



## INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu says she has never met a strong person with an easy past

LEISURE P2



## CHINA REFUTES CHARGES

China rejected as 'untrue' the US' charge that Beijing was rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal

INTERNATIONAL P10



## SHARDUL'S DAY OUT

Shardul Thakur finishes with the figures of 7/61 to help India bowl out SA for 229, restricting their lead to 27 runs

SPORTS P12

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## CM sanctions ₹78.76L to Teresa's NGO in state

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday sanctioned ₹78.76 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to back 13 institutions run by Missionaries of Charity in the state, a statement by the CMO said. Patnaik has also asked District Collectors to remain in touch with the institutions run by MoC and that the government will fund them from CMRF. "Based on the requests of Collectors, the CM has sanctioned assistance for 13 institutions run by MoC spread over eight districts. More than 900 inmates in various leprosy homes and orphanages in the state will benefit from this decision," the statement said. On December 30, Patnaik directed all DMs to ensure that no inmate of the institutions run by the MoC suffer, specially from food security and health.



## New Cov variant 'IHU' identified in France

**New Delhi:** As the world grapples with the highly mutated Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2, scientists have identified a new strain of the COVID-19 causing virus in Southern France. Known as 'IHU', the B.1.640.2 variant has been reported by researchers at institute IHU Mediterranee Infection in at least 12 cases, and has been linked to travel to African country Cameroon. However, the researchers noted that it is too early to speculate on how this variant behaves as far as infection and protection from vaccines is concerned. The yet-to-be peer-reviewed study, posted on the preprint repository MedRxiv December 29, revealed that IHU has 46 mutations.

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## DR REDDY'S TO SELL MOLFLU AT ₹35/CAPSULE

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Covid antiviral drug Molnupiravir was Monday launched in India at ₹1,400 for a five-day course for mild to moderate infection.

Dr Reddy's Laboratories said it will launch Molflu (Molnupiravir) at ₹35 per capsule to treat COVID-19 in the country. Molflu will be priced at ₹35 per capsule, a spokesperson of the Hyderabad-based drug maker said in a statement. With 10 capsules per strip, the total course of 40 capsules over five days would cost ₹1,400, making it among the most affordable treatment options available to patients, it added.

"Molflu is expected to be available from early next week at pharmacies throughout the country with particular focus on states with high caseload of COVID-19," the spokesperson noted.

Last year, Dr Reddy's entered



into a non-exclusive voluntary licensing agreement with Merck Sharpe Dohme (MSD) to manufacture and supply Molnupiravir to India and over 100 low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

In a first-of-its-kind collaboration in the Indian pharmaceutical industry, a Dr Reddy's-led consortium of pharma companies collaborated to jointly sponsor, supervise and monitor the Phase 3 clinical trial in India, and presented its findings to the Subject Expert Committee (SEC).

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Our weekend plans are decided. You will stay at home. I'll be addressing election rallies

**MARKET WATCH**

| INDEX  | VALUE    | VI       |
|--------|----------|----------|
| SENSEX | 59855.93 | ↑ 672.71 |
| NIFTY  | 17805.30 | ↑ 179.60 |
| DOLLAR | 75.01    | ↑ ₹0.25  |
| EURO   | 84.73    | ↓ ₹0.26  |
| GOLD   | ₹47,964  | ↑ ₹248   |
| SILVER | ₹62,305  | ↑ ₹564   |

**WEATHER**

|          | BHUB   | CTK    |
|----------|--------|--------|
| MAX      | 26.4°C | 27.2°C |
| MIN      | 12.8°C | 12.6°C |
| Humidity | 62%    | 67%    |
| Rainfall | Nil    | Nil    |

Forecast: Dry weather likely



Indian soldiers pose for a photograph with the national flag as part of New Year's celebration at the Galwan Valley in Ladakh, Saturday. The photograph was released Tuesday by sources in the security establishment. PFI PHOTO

## Keep Cov hosps ready: CM

**Naveen tells officials to impose necessary curbs to check Covid spread but they must ensure that livelihood of people is not disturbed**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 4:** Amid the resurgence of Covid-19 cases in the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday asked officials to keep all Covid hospitals in the state ready to face the emerging situation.

Patnaik, who reviewed the preparedness for the impending third wave of the pandemic in the state, with all Collectors and senior officials, asked officials to keep both government and private Covid hospitals on readiness within next 10 days.

The CM instructed to make similar arrangements of beds and ICU beds that were done during the peak time of the second wave of the pandemic last year. Stressing the vaccination programme, he directed officials to complete the vaccination

target on a campaign mode and give priority to teens in the age group of 15 to 18.

To control the spread of the virus, he advised to impose necessary restrictions while ensuring that livelihood of people is not disturbed. The CM said the Omicron variant of Covid-19 is spreading rapidly across the country. The number of patients has doubled in a few days and millions of people are likely to be infected in the country soon.

"Odisha is also witnessing a spurt in the number of Omicron patients. Therefore, we need to take immediate steps for proper management of the emerging situation without putting much pressure on people," he said.

At a review meeting last week, it was decided to implement some measures on a war-footing. He asked Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra to hold review meetings everyday for early implementation of the decisions. Like the second wave, Patnaik asked to appoint senior officials for proper management and monitoring of oxygen management, awareness campaigns and train-

## HIGHEST INFECTIONS IN OVER 3 MONTHS

**Bhubaneswar:** Odisha recorded the highest single-day jump in COVID-19 cases in over three months Tuesday as 680 more people tested positive, the Health Department said. The daily positivity rate surged to 1.31 per cent from 0.77 per cent a day ago, while 119 children, or 17.5 per cent of the fresh cases, were infected in the past 24 hours, a bulletin stated. Khurda district reported most of the new cases at 263, followed by 69 in Sundargarh and 59 in Cuttack.

ing modules. He directed to reappoint district observers for this purpose. As the infection is likely to spread very quickly, the CM asked the officials to implement the decided steps immediately. District observers will be appointed and they will start visiting districts, very soon.

Additional Chief Secretary, Health, RK Sharma said his department will prepare the treatment protocol soon.

## Tapaswini to stay at in-law's home

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 4:** The long-drawn marital dispute between Tapaswini Dash and her husband Dr Sumit Sahu came to an end Tuesday-- at least it seemed so-- 44 days after Tapaswini's sit-in protests outside her in-law's house here, leading to creation of a lot of local commotion.

The District and Sessions Judge, Ganjam, Tuesday pronounced an order in favour of Tapaswini who had been sitting on a dharna demanding entry into her in-law's house.

The court ordered that Dash will stay with her husband, Dr Sumit Sahu in the latter's paternal house in Bramhanagar in Berhampur town. The court also directed Dr Sahu to pay a sum of ₹17,000 per month to his wife for her expenses.

The district court in its order asked the couple not to cast aspersions on each other as they would live in the same house from Tuesday. Dash will need to give a receipt of the amount she receives for her monthly expenses, the court said. P5

## Govt carries out 45 TP schemes in City

**Basic urban amenities like road, water supply, power supply, social infra, among others, will be provided to identified areas**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 4:** With an aim to ensure availability of every urban amenity to people on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar city, the state government began implementing 45 town planning (TP) schemes in different areas of the capital city.

Presenting the updates, Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) vice chairman Sanjay Kumar Singh said the authorities have proposed to take up 45 TP schemes along the upcoming capital ring road. The TP scheme Nos - 1, 2, 3, and 4 taken up in the first phase have made substantial

progress. After a detailed survey and pooling of all available land, corrected land record of rights (RoR) has been prepared and distribution started.

Sources said TP No-1 covers parts of Sahajpur, Narogada, Sijuput, and Paikrapur while TP No-2 covers parts of Tamando and Bijipur villages. Similarly, TP-3 covers parts of Nuagan and Paikrapur while TP-4 covers part of Shyamsundarpur.

In total, the four schemes cover around 1600 acres to accommodate 1.50 lakh people with basic urban amenities. As per initial estimate, around ₹749 crore would be invested for development of different infrastructure. Singh said with initial investment for development of infrastructure, the schemes would generate self-supporting revenue.

The CS sought to complete distribution of the corrected RoR to the land owners in two months.

## Ex-Theranos CEO Holmes to go to jail for fraud

**The trial lays bare the pitfalls of a swaggering strategy used by many Silicon Valley entrepreneurs — conveying boundless optimism regardless of whether it's warranted, known as 'fake it till you make it'**

AGENCIES

**San Jose (US), Jan 4:** In a case that exposed Silicon Valley's culture of hubris and hype, Elizabeth Holmes was convicted of duping investors into believing her startup Theranos had developed a revolutionary medical device that could detect a multitude of diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood.

A jury convicted Holmes, who was CEO throughout the company's turbulent 15-year history, on two counts of wire fraud and two counts of conspiracy to commit fraud after seven days of deliberation.

The 37-year-old was acquitted on four other counts of fraud and conspiracy that alleged she deceived patients who paid for Theranos blood tests, too.

The verdict came after the eight men and four women on the jury spent three months sitting through a complex trial that featured reams of evidence and 32 witnesses — including Holmes herself. She now faces up to 20 years in prison for each count, although legal experts say she is unlikely to receive the maximum sentence.

The jury deadlocked on three remaining charges, which a federal judge anticipates dismissing as part of a mistrial ruling that could come as early as next week. The split verdicts are "a mixed bag for the prosecution, but it's a loss for Elizabeth Holmes because she is going away to prison for at least a few years," said David Ring, a lawyer who has followed the case closely.

Federal prosecutors depicted Holmes as a charlatan obsessed



with fame and fortune. In seven days on the witness stand, she cast herself as a visionary trailblazer in male-dominated Silicon Valley who was emotionally and sexually abused by her former lover and business partner, Sunny Balwani. The trial also laid bare the pitfalls

of a swaggering strategy used by many Silicon Valley entrepreneurs — conveying a boundless optimism regardless of whether it's warranted, known as "fake it till you make it." That ethos helped hatch groundbreaking companies such as Google, Netflix, Facebook, and Apple — the latter co-founded by one of Holmes' heroes, Steve Jobs.

Her conviction might lower the wattage — at least temporarily — on the brash promises and bold exaggerations that have become a routine part of the tech industry's innovation hustle.

The trial's outcome "will send a message to CEOs that there are consequences in overstepping the bounds," predicted Ellen Kreitzberg, a Santa Clara University law professor who attended the trial. But she also believes greed will keep hyperbole alive in Silicon Valley. "Investors are still going to want to make more money on a promising idea," Kreitzberg said. "They will always go in for the golden ring."

## State favours 18 as legal marriage age for boys, girls

**State child rights body asks parl panel to give more accountability to the state towards building an enabling environment where girls can dare to fulfil their desires**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 4:** The Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) has proposed the Union government's move to raise the minimum legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years. Rather, it has proposed to bring down the minimum marriage age of men to 18.

The commission chairperson, Sandhyabati Pradhan, has recommended keeping 18 as the minimum legal age for both boys and girls. She has stressed building an enabling environment for girls for a sustainable change in them. She asked the committee to give more accountability to the state towards building an enabling environment where girls can dare to fulfil their desires which will build courage in them to say 'no' to child marriage.

She has sent her letter to Vinay P Sahasrabudhe, chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth & Sports. The "Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2021" was introduced in Lok Sabha December 21, 2021 which was later sent to the house panel for scrutiny.

She said the statement of objects and reasons as mentioned in the bill emphasised the urgent need to tackle this societal issue and bring in reforms. It is argued that various marriage Acts in their present forms do not provide for a uniform minimum age of marriage for men and women leading to gender inequality. If enacted, the proposed amendment will redefine the 'child' to bring the age of marriage for both men and women at par i.e. 21 for both boys and girls. This will be having an overriding effect on every other law, custom,

## GANJAM CHILD MARRIAGE-FREE

**Chhatrapur:** In a significant development, Ganjam has declared itself as a child marriage-free district. District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange issued a notification to this effect. "After it's duly verified by the respective block development officers (BDOs), Tehasildars, executive officers of NACs and child marriage prohibition officers recommended by the Gram Panchayats, wards and village-level task force committees, the administration in Ganjam hereby declares Ganjam district as child marriage-free district," read the notification.

usage and practice.

She added that legislations alone have never been able to check child marriage. The National Crime Record Bureau data says only 785 cases have been registered under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2020 from 523 in 2019 and 501 in 2018. On the other hand 23.3% of girls marry before the legal age.

She said Acts like Juvenile Justice Care and Protection and schemes like Integrated Child Protection Scheme have scopes to extend support to such vulnerable children only up to the age of 18. In such circumstances there will be no space to provide support to a child bride/groom between 19 and 21 if rescued from child marriage.

Acts like POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) have restricted consensual sexual act up to 18 which implies that someone may have sex after 18 but won't be able to marry till 21. This will create a new set of issues like increasing unwed mothers and feticides. She said when the Prevention of Child Marriage Bill, 2004 was referred to the parliamentary standing committee, the latter had suggested keeping the minimum legal age for marriage at 18 for both boys and girls. She said both the state government and the OSCPCR have taken many proactive steps in keeping with the socio-behavioral changes of girls and boys.

# leisure



## KATIE PRICE WANTS 'NO DRAMAS' IN '22

Model Katie Price looks forward to the coming months with her fiancé Carl Woods. The 43-year-old has promised to lead a quiet life following a turbulent 2021 which saw her go back to rehab after being arrested for drunk-driving while already banned from being behind the wheel.

## BOWIE'S BACK CATALOGUE SOLD FOR \$250 MILLION

Music icon David Bowie's estate has sold the publishing rights to his entire body of work to Warner Chappell Music (WCM) for more than \$250 million. The late *Changes* hitmaker, who died of cancer in 2016, had released a total of 111 singles in his career.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Ganesh sees a wonderful time ahead for you. Today, you will meet many people who will prove reliable and trustworthy in the future. You aim to think and work perfectly. For that, says Ganesh, you will have to remain your practical and head-on-shoulders self.

**TAURUS**  
There will be a positive surge in your career prospects today. However, this progress may not be in the direction that you expected. Financial opportunities and success will knock at your door, a rare combination of guests. You will also achieve material progress, predicts Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
You are likely to be concerned about your finances, jointly held assets and property, says Ganesh. Also, you will be a little edgy today. Even the most insignificant problems will dampen your mood. You will probably take chances in money matters. Ganesh advises you to keep your cool and return to your charismatic self.

**CANCER**  
There is nothing extraordinary about today. You will be busy doing the routine work and will find contentment in the mundane. The absence of thrill and adventure doesn't mean that you'll be free for most part of the day.

**LEO**  
You may not have a halo around your head, but that most certainly does not deter you from playing the spiritual card today, says Ganesh. On this auspicious day, it is through religious scriptures that you satiate your desire to attain the intangible.

**VIRGO**  
Don't dilly-dally when it comes to matters of health, says Ganesh. You look lean and mean to take on those old wounds today. But peace and prosperity are the flavours of the day. Ganesh advises you to invest time in fun and entertainment today – just to get those batteries charged.

**LIBRA**  
A wistful day lies ahead of you, says Ganesh. This day, just like 'on the summer day that we flew kites', may be the standard when it comes to wanting to have a better future. Ganesh expects a sea of change in your outlook, thanks to your sweetheart's noble gesture today.

**SCORPIO**  
Dear friends and soul mates will bring you much relief and calm today, says Ganesh. Spend as much time as possible with them. Romantic escapades with your beloved will be heaven in itself. Blood relations will stand true and strong in matters of importance, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Tempers will fly today, warns Ganesh. Rein in your anger by the leash of control and restraint. But the buck will stop somewhere! When it does, dig your feet in and battle the crunch situation, advises Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
Your outstanding intellectual ability will not only yield exciting results for you, but will also help your close associates who will have progressed a great deal in their career because of your valuable advice, says Ganesh. Scores of problems may come your way, but you will have nothing to worry about. You will deal with each one of them with ease. A project approved for implementation will be successful, and will earn you the reputation of being a perfectionist.

**AQUARIUS**  
It is your lucky day today! Whatever you wish for, it will fall into your lap, be it name, fame, money or love. During the second half of the day, you will keep yourself occupied with your hobbies like reading, writing, playing active role in discussion groups or research, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
'Love thy neighbour' is a commandment you may just end up implementing, literally, considering how religious scriptures provide you food for thought today. Spiritual pursuits will keep you occupied. You may also find yourself visiting places of religious significance, says Ganesh.

## Human made Kirti see doctors in a new light

**Mumbai:** Kirti Kulhari, who essays the role of Dr Saira Sabarwal in the upcoming medical thriller series *Human*, revealed that her part gave her a new perspective towards the medical professionals.

She feels grateful to be an actor as it allows her to portray and touch many lives with her work.

The actress mentions, "While playing the part, I understood the noble thought behind being a doctor, what it really means to be a doctor, to selflessly be there for someone and help in reducing their pain."

Defining her process as an actor she states, "I approach all my characters in a way where I try to find out about the person behind the profession."

For her, the beauty of acting lies in the fact that it not just connects with people on a cerebral level but is also rewarding in many ways to the actor itself as she says,

"That's the beauty of the profession of acting, all characters that you have portrayed on screen, lead you to becoming a better person."

IAN S

**PEANUTS**

**CALVIN AND HOBBS**

**BREVITY**

**DOCTOR STRANGE SEQUEL'S HINDI TEASER CASTS A DISTORTING SPELL**

The movie shows two versions of Doctor Strange, the Sorcerer Supreme and his evil counterpart Defender Strange

**Mumbai:** The Hindi teaser of the Doctor Strange sequel - *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* - was released recently and it promises the next big multiverse film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

It shows two versions of Doctor Strange, the Sorcerer Supreme and his evil counterpart Defender Strange.

The film picks up directly after the events of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* as Doctor Strange distorts the multiverse after Tom Holland's Peter Parker requests him to per-

form a ritual which will lead everyone to forget about him. However, the multiple is ripped apart as the spell goes wrong. The teaser suggests that the multiverse will get warped after the same ritual.

The film will see Benedict Wong, Rachel McAdams, and Chiwetel Ejiofor reprising their respective roles with Xochitl Gomez joining the MCU as America Chavez. The film is scheduled for a theatrical release May 6.

**FUN POST**

**CROSSWORD**

**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**

MAKE DO SMOCKS  
U H O A A O T  
T R A I N E R G A M M A  
U K J I M M V  
A D I E U S T A T U T E  
L A T T S  
P O I N T O F V I E W  
C B C I W  
A D V I S O R C R A Z E  
N I N A I L I  
N O O S E C O O K I N G  
E U R E Y U S H I H  
D I S A R M T S H I R T

6 7 8 3 4 1 2 9 5  
1 4 3 9 2 5 6 7 8  
2 5 9 6 7 8 1 3 4  
5 8 1 7 3 9 4 6 2  
9 2 6 5 1 4 3 8 7  
4 3 7 2 8 6 9 5 1  
8 1 5 4 9 3 7 2 6  
7 9 4 8 6 2 5 1 3  
3 6 2 1 5 7 8 4 9

Across  
7 College award  
8 Double agents  
9 Jettison  
10 Masking  
11 Personal computer  
12 Court admission  
13 Shady sort  
15 Nettle  
16 TV installment

Down  
18 Scouting tool  
19 Machu Picchu builder  
20 Summer treat  
3 Nuclear power need  
4 Thread holder  
5 Canes (7,6)  
6 Benchmark  
12 Court admission  
14 Accelerate (5,2)  
17 Picture shows  
20 Summer treat

1 Kill, in a way (5,8)  
2 Thug's weapon (5,8)

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Hollywood actress Gal Gadot and Ali Fazel in a scene from *Death On The Nile*

## Gal Gadot drops a 'heart' on Ali's post

**Mumbai:** Actor Ali Fazel's post about his upcoming film *Death On The Nile* received a sweet reaction from Hollywood star Gal Gadot.

Ali shared a picture on Instagram from the film. In the image, he is seen standing next to Gadot looking dapper in a white blazer paired with a white shirt, black bow and pants.

He is seen holding a champagne glass while Gadot looks every inch gorgeous as she sports an all-white gown. Alongside the post, he wrote: "DEATH ON THE NILE, in theatres soon. Humbled to have had the chance to be immortalised into one of Agatha Christie's characters. Thank you Ken. . . And to the wonderful cast for being such a sporty and a fun bunch to share notes and screen with."

Reading the caption, Gadot dropped a heart on the comment section. The cast also includes five-time

Academy Award nominee Kenneth Branagh, Armie Hammer and Margot Robbie among many others.

The plot tells the tale of a perfect couple's honeymoon on a cruise, however things take an awry turn after a murder takes place on the ship. The movie is set on the picturesque locales of the Giza pyramid and sandy desert vistas. Based on the 1937 novel by Agatha Christie, *Death On The Nile* is a daring mystery-thriller about the emotional chaos and deadly consequences triggered by obsessive love.

IAN S

her up-coming big ventures, one of which is rumoured to be a Hindi web series to be created by the Raj-DK duo of *The Family Man* fame.

IAN S

## 'Haven't met a strong person with an easy past'

**Hyderabad:** Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu has spoken about the importance of mental strength and her intent to be a strong person following setbacks in her personal life.

Samantha posts pictures from her holidays, as they give a sneak peek of her private life. The *Majili* actress also keeps sharing some inspirational and poignant messages and quotations, which are intended to spread positivity among her followers.

Ever since the actress announced her divorce from Naga Chaitanya, her Instagram quotes are being decoded by her fans and followers. Some posts are also assumed as the actress' cryptic message.

One of her recent quotes, "I have never met a strong person with an easy past", has drawn attention from all as it suggests Samantha's intent that she has been striving to be a strong person, following the huge setback in her personal life.

October 2 last year, Samantha announced her divorce from Naga Chaitanya, causing rumours about her private life to swirl. However, Samantha came up with a post to give herself time to recover from the shock of being separated.

On the work front, Samantha is busy prepping for

her up-coming big ventures, one of which is rumoured to be a Hindi web series to be created by the Raj-DK duo of *The Family Man* fame.

IAN S

# EXPLORING CAPITAL FOODS-II

Food vendors across a rapidly growing city like Bhubaneswar have time and again proven to be the breakers of monotony by presenting varieties of delicacies before denizens. Goes without saying though, taking on such mantle comes with its challenges; consistency, affordability, and most importantly newness being quite a few of them. This segment of **Orissa POST** aims to come as a recount for the connoisseurs, and more importantly a guide to the uninitiated. For our hungry readers, we bring two of the most loved and preferred items on our platter...

## THE BAHUBALI ROLL



**Specialty: City's biggest roll (18 inch)**

**KIIT Campus, Opp Falcon Residency, Patia**

**H**uge, humungous, enormous, colossal, massive; these are the adjectives foodies instinctively blurt out to describe the Capital city's biggest roll aka The Bahubali Roll.

The 18-inch-long bolt is made of two eggs, mixture of four kinds of kebab along with mayonnaise, veg masala and three different sauces. The Chandini Food Magic store near KIIT Campus charges Rs 180 for non-veg and Rs 140 for veg rolls.

"The idea of introducing this roll was to satiate customer's demand for something fulfilling, scrumptious and quick. The entire roll can hardly be eaten at one go. One can easily replace a meal and still feel full," said Kareem Mohammad, a cook at the eatery.

Thronged by KIIT College students among other costumers, the roll remains the stall's most



demand item ever since it was introduced. "Most of our orders, online or offline, are for the rolls. Although our ingredients usually don't change, we make modifications on customer's demand," Kareem said.

## AWESOME DIM SUM



If there is one street food that quietly sneaks into our daily evening snacks and has made rapid strides across the country it's the scrumptious momos. It is believed that momos came to India in the 1960s when a large number of Tibetans entered the country. The steamed dumpling with juicy veg or non-veg fillings is served with piping hot sauces and chutneys.

**A**s the Capital city is no different when it comes to the ever increasing craze for momos, countless shops and stalls have come up here in no time. However, what irked Roshan Kumar Biswal and Renchen Choetzom Damo the most was that the dish was losing its true flavour and taste amidst the need to merely meet the huge demand. This prompted Biswal and Damo to start a restaurant of their own.

Leaving behind lucrative jobs in hospitality sector, the couple vowed to bring more purity to the fast food and set up their own stall. Renchen with her penchant for cooking learned the recipe while growing up in a Tibetan camp in Arunachal Pradesh. Roshan with his more than 15 years of hospitality experience chose to handle the operations.

Their passion soon came to fruition and it was an instant hit. The demand is such that the entire stock is sold out within three



**"**In contrast to the traditional momos available in the City, ours is a more Tibetan-themed one. Most of our sauces, fillings and other ingredients are totally fresh and completely homemade. We visit the local markets to buy fresh vegetables and meat every day. We do not put mayonnaise or chaat masala which we feel ruins the authenticity of the momos

**ROSHAN KUMAR BISWAL | OWNER OF SONAM'S TIBETAN KITCHEN**

hours of opening. In spite of being located at a very secluded place near DAV Public School, Pokhariput, foodies from across the City throng to the stall more during the evening hours.

"In contrast to the traditional momos available in the City, ours is a more Tibetan-themed one. Most of our sauces, fillings and other ingredients are totally fresh and completely homemade. We visit the

local markets to buy fresh vegetables and meat every day. We do not put mayonnaise or chaat masala which we feel ruins the authenticity of the momos," says Roshan.

The fandom of their dishes is now so large that the small rickety stall has started getting franchise offers from prominent restaurants and hotels that are willing to offer handsome amounts in exchange of the secrets ingredients and recipes.

### Sonam's Tibetan Kitchen

LEAVING BEHIND LUCRATIVE JOBS IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR, THE COUPLE VOWED TO BRING MORE PURITY TO THE FAST FOOD AND SET UP THEIR OWN STALL

### The specialty

RENCHEN WITH HER PENCHANT FOR COOKING LEARNED THE RECIPE WHILE GROWING UP IN A TIBETAN CAMP IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

ROSHAN WITH HIS MORE THAN 15 YEARS OF HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE HANDLED THE OPERATIONS BY HIMSELF

Opposite DAV Public School, Pokhariput

## Momos with Sikkim flavour

**M**omo lovers, it's for you. The momos at 'Sikkim Special Momos', located at Indradhanu Market in Nayapalli area of the City, are so palatable that you might go for them for breakfast, lunch and dinner!

About six years ago, Nima

Supa from Sikkim made his way to the state Capital when an abject poverty held him by his throat. Determined to change things around, Nima, along with his wife, opened a small momo stall after saving for months through odd jobs. With a unique mix of



Nima Supa at the stall

**"**I've received so much love from this City and its people. This is just my way of repaying them back. I'm happy that people have appreciated my cooking. I hope to bring more smiles to the people

**NIMA SUPA | OWNER OF SIKKIM SPECIAL MOMOS**

**Specialty: Veg, chicken and paneer momos**

Indradhanu Market in Nayapalli area

flavours and fillings Nima's little stall soon caught attention. His veg, chicken and paneer momos became an instant hit with foodies.

"I've received so much love from this City and its people. This is just my way of repaying them back. I'm happy that people have appreciated my cooking. I hope to bring more smiles to the people," an elated Nima said.

Having struck the right chord with people, the stall has attracted customers from far and wide corners of the City.

"I have tried momos from almost every stall in the City but the taste of Sikkim Special Momos is unmatched. Nima and I have developed a relationship that goes beyond that of the customer and seller," said Sandeep Rout, a private manager.

STORES: AVIRAL MISHRA PHOTOS: BIKASH NAYAK

**OrissaPOST**  
English daily

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| <p><b>Type of Possession: Symbolic / Reserve Price: ₹30,00,000/- / Earnest Money to be deposited: ₹3,00,000/-</b></p>  |  |   |  |
| <p><b>BID INCREMENT AMOUNT FOR EACH PROPERTY : ₹10,000/-</b></p>   |  |   |  |
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CLASSIFIED  
AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit dt. 24.11.2021 before the Court of Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar. I Puspalata Mahapatra, At- Khanguria, Post- Bolgarh, Dist.- Khurda after marriage have changed my name from Puspalata Mahapatra to Pusp Manjari Sathua according to my husband surname i.e. Krushna Chandra Sathua for all future purposes. A Puspalata Mahapatra and Pusp Manjari Sathua is same and one person

LOST

It is hereby notified that the 10th Standard Certificate of Sovna Priyadarsani Parida has lost on 31.12.2021 during her journey from Bhadrak to Cuttack. In this regard she informed Bhadrak Town Police dated 3.1.22 and its contents has been entered in the Station diary No.-16 and in this connection she sworn an affidavit before Notary Public, Bhadrak and she approached the ICSE Board for issuance of duplicate Certificate.

Ambuja Bandhu Parida, Advocate, Orissa High Court, Cuttack

Original registered mutation ROR No. 801/1912, dated 04.12.2015, Khata No. 801/1912, Plot No. 2399/4498, Area: A0.061 dec., Mouza: Daruthenga, P.S.- Chandaka, Dist.- Khurda has been lost. FIR has been lodged in Infocity Police Station, Bhubaneswar, vide R. No. 622/21, dated 31.12.2021. If found kindly Contact: 9437087116.

Original registered mutation ROR No. 474/914, dated 17.12.1997, Khata No. 474/914, Plot No. 346/2725, Area: A0.110 dec., Mouza: Patia, P.S.- Infocity, Dist.- Khurda has been lost. FIR has been lodged in Infocity Police Station, Bhubaneswar, vide R. No. 622/21, dated 31.12.2021. If found kindly Contact: 9437087116.

Original registered mutation ROR No. 801/2968, dated 26.10.2016, Khata No. 801/2968, Plot No. 2394/3664, Area: A0.288 dec., Mouza: Daruthenga, P.S.- Chandaka, Dist.- Khurda has been lost. FIR has been lodged in Infocity Police Station, Bhubaneswar, vide R. No. 621/21, dated 31.12.2021. If found kindly Contact: 9437013115.

Original registered mutation ROR No. 801/1433, Khata No. 801/1433, Plot No. 2394, Area: A0.095 dec., Mouza: Daruthenga, P.S.- Chandaka, Dist.- Khurda has been lost. FIR has been lodged in Infocity Police Station, Bhubaneswar, vide R. No. 621/21, dated 31.12.2021. If found kindly Contact: 9437013115.

RURAL POLLS

SEC to hold all-party meet Jan 10

The meeting will be conducted to get suggestions and recommendations from the political leaders for a free and fair election

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Before announcing dates for the three-tier Panchayat elections ahead, the State Election Commission (SEC) will hold an all-party meeting January 10.

SEC Secretary RN Sahu Tuesday wrote to the presidents and general secretaries of all political parties in the state. The meeting will be held at 11:30am in Gita Gobinda Sadan. The tenure of zilla parishads will end by the second week of March 2022. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct elections before the completion of the five-year tenure of the local bodies, Sahu said in the letter.

The meeting will be conducted to get suggestions and recom-



IT INDICATES THAT SEC IS ALMOST READY TO GO FOR THE POLL AND SOON AFTER THE MEETING, THE ELECTION DATES ARE LIKELY TO BE DECLARED

THE COMMISSION HAS ALREADY HELD TALKS WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND ACCORDINGLY, IT HAS INCREASED THE EXPENDITURE LIMIT FOR THE CANDIDATES

THE COMMISSION HAS GIVEN MORE RELAXATION ON USE OF VEHICLES FOR CAMPAIGNING AND INCREASED THE VOTING TIME BY ONE HOUR, WHILE THE COUNTING PROCEDURE HAS ALSO BEEN CHANGED THIS TIME

THE SEC HAS ALSO ISSUED MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT AND SYMBOLS FOR THE CANDIDATES TO FIGHT THE RURAL POLL, WHICH SUGGESTS THAT IT IS FULLY READY TO GO FOR THE POLLS SOON AFTER THE STATE COMPLETES THE RESERVATION PROCESS

mendations from the political leaders for a free and fair election, he said. The state chiefs of political parties like BJD, BJP and Congress can attend the meeting or can send their representatives.

It indicates that the SEC is almost ready to go for the polls and soon after the meeting, the election dates are likely to be declared. Possibility is high that the panchayat election in the state is likely to be conducted in February 2022.

The SEC has already held talks with the political parties and accordingly, it has increased the expenditure limit for the candidates. The commission has also given more relaxation on use of vehicles for campaigning and increased the voting time by one hour. The counting procedure has also been changed this time.

Besides, the SEC has issued Model Code of Conduct and symbols for the candidates to fight the rural poll. The commission is fully ready to go for the poll soon after the state completes the reservation process.

Summative assessment for Class X begins today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 4: The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) in Odisha is all set to hold the summative assessment-I for Class X students from January 5.

Altogether 5,76,223 students will appear for the test at 3,093 centres across the state. The assessment will continue till January 8, BSE sources said.

"All arrangements are in place for the assessment. There will be two sittings for the theory papers during the first three days of the assessment while the practical tests will be conducted on the last day," said BSE President Ramashis Hazra at a presser here Tuesday. According to the BSE President, question papers have already reached 311 nodal centres across the state. The board officials will carry the question papers from the nodal centres to the examination centres at 8:30am January 5, Hazra said.

The BSE has constituted as many as 40 central squads to check malpractices in the examination. This apart, the District Education Officers (DEOs) have formed 72 squads to inspect the examination centres. "The district ad-

ALTOGETHER 5,76,223 STUDENTS WILL APPEAR FOR THE TEST AT 3,093 CENTRES ACROSS THE STATE

ALL EXAMINATION CENTRES HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY SANITISED IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT SURGE IN COVID CASES IN STATE

ministrations have been asked to make the required arrangements for smooth conduct of the examination. If required, we would form more number of squads to check the malpractices," said BSE Vice President Nihar Ranjan Mohanty.

According to Mohanty, all examination centres have been thoroughly sanitised in the wake of the recent surge in Covid cases in state.

"The students have been told to wear face masks and maintain social distance at the examination centres to keep the virus at bay. As per the guideline, only 24 students will appear for the test in one room. No one would be allowed to carry mobile phones into the examination centres," Mohanty said.

Pact inked to boost solar power production in state



The project will help the state meet its renewable energy generation target and purchase obligation besides creating investment and employment opportunities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: A promoters' agreement has been signed between the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and the Green Energy Development Corporation of Odisha Ltd (GEDCOL) to form a Joint venture company for production of solar power from floating installations in different reservoirs of the state with a total capacity 500 MW.

The NHPC, a Central Miniratna PSU, and GEDCOL, a fully owned subsidiary of Odisha Hydro Power Corporation Ltd (OHPC), have come together to boost solar energy production in the state.

The agreement was signed by NHPC CMD AK Singh and GEDCOL CMD and OHPC Chairman Bishnupada Sethi in the presence of Minister of State for Energy Dibya Shankar Mishra here Tuesday.

In the first phase, 300 MW capacity solar panels will be installed in Rengali reservoir. The project will be implemented under the Ultra Mega Renewable Energy Power Parks (UMREP) mode 8 scheme of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), which provides for one time central assistance to the developers and an annual facilitation fee to be paid to the state throughout the life of the project.

The first stage of the project will have an outlay exceeding Rs 2,000 crore and the project will generate 600 MU of energy per year. It is first of its kind in the state and the largest in the country so far.

The project will help the state meet its renewable energy generation target and purchase obligation besides creating investment and employment opportunities.

More such projects are being planned in Hirakud and other reservoirs of the state, sources said.



Guard of honour being given to 1971 Indo-Pak war veteran SH Sarma during his funeral at Swargadwar cremation ground in Puri, Tuesday. Sarma breathed his last in Bhubaneswar Monday

Health insurance for discoms employees

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: All the four Tata Power and Government of Odisha joint venture distribution companies (discoms) will roll out Group Health Insurance Schemes for employees.

This has become possible after the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) approved expenditure applications of the four discoms to introduce employee group health insurance schemes keeping employee welfare in vision. The TP Central Odisha Distribution Ltd. (TPCODL), TP

Depending on the grade of employees, annual health insurance would remain in the range of ₹5L to ₹7L for a family

Western Odisha Distribution Ltd, (TPWODL), TP Southern Odisha Distribution Ltd. (TPCODL), and TP Northern Odisha Distribution Ltd. (TPNODL) - are now set to introduce the health insurance scheme for the employees.

The new schemes will be offered as floater policies covering em-

ployees and their family members of up to a total of six members in a family including spouse, dependent parents or parent-in-laws with no fully dependent and unmarried/unemployed siblings.

Depending on the grade of employees, annual health insurance coverage would remain in the range of ₹5 lakh to ₹7 lakh for a family.

TATA Power President Sanjaya Bang said the new health insurance cover for the employees is designed not only to create a healthy work environment, but also to safeguard their family members against medical care expenses.

HC for Bar Council election in 6 weeks

CUTTACK: The Orissa High Court Tuesday directed the Odisha State Bar Council to conduct its election within six weeks. A bench of Justice Arindam Sinha pronounced the order while hearing a batch of petitions by Bar Council's former chairman Chinmaya Mohanty and senior advocate Sitanshu Dwivedi. The petitioners informed the court that the Bar Council had conducted its election for the last time in 2014 and the elected members' tenure had expired in 2019.

T-cells flak jacket against Omicron shrapnel: Study

Researchers have found that T-cells, one of the body's key defences against Covid-19, can mount an effective immune response against Omicron, if antibodies fail to do so.

T-cells are one of the important white blood cells of the immune system and play a central role in the adaptive immune response. T-cells can be distinguished from other lymphocytes by the presence of a T-cell receptor (TCR) on cell surface. T-cells, generated both by vaccinations and Covid-19 infections, have been shown to be critical in limiting progression to severe disease by eliminating virus-infected cells and helping with other immune system functions.

Preliminary studies have reported that Omicron, fast becoming the most dominant circulating strain

Even if Omicron, or some other variant for that matter, can potentially escape antibodies, a robust T-cell response can still be expected to offer protection and help to prevent significant illness. Among these T-cell epitopes that have Omicron mutations, our further analysis revealed that more than half are predicted to still be visible to T-cells. This further diminishes the chance that Omicron may escape T-cells' defences. MATTHEW MCKAY | PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE. AHMED ABDUL QUADER | RESEARCH ASSISTANT, HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

globally, can escape antibodies produced by vaccination or natural Covid-19 infection, raising concerns about the increased possibility of reinfection and breakthrough cases. But, Omicron is unlikely to be

able to evade T-cells, according to the new study led by researchers from the University of Melbourne and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). In the study published in the

peer-reviewed journal Viruses, the team analysed over 1,500 fragments of SARS-CoV-2's viral proteins called epitopes that have been found to be recognised by T-cells in recovered or vaccinated Covid-19 patients.

The results showed that only 20 per cent showed mutations associated with Omicron. Even then, these mutations do not necessarily mean the virus will be able to evade the body's T-cells.

Further, the team broadened their analysis to other virus proteins; they found more than 97 per cent of non-spike T-cell epitopes not encompassing mutations associated with Omicron.

"These results, overall, would suggest that broad escape from T-cells is very unlikely," McKay said. "Based on our data, we anticipate that T-cell responses elicited by vaccines and boosters, for example, will continue to help protect against Omicron, as observed for other variants. We believe this presents some positive news in the global fight against Omicron," he added. IANS

Shopkeepers close Market Building

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The shop owners' association at Unit-II Market Building here Tuesday resorted to an indefinite bandh alleging the civic authorities' failure to evict street vendors from the vicinity of the market.

Shop owners alleged that street vendors have been troubling them for several days. The Market Building shop owners' association alleged that the BMC has been ignoring its pleas for eviction of the street vendors from the market place.

"The number of street vendors has gone up recently. Some people are collecting anywhere between Rs 500 and Rs 1000 per day from the vendors. The presence of large number of street vendors at the market place is causing inconvenience to the shopkeepers and the customers. We will not open our shops till the issue is not solved," said association secretary Sisir Panda. The BMC has invited the shop owners to discuss the issue Wednesday.

City DCP office shut

BHUBANESWAR: The DCP office near Vani Vihar Square here was Tuesday ordered to be shut for January 4 and 5 following detection of Covid-19 cases. The office premises will be sanitised in accordance with the guidelines issued by the state government and the Centre, according to a release issued by the BMC southeast zone Tuesday.

Sethi takes charge as S&ME secretary

BHUBANESWAR: The newly-appointed principal secretary of School and Mass Education (S&ME) department, Bishnupada Sethi, took charge of the department Tuesday. On the occasion, S&ME special secretary Alok Kumar Kar and other senior officials greeted him with a bouquet. Sethi briefed them on smooth functioning of the department.

LOST

By virtue of an affidavit, I Sauti Lenka, 82 years, S/o late Krushna Lenka, At - Bodhakhandi samili Satkhabada, P.S.- Balipatna, Dist.- Khordha solemnly affirm that my original ROR bearing Khata No. 1089, Plot No. 3030, A0.15 decs and Plot No. 2852 Area A0.030 decs, and Plot No. 3082, A0.080 decs has been lost on 21.12.2021 from my house to Balipatna Hat while I was going to do Xerox. If found kindly inform at the above address. I have not sold or mortgage in any bank or any where.

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Acharya Vihar-Darshan Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Raynir Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

SHORT TAKES

₹250cr for drinking water project

**Chhatrapur:** A sum of ₹250.36 crore will be spent on a mega drinking water project aimed at providing piped water to 51 panchayats in three blocks in Ganjam district. Chhatrapur MLA Subash Chandra Behera laid a foundation stone and unveiled an information plaque Tuesday for the project at Pottalampur near Rusikulya river under Chhatrapur block. Thousands of people of Chhatrapur, Sadar and Rangeilunda blocks will benefit from the mega drinking water project.

4 students test Covid +ve

**Nabarangpur:** Amid fears of the third wave of Covid, four students tested positive for the virus in Dabugaoon block of Nabarangpur district, Tuesday. Among them, one is a student of Adarsha Vidyalaya. These students are under treatment in isolation. Their condition is stated to be stable. The administration has declared the houses of the four students as micro-containment zones and closed the schools for sanitisation. The administration has urged the people to strictly abide by Covid safety guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus.

Tribals irked over reservation issue

**Deogaon:** A day after the tribals staged protests over seat reservation for them in the upcoming panchayat polls in Bolangir district, hundreds of tribal people, including women, took out a rally in Deogaon block of the district Tuesday. Armed with their traditional weapons and beating drums, their protest rally converged outside the block office shouting slogans against the state government. Tribal leaders alleged that the state government has done away with reservation of seats for the Scheduled Tribes in the upcoming panchayat polls. They warned that they would not allow the panchayat elections to be held in their areas if seats were not reserved for the tribals.

3 killed, 7 injured as car plunges into gorge in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Raikia, Jan 4:** Three persons were killed and seven others sustained critical injuries after the car they were travelling by skid off the Karada ghat road and fell into a 70-foot deep gorge near here in Kandhamal district, Tuesday. The deceased were identified as Isudas Parichha, Sabin Dugal and Shakil Parichha. While Isudas and Sabin died on the spot, a critically injured Shakil breathed his last on way to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. The other injured passengers were taken to the district headquarters hospital in Phulbani and MKCG Medical College and



**Hospital in Berhampur:** The deceased and injured youths from Gumamaha and Sugabadi panchayats under Raikia police limits in Kandhamal district were travelling to Sorada area in Ganjam district for picnic. The mishap occurred after the vehicle skid off the ghat road into a 200-ft gorge while maneuvering a turning. On being informed, Raikia Fire services personnel rushed to the spot and rescued the injured passengers

Youth gets 1-yr jail for throwing acid on minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, Jan 4:** A local court Tuesday sentenced a jilted lover to one year of imprisonment after convicting him for throwing acid on a minor girl. The convict was identified as Shankar Mandal, a native of MV-11 village in Malkangiri district. The court heard the case filed under the POCSO Act. The court of additional district judge also slapped a penalty of ₹10,000 on the convict. In default, Mandal has to undergo an additional three months of imprisonment, the court ordered. The case diary says, Mandal professed his love for a minor girl of the same village but was ultimately turned down by the latter. Enraged, Mandal hurled acid on the girl and fled.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



BANE FOR COMMUTERS

NH-55 expansion plan goes haywire

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Jan 4:** The expansion works of the National Highway (NH)-55 has been pushed to uncertainty as no one knows when it will get completed.

According to reports, the expansion work of NH-55, which is known as the lifeline of Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul and Sambalpur, has come to a standstill with construction work showing no signs of completion. The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), which is implementing the project, is only buying time and extending the deadline of the project from time to time.

The project is showing no signs of completion and the half-constructed road has turned into a death trap for commuters. It is alleged that people of these four districts, who are dependent on this highway, are suffering due to lack of coordination between the consultancy agency Gayatri Construction and NHAI.

The consultancy agency has been issued a show-cause notice for stopping the road work midway and inordinate delay in executing the expansion work, but it is yet to reply to the notice. It is apprehended that if the agency withdraws from the project, the expansion work may get further delayed.

Reports said that the expansion work of NH-55 was started



four years back for seamless commuting between Central and Western Odisha. A blueprint was prepared to start the expansion work from Manguli in Cuttack to Sambalpur.

However, due to arbitrary implementation of the work, uncertainty now looms over the four-laning of the road. The highway has become an accident-prone region as the agency has dug up the road at various points. The incomplete road has also resulted in air pollution and a thick envelope of dust is always found covering the adjoining areas.

Recently, the state bus owners' association observed a token strike protesting the bad shape of the highway and stopped plying their buses on the route, December 23. Later, the state Commerce and Transport secretary convened an urgent meeting with the office bearers of the association and NHAI authorities.

It was decided that the repair work of the highway, which was undertaken from December 1, will be completed by January 22. Rudra Narayan Tripathy, joint secretary of Dhenkanal Bus Owners' Association, and Santosh Mishra, secretary of Angul Bus Owners' Association, have warned that their organisations will intensify their agitation if the consultancy agency did not finish the repair work within the deadline.

Meanwhile, the NHAI has issued a notice to the agency to stop the expansion work. However, the agency is yet to reply to the notice. It is apprehended that the agency may be forced to withdraw from the project if its reply is found unacceptable. If this happens, the expansion work might get further delayed as the NHAI has to appoint a new agency by floating a fresh tender. This will only delay the expansion works by a year, joint secretary Tripathy said.

BERHAMPUR COUPLE'S MARITAL DISPUTE

Tapaswini to stay in hubby's house: Court

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 4:** The marital dispute between Tapaswini Dash and her husband Dr Sumit Sahu was settled, albeit temporarily, Tuesday - 44 days after Tapaswini's sit-in protests outside her in-laws' house here.

The court of District and Sessions Judge, Ganjam, Tuesday pronounced an order in favour of Tapaswini Dash who had been sitting on a dharna demanding entry into her in-laws' house. The court ordered that Tapaswini will stay with her husband Dr Sumit Sahu in the latter's paternal house at Bramhanagar in Berhampur town. The court also directed Dr Sahu to pay a sum of ₹17,000 per month to his wife for her expenses. Dash will need to give a receipt of the amount she receives for her monthly expenses, the court said.

The court, in its order, asked the couple not to cast aspersions on each other as they would live in the same house from Tuesday.

It may be noted here that Tapaswini and Sumit had moved the court and filed two separate petitions. December 17, Tapaswini had filed a petition at the SDJM court seeking an order to allow her to stay in her husband's house. Hearing the petition December 20, the SDJM court had rejected her plea.



FILE PHOTO

Challenging the decision of the SDJM court, Tapaswini's advocate Deepak Pattanayak had filed a petition in the district court, December 23. Earlier, Sumit's advocate had also moved the court of the district judge appealing against the orders passed by the SDJM court December 2 and December 9 asking the couple to stay together in a rented house.

A few days ago, Tapaswini was seen in a video clip threatening to end her life if her husband did not accept her as his wife. In the video, Tapaswini was purportedly seen crying and pleading with Sumit to accept her before she decided to take the extreme step. Tapaswini's counsel said that Dr Sumit had challenged the order of the SDJM court at the district judge's court. However, the district judge quashed Dr Sumit's plea.

Pangolin rescued in Bargarh, one arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh, Jan 4:** A pangolin was rescued Tuesday from a village in Bargarh district and one person was arrested in this connection on charges of wildlife trafficking, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of the special task force along with the Forest department officials conducted search operations in areas along the Bargarh-Bheden road and recovered the animal from a person's possession, a senior officer informed.

The pangolin was allegedly being trafficked and the person, a resident of Negipalli village in Bargarh district, was handed over to the Forest department for legal action, the officer said.

Pangolins are nocturnal termite-eating mammals found in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. They are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, which puts them in the same bracket as tigers, lions, rhinos and several other species. The body of a pangolin is covered with overlapping scales made of keratin, the same protein that forms human hair and nails, and rhino horn.

Since 2020, the STF has seized at least 22 leopard skins, 12 elephant tusks and nine pangolins, and arrested 52 wildlife criminals.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY SUPPLY OF MATERIALS**

E-Tender Notice No.: Sr.DMM/SBP/Stores/Tender Publication/01, Date: 03.01.2022

Tender No.: 0215304

DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: SET OF RAILING EQUIPMENT FOR MOBILE TOOL VAN DETAIL AS PER ANNEXURE-I, MAKE-BEMCO OR SIMILAR.

Tender Value: ₹31,17,614/-, EMD @ 2%: ₹62,350/-

Tender Closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. of 26.01.2022.

E-Tender is not transferable and the same is to be submitted with DSC by the pre authorized personnel of the tenderer who are already registered in the website. The Railway deserves the Right to cancel the tender or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof. Tenderer can participate in the e-Tender duty paying the EMD & Tender Document cost.

Complete details available at: www.treps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Materials Manager / PR-696/M/21-22 Sambalpur

Cyber criminals defraud two of ₹5 lakh in Silk City



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 4:** Cyber criminals continue to be active in the new year as they defrauded around ₹5 lakh from the bank accounts of two persons in this district in last three days, police said.

According to reports, the criminals have withdrawn around ₹3.40 lakh from the State Bank of India account of a person identified as Bijay Samantary of Polsara area in the district and ₹1.5 lakh from the savings bank account of a staff nurse in MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. Cyber police have registered the cases and started

an investigation.

Surprisingly, both the victims have not received any message on their mobile numbers registered with their banks despite repeated withdrawals of money from their bank accounts.

The matter came to the fore after Samantary of Polsara and the nurse lodged separate complaints at the Cyber Police station in Berhampur.

According to the complaints, Samantary has an account at the State Bank of India branch in Polsara. He had ₹3.42 lakh in his account, November 22. He, however, found that only ₹2,000 was left in his account when he got his passbook updated, December 31. He said he had not withdrawn any money during the period, but still ₹3.40 lakh was missing from his account.

Samantary said he suspected that some bank employees were involved in the fraud as he did not receive any message on the withdrawal of money on his registered mobile number.

Similarly, a staff nurse had lodged a complaint at the Cyber Police Station regarding unauthorised withdrawal of ₹1.5 lakh from her savings bank account in a month from at the State Bank of India branch at the MKCG Medical College and Hospital campus.

Irregularities alleged in canal division

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hatadihi, Jan 4:** Large-scale irregularities were allegedly committed in various works done by Bidyadharpur canal division under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district. Funds to the tune of ₹1 crore have been embezzled, it has been alleged.

Anandapur Civil Society, a local body, has taken up the issue with the Vigilance department and the district Collector. It has

demanding a Vigilance investigation into the alleged irregularities. A tender for works for Sai, Nahanga and Dhubog canals worth ₹2.52 crore was floated in 2019-20. Earlier about ₹2 crore was spent on these canals. The works were botched up while bills for the same were passed. As per estimate, no iron rods were used in these works.

The superintending engineer of the Canal division said that the allegations will be looked into.

Female leopard dies after falling into snare

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Tigiria, Jan 4:** A female leopard was killed after it fell into a snare laid by poachers at Sorishapala jungle near Bhiruda village under Tigiria forest range in Athagarh forest division in Cuttack district.

The matter came to the fore after locals spotted the carcass of the animal and informed the Forest department officials, who rushed to the spot and recovered the car-



The carcass was trapped in a snare made from clutch wires of vehicles. Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav, di-

visional forest officer (DFO), Athagarh, Ghanashyam Muduli, ACF, Gajendra Singh Mathore, Forest ranger and forester Rakesh Pradhan conducted an investigation at the spot. Later, the carcass was sent for post-mortem.

As per reports, the leopard got entangled in a wire snare laid by poachers to hunt wild animals. As the leopard made desperate attempts to escape from the snare, it inflicted self-injuries and died of as-

phyxiation, the veterinarians conducting the post-mortem said.

It is suspected that the leopard might have got ensnared Monday night. The population of leopards is critically endangered in India. Loss of habitat and prey as well as intense persecution as livestock killers are the major threats to this species. They are heavily hunted for their skin and bones, which are supplied for preparing traditional Chinese medicinal.

Bhadrak man scripts success with Thai apple ber farming



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, Jan 4:** You read it right. The tiny, red-coloured, apple-like fruits are now being grown in Bhadrak district. In Tulamtula village of Aruha panchayat under Basudevpur block of Bhadrak district, an orchard has been set up on a half-acre land beside a canal, protected from birds and animals by boundaries and nets. More than 200 plants of Thai and Kashmiri apple ber breeds are now bearing fruits. The sweet and unique tasting fruits are being sold at ₹100 per kilogram in the market and are in high demand.

Upendra Biswal, 49, of Tulamtula village in this district has scripted success story by growing this unique variety of fruit with his grit and hard work. He had got an opportunity to be a lecturer in a college after he finished his Masters in History in 1997. But, having a strong drive to do something unique and independently, Upendra did not take up the job. Instead, he tried to be self-employed.

Upendra first tasted success in 2005 after he took up fishery, dairy, horticulture and poultry on 5 acres taken on lease from a trust. Subsequently, he started growing potatoes, cabbages and cauliflowers, bitter gourds,

papayas, chilies, bananas and guavas through organic methods and became an example for the local populace.

Looking at his interest in farming, his wife first told him about growing apple ber fruits, which she had seen on YouTube videos. Subsequently, he ordered 200 saplings of the variety from West Bengal and sowed them on half-acre land. The plants are now fully grown and have borne more than a tonne of fruits worth almost ₹1 lakh. People from various quarters are gathering at his orchard to buy and see the unique fruit being grown.

The fruit trees are unique. Taken proper care, these plants give better yields with each passing year. The trees are being grown with proper cuttings and pruning, drip irrigation system and wholly organic fertilizers and pesticides. After Upendra's success, the local Horticulture and Agriculture departments have promised to provide useful equipment and financial help to develop the fruit cultivation in the region.

Four-five families are earning their livelihood by working on Upendra's farm. Receiving higher education, being self-reliant and showing the path of success to others have given him an immense satisfaction and fulfilment, Upendra shared.

**WORKS DEPARTMENT** No.B-957

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**

**MAYURBHANJ (R & B) DIVISION, BARIPADA**

e-mail - bpd\_eerb@rediffmail.com

**Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice**

**Bid Identification No. E.E.-50/2021-22**

1. Number of works - 11 (Eleven) number of works.
2. Approximate estimated cost- 08.92 Lakh to 44.30 Lakh
3. Period of Completion: - 3 (Three) & 4 (Four) Calendar months
4. Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the portal :- Dt. 05.01.2022 to 12.01.2022.
5. Last Date / Time of receipt of bid in the portal :- Dt. 12.01.2022 up to 5.00 PM
6. Date of Opening of bid :- Dt.13.01.2022 at 11.00 AM
7. Name & address of the Officer inviting bid :- Executive Engineer, Mayurbhanj (R&B) Division, Baripada.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./ Executive Engineer  
Mayurbhanj (R&B) Division

OIPR-34060/11/0017/2122

**Government of Odisha** No.C-1791

**"e" Procurement Notice**

**Bid Identification No. 66/2021-22**

1. Name of the work : 3 Nos. of work
2. Estimated cost : Rs. 9.30 Lakhs. 35.02 lakhs
3. Period of completion : One month to 45 days.
4. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 11.00 AM of 07.01.2022 to 5.00 PM of 21.01.2022
5. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : 5.00 PM of 21.01.2022
6. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, P.H. Division, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from e-procurement portal in the Website (<http://tendersorissa.gov.in>)

Sd./ Superintending Engineer,  
P.H. Division, Bhubaneswar  
OIPR-13021/11/0034/2122

Rise above the falsehood, live in the pure Light of your soul, and you will be close, very close, to the Lord.

THE MOTHER



## 1 in 31

The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to raise the age of legal marriage for women from 18 to 21, introduced in the Lok Sabha during the winter session, appears to be yet another exercise of the BJP government in tinkering with laws to whip up controversies for political gain rather than seriously tackling problems on hand. For, the legislative initiative looks like an oversimplification of the problem. The stated objectives, as explained by the government, are not population control, but empowerment of women and giving them more access to education and jobs. If that is so, the aims could be achieved without raising women's marriageable age or blaming the existing law for the plight of women in India. The solution is likely to create more problems than solve the existing problems.

The existing law, instead of being vigorously implemented, is wantonly violated. As such, the move to raise the marriage age for women could end up being counter-productive by criminalising a large number of women who marry early out of choice. At the same time, no sincere efforts have been made to address the underlying factors that are responsible for the phenomenon of child marriage. According to available data, what is required far more than raising the marriageable age for women is more investments in education and creation of jobs for women, especially, those belonging to economically weaker families.

Noteworthy is that the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has recommended not only continuing 18 years as the legal marriageable age for girls, it has also suggested that the legal marriageable age for boys be lowered to 18 years from the present 21 years.

Interestingly, early marriage of women below 18 years has steadily kept falling in India from 47 per cent of women in 2005-06 to 23 per cent in 2019-20. This shows that increase in awareness of social requirements has, by itself, helped in decreasing the evil of child marriage. The reason for under-age brides is not because of the current legal marriageable age being 18 years, but because of lack of adherence to the existing law. It is unfortunate that in 2018, only 501 cases were booked under the Prevention of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) throughout the country. Sociologists point out and experience shows when girls study and earn money, they and many a times their families undergo a change in attitude and the girls invest their time in the pursuit of studies and career. This automatically delays their marriage. In some instances, parents also, in a very sly manner, obstruct the earning daughter's marriage at a young age. Because of India's social mores, once the daughter becomes older, she moves out of the marriage bracket. This compels the daughter to continue living with the parents who then benefit from her income for the rest of their lives. This kind of a family situation proves that though technically the daughter has been educated and has become economically independent, she is not necessarily empowered to take her own life decisions.

Another aspect that is being glossed over by the government while bating for increase in the age of marriage for women is that such a move will in all likelihood diminish further adult women's right to decide their own lives and choice of life partners. At the grassroots, it is found that the PCMA is used by parents of girls as a coercive tool to prevent them from choosing their own life partners. The country has seen umpteenth cases when young people, who decided to marry a partner of their own choice, found their parents or relatives register cases under the PCMA if they are lucky. If unlucky and part of a family believes in honour killing, they can have their heads chopped off. It is a sad commentary on the government and law enforcement agencies that they, more often than not, fail to prevent parents from stopping their adult daughters from marrying men of their choice. On the other hand, the existing law prohibiting child marriage is merrily violated in cases where parents take the initiative to get their underage daughters married off knowingly.

The Bill, which has been sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee following vociferous demands made by the Opposition parties, overrides six existing personal laws including those of Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Parsis. The protests by the Opposition and the charge that the government is showing undue haste in passing the legislation seem to be well founded. What strengthens the suspicion is the fact that only one woman MP has been included in the 31-member Parliamentary Panel assigned to examine the Bill.

Questions can be posed on the true intentions of the government in pushing this Bill. Is it for controlling the growth of population? Is it for posturing by the government on being progressive and pro-women? Or is it, like Demonetisation, for proving that this government is capable of taking bold steps that touches every individual? Only time can tell.

### WISDOM CORNER

The mind is its own place and in itself, can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven. JOHN MILTON

The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections, and the truth of imagination. JOHN KEATS

### WORDSWORTH

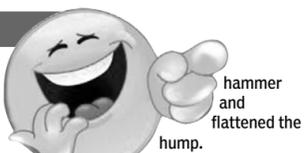
#### Raw foodism

This is an extreme form of vegetarianism, in which all cooking is eschewed in favour of raw ingredients as near their natural state as possible. The rationale is that cooking is an unnatural process which destroys many vitamins, minerals and essential food enzymes. Starting as an minority interest in California, raw foodism is apparently gaining some support, though its adherents even now form only a very small proportion of all vegetarians. About 70 per cent of the diet of raw foodists is fruit — taking that in a broad sense to include peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers — with the rest made up of raw vegetables, rice and other grains, and nuts. Another term for raw foodism is living foodism, though some apply the latter more strictly to raw foods whose enzymes are thought to be in a naturally activated state, as opposed to those, such as seeds, which are dormant and need soaking to "activate" them. Some even subdivide the practice further into sproutarians (who mainly eat sprouts and leafy green plants), fruitarians (who eat fruits exclusively), and juicearians (who stick to fresh fruit and vegetable juices). Natural hygienists use fasting in combination with one or other of these diets to cleanse the body. Raw foodists are sometimes known as rawists.

### LOL

#### Installing a carpet

A carpet layer had just finished installing carpet for a lady. He stepped out for a smoke, only to realize he'd lost his cigarettes. In the middle of the room, under the carpet, was a bump. "No sense pulling up the entire floor for one pack of smokes," he said to himself. He proceeded to get out his



hammer and flattened the hump. As he was cleaning up, the lady came in. "Here," she said, handing him his pack of cigarettes. "I found them in the hallway." "Now," she said, "if only I could find my parakeet."



Arvind Subramanian

**IF BLACKROCK CEO LARRY FINK AND THE CLIMATE ACTIVIST GRETA THUNBERG CAN FIND COMMON CAUSE, THEN THE TANTALISING PROSPECT HELD OUT BY WILLIAM BLAKE - "GREAT THINGS ARE DONE WHEN MEN AND MOUNTAINS MEET" - COMES INTO VIEW**

In the last few years, and especially after the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, private investors have seen an opportunity to midwife developing countries' bumpy transition to net-zero carbon-dioxide emissions. After all, if BlackRock CEO Larry Fink and the climate activist Greta Thunberg can find common cause, then the tantalising prospect held out by William Blake - "Great things are done when men and mountains meet" - comes into view.

The heady optimism is reflected in the numbers. Asset managers think that tens of trillions of dollars, mostly in the form of green finance, could be available for environmental, social, and governance (ESG) lending. Former Bank of England governor Mark Carney claims to have mobilised \$130 trillion to help finance the net-zero transition. The \$100 billion per year in climate finance that rich countries promised to provide to the developing world at COP15 in 2009 - a pledge that remains unfulfilled - is starting to look like chump change by comparison.

Developing economies' response to the new push for net-zero emissions has rightly focused on rich countries' fossil-fuel hypocrisy. As Vijaya Ramachandran of the Breakthrough Institute and Todd Moss of the Energy for Growth Hub have noted, advanced economies are asking developing countries to phase out coal and natural gas while continuing to rely on the latter energy source in particular. The rich world's failure to cough up the necessary finance just compounds the hypocrisy.

But developing countries' fears are misplaced. Perhaps they should worry not that there will be too little climate finance, but rather that there will be too much, especially from the private sector. It's not hard to see why.

An implicit bargain - finance in exchange for fossil-fuel reduction - underlies the current intellectual consensus on climate change: the rich provide the funding while the poor move to renewables. But whereas the onus a decade ago was on rich-country governments to mobilise the money, the expectation now is that the private sector will do so. This bargain is problematic for two reasons: implicit political condensation and looming economic risks.

The condescension can be

### FOCUS CLIMATE FINANCE

# THE NEXT BUBBLE



**While the conventional wisdom is that the next financial crash will come from the collapse of the cryptocurrency bubble, climate finance may pose a more serious risk. Mounting evidence suggests that green lending is displaying all the pathologies associated with financial manias... As Mark Twain wisely warned, "it's not what you don't know that kills you; it's what you know that ain't so"**

summed up starkly: "We, the rich, have messy politics, but the poor don't." For example, when protesters in France pushed back against increases in fuel taxes in 2018 and 2019, the discussion focused on the difficulty of climate action and the need to accept the rollback of those taxes as an understandable consequence of democratic politics. But such latitude ends where the Global South begins. There, finance is somehow a magic bullet that overcomes social and political obstacles to climate action.

The Indian government's recent retreat on its planned reforms of the agricultural sector, following a successful 15-month protest by farmers, shows how misguided this view is. One concession that the farmers extracted from the government was to forestall any effort to reduce the large power subsidy they receive. The subsidy is devastatingly harmful in terms of CO2 emissions, soil quality, water availability, and atmospheric pollution. But reducing it will be fiendishly difficult, with or without external finance.

More important are the bar-

gain's economic risks. Climate change affords investors an opportunity to do global social good without sacrificing profits. And ESG-related lending, which marries conscience and capital, has become a major financial fad.

But mounting evidence suggests that this activity is displaying all the pathologies associated with financial manias and bubbles. Tariq Fancy, a former senior investment officer at BlackRock, has spelled them out. Opportunities for green projects in developing countries are over-hyped. Questionable ESG standards and ratings result in fuzziness about how to measure the ESG impact of funding, as well as doubts about borrowers' incentives, given the relatively light and back-loaded nature of penalties for noncompliance. Because finance is fungible, some firms may obtain ESG financing only to divert other sources of funding to non-ESG activities.

If trillions of dollars in climate finance go to emerging markets, the flows could amount to 5-10 per cent of these economies' GDP - similar to the financing surges that preceded the 1997 Asian financial cri-

sis and the 2013 'taper tantrum.' Unregulated private capital flows of this magnitude will lead to overheating, volatility, imprudent lending, and overvalued exchange rates. Eventually, when the mania is seen for what it is, costly consequences will follow: capital flows will reverse, and both output and the financial sector will collapse. We have seen this movie before in country after country, and we know how it ends: badly.

Turkey is only the latest example of financial globalisation gone wrong, as Harvard's Dani Rodrik and I have argued. Long periods of private financial inflows indulge rather than discipline unsustainable macroeconomic policies, until the inflows suddenly become outflows, as they invariably do.

Of course, if interest rates start rising in advanced economies, capital will become more expensive for poorer countries. But insofar as there is enough liquidity still sloshing around in the system, the risks associated with large-scale ESG and climate financing are real. A cynical view is that private climate finance could end up damaging poorer economies and producing little by way of climate-positive outcomes, while enabling the financial sector to coat its somewhat tarnished reputation with a patina of green.

The conventional wisdom is that the next financial crash will come from the collapse of the cryptocurrency bubble. But climate finance may pose a more serious risk. Financial markets are naturally wary toward cryptocurrencies and the like, owing to the realisation that these are inherently risky assets (if they can be called assets at all), the type of investors they attract, and the whiff of Ponzi that hangs over them. In contrast, ESG investing appears more serious and less risky, and its halo of perceived social good could easily lull regulators into leniency and inattention.

As Mark Twain wisely warned, "It's not what you don't know that kills you; it's what you know that ain't so." Private climate finance could be the next financial bubble - and the world needs to wake up to the danger.

*The writer, a senior fellow at Brown University, is a distinguished non-resident fellow at the Center for Global Development.*

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### IN JEST THIS

# Don't eat too much chicken biryani please



Melvin Durai

**PUTTING CHICKEN IN HYDERABADI BIRYANI IS LIKE PUTTING ICE CREAM ON GULAB JAMUNS**

I've often wondered which dish I would eat if I were having a last meal. I hope I never have to make such a choice, because it would probably mean that I'm on death row somewhere, and it's hard to enjoy a last meal when you know what's coming next. But if I were having a last meal, it would surely be chicken biryani.

I would get a huge plate of chicken biryani and eat it extremely slowly. Six hours after being served, when the warden comes to check on me, I'd say, "Sorry, I'm still eating. I didn't know there was a time limit for last meals."

Truthfully, I could eat chicken biryani all day. Just ask my wife. She makes great chicken biryani, but she doesn't make it often enough. Perhaps three or four times a year, I get a taste of heaven, and I savor every bite. Sometimes I even leave a little biryani for other members of my family.

It's no surprise to me, then, that Swiggy the online food ordering and

delivery platform, reported that in 2021, for the sixth year in a row, chicken biryani was the most popular dish in India.

According to Swiggy's sixth annual StateATistics report, Indians ordered 115 biryanis per minute (almost two per second), compared with 90 per minute in 2020. Chicken biryani was ordered 4.3 times more than vegetarian biryani. If this trend continues, we might have to put chickens on the endangered species list.

I have no idea how many chickens it takes to satisfy India's appetite for chicken biryani, but if we ever have a chicken shortage, it's going to be very disappointing for the millions of us who love chicken biryani. That's why I'd like to encourage everyone to follow the eating patterns in Delhi and consume more dal makhani. It's not just tasty, it's good for you!

Dal makhani was the No. 1 dish in Delhi, but if that doesn't satisfy your palate, please try the No. 1

dish in Mumbai: dal khichdi.

People in Mumbai ordered twice as many dal khichidis than chicken biryanis, so you can be twice as confident in your choice.

Whatever you do, please try your best to avoid chicken. Don't order chicken fried rice, chicken 65, butter chicken or chicken Darjeeling momo. You are better off with a healthier option, such as the No. 1 dish in Bangalore: masala dosa. Other great options include paneer tikka masala (No. 1 in Pune) and dal fry (No. 1 in Jaipur).

If you insist on having biryani, there are many tasty varieties you can try: vegetable biryani, mutton biryani, prawn biryani, egg biryani and even duck biryani. Actually, as any biryani connoisseur knows, almost every region in India has its special kind of biryani. For example, one of the most famous kinds of biryani is Hyderabad biryani, also known as "biryani to die for." It is ideally made with

goat meat, not chicken. Putting chicken in Hyderabadi biryani is like putting ice cream on gulab jamuns.

However, according to Swiggy, the most popular dish in Hyderabad was ... you guessed it ... chicken biryani. It was also the most popular dish in Chennai, Kolkata and Lucknow.

If that isn't enough, chicken biryani was the most common first dish ordered, thanks to 4.25 lakh new users on Swiggy. Moreover, "chicken biryani cut" was the fourth most ordered meat item from Swiggy's Meat Stores, which means that people are cooking a lot of chicken biryani at home (and forgetting to invite me).

But before you do the same, I'd like to suggest that you follow the example of a biryani lover in Kolkata. She made a Swiggy Genie delivery partner travel 39.3 kms to bring her biryani - her favorite kind of biryani: mutton biryani.

Did I mention how much I love mutton biryani?

### Callous management

Sir, The quality of crowd management is a far cry from expected standards in the country's pilgrimage places. Many past tragedies at popular religious places have left telltale imprints on them but the stakeholders are loathe to learn from examples. The tendency to take people for granted is a shocking fact no matter what the governments of the day have to say after each tragedy. The Mata Vaishno Devi shrine is a hugely popular religious destination for lakhs of pilgrims from all over India. Considering the occasion of New Year, the bothersome question is why such a massive congregation was allowed near the Bhavan. The authorities everywhere are busy imposing prohibitory orders to stem the Omicron-induced COVID-19. Were the devotees at Vaishno Devi following COVID norms? Was each devotee frisked and tested for COVID-19? Is it correct, in these times, to gather in such massive numbers at one place? Can there be different standards for different occasions? The answers are too obvious to deserve elaboration. Coming to the larger picture, in most holy places of India a strong sense of disaster-anticipation is lacking. Devotees are compelled to wait for long in serpentine queues before they can have a glimpse of the deity. Heated arguments and scuffles may lead to an inadvertent stampede, and at Vaishno Devi, an argument is said to have broken out between two groups leading to pushing, jostling and people falling over one another. All temple authorities in the country should introduce a system wherein only pre-determined groups of people are permitted to enter the temple at specified times. Sadly, in a country where people throng to temples risking their lives and temple managements are busy filling their coffers, it is hard to imagine that happening.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Chinks in armour

Sir, The chinks in India's middle-order stood exposed yet again on day one of the second Test against South Africa at the Wanderers. The Proteas speedsters called the shots after India won the toss and elected to bat first on a pitch with spongy bounce. As a result, India's famed middle-order came apart with Cheteshwar Pujara (3), Ajinkya Rahane (0), Rishabh Pant (17) and Shardul Thakur (0) dancing to the tunes of the South African speedsters who bowled with verve and generated speed and bounce. If not for skipper KL Rahul's battling half-century and a valiant 46 from Ravichandran Ashwin, the visitors would have struggled to reach 200. However, India will now need a good show from the bowlers to get back into the contest. *NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE*

## 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**  
B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# national

## of the day quote

All parties in Bihar, except the BJP, have made known their stance on conducting a headcount of castes in the state

Anganwadi workers gave their services diligently during the peak of COVID-19 and because of their efforts, the most populous state contained the spread efficiently

The Akhilesh Yadav government had promised to give laptops to youths. For this, 15 lakh laptops were purchased but only 6.25 lakh were distributed. Where did the rest go?

## SHORT TAKES

### 20 tourists injured in J&K

**Banihal/Jammu:** A mini-bus carrying tourists turned turtle inside the Banihal-Qazigund tunnel on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on Tuesday, leaving the 18-year-old driver dead and 20 travellers injured, officials said. The tourists from Uttar Pradesh were returning from the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine and were on their way to Srinagar to enjoy snowfall when the driver lost control inside the west tube of the four-lane tunnel around 4.30 pm due to over-speeding, the officials said.

### Surjewala tests Covid positive

**New Delhi:** Congress general secretary and chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala has tested Covid positive and has isolated himself at home. "After experiencing symptoms like mild fever and cold last night, I got myself tested and am Covid positive. I would request everyone who came in contact with me over the last 24 hours to take appropriate precautions and get themselves tested," he tweeted.

### Delhi to witness rainy week

**New Delhi:** In its latest forecast Tuesday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that Delhi and its adjoining areas are likely to have a rainy week ahead. From Tuesday till January 10, Delhi will either have a partly or generally cloudy sky with the possibility of very light rain or drizzle, the forecast said.

### 2 militants killed

**Srinagar:** Two terrorists have been killed in an ongoing gunfight with the security forces at Okay area in South Kashmir's Kulgam district, officials said Tuesday. Both the killed terrorists are said to be locals, and belong to the Lashkar-e-Taiba/The Resistance Front, said the police.

### Minor girl dies

**Bilaspur:** A seven-year-old girl died Tuesday when a portion of her school's washroom wall collapsed on her in Bilaspur city in Chhattisgarh, police said. The deceased girl was a student of class 2 of a private school in the Gitanjali City Phase-2 area under the Sarkanda police station limits, Sarkanda Station House Officer (SHO) Parivesh Tiwari said. A portion of the partition wall collapsed around noon soon after the girl entered the washroom in her school, the SHO said. She suffered critical head injuries in this accident, he said.



The police has to "redefine" its role and focus on fighting crime firmly, improve quality of investigation and be more citizen centric

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

## KEJRIWAL TESTS COVID POSITIVE

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday announced that he has tested positive for Covid-19, adding that he has "mild symptoms" and was isolating at home



# Weekend curfew back in Delhi

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Weekend curfew will return in the national capital as the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Tuesday decided to reimpose some more restrictions in the wake of a fresh surge in COVID-19 cases driven by the fast-spreading Omicron variant.

Addressing an online press conference, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also announced that during weekdays, government employees, barring those engaged in essential services, will be asked to work from home, while private offices will remain open with 50 per cent capacity.

However, buses and metros will return to running to their full seating capacity throughout the week as the government feared that bus stops and metro stations could become super spreaders after the seating capacity had been halved and long queues were seen at such places.

"There will be a curfew on Saturdays and Sundays. People are requested to step out only when it is absolutely necessary. The weekend curfew will begin from Friday evening to Monday morning," Sisodia said in a virtual press conference.

On December 28, the DDMA declared a 'yellow alert' after the positivity rate crossed the 0.5 per cent mark, and closed down cinemas



A healthworker interacts with a Covid-19 infected patient inside a Covid care centre of the Commonwealth Games village in New Delhi

and gyms. It had directed shops of non-essential items to open on an odd-even basis and reduced the seating capacity in metro trains and buses to 50 per cent. Night curfew from 11 pm to 5 pm, is already imposed in Delhi since December 27.

"Fearing that bus stops and metro stations can become super spreaders due to overcrowding, it has been decided to run buses and metro trains on full capacity. But no one can travel without a mask,"

he said. There are around 11,000 active cases in Delhi. Only 350 are in hospitals. Of them 124 need oxygen, while seven are on ventilator support, Sisodia said.

According to the DDMA-approved Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), a positivity rate of more than five per cent for two consecutive days is one of the criteria to declare a 'red alert' which means a 'total curfew' and halting of most economic activities in the capital.

## Mumbai Mayor warns of lockdown

**MUMBAI:** Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pedekar Tuesday warned of imposing a lockdown if the state capital's daily Covid-19 case count breaches the 20,000-mark. She also warned that localised lockdown could be imposed if people continue to throng public places like beaches, grounds, gardens, parks, etc, where entry restrictions have been imposed between 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. since last week. The Mayor's statement came a day after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) ordered closure of schools from Classes 1 to 9 and 11 till January 31 amid a massive spike in cases in the city. Simultaneously, from Monday, the state government launched the vaccination drive for teens aged 15-18 with massive response from the youngsters. The BMC has implemented fresh guidelines for the city which includes sealing of buildings if more than 20 per cent of the occupied flats have Covid-19 patients and ordered all infectees to strictly adhere to protocols while in home quarantine.

# Modi lashes out at previous NE govts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal/Agartala, Jan 4:** Blending politics with development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday attacked the past governments of Manipur, Tripura and other Northeastern states, accusing them of neglecting the region and creating a "hill-valley chasm", while launching an array of infrastructure and public welfare projects.

In election-bound Manipur, Modi highlighted the alleged societal divide the previous governments created between peoples of hills and plains, and in Tripura he claimed the "vehicle of corruption" there, before the BJP assumed power, was "unstoppable".

Addressing a well-attended public meeting in Imphal, Modi asserted the BJP-led dispensations at the Centre and in states of the Northeast ushered in a new dawn of peace and development. The BJP is in power across all eight states of the region, either leading a coalition government or being part of one.

The Northeast will become the driver of India's growth story, he said, after dedicating to the na-

tion and laying the foundation stone for 22 development projects worth ₹4,815 crore in election-bound Manipur.

"The previous governments in Delhi neglected Manipur and the entire Northeast, conspired to create a chasm between the hills and the valleys. Today, there is no fire of extremism and violence. We have brought in a new light of peace and development," he told a public meeting in Imphal.

Modi alleged the earlier governments left Manipur and other Northeastern states to their own devices, resulting in alienation of people. He said ever since he became the prime minister, sustained efforts were made to "narrow the distance".

"After I became the PM, I brought New Delhi, the Government of India, to the doorsteps of Manipur and the Northeast. The entire region will become a major driver of India's growth," he asserted.

Modi recalled how Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, while unfurling the tricolour at Moirang in Manipur during the Second World War, had asserted it will become the gateway to India's freedom.

# Cong slams Centre over China's move

The Congress alleged that government is silent over China as it has occupied and set up a village in "our" territory in Arunachal Pradesh and renamed 26-27 places in the state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** The Congress Tuesday slammed the Centre after reports of China building a bridge across the Pangong Tso lake emerged.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said: "China is busy building a bridge on Pangong Tso to make it easier to deploy troops. Meanwhile, 'Beijing' Janata Party leaders led by PM & HM are busy in election rallies. Enemy is at our gates. PM Modi is taking a siesta."

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi too questioned the government's silence. "PM's silence is deafening. Our land, our people, our borders deserve better," he said. The Congress alleged that government is silent over China as it has occupied and set up a village in "our" territory in Arunachal

Pradesh and renamed 26-27 places in the state.

On Monday, the Congress slammed the government over reports of Chinese troops celebrating new year at Galwan valley but later it emerged that PLA was not present at the disputed area of Galwan valley, which is now a demilitarised zone after the June, 2020 clash between the two armies and subsequent series of talks between India and China through proper diplomatic channels.

It all started after a video surfaced on social media site, shared by the Chinese media, showing PLA troop celebrating new year and unfurling the Chinese national flag, with a caption, "China's national flag rises over Galwan Valley on the New Year Day of 2022," which further read, "the flag was special since it once flew over Tiananmen Square in Beijing".



Camel herders ride their camels in the shallow part of the Ganga river at Vindhyaachal dham in Mirzapur

# Man lynched, set on fire by mob

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Simdega, Jan 4:** A 30-year-old man was Tuesday lynched and set on fire allegedly by a group of people at a village in Jharkhand's Simdega district on the suspicion of felling trees for stealing wood, police said.

Later the charred body of the victim, identified as Sanju Pradhan, was recovered from the spot.

The incident occurred barely a fortnight after the Jharkhand Assembly passed the Prevention

of Mob Violence and Mob Lynching Bill, 2021, which aims at providing "effective protection" of constitutional rights and the prevention of mob violence in the state.

Pradhan was lynched allegedly by a mob near Besrajara Bazar area, Kolebira police station in-charge Rameshwar Bhagat said. Hundreds of villagers who gathered around the spot alleged that the man was involved in the illegal felling of trees for stealing wood. The locals initially refused to

hand over Pradhan's body to the law enforcers. The police recovered the body after much persuasion.

The Prevention of Mob Violence and Mob Lynching Bill, 2021, envisages imprisonment for those pronounced guilty of mob violence and lynching for periods ranging from three years to life term, besides imposition of fine and attachment of property.

Jharkhand became the third state in the country after West Bengal and Rajasthan to pass such a legislation.

# Former BJP MLA escapes Maoist attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chaibasa (Jharkhand), Jan 4:** Former BJP MLA from Manoharpur; Gurucharan Nayak, Tuesday narrowly escaped a Maoist attack in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district but the red rebels slit the throats of his two policemen bodyguards and snatched three AK-47 rifles before escaping from the spot, a senior officer said.

Chakradharpur Sub-divisional Police Officer Dilip Khalkho said that the attack by members of the banned CPI (Maoist) outfit took place in Jheelruwa village in Goikera police station area after a football match in which Nayak was the chief guest.

"Soon after the local football match was over, the Maoists, who were in the crowd of football-watchers, suddenly attacked Nayak. He somehow managed to escape with the help of his policemen bodyguards.

"The Maoists, however, slit the throats of his two policemen bodyguards and snatched their AK-47 rifles. They also snatched a similar rifle from another security personnel and fled the spot," the officer said.

More security forces have been sent to the spot which is in a forested area and further details are awaited, he said.

Nayak had a similar narrow escape when he was attacked by Maoists in Anandpur police station area in the district in 2012.

# Suspense over non-Yadav OBC votes in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** After Brahmins it's non-Yadav OBCs which are talked of in UP as this chunk of OBC voters have been decisive in BJP's victory in the state. The OBC comprises of around 43 per cent of the total votes and have castes like Kurmi, Maurya, Shakya, Kushwaha, Nishad and Rajbhar among others.

The votebank was primarily with SP and the BSP but shifted to BJP post 2014 and it has promoted leaders like Swatantra Dev Singh the state BJP Chief and a Kurmi, Keshav Maurya, deputy CM, Swami Prasad Maurya and have alliance with Apna Dal, a Kurmi based party and Nishad Party, but Samajwadi Party is also not going to leave any stone unturned to attract this segment in the state.

Rahul Varma, a Delhi based analyst says, "Non-Yadav OBCs will be crucial in determining the final tally. We have better sense about how other communities are likely to vote. The BJP since 2014 has managed to get a larger share of non-Yadav OBC vote, but the same can't be said about 2022, especially because the SP is attracting lots of important leaders from this community into its fold."

But Varma concedes, "However, I think the BJP will find ways to retain a large chunk of non-Yadav OBC support base."

The OBC mobilisation has helped the SP and BSP who mostly rely on caste based equation and from 1989 to 2017 the OBCs have dominated the UP politics. The SP had Mulayam Singh Yadav and Beni Prasad Verma and leaders from Shakya community and Phoolan



Devi from the Nishad community while the BSP had Lalji Verma, Swami Prasad Maurya, Babu Singh Kushwaha, none of them are with BSP anymore.

In the OBC politics post Mandal era, Yadavs benefited greatly from

the government formed under SP. But less significant backward caste groups such as Kurmis and other OBCs were excluded from their share. The ignorance led to the disenchantment among non-Yadav OBCs, whom the BJP tapped well

and latter became solid vote bank with representation from lesser known community like Khatik, Paasi and Charwaha (shepherd) which has given the BJP strength and advantage.

In recent ministerial induction in the state and at the Centre, the BJP has adopted the social engineering formula with S.P.S. Baghel and Kaushal Kishore being inducted into the Union Council of ministers.

As per rough data, it suggests that BJP managed to pull 60 per cent of OBC votes and it rose threefold from last assembly elections to 2017 elections, but it's not the main OBC Yadav chunk but the smaller OBC groups have inclined towards the saffron party. The BJP first made inroads in 2014 elections and has increased its share considerably in subsequent polls.

## Bengal in throes of third Covid wave: Experts

West Bengal Tuesday reported 9,073 fresh Covid-19 infections, an increase of over 49.27 per cent in a single day, with Kolkata accounting for over half of them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 4:** Bengal and eastern India's largest metropolis Kolkata, is in the throes of a third wave of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic which may last well into February with a peak sometime in the second week of this month, according to health experts. They held the lack of vision on the part of the state administration in allowing large congregations and festivities as well as Covid fatigue and complacency on the part of people for the current surge of Covid-19 cases here. "If you see the surge in the last five days, it's evident that the third wave is already here in West Bengal. It's also there in other metros like



New Delhi and Mumbai. Cases in our state, especially in Kolkata have gone up by 12 fold. Every third person coming for a test is testing positive for the disease," Dr Anima Halder, principal of state-run Infectious Diseases and Beliaghata General (ID&BG) Hospital told PTI. West Bengal like the rest of the country witnessed its first wave in March 2020 and another after elections to the state assembly in May-June last year. Dr Sanjib Bandyopadhyay, Associate Professor of Burdwan

Medical College, who has been handling COVID cases since the outbreak of the pandemic, said, "The infections that we see at the moment is not a result of the congregation we witnessed December 24-25 and New Year's eve, that will come in the next few days. As of now, going by the last few weeks' happenings, it seems that the graph will continue to rise, he added. Dr Bandyopadhyay however also said that if the ongoing restrictions are continued, a flattening of the curve may soon be seen.

**If you see the surge in the last five days, it's evident that the third wave is already here in West Bengal. Cases in our state, especially in Kolkata have gone up by 12 fold. Every third person coming for a test is testing positive for the disease**  
DR ANIMA HALDER | PRINCIPAL, ID&BG HOSPITAL

"We were very well placed even in the first two weeks of December, but the complacent attitude of common people which was compounded by a lack of vision on the part of the authorities saw the situation deteriorating," he said. "We saw policemen pleading with people to wear masks. That's shocking. A stricter approach could have saved us from this," Dr Bandyopadhyay told PTI. Internal projections by the health department indicate that there are fears that the daily infections rate

could rise to 30,000 unless strict steps are taken. West Bengal, which reported upwards of 6,000 Covid infections daily for the last two days, has already taken a variety of steps to enforce Covid norms and asked offices to work at 50 per cent capacity. Kolkata which accounted for nearly half of the daily Covid cases has come up with micro-containment zones and has set up safe houses for those patients who do have sufficient space at home to self-isolate or do have care-givers. Dr Shanta Dutta, director of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases, at Beliaghata also said definitely, an epidemic outbreak that has started. Study showed that in our state, every third person taking the Covid test is positive. The NICED director also held the irresponsible attitude of the common people and laxity on the part of the government as causes for the rise in the number of infections. Dr Koushik Chaki, a founding member of the West Bengal Doctors' Forum told PTI, "This third wave was inevitable going by our irresponsible attitude of the people as well as the administration."

## J&K Police to procure assault rifles, pistols for anti-terrorist ops



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Jan 4:** Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel will soon get American Sig Sauer assault rifles and pistols to carry out anti-terror operations, officials said.

The Army has already equipped its personnel guarding the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan and Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China with the state-of-the-art rifles. The Jammu and Kashmir Police is probably the first in the country to get the modern weapons, they said, adding that the force will be procuring 500 Sig Sauer-716 rifles and 100 Sig Sauer MPX 9mm pistols. The special operation group (SOG) and personnel deployed for the security of protected people will be equipped with the weapons, they said. According to officials, the Jammu and Kashmir Police had recently floated global bids on the government buying portal GeM (Government e-Market) for purchasing the assault weapons. The Sig Sauer-716 assault rifle has a more powerful 7.62x51mm cartridge as compared to the 5.56x45mm intermediate cartridge of the INSAS (Indian Small Arms System) rifles used by police, officials said. The rifle, which weighs 3.82 kilograms without magazine, fires at a cyclic rate of 650-850 rounds per minute and can prove to be an effective

**J&K Police is probably the first in the country to get the modern weapons, officials said, adding that the force will be procuring 500 Sig Sauer-716 rifles and 100 Sig Sauer MPX 9mm pistols**

weapon in anti-terror operations due to its 500 metres range, they said. Moreover, the rifles are compact, robust, modern and simple to maintain in field conditions, they added. Similarly, the SIG MPX 9mm pistol, which weighs 2.94 kilograms without magazine, fires at a cyclic rate of 850 rounds per minute, they said. Both weapons are gas-operated, they added. The induction of these assault rifles will help the police operate more effectively in engagements with the terrorists, they said. In 2019, India had signed a contract with Sig Sauer for 72,400 assault rifles at a cost of around ₹700 crore. In October, 2017, the Army began the process to acquire around 7 lakh rifles, 44,000 light machine guns and nearly 44,600 carbines.

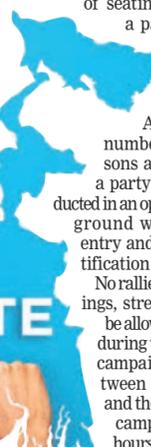
## WB SEC issues Covid norms for civic polls

No rallies, public meetings, street plays shall be allowed on any day during the days of the campaign period between 8 pm to 9 am and there shall be no campaign from 72 hours before the end of poll, the notification said

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Jan 4:** In view of the partial restrictions imposed by the West Bengal government following the steep rise of Covid cases in the state, the State Election Commission Monday issued Covid protocol for the candidates and the polling personnel for the forthcoming elections in the four Municipal Corporations January 22. Polls would be held in Asansol, Bidhannagar, Siliguri and Chandannagar. Counting will be held on January 25. In a detailed notification, the SEC asked the state government to appoint a nodal health officer to oversee Covid-19 related arrangements and preventive measures. In its directive, it also said that it is mandatory for electoral staff including polling personnel to have a double vaccination, and all the contesting candidates should have a single vaccination at least. The SEC also issued a detailed guideline for campaigning, barring parties from any kind of road show or padayatra, cycle, bike, vehicle rallies during the campaign. The notification also cancelled any kind of previous permission if any for road show, cycle, bike, vehicle rally. A maximum number of 5 persons including the candidates, ex-

cluding security personnel are allowed for house-to-house campaigning and a maximum number of 200 persons, or 50 per cent of seating capacity, in a party meeting conducted in a conference hall, the notification said. A maximum number of 500 persons are allowed in a party meeting conducted in an open space (a big ground with separate entry and exit), the notification added. No rallies, public meetings, street plays shall be allowed on any day during the days of the campaign period between 8 pm to 9 am and there shall be no campaign from 72 hours before the end of poll, the notification said. So far as polling station arrangement is concerned, the state poll body said that there shall be mandatory sanitisation of all polling stations during voting day and wearing face masks is compulsory for every person entering the polling premises. The poll body said that face masks will be made available at polling stations for defaulters and there shall be thermal scanning and hand sanitisation of all persons entering. Gloves will also be provided to each voter.



## FIRST SNOW



A boy plays on a road during season's first snowfall, on the outskirts of Srinagar, Tuesday  
PTI PHOTO

## Fresh spell of snowfall in Valley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 4:** Kashmir received fresh snowfall Tuesday, forcing suspension of air traffic to the valley as authorities carried out snow clearance operations in all major towns, officials said. The snowfall and low visibility hit air travel to and from Kashmir, according to officials. So far, 16 flights have been cancelled. If the weather improves, the air traffic might be restored later in the day, an official of the Airport Authority of India told PTI. Authorities have started snow clearance operations

in all major towns, including tourist resorts of Gulmarg and Pahalgam, they said. The snowfall has resulted in warmer-than-expected nights in the valley but the weatherman has forecast the temperature to all further over the next two days. The Met office has forecast widespread snowfall of moderate to heavy intensity till January 8. Heavy snow is expected at some places during the period, it said. Kashmir valley is currently under the grip of the 40-day harshest winter period known as 'Chilla-i-Kalan' which began December 21.

## Saffron blooms in Rajouri as cultivation trial gets success

APART FROM KASHMIR'S PAMPORE BELT, SAFFRON IS CULTIVATED ONLY IN KISHTWAR DISTRICT OUTSIDE THE VALLEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Jan 4:** The Rajouri district came up on the saffron map of Jammu and Kashmir, when a farmer Vishal Chander Sharma successfully undertook saffron cultivation in his fields in this border district, surprising people with the purple-orange flower bloom in their neighbourhood. Influenced by the cultivation of saffron in the Kishtwar area of Jammu region, the Rajouri administration picked up the idea of Saffron cultivation in the district. "It is a dream coming true. I never thought saffron could be cultivated here. But we were successful in bringing in new areas of J&K on the saffron map of the UT," farmer Vishal Chander Sharma said. Sharma is highly thankful to the district administration of Rajouri and department of agriculture for motivating him to cultivate saffron in this area. He was previously dependent on subsistence agriculture and was cultivating wheat and maize but now he is keen to cultivate saffron crop in his fields to earn more income and to improve his socio-economic status, officials of agriculture department said. Giving details, officials said that the district administration desired the project to be taken up on an experimental basis by the agriculture department in Darhal Sub division as the terrain and climatic conditions of that area are almost akin to that of Kishtwar. The Department selected one farmer Vishal Chander Sharma of panchayat Kot Dhara, block Dhangri, zone Patehpur. The farmer



possesses only 15 kanal un-irrigated land in which he has been growing wheat and maize crops, a senior official said. He agreed to cultivate saffron in 15 marlas for which the saffron seed was purchased by the agriculture department from Pampore Kashmir and supplied to him. In addition to the seed, some other assistance like fertilizer, labour charges, weedicides etc were also provided to him. With no prior experience in growing saffron, help of the experts from Kishtwar was sought who assisted Sharma in saffron cultivation. Sowing of the seed was done August 24, 2021. Blooming started December 12, 2021. The blooming process continued for 15 days resulting in 734 flowers in total and on average 45-50 flowers per day. Plucking of the flowers was done on the same day of blooming, an officer said. The farmers of the adjoining area are also fascinated and expressed their desire to cultivate saffron in the forthcoming season, he said. Now the challenge for the agriculture department and the farmer is protection, preservation and multiplication of the seed for future cultivation, officials said. Saffron cultivation has long been restricted to a limited geographical area in J&K, mainly Pampore, followed by Budgam, Srinagar, and Kishtwar districts. After the successful conduct of saffron cultivation trial, the district administration and the department of agriculture are also looking at extending the cultivation of saffron to other areas where it feels will favour its cultivation to increase farmers' income.

## J&K beer wins silver at Brussels contest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Jan 4:** Kotsberg Pils, the light lager beer manufactured by Devans in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, has been awarded the coveted silver medal in the lager beer category at the Brussels Beer Challenge, a spokesperson of the company said.

The Brussels Beer Challenge in Belgium, now in its tenth edition, is one of the world's most important and prestigious beer competitions. An international panel of 75 independent beer critics from around 20 different countries judged nearly 1,800 beers from 35 different countries, he said.

Sharing the stage with established breweries from across the globe - from Brussels, Brazil, Germany, Japan and China - Jammu's family-run brewery wowed judges with its entry Kotsberg Pils, he said. The fact that a homegrown Indian brand outshone other international brands at this prestigious competition in Belgium, where beer brewing has been practised since 3 AD, is a matter of pride not just for



the Union Territory of Jammu, but also the entire nation, the spokesperson said. Other beers that were honoured with awards this year included Grimbergen (Carlsberg Breweries), Hoegaarden (AB-Inbev), Bavaria Pilsner (Svinkels Family Brewers), Duvel (Duvel Moortgat). Devans has regularly been win-



ning accolades for the quality of its beers. Its Godfather legendary has won gold awards consecutively for two years along with a silver and a gold for its six fields blanche and six fields cult, respectively, at the Spiritz Selection Awards - a blind tasting competition held at New Delhi, organised by India's leading alco-bev magazine Spiritz, he said. The award at Brussels makes this a special year for Devans. Devans completes 60 years in the business this year and is one of the leading liquor houses of the country known for manufacturing quality beers. Devans had in 2014 commis-

sioned a most modern and state of the art Brewery at Samba from where it is manufacturing international quality beers in bottles and cans and also draught beers in 5-litre party kegs and 30-litre kegs, the spokesperson said. It exports 95 per cent of its production outside the state and about 40,000 cases a year to the US, the UAE, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Hong Kong, he said. Professionals, who are experts in their fields of operation, manage the brewery and the beers are brewed under strict quality control parameters under the guidance of international consultants.

The fact that a homegrown Indian brand outshone other international brands at this prestigious competition in Belgium, where beer brewing has been practised since 3 AD, is a matter of pride not just for the Union Territory of Jammu, but also the entire nation



Omicron is a variant that arrived from abroad and if the flights were banned on time the spread could've been contained, but the Central government didn't take any action even after repeated requests from Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

HELPLINES SET UP

The Jammu and Kashmir Police have established helpline numbers for emergency across Kashmir in view of snowfall and inclement weather, officials said Tuesday



of the day quote

We demand that today, please, come forward and announce compensation for next of the kin of each one of the 700 farmers who died, announce a government job for them, and also announce withdrawal of every single criminal case registered falsely from UP to Haryana

RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONGRESS LEADER

There is a dire need to inculcate the spirit of service from a young age in the youth

M. VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

Get fully vaccinated to prevent Covid-19 and its new variant Omicron

MK STALIN | TN CM

SHORT TAKES

33 medical staff test Covid positive

Lucknow: As many as 33 medical staff members, including doctors, at Medanta hospital in Lucknow have tested positive for Covid-19, the hospital said Tuesday. Of the 33 new patients, 32 are hospital staff and one is a doctor, working in emergency ward. All the patients are asymptomatic. Recently, the hospital had collected 800 Covid samples for RT-PCR testing, of which 33 were found infected.

Couple injured

Korba: A couple was seriously injured in an attack by a wild elephant in Chhattisgarh's Korba district on Tuesday, a forest official said. The incident took place in the wee hours when the victims, identified as Khulsai Uraon (45) and his wife Hirmatiya Bai (40), were sleeping in their hut on the outskirts of Pondikala village under Katghora forest division, he said.

Woman raped

Bhopal: A woman was allegedly raped during an outing with her family members in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district, police said Tuesday. The incident took place Sunday following which the police arrested two persons, they said. In a police complaint, the woman said she had gone out in a car with her husband and children. While they were returning home, two persons signalled them to stop the car on Aron Road in Raghogarh police station area, Superintendent of Police Rajiv Mishra said.

Three cops dead

Patna: Three police personnel were killed and two others critically injured after a speeding dumper rammed into a police vehicle in Patna Tuesday. The accident occurred at 4.30 a.m. while the police personnel were patrolling in the state capital's Beur More area. An official of Gardanibagh police station said that the dumper dragged the police vehicle for more than 50 metres after which it overturned and fell on it.

Farmer killed

Meerut (Uttar Pradesh): A 72-year-old farmer was shot dead by his son and grandson over a property dispute in the Modkurd village in Meerut. Chaudhary Baru Singh was allegedly shot dead by his son Lavkush Chaudhary and grandson Mohit Chaudhary, just 200 metres away from his ancestral land Monday. Baru Singh was standing next to his house, which comes under the Mawana police circle, when the father-son pumped bullets into him from a close range duo, following a brief argument.

CLOSE WATCH



A security personnel patrols at Taj Mahal complex in view of the upcoming Republic Day, in Agra

NEET-PG ADMISSION

SC to hear plea



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 4: The Supreme Court has agreed to hear Wednesday a plea related to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota in NEET-PG admissions, after the Centre sought urgent hearing in the matter. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) N V Ramana and Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli took note of the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre, that the matter pertains to admissions to post-graduate medical courses and that students have been facing difficulties. "It concerns EWS of the society. There's a statement made by us which prevents further counselling of resident doctors," the law officer submitted, seeking urgent hearing of the matter. "Resident doctors are protesting and their concerns are genuine." The CJI said, "The problem is it is a three-judge bench matter, this entire week is a miscellaneous week. Let me see if tomorrow, some judge is available, we will constitute a bench. Let me see. If possible, I will constitute a three-judge bench or it will go before a Division bench tomorrow."

The CJI said the first week after the winter vacation is the miscellaneous week and hence, no three judge bench was available except the one led by him. On Monday, a bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud had told the Centre that a bench of requisite strength can be set up by the CJI as the EWS quota matter is being heard by a three-judge bench.

Gaganyaan Crew Module to have two landing choices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 4: As the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is going at full throttle for Gaganyaan, the country's maiden manned space mission scheduled for launch in 2023, interesting details of the Crew Module (CM), including the landing choices, Crew Escape system, and survival packets for each crew member, have emerged. The CM will be splashing down near the Indian coast in 2023 after the week-long mission, and the Arabian Sea, which is comparatively calmer, is the primary choice, but Bay of Bengal is also being considered as a backup option, writes Dr Unnikrishnan Nair S,

100 students, docs in Punjab test positive

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Jan 4: Nearly 100 students and resident doctors of the Government Medical College in Patiala in Punjab have tested positive for Covid-19, officials said Tuesday.

The district administration has asked all students staying at the hostel to vacate their rooms immediately. A retirement party and New Year Eve's party held on the college campus without following appropriate Covid-19 behaviour is blamed for alarming spike in the cases.

This is the second education institution in the state that saw a spike in coronavirus cases. Earlier, 93 students of the Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology in Patiala tested positive for Covid-19. With the spike in Covid-19 cases, Punjab on Tuesday imposed statewide night curfew daily from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. and ordered closure of all educational institutions till January 15.

The educational institutions include the schools, colleges, universities and the coaching institutions. However, these institutions are expected to maintain the academic schedule through online teaching. However, medical and nursing colleges may continue to function normally.

'Bulli Bai' app probe: Woman arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 4: The cyber cell of Mumbai police which is probing the 'Bulli Bai' app case has arrested a 19-year-old woman, alleged to be the main culprit, from Uttarakhand, and a 21-year-old engineering student from Bangalore, officials said here Tuesday.

Vishal Kumar Jha, the student, and co-accused Shweta Singh who is from Uttarakhand allegedly knew each other. According to police, more arrests are likely. While a court in Mumbai remanded Jha in police custody till January 10, a court in the northern state granted city police four-day transit remand of Shweta Singh so that she could be brought here. She will be produced before the Mumbai court on Wednesday, said a police official.

The Mumbai police had registered a First Information Report (FIR) against unidentified persons following complaints that doctored

Stampede-like situation in Cong marathon, 3 hurt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bareilly (UP), Jan 4: A stampede-like situation occurred during a marathon organised by the Congress as part of its election campaign here, leaving three girls injured on Tuesday, with officials saying the turnout for the event was much higher than permitted.

While the Congress alleged that the incident was fallout of laxity on part of the district administration and a conspiracy, the BJP said the opposition party was making girls "pawns" for its "petty politics".

"Permission was given for 200 children. However, the number of those who actually turned up for the event was much higher," City Magistrate Rajiv Pandey said, adding that the incident will be thoroughly probed and action will be initiated against the guilty.

Three girls, who participated in the marathon, were injured and they have been sent to the district hospital, he said. "What led to the near stampede-like situation? What was the laxity? How a large number of children gathered there, and the permission given by the higher education department are some of the aspects that will be probed," Pandey said.

The Congress has been organising marathons in different parts of Uttar Pradesh under its 'Ladki Hoon, Ladki Sakti Hoon' (I am a girl, and can fight) campaign that furthers party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's women-centric agenda for the upcoming assembly polls.

A large number of participants of the long-distance run had gathered around 9 am at a school ground and video clips showed that in a rush to race ahead, participants stumbled and fell on each other. Pandey claimed that the organisers had announced a scooty as first prize for the marathon's winner. Participants were overexcited to get the scooty, leading to pushing and shoving, and creating a stampede-like situation, he said.

Videos showed there was no social distancing and many were not wearing masks, violating Covid protocols. Local Congress leader and former Bareilly mayor Supriya Aron said, "People had gone to Vaishno Devi on a pilgrimage (on New Year day), what happened



While the Congress alleged that the incident was fallout of laxity on part of the district administration and a conspiracy, the BJP said the opposition party was making girls "pawns" for its "petty politics" A large number of participants of the long-distance run had gathered around 9 am at a school ground and video clips showed that in a rush to race ahead, participants stumbled and fell on each other

there? What will you call it? It is human tendency to race ahead (of others)."

"Here it is girls, who are studying in schools, and a little bit of 'bhaag dauri' took place," she said. Twelve people died in a stampede at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu, with its board saying it happened due to a scuffle between two groups.

State Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh alleged that the incident was the result of a "conspiracy" hatched by the BJP government in the state. "Some girls were injured, and we are waiting for further details," he said. "The district administration knew that the run was being held and did not cooperate," Singh said, adding that the incident was a "fallout of laxity on the part of the local administration".

The administration "did not cooperate" as far as the issue of security was concerned and the entire incident "smells of a conspiracy hatched by the BJP", he said. In Lucknow, Congress national spokesperson Supriya Shrinete told reporters: "Events like these are organised, some incidents like this do happen. But they (the incidents) should not have happened. Such incidents will not recur."

To a question from reporters here about some from the Congress heckling at journalists covering the event, Aron said, "My request

to the media is if somebody has felt bad (over something), I on the party's behalf apologise. Nothing as such happened. I know that from within you all are 'Congress' (Congress supporters)."

"Because, when I speak, the entire media in Delhi wants that Congress to return (to power)," Aron, who contested the last polls from Bareilly Cantt, told reporters. Not ruling out the conspiracy angle, she said, "See, all types of people manage to sneak into such events. I will also say there could be a possible conspiracy."

"Who was there? What was there? Did you see any faces? None amongst us were there. They are planted people. Don't know who actually sneaked (in) after seeing increasing support for the Congress," Aron said.

The state BJP unit in a tweet in Hindi said, "Making innocent girls pawns for your petty politics, is the height of shamelessness. The girls were beaten up in Jhansi (marathon), while the participants were kept hungry in Lucknow (marathon), and girls have been injured in Bareilly. Have some shame, Priyanka Vadra."

Seeking to regain its lost ground in the politically crucial state, Congress has chosen to go into the polls with the gender equality agenda, and prominent is Priyanka Gandhi's announcement of allotting 40 per cent of poll tickets to women candidates.

PM'S PUNJAB VISIT

10,000 security personnel deployed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 4: Around 10,000 security personnel have been deployed in Punjab's Ferozepur district ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, which is being opposed by some farmer unions.

Modi is visiting Punjab after a gap of two years and set to lay foundation stones of projects worth ₹42,750 crore. Some farmer unions are demanding from the government to bring a law to guarantee the minimum support price (MSP) and withdraw police cases against farmers, who protested the Centre's farm laws.

Adequate security arrangements have been made ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Punjab's Ferozepur on Wednesday. Additional Director General of Police G Nageswara Rao said.



Director, Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC), ISRO, Bengaluru, in an article. The article 'Indian Human Space Mission' appears in the Manorama Yearbook 2022. The HSFC was set up by the ISRO in Bengaluru in 2019 for sustained and affordable human space flight activities and Gaganyaan is the first project. The test flight to validate the performance of Crew Escape System and the first uncrewed mission of Gaganyaan has been scheduled at the beginning of the second half of 2022. The Gaganyaan Orbital Module (OM) has two parts — the Crew module (CM) and the Service module (SM) — and weighs about 8,000 kg. While in orbit, the OM will be orbiting the Earth with a velocity of about 7,800 m/s. The CM, a double walled system and the habitat of astronauts, who would be part of the manned mission, has an ablative Thermal Protection System (TPS) to protect it during the intense aerodynamic heating during the flight, points out Dr Nair. The Orbital module will be launched by Human Rated Launch Vehicle (HRLV), which is a modified version of GSLV MK-III vehicle. The CM has a cluster of small thrusters with 100N thrust level based on green propulsion that will be fired in controlled manner to change the attitude of the module during the re-entry and atmospheric phases of flight. After landing, the coordinates of CM will be passed on to the recovery team waiting in ships. The CM has survival packet for each crew that can support them for nearly two days. However, ISRO is positive that the crew can be recovered within two hours after the splash down. For Gaganyaan, the selected four astronaut candidates have undergone generic space flight training at Russia for nearly 15 months. The Gaganyaan-specific training

will be carried out in India at the Astronaut Training Facility being set up at Bengaluru. The crew will be familiarised with all conceivable situations that can happen while in flight and they will be trained to face such situations. The training will include classroom sessions on different engineering, medical and safety aspects of the mission.

The crew will undergo training in weightlessness condition by flying in special aircraft through a parabolic path that will give 25 to 30 seconds duration of weightlessness. In order to familiarise the crew with rescue under abort conditions, they will undergo special survival training in sea, snow, mountain and desert conditions.

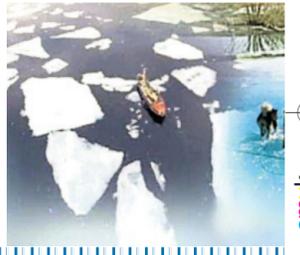
# international



As long as news outlets do not engage in illegal acts, they can continue to report news in Hong Kong  
CARRIE LAM | HONG KONG LEADER

## CLIMATE CRISIS

Nine out of 10 South Koreans feel climate change firsthand and are willing to accept any inconvenience caused by policies to solve the problem, a poll revealed Tuesday



## of the day quote

The civil servants and pensioners in the country will be supported by new economic measures  
RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | TURKISH PRESIDENT

Donald Trump, Donald Trump Jr., and Ivanka Trump are trying to stop my office from interviewing them under oath as part of our investigation into the Trump Organisation and Mr. Trump  
LETTITIA JAMES | NY ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Secretary-General appreciates the recognition by the nuclear-weapon States of their need to comply with their bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments, including their binding obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of N-Weapons related to nuclear disarmament  
STEPHANE DUJARRIC | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPOKESMAN

## SHORT TAKES

### 14 killed in China landslide

Beijing: At least 14 people were killed in a landslide that hit Bijie city in China's Guizhou province, local authorities said Tuesday. The landslide took place at a construction site at around 7 p.m. Monday, according to the municipal government of Bijie. As of 2.05 p.m. Tuesday, a total of 17 people had been found, of whom 14 were confirmed dead while three others are undergoing treatment in the hospital, reports Xinhua news agency.

### 10 dead in Pak road mishap

Lahore: At least 10 people were killed and 40 others injured in a head-on collision between two passenger buses in Pakistan's Punjab province, officials said Tuesday. According to the Punjab Emergency Services Rescue 1122, a bus was going to Hasilpur, some 400 kms from Lahore, while the other one was coming in the opposite direction when they collided Monday night.

### Fighting intensifies in eastern Colombia

Bogota: At least 23 people were killed in Colombia this weekend and 20 had to flee their homes as fighting between rebel groups intensified in the eastern state of Arauca, Colombia's Defense Minister said Monday. The killings mark a setback for Colombia's government, which was able to bring down homicide rates in much of the country following a 2016 peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

### Suspect in SA's Parl fire appears in court

Johannesburg: The man suspected of starting the fire that gutted South Africa's parliament buildings appeared in court Tuesday and will remain in custody pending a bail hearing. Zandile Christmas Mafe faces several charges including arson, theft, housebreaking and contravention of the National Key Points Acts, which restricts access to government buildings.

### Quake jolts Japan

Tokyo: An earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale jolted Japan's Ogasawara Islands Tuesday, authorities said, adding that no tsunami warning was issued. According to the Japan Meteorological Agency, the tremor struck at 6.09 a.m., with its epicentre at a latitude of 27.1 degrees north and a longitude of 142.5 degrees east, and at a depth of 70 km.

## HISTORIC DAY Same-sex couples can now opt for surrogacy in Israel

Israel's LGBTQ+ community had demanded for years to be allowed to pursue surrogacy, which is already accessible to heterosexual couples and single women

AGENCIES

Jerusalem, Jan 4: Israel Tuesday lifted restrictions barring same-sex couples and single men from becoming parents through surrogacy within the country, upholding a Supreme Court ruling to end the ban. "It is a historic day for the LGBTQ struggle in Israel," Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz said at a news conference, announcing

the ministry had issued a circular granting equal access for all to surrogate pregnancy.

In July, the Supreme Court, petitioned by gay rights activists, ruled that the surrogacy ban for same-sex couples and single men violated their rights and must be lifted within six months.

The restrictions had applied only to surrogacy arrangements in Israel, and some of those barred



from pursuing the process at home travelled abroad to do so. It gave the government of then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a year to draw up a new law, but parliament

failed to meet the deadline. The court said last year that the change in the law would take six months to come into effect, January 11, to allow the formation of

professional guidelines.

"Full equality. That is the simple demand and it is the goal of the LGBT struggle, the long struggle of my community," said Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz, who is openly gay. "Equality before the law and equality of parenthood."

Horowitz said the change in the law would also expand surrogacy to single men and transgender people. Under the previous regulations, Israeli same-sex couples looking to become parents could not engage a surrogate, and were often deterred by the additional costs of finding one abroad.

## CHINA DENIES EXPANDING ITS NUKE ARSENAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 4: China Tuesday rejected as "untrue" the US charge that Beijing was rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal and took credit for playing an "important role" in facilitating leaders of the five Nuclear-Weapon States to issue the first joint statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding an arms race.

Declaring that they consider the avoidance of a war between the Nuclear-Weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as their foremost responsibilities, the leaders of China, France, Russia, the UK and the US Monday in a joint statement said, "We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

"As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons - for as long as they continue to exist - should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war," the statement said.

The five countries, also permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council, said they believed strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be

prevented. They also reaffirmed the importance of addressing nuclear threats and emphasised the importance of preserving and complying with their bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments.

Fu Cong, the director-general of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's arms control department, denied the US Defence Department's allegation that China was rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal.

"On the assertions made by US officials that China is expanding dramatically its nuclear capabilities, first, let me say that this is untrue," he told a media briefing here Tuesday.

The US Defence Department said in a report in November that China is expanding its nuclear force faster than previously predicted and could have more than 1,000 warheads by 2030. The US has 3,750 nuclear weapons.

Fu hoped that the five nuclear weapons states could abandon the policies of nuclear deterrence based on the first use of nuclear weapons and make commitments of mutual no-first-use of nuclear weapons.



## FLOOD FURY



Vehicles and houses are inundated by floodwater in Lhoksukon of Aceh Province, Indonesia

UNI PHOTO

## UK Defence Academy hit by major cyber attack

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, Jan 4: A cyberattack - possibly by China or Russia - reportedly hit the academic arm of the UK's Ministry of Defence and had a "significant" impact, the officer in charge at the time has revealed.

According to Sky News, Air Marshal Edward Stringer, who retired from the armed forces in August, said the "sophisticated" hack - discovered last March - prompted the Defence Academy to accelerate plans for its entire network to be rebuilt and made more resilient.

The targeting of an academic institution is a sign of how the frontline in modern warfare can be anywhere, the former director-general of the academy told Sky News.

Attack was possibly launched by hostile foreign state such as Russia or China, says Air Marshal Edward Stringer

"The consequences for the operations were significant, but then manageable," Stringer was quoted as saying.

"But only manageable because your people work incredibly hard to keep things going and find back-up methodologies," he added.

IT staff had to "find back-up ways to use regular internet, etc, etc, to keep the courses going, which we managed to do - but not as slickly as previously, that would be fair," he mentioned.

## Capt Harpreet Chandi reaches South Pole

Chandi announced her live blog Monday at the end of Day 40 after travelling 700 miles (1,127 kilometres) while pulling a pulk or sledge with all of her kit and battling temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius and wind speeds of around 60mph



PIC CREDIT: INSTAGRAM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 4: Captain Harpreet Chandi, a 32-year-old Indian-origin British Sikh Army officer and physiotherapist also known as Polar Preet, has created history by becoming the first woman of colour to complete a solo unsupported trek to the South Pole.

Chandi announced her history-making feat on her live blog Monday at the end of Day 40 after travelling 700 miles (1,127 kilometres) while pulling a pulk or sledge with all of her kit and battling temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius and wind speeds of around 60mph.

"I made it to the South Pole where it's snowing. Feeling so many

emotions right now. I knew nothing about the polar world three years ago and it feels so surreal to finally be here. It was tough getting here and I want to thank everybody for their support," she wrote.

"This expedition was always about so much more than me. I want to encourage people to push their boundaries and to believe in themselves, and I want you to be able to do it without being labelled a rebel. I have been told no on many occasions and told to 'just do the normal thing', but we create our own normal," Chandi said.

She uploaded a live tracking map of her trek and also posted regular blogs of her journey to the snow-capped region.

## Omicron surge could differ per country: WHO

AGENCIES

Geneva, Jan 4: A top World Health Organisation official says low hospitalisation and death rates in South Africa due to the omicron variant cannot be considered a template for how the variant will fare as it surges in other countries.

Dr. Abdi Mahamud, Covid-19 incident manager at the UN Health agency, notes a "decoupling" between case counts and deaths in the country, which first announced the emergence of the fast-spreading new variant. He said Tuesday that in terms of hospitalisations South

Africa remains "very low, and the death has remained very, very low." But Mahamud says "it cannot be extrapolated from South Africa to other countries, because each is country is unique on its own."

By its latest count, WHO says 128 countries had confirmed cases of the new variant that first emerged in southern Africa in November, but many other places - which may not have complete testing capabilities - are believed to have it too. Mahamud notes that omicron has shown nearly unprecedented transmissibility for a virus. He notes a "remarkable



increase" in cases in the United States, where "we are seeing more and more hospitalisations coming along." But he did cite an increasing number of studies showing omicron affects the upper part of the body, whereas other versions devastated lung function and caused severe pneumonia that led to many deaths.

## US reports 1mn daily Covid cases

Washington: Amid the rapid spread of the new highly-transmissible Omicron variant, the US has reported more than one million Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, breaking previous records for single-day infection spike. As of 5 a.m. Tuesday, the country registered 1.07 million confirmed cases in the past 24 hours, which increased the country's overall infection tally to 56,191,733, according to Johns Hopkins University.

## Taliban shut down women's baths in Afghan province

Based on the new decision, women can only take shower in private baths while observing Islamic hijab, not in general baths

AGENCIES

Kabul/New Delhi, Jan 4: Taliban officials in northern Balkh province, bordering Uzbekistan, have announced the closure of all general baths for women, Khaama Press reported.

As the Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan is taking root across the country, their restrictions, especially on women, are also increasing. The decision was taken unanimously by religious scholars and provincial officials of the Directorate of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in the province. Based on the new decision, women can only take shower in private baths while observing Islamic hijab, not in general baths, the report said. The head of the Directorate of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Balkh province said that the decision was made after consultations with religious scholars (Ulema). "Since people do not access modern baths at home, men are allowed to go to



general baths, but women are supposed to go to private baths while observing hijab," said the head of the directorate. Under age boys are also banned from general baths,

and body massage is also banned in the baths.

Earlier, local officials in western Herat province had temporarily closed general baths for women.

## Suicide bomber battalion to be part of Taliban Army

New Delhi: Officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have said that they will create a special battalion of suicide attackers to be part of their army, Khaama Press reported. Deputy Minister of Information and Culture and spokesperson of the Taliban, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that the battalion will be part of their special forces and will be active under the Defence Ministry. Zabiullah Mujahid said that the battalion will be used during special operations. About women and former officers in the Taliban army, Mujahid acknowledged that women will be recruited based on need, and specialists of the previous Afghan army will also be given a part in the future army. Earlier, the Defence Ministry of IEA had said that it is working to build a 100,000-member army that will be fully equipped. The IEA had reportedly deployed suicide attackers to Afghanistan's northern border with Tajikistan, but the news has not been confirmed officially.

# business



**Luxury consumers are evolving to strongly adopt the concept of responsible luxury**  
NAVEEN SONI | PRESIDENT, LEXUS INDIA

## APPLE BECOMES FIRST CO TO HIT \$3TRN MARKET VALUE, THEN SLIPS

Apple Inc Monday became the first company to hit a \$3 trillion stock market value, before ending the day a hair below that milestone, as investors bet the iPhone maker will keep launching best-selling products as it explores new markets such as automated cars and virtual reality.



### of the day quote

Not only do we have a full year supply of the recently launched products but we will also have new products that we will launch this year. When all these products are available, I'm sure we will have a good year this year as well

BALBIR SINGH DHILLON | AUDI INDIA HEAD

Greater flexibility and farsighted planning in business processes ensured that we overcame unpredictable market situations and increased our market share

VIKRAM PAWAH | BMW GROUP INDIA PRESIDENT

We are delighted to achieve the successful commissioning of KTL project which aims at solving the critical challenge of energy delivery for the western and central region

PRATIK AGARWAL | MD, STERILITE POWER

### SHORT TAKES

#### Alka Mittal interim ONGC head

**New Delhi:** Alka Mittal has been appointed an interim chairman and managing director of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), the first woman to head the country's largest oil and gas producer. Mittal replaces Subhash Kumar, another interim head who retired after reaching superannuation age December 31. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for entrustment of the additional charge of the post of chairman and managing director (CMD), ONGC to Alka Mittal, director (HR), ONGC for a period of six months with effect from January 1, 2022, or till the appointment of a regular incumbent to the post, or until further order, whichever is the earliest," the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said in an order dated January 3, 2022.

#### Tata CLIQ Luxury ties up with BigBasket

**New Delhi:** Tata CLIQ Luxury, a Tata-owned premier luxury lifestyle platform, has partnered with the group-backed online grocery platform BigBasket, to launch a luxury gourmet store. The new luxury gourmet store is on the Tata CLIQ Luxury platform, according to a joint statement from both e-tailers. "Through this unique collaboration, Tata CLIQ Luxury is building a world-class, differentiated, and experiential gourmet store for consumers who appreciate the finer things in life and are looking for an exclusive selection of luxury gourmet products," it said. The platform is offering a curated selection of products from a wide assortment of leading global and Indian luxury gourmet brands and categories across select staples and speciality categories.

#### EKI Energy Services hits \$1bn valuation

**New Delhi:** Climate change advisory company EKI Energy Services Tuesday said it has become India's first BSE SME listed company to achieve USD one billion valuation. It has achieved this milestone within nine months of its debut on the BSE April 7, 2021 with a market capitalization of ₹96.23 crore, the Indore-based company said in a statement. Tuesday, shares of EKI Energy Services hit an all-time high of ₹10,946 on BSE. The shares soon witnessed profit-booking and finally settled for the day at ₹9,903.60 apiece. Its valuation surged manifolds especially in last one year as the company expanded its global footprint.

## Starlink to refund pre-orders in India after govt order

Starlink, a division of Elon Musk's SpaceX, has already received over 5,000 pre-orders for its devices in India but is struggling to receive commercial licences

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Jan 4:** Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet venture told its members Tuesday the Indian government had asked the company to refund all its pre-orders until it receives licences to operate in the country.

"As has always been the case, you can receive a refund at any time," the company said in an email to one of its customers. Reuters has seen a copy of the email.

Starlink, a division of Musk's SpaceX aerospace company, has already received over 5,000 pre-orders for its devices in India but is struggling to receive commercial licences without which it cannot offer any services in the country.

"Unfortunately, the timeline for receiving licences to operate is currently unknown, and there are several issues that must be resolved with the licensing framework to allow us to operate Starlink in India," the company said in the email.

"The Starlink team is looking forward to making Starlink available in India as soon as possible,"



it said. Starlink is one of a growing number of companies launching small satellites as part of a low-Earth orbit network to provide low-latency broadband internet services around the world, with a particular focus on remote areas that terrestrial internet infrastructure struggles to reach.

But the Indian government has advised people against subscribing to Starlink without a licence and also warned the company, ordering it to refrain from taking bookings

and rendering services.

Starlink is planning to apply for a commercial licence in India by the end of January, its country head had said in a social media post last month, and a presentation showed with an April roll out it targeted 200,000 devices in India by December 2022.

Its competitors include Amazon.com's Kuiper and OneWeb - a collapsed satellite operator rescued by the British government and India's Bharti Group.

## Amazon scores over Future in HC ruling

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** The Delhi High Court Tuesday dismissed two Future Group's pleas seeking a direction to the arbitration tribunal, adjudicating Amazon's objections against Future Group's deal with Reliance, to take a decision on their application for terminating the arbitration proceedings before moving any further.

"Both the petitions are dismissed," said Justice Amit Bansal, who had reserved the order January 3 on the petitions filed by Future Coupons Private Limited (FCPL) and Future Retail Limited (FRL).

The judge said it was not for the court to interfere with the scheduling of the arbitration proceedings and no grounds for interference were made out in the present petitions.

He said the tribunal has already fixed January 8 as the date for hearing the termination application after cutting short the scheduled four days' hearing of the expert witnesses.

Rejecting FRL's contention that the tribunal was violating the principle of equal opportunities, the court opined that in its prima facie view, there was nothing to suggest this or that the tribunal was not accommodative towards their requests.

This court finds no infirmity in the decision of the Arbitral Tribunal in not postponing the hearings of the expert witnesses scheduled in January, 2022, the order said.

"In the opinion of this Court, according to such a request for adjournment, is bound to derail the arbitration proceedings as it would be very inconvenient and cumbersome to schedule fresh dates for the arbitration proceedings, taking into account the availability of all arbitrators as well as the experts," the court said in its 21-page order.

"There is nothing to suggest that the Arbitral Tribunal has denied equal opportunity to the parties or that the Arbitral Tribunal has not been accommodating towards requests of the petitioners," it added.



## Colgate in talks with sales agents after disruption threats



REUTERS

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Colgate-Palmolive India said Tuesday it was holding talks with its sales representatives in the country after they threatened to disrupt supplies in one of India's most populous states and alleged they were being unfairly treated on pricing.

Reuters reported in November that Indian sales agents of companies including Reckitt Benckiser, Unilever and Colgate had seen their sales drop by 20%-25% over a year as mom-and-pop stores partnered with Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance to secure lower prices.

Following the story, sales representatives threatened to stop supplying the mom-and-pop stores, known in India as kiranas, unless they were given the same price deals as big corporate distributors such as Reliance.

Last week, a group of distributors said they will stop some Colgate products from January 1 in Maharashtra, the richest and one of the most populous states in India.

In a statement to Indian stock exchanges, Colgate-Palmolive India said "it is directly engaging with its distributors to resolve their challenges," without elaborating. "The company will ensure that supply of its products remains uninterrupted in the state," the statement said.

Distributors had told Reuters that Ambani's discounts were prompting more stores to order digitally from his JioMart Partner app, posing an existential threat to more than 450,000 sales representatives who for decades have gone store-to-store to take orders.

A Reuters review of purchase deals on the JioMart Partner app in November showed a Mumbai retailer could bulk buy a two-tube pack of Colgate MaxFresh toothpaste for about ₹115 (\$1.55) while a traditional Colgate sales agent offered it at ₹154, roughly a third higher.

In a statement last week, All India Consumer Products Distributors Federation said its members would stop supplying the MaxFresh brand starting Jan. 1 in Maharashtra, and later disrupt other product supplies. The group estimates Maharashtra accounts for roughly 40% of consumer goods sales in India.

## Swosti Group unveiling five star resort at Puri



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 4:** Swosti Group is unveiling the first five star premium luxury beach resort "Swosti Premium Beach Resorts" at Sipasurubuli, Puri with an investment of ₹160 crores.

To attract MICE and wedding tourism, this property will have mega conference and wedding facilities with large open air landscaped lawns in different heights of the building. A food court with cuisines from various states as well as intercontinental and Chinese food will be available. The infinity swimming pool will keep the guest busy all throughout the day. Another special attraction of this property would be sky lounge bar at a height of 150ft above ground level overlooking miles at the Bay of Bengal and the blue sky. 125 luxury rooms (including five premium luxury large suites on the 12th floor) will get direct view of the sea.

The property would be centrally air-conditioned with the state-of-the-art facilities available in premium luxury resorts. Each banquet hall will be attached with open air lawn. Special game zone for adults and kids will be provided in the food court area to keep guests occupied

all through. State of the art wellness spa and gym will be available in the resort. Adequate parking space will be provided in the basement for large weddings and conferences.

The company has obtained all clearances from all government bodies required for a resort project. Swosti Group under the leadership of JK Mohanty has been promoting tourism sector of Odisha successfully since 1981. This company has given employment to more than 1200 people and is having offices in Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmadabad and associated offices in Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai. Swosti Premium Beach Resorts will give direct employment to 375 people and indirectly around 700 people including all vendors will be benefited.

## Energy, bank stocks propel shares amid Covid surge

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Jan 4:** Equity benchmarks defied gravity for the third session on the trot Tuesday, in tandem with a rally in global markets as investors shrugged off soaring Omicron cases in multiple countries.

Strong domestic trade data further added to the buying momentum despite a depreciating rupee, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened with significant gains and saw further consolidation as the trade progressed. It finally closed at 59,855.93, clocking a gain of 672.71 points or 1.14 per cent.

Likewise, the NSE Nifty rose 179.55 points or 1.02 per cent to end at 17,805.25.

On the Sensex chart, major gainers were NTPC, PowerGrid, SBI, Titan, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank and TCS, rising as much as 5.48 per cent.

In contrast, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Dr Reddy's and Infosys slipped up to 1.21 per cent.

"Tracking strong momentum of global peers, domestic bourses witnessed a smooth sail, steered by index heavyweights and gains in financials and consumer durables.



Despite surging COVID cases, investor sentiments remain positive globally as reports suggest lower impact of the new variant on economic recovery. However, India's unemployment rate rose to 7.9 per cent in December as compared to 7 per cent in November owing to muted economic activity in rural and urban India amid rise in Omicron cases," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said the US markets setting record highs on the first trading day of 2022 is auspicious for global stock markets.

If the FIIs' buying of Monday is an indication of their renewed interest in India, financials particularly the leading banks, are likely to continue the momentum witnessed in the previous session, he added.

## India spends record \$55.7bn on gold imports in '21

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Jan 4:** India splurged a record \$55.7 billion on gold imports in 2021, buying more than double the previous year's tonnage as a price drop favoured retail buyers and pent-up demand emerged for weddings that were delayed when the pandemic first hit.

The previously unreported details of the world's second biggest

consuming nation's soaring imports were disclosed to Reuters by a senior government official who requested anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to media.

The 2021 gold import bill easily doubled the \$22 billion spent in 2020, and surpassed the previous high, set in 2011, of \$53.9 billion, according to the official, who tracks broad import trends. In volume terms, India imported 1,050 tonnes



of gold in 2021, the most in a decade, and far more than the 430 tonnes

imported in 2020, the official said.

While global bullion prices drew support from the strong demand in India, the outlay on imports would have added to pressure on the country's ailing rupee.

"Last year demand was robust as lots of weddings were postponed to 2021 from 2020 because of the coronavirus outbreak," said Harshad Ajmera, a gold wholesaler in Kolkata.

## Mercedes unveils 1,000 km-per-charge VISION EQXX prototype

The VISION EQXX is dubbed the most efficient Mercedes-Benz ever built

REUTERS

**Frankfurt, Jan 4:** Mercedes-Benz Monday took the wraps off its battery-powered VISION EQXX prototype which it says will have a range of more than 1,000 kilometres (km) per charge, taking a big stride in its electric vehicle (EV) ambitions.

Daimler, soon to be rebranded Mercedes-Benz, announced plans in 2021 to invest more than 40 bil-



lion euros (\$45bn) by 2030 to take on Tesla in an all-electric car market, including building eight battery plants. From 2025, all its new vehicle platforms will only make EVs, it has said.

The VISION EQXX, dubbed the most efficient Mercedes-Benz ever built, will have energy consumption of less than 10 kilowatt hours (kWh) per 100km, said Daimler.

Tesla's Model S 60 currently consumes 18.1 kWh over the same distance, data on its website shows.

"The Mercedes-Benz VISION EQXX is how we imagine the future of electric cars," Mercedes-Benz CEO Ola Källenius said.

Daimler will test drive the prototype before the middle of the year on various types of terrain, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Markus Schaefer told journalists Monday. Some components of the prototype would be available in Mercedes-Benz vehicles within two to three years, Schaefer said. However, the CTO declined to specify when the 1,000 km-range battery would be market-ready.

"We will likely be the first to show a 1,000 km-range car in real life, with such a small battery," Schaefer said.

When such a vehicle would go on sale is a "market decision" to be de-

termined once the carmaker had established how much range customers expected and what they would be willing to pay, he said.

The prototype, built within 18 months, "puts an end to range anxiety," Mercedes-Benz said, referring to one of the key obstacles for why EVs have not been in higher demand.

This required developing a new battery pack, which the company says would fit into a compact vehicle and whose energy density - measuring how much power batteries can hold compared with their size - stands at close to 400 watt hours per litre.

# THAKUR IN 7TH HEAVEN Boland in for 4th Ashes Test

Mumbai pacer claims career-best figures in Tests to help India bowl South Africa out for 229 conceding only a 27-run first innings lead before the visitors reach 85/2 at stumps on Day 2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

It was his effort that nullified India's seemingly inadequate first innings score of 202 with the lead being restricted to 27 and then erased by visitors as they reached 85/2

at stumps, losing stand-in skipper KL Rahul (8) and Mayank Agarwal's (23) wicket.

The two under-fire seniors Cheteshwar Pujara (35 batting) and Ajinkya Rahane (11 batting) were at the crease and for a change showed lot of positivity and intent. India now lead by 58 runs.

Shardul means 'Tiger' in Sanskrit and his teammates teasingly call him 'Lord Beefy' which incidentally is legendary all-rounder Ian Botham's nickname.

The 'Tiger' was in a mood to hunt inside the 'Bull Ring' under sunny the Johannesburg skyline and he did exactly that, coming up with a performance which is over and above what even coach Rahul Dravid would have expected.

On a pitch with spongy, tennis ball like bounce, a total of 180 to 200 will be an onerous fourth innings

chase for South Africa as the match is expected to end well within four days if the weather doesn't play spoilsport.

The day started nicely for South Africa as their dogged skipper Dean Elgar (28) was happy to play the ugly waiting game while allowing his younger colleague Keegan Peterson (62, 118b, 9x4) to play an attacking role.

It was going well in a stand of 74 as South Africa reached 88/1 before Thakur was brought into the attack in the 34th over as the second change. With Mohammed Siraj bowling from a shorter run-up and not able to exert himself fully due to a hamstring injury the man from Maharashtra's Palghar district had to take more responsibility with the team virtually one bowler short.

Mohammed Shami (2/52) and Jasprit Bumrah (1/49) once again bowled their hearts out, beat the outside edges without much luck before Thakur came into the picture and dealt three blows in quick succession just before lunch.

The delivery that got Peterson was a conventional outswinger which wasn't at drivable length and the batter went for a non-existent punch through covers only to land in second slip Agarwal's palms.

Before that, Peterson's left-handed skipper Elgar got one that moved late taking the outside edge.

Similarly, in the second session, just when Temba Bavuma (51, 60b, 6x4, 1x6) and Kyle Verreynne (21) added 58 and looked like heading for a sizeable lead, Thakur produced a fuller one with scrambled seam that landed on the 'fifth off stump' and cut back sharply to trap the young keeper leg before.

In case of Bavuma, the delivery



CHETESHWAR PUJARA

was drifting towards his rib cage and was drifting down before Rishabh Pant took an extraordinary catch down the leg-side. He again came back in the final session to wrap up the innings.

### A contentious dismissal

Out of Shardul's seven wickets, the dismissal of Rassie van der Dussen did create some controversy as TV replays turned out to be inconclusive whether Thakur's off-cutter, that literally had the batter cut into half, was taken cleanly by Pant.

One angle seemed to suggest that it was picked on the bounce and it was learnt that home team captain Elgar visited the match referee's room to have a chat.

**Brief scores:** India 202 & 85/2 (Cheteshwar Pujara 35 batting, Mayank Agarwal 23; Marco Jansen 1/18); South Africa 229 (Keegan Peterson 62, Temba Bavuma 51; Shardul Thakur 7/61, Mohammed Shami 2/52). Match to continue.

Sydney, Jan 4: Scott Boland has retained his spot in Australia's bowling attack for the fourth Ashes test after his starring role on debut in the series-deciding victory over England last week.

Boland took six wickets for seven runs as England collapsed in the second innings to be all out for 68 in Melbourne, allowing Australia to retain the Ashes with two matches to spare.

Any debate about Boland's spot in the starting XI ended when veteran pace bowler Josh Hazlewood was ruled out for a third consecutive match because of a side strain.

Australia made one injury enforced change for the fourth test starting Wednesday at the Sydney Cricket Ground, with Usman Khawaja replacing middle-order batter Travis Head. Khawaja's return for the first time since 2019 comes after Head was ruled out following a positive COVID-19 test.

England's coronavirus concerns have mainly been off the field, with head coach Chris Silverwood among the support staff in isolation in Melbourne and missing the Sydney match.

Assistant coach Graham Thorpe, who will guide the squad in Silverwood's absence, recalled 35-year-old paceman Stuart Broad in the only change to England's line-up.

Broad missed selection for the first and third Tests but returned to replace Ollie Robinson, who leads the team with nine wickets in this series but has been sidelined with a shoulder problem.

After inspecting the SCG pitch, Cummins opted against bringing in Mitch Swepson as a second spinner to work with Nathan Lyon.

Thorpe said Broad and star all-rounder Ben Stokes, who is yet to hit top form since returning in Australia from a prolonged break, were like a "couple of caged tigers"



ahead of the Sydney match as England tries to end a run of 13 Ashes tests in Australia without a win.

As well as the isolation of coaching staff and other pandemic-related restrictions in Australia, England's difficult tour has included a nine-wicket loss in Brisbane, a 275-run loss in the day-night test in Adelaide and the thumping innings and 14-run defeat in the Boxing Day Test.

### LINE-UPS

**AUSTRALIA:** David Warner, Marcus Harris, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja, Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (C), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon & Scott Boland. **ENGLAND:** Haseeb Hameed, Zak Crawley, Dawid Malan, Joe Root (C), Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Mark Wood, Jack Leach, Stuart Broad & Jimmy Anderson.

7/61 OVERS 17.5

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, Jan 4:** Unheralded seam bowler Shardul Thakur turned out to be an unlikely hero with a career-best 7/61 to keep India on even keel against South Africa on an intriguing second day of the second Test here Tuesday. Standing at 5 feet 7 inches and with a physique which is an antithesis of what is perceived to be a fast bowler's body, the skiddy Thakur landed crucial blows at opportune moments to send the Proteas packing for 229 in their first innings.

## Mbappe treble helps PSG trounce Vannes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, Jan 4:** Kylian Mbappe scored a second-half hat trick as French Cup holder Paris Saint-Germain won at fourth-tier Vannes 4-0 to reach the last 16.

Goalkeeper Clement Petrel made a couple of smart saves before PSG central defender Presnel Kimpembe stooped to score a powerful header from a Nuno Mendes corner in the 28th minute.

Mbappe was kept quiet by the Vannes defense in the first half on a rainy night in the Brittany region of northwestern France.

But he made it 2-0 in the 59th when he latched onto Kimpembe's long pass from defense to sprint clear and finish with a low shot that looped in.

His next goal was far more emphatic as he arrowed a shot high into the net from 20 meters, after good work from midfielder Marco Verratti allowed 18-year-old Dutch midfielder Xavi Simons to send Mbappe through in the 71st.

His third goal was from close range after swapping passes with substitute Eric Ebimbe in the 77th. It marked his 18th goal in 25 games overall.

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino also picked 18-year-old French midfielder Edouard Michut, who impressed with his technical ability albeit against modest opposition.

PSG were without Lionel Messi, isolating at home in Argentina



after being among four players who tested positive for the coronavirus during a brief winter break. Pochettino was uncertain if Messi will recover in time to play at Lyon in the league Sunday.

## WOLVES STUN MAN UNITED

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, Jan 4:** Ralf Rangnick is beginning to understand just how big a job he has taken on at Manchester United. His players are already becoming dispirited, too.

Rangnick fell to his first loss as United manager after Joao Moutinho's 82nd-minute strike earned Wolverhampton a 1-0 win in the English Premier League on Monday, and his team's first victory at Old Trafford since 1980.

Outplayed for much of the game, United's players looked like they would survive for a point until Moutinho met a defensive headed clearance by controlling the ball at the edge of the area and driving in a volley that rolled just inside the post.

This was the toughest test of Rangnick's opening six matches in charge and United at times couldn't get near Wolves, whose passing and movement was sharper in its first game in two weeks following COVID-19 issues in the squad.

Wolves had 19 shots in total, with the 15 in the first half the most by a visiting team at Old Trafford since the league's statistic supplier, Opta, began recording stats in 2003.

There were murmurings of discontent from the home fans, too, with some jeering Rangnick's decision to substitute Mason Greenwood just before the hour.

Shaw went on to paint a bleak picture of life in a squad that includes world-renowned players Cristiano Ronaldo, Marcus Rashford and



Joao Moutinho wheels away in celebration after scoring, while his Portugal national teammate Bruno Fernandes looks dejected at Old Trafford, Monday

Bruno Fernandes, the latter of whom started on the bench.

United stayed in seventh place, 22 points off leader Manchester City and four off the top four after the most worrying display yet under Rangnick. A positive for United was a first start in nearly

two years in all competitions for Phil Jones, a former England center back who has struggled with a longstanding right knee injury.

Jones couldn't mark his return with a clean sheet, though, and it was his clearance that was pounced on by Moutinho for the goal, which

made him the oldest visiting player at 35 to score a winner in the Premier League at Old Trafford.

Wolves goalkeeper Jose Sa preserved his shutout with a diving save to his right to keep out Bruno Fernandes' free-kick with one of the last acts of the game.

## Viru, Yuvi, Bhajji to play for India in Legends League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh and Harbhajan Singh will be among a host of former stars in the India Maharaja team which will take part in the inaugural edition of the Legends League Cricket (LLC), starting January 20 in Oman.

The first season of LLC, which is a professional cricket league for retired international cricketers, will be played at the Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in Oman among three teams. The other two teams would be representing Asia and rest of the world.

Irfan Pathan, Yusuf Pathan, Badrinath, RP Singh, Prayagn Ojha, Naman Ojha, Manpreet Gony, Hemang Badani, Venugopal Rao, Munaf Patel, Sanjay Bangar, Nayan Mongia and Amit Bhandari will also be part of the India Maharaja team.

## Zverev clinches Germany win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Sydney, Jan 4:** Alexander Zverev beat Taylor Fritz in straight sets Tuesday to clinch a victory over the US Team and get Germany's ATP Cup campaign back on track.

Jan-Lennard Struff withstood 34 aces in a 7-6(9-7), 4-6, 7-5 win over John Isner to give Germany the lead and Zverev sealed it, on his fifth match point, with a 6-4, 6-4 win in the second of the singles matches.

Isner and Fritz combined for a 6-0, 6-3 win over Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz in the doubles. Both teams are now 1-1 in Group C. The US Opened with a 3-0 win over Canada and Germany was coming off a 2-1 loss to Britain.

"Great effort by Jan to beat John in these conditions... We needed that win, we needed to get on the board," No.3-ranked Zverev said. "It's the second match of the season. I'm still getting into it. I'm still trying to adjust, but I'm happy with how things are."



Italy rebounded from its opening upset loss to Australia to beat France in Group B. Runners-up last year to Russia, Italy took the lead when Jannik Sinner beat Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 7-6(7-3) and secured its victory over France when Matteo Berrettini beat Ugo Humbert 6-4, 7-6(8-6).

Sinner and Berrettini completed the sweep with a three-set win in the doubles. For Berrettini, it was a confidence-boosting win following a loss to Alex de Minaur of Australia. Humbert was coming off an upset over US Open champion Daniil Medvedev.

"I had to play my best tennis in the important moments to win the match and I'm really happy with my performance," Berrettini said in an on-court TV interview.

Canada was playing Britain later Tuesday in Group C and Russia was playing Australia in Group B. The four group winners in the 16-team tournament advance to the semifinals Friday and Saturday,

## Djoko gets medical exemption to play

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Brisbane, Jan 4:** Novak Djokovic will get a chance to defend his Australian Open title after receiving a medical exemption to travel to Melbourne, ending months of uncertainty about his participation because of the strict COVID-19 vaccination requirements in place for the tournament.

The top-ranked Djokovic wrote on Instagram Tuesday he has "an exemption permission" to travel to Australia. Djokovic, who is seeking a record 21st Grand Slam singles title, has continually refused to reveal if he is vaccinated against the virus.

The Victoria state government has mandated that all players, staff and fans attending the Australian Open must be fully vaccinated unless there is a genuine reason why an exemption should be granted.

Australian Open organizers issued a statement later Tuesday to confirm Djokovic will be allowed to compete at the tournament and is on his way to Australia.

"Djokovic applied for a medical exemption which was granted following a rigorous review process involving two separate independent panels of medical experts," the statement said. "One of those was the Independent Medical Exemption Review Panel appointed by the Victorian Department of Health. They assessed all applications to see if they met the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation guidelines."

Tennis Australia said the process included the redaction of personal information to ensure privacy for all applicants, meaning Djokovic was not obliged to make his exemption public.