huge wildfire on the slopes of Cape Town's famed Table Mountain last year spread to buildings below and destroyed part of a historic library at the University of Cape Town as well as other structures. A report concluded that fire was started deliberately.

# Fauci warns of danger of hospitalisation surge

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 2: Top US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said there was still a danger of a surge in hospitalisation due to a large number of coronavirus cases even as early data suggests the Omicron Covid-19 variant is less severe. "The only difficulty is that if you have so many cases, even if the rate of hospitalisation is lower with Omicron than it is with Delta, there is still the danger that you will have a surging of hospitalisations that might stress the healthcare system," Fauci said in an interview Sunday with CNN. The Omicron variant was esti-



## COVID SURGE

mated to be 58.6% of the coronavirus variants circulating in the United States as of December 25, according to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The sudden arrival of Omicron has brought record-setting case counts to countries around the world and dampened New Year festivities around the world. read more. "There will certainly be a lot more cases because this is a much more transmissible virus than Delta is," Fauci said on CNN. However, "It looks, in fact, that it (Omicron) might be less severe, at least from data that we've gathered from South Africa, from the UK and even some from preliminary data from here in the United States," Fauci said. Fauci added that the CDC will soon be coming out with a clarification on whether people with

Covid-19 should test negative to leave isolation, after confusion last week over guidance that would let people leave after five days without symptoms. The CDC had reduced the recommended isolation period for people with asymptomatic Covid to five days, down from 10. The policy does not require testing to confirm that a person is no longer infectious before they go back to work or socialize, causing some experts to raise questions. read more. "You're right. There has been some concern about why we don't ask people at that five-day period to get tested." That is something that is now under consideration", Fauci told ABC News in a separate interview Sunday. "I think we're going to be hearing more about that in the next day or so from the CDC." US authorities registered at least 346,869 new coronavirus Saturday, according to a Reuters tally.

## Face masks mandatory in England schools

London: Secondary school students in England will be required to wear face coverings in classrooms amid the spread of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, the UK government said Sunday. The rules, which bring England in line with other parts of the United Kingdom, are to be brought in on a temporary basis in time for students to return to classrooms after the Christmas holidays next week. Pupils are also being asked to take part in on-site rapid Covid tests and to get their vaccines, if due, before the start of the new term.



## Officials probe cause of Colorado fire

Three people are missing following the inferno that broke out Thursday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Superior (US), Jan 2: Investigators are still trying to determine what sparked a massive fire in a suburban area near Denver that burned neighborhoods to the ground and destroyed nearly 1,000 homes and other buildings. Boulder County Sheriff Joe Pelle said Saturday authorities were pursuing a number of tips and had executed a search warrant at "one particular location." He declined to give details. A sheriff's official who declined to provide his name confirmed one property was under investigation

in Boulder County's Marshall Mesa area, a region of open grassland about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) west of Superior. A National Guard Humvee blocked access to the property, which was only one of several under investigation, the official said. Utility officials found no downed power lines around where the fire broke out in the area located between Denver and Boulder. The wildfire came unusually late in the year, following an extremely dry fall and amid a winter nearly devoid of snow, conditions experts say certainly helped the fire spread. At least 991 homes and other



buildings were destroyed, Pelle said: 553 in Louisville, 332 in Superior and 106 in unincorporated parts of the county. Hundreds more were damaged. Pelle cautioned that the tally from the wind-whipped wildfire is not final.

# Covid surge in Chinese city of Xian despite lockdown

XIAN, A POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATION, AND HOME OF THE FAMOUS TERRACOTTA WARRIOR MUSEUM REPORTED 122 LOCALLY TRANSMITTED COVID-19 CASES SATURDAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 2: The Chinese city of Xian, which has been under lockdown for the past ten days, continued to reel under a major Covid-19 outbreak in the New Year, with cases breaching the 1,500-mark, and 200 fresh cases being reported in other parts of the country, local authorities said Sunday. The capital city of north-western Shaanxi province, has so far registered a total of 1,573 local cases since December 9, amid the latest resurgence of the virus, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Of the fresh cases, 104 were reported while in quarantine, and

18 were detected during nucleic acid testing. Of the total 1,573 cases, eight have recovered. Three of the cases are critical and 10 remain severe, but all of the rest are moderate and mild cases. Thousands of tonnes of food were being delivered to residents under lockdown, although complaints of food shortages continued as Xian, the city of 13 million, grappled with China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of last year, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. An official in Xincheng district of the city said Saturday that 4,100



Image used for representational purpose only. (PHOTO | AP FILE)

tonnes of vegetables were delivered to nearly 250,000 residents, while another local official said at least 1,200 tonnes of meat, eggs, milk and

vegetables were delivered to those living in the city's special economic zone, the report said. China's National Health Commission said Sunday that the Chinese mainland Saturday reported 191 new cases, including 60 imported cases. More than 13 million people in the Chinese city of Xi'an have been ordered to stay at home as authorities attempt to tackle a Covid outbreak there. With this, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in China, since the virus first surfaced in Wuhan in late 2019, touched 102,505 as Saturday. This included 3,013 patients, who are still receiving treatment, of whom 16 were in severe condition, the Commission's report said. So far 4,636 people had died as a result of the virus. China has followed a "zero-Covid" approach involving strict border restrictions and swift, targeted lockdowns. However, this strategy has been put under intense pressure, due to a surge in local outbreaks in recent weeks. The rising number of cases is also a cause of concern as China is poised to hold the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics from next month. The Beijing Winter Olympics, the 24th edition of the showpiece event, which started in 1924, will be held from February 4 to 20.

## of the day quote

We have similar trends in India. With all the efforts that we have put in the market, we also have a good order book which is also giving us a good start to 2022

**SHARAD AGARWAL** | HEAD, LAMBORGHINI INDIA

The MHA's decision to deny renewal of FCRA registration will severely hamper the collaborations which were providing relief to those who needed it the most during times of crisis

**AMITABH BEHAR** | CEO, OXFAM INDIA

Over the past five years, we have sold over 8.34 lakh SUVs. So, we feel confident that we should continue to do well as far as the SUV space is concerned. We have a complete range which puts us in an advantageous position

**TARUN GARG** | DIRECTOR, HYUNDAI MOTOR INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### RIL plans to raise \$5bn in US debt

**New Delhi:** India's Reliance Industries Ltd said it plans to raise up to \$5 billion in dollar-denominated debt and use proceeds primarily to refinance its existing borrowings. The Mukesh Ambani-owned oil-to-telecoms conglomerate said that the proposal for fixed rate notes, which could be issued in one or more tranches, was approved by the board in a meeting Saturday. While the company did not give further details on the use of proceeds, the Economic Times newspaper said it will be used to refinance earlier debt raised from international investors, with a bundle of loans coming up for maturities in the next three to four months. The newspaper said the offering would be the largest offshore raising by an Indian borrower in one go, adding that the move will be debt-neutral to the company.

### Global carpet fair to be held in Oct

**Lucknow:** The Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) has decided to organise a national and international level carpet fair in October this year. The fair was not organised for two years due to the pandemic. The idea behind the fair is to bridge the gap between Indian handmade carpet products and their demand across the globe during the pandemic period. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath while speaking at the Carpet Expo Mart Saturday, said that Bhadohi has emerged as a boon in tough times by bringing sellers and buyers under one single roof.

### Housing sales rise in top seven cities

**New Delhi:** Housing sales across top seven cities rose 71 per cent year-on-year in 2021 to 2,36,530 units, but demand fell short of pre-Covid levels by 10 per cent, according to Anarock. Housing sales stood at 1,38,350 units in 2020 and 2,61,358 units in the 2019 calendar year. Mumbai-based Anarock attributed the rise in housing sales to very low interest rates on home loans, pent-up demand, surge in aspiration for home ownership, cut in stamp duty by a few states including Maharashtra and discounts offered by builders. The fourth quarter contributed nearly 39 per cent to overall sales during the last year, on festive demand and other positive factors. "Extrapolating on the performance in 2021, 2022 will see very satisfactory growth as long as the coronavirus pandemic remains in check in India," Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said.



India has come out of a very difficult time with good macroeconomic parameters. It is likely to have one of the highest rates of growth in the world, while inflation remains within the tolerance band

**ASHIMA GOYAL** | ECONOMIST

## DIESEL, PETROL PRICES STABLE SINCE NOV 3

Oil marketing companies (OMC) have kept the prices of diesel and petrol unchanged across major Indian cities since November 3, 2021, when the Centre and some states reduced duties on them. Accordingly, diesel and petrol prices in Delhi stood at ₹86.67 per litre and ₹95.41 per litre Sunday, respectively. In the financial capital Mumbai, the rates were unchanged at ₹94.14 and ₹109.98



## SUGAR EXPORT SUBSIDIES

# India appeals against WTO's ruling

The panel in its ruling December 14, 2021 recommended India to withdraw its alleged prohibited subsidies under the Production Assistance, the Buffer Stock, and the Marketing and Transportation Schemes within 120 days from the adoption of this report



While calculating subsidies, today's prices cannot be compared to prices in 1986-88. This is wrong. A larger battle has to be fought on how much price support can India give in the WTO

**BISWAJIT DHAR** | PROFESSOR, JNU

**TRADE DISPUTE**  
 In 2019, Brazil, Australia and Guatemala dragged India into the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism alleging that New Delhi's domestic support measures to producers of sugarcane and sugar and export subsidies are inconsistent with global trade rules

In December 2020, the government had approved a subsidy of ₹3,500 crore to sugar mills for the export of 60 lakh tonne of sweetener during the ongoing marketing year 2020-21 as part of its efforts to help them clear outstanding dues to sugarcane farmers

The three countries, which are members of the WTO, had complained that India's support measures to sugarcane producers exceeds the de minimis level of 10 per cent of the total value of sugarcane production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** India has appealed against a ruling of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) trade dispute settlement panel which ruled that the country's domestic support measures for sugar and sugarcane are inconsistent with global trade norms, an official said.

The appeal was filed by India in the WTO's Appellate Body, which is the final authority on such trade disputes.

India has stated that the WTO's dispute panel ruling has made certain "erroneous" findings about domestic schemes to support sugarcane producers and exports and the findings of the panel are com-

pletely "unacceptable" to it.

Ruling in favour of Brazil, Australia and Guatemala in their trade dispute against India over New Delhi's sugar subsidies, the WTO panel has stated that the support measures are inconsistent with WTO trade rules.

The official said that the dis-

pute panel's findings are unreasonable and not supported by the WTO rules and also evaded key issues which it was obliged to determine. "The panel's findings on alleged export subsidies undermine logic and rationale. India has appealed in the appellate body of the WTO against the panel's ruling,"

# 23 cos line up IPOs worth ₹44K crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** The IPO rush is far from over and the primary market will see frenetic activity in the March 2020 quarter with nearly two dozen companies are looking to collectively raise nearly ₹44,000 crore through initial share-sales, merchant bankers said.

This comes after 63 companies mopped up a record ₹1.2 lakh crore in 2021 through initial public offerings (IPOs) even as the pandemic gloom shadowed the broader economy. Excessive liquidity, huge listing gains and increased retail investor participation spurred a persistent euphoria in the IPO market in 2021.

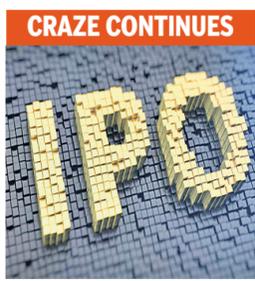
The firms that are expected to raise funds through their IPOs during the March quarter include hotel aggregator OYO (Rs 8,430 crore) and supply chain company Delhivery (Rs 7,460 crore), the merchant bankers said.

In addition, Adani Wilmar (Rs 4,500 crore), Emcure Pharmaceuticals (Rs 4,000 crore), Vedant Fashions (Rs 2,500 crore), Paradeep Phosphates (Rs 2,200 crore), Medanta (Rs 2,000 crore) and Ixigo (Rs 1,800 crore) are expected to float their initial share-sales, they added.

Also, Skanray Technologies, Healthium Medtech, and Sahajanand Medical Technologies are likely to come out with their IPOs during the period under review, the merchant bankers said.

These firms are raising funds for organic and inorganic growth initiatives, debt payments and giving exits to existing shareholders.

The continued activity in the primary market comes at a time when Sebi has decided to tighten the IPO rules to tackle the extreme volatility in the stock prices on



**CRAZE CONTINUES**  
 Of the total fundraising, a large chunk will be garnered by technology-driven companies

their listing day.

These measures include putting a cap on the quantum of issue proceeds a company can use for unidentified inorganic growth, as well as restricting the number of shares that can be offered by selling shareholders and increasing the lock-up of shares subscribed by anchor investors.

Yash Ashar, partner and head (capital markets) at Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, said "Inability to raise money for future unidentifiable acquisitions would impact capital raising plans of some unicorns, particularly, where such companies may not have any other use of capital and where existing shareholders are not keen to sell."

These proposed changes to the law could have a long-term impact... These changes may impact plans of issuers planning to list on Indian stock exchanges, he added.

## BUDGET 2022-23

# Govt may hike agri credit target

For the current financial year, the government has set a credit target of ₹16.5 lakh crore and for the next financial year, the centre plans to raise it to ₹18 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** With a view to give a boost to the agriculture sector, the government is likely to raise farm credit target to about ₹18 lakh crore in the Budget 2022-23 to be presented February 1, according to sources.

The government has been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year and this time also, the target is likely to be increased to ₹18-18.5 lakh crore for 2022-23, the sources said.

"The number will be frozen at the time of giving final touches to the Budget figure in the last week of the month," the sources said.

The government fixes annual agriculture credit, including crop loan targets for the banking sector. The agricultural credit flow have increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal. For instance, credit worth ₹11.68 lakh crore was given



to farmers in 2017-18, much higher than the ₹10 lakh crore target set for that year. Similarly, crop loans worth ₹10.66 lakh crore were disbursed in the financial 2016-17, higher than the credit target of ₹9 lakh crore.

"Credit is a critical input in achieving higher farm output. Institutional credit will also help delink farmers from non-institutional sources where they are compelled to borrow at usurious rates of interest," the sources added.

Normally, farm loans attract an interest rate of nine per cent.

However, the government has been providing interest subvention to make available short-term crop loan at an affordable rate and help boost farm output. The government is providing a two per cent interest subsidy to ensure farmers get short-term farm loans of up to ₹3 lakh at an effective rate of seven per cent per annum.

To enhance coverage of small and marginal farmers in the formal credit system, the RBI has decided to raise the limit for collateral-free agriculture loans from ₹1 lakh to ₹1.6 lakh.

# NBFCs to witness growth revival next yr: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 2:** Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) showed resilience in 2021 despite the coronavirus pandemic woes and are expected to witness continued momentum in growth this year.

Recently, the "Trends and Progress of Banking of India in 2020-21" report released by the RBI said, "With increased pace of vaccinations and the broadening revival of the economy, the NBFC sector is

expected to remain buoyant."

This year, the growth will be driven by the uptick in the economy, stronger balance sheet, higher provisions and improved capital positions of NBFCs.

"Our baseline assumption is that the worst is behind them (NBFCs) and things will start improving here on. We expect NBFCs to show higher growth and they will benefit from the economy moving up," Crisil Ratings Ltd Senior Director and Deputy Chief Ratings

To strengthen supervision over NBFCs, the RBI introduced scale-based regulation and revised NPA recognition and upgradation norms during 2021

Officer Krishnan Sitaraman said. The asset under management (AUM) of shadow banking players is expected to grow at 6-8 per cent

in the current financial year and 8-10 per cent in the next FY, he said.

ICRA Ltd VP and Sector Head A M Karthik said the NBFC sector, including housing finance companies (HFCs) but excluding infra-focused and government-owned entities, experienced a roller-coaster trend in the past 12-18 months.

The rebound in the second-half of FY2021 on the back of the pent-up demand and after relaxation of the Covid-19 lockdown supported growth and earnings performance, he said.

# OTT industry may grow \$13-15bln over the next decade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** The Indian OTT streaming industry is expected to grow to \$13-15 billion over the next decade at a CAGR of 22-25 per cent, according to a joint report by media and entertainment.

The OTT (over-the-top) industry is constantly growing and is one of the most competitive amongst emerging markets with over 40 players representing all types of content providers, said the report from industry body CII and Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

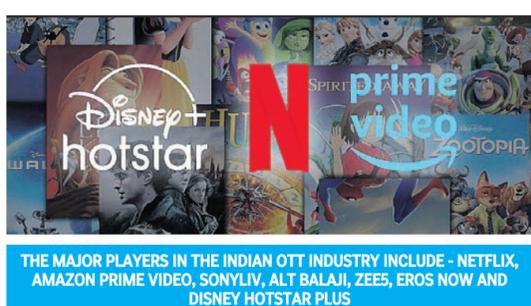
This has been led by strong tailwinds from basic enablers being in place for digital video streaming such as affordable high-speed mobile internet, doubling of internet

users in the last six years, increased adoption of digital payments.

"Strong content also helping capture eyeballs outside India," the report said, adding Indian OTT can cater to international demand by targeting the Indian diaspora and markets that have language similarities.

There has been a remarkable surge over SVOD (subscription video on demand) content over the last few years and is expected to overtake AVOD (advertising-based video on demand), it added.

"This strong growth in the subscription is due to various initiatives taken to expand the user base through bundling and pricing innovations, amply supported by significant investment in content,"



THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE INDIAN OTT INDUSTRY INCLUDE - NETFLIX, AMAZON PRIME VIDEO, SONYLIV, ALT BALAJI, ZEE5, EROS NOW AND DISNEY HOTSTAR PLUS

said the report titled "Blockbuster Script for the New Decade Way Forward for Indian Media and Entertainment Industry."

It has been additionally

helped by a predominance of a younger population, with 50-55 per cent population under the age of 30, it added.

"Indian OTT has progressed

Global players such as Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+ are offering plans in India at 70-90% cheaper than the US

Short-form video grew at 150 per cent + CAGR, driven by Indian short-form video players post TikTok ban

The OTT sector is also witnessing a rise in investments in Indian original content. This has led to growth in hours of original content available to users

and original content," it said.

Now, it will enter into a mass stage, which will witness, Pay-TV cord cutting, high SVOD penetration with consumers subscribing to multiple services and live OTTs.

The report expects that "the growth story will continue and accelerate Key drivers" such as increased content spends, pricing innovations and rise of alternate formats as short-form video.

Now the OTT players are creating content to cater to regional demand with a strong focus due to untapped market potential.

"About 56 per cent of the Indian population has a regional language as mother tongue, which is larger than the population of EU," the report said.

# India on cusp of history

GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR VIRAT'S BRIGADE TO WIN FIRST TEST SERIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

# DRAVID PRAISES KOHLI'S EFFORTS

COACH LAUDS BATTER'S LEADERSHIP ROLE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, Jan 2:** India Test skipper Virat Kohli has been phenomenal despite 'all the noise around him' and will soon be scoring 'big' runs, head coach Rahul Dravid said Sunday. The newly-appointed head coach backed the superstar batter who has been locked in a war of words with the BCCI over the way his white-ball captaincy tenure ended.



**He's been absolutely phenomenal the way he has trained, motivated the other guys. It's been a pleasure to work with someone like Kohli**

RAHUL DRAVID

"I know there's been a lot of noise on other issues outside of the group, even leading into this particular Test match. But honestly, in terms of keeping the morale high, it's not been very difficult because it's been led by the skipper himself," Dravid said on the eve of the second Test against the Proteas here. "Virat has been absolutely phenomenal over the last two years that we've been here. The way he's trained, the way he's practiced, the way he's connected with

the group has been phenomenal. I could not speak more highly of him," Dravid added.

Dravid was asked why Kohli has not addressed the media so far in the tour. "There is no specific reason for that. I don't decide this but I am told he will be speaking on the eve of his 100th Test. Then you can ask all the questions on his 100th Test," Dravid said. Kohli's 100th Test would be the third match against South Africa in Cape Town starting January 11.

Kohli's batting form has also added to the problems of the Indian skipper. His inability to convert starts over the last two years and his play outside the off stump has remained the talking point.

"As coach, there's not really too much you can do once the game starts. There's not too much that you can control in the results. We're really looking to prepare well and get the team into a good space," Dravid said. "...The way he's (Kohli) committed to his own preparation, his own practice, has truly been fantastic. It's been a pleasure to work with someone like him," added the former India captain.

Dravid sees Kohli back to scoring hundreds very soon, something he has not done in over two years. "Personally, he's in a really good space and even though he sort of batted well and couldn't convert those starts, I feel there's going to be big runs, really good scores coming in from someone like him," asserted Dravid.



**TOILING AWAY:** Virat Kohli bats at the nets at the Wanderers during India's training session Sunday. PHOT COURTESY: BCCI

**India have played 5 Tests at the Wanderers winning two while the other 3 have ended in stalemates**

Nov 26-30, 1992	Match drawn
Jan 16-20, 1997	Match drawn
Dec 15-19, 2006	India won by 123 runs
Dec 18-22, 2013	Match drawn
Jan 24-27, 2018	India won by 63 runs

from facing Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami with the red Kookaburra.

As for the Indians, their middle order in Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane, needs to fire. It is the only worry the Indians have and even if two among the three can come good, the battle will be half won for the visitors. Sources said Sunday that both Pujara and Rahane are expected to play even though Shreyas Iyer was given extended batting time at the nets. However, it is very difficult to imagine that India would be ringing in changes to their winning combination considering Kohli's obsession with five bowlers.

The three big guns are due for a big score and it would be Proteas' worst nightmare coming true if they all fire in unison at the 'Bull Ring' here.

## De Kock's retirement won't bother us: Elgar

AGENCIES

**Johannesburg, Jan 2:** South Africa skipper Dean Elgar has said he was initially 'shocked' at Quinton de Kock's sudden retirement from Test cricket. However, he asserted Sunday that the team will take the setback in their stride and strive to level the ongoing series against India.

De Kock, only 29, announced his retirement from the traditional format at the end of the opening Test

**As professionals we have to get over the retirement of Quiney and get on with the game. Our focus is on winning the Test**



DEAN ELGAR

against India, which the hosts lost by 113 runs at SuperSport Park.

"I was pretty shocked. But sitting down with Quiney (De Kock), he explained his reasons and I respect and fully understand his decision," Elgar said at a virtual press conference on the eve of the second Test. "I don't think there will be any," Elgar added when asked if there be any hangover on the players about his retirement.

"The responsibility for us is to carry and conduct ourselves as international players. We still

have to be professional around this. We still have a Test series to level, so I don't think there will be any hangover or shock over Quiney's retirement," informed the South African skipper.

"Players respect the environment. We realise that we had a few setbacks in recent times and we need to obviously have to be clever around it and get over it. I don't see the retirement affecting the players in any way," the South African Test skipper signed off.

### SHORT TAKES

#### McGrath tests +ve before Pink Test

**Sydney:** Australian pace legend Glenn McGrath has tested positive for Covid-19 days before the 'Pink Test' which is played in memory of his late wife Jane, who died of breast cancer, and is used as a fundraiser to support patients suffering from the dreaded disease. Australia will face England in the fourth Ashes game here at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) beginning January 5 which has been titled the 'Pink Test'. The third day of the SCG Test is known as 'Jane McGrath Day' and it remains to be seen if the former cricketer will turn negative in time to attend the event.

#### Tenure extended

**New Delhi:** Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra will continue to train with his German coach Klaus Bartonietz, whose contract has been extended till the 2024 Paris Games, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) confirmed Sunday. After winning the historic Olympic gold in Tokyo, javelin thrower Chopra had expressed desire to continue to train with the German bio-mechanical expert. "We have secured the services of Olympic Games javelin throw gold medallist Neeraj Chopra's coach Dr Klaus Bartonietz till the 2024 Paris Games," the AFI said in a release. Bartonietz has been training Chopra since 2018.

#### Madrid beaten

**Madrid:** Getafe ended Real Madrid's 15-game unbeaten streak after beating the Spanish league leaders 1-0 in the capital derby Sunday. The all-important goal was scored by striker Enes Unal in the ninth minute. Madrid went close to restore parity when Luka Modric's strike hit the crossbar in the 17th minute. Madrid brought on Eden Hazard and Marcelo in the second half but the failed to script a comeback. AGENCIES

### CORONAVIRUS STRIKES LIGUE 1 IN FRANCE

## Messi, 3 others hit by Covid bug

AGENCIES

**Paris, Jan 2:** Seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi and three other Paris St Germain (PSG) players have tested positive for Covid-19, the French Ligue 1 club confirmed Sunday. In a statement Saturday night, PSG had said that four players and one staff member had tested positive but none of them was named. However, in a fresh statement on the team's medical news Sunday, the club named the players.

"The four players who tested positive for Covid-19 are Lionel Messi, Juan Bernat, Sergio Rico and Nathan Bitumazala. They are currently in isolation and are subject to the appropriate health protocol," PSG said in a statement.

The 34-year-old Messi, along with Bernat, Rico, and Bitumazala, will now miss Monday the French Cup clash with Vannes. However,



if they test negative after that, they may be available for their clash with Lyon next Sunday.

Last year's runners-up Monaco also said that seven of their players have tested positive.

## Mumbai challenge awaits Odisha FC

CRUCIAL ISL ENCOUNTER FOR EASTERN INDIA SIDE AS THEY TAKE ON ISL LEAGUE LEADERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vasco, Jan 2:** Desperate to snap a four-game winless run, Odisha FC (OFC) will face their sternest test yet when they play defending champions Mumbai City FC (MCFC) in an ISL encounter here Monday. OFC suffered a heavy defeat to Hyderabad FC in their last outing. The loss underlined their drop in form since the first few games when they looked very good.

The Kiko Ramirez-coached side have been poor defensively, conceding 20 goals in eight games this season, the worst record so far. In the 2020-21 season, they had conceded 44 goals in 20 matches with just one clean sheet.

"There are some moments where we made individual mistakes and that cost us the game. But we cannot blame anyone," assistant coach Kino Garcia said at the pre-match press conference Sunday.

"The coaching staff will take the responsibility first and then the players. We will keep trying to



OFC assistant coach Kino Garcia (right) and footballer Liridon Krasniqi during the virtual press conference Sunday

find a solution and we are confident of getting better," Garcia added.

Garcia was the first to acknowledge that MCFC are a real threat. "Mumbai are league leaders and they are a strong team. So one has to give them due respect.

However, we have done our homework and we will be ready," Garcia informed.

Head coach Ramirez remains suspended for the game for accumulating his second caution from the bench in the last match.

## Contrasting wins for US, Russia

WORLD NO.2 DANIIL MEDVEDEV STUNNED BY UNSEEDDED UGO HUMBERT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Sydney, Jan 2:** The United States beat Canada and defending champions Russia defeated France at the ATP Cup tennis tournament here Sunday, with the Americans taking a much easier route.

John Isner and Taylor Fritz beat their Canadian singles opponents and then clinched the match in doubles for a 3-0 win. Isner beat Brayden Schnur 6-1, 6-4 in 66 minutes to give the Americans the early lead. Fritz then came from a set down to beat World No. 11-ranked Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-7 (6-8), 6-4, 6-4 and clinch the match before the Americans won the doubles 6-4, 6-4 over Auger-Aliassime and Denis Shapovalov.

"I surprised myself with how well I played out here," Isner said in his on-court interview. "You al-



**BALANCING ACT:** Taylor Fritz leaps high to play a backhand during his encounter against Felix Auger-Aliassime in Sydney. PTI PHOTO

ways work hard in the off season, but you never really know what could happen in that first match of the year," the American added.

Russia, meanwhile, needed the deciding doubles match to clinch victory over France.

Roman Safiullin beat Arthur Rinderknech of France 2-6, 7-5,

6-3 before No 35-ranked Ugo Humbert evened the match for France with an upset 6-7 (5-7), 7-5, 7-6 (7-2) win over World No. 2 Daniil Medvedev.

But Medvedev and Safiullin came back to beat two fresh opponents in the doubles — Fabrice Martin and Edouard Roger-Vasselin — 6-4, 6-4.

## SA announces squad for ODIs against India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, Jan 2:** Young fast bowler Marco Jansen received Sunday his maiden ODI call-up as South Africa named a 17-member squad for the three-ODI series against India beginning January 19. The SA squad will be led Temba Bavuma. The ODIs will be played January 19, 21 and 23 respectively. **The team:** Temba Bavuma (captain), Keshav Maharaj (vice-captain), Quinton de Kock, Zubayr Hamza, Marco Jansen, Janneman Malan, Sisanda Magala, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Wayne Parnell, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen and Kyle Verreynne.

### THRILLING ISL MATCH SEES 4 GOALS

## Kerala, Goa share points

AGENCIES

**Vasco, Jan 2:** Adrian Luna's stunning goal could not ensure Kerala Blasters FC a win as FC Goa fought back in a thrilling ISL match which ended 2-2 at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here Sunday.

Jeakson Singh (10th) opened the scoring for the Blasters before Luna scored a brilliant in the 20th minute to make it 2-0. Kerala looked on top before FC Goa came back to first make it 2-1 riding a Jorge Ortiz (24th) strike before Edu Bedia scored from the corner in the 38th minute.

Kerala are now third in the league table with 14 points from nine games while FC Goa remain at ninth with nine points from nine outings.

Kerala were off to a perfect start, nosing ahead after Luna swung in

a delectable corner for Jeakson to head home. It soon became 2-0 as Luna beat the Goa custodian Dheeraj Moirangthem with a dipping shot from 30 yards out.

However, Goa refused to buckle. Ortiz received a through ball from Saviour Gama, turned sharply and fired home past Prabhukhan Singh Gill to make it 2-1. Then it was 2-2 as Edu curled the ball in from the corner kick. The Kerala custodian was partly responsible for the goal as he failed to judge the flight of the ball.

The second session however, did not see the same frantic pace which was noticed in the first half. Both teams tended to play with caution. As a result most of the action was limited in midfield only. Edu however, hit the cross-piece with a free-kick and Goa missed a chance to close out the game.