



NO TO NUDITY

Actor Sneha Ullal reveals that she refused a Hollywood project because there was absolute full-on nudity in the movie

LEISURE P2



DEADLIEST DAY FOR RUSSIA

Russia acknowledges that scores of its troops were killed in one of the Ukraine war's deadliest strikes

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA FACE SL TODAY

India take on Sri Lanka in the first T20I without the big three - Virat, Rohit and Rahul - keeping an eye on 2024 T20 World Cup

SPORTS P12

2 terror strikes rock J&K within 36 hours of 2023

Protests in many areas as terrorists strike twice at same site within 14 hours; minor siblings among 6 killed



AGENCIES

Rajouri/Jammu, Jan 2: In an apparent security lapse, two cousins - aged four and 16 - were killed when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off in a village in Jammu's Rajouri area Monday, 14 hours after terrorists had shot dead four people there.

The terrorists, locals claimed, had planted the IED Sunday itself and it was missed during the scanning by police and security officials who had cordoned off the area after the shootings last evening.

Samiksha Sharma (16) and Vihan Kumar Sharma (4) were killed and six others injured in the blast in Dangri village near the house of Pritam Lal, a victim of the Sunday attack, locals said. There were several people, including Lal's relatives, in the house when the blast took place at around 9.30am. Six persons were killed and 12 injured in the two incidents.

Village Sarpanch (headman) Deepak Kumar said that it was a serious security lapse on the part of police and security agencies.

It is a serious security lapse by security agencies. Minority community people do not feel secure. The administration should take tough measures, he told reporters in Rajouri.

As the incidents led to protests across the district, including in Rajouri town, and a complete shutdown, Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, who visited the site, said that the IED blast was intended to target senior officers who were about to reach there.

He announced that village defence committees (VDCs) will now be revived and rearmed, after some protesting leaders and locals claimed that the incidents could have been averted had the authorities not taken away the weapons of VDCs.

The improvised explosive device (IED) was planted beneath a bag, Additional Director General of Police, Jammu, Mukesh Singh told reporters in Rajouri.

Senior J&K BJP leader and former MLC Vibodh Gupta alleged that 60 per cent of the guns of VDCs have been taken back.

Continued on P4



BEAUTIFYING CITY: Decorative sculptures are kept at Kala Bhoomi to be installed across Bhubaneswar ahead of the Men's Hockey World Cup 2023, Monday

OP PHOTO

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Yes, SC gave us a clean chit but no need to mention notebandi as our achievement in public

Govt announces another chance to OCS aspirants

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: With the change in the pattern of Odisha Civil Service Examination (OCSE), the state government has given another compensatory attempt to students to appear in the Odisha Civil Service, Combined Competitive Recruitment Examinations, 2022.

Issuing a notification Monday, General Administration & Public Grievances department said the intending candidates who have appeared in OCSE-2019 or OCSE-2020 or OCSE-2021, but are otherwise ineligible to appear/compete in the OCSE-2022.

On account of delay in conducting Odisha Civil Services, Combined Competitive Recruitment Examinations (CCRE) each year during the period 2011-2014 and consequent upon introduction of UPSC pattern in the OCS examination, the state government in the past had allowed additional compensatory attempt to appear in the OCSE conducted in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 irrespective of maximum age limit of the candidates.

Continued on P4

VERDICT ON DEMONETISATION 4 support, 1 opposes

Justice BV Nagarathna, in her dissenting verdict, said the action of demonetisation of currency notes was "vitiating" and the notification issued in this regard in November 2016 was "unlawful"

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 2: The Supreme Court Monday upheld the legality of the Centre's 2016 decision to ban Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 currency notes, saying the decision-making process was neither flawed nor hasty and that it is not relevant whether the stated objectives were achieved or not.

In a big win for the Modi government, a Constitution bench by a 4:1 majority also held that demonetisation is not bad in law merely because some citizens suffered through hardships. The decision does not suffer from illegality as there was consultation between the RBI and the Centre for a period of six months before the notification under challenge was issued, it said.

The shock move to demonetise 86 per cent of the country's cash in circulation overnight in a bid to tackle black money and corruption was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a televised address November 8, 2016.

Scrutinising the entire record on demonetisation, the bench said there has to be great restraint in matters of economic policy and the court would not interfere with



any opinion formed by the government if it is based on the relevant facts and circumstances or based on expert's advice.

The decision had a reasonable nexus with its objectives, such as eradicating black money and terror funding, and it is not relevant whether those objectives were achieved or not, the court said, adding such decisions required to be taken with utmost confidentiality and speed. The individual interests must yield to the larger public interest sought to be achieved.

Justice BV Nagarathna dissented from the majority judgment and said the demonetisation of high-value currency notes was vitiated and unlawful.

Holding that Parliament cannot be left aloof in a matter of such im-



portance and its views on demonetisation were critical, Justice Nagarathna, who was the junior-most judge in the bench, noted there was no independent application of mind by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the entire exercise was carried out in 24 hours.

At the same time, the judge said it is beyond the pale of doubt that

the demonetisation measure, which was aimed at eliminating depraved practices like hoarding black money and counterfeiting, was well-intentioned.

While the BJP hailed the judgement as historic and asked if Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will now tender an apology for his campaign against note ban, the Congress said the majority verdict dealt with the limited issue of the process of decision-making and not with its outcome. The Congress also maintained that it is misleading and wrong to say top court upheld demonetisation.

The judgement came on a batch of 58 petitions including one filed by Vivek Narayan Sharma challenging the demonetisation exercise.

Continued on P4

6 YRS AFTER NOTE BAN, CASH IS KING

Six years after the shock move to ban 86 per cent of the currency in circulation, cash is still the king with official data showing close to doubling of cash with the public. The value of the currency in circulation (or public holding of cash) stood at ₹32.42 lakh crore as December 23, 2022, according to RBI data. This compares to ₹17.74 lakh crore worth of notes in circulation (NIC) on November 4, 2016, days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced outlawing of old 1,000 and 500 rupee notes to target black money and fight corruption. NIC fell to about ₹9 lakh crore after demonetisation. Compared with January 6, 2017, the cash in circulation has seen a more than 3-fold or 260 per cent jump, while from November 4, 2016, it has seen about 83 per cent rise.

Mystery shrouds woman doctor's death in Keonjhar

AGENCIES

Keonjhar, Jan 2: Mystery shrouds the death of a 25-year-old woman doctor in Keonjhar district after her body was recovered from her house, police said Monday.

Police recovered the body of Subhashree Kar by breaking the door of her house which was locked from inside. The woman had the previous night celebrated New Year's party and danced in the party with her colleagues.

The woman was found dead barely 10 days after she lodged a complaint with Joda police against a male colleague, also a doctor, for having physical relation with her on the promise of marriage. She had lodged the complaint with police December 21, police said.

In her complaint, Subhashree mentioned that she came in contact with her male colleague six years ago.

He allegedly established physical intimacy with her at her residence here September 18 and October 10 of last year on the pretext of marrying her; she wrote in the complaint.

However, she lodged the police complaint after the man allegedly refused to marry her.

Subhashree, a native of Cuttack district, was working as medical officer at Urban PHC, Baneikala, Joda. She was staying in the first floor of the PHC.

A third of world to be hit by recession this year

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 2: A third of the global economy will be in recession this year, the IMF chief has said, and warned that 2023 will be tougher than last year as the US, EU and China will see their economies slow down.

Kristalina Georgieva, the chief of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made these grim assertions Sunday during a CBS news programme Face the Nation.

It comes at a time when the ongoing conflict in Ukraine shows no signs of abating after more than 10 months, with spiralling inflation, higher interest rates and the surge in coronavirus infections in China fuelled



The year 2023 will be tougher than last year because the economies of the US, the EU and China will slow down

Even in countries that are not in recession, it would feel like a recession for hundreds of millions of people

by the Omicron variant. "We expect one-third of the world economy to be in recession," Georgieva said on the news programme.

The year 2023 will be tougher than last year because the economies of the US, the EU and China will slow down, she said.

Even in countries that are not in recession, it would feel like a recession for hundreds of millions of

people, she explained. In October last year, the IMF trimmed its growth forecast for 2023.

Global growth is forecast to slow from 6 per cent in 2021 to 3.2 per cent in 2022 and 2.7 per cent in 2023. This is the weakest growth profile since 2001 except for the global financial crisis and the acute phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, it said.

China has scrapped its zero Covid policy and opened its economy following a wave of anti-government protests in the country. For the next couple of months, it would be tough for China, and the impact on Chinese growth would be negative, the impact on the region will be negative, the impact on global growth will be negative, she added.

SOP for police in case of foreign national's death

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 2: What should the police do if they find about death of a foreign national in India? There is a certain standard operating procedure, laid down by the Union government, for police to follow in case of death of a foreign national.

If police finds the dead body of a foreign national, it should use the quickest medium of communication to inform the Union Home ministry about the death and it should also inform the Ministry of External Affairs.

The information should contain all details of the foreign national such as name, nationality, date of

birth, parentage, number, date and place of issue of passport, residential address in their country of domicile, exact date and time and cause of death.

It should also specify whether postmortem examination was conducted or not. If yes, the result of the postmortem and whether action required from Interpol wing, needs to be conveyed. The police should also collect finger impressions and photographs for identification of foreign national in case of unnatural death.

The Union government official, then, informs the concerned embassy about the death.

leisure



ROBBIE WILLIAMS' DAUGHTER ABANDONED BY FRIEND

Singer Robbie Williams has revealed that his eldest daughter Teddy has dyslexia. The 48-year-old star said, "Because of this, one of her friends decided overnight that she didn't want anything to do with her any more. Teddy was devastated, completely desperate."

MEGAN FOX SAYS SHE'S 'SEEKING A GIRLFRIEND'

American actor Megan Fox, one year after getting engaged to rapper Machine Gun Kelly, has revealed that she's "currently on the hunt for a new romantic partner. Megan posted two sexy selfies on Instagram with the eyebrow-raising caption, "Currently seeking a girlfriend. Please submit applications in the DMs."



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Now at last you have realised that you have been preoccupied with work at the cost of your family life. Making up to them now is going to take a lot more effort. Ganesh says be ready to open your purse strings for either eating out, going out for a movie or shopping at the best places.

TAURUS
This day has been earmarked for beautification, a makeover, says Ganesh. You are likely to remain preoccupied with ways to enhance your looks and appearance. A new, stylish hair do, face packs and massages, trendy outfits and accessories could be in store. You will, subconsciously, be doing all that you can do, to get noticed by others.

GEMINI
You will feel lonely and unwanted today. You will feel the need for someone who can calm your troubled mind. Meditation and yoga will help you calm yourself. It is a good day to receive love from that someone special, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will succeed in a new venture and will brim with radiance and energy. Ganesh says this is the best time for get-together and kindle contact with friends and relatives.

LEO
You will look to give your house a new appearance by decorating it or undertaking some renovation projects. You will make the best out of waste and produce some truly marvellous pieces of art for improving the ambience of your nest. You will be able to save up on some money. Laudable, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will excel remarkably in whatever work you prefer to engage yourself in today. Ganesh says your aspiration to start a business endeavour in a foreign country will bear fruit. To considerably enhance your self-image, it is necessary to make required improvements in your personal appearance.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that on the work front you may be in the midst of meetings or negotiations, which will work out favorably for you. This will help ease your tension and you will feel mentally free. Today you will feel more vibrant and active too and hence will be able to get more done.

SCORPIO
According to Ganesh, your new business venture is likely to keep you on toes today. You may even neglect your personal life to meet expectations at work. A feeling of disappointment may surround you as things do not go according to planning and your efforts may go in vain. No pains, no gains reminds Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
You are in a dilemma today. You may find yourself standing at crossroads, and your decision power does not seem to help you much, says Ganesh. You are likely to become controversy's favourite child; this may add fuel to the fire. Be wise, and take guidance of experienced people.

CAPRICORN
God helps those who help themselves, likewise, your sincere efforts will be paid off well, today. If you're dealing with shares and stocks, it may be your day, today. Your life partner will proved to be lucky for your success, so give him/her the credit he/she deserves, suggests Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You always see the larger picture, and desire to channelise all your energies towards making things better. Such positive approach makes you an excellent team player, and enables you to bring novel ideas and effective solutions to the table, says Ganesh.

PISCES
This day promises to be filled with much romance, laughter, and fine dining, says Ganesh. You will seem irresistible to the opposite sex. You might also find yourself falling for someone. A breathe of fresh air could wait into old relationships, or new ones could be formed. However, this is likely to be a drawn out process. You could find yourself dining out with friends, later on in the evening.



Samantha's epic response to troll

Hyderabad: Samantha Ruth Prabhu is a woman of substance with an undying fighter spirit. During her career spanning more than two decades, she has been subjected to several trolls. However, the diva has always managed to shut them with fitting replies.

Recently, she decided to react to some Tweets directed at her. One of the netizens wrote on the micro-blogging site that women rise 'just to fall'. Reacting to this, she said, "Getting back up makes it all the more sweeter my friend."

When another user asked her "how's life lately? @Samanthaprabhu2", she wrote, "Different !!"

Another netizen posted on her wall, "I will always be your loyal fan, your protector, your confidante. I love you with all my heart. My love for you will always remain @Samanthaprabhu2 ma'am." To this, she reacted, "Thank you for always having my back...the strength I still have is because of all of your prayers." Additionally, she received the Tweet, "Hi @Samanthaprabhu2 You're in all my prayers. You will come back bigger and stronger, lots of lots love love", and here is what Samantha said, "will be needing them."

Shanaya replaces Rashmika in Tiger starrer Screw Dheela

Mumbai: A while it was reported that the Shashank Khaitan directorial *Screw Dheela* starring Tiger Shroff has been put on the back burner. In fact, reports claimed that the unpredictability of the box office, the ballooning budget, and low-key response to the film's announcement were the reasons. While it was never made clear whether the project was on hold or continuing, it is learnt that the makers of the film have opted for a casting change in the venture. If what the grapevine says is true, then apparently, Shanaya Kapoor will be stepping into the shoes of Rashmika Mandanna in *Screw Dheela*.

A source close to the project reveals, "Yes, there has been a change in the cast, Shanaya will be replacing Rashmika. Although Shanaya is yet to sign the dotted line, everything is in place, and when the film starts it will headline Shanaya as the female lead".

Asked about the reason, it continues, "Shanaya Kapoor was to feature in Shashank's other project for Dharm Productions, *Bedhadak* with Lakshya Lalwani and Gurfateh Pirzada. However, for some reason that film has run into trouble and the shoot has been paused. In the interim while the issues are settled, Shanaya has moved to *Screw Dheela*." AGENCIES



Sneha on her refusal to Hollywood offer

The 'Aishwarya Rai look alike' tag won't go as that is how she was introduced to the industry, says the 'Aryan' actress

Mumbai: Actress Sneha Ullal was introduced to the film industry with the tag 'Aishwarya Rai lookalike' in Mithun Chakraborty-Salman Khan starrer *Lucky-No Time for Love* in 2005.

Since then she has been appeared in so many movies, yet all news reports and headlines still continue to begin with that tag. Asked about it, Sneha, in a recent interview to a portal, said, "That tag won't go as that is how I was introduced to the industry. I completely understand it."

She has recently been in the news for her item song in a Telugu film. Describing the reason, she says, "It's the first item number of my career. I had my doubts about taking it up because I have always been like 'I am not the item girl type'. But then I decided to move beyond my comfort zone. And it was fun and a good experience."

In the same interview, she also revealed that she refused a Hollywood project. "Yes, because there was absolute full-on nudity in that film. Although they tried to adapt and adjust as per the sensibilities of Indian cinema, it was still quite a bit for me. At that point, in time, it was a shocker for me. I was like 'No way I am doing it', adds the *Bezubaan Ishq* actress. AGENCIES



NATYADHARA: DAY 2

Members of theatre troupe Sutradhara, Khurda, presented Odia play *Shunya Panjuri* at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Monday. Written by Ratnakar Chai, the drama was directed by Jitendra Pattnaik. The music was scored by Pradipta Mohapatra. The play revolved around young Arpita who suffers from mental disorder following her husband's untimely death. A psychiatrist requests his friend to act as Arpita's husband to help her fight the condition. He obliges and a relationship blossoms between the two. In the climax, Arpita's father comes to take his daughter back and the two get separated. Again Arpita becomes alone. The play was part of Natyadhara, a monthly event jointly organised by Odisha Natya Sangh(ONS), Culture Department and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi. OP PHOTO

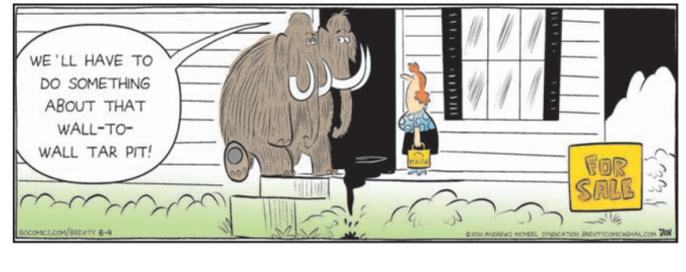
PEANUTS



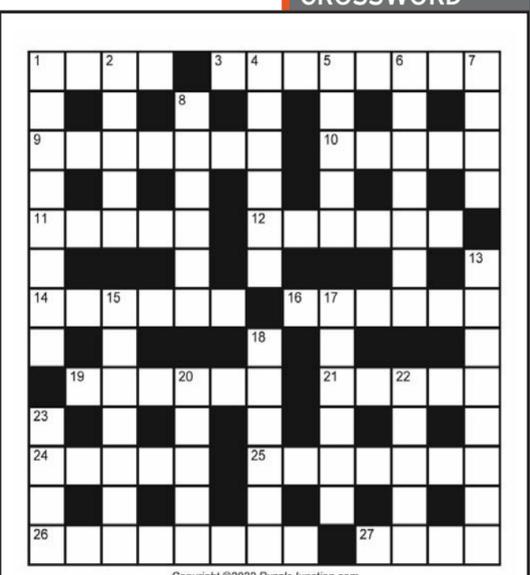
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



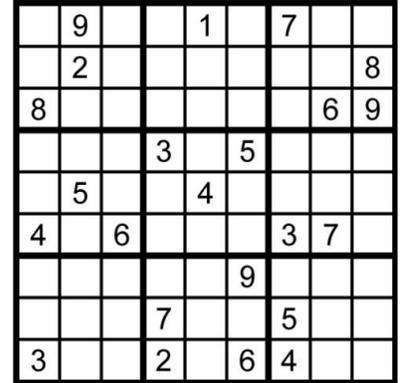
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2022 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Small stream
 - 3 Energy
 - 9 Give in
 - 10 Own up to
 - 11 Fashion
 - 12 Plant science
 - 14 Reside in
 - 16 Start
 - 19 Deceive to snare
 - 21 Bizet work
 - 24 Overhead
 - 25 Plead
 - 26 Indoor garden
 - 27 Just say no
- Down**
- 1 Highway sign (4,4)
 - 2 Fortunate
 - 4 Drain the cup
 - 5 Show flexibility
 - 6 Huge
 - 7 Himalayan legend
 - 8 Auto service (4,2)
 - 13 Game plan
 - 15 Twist
 - 17 Sagging
 - 18 Robber's take
 - 20 Proportion
 - 22 Toothed
 - 23 Poison ivy woe

SUDOKU

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

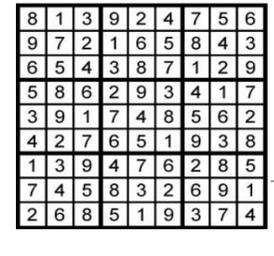


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

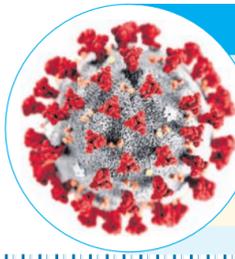


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



IN MEMORIAM

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik pays tribute to former CM Harekrushna Mahtab on his death anniversary in Bhubaneswar, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	66,53,39,248	63,71,67,255	66,98,470
India	4,46,78,822	4,41,45,445	5,30,707
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

PK Mishra condoles Manjula's demise

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: Manjula Subramaniam, a Gujarat cadre IAS officer of 1972 batch, passed away due to health complications at a hospital in Vadodra January 1, 2023. She had the distinction of serving as Gujarat's first woman Chief Secretary, whereby she served under the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

Condoling her death, PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to PM, said that the sad demise of his batchmate and close friend was an irreparable personal loss.

He said that Manjula was one of the brightest, most dedicated and highly conscientious officers.

Mishra recalled how she served in Gujarat in various capacities including as DDO Jamnagar, Collector Amreli and Junagadh and as Additional Chief Secretary to various departments and Chief Secretary to the government.



FOR A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST: A farmer works at a mustard field of OUAT in Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

2 woman daily wagers found dead in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: The bodies of two woman daily wagers were found under mysterious circumstances at Koradakanta under Mancheswar police limits and Indradhanu Market under Nayapalli police limits here Monday, raising suspicion of murders.

In Koradakanta incident, the deceased in her 30s, Sarita Nayak, who hailed from Berhampur in Ganjam, had married Bidyadhar Nayak, a resident of Banigochha area in Daspatha block of Nayagarh, a year back. Since then, the couple, who made a living by making odd jobs, had been residing at the under-construction building near which Sarita was found dead, sources said.

According to police, Sarita's brother Herambh Nayak, also a daily wage earner and stays at the building, was the first to spot her body. Informed, police recovered the body before sending it to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar for autopsy.

Herambh claimed that the couple frequently quarreled over petty issues and that Bidyadhar might

have had killed him in a fit of rage.

"On the basis of a complaint lodged by the woman's brother (Herambh), a case (1/2023) under Section 302 has been registered," ACP Sanjeeb Kumar Satapathy said.

Bidyadhar has been detained at the police station and was being interrogated when the last report came in. Meanwhile, a 44-year-old woman was found dead at an under construction building at Indradhanu Market under Nayapalli police limits here Monday.

The deceased was identified as Suni Muli Singh, who hailed from Udala in Mayurbhanj. Suni and her husband Maheswar Singh worked as daily wagers in the City.

According to sources, police learnt about Suni's death around 9am. "We rushed to the spot and sent the body to Capital Hospital for post-mortem. Maheswar, who has been detained for questioning, confessed to have beaten her Monday morning over some trivial issue. We have informed the family members of the deceased and will soon register a case in this regard," a police official said.

CMIE's unemployment report 'sponsored': BJP

A REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRE FOR MONITORING INDIAN ECONOMY JANUARY 1 CLAIMED THAT THE STATE'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE WAS 0.9% BY DECEMBER 2022

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: Opposition BJP and Congress Monday targeted the BJD government and raised questions over the report claiming a drastic fall in the unemployment rate in the state.

A report published by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) January 1, 2023, claimed that the state's rate of unemployment was 0.9 per cent by December 2022.

However, the Union government in a statement in Rajya Sabha during the recently concluded Winter Session stated that the unemployment rate of Odisha was 5.3 per cent. At national level, the rate of unemployment was 4.2 per cent.

State BJP general secretary Prithviraj Harichandan said it (CMIE report) is a sponsored one. Almost all the reports of different organisations have shown that Odisha's rate of un-



employment is very high.

There is no industrialisation and no scope for employment in the state. Besides, the state government is also not making any effort to create job opportunities for the youths. "How has the employment rate suddenly increased today," he questioned.

The BJP leader said Naveen Babu should stop hoodwinking the people of Odisha by producing false survey reports before elections.

Similarly, Congress MLA Santosh Singh Saluja said, "The youths in Odisha are in streets for employment. If we consider the registration figures of 40 employment exchanges, a total of over 8.80 lakh unemployed youths are there in the state. I think Odisha will be at the top in unemployment in India."

Responding to the allegations, BJD spokesperson Chinmay Sahoo said the private organisation must have prepared the report with some facts and figures. In the coming days, the government of India report will come up, you will see Odisha in a good position in the employment index, he added.

Registration for vintage vehicles starts

ODISHA FIRST STATE IN THE COUNTRY TO IMPLEMENT IT, SAYS JOINT TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER (TECHNICAL) DIPTI RANJAN PATRA

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: The state government Monday said it has initiated separate registration of vintage vehicles in a bid to fulfill the ambition of owners intending to keep such vehicles and enjoy exemption from scrappage policy.

The owners, enthusiasts and collectors of vintage vehicles, classic vehicles of more than 50 years can apply for special number plates and enjoy exemption from scrappage in Odisha. Joint Transport Commissioner (Technical) Dipti Ranjan Patra said.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has a provision under CMV Rule, 1989 for the registration process of Vintage Motor Vehicles, Patra said, claiming that Odisha would be the first state in the country to implement it.

"Odisha being a state of heritage and culture is the first state to implement this provision so as to fulfill the ambition of the vehicle owner intending to keep such

BEAUTIES OF A BYGONE ERA

- 2 and 4-wheelers (personal use) that are more than 50 years old from the date of their first registration (including imported vehicle) and without any overhaul shall be defined as the Vintage Motor Vehicles

Application for registration/re-registration will be made as per Form 20 and shall be accompanied by documents like an insurance policy

- Following inspection of vehicle of fitness and PUC (pollution under control) certificate, STA will issue a certificate of registration as per Form 23A

- A fresh registration mark will be assigned to the eligible vehicles for Vintage vehicle as 'XX VA YY ****', where VA stands for vintage, XX stands for State Code, YY will be a two-letter series and **** is a number from 0001 to 9999 allotted by the State Registering Authority

a vehicle," said Patra.

He said, "MoRTH has taken initiatives to discourage the use of old vehicle by introducing scrapping policy. At the same time to preserve and promote the heritage of old vehicles in India, Central Government has formalised the registration process of vintage motor vehicles. The new rules shall provide salient features such as retention of old already registered vehicles with a new Vintage registration mark 'VA' series (Unique Registration Mark)."

According to the provision, two-wheelers and four-wheelers (personal use) that are more than 50 years old from the date of their first registration (including imported vehicle) shall be defined as the Vintage Motor Vehicles.

However, only vehicles that have no substantial overhaul including modification in chassis or body shell, and/or engine will be considered as vintage, he said, quoting the provision.

The official said the application for registration/re-registration will be made as per Form 20 and shall be accompanied by an insurance policy, fee, bill of entry in case of imported vehicles, and old RC in case of an already registered vehicle in India.

The old certificate of registration of a motor vehicle after being registered as Vintage Motor Vehicle, will be marked as cancelled and the owner may retain such cancelled certificate of registration for historical purposes only, he said.

The State Registering Authority will issue a certificate of registration as per Form 23A after inspection of the vehicle and sub-

ject to the condition that the vehicle is fit and having valid PUC (pollution under control) certificate.

If the vehicle is approved, a fresh registration mark will be assigned to the eligible vehicles for Vintage vehicle as 'XX VA YY****', where VA stands for vintage, XX stands for State Code, YY will be a two-letter series and **** is a number from 0001 to 9999 allotted by the State Registering Authority.

"Under the new law, the issue of a new certificate will cost the owner Rs 20,000 and will be valid for a period of 10 years. Subsequently, the renewal of said registration will cost the owner an additional Rs 5,000 and shall be renewable for a period of five year," the official said.

However, the official said according to a provision, the Vintage motor vehicles shall not be driven on roads for regular/commercial purposes. A vintage motor vehicle is allowed to run on Indian roads only for display, technical research or taking part in a vintage car rally, re-fuelling and maintenance, exhibitions, vintage rallies, and to and fro to such exhibition or car rally, he said.

The owner of a Vintage Motor Vehicle after assignment of Vintage number can also sell his vintage vehicle by applying for transfer of ownership of the motor vehicle and also can change his address by making application in the manner as provided under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, the official said.

Labelling norms to fuel refrigerator prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: Prices of refrigerators are likely to increase by up to 5 per cent as the revised norms of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) have become applicable from January 1 this year.

According to manufacturers like Godrej Appliances, Haier and Panasonic, implementation of the new norms may put an additional burden of 2-5 per cent on consumers, depending on the models.

Besides tightening the labelling, the new norms also mandate separate star labelling for freezers and refrigerator provisioning units (storage part) of the frost-free models.

"Now, we have to declare labelling for both. That is the new change," said Godrej Appliances Business Head and Executive Vice President Kamal Nandi told PTI.

When asked about the price increase, he said, "In every energy efficiency tightening, cost inputs go up a little bit to achieve those efficiencies through better insulation and around 2-3 per cent price hike because of this will be happening, depending on various models and star ratings."

Moreover, another change in the recent star labelling that is happening is the declaration of the net capacity of a refrigerator unit and not the gross ca-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

capacity, Nandi said.

Net capacity is the usable capacity of any refrigerator, while gross capacity is based on the total volume (of liquid) which could be stored in a unit.

"For example, there are gaps between the door and shelves, which are not useable. So, those will not be considered," Nandi added.

This will help a customer make a judicious decision while buying

the refrigerator, based on the actual space available to them for storing.

Haier Appliances India President Satish NS said after BEE revised norms, energy efficiency for refrigerators has been redefined.

"Some of the compressors have to be reloaded or changed. Definitely, we are looking for a 2-4 per cent price increase," he said, adding "the cost would be passed

on to the consumers".

ACCORDING TO MANUFACTURERS LIKE GODREJ APPLIANCES, HAIER AND PANASONIC, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW NORMS MAY PUT AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN OF 2-5 PER CENT ON CONSUMERS, DEPENDING ON THE MODELS

BESIDES TIGHTENING THE LABELLING, THE NEW NORMS ALSO MANDATE SEPARATE STAR LABELLING FOR FREEZERS AND REFRIGERATOR PROVISIONING UNITS (STORAGE PART) OF THE FROST-FREE MODELS

Panasonic Marketing India MD Fumiyasu Fujimori said, "With the revised BEE norms coming into effect, we expect an impact on the pricing of refrigerators to go up to 5 per cent. We at Panasonic are keeping a close eye on the development and will try to absorb maximum costs."

Entry-level buyers will face a challenge as affordability costs will rise, he added.

According to a report from Research And Markets, the Indian refrigerator market was valued at USD 3.07 billion in 2022 and is anticipated to achieve a market value of USD 5.88 billion by 2028 with a CAGR of 11.62 per cent.

CM urged to stop auction of mines in virgin forests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: Environment activist Prafulla Samantara Monday wrote to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urging him to stop auction of mines in virgin forests.

In a letter, Samantara said, "As a sincere social and environment activist and also a concerned citizen, my appeal to you as the Chief Minister to reconsider the decision for auction of five mines in virgin forests in undivided Koraput and Nuapada districts. These are bauxite mines at Balada in Koraput, Kutur Mali & Siji Mali in Rayagada, limestone mines at Uskavagu of Malkangiri and Garramara in Nuapada district. The auction is scheduled for January 16, 2023.

Virgin forests are key natural resources to be conserved, protected and saved, not only for the livelihood of lakhs of people and climate justice but also for future generational equity and justice, he stated.

'Unmindful' and 'indiscriminate' mining in the said auctioned and to be auctioned forests and hills will result in depletion of perennial water sources to rivers and dams. This will also destroy bio-



'Unmindful' and 'indiscriminate' mining in the said auctioned and to be auctioned forests and hills will result in depletion of perennial water sources to rivers and dams

PRAFULLA SAMANTARA | ENVIRONMENT ACTIVIST

sources," said the green activist. Other than the said auctions, the Mines department is planning to have auction of mines in Sasubohu Mali in Rayagada district which will be lethally dangerous to many natural streams as tributaries to rivers Jhanjavati and Nagabali.

Many residents of the said forests do not know that they are under threat of depleting source of their livelihood as they are neither consulted nor informed though they have community ownership under 5th Schedule of the Constitution.

Samantara appealed to the CM to stop the auctions and cancel allotted mining leases through auctions held in 2020-21 with a view to assessing the impacts of mining and taking the consent of gram sabhas.

Archana Nag to be grilled by ED Jan 4

The Enforcement Directorate had earlier sought court's permission to question Archana and her business partner, Khageswar Patra in connection with fresh evidence



inside the jail by the ED January 5. Meanwhile, Archana Monday moved the Orissa High Court seeking bail in the money laundering case registered by ED.

It is to be noted that Archana Nag has been accused of allegedly amassing wealth by blackmailing prominent people in Odisha using sexually explicit videos, under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The 28-year-old Nag, arrested by Odisha police in October following two FIRs including one by filmmaker Akshay Parija who alleged that he was blackmailed to pay Rs 3 crore to her, has so far not disclosed any information into her alleged business of honey-trapping of influential people of Odisha even though she was taken on remand by ED.

The ED had earlier lodged a case of money laundering against Archana, husband Jagabandhu, business associates Khageswar Patra and Shradhanjali Behera.

permission to question Archana and her business partner, Khageswar Patra in connection with the fresh evidence came to fore in the second batch of forensic examination report of the digital gadgets of Archana recently. The State Forensic Science Laboratory has recently handed over the reports to ED few days back.

Patra who is also lodged in Jharpada special jail will be grilled



CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH: Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Deb inaugurated the 2nd Skill Development Centre of TPCODL at Badambadi in Cuttack, Monday

Skill Development Centre to upskill employees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited (TP-CODL), the joint venture between Tata Power and the government of Odisha inaugurated its 2nd Skill Development Centre at Badambadi, Cuttack Monday.

The Centre was inaugurated by Energy, Industries, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Minister Pratap Keshari Deb, and CEO, TP-CODL M Shenbagam in the presence of Cuttack Mayor Subhash Chandra Singh, Choudwar-Cuttack MLA and senior executives of TPCODL.

Aimed at strengthening & enhancing the technical skills of its regular and business associates, TPCODL's Skill Development

TPCODL's Skill Development Centre (SDC) will provide access and cater to the development opportunities to various sections, sub-divisions and division offices falling in the service area of Cuttack Circle.

Centre (SDC), will provide access and cater to the development opportunities to various sections, sub-divisions and division offices falling in the service area of

Cuttack Circle.

The centre is well equipped with classroom training, all types of Distribution equipments and also an opportunity wherein employees can get hands-on training. This centre, like the previous one set up in Bhubaneswar, is a great platform for the workforce and technical staff of both TPCODL and its business associates as it helps the employees from urban & rural areas to learn and practice new processes and technology that will help them sharpen their overall skill sets. TPCODL plans to set up one such Skill Development Centre in all three other remaining electricity circles under its licensed area of operation for knowledge and skill upgradation of all its employees.

The first Centre was inaugurated in Bhubaneswar in the month of September 2022.

"I congratulate the team of TP-CODL for launching its second skill development centre. I am confident that this will help its employees to further enhance their skills and will equip them to tackle any situation" said Deb.

"The inauguration of our 2nd centre is a testament to our commitment towards providing a platform to upskill our employees for their professional growth. Keeping up with the ever-evolving technology, our primary focus will always be to upgrade ourselves so as to provide reliable and robust power supply to our customers," said M Shenbagam, CEO-TPCODL.

Continued from P1

4 support, 1...

On the issue of hardships suffered by citizens during demonetisation, the apex court said if the RBI notification had a nexus with the objectives to be achieved, then, merely because some citizens have suffered through hardships would not be a ground to hold the notification to be bad in law.

The contention that the impugned notification is liable to be set aside on the ground that it caused hardship to individual citizens will hold no water. The sudden note ban decision sparked anxiety and panic as banks and ATMs witnessed serpentine queues with people waiting for several hours for their turn to get some cash. Demonetisation was also blamed for people losing their livelihoods and small businesses having to shut shop during that period.

The bench headed by Justice SA Nazeer and also comprising justices BR Gavai, AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said the November 8, 2016 notification cannot be said to be unreasonable and struck down on the ground of decision-making process.

2 terror strikes...

The DGP met the protesters who were refusing to conduct the last rites of the victims till Lt Governor Manoj Sinha came to the spot.

Later in the evening, Sinha arrived at the village where he assured the protesters that the guilty would be punished.

The government is determined to end the era of terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir and all support will be extended to the bereaved families, Sinha told the gathering before a meeting with village heads and police.

"What you told me (about security lapses and measures), I promise you we will go into the depth of the matter. Whatever strong and necessary action is needed will be taken," Sinha said.

Govt announces...

In spite of that, many OCS examination aspirants moved to the government to allow them additional chances to appear in the OCS-2022 irrespective of their maximum age limit.

Further, the government has also decided to allow candidates to write the answer in Odia except language papers in the OCS examinations from this year. Therefore, considering the above issues, the state government has taken this decision to give another chance to the aspirants.

However, no further additional compensatory attempt to appear for the OCS examination shall be allowed in future, it said.

Man held for killing birds

Berhampur: Wildlife personnel Monday arrested a man from near Chilika lake for allegedly killing birds after four carcasses of feathered creatures were seized from his possession, an official said. At least four carcasses of three bird species were seized from the possession of the man. The birds were allegedly killed by poisoning them at Barakudi channel, near Kalupada under Tangi range of Chilika wildlife division. The carcasses of bird species included one large whistling duck, purple moorhen and two Pheasant tailed jacana, said Choodarani Murmu, range officer Tangi. "The accused person was carrying the carcasses of the birds in a bag, when the wildlife personnel caught him moving suspiciously. While searching, they found the dead birds", she said. He was suspected to have killed the birds by giving poison, she said. The carcasses of the birds were buried after post-mortem by veterinary surgeons, she added. With this, wildlife officials have registered at least six bird poaching cases and arrested six hunters during this migration season in Tangi range. At least 24 dead birds were seized from the accused persons.



REMINISCING THE LEADER: Dignitaries at a programme organised by I&PR department to commemorate tribal leader Chakra Bisoi on his 200th anniversary at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Monday

Novel water filter technology to remove pollutants quickly

Scientists have developed a new water purification system that can filter out small plastic particles, as well as other pollutants, very quickly and with high efficiency.

The porous material, described in the journal *Advanced Materials*, may be used as a high-efficiency adsorption material in the future as it has cost competitiveness based on raw materials and enables solar-based water purification process.

"The technology is an unrivaled with the world's highest purification efficiency, removing more than 99.9 per cent of phenolic microplastics and volatile organic

compound (VOC) contaminants in water at ultra-high speeds," said Professor Park Chi-Young from Daegu Gyeongbuk Institute of Science and Technology (DGIST) in Korea.

"We expect that it will be a universal technology with high economic efficiency that can purify contaminated water and supply drinking water even in areas where there is no power supply," Chi-Young said in a statement.

Water pollution caused by the rapid development of the chemical industry is a big problem in environmental pollution.

Various water purification technologies and materials have been



developed to solve this problem. The researchers noted that carbon-based porous materials using

existing adsorption mechanisms

have limitations in that the adsorption rate is slow and high thermal energy is required for recycling.

Various materials have been developed to improve contaminant removal efficiency, but it has been difficult to develop materials that simultaneously satisfy excellent recyclability, high efficiency, economic efficiency of raw materials, and industrialisation potential.

The team synthesised a porous polymer with excellent adsorption performance and photothermal properties by reacting an inexpensive and effective precursor.

The new technology enables a material with fast adsorption of

micro-pollutants in the aquatic environment.

It was confirmed through experiments that the polymer does not require high thermal energy for recycling and can be used multiple times without loss of performance, the researchers said.

The team produced a water treatment membrane capable of evaporating water using solar energy as a driving force through the developed polymer's ability to absorb light broadly and convert the absorbed light into heat.

The water treatment membrane coated with the oxidised polymer was confirmed to purify phenolic contaminants through sunlight.

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Berhampur rly station turns into hub of child trafficking

343 kids rescued in 2022 while they were being taken to other states as labourers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 2: The Berhampur railway station in Ganjam district has turned into a major transit point for human trafficking. In 2022, a total 343 children that were being trafficked as labourers were rescued from the station, sources said Monday. Being one of the largest commuting hubs in Odisha with a huge number of footfalls daily, the Berhampur railway station has turned into a lucrative outlet for labour agents. Even though, 343 kids have been rescued, the persons behind their plights have evaded arrests.

Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel have been the key figures behind the rescue of the children last year. Eleven such kids were saved in December by GRP and RPF officials while being trafficked from Bihar via Berhampur to Andhra Pradesh. They were later handed over to their respective families.

However, except for reuniting the children with their families, the concerned departments have failed to include them or their family members in various government-run welfare schemes. This has happened due to lack of proper coordination among the Child Protection, Labour, Education departments and

Childline, sources informed.

In January last year, 12 boys and nine girls were rescued from the station followed by seven boys and two girls in February. The figures for the other months stood at: March (15), April (43), May (23), June (21), July (26), August (22), September (34), October (45), November (21) and December (51). Overall 220 boys and 123 girls were rescued from the station premises till December 25, officials informed.

Bhalachandra Sarangi, who is the national secretary of Akhil Bharat Kishan Mazdoor Sabha, alleged Monday that officials are not taking any proactive steps after reuniting the rescued kids with their families. He pointed out that financial constraints force these kids to seek jobs in other states and added that if efforts are made to rehabilitate them or their families through government welfare schemes, child trafficking will go down substantially.

Sources pointed out that kids in the 15-18 age group are the worst sufferers. Sarangi said that if they are brought under the Biju Sishu Suraksha Yojana, they will not try to migrate to other states in search of work. As these kids are gullible, they are easy 'fodder' for the middlemen involved in trafficking.

Local advocate Surendra Behera said exemplary punishment should be handed out to the traffickers.



TRIBAL BALLETT: Artistes performed a traditional tribal dance routine on the occasion of the 76th district foundation day which is also called 'Sundargarh Day' at the Zilla Sanskruti Bhawan in Sundargarh

Jajpur health officials face heat for buying substandard furniture

MASSIVE IRREGULARITIES ALLEGED; VIGILANCE PROBE SOUGHT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 2: Massive irregularities have allegedly been committed in the purchase of furniture by the Health department in Jajpur district. Substandard products have been purchased from a Raipur-based firm which allegedly used forged documents while bidding. Various quarters alleged that former chief district medical officer (CDMO) Biranchinarayan Barik has been transferred to Kalahandi district due to his alleged involvement in procuring the substandard furniture.

Additional CDMO, Shibasish Maharana has been entrusted with the responsibilities of Barik. However, there were three senior medical officers who ruled out Barik's involvement in the purchase of furniture.

Sources said that guidelines of GeM have been violated in the purchase of furniture for 133 health subcentres in the district as it has been done through a single bidding. This shouldn't have happened, they added.

Furniture like consultation tables, chairs, racks, cabinets and



FILE PHOTO

almirahs have been purchased from Raipur-based 'Riyan Consultancy'. Strangely the firm has no manufacturing unit in Chhattisgarh. This has left many bewildered. Moreover, no government or authorised agency has examined the quality of the furniture supplied by the Raipur-based firm. It has been alleged that the former CDMO and some other officials initiated attempts to pass the bill for substandard furniture at high rates.

It should be stated here that 'Riyan Consultancy' had also bid for supply of refrigerators to hospitals in Keonjhar. However, the documents presented by the company were found to be fake, for which it was de-listed. Questions have now come up as to how a firm

banned in Keonjhar district could secure orders for medical centres in Jajpur district. Lawyer Udaynath Sahu has raised this question and alleged massive irregularities in the purchase of the items. He has urged the collector to direct a Vigilance probe into the supply of substandard products to health centres.

"If someone looks for information about 'Riyan Consultancy' on the net, it is not available. The administration should have thoroughly examined the 'Make in India' manufacturing certificate, its income tax returns, GST documents and certificates given by chartered accountants," Sahu said. Efforts were made to contact Barik but calls to his phone went unanswered.

Man trampled to death by tusker

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jhumpura, Jan 2: A man was trampled to death by a tusker in a jungle adjoining Nischintapur village under Champua forest range in Keonjhar district, late Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Bhima Munda, 45, a resident of the same village. His wife had a close shave as she managed to hide behind a tree and evade the animal. The incident occurred when the couple was returning home after attending a feast when the elephant suddenly attacked.

Forest officials rushed to the spot and took stock of the situation. Police also arrived at the spot, registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem.

Champua ranger Sanjiv Kumar Rout said that the deceased's kin will be provided with rupees four lakh financial assistance after completion of necessary formalities.

Villagers said a 24-strong elephant herd has strayed into the Nischintapur area and have unleashed a reign of terror. They informed that most of them are spending sleepless nights due to the elephant threat. They added that a tusker has strayed from the herd and creating problems. Forest officials said they will look into the matter.

Jeypore's last queen Rama Devi no more

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, Jan 2: The last surviving queen of the Jeypore royal family, Rama Kumari Devi breathed her last Sunday night at the Moti Mahal palace here. She was 92 and suffering from old-age related complications since a long time.



Rama Kumari was the wife of late Rama Krushna Dev, the last king of Jeypore estate. She was also an MLA representing the Madgul Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh. Her daughter-in-law Sarika Devi and grandson Chandrachud Dev were present by her bedside at the time of her death.

On being informed about Rama Devi's demise, several dignitaries including sub-collector Bedavara Pradhan, district president of the Congress, Meenakshi Bahinipati, tehsildar Pradhan Tuli Amma, Jeypore Municipality EO Siddharth Patnaik and chairperson B Sunita, SDPO Arup Abhishek Behera, Town police IIC Sambit Behera visited the palace and paid their last respects. Jeypore MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati expressed condolences on the queen's death. Her last rites were performed at the crematorium at Chandanbad locality here as per royal customs and traditions.

24 teachers sacked in Nabarangpur dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Jan 2: The district collector of Nabarangpur has sacked 24 teachers working in various schools as they allegedly went on long leaves. The dismissal notice was served December 27, last year.

According to sources, the District Education Officer (DEO) had submitted in December a list of teachers who have been on leave for lengthy periods to the School and Mass Education department.

The 'District Sarba Sikshya Abhijan' officials, in a letter (dated July 20, 2022), had sought a list of teachers who were on long leaves from 10 block education officers (BEOs). The BEOs informed that between 2010 and 2022, 31 contractual teachers had taken leaves for lengthy periods.

Among them was one teacher

each from Chandahandi, Tentulikhunti and Umerkote blocks, two from Dabugaon, Nabarangpur and Nandahandi blocks, three in Jharigaon block, seven each in Kosagumuda and Raigarh blocks and five in Papadahandi.

The district collector December 2 last year, had sought explanation from these teachers for being absent from duty for a lengthy period of time. However, only six of the teachers replied.

Despite being asked to reply within 15 days, the other truant teachers failed to provide a satisfactory answer.

Taking serious note of the issue, the district collector directed the BEOs concerned December 27 to serve dismissal notices to the 24 errant teachers. One contractual teacher had left the job on his own, officials informed.



HAVING A BALL: Players fight it out Sunday during the final of a day-night volleyball tournament held at Chakamahasapur Kalarapal village under Khairab block in Balasore district

Popularity of Daringbadi coffee growing rapidly

GOVERNMENT-RUN PLANTATIONS START PROCESSING OF COFFEE SEEDS ALSO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, Jan 2: Daringbadi in Kandhamal district is a popular place for tourists and is also referred to as the 'Kashmir of Odisha'. Now however, Daringbadi is also gaining recognition for its coffee cultivation. To add to the success story, now the state-run coffee plantations are processing the seeds in the gardens itself. Earlier coffee seeds were collected from the plantations and sent to Koraput or Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) in Bhubaneswar for processing. Now the cumbersome process has been shelved.

Tourists at Daringbadi will always make it a point to visit the coffee plantations. To facilitate them, the

block administration constructed a 'Hill View Park' in 2000 and renovated it again in 2015.

The Forest department also constructed a nature park for entertainment of tourists. The 'Shita Utsav' which was first started by the district administration in 2015 currently attracts tourists from all parts of the world. However, even then, the coffee plantations have remained prime attraction spots for visitors.

Earlier, the Soil Conservation department had floated a tender and assigned a private agency for upkeep of the coffee gardens, but the agency failed to carry out the work in a proper manner.

However, things started changing for the better after the state-owned Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation of Odisha LTD (TDCCOL) took up the management of the coffee plantations. New coffee gardens have also been developed under the 'Mission Coffee' programme. For this programme coffee cultivation will be taken up



on 70 hectares of land

With seeds now being processed at Daringbadi itself, employment opportunities for women have grown. Women belonging to self help groups are now involved in the coffee processing work after getting the training required. So they have become self-reliant.

All this development is happening under the direct supervision of Kandhamal District Collector Ashish Ishwar Patil with the assistance of local BDO Gadadhar Patra and project director Prashant Tripathy, who works in the Soil Conservation office at Baliguda.

Officials said that after processing of the seeds, the entire amount is taken to Koraput for preparation of the coffee powder. Last year approximately seven tonne of coffee seeds were processed. The district administration has set a seed processing target of 10 tonne or more for 2023.

Officials said that soon a government-run café will come up here at a cost of ₹50 lakh. A children's park, roads and ponds will be constructed as part of beautification project. The state Tourism department has sanctioned ₹30 lakh for the project while another ₹20 lakh will be spent from MGNREGS funds. The district administration will spend an additional ₹50 lakh for beautification, Patra said.

The reason behind setting up of the café is to allow tourists have a taste of organic coffee. They will also be able to buy coffee powder, roasted beans and green coffee at government rates. Demand for all these products are increasing, officials said.

Man dead, wife critical as ambulance hits bike

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sorada, Jan 2: A biker was killed while his pillion-riding wife suffered critical injuries after a speeding 102 ambulance hit their two-wheeler at Khariguda Square on Sorada-Badgad road in Ganjam district, Monday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Jai Mahakur, 60, and his wife Subhasini, 53. The latter is an ASHA worker in Gundibira village under Borsingri panchayat. Fire services personnel rescued the couple in critical condition and rushed them to Sorada hospital where doctors pronounced Jai dead on arrival. The injured woman was later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital as her condition deteriorated.

The mishap occurred when



the ambulance was returning to Sorada after dropping a patient at Badgad hospital. The couple was on their way to the same hospital to attend to a job of the Health department when the accident occurred.

Driver of the ambulance, Shiba Shankar Nayak later surrendered at the Sorada police station. Police visited the spot and launched an investigation.

After reports surfaced, MLA Purna Chandra Swain, NAC chairman Shiba Shankar Panda and several people visited the hospital and enquired about the condition of the ASHA worker.

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KRCL has published Employment notification No. CO/P-R/7C/2022 for following posts on contract basis through walk-in-interview:

S. N.	Post	No of Vacancy	Date of walk-in-interview
1	Asst. Project Engineer	03	19.01.2023
2	Project Engineer	03	20.01.2023
3	Sr. Technical Assistant	23	23.01.2023
4	Sr. Technical Assistant for Khurda Road- Bolangir new BG Link Project, Odisha	02	24.01.2023
5	Jr. Technical Assistant	10	30.01.2023

The walk-in-interview is scheduled to be held at Executive Club, Konkan Rail Vihar, Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd., Near Seawoods Railway Station, Sector-40, Seawoods (West), Navi Mumbai.

Candidates can see the detailed notification, eligibility criteria on the KRCL website www.konkanrailway.com at the link > Recruitment > Current Notification and may apply accordingly.

Chief Personnel Officer

True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are; it is what you become.
SRI AUROBINDO



Xi-Marcos Meet

The Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr's three-day visit to China from 3 January when he will meet China's President Xi Jinping and other top leaders will be a test of his policy of "friend to all and enemy to none." The exchanges will influence geopolitical equations in the South China Sea region as both China and the US are wooing the Philippines to checkmate each other in the strategically important area. The US has forged ties with the Philippines for providing assistance in the event of attacks by China. This has caused anxieties in Beijing as China is embroiled with the Philippines over control of the South China Sea. According to reports, Chinese fishing boats were seen last week carrying out landfill work at four reef sites around the Spratly Islands, a disputed archipelago claimed by both Beijing and Manila, as well as Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei.

The Philippine military reacted to the reports and expressed its "serious concern." It vowed to increase its presence. China, however, dismissed the reports as fictitious. Washington, on the other hand, issued a statement to support Manila's "continued calls on Beijing to respect the international law of the sea in the South China Sea." The thorny issue of maritime disputes will be discussed during Marcos' trip along with areas of cooperation in bilateral trade, infrastructure development, energy and communications.

The meeting between Xi and Marcos is dictated by both domestic and international compulsions. Just as the Philippines likes to continue its policy of bilateral cooperation with China, China is also keen on weaning the Philippines away from the orbit of US influence. The situation has been succinctly summed up by Philippines' foreign affairs assistant secretary Nathaniel Imperial who said both sides have agreed to sign an agreement establishing direct communication between the foreign ministries of both countries "to avoid miscalculation and miscommunication in the West Philippine Sea." The comments also signal a reconciliatory approach and a balancing act.

The President himself has hinted as much in his remarks that the maritime issues do not define "the totality of our relationship with China." In the same breath he has acknowledged the importance of this issue, according to his foreign affairs official.

Marcos' visit is expected to lead to 1.5 billion yuan (US\$217 million) in Chinese grants for the Philippines as well as tourism and infrastructure deals. Though similar agreements were signed between the two countries during the tenure of Marcos' predecessor, former President Rodrigo Duterte, only a few produced tangible results. This was despite the fact that Duterte had friendly relations with China. As such, Marcos' visit will be a test of his abilities to navigate his country's relations with China and the US. Marcos has to show that his independent foreign policy is efficacious as he engages with China.

Incidentally, Marcos' trip to China comes only a month after he met visiting US Vice President Kamala Harris who pledged the commitment of Washington to its ally.

Marcos' engagement with China will also have a bearing on his domestic support base. He has been trying to project an image that he will defend the country at all costs. This will add legitimacy to his presidency. The South China Sea issue will bring out the Marcos administration's position on engaging international partners, but more importantly it will address a domestic audience to strengthen the President's support base. China's news agency has put out the news about Marcos' meeting with Xi in a big way. This underlines the importance China is attaching to the Philippines as it under pressure following efforts by the US, the UK and Australia forming the AUKUS grouping to frustrate China's ambitions over control of the South China Sea. China's spokesperson Wang Wenbin's superlative praise of the Philippines prior to Marcos' visit makes clear China's intent to mollify its neighbour. He said, "China looks forward to working with the Philippines to make this visit an opportunity to carry forward friendship, deepen mutual trust and continue to advance cooperation in the four key areas as good neighbours, good relatives and good partners."

The fact that the meeting is on even after a fresh surge of COVID-19 in China shows the desperation of China to keep its borders open for the country's economic growth and also thwart efforts of the US and its Western allies to corner it.

WISDOM CORNER

- Your only obligation in any lifetime is to be true to yourself. Being true to anyone else or anything else is not only impossible, but the mark of a fake messiah. RICHARD BACH
- Great things are done by a series of small things brought together. VINCENT VAN GOGH
- The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance. ALAN WATTS

WORDSWORTH

Ephebicide

George Monbiot created this word in an article entitled Lest we forget in the Guardian on 11 November 2008: "There are plenty of words to describe the horrors of the 1939-45 war. But there were none, as far as I could discover, that captured the character of the first world war. So I constructed one from the Greek word ephebos, a young man of fighting age. Ephebicide is the wanton mass slaughter of the young by the old." The root appears in a few English words, including ephebe, the Greek word filtered through Latin that means a young man aged between 18 and 20 who undertook military service. Ephebiatrics is a rare medical term for the branch of medicine that deals with the study of adolescence and the diseases of young adults; an epheophile is an adult who is sexually attracted to adolescents. Though George Monbiot created it afresh, there is one previous example of ephebicide on record, in a work of 1979, Saul's Fall: A Critical Fiction. This purported to be a collection of critical essays about a play by a forgotten Spanish author, but the whole book, including the play, was an invention by Herbert Lindenberger, now Emeritus Professor of Humanities at Stanford University.

Epigenome

This term of the biological sciences has been around for decades but it has been specialist, unknown to the general public. That changed to some extent in October 2009 when newspapers reported a paper that had appeared in the science magazine Nature. We're familiar these days with the idea that the nature of living things is controlled by the DNA in their genes, the genetic code of an individual being its genome. Since there are many sorts of cell, but only one genome in an individual, there must be a way to switch genes on and off inside the cell so that it develops into a specific type — fat, muscle, brain or other sort. This process is controlled by chemical switches collectively called the epigenome. The report in Nature was that researchers at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, had for the first time mapped it. Environmental factors can disrupt the epigenome, which can lead to a variety of medical conditions, including cancers. Armed with the new roadmap of the way the epigenome works, specialists can now study the differences between healthy and diseased cells and begin to understand how this can happen. Epigenome includes the prefix epi-, upon or in addition to, from Greek epi, upon, near to, or in addition to. Its study is epigenomics and the adjective is epigenomic. The field is new and the terminology is still evolving; it is common for researchers to use epigenetics instead of epigenomics for the study of all the changes to a cell that result from external rather than genetic influences. The closely related term epigenesis refers to our current understanding that an embryo progressively develops from an undifferentiated egg cell, rather than the older belief that it is created completely formed (an homunculus) and merely grows bigger.

BE CAUTIOUS, NOT ANXIOUS

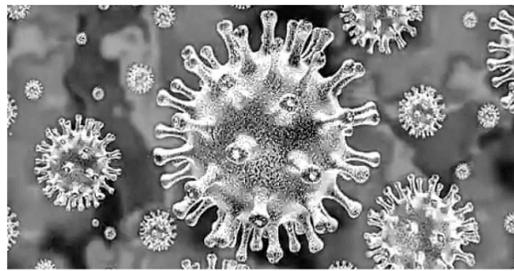
FOCUS COVID

We are into the New Year but the pandemic, it appears, will follow us into 2023. If the world thought this would be the first COVID-free year since 2019, then the current suffering in China sends us a reminder that it may not be so easy.

This is where it all began in China in late 2019 but the true picture of the epidemic was never fully shared with the rest of the world. It was reported that Italy had the SARS-CoV2 infection (then called just novel coronavirus) during the last quarter of 2019, but it was discovered only after the RT-PCR test became available in January-February of 2020. Details about the origins of the virus and time sequence are still unknown. The geopolitical challenge was that many doors were closed to investigators looking for clues in China.

Once again, China was playing hide and seek with information during the winter months of 2022. Worldometer (using government-released data) showed a wave during November-December that peaked in the second week of December with just over 4,000 daily cases steadily declining to less than 3,000 by Christmas, slowly climbing to a little over 3,000 as of 26 December. Other sources, particularly foreign news agencies, reported an epidemic raging in the whole country with Beijing and Guangdong the worst affected. The New York Times reported on Christmas Day: "a picture is emerging of the virus spreading like wildfire." The current spread is mostly Omicron BF-7 variant, which has been found earlier in isolated pockets in India.

Unfortunately the WHO has once again been unable to lead the world about this outbreak, mirroring the delay seen in January 2020 when there was an obvious pandemic with the virus detected in many countries in three continents plus Australia. WHO announced the pandemic only in the second week of March 2020. A new WHO investigation accepts this — a panel headed by Helen Clark (former PM of New Zealand) and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (former President of Liberia) asked why WHO waited until January



The unmistakable fact is that we had no 'Zero-COVID' policy but let the virus spread at its will, we let re-infections happen too, and we have much more efficacious vaccines

30 to declare an international health emergency (which is still short of calling it a pandemic), a surprising and costly delay that came due to apparent Chinese efforts to stop the announcement. During 2020-21-22, the world has moved on, scientists and epidemiologists, India included, are past the learning curve and quite well-informed. India has no cause to panic. All we need to do today is to keep watching the daily numbers of diagnosed infections, the pressure on our healthcare system in various states, and make slow but deliberate conclusions. So far there is no signal of any new wave in India.

India had three major waves — in 2020 spread over 10 months, caused by the original, slow spreading Wuhan virus and a small proportion of the Alpha variant that emerged in the UK; in 2021 spread over March-July, about five months, caused by Delta variant that had emerged in India; in 2022 spread over just two months, January-February, due to the Omicron variant. In epidemiological terms, a wave is an epidemic spread, and the valley if sustained over a long period, is an endemic spread. India has been in an endemic pattern since March 2022, with a slight increase in daily numbers in June-July-August, partly due to the BF-7 variant, not quite a wave.

The Omicron variant defied predictions — it spewed out many sub-variants; all of them defied immunity from previous infections

or from two or even three doses of available COVID-19 vaccines. Re-infections were common, in some once, in others more than once. We have already seen the BF-7 sub-variant. So, what should India be afraid of? True, the SARS-CoV-2 has not followed the rules made by virologists, and caution is the watchword. Panic is certainly not called for. Full facts will take time to be known. But we know that there was a ruthless lockdown in Wuhan district in early 2020, obviously as they had a calamitous wave, spreading fast and putting immense pressure on healthcare, and causing very high mortality. While preparing for the lockdown, they let foreigners leave, and medical students returning to Kerala, even in January 2020, had famously carried the virus. The strict and ruthless lockdown was initiated by India in March as soon as WHO declared a pandemic, but even before the virus had begun spreading.

China had consistently been ruthless when it came to slowing the spread of the virus, yet kept up the image that all was well in the country. The Chinese even went through the Winter Olympics 2021. Then they had the 'Zero-COVID' policy in vogue up until the end of November 2022.

All in all, many Chinese were protected from the infection and disease during 2020 and through the last quarter of 2022. But nothing can stop the transmission of BF-7, as the Chinese have learned.

Their indigenous vaccines turned out to have low efficacy. Their killed-virus vaccine is with aluminum salt as the adjuvant, but the Indian adjuvant for killed-virus vaccine is a novel one called alhydroxyquim — a combination of aluminum to strengthen antibody response and a special, innovative, molecule to markedly enhance cell-mediated immunity. What high immunity does is to protect from severe disease in spite of re-infection.

On account of earlier infection prevention interventions under the Zero-COVID policy, a large proportion of Chinese were immunity-naïve. Now, millions of Chinese are getting their first infection with BF-7 and that would explain the current scenario in China with severe disease. Omicron disease is not a killer in the immune-population — except in the elderly, the immunosuppressed due to malignancies, organ transplants, immunosuppressive therapies, and particularly in the non-immune.

At present, it is reasonable to predict that India is not anywhere near as vulnerable as China. We had our share of mortality during 2020-2021, the scale of which is disputed. The unmistakable fact is that we had no 'Zero-COVID' policy but let the virus spread at its will, we let re-infections happen too, and we have much more efficacious vaccines. Omicron (known sub-variants) cannot do much harm in India in 2023. The advice of the experts is: Be cautious, not anxious. Be alert, not in panic. Keep watching daily numbers and events to see the trend.

That's as good as it can get for 2023. It is advisable to be masked up in crowded areas. The practice helps prevent other infections, and puts in place civic discipline as a simple and easy layer of protection that can be made mandatory should the situation turn out different.

Dr T Jacob John is retired Professor of Clinical Virology, CMC Vellore. Jagdish Rattanani is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM CLIMATE CHANGE

Is it time to give up on 1.5°C?

Net-zero commitments are all the rage. Countries, companies, and others worldwide have committed to eliminating their net greenhouse-gas emissions by a particular date — for some, as early as 2030. But net-zero targets are not tantamount to limiting global warming to the Paris climate agreement's goal of 1.5° Celsius — or any particular level of warming, for that matter. It is the path to net-zero emissions that makes all the difference.

This is well understood among experts. A 2021 report by the International Energy Agency, for example, charts a detailed path, divided into five-year intervals, toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 — and giving the world "an even chance of limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C." The most striking feature of this analysis, at least to me, is the magnitude of the decline that is required by 2030: roughly eight billion tons of fossil-fuel-based emissions, taking us from the 34 gigatons carbon dioxide today to 26 Gt.

To achieve this, emissions would have to decline by 5.8% per year. If the global economy grows at a conservatively estimated annual rate of 2% over that period, the global economy's carbon intensity (CO2 emis-

sions per \$1,000 of GDP) would need to decline by 7.8% per year. While carbon intensity has been declining over last 40 years, the trend has been nowhere near this rate: from 1980 to 2021, carbon intensity fell by just 1.3% per year, on average.

In fact, with global GDP growth exceeding the rate of carbon-intensity decline by about two percentage points, emissions roughly doubled during that period. One reason is precious little effort was made to reduce carbon intensity for most of that time. The decline that occurred was largely a byproduct of emerging economies becoming wealthier. To be sure, as climate change gained more attention from policymakers, the rate of decline did accelerate, averaging 1.9% per year since 2010. And with supply-side constraints now encumbering the global economy a modest further reduction in carbon intensity could be enough to put the global economy at or near the peak of its total CO2 emissions. An emissions peak would be an important milestone. But unless it was followed immediately by a sharp decline, we would still be pumping some 34 Gt of CO2 into the atmosphere each year. While the IEA report does not address what would happen if we

fell significantly short of the first two interim targets (2025 and 2030), one can probably assume that it will be next to impossible to avoid crossing the 1.5°C threshold.

We have the tools to reach the IEA's targets. As the report makes clear, no new technological breakthroughs are needed in the first decade. Moreover, the costs do not appear to be prohibitive. The prices of wind and solar energy, for example, have declined substantially in recent years. But there would have to be huge changes in almost every corner of the global economy, and those changes do not appear to be occurring nearly as fast as the IEA timeline would demand. The sobering fact is that the IEA report's target of 26 Gt of CO2 by 2030 is not within reach, because the global economy's carbon intensity is declining at barely a quarter of the required rate. A sharp discontinuity in this variable is possible, and perhaps some would argue that 26 Gt remains a useful aspirational target. But it does not seem particularly realistic.

Is it better to cling to an unattainable target, because it represents the best path for people and the planet, or revise that goal to something more feasible? Can continu-

ing to tout an unrealistic goal hamper progress, as people become demotivated or simply stop viewing the effort as credible? Or is it worse to acquiesce to the consequences of abandoning the ambitious path, including the risk of crossing irreversible tipping points?

Whichever route the world chooses, the challenge will remain the same: reduce CO2 emissions dramatically — and fast. Of course, that is easier said than done. The world economy comprises 195 countries with different cultures and political systems and at different stages of development, as well as countless businesses of all sizes and types, and eight billion people.

But there are ways to simplify the challenge. Half of global greenhouse-gas emissions come from just seven economies: China, the US, the EU, Japan, India, Canada, Australia, and Russia. A concerted and coordinated effort in these large economies would make a material difference in emissions trajectories and, perhaps more important, generate technologies and management approaches that will be needed to reach net-zero goal.

The writer is a Nobel laureate in Economics.



Michael Spence

IS IT BETTER TO CLING TO AN UNATTAINABLE TARGET, BECAUSE IT REPRESENTS THE BEST PATH FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET, OR REVISE THAT GOAL TO SOMETHING MORE FEASIBLE?

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Digital education

Sir, The ongoing rollout of the digital university in India this year, an ambitious initiative of the Union government that gives students with online access to a variety of courses and degree programmes, is an excellent example of development in the digital age. The primary goal is to provide students with skill-based training, and the courses ought to be career-focused. In its Budget for 2022-2023, the Indian government had already declared plans to establish a digital university, giving students access to a high-quality, universal education that is suited to their needs right at their doorsteps. The digital university is seen as a significant step towards improving employability through programmes in developing fields and achieving 50% gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education by 2030, as planned in the National Education Policy, 2020. National Digital University (NDU) will be India's first digital university and help establish the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). Giving students the choice between earning their degrees from traditional colleges or through online universities is the premise behind this initiative. It's interesting to note that the digital university will begin offering certificate and diploma programmes in the following academic year before moving on to degree programmes. The best universities in India and abroad can collaborate with the digital university to provide students with a tailored education anytime and anywhere in the world. Therefore, the government's big initiative to establish NDU would undoubtedly change the educational environment of the digital education system.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Sports carnival

Sir, The World Cup Hockey 2023 in Odisha is going to be a great carnival of sports and will bring amity among nations. It bears the testimony of our self-reliance and superb preparedness. It is an international event that is going to happen in both Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. It is a historic moment for all Odias living across the world. This is a remarkable feat and an outstanding achievement for the state. Odisha is known for its hospitality and tolerance in the world. This event will boost our economy especially the tourism industry. It will be a synthesis and melting pot of various cultures and traditions. Let's wish this mega event a grand success.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR



Every Indian should feel that Congress is the medium and vehicle in realising their dreams and aspirations of a secular, progressive and liberal India. Congress has always stood for India, and we need to strengthen this ideological bond and invaluable relationship

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

'CHILLAI KALAN' TIGHTENS GRIP

The 40-day long period of harsh winter cold known as 'Chillai Kalan' tightened its grip on Kashmir Monday as night temperatures dropped further. Water taps in most parts of Srinagar city had frozen in the morning and people were seen lighting small fires around the water pipes to de-freeze them



of the day quote

We hope this year will end the politics of hatred and separatism. The politics of brotherhood and love would spread its wings. Like in Bengal, you will find love, compassion and brotherhood coexisting under the same roof. In the near future, the Bengal model will show the way in 2023 and beyond. The ideology of Mamata Banerjee will reach every nook and corner of the country

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TMC NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY

Science departments of the government have already outlined their roadmap for 2023 with the Indian Space Research Organisation turning its focus on scientific exploration missions, technology demonstration missions and human spaceflight programme "Gaganyaan"

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

Assam police is working with Muslims in the state to rationalise madrasa education following the alleged involvement of Islamic clerics in "jihad" activities

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

People still smarting from note ban blow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: The father with money in the bank but none to pay vendors for his daughter's wedding, the retailer scrounging for funds to keep business going, the house help who didn't get a salary for two months.

On Monday, these and many other similar tales of hardship became alive again, when the Supreme Court upheld the government's November 8, 2016 decision to demote Rs 1000 and Rs 500 denomination notes.

The decision, touted by the government to be a 'surgical attack' on black money, missed its mark by a great margin and became the bane of the daily-wage labourers and poor Indians, a section which relies almost exclusively on cash. To 38-year-old house help Parvesh, even the mere mention of the word 'notebandi' sends a shiver down



People queue up at an ATM in Patna on November 12, 2016

her spine. The single mother of a 20-year-old son said she was forced to work without a salary for almost two months and went empty stomach for days at a stretch. "It was the worst time of my life. Worse than even Covid-19, because during the Covid there was at least

some help from the government and society at large. But during demonetisation, we are left alone to suffer," said Parvesh.

"I mean how can I expect my employer to help me when he himself was struggling with money?" she said, having little to no idea

about Monday's Supreme Court verdict. The SC in its verdict said the decision-making process behind the 2016 demonetisation was "not flawed."

In a five-judge bench, four judges voted in favour of upholding the note-ban decision-making whereas one judge dissented.

The pain was not limited to the poor; and the middle class too struggled to understand the withdrawal rules that cascaded with everyday regularity in the wake of demonetisation. Nor was it any more injured to the agony of standing in the unending queues before the ATMs, which too often ran out of cash, and too early. Many small-scale businesses are still reeling from demonetisation.

"Our business relies on cash and this makes it impossible for us to function properly and run our business. A limited time was given by the government to ex-

change the cash left with us, we were in continuous confusion about whether we should do business or stand in long queues for hours to get our cash exchanged," Manish Shah, a Surat-based retailer, recounted.

"The whole business cycle was disrupted in the entire country," he added. For Jammu-based Rajendra Gupta, the cash crunch due to demonetisation had turned the once-in-a-lifetime occasion of his only daughter's wedding into a nightmare. He recalled how he was made to beg for his own hard-earned money to pay the vendors so that preparations could go on without a hitch.

"I didn't have enough money to pay the vendors. There was a limitation on how much money you could withdraw from banks. And then the government's continuous flip-flop on rules and regulations and whatnot," he said.

HP cops being trained in Tibetan, Chinese

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Jan 2: Himachal Pradesh Police is giving training to its personnel in Tibetan and Chinese languages to strengthen the intelligence network in border areas along China, a police official said Monday

The knowledge of these languages would help the force to get a better in-depth understanding of the happenings at the border area, he said. About 21,000 Tibetans are living in Himachal. At least 48 Himachal villages are located near the LAC out of which 36 fall in Kinnaur which shares a 160-km border while the remaining 12 villages are in Lahaul and Spiti sharing an 80-km border with China.

Today the border is more secure as compared to 2020 as road infrastructure, air defence capabilities and central intelligence (Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Army) have improved and the communication network is being strengthened, officials said.

Bomb found near Punjab, Haryana CMs' residences

The shell was found in the fields on the Nayagaon-Kansal road, which is about one kilometre away from the helipad and about two kilometres from the official residences of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 2: A bomb disposal squad was rushed to the spot after a live bomb was found a few hundred metres away from the helipad used

by Punjab and Haryana chief ministers here on Monday, police said.

The shell was found in the fields on the Nayagaon-Kansal road, which is about one kilometre away from the helipad and about two

kilometres from the official residences of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar, they said.

An official of the disaster management department who reached the spot told reporters that the police control room received a message that a bomb-like object had been seen near the Kansal and Nayagaon T-point.

"When we checked it and found that it was a live shell," he said, adding the area has been sealed. "It is a matter of investigation how this shell reached the spot," the official said. With the help of police and the bomb disposal squad, the shell has been placed in a drum and covered with sandbags and the Army has been alerted, he said.

"Army officials will come and take care of it," he added. Replying to a question, the official said in the past too discarded shells have been found. The possibility of a scrap dealer dumping it here cannot be ruled out, he said.

SHORT TAKES

Flight grounded

Chennai: A Sharjah-bound Air Arabia flight was grounded in Coimbatore on Monday after two eagles hit the left engine of the aircraft just before takeoff. The flight was taxing through the runway when the birds hit the engine. All 164 passengers were alighted from the plane and of the two eagles, one died after hitting the engine blade.

2 children killed

Tapi (Gujarat): Two teenagers died while 15 others suffered injuries after a tempo, in which they were travelling, overturned near Nani Chikhli village of Vyara taluka in Gujarat Monday. The injured were rushed to a government hospital in Vyara. A village resident Nimish Chaudhary in his complaint with the Vyara police station stated, on Monday morning, at least 150 villagers had boarded a Bolero and two tempos, as they had planned to pay a visit to Devlimata temple in Songadh taluka. All vehicles left around 6:30 a.m.

Two held in Hyd

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Narcotics Enforcement Wing (H-NEW) has arrested two drug peddlers and seized three grams of cocaine from their possession, police said Monday. Mohit Agarwal alias Myron Mohit and Manyam Krishna Kishore Reddy were arrested by the H-NEW along with Ramgopalpet police in a special operation on New Year day. They were absconding in a drugs case registered previously at the Ramgopalpet police station.

Three found dead

Varanasi: A family of three in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi has been found allegedly dead inside their house in railway colony, police said Monday. Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime and Headquarters), Santosh Kumar Singh, said that initial investigation hinted that either Rajiv Ranjan Patel, 32, along with his wife Anupama, 30, and their two-and-a-half-year-old son Harsh had died by suicide or their deaths were caused due to suffocation as ashes of bonfire were also found inside the room. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, Singh said, adding that there was no sign of entry of any outsider in their home.

Mamata launches new party campaign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 2: West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee Monday lashed out at both her opponents in the state - BJP and the CPI(M) led Left Front - claiming the ideological opposites, 'Ram-Baam' (BJP-Left), had allied covertly.

Launching her party's new outreach programme titled 'Didir Suraksha Kavach (Didi's Protective Shield)', Banerjee said, "Even if one weed attacks our paddy, the whole crop could be ruined", while cautioning her workers to root out corruption ahead of Panchayat polls to be held in the next few months.

Around 3.5 lakh Trinamool Congress workers will reach out to the around 10 crore people of the state to check if they are benefited from government projects, she

said. Banerjee said a proper vigilance system at the party level will be put in place to "weed out rotten elements".

Her party functionaries have been facing a series of corruption charges and two prominent leaders have been arrested in the year gone by.

"A proper vigilance system will be put in place to keep a check at the panchayat level. There will be a check and cross-check mechanism to look into all complaints," she said.

She also asked the party's cadres to reach out to the people to counter "canards" spread against the TMC by opposition parties.

In an apparent reference to an alleged tacit understanding between the opposition BJP and the Left in the state, she said, "Now, Ram and Bam (BJP and Left) have become one."

INDIA REVISES COVID GUIDELINES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: A negative Covid report is a must for passengers transiting through China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand, irrespective of their originating countries, before landing at any Indian airport, the Union Health Ministry said Monday.

In a letter to Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal on Monday, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that in the context of the evolving trajectory of COVID-19 cases in some countries, especially China, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Japan, the guidelines were revised and came into effect from January 1.

A negative Covid report from the RT-PCR test is a must for pas-



sengers arriving in India from China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand from the first day of 2023. The test must be conducted within 72 hours of undertaking the journey to India and the negative report from the RT-PCR test has to be uploaded on the Air Suvidha portal before their departure.

"This will also apply to transit-

ing passengers through the coun-

tries (mentioned) irrespective of their originating countries before coming to any Indian Airport," Bhushan said in the letter. Accordingly, the Ministry of Civil Aviation's Air Suvidha Portal has to be made operational for passengers on all international flights from these countries, with a provision to allow international travellers arriving in India to submit negative RT-PCR test reports as

A negative Covid report from the RT-PCR test is a must for passengers arriving in India from China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand from the first day of 2023

well as a self-declaration form on this portal.

"This arrangement is in practice with effect from 10 am on Sunday, January 1, 2023," the letter said, adding the existing practice of post-arrival random testing of 2 per cent of travellers irrespective of the port of departure shall continue.

India building permanent bunkers for BSF at Sir Creek

A BSF contingent is providing armed protection to the labourers engaged by the CPWD to complete the construction of the three bunkers in the Sir Creek area by March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: For the first time, India is constructing "permanent vertical bunkers" of concrete to station BSF troops right at the strategically significant Sir Creek and 'Harami Nalla' marshy area along the India-Pakistan International Border in Gujarat, official sources said.

The Union Home Ministry has sanctioned a Rs 50-crore fund for the construction of eight multi-storeyed bunkers cum observation posts in this area along the

Bhuj sector in view of the "constant infiltration of Pakistani fishermen and fishing boats in the area", the sources said.

According to official data, the Border Security Force (BSF) apprehended 22 Pakistani fishermen and seized 79 fishing boats as well as heroin worth Rs 250 crore and charas worth Rs 2.49 crore from this region of Gujarat in 2022.

While three pylon-shaped towers are coming up in the Sir Creek area, a 4,050 sq km marshy area between India and Pakistan, five such concrete structures will be

FIRST TIME



constructed by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) along the 'harami nalla' area spread across 900 sq km, sources said.

The top floor of each of the 42-foot high 'vertical bunkers' will

have space for mounting surveillance gadgets and radars to keep an eye on the area that comprises serpentine estuaries. The rest two floors will have the capacity to house around 15 armed BSF per-

sonnel and their logistics, the officials said.

According to officials, these bunkers are being erected in the Lakhpat Wari bet, Dafa bet and Samudra bet on the eastern side of the creek area, well within Indian territory. A BSF contingent is providing armed protection to the labourers engaged by the CPWD to complete the construction of the three bunkers in the Sir Creek area by March. The ocean gets too turbulent from April and hence the work is going on at war footing, a senior BSF officer said.

The move to build the bunker came after then BSF director general (DG) Pankaj Kumar Singh, during a tour of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to the Gujarat border in April last year, along with senior officers made a presentation that the creek area and the marshy water body between India and Pakistan were prone

to infiltration and the BSF security apparatus was located way behind. The BSF said it requires eyes right at the front and for that to happen it needed a permanent base, a senior official privy to this meeting said.

It was informed during the presentation that the area is "very sensitive and holds enormous strategic significance" and hence the BSF needs some permanent bases right on the front as compared to the border posts that are currently located about 50-60 km from the creek area.

In order to "dominate" the creek areas, the BSF sends regular foot and boat patrols to keep vigil in the entire 85-km-long coastal region of Gujarat under its control, they said, adding that currently, it takes about five to six hours for troops to reach the border from their posts, onboard speed boats or regular boats.



Demands for separate states in NE gain traction

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, Jan 2: Ahead of the Assembly elections in three north-eastern states - Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura - the demands for separate states by the local parties for the tribals are gaining momentum. The national parties, in terms of tribal vote share, are caught in a tricky situation on the issue.

The creation of separate Garo, Khasi states in Meghalaya, the separate state of 'Frontier Nagaland' and elevation of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) into 'Greater Tripaland State' for the tribals are the key issues in the poll bound three states.

The leaders of the national political parties including the BJP, the Congress and the CPI-M, though not supporting the separate state demand, remained non-committal about openly opposing the issue fearing loss of tribal votes.

Leaders of TIPRA (Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance), who have been demanding the elevation of the TTAADC into the 'Greater Tripaland State' for the tribals, said that it is ready for an electoral alliance with those parties who give their commitment and support to their demand.

Senior TIPRA leader and Deputy Chief Executive Member of the TTAADC, Animesh Debbarma told IANS: "We have only one agenda, that is 'Greater Tripaland' and constitutional solution for the Tiprasa (tribal) people living in the TTAADC area. Until this issue is resolved we are not going to form any type of alliance with anyone. We are also protesting against the violence unleashed by the BJP."

The TIPRA is now ruling the 30-member TTAADC, which has jurisdiction over two-third of Tripura's 10,491 square km area and is home to over 12,16,000 people, of which around 84 per cent are tribals, making the autonomous council a mini-assembly.

The TTAADC, in terms of its political significance and geographical area, has been considered a mini-assembly in Tripura after

The creation of separate Garo, Khasi states in Meghalaya, the separate state of 'Frontier Nagaland' and elevation of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council into 'Greater Tripaland State' for tribals are key issues in three poll bound states



the 60-member Assembly

The TIPRA organised a two-day sit-in demonstration at Jantar Mantar in Delhi December 5 and 6 and submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding upgradation of the TTAADC to a 'Greater Tripaland State' under Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution for the protection of the demography and rights of the tribals.

In Nagaland, the influential Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) is firm on boycotting the forthcoming Assembly election if the Centre does not fulfil its demand for a separate state of 'Frontier Nagaland'.

ENPO Secretary W. Manwang Konyak said that Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to visit the ENPO areas in northern Nagaland in the third or fourth week of January to discuss the issue. "The three-member central team, which visited Nagaland in mid-December to study the separate state of 'Frontier Nagaland' demand, has submitted its report to the central government," he told IANS over phone.

The ENPO leader said that the 'Frontier Nagaland' would cover six of the 16 backward districts of Nagaland - Mon, Tuensang, Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak and Shamator.

A delegation of the ENPO met the Union Home Minister in New Delhi December 6 and Shah, according to the Naga leaders, highlighted a clear roadmap for an amicable, legislative and sustainable solution of their demand which also includes consultation with the people of Nagaland and the state government.

In support of their demand for the creation of 'Frontier Nagaland', seven tribes of Nagaland rejecting the state government's appeal had also boycotted the recent 'Hornbill Festival'. Seven tribes of Nagaland - Chang, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Phom, Tikhir, Sangtam and Yimkhiong - are spread across six districts.

On the separate state demand, the Nagaland cabinet had recently resolved that whenever a Legislative Assembly session is convened, legislators and members of Eastern Nagaland Legislators' Union, if

and when they desire to discuss, may move accordingly and the issue would be deliberated threadbare.

In Meghalaya, different tribal groups in the state in support of the separate Garoland state demand organised a sit-in demonstration at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi in mid-December under the umbrella of the National Federation for New States, in an effort to make their respective demands for statehood heard by the Centre.

The Garoland State Movement Committee in collaboration with the NFNS has been agitating for a separate Garoland state for the past many years. The Garo Hills region in western Meghalaya is spread across 10,102 sq. km and according to the 2011 Census, is home to 13.94 lakh people, mostly tribals.

NFNS Vice-President Nikman C. Marak said: "If we work together, we would be able to achieve our demand. We need to work unitedly to achieve our long-standing demand of Garoland."

The assembly elections in Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya are expected to be held in February

Naga peace accord: A tale of so near, yet so far

A final agreement acceptable to all sides remained elusive with Naga rebels and the Centre agreeing to disagree on two key issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kohima, Jan 2: The Gordian knot enveloping the Naga peace talks could not be untied through the year gone-by, as a final agreement acceptable to all sides remained elusive with Naga rebels and the Centre agreeing to disagree on two key issues.

The coming of Centre's new interlocutor for Naga Peace talks, AK Mishra to Dimapur in Nagaland earlier last year and holding parleys with representatives of various Naga groups and other stakeholders in an effort to resolve the vexed problem had spread hope that a solution to the decades long insurgency in the state would come as a welcome Christmas gift.

Mishra met the leadership of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isac-Muivah) including veteran leader Th Muivah inside the group's headquarters in Hebron, a first in the history of such talks.

A former special director of the Intelligence Bureau, Mishra succeeded the last Interlocutor and Nagaland Governor RN Ravi, who was transferred to Tamil Nadu as the Governor in September last year.

After this, the negotiations continued in Delhi with Muivah and other leaders of the group for several rounds, but a final settlement remained elusive, as the NSCN-IM remained adamant on its demand for a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas. A demand, which till now has not favour with the Centre. However, while marking the 25th year of ceasefire with the Centre, the NSCN-IM has assured it will continue to uphold the ceasefire.



The reassurance was made by the Ceasefire Monitoring Cell (CFMC) of the NSCN-IM on completion of 25 years of ceasefire agreement with the Government of India entered July 25, 1997.

The Government of India has been holding separate dialogue with the NSCN-IM and the Working Committee of Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) since 1997 and 2017 respectively.

NNPGs comprise of at least seven Naga groups. It inked the Framework Agreement with NSCN-IM in August 2015 and the Agreed Position with NNPGs in November 2017.

While NNPGs have agreed to accept a solution and continue the dialogue, the NSCN-IM has been rigid on its demand for a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas.

"They (Naga negotiators) have come back from Delhi and nothing is likely to happen before Christmas as talks will resume only after the festive season," Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had said last month.

On the other hand, the Centre

heeded to the cry of the people of the State for removal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958 from Nagaland.

March 31, the Centre announced withdrawal of AFSPA 1958 from 15 police stations in 7 districts in Nagaland with effect from April 1, which was welcomed by the State government but rejected by Naga civil societies demanding complete repeal of the Act from the State.

AFSPA was imposed in the entire state of Nagaland from 1958 to curb the Naga insurgency movement.

A demand from people residing in six districts supported by the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) for a separate state - 'Frontier Nagaland' - too remained a chimera.

The ENPO, an apex body of the seven tribes from the six districts - Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak and Shamator, had started seeking a separate state from 2010 and in August this year announced a boycott of the Hornbill Festival held from December 1 to 10, to highlight the demand.

Police to scrutinise madrasa teachers from outside Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Jan 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that all teachers who came from outside Assam to teach in the madrasas in the state may be asked to appear "from time to time" in the nearest police station.

The move comes after the police cracked down on alleged modules of terrorist organisation Ansarul Bangla Team, and 51 Bangladeshis were discovered among the preachers at madrasas. Sarma said that a checklist has been prepared for the madrasas, though the state is yet to "enter into an agreement with stakeholders, but things are moving in the right direction."

The Assam Police is working with Muslims in the state to "rationalise" madrasa education, he said Sunday. There are some 3,000 registered and unregistered madrasas in Assam. Sarma said the police are coordinating with Bengali Muslims, who have a positive attitude towards education to create "a good environment" in the madrasas.

AIADMK settles issues with TN BJP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 2: The opposition AIADMK, which is heading the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu, has settled the issues with the state BJP and has commenced focusing to highlight the flaws of the ruling DMK government.

The BJP and AIADMK were in a war of words in the state after the AIADMK leader and former minister, CV Shanmughan said in a public programme that the DMK would forgo all its present allies and enter into a political alliance with the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections.

This evoked a sharp response from the Tamil Nadu BJP and many leaders took to social media handles against this statement from the AIADMK leader. However, in another public programme, AIADMK interim general secretary and former Chief Minister, Edappadi K. Palaniswami said that the AIADMK and BJP alliance was intact and that there should not be any public opinion from the AIADMK leaders or cadres against the BJP.

The BJP also directed its leaders



and cadres not to attack the AIADMK leaders in public or through social media platforms.

With the 2024 Lok Sabha polls approaching, the AIADMK has now commenced focusing on the flaws of the DMK government in the state and the failure to keep its promises.

AIADMK leader and former minister Sellur K. Raju in a public programme Sunday said that if the DMK government of Stalin had kept its promise, the women in the

state would have been richer by Rs 22,000. He was rebuking the promise made by the DMK before the 2021 Assembly elections that if the party was elected to power it would provide Rs 1,000 per month to women voters. The DMK came to power in May 2021 and if the promise was kept each woman would have gotten Rs 22,000 taking into consideration Rs 1,000 per month for the past 22 months.

The former minister also said that except for the Rs 1,000 as Pongal gifts, the DMK government has not been able to provide anything to the people of the state. AIADMK also is highlighting the fact that even sugarcane was included in the Pongal gift hamper after the party had taken a strong stand for the sugarcane farmers.

The AIADMK interim general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) said that the DMK government was bent on destroying the Pongal gift scheme envisaged and executed by the legend of Tamil Nadu politics, former Chief Minister, MG Ramachandran (MGR).

The AIADMK leader has also demanded Rs 5,000 as the Pongal gift amount and said that when the DMK was in opposition, it had promised that the Pongal gift money would be enhanced to Rs 5,000 if the party gets power.

According to sources in the AIADMK, the party would be highlighting the issues of the flaws of the DMK government, including unkept promises across the state. The party is also planning a door-to-door campaign against the DMK government as part of its preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Despite border troubles with China, Arunachal revs up development

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Itanagar, Jan 2: The Centre and the state government have rolled out an ambitious infrastructure development mission along Arunachal Pradesh's border with Myanmar (520 km), Bhutan (217 km) and China (1,080 km), even as the intermittent troubles that keep erupting along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) show no signs of abating.

December 9, PLA troops approached the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, but Indian troops firmly contested their way, leading to a clash between the two. Sources said that although no loss of life or major injuries were reported but both - some Indian and Chinese troops - received some minor injuries during the clash.

Besides the problem in the international frontiers, the 804 km inter-state decades old border issue with Assam, Chakma-Hajong tribal issue and Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission recruitment examination paper leakage also dominated Arunachal Pradesh in 2022 and their consequences would carry forward in the new year.

After Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh is the second state in the northeastern region to become a power surplus state after Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the 600 MW Kameng HydroPower plant to the nation November 19.

The Prime Minister November 19 also inaugurated northeast's first greenfield airport called Donyi Polo airport at Itanagar and with this the northeastern state got three airports with the Pasighat and Tezu airports- the other two.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Pema Khandu, said that to develop the bordering areas of the state and to facilitate the people to remain in their border villages and to prevent their migration, the Centre would invest Rs 50,000 crore to construct highways in far-flung areas along the 1,817 km international borders with China, Myanmar and Bhutan.

The Chief Minister, who was recently on several day visit to the remote areas along China, said that the Union Road, Transport



Highways Ministry has sanctioned adequate money for the 1500 km frontier highway that would connect all the border areas of the state from East to West and inter-connecting roads between the highways of about 1,000 km.

To tap the state's hydropower potentiality, Union Power Minister RK Singh recently assured Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister, Chowna Mein, that the Centre would soon approve an investment of Rs 32,000 crore for the 2,880 MW generation capacity Dibang hydroelectric project in the state.

Assam and Arunachal have earlier agreed in-principle to restrict the number of disputed villages to 86 instead of 123 along eight districts of Assam and 12 districts of Arunachal. Chief Minister, Minister and official level meetings were held both in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam to resolve the several decades old 804 km inter-state border disputes between the two states.

There are about 65,000 tribals belonging to Chakma and Hajong community in Arunachal who fled from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and were settled by the Central government in the then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), now Arunachal Pradesh.

Various tribal organisations in Arunachal have been agitating both in the state and in New Delhi alleging deprivation of their basic rights including racial profiling, cancellation of the Residential Proof Certificates issued to the Chakmas and Hajongs tribals by the state government.

Special diet for Jallikattu bulls to eat well, fight well

Food items, neatly divided into 'three square meals' a day are provided to bulls in the morning, afternoon and evening

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madurai, Jan 2: Farm fresh grass rolls, a big bucket full of rice bran and husk of black and red gram with plenty of water! These are among the 'delicacies' that figure in the 'special diet plan' for bulls that are being trained for the bull taming sport, 'Jallikattu'.

A big pack of hay and fodder made of cotton seed and corn are part of the other items of food provided to bulls. Such food items, neatly divided into 'three square meals' a day are provided to bulls in the morning, afternoon and evening.

Sundaravalli, a cowherd with hands-on experience in cattle farming says the diet plan is designed



to ensure nutritious food to bulls. "We provide nutritious food at all times. However, now we go the extra mile to ensure nutrition as Jallikattu is nearing and bulls need to be physically more strong."

"The first full meal is at 9.30 AM when we provide a full, big bucket of rice bran and a roll of hay," she says. Also, farm fresh grass and plenty of water is ensured at all times.

The next meal, by 3 PM com-

prises 'Makkacholam' (corn), 'Paruthi Vidhai' (cotton seed cake), 'Nel Thavidu' (rice bran) and 'Ulundu-Thuvaram doosi' (husk of black and red gram). Bran obtained from 'Pachha nellu' (raw rice bran) and Puzhunga nellu (boil rice bran) is alternately used. Corn and cotton seed cake are among the fresh additions to the diet plan considering Jallikattu.

The next food in the evening is

light and it is a good combo of what was provided in the morning and afternoon, she says. "We also provide Thavidu Thanneer (bran mixed water) on and off. The workout for bulls, which includes taking them for pretty long walks, running and swimming make them super fit and it ensures good appetite."

As she prepares 'bran meal', a pair of 'Uzhavu madu' (bulls used only for farming purposes) rushes ahead to partake of the food. Jallikattu bulls 'Rana', 'Rudra' 'Aacha' and others enjoy the sumptuous meal!

Sundaravalli's husband Marimuthu, a herdsman, promptly arrives to help her feed the cattle. After feeding them, the duo double up as 'physicians' and gently touch the ears of bulls.

"We try to ascertain if the warmth is normal or not. In case there is a fever, we could feel the extra-warmth."

After noticing that a bull had comparatively less feed, they quickly

prepare a fine mix of 'Vetrilai' (piper betel) and 'Milagu' (black pepper-Piper nigrum) and push it into the animal's mouth.

"If such simple home remedies do not yield results we take the advice of doctors."

Quoting veterinarians, she says the food they provide to bulls has all the nutrients including proteins that animals need.

Traditionally, Jallikattu commences in the Tamil month of Thai (starts in January and ends in February) and goes on for at least 3-4 months. It is held in various parts of the state. The star attractions are, however, those held in Alanganallur, Palamedu and Avaniapuram in Madurai district.

December 8, 2022, the Supreme Court reserved its order on petitions against the bull taming sport. The top court had said that Jallikattu cannot be termed a blood sport as nobody is using any weapon and the blood may only be an incidental thing.

of the day quote

The state government will revisit its health scheme to cover additional ailments under it for the benefit of maximum number of the needy people

EKNATH SHINDE | MAHARASHTRA CM

The year 2022 has given a new shine and aura to the leadership of Rahul Gandhi. If it remains the same in 2023, we can see a political change in 2024 (general elections)

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

The Dearness Allowance for government employees including teachers, pensioners and family pensioners will be increased from 34 per cent to 38 per cent with immediate effect

MK STALIN | TN CM

SHORT TAKES

18 injured
Udupi (Karnataka): Fifteen students and three teachers were injured after a private bus, in which they were travelling for a tour programme, turned turtle in Nalluru village near Karkala town in Udupi district of Karnataka on Monday. According to police, the students of Basaveshwara High School in Kottur of Vijayanagara district were travelling in the bus for the tour programme.

2 cops suspended
Surat: Two policemen have been suspended and a departmental inquiry ordered for beating two youths in the Udhna area here on December 31 night. Udhna Police inspector H.S. Acharya told the mediapersons that the moment CCTV footage was available to the police, the action was taken against the two. The CCTV footage that went viral on Sunday morning in Surat, shows the two policemen dragging two youths on the road and beating them. The youths have alleged that the policemen demanded Rs 5,000, when youths refused they took away their ATM cards and forcibly withdrew money.

Man shot dead
Baghat: A 22-year-old man was allegedly shot dead by a youth and three others in Uttar Pradesh's Baghat district after a dispute over an objectionable video. Three accused have been arrested so far, police said. The incident took place near Lohadda village in Baraut area. A police officer said that the victim, Vipul Ahlawat, was a resident of Kandra village.



The 'samajwadis' (socialists) had earlier fought for reservation, and now they have to fight to save reservation. The intention of this government is to first end the reservation to the backward classes, and then end the same for Dalits

SHIVPAL YADAV | SP LEADER

NOVEL INITIATIVE

The Delhi government launched a 'Mathematics Winter Camp' for the city schools Monday to bridge the learning gaps induced by the Covid-19 pandemic among students. The camp will be run till January 14



KANJHAWALA INCIDENT

MHA seeks report from Delhi police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: The 20-year-old woman, killed in the early hours of New Year after her scooter was hit by a car, was dragged for 12 kilometres under the vehicle on the city's roads, police said and added culpable homicide among other stringent sections on Monday in the case following protests over alleged "shoddy investigation".

Police said that the victim's body was found naked on roadside in Kanjhawala area in outer Delhi and a medical board conducted a post-mortem on Monday, which will establish if she was sexually assaulted by the accused.

As outrage mounted over the incident, officials said that the Union Home Ministry has sought a detailed report from the Delhi police on the direction of Home Minister Amit Shah. The Delhi police has also constituted an inquiry committee, headed by Special Commissioner Shalini Singh, and asked her to submit a probe report as early as possible, they said.

All five accused were sent to three-day police custody Monday. Prima facie, it is suspected that the accused were allegedly intoxicated at the time of the incident. Sources said that blood samples have been sent for medical examination to ascertain if the accused were under the influence of alcohol. The report is awaited.

New high-quality security camera footage confirmed horrific witness accounts that she had been dragged under the wheels for over an hour. A senior police said that the woman was dragged for around 12 kilometres following the accident. The victim, who was the sole bread earner of her family, leaves behind



AAP MLA Rakhi Birla speaks with the media outside the Sultanpuri police station as people gather to demand stern punishment for men accused in Sultanpuri road accident in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

an ailing mother and six siblings. The mother alleged that police were trying to "make it look like an accident" as she expressed dissatisfaction with their handling of the case. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed it a "rarest of rare crime" and demanded the strictest punishment for those behind the incident, while L-G V K Saxena said his head hung in shame over the "inhuman" crime. The victim's family demanded the death penalty for the accused.

Addressing a press conference here, Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Sagar Preet Hooda said fresh charges could be added against the five accused arrested in connection with the case on the basis of the post-mortem report. The accused have been booked on charges of culpable homicide (Section 304) not amounting to murder, causing death by negligence and criminal conspiracy, according to the police.

According to Section 304 of IPC, whoever commits culpable homicide

not amounting to murder shall be punished with imprisonment for life or imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years. "The accused will be taken to the scene of the crime and their story will be verified. The timeline of events will be established on the basis of CCTV footage and digital evidence," Hooda said. He said the victim's family is being updated about the investigation and assured that the police will gather all evidence to ensure that the accused get the strictest punishment.

A political slugfest erupted over the incident, with the Aam Aadmi Party attacking the BJP alleging that one of the accused - Manoj Mittal - is linked to it. It also accused the lieutenant governor of being "negligent" in the matter.

Delhi BJP leaders said the accused should be given the strictest punishment if found guilty and claimed that its rivals were indulging in politics over a sensitive issue.

26 INJURED AS TRAIN DERAILS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Jan 2: Twenty-six passengers were injured after 13 coaches of a Jodhpur-bound express train derailed in Rajasthan's Pali district early Monday, an official said.

No loss of life has been reported, a spokesperson of the North Western Railway (NWR) said and added that several trains have either been cancelled or diverted due to the derailment of the Bandra Terminus-Jodhpur Suryanagri Express (12480) on the Rajkiyas-Bamodara route at 3.27 am.

The injured, two of them seriously hurt, have been admitted at the Bangad Hospital in Pali, the official said. The railways is operating helpline numbers and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw is monitoring the situation, the spokesperson said. Vaishnaw will visit the spot in the evening, the official added.

"Constantly monitoring the unfortunate accident of the Bandra-Jodhpur Suryanagari Express.



Emergency assistance and timely medical support were ensured. Compensation also granted: Rs 1 lakh towards grievous injuries and Rs 25,000 towards minor injuries," the railway minister said in a statement.

Stranded passengers have been taken to their destinations by buses and alternative train routes, the spokesperson said.

Tunisha death: Sheezan's family rubbishes claims



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Jan 2: TV actor Sheezan Khan's mother and his sisters - actresses Shafaq and Falaq Naaz - held a press conference in Mumbai in which they rubbished the allegations of 'love jihad' or that Tunisha was forced to wear the hijab.

The family asserted that Tunisha's mother ignored the state of her daughter's mental health. If she had paid some attention to it, Tunisha would have been alive today, the family alleged.

"Tunisha was like my sister," Palak clarified. "All this talk about the hijab, dargah are baseless. Following a religion is our own personal choice. People are saying we forced her to wear a hijab, but the picture from one of her 'Ali Baba: Dastan-e-Kabul' shoots."

She added that Tunisha was in her costume and no one forced her to wear a hijab. Sheezan's mother referred to the claim by

Tunisha's mother that Falaq had taken her daughter to a dargah. "You give us proof," she countered.

She also opened up on Vanita Sharma's accusation that Sheezan had slapped Tunisha.

"If your child is being tortured on sets like this, will you just sit

The family asserted that Tunisha's mother ignored the state of her daughter's mental health. If she had paid some attention to it, Tunisha would have been alive today, the family alleged

and talk on the phone? She used to talk to me over the phone, then why didn't she tell me or take any action? She could have come to my place and we would have slapped Sheezan. Was she waiting for her daughter to take this extreme step?"

Sheezan's mother also added that for her, Tunisha was like a 10-year-old child and she shared an incident when she was running high fever, her mother called her to take care of her daughter. Sheezan's sister took care of Tunisha and Vanita Sharma texted saying that no one ever cared for her like them.

Akhilesh to skip Bharat Jodo Yatra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Jan 2: Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav Monday thanked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for inviting him to his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and wished it a success, even as the party said he will not be attending it.

SP chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said Akhilesh will not participate in the yatra, nor will any other leader from the party. The nationwide yatra will enter Uttar Pradesh from the Loni border in Ghaziabad on January 3 afternoon and will halt for the night in Mavikala village in Baghat.

It will pass through Shamli in UP on January 4 and enter Haryana through Sanauli in

Panipat on January 5 evening. In a letter addressed to Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh said, "Thanks for the invitation to the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and wishes for the success of the 'Bharat Jodo' initiative."

"India is a feeling which is beyond geographical expansion, where there is love, non-violence, emotions, co-operation and bonhomie -- the positive elements, which unite India. "Hope that this yatra achieves its aim of conserving this inclusive culture," the former UP Chief Minister said in the missive he posted on Twitter.

Chaudhary, when asked whether Akhilesh or any other SP leader will be going to the Yatra, said, "Akhilesh will not participate in the yatra and there is nil possibility of any other leader of the party going there."

Senior UP Congress leader Nasimuddin Siddiqui, when contacted, said, "Rahul Gandhi ji had written a letter to Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday to be a part of the yatra." "I do not have any information on this," he added, when asked whether Akhilesh will be attending it.



Resident doctors stage a protest at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital in Solapur

PTI PHOTO

MOTHER ARRESTED FOR KILLING BABY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ahmedabad, Jan 2: Police in Ahmedabad have arrested a woman who killed her three-month-old baby girl by throwing the infant from the third floor of a hospital.

According to the complaint lodged by Asifmiya Shaikh, his wife Farzanabanu gave birth on

October 5, 2022, at a hospital in Uttarsanda of Anand district. On Sunday morning, Farzanabanu informed her husband that the baby had gone missing.

Shaikh along with staff of the hospital searched for the baby and even informed the police. While checking the CCTV footage of the hospital corridors, at around 4 a.m.

Farzanabanu can be seen coming out of the ward with the baby in his arms, she stands near a pillar for a while, later she returns to the ward empty handed, Asifmiya said in the complaint. During police interrogation, the accused said that she was fed up of the infant's illness and pain which led her to take the drastic step.

TN student dies in China

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 2: A 22-year-old student pursuing medical education at QiQihar Medical University, China died due to a brief illness Sunday.

The family of deceased S. Sheikh Abdulla has petitioned Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin to help bring the body back to his native Pudukottai for the last rites. According to the family members, Sheikh Abdulla had fallen ill and was admitted to the hospital attached to the medical university. The university later granted him an opportunity to do internship at the university after his course was completed. The university also directed him to reach the university in person and to continue the internship.

Abdulla left on December 11 and was quarantined following the advent of the new Covid-19 variant. Later, the family was informed that the 22-year-old had fallen ill and was admitted to the hospital attached to the medical university. The family had also to shell out huge money for his treatment in China but on Sunday, the hospital authorities informed Sheikh Abdulla's father, Syed that his son had passed away due to illness and that his liver and kidney were damaged.

The family has appealed to the Chief Minister and state health minister for suitable compensation.

Celebrate endings- for they precede new beginnings

Celebrate endings- for they precede new beginnings goes a saying. And as the old year yields place to the new, hopes surface that India's lawmakers will spare time to pause and ponder at the plummeting levels of public discourse and the crass contradictions that mark their conduct.

The contradictions are most noticeable in the matter of the spurious liquor tragedy in Saran district of Bihar in December where over 80 people lost their lives. Both Houses of the Bihar legislature were adjourned indefinitely ahead of schedule following the BJP opposition's backlash over the hooch deaths and the demand for a review of the prohibition policy in the state.

Taking suo moto cognizance, the National Human Rights Commission issued notice to the Bihar government. The NHRC also underlined the failure of the State government to implement its policy of prohibition of sale and con-

sumption of illicit liquor in Bihar since 2016. Soon after a 9-member NHRC team landed up to take stock of the situation inviting strong objections from the state government which called it wholly unjustified and beyond the aims and objectives of the Commission.

However when a similar liquor tragedy took place in BJP ruled Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana the party's approach was wholly different. Like-minded Opposition parties in a statement issued in Delhi charged the Modi government with double standards pointing out that there had been over 200 hooch deaths during 2016 and 2021 when the JD-U-BJP government had been in power in Bihar but the NHRC never felt the need to investigate such incidents. In Uttar Pradesh 36 people had died after consuming spurious liquor in Aligarh in May 2021 and 40 in Haryana's Panipat and Sonapat districts after consuming adulterated liquor in November 2020, 14 people in the Ujain hooch tragedy in October



Gujarat files
RK MISRA

2020 and 24 people in similar fatalities in Morena district, Madhya Pradesh in January 2021.

There has been liquor Prohibition in Gujarat since the inception of the state in 1960 and its consumption or possession is an offence. Nevertheless the state has witnessed numerous spurious liquor deaths over the years.

Earlier in July, 2009, over a 150 people fell to the killer brew in Ahmedabad while the Vidhan Sabha was in session. Moving fast into damage control mode, Chief Minister Narendra Modi, announced a further tightening of prohibition laws

and amended the Bombay Prohibition Act to provide for death sentences for those found guilty of manufacturing and selling spurious liquor called "lattha" (hooch) in 2009. The Bill received the Governor's assent in December 2011 but to date there has not been a single case where the culprit has received the death penalty though liquor tragedies have been taking place even thereafter.

The Narendra Modi government had also set up a one-man judicial inquiry commission headed by Justice K.M. Mehta to probe the tragedy. Justice Mehta was surprised when he learnt that the state government did not have regulations for transportation of methyl alcohol, which was the root cause of the tragedy. He had termed it as a ridiculous situation.

Justice Mehta noted that methyl alcohol had been responsible for all the spurious liquor tragedies that have taken place in Gujarat over the years and yet even after the 2009 Ahmedabad liquor deaths

no rules had been framed by the time the matter came up before him.

Successive inquiry commissions set up after every major liquor tragedy have drawn attention to this anomaly and yet it remained unattended. Following the 1989 hooch tragedy in Vadodra in 1989 in which 132 people died and 200 were affected, the Justice A.A. Dave inquiry commission set up to probe it, had strongly recommended that either the government should abolish prohibition or make suitable and stringent changes in the policy to tighten it.

Justice (ret'd) N.M. Miabhoj inquiry commission which probed the 1977 Ahmedabad hooch tragedy in which 100 people lost their lives and over 200 were badly affected had observed that the prohibition policy in Gujarat was a failure and that sweeping changes were necessary for its effective implementation. One of the main reasons he attributed for its failure was the rampant corruption in the police force. Nothing has changed even now.

international

of the day quote

Since the epicentre (of terrorism) is located so close to India, naturally our experiences and insights are useful to others

The nuclear weapons belong to the United States, but planning, information sharing, exercises and training should be jointly conducted by South Korea and the United States

The Secretary-General trusts that adherence to these commitments will reduce violence and the suffering of conflict-affected communities, while helping to build confidence in ongoing dialogues

SHORT TAKES

14 dead in armed attack on prison
Mexico City: Mexican authorities said Sunday at least 14 people died in an armed attack at a prison in the northern border city Juarez and two more died during a later armed aggression elsewhere in the city.

4 killed after 2 choppers collide
Brisbane: Four people were killed and three others are currently in critical condition after two helicopters Monday collided at the Gold Coast in the Australian state of Queensland, authorities have confirmed.

Kabul attack: IS claims responsibility
Riyadh/Kabul: Islamic State Monday claimed responsibility for an attack on Taliban forces in Kabul. The militant group said on Telegram that the attack Sunday had killed 20 people and wounded 30.

Renner critical post snow plow accident
Los Angeles: Marvel actor Jeremy Renner is in 'critical but stable' condition after being injured in an accident while plowing snow, entertainment magazine Variety reported Monday.

Nepal PM to take vote of confidence Jan 10
Kathmandu: Nepal's newly-appointed Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has decided to take the vote of confidence in the Parliament January 10, an official said Monday.

Harry: I want my father, brother back

London, Jan 2: Prince Harry said he wants to have his father and brother back and that he wants "a family, not an institution," during a TV interview ahead of the publication of his memoir. The interview with Britain's ITV channel is due to be released this Sunday. In clips released Monday, Harry was shown saying that "they feel as though it is better to keep us somehow as the villains" and that "they have shown absolutely no willingness to reconcile" — though it was not clear who he was referring to. Harry, also known as the Duke of Sussex, and his wife Meghan have aired their grievances against the British monarchy since the couple stepped down as senior royals in 2020 and moved to California, where they now live with their two



young children. Harry, 38, has previously spoken about his estrangement from his father, King Charles III, and elder brother Prince William since his departure from the UK. Last month Netflix released "Harry & Meghan," a six-part series that detailed the couple's experiences leading to their decision to make a new start in the US. In that documentary, Harry was scathing about how the royal press team worked, and spoke about how his relationship with William and the rest of the royal household broke down. Meghan described wanting to end her life as she struggled to cope with toxic UK press coverage. Harry's autobiography, titled "Spare" — recalling the saying "the heir and the spare" — is being released January 10.



My life is in danger but I will face (the challenges) by staying in the country
IMRAN KHAN | EX-PAK PM

GOTABAYA APPLIES FOR US CITIZENSHIP RESTORATION

Sri Lanka's ousted president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country in July last year and then returned after nearly two months, has applied for restoration of his US citizenship after he failed to get asylum in any country, according to a media report



Thousands of people lined up across St Peter's Square hours before dawn Monday to view Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's body and pay their respects. Twelve hours of viewing are scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday before Thursday morning's funeral, which will be led by Pope Francis, in the square

Massive anger in Russia as scores of troops killed

Kyiv, Ukraine, Jan 2: Russia acknowledged Monday that scores of its troops were killed in one of the Ukraine war's deadliest strikes, drawing demands from nationalist bloggers for commanders to be punished for housing soldiers alongside an ammunition dump. Ukrainian forces fired six rockets from a HIMARS launch system and two of them were shot down, a Russian defence ministry statement. The strike, using a US-supplied precision weapon that has proven critical in enabling Ukrainian forces to hit key targets, delivered a new setback for Russia which in recent months has reeled from a Ukrainian counteroffensive. The Ukrainian military has not directly confirmed the strike, but tacitly acknowledged it. The Strategic Communications Directorate of Ukraine's Armed Forces claimed Sunday that some 400 mobilised Russian soldiers were killed in a vocational school building in Makiivka and about 300 more were wounded. That claim could not be independently verified. The Russian statement said the strike occurred "in the area of Makiivka" and didn't mention the vocational school. Meanwhile, Russia deployed multiple exploding drones in another nighttime attack on Ukraine, officials said Monday, as the Kremlin signalled no letup in its strategy of using bombardments to target the country's energy infrastructure and wear down Ukrainian resistance to its invasion. The barrage was the latest in a series of relentless year-end attacks, including one that killed three civilians on



Russia has flattened Ukrainian cities, killed thousands of civilians and annexed swathes of Ukraine since Putin ordered his invasion in February

New Year's Eve. On Monday, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said that 40 drones "headed for Kyiv" overnight. All of them were destroyed, according to air defence forces. Klitschko said 22 drones were destroyed over Kyiv, three in the outlying Kyiv region and 15 over neighbouring provinces. Energy infrastructure facilities were damaged as the result of the attack and an explosion occurred in one city district, the mayor said. It wasn't immediately clear whether that was caused by drones or other munitions. A wounded 19-year-old man was hospitalised. Klitschko added, and emergency power outages were underway in the capital. In the outlying Kyiv region a "critical infrastructure object" and residential buildings were hit. Gov Oleksiy Kuleba said. Russia has carried out airstrikes on Ukrainian power and water supplies almost weekly since October. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused Russia of "energy terrorism" as the aerial bombardments have left many people without heat amid freezing

- Kyiv says Russian strikes are falling
- Scores of Russian troops reported dead in barracks blast
- Stern Putin New Year speech signals no let-up
- Zelenskyy says Ukraine stands united

temperatures. Ukrainian officials say Moscow is "weaponising winter" in its effort to demoralise the Ukrainian resistance. Ukraine is using sophisticated Western-supplied weapons to help shoot down Russia's missiles and drones, as well as send artillery fire into Russian-held areas of the country. Moscow's full-scale invasion February 24 has gone awry, putting pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin as his ground forces struggle to hold ground and advance. He said in his New Year's address to the nation that 2022 was "a year of difficult, necessary decisions." Putin insists he had no choice but to send troops into Ukraine because it threatened Russia's security — an assertion condemned by the West, which says Moscow bears full responsibility for the war.

Deadly Israeli missile strikes put Damascus airport out of service

Beirut, Jan 2: Israel's military fired missiles toward the international airport of Syria's capital early Monday, putting it out of service and killing two soldiers and wounding two others, the Syrian army said. The attack, which occurred shortly after midnight Sunday, was the second in seven months to put the Damascus International Airport out of service. It caused material damage in a nearby area, the army said, without giving further details. Syria's Ministry of Transport said work to repair the damage began immediately and later Monday, some flights resumed while work in other parts of the airport continued. Israel has targeted airports and ports in government-held parts of Syria in an apparent attempt to prevent arms shipments from Iran to militant groups backed by Tehran, including Lebanon's Hezbollah. An opposition war monitor reported the Israeli strikes hit the airport as well as an arms depot close to the facility south of Damascus. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said four people were killed in the strike. The conflicting reports could not immediately be reconciled. The Observatory said the runway used for civilian flights was fixed while another, used for cargo transport, remains out of service. That runway is also used by Iran-backed backed groups, the Observatory added.

Kim sacks No. 2 military official



Seoul, Jan 2: North Korea has sacked Pak Jong Chon, the second most powerful military official after leader Kim Jong Un, state media reported. Pak, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the ruling Workers' Party and a secretary of the party's Central Committee, was replaced by Ri Yong Gil at the committee's annual meeting last week, the official KCNA news agency said Sunday. No reason for the change was given. Pyongyang regularly revamps its leadership and the year-end party gathering has often been used to announce personnel reshuffles and major policy decisions. State television showed Pak sitting in the front row of the podium with his head down during the meeting while other members

raised their hands to vote on personnel issues. His seat was later shown unoccupied. He was also absent in photos released Monday by the official KCNA news agency of Kim's New Year's Day visit to the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun which houses the bodies of his grandfather and father, unlike in October when Pak accompanied Kim on a trip to the palace to mark a party anniversary. The party's Central Military Commission, which is headed by Kim, is considered the country's most powerful military decision-making body, above the defence ministry. Pak's replacement came as Kim called for developing new inter-continental ballistic missiles and a larger nuclear arsenal to counter the United States and South Korea as key to the isolated country's 2023 defence strategy. Pak had rapidly moved up the military ladder from a one-star artillery commander in 2015 to a four-star general in 2020, taking credit for contributing to progress in the country's short-range missile technology. In late 2020, Pak was promoted to the politburo and earned the title of marshal, the highest military rank under Kim, and became a leading voice last November against joint South Korea-US military exercises.

Lula sworn in as Brazil President

Brasilia: Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has been sworn in as the new President of Brazil — a hird time he has held the country's highest office. The inauguration of Lula da Silva and his Vice President Geraldo Alckmin took place at 3 p.m. pm Sunday during a plenary session of the Chamber of Deputies in Brasilia, reports Xinhua news agency. This is Lula da Silva's third presidential term and his return to power comes after having spent more than a year in prison between 2018 and 2019, due to a controversial sentence that was later annulled by the Supreme Court. In October, he was elected president with 60.3 million votes, or 50.9 per cent of the vote, while then President Jair Bolsonaro obtained 58.2 million votes or 49.1 per cent. Lula da Silva returns to the presidency with an agenda focused on strong social programs aimed at fighting poverty, under the motto "union and reconstruction".



Parts of China return to regular activity amid Covid wave

Beijing, Jan 2: Some people in the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan braved the cold and a rise in Covid-19 infections to return to regular activity Monday, raising the prospect of a boost to the economy as more recover from infections. Among those who gathered to sled or ice skate on a frozen lake in the capital's Shichahai Lake Park, some were upbeat about the opening-up after China dropped stringent "zero-Covid" measures on December 7 to adopt a strategy of living with the virus. Monday was a public holiday but traffic in the capital has built up again in the last few days as

people flock to outdoor sites, although business is still slow in some smaller, confined locations, such as restaurants. The owner of a Beijing seafood restaurant said patrons had not returned to full strength. In the central city of Wuhan, where the pandemic began three years ago, people were not as anxious any more. During the New Year's holiday period, 52.7 million domestic tourist trips were made, an increase of 0.44% over the same period a year earlier and up 42.8% over the corresponding period in 2019, according to government data posted Monday. LUNAR NEW YEAR TRAVEL China's biggest holiday, Lunar New Year, begins January 21 this



year, when the railway network is expected to carry 5.5 million passengers, state broadcaster CCTV has said. As expectations for holiday travel grow, authorities at Tibet's spectacular Potala Palace said it would open for visitors from Jan 3, after shutting last August due to a Covid-19 outbreak. Some hotels in the southern tourist resort of Sanya are fully booked for Lunar New Year,

The switch followed protests over the policy championed by President Xi Jinping, marking the strongest show of public defiance in his decade-old presidency and coinciding with grim growth figures for the country's \$17 trillion economy. However, a wave of infections has erupted nationwide since the dismantling of the zero-Covid policy, fuelling international concern and prompting some countries to impose curbs on travellers from China

media have said. In recent days state media have sought to reassure the public that the Covid-19 outbreak was under control and nearing its peak. More than 80% of those living in southwestern Sichuan have been infected, the province's Center for Disease Control and Prevention has said. But Monday's single new Covid death — flat from the previous day — among China's population of 1.4 billion does not match the experience of other countries after they re-opened. The official death toll of 5,250 since the pandemic began compares with more than 1 million in the United States. Chinese-ruled Hong Kong, a city of 7.4 million, has reported more than 11,000 deaths.

of the day quote

Our domestic demand is bound to offset the risk of global demand slowdown...However, we need to be watchful about international currency fluctuations, particularly in Emerging Economies

DEEPAK SOOD | SECRETARY GENERAL, ASSOCHAM

We are also exploring opportunities in emerging areas of Green Hydrogen, Battery Energy Storage Systems through collaborations with global technology companies

RAJIB K MISHRA | CMD (ADDITIONAL CHARGE), PTC INDIA

The year has been challenging on the supply side, customer interest has been strong especially in the festive period. The higher purchasing power of the customers is driving interest towards aspirational products

RAKESH SRIVASTAVA | MD, NISSAN MOTOR

SHORT TAKES

Petrol export by OMCs rose 142%

New Delhi: Export of petrol by Indian oil marketing companies (OMCs) rose 142 per cent in a year between 2020-21 and 2021-22, while there was a minuscule rise of less than 1 per cent in export of diesel during the same period. According to official figures, the OMCs exported 668 thousand metric tonnes (TMT) of petrol in 2021-22, which was 142 per cent more than 276 TMT of petrol exported by the country in 2020-21. In 2020-21, the OMCs exported 1,985 TMT of diesel, while in 2021-22, it exported 1,994 TMT of diesel, a growth of less than 1 per cent over the previous year. The three OMCs, namely the Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum, and Bharat Petroleum Corporation, export petrol and diesel to several nations across the world.

Indian Bank hikes lending rates

New Delhi: State-owned Indian Bank Monday increased lending rates, including the marginal cost of funds-based lending rates (MCLR), by up to 25 basis points. The new rates are effective from January 3, Indian Bank said in a regulatory filing. The Asset Liability Management Committee (ALCO) of the bank has reviewed the Marginal Cost of funds based Lending Rate (MCLR), Treasury Bills Linked Lending Rates (TBLR), Base Rate and Benchmark Prime Lending Rate (BPLR) and decided for an upward revision in MCLR, TBLR, Base Rate and BPLR across various tenors, it noted. The one-year rate is used to fix most consumer loans, such as auto, personal and home loans. The overnight MCLR rate has been revised upward by 25 basis points to 7.75 per cent, while that of one month to six months tenure hiked by 20 basis points, the bank said.

Swiggy's losses jump 2X in FY22

New Delhi: Online food delivery platform Swiggy's losses doubled to ₹3,629 crore in FY22 compared to ₹1,617 crore in the last fiscal year. Total expenses went up 131 per cent to ₹9,574.5 crore in FY22. According to its annual financial statement with the Registrar of Companies (RoC), during the last quarter of FY22, Swiggy turned "decacorn" (with a valuation of \$10 billion and above) after raising a \$700 million round led by Invesco. Meanwhile, Swiggy's revenue grew 2.2 times to ₹5,705 crore during FY22 as opposed to ₹2,547 crore in FY21.

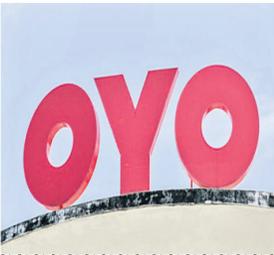


If last year has shown us the true potential of India's EV market, this year is poised to open the floodgates for EVs in the country

BHAVISH AGGARWAL | FOUNDER AND CEO, OLA ELECTRIC

OYO SAW RECORD BOOKINGS ON NY EVE

Travel tech firm OYO witnessed a record 4.5 lakh-plus bookings on New Year's eve, its highest bookings per hotel per day for India in the last 5 years. Founder and Group CEO Ritesh Agarwal said. In a series of tweets, Agarwal spoke about the "busiest day of the year" for the travel technology company and shared that OYO saw higher bookings in Varanasi as compared to Goa



BANKING BEHEMOTHS

SBI, ICICI, HDFC remain 'too big to fail'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 2: The RBI Monday said state-owned SBI, along with private sector lenders ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank continue to be Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) or institutions which are 'too big to fail'.

SIBs are perceived as banks that are 'too big to fail' (TBTF). This perception of TBTF creates an expectation of government support for these lenders in times of distress. Due to this, these banks enjoy certain advantages in the funding markets.

"SBI, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank continue to be identified as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs), under the same bucketing structure as in the 2021 list of D-SIBs," the Reserve Bank said in a statement.

The additional Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) requirement for D-SIBs was phased-in from April 1, 2016 and became fully effective from April 1, 2019. The additional CET1 requirement will be in addition to the capital conservation buffer.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had announced SBI and ICICI Bank



as D-SIBs in 2015 and 2016. Based on data collected from banks as March 31, 2017, HDFC Bank was also classified as a D-SIB.

The current update is based on data collected from banks as March 31, 2022. The framework for dealing with

D-SIBs was issued in July 2014. The framework requires the RBI to disclose the names of banks designated as D-SIBs starting from 2015 and place these lenders in appropriate buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SIS).

Based on the bucket in which a D-SIB is placed, an additional common equity requirement has to be applied to it.

The Additional Common Equity Tier 1 requirement as a percentage of Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs) in case of SBI is 0.6 per cent, and 0.2 per cent for ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank.

Markets dart up on first trading day of New Year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 2: Equity benchmarks began the New Year on a strong note, with the Sensex climbing 327 points and the Nifty finishing near the 18,200-mark Monday as positive macroeconomic data and a firm trend in European equities bolstered investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 327.05 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 61,167.79. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 92.15 points or 0.51 per cent to 18,197.45.

Tata Steel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, vaulting 5.86 per cent, followed by Tata Motors, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Infosys, NTPC and Bharti Airtel. However, Asian Paints, Titan, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finance and SBI were among the laggards, losing as much as 1.47 per cent.

The market breadth was firmly in favour of the bulls, with 22 advances and only 8 declines.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge rose 0.84 per cent and midcap index advanced 0.57 per cent. Among sectoral indices, metal jumped 2.83 per cent, telecommunication climbed 1.32 per cent, services (1.08 per cent), commodities (1.23 per cent), realty (0.99 per cent) and industrials (0.76 per cent). Consumer durables and power indices closed in the red.

The rupee started the New Year on a muted note, declining 17 paise to close at 82.78 against the US dollar. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in the capital market Monday, as they offloaded shares worth ₹212.57 crore, as per stock exchange data.

UPI payments touch all-time high in Dec

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: Payments through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) touched a record high of ₹12.82 lakh crore in December.

During the month, 782 crore transactions in volume terms were done on the platform, which was launched in 2016.

"UPI has made major contribution in ushering digital payment revolution in the country. In December 2022, UPI has crossed 7.82 billion transactions worth ₹12.82 trillion," the Department of Financial Services said in a tweet Monday.

Payments through UPI had crossed the ₹12 lakh crore mark in October this year.

In November, as many as 730.9 crore transactions worth ₹11.90 lakh crore had taken place via UPI.

HEFTY SCRUTINY

Govt drafts rules for online gaming firms

GOVT SAID THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RULES IS TO GROW THE ONLINE GAMING SPACE & ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: Online gaming companies will not be allowed to engage in betting on the outcome of games under the principle laid in draft rules, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said Monday.

The minister said that as of now, all permissible online gaming will need to be registered with a self-regulatory organisation that will be accountable to the online gaming rules.

"As per the principles laid under the rule, wagering on the outcome of game will not be allowed. All online gaming companies will have to register with the self-regulatory body that will decide on the action required to be taken as per the rules," Chandrasekhar said.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT has published draft rules for online gaming companies and has invited comments on the same by January 17.

The government has proposed a self-regulatory mechanism, mandatory verification of players and physical Indian address for online gaming companies, according to the draft online gaming rules.

Online gaming companies will be covered under the new IT rules that were issued in 2021 for social media platforms. Online gaming platforms are expected to comply



GOVT PROPOSES SELF REGULATORY MECHANISM, DUE DILIGENCE FOR ONLINE GAMING FIRMS

Betting on outcomes of games will not be allowed; rules expected in Feb: MoS IT

FIRMS WILL BE COVERED UNDER THE NEW IT RULES THAT WERE ISSUED IN 2021 FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

We are not policing. Online gaming is \$200 billion industry. India has a tremendous amount of potential in terms of startups and investments. Our goal is more and more investment comes in, startups in the gaming sector grow

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR | MOS FOR ELECTRONICS & IT

with the laws of the land, including any such law that relates to gambling or betting.

"If you bet on an outcome of the game, it is prohibited. The self-regulatory organisations will develop filters and tests required to decide permissible gaming, be it a game of chance or game of skills or anything else," Chandrasekhar said.

The draft rules prescribe additional due diligence for companies by displaying a registration mark on all online games registered by a self-regulatory organisation (SRO) and informing its users regarding its policy related to withdrawal or refund of the deposit, manner of termination and distribution of winnings, fees and other charges payable and KYC procedure for user account registration.

On the verification requirement of children, the minister said the finer details will evolve after the consultation is over.

Chandrasekhar also said that he has learnt that 40-45 per cent of gamers are women and the feedback that the government has received shows that there is a considerable amount of work that needs to be done to make online gaming safe for women.

In response to a question on the impact of rules on the laws passed by some states, the minister said that the centre wants online gaming to grow without any contradiction to local or state laws.

"We want the year 2023 (to be) a year where online gaming rapidly explodes and expands with investments and new platforms develop," Chandrasekhar said.

He said as per the draft rules, even casual gaming entities need to register with SROs but the final call will be taken based on the feedback during the consultation process. "We hope that by early February we will have final rules."

Economy poised for further growth in '23

The challenges before the govt and RBI in the new year would be to arrest inflation, check declining value of rupee against US dollar and promote private investment and growth, with a view to ensure that the country remains one the fastest growing major economies of the world

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: The Indian economy recovered from the Covid-induced downturn during 2022 and is poised for further improvement in the coming quarters though downside risks emanating from geopolitical tensions, strengthening dollar and elevated inflation will continue.

The positive trajectory in the growth trend and improved fundamentals will help the nation in neutralising the impact of global headwinds which are expected to have a bearing on the country's exports in the months to come.

"From the viewpoint of India, in terms of headwinds originating abroad, the worst is probably behind us... Overall, I still expect us to end the current fiscal year with a growth rate exceeding 7 per cent. Next year, the 7 per cent growth rate should sustain assuming the forthcoming Budget does not have any negative surprises," opined former vice-chairman of the Niti Aayog and noted economist Arvind Panagariya.

The biggest problem the economy faced was persistent high inflation which remained above the Reserve Bank's comfort level for the most of the year. Infact, the



RBI had to file a report to the central government on why it failed to check inflation.

The depreciating rupee against the US dollar too remained a challenge for policy makers making imports costlier and in turn impacting the country's current account deficit. The rupee, according to analysts, will continue to remain under pressure in the coming months.

Exports too faced global headwinds and the things may not be rosy either in 2023, because of recession in key western markets and geo-political crisis due to the Russia-Ukraine war.

Later months of 2022 witnessed

lots of job cuts in the technology segment amid global economic turmoil, though a mixed bag of opportunities is likely to greet job aspirants in the New Year as telecom and services-oriented sectors are anticipated to accelerate hiring.

The Reserve Bank front-loaded interest rate hikes to check inflation as well as rupee depreciation triggered by repeated hike in interest rate by the US Federal Reserve, thus making loans dearer.

However, a surge in post-pandemic pent-up demand helped India's property market, one of the largest employers in the country, overcome risks from rising interest rates this year but the dream

run might face hurdles from global headwinds in 2023.

Former Reserve Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan has opined that the next year will be difficult for the Indian economy as also for the rest of the world and the country failed to "generate reforms" needed for growth.

He said policies should be formulated keeping in mind the lower middle class which suffered the most due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Rajan also pitched for creating a conducive environment for small and medium-scale industries and giving a push to a green revolution in the field of sustainable energy.

Bol opens National Banking Group-Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Odisha being a fast developing state with ease of doing business offers ample scope for development. Looking at the prospects, the Bank of India decided to open a new National Banking Group (NBG) for the state at Bhubaneswar. The NBG was inaugurated by the MD and CEO of the bank, AK Das January 2 and is located at the first floor of the Bank of India Star House, Jayadev Vihar.



With the opening of NBG-Odisha, the bank envisages to increase the pace of business growth, to effect better monitoring & control of the branches. The bank desires to have sustainable and inclusive growth across all the 30 districts of the state. It will be headed by a General Manager, who will be leading all the four zones for the overall business development of the state. Bank of India has a spectrum of banking products across all segments viz Retail, MSME, Agriculture and Corporate, besides its commitment for various government sponsored schemes of both the Central and state government. Branches in Odisha were earlier controlled by National Banking Group (East) Kolkata, through 4 zonal offices situated at Bhubaneswar, Baripada, Keonjhar and Sambalpur with a total business mix of around ₹38000 crore.

24th MEMC week celebrated by AMIPL

Bhubaneswar: The 24th Mines Environment and Mineral Conservation (MEMC) week was celebrated at Thakurani iron ore mines of ArcelorMittal India Pvt Ltd (AMIPL) under the aegis of IBM, Bhubaneswar. On the occasion, the mines manager Pramod Kumar Mishra hoisted the flag on the premises of Thakurani mines in presence of the employees and workers. The MEMC week inspection was conducted at Thakurani Iron Ore Mine by a team led by the convener Arbind Kumar Jha, AGM-mines, Lanjiberna Limestone and Dolomite Mines, M/s Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd and accompanied by Chandrakant Rath, DGM-mines, Mahulsukha Iron and Manganese Mines, M/s Pattanaik Minerals and Vikas Ranjan Nayak, GM-Mines, Gorumahisani, M/s GS Mishra & Sons. To mark this occasion various environment awareness programmes like slogan, poster, debate, and essay competitions were organised.



INDIAN T20 TEAM UNDER NEW SKIPPER HARDIK PREPARE FOR LIFE WITHOUT 'BIG THREE'

'MISSION 2024' KICKS OFF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 2: Hardik Pandya will be expected to begin his full-time T20 captaincy tenure on a bold note as the Indian T20 team prepares to start its life beyond Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul with the three match series against Sri Lanka, beginning here Tuesday.

The followers of Indian cricket got more than glimpse of Hardik's vision for the team when led the team to victory in the rain-hit T20 series in New Zealand.

In an ODI World Cup year, the shortest format is not priority for the Indian team but the series will allow Hardik to start planning for the future, specifically the 2024 T20 World Cup.

India's famed top three – Rohit, Kohli and Rahul – are not part of the squad and irrespective of their T20 future, the team must prepare for life without them.

The problem with the current Indian T20 team in recent past, has been distinct lack of intent and ability to play fearless cricket.

The idea of self preservation at the cost of impactful performance was hurting the team for a long time and perhaps the poor show in the T20 World Cup became the last straw.

The combination

Rishabh Pant, who suffered a horrific car crash last week, opened for the team in New Zealand alongside Ishan Kishan. Pant was anyway not picked for the Sri Lanka series, making Kishan and Rituraj Gaikwad opening combination most likely for the first T20 at the high-scoring Wankhede Stadium.



Indian players warm up during their training session ahead of the first T20I against Sri Lanka, Tuesday

Both Kishan and Gaikwad have been bonafide IPL stars for a past few years and this is their real chance to show their wares without worrying about their place in the side.

With next T20 World Cup at least 18 months away, the duo is expected to get a fair run although the number of T20Is this year is less than 15 with ODI gaining more precedence. Shubman Gill, who is yet to make his T20 debut, is another opening option for Hardik.

At number three, the skipper will rely on the brilliance of world's No.1 batter Suryakumar Yadav. With Hardik keen to have six bowling options in the playing eleven, Deepak Hooda could be a likely starter for Tuesday's game.

The management will have to choose between Sanju Samson and uncapped Rahul Tripathi for the one spot in the middle order. Tripathi has been warming the bench for a while now and it could continue against Sri Lanka but Samson on

account of experience should get a first go.

Though uncapped Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar have been included in the squad, the likely pace bowling trio will be of Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel and Umran Malik.

India could also pack in more all-rounders in the team with the option of Washington Sundar and Axar Patel. Specialist spinner Yuzvendra Chahal is expected to play in the series opener.

Reigning Asia Cup champions Sri Lanka will be no pushovers for India even in their own conditions. Sri Lanka have rewarded the star performers of the Lanka Premier League – Avishka Fernando, Chamika Karunaratne and Sadeera Samarawickrama – by including them in the team for the India series.

Both Fernando and Karunaratne have made a comeback and will be looking to make an impactful contribution. Bhanuka Rajapaksa will be their key batter in the middle-order.

THE SQUADS

INDIA
Hardik Pandya (C), Ishan Kishan (wk), Rituraj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (vc), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Sanju Samson, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi & Mukesh Kumar.

SRI LANKA
Dasun Shanaka (C), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kusal Mendis (vc for ODIs), Bhanuka Rajapaksa (only for T20Is), Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga (vc for T20Is), Ashen Bandara, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay (only for ODIs), Chamika Karunaratne, Dilshan Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, Nuwanidu Fernando (only for ODIs), Dunith Wellalage, Pramod Madushan, Lahiru Kumara & Nuwan Thushara (only for T20Is).

VVS Laxman in line for India's head coach job

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 2: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) may consider making VVS Laxman the next head coach of the Indian men's team after the end of Rahul Dravid's contract, which currently runs till the 2023 ODI World Cup.

A report by News18 Cricketnext has said it is reliably learnt that should Dravid not consider an extension as men's team head coach, then Laxman, who is currently the Head of Cricket at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bangalore, could be the person to take the top job.

Laxman, 48, has filled in as the head coach of the Indian team in Dravid's absence. He was with the team for the bilateral series against Ireland in June 2022, as well as for the first T20I against England and the short tour of Zimbabwe.

He was also with the Indian team for the 2022 edition of the T20 Asia Cup in the UAE when Dravid was down with Covid-19 and has also travelled to New Zealand as the head coach of the team for their white-ball tour immediately after the T20 World Cup ended in November 2022.

Apart from grooming the next generation of players at the NCA, Laxman had travelled with the India U-19 team for their successful 2022 World Cup too and played a very proactive role with the young bunch during their campaign in the West Indies.

The report also said that for now, split coaching will not be happening. "Has that happened in Indian cricket before?" a senior BCCI official was quoted as saying in the



report when asked about the possibility of split coaching coming into the set-up.

Ever since he took over from Ravi Shastri as the head coach in November 2021, Dravid has had an indifferent run at the helm of the Indian team.

They lost to England in the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup and didn't reach the final of the 2022 T20 Asia Cup apart from losing the Test and ODI series in South Africa and rescheduling the fifth Test to England at Birmingham.

PANT SHIFTED FROM ICU TO PRIVATE WARD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Jan 2: Cricketer Rishabh Pant has been shifted from the ICU to the private ward of the Max Hospital here following improvement in his condition. He was shifted to the private ward Sunday evening as his condition improved but the pain in his leg persists, sources said. No MRI is planned yet, they added.

Pant was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital hours after the wicketkeeper-batsman suffered multiple injuries in a car accident on the Delhi-Dehradun highway, near Roorkee, in the early hours of Friday.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, who met Pant at the hospital Sunday, had said quoting the cricketer that he had lost control over his car while trying to avoid a pothole and something black on the road.



Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) director Shyam Sharma, who met the cricketer on Saturday, had also told reporters that the accident took place when Pant was trying to negotiate a pothole.

The accident took place at around 5.30 am Friday, when Pant's luxury car hit a road divider, rolled over to the other side of the road and caught fire. Pant had a miraculous escape but he sustained injuries on his forehead, leg and bruises on his back.

Hire drivers: Kapil's suggestion to players

NEW DELHI: The legendary Kapil Dev believes any cricketer representing the country like Rishabh Pant should be "more careful" and hire drivers instead of getting behind the wheels to avoid the mishap that happened last week. Kapil made the statement while reacting to Pant's horrifying accident Friday while driving his Mercedes on NH-58. "We can avoid things that can lead to mishaps like these," Kapil was quoted as saying by ABP News. "Especially for these special players. I remember during my early playing days, I was riding a bike and met with an accident following which my brother never let me ride one. The players should be careful. They don't need to drive themselves. They can afford drivers. I know a lot of people are passionate about driving but when one has so many responsibilities, one must take care of oneself," the 63-year-old stated.

Hardik backs Surya for Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 2: India's T20I captain Hardik Pandya has pitched for charismatic white-ball batter Suryakumar Yadav to be given the opportunity to play red-ball cricket following the 32-year-old's amazing run in the short-format last year.

On the eve of the opening T20I against Sri Lanka at the Wankhede Stadium here, Pandya complimented his vice-captain, saying going forward Suryakumar could be a vital cog in all three formats of the game.

Surya recently expressed his intention to play Test cricket, saying he always dreamt of playing red-ball cricket for the country. He is also among a very few current India players who have played a Ranji Trophy game this season. The Mumbai batter scored an entertaining 80-ball 90 in his first Ranji game in nearly three years, in December last year.

Pandya said Suryakumar has the knack to alter the complexion of the game and that he is the "most important player" for the team management.

"I have said in the past for Surya that he played international cricket late. I was always keen from 2020 for him to be a part of the Indian team. But, unfortunately, he was not. So, God gave him what he did not get in the past. He played late but, yes, he got exactly what he would have got earlier as well," Pandya said.

"I can only wish all the best and



I hope he continues the run for the Indian team and flourishes more in life and scores more runs. For me and my side, Surya has been fantastic," said Pandya during a press conference on Monday.

Pandya indicated that he would banking heavily on his deputy in the three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, saying everyone knows his utility in white-ball cricket.

"Going ahead, he is very important for all the formats and I feel in red ball as well. He has the game to kind of change the momentum and the situation if he comes in. I'm sure that the selectors and the captain are looking at him as well.

"In white ball, everyone knows, I don't need to tell how important he is. For us, as captain, for the management he is our most important player. We want him to flourish more," added Pandya.

When Hardik was asked about Rishabh Pant, he was full of en-

Pele funeral: Fans line up to mourn Brazilian legend

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Santos (Brazil), Jan 2: Fans lined up early Monday outside the Vila Belmiro Stadium ahead of Pele's funeral in his hometown of Santos.

The Brazilian football great died Thursday after a battle with cancer. He was 82. Pele scored some of the best goals of his career at the 16,000-seat stadium outside Sao Paulo. His funeral is scheduled start at 10 am local time, and the burial will take place in a vertical cemetery only 600 meters away Tuesday.

Fans started arriving at the stadium in the early hours of Monday to pay their last respects to Edson Arantes do Nascimento, globally known as Pele. One of them was Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Gilmar Mendes. Mendes said Pele was a humble man despite his global fame, and that he deserves every tribute.

Inside the Vila Belmiro, a large tent has been set to place Pele's coffin. After Pele's funeral, his casket will be ushered through the streets of Santos before his burial. Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and other dignitaries are expected to attend.

Pele had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. The medical center where he had been hospitalised said he died of multiple organ failure as a result of the cancer.

Pakistan bounce back after Conway ton

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Karachi, Jan 2: New Zealand slipped against Pakistan all-rounder Agha Salman's offspin in the final session after Devon Conway hit his fourth Test hundred on the opening day of the second Test Monday.

New Zealand were cruising along at 234/1 on the back of Conway's 122 (191b, 16x4, 1x6) before Salman picked up 3/55 and the Black Caps finished the day at 309/6. Tom Blundell was not out on 30 while Ish Sodhi, who made a career-best 65 in the drawn first Test, was unbeaten on 11.

Conway put on two solid century stands with Tom Latham (71, 100b, 9x4) and Kane Williamson (36, 91b, 5x4) in a dominating first two sessions for the Black Caps after Tim Southee won the toss and elected to bat before losing five wickets for 45 runs after tea.

Salman pegged back New Zealand with the old ball on a wicket that had some grass and tempted Pakistan to go with three



Devon Conway celebrates his century against Pakistan, Monday

fast bowlers — Mir Hamza, recalled Hasan Ali and fit-again Naseem Shah — and just one spe-

cialist spinner Abrar Ahmed. Salman ignited the collapse when he found the outside edge of

Conway's bat that ended his 100-run stand with Williamson.

The off-spinner, who bowled 12-over spell after tea, hit back the off stump of Daryl Mitchell (3) with his turning delivery before successfully overturning a caught behind decision through TV referral against Henry Nicholls (26).

Earlier, Conway and Latham contributed a second successive century opening stand in the two-match series before Naseem Shah (2/44) brought the lone success in the first two sessions when he had Latham trapped leg before wicket of a full delivery after lunch but New Zealand added further 107 runs in the post-lunch session.

Both lefthanders Conway and Latham dominated the pace and spin in the first session to produce 119 runs and even showed aggression against Abrar's mystery spin after captain Babar Azam turned to his ace spinner as early as in the ninth over.

Hasan Ali, playing his first Test since July, twice found the edges of

Conway's bat in successive overs after lunch only to see the ball fall short of Abdullah Shafique in the slips and then Saud Shakeel couldn't hold onto a sharp chance in gully while diving full length to his right when the lefthander was 11 shy of his hundred.

Latham and Conway completed their half centuries before lunch and provided New Zealand a solid start. Both batters motored New Zealand to 63 inside the first hour and batted aggressively against fast bowlers Naseem and Hasan.

Conway raised New Zealand's half century with a six against the mystery spinner Ahmed over wide mid-on as Pakistan struggled to get through the defenses.

New Zealand, on their first Test tour to Pakistan since 2002, had made a strong bid to chase down 138 in the last hour of the first Test of the two-match series last Friday after Pakistan captain Babar Azam made a daring declaration. Poor visibility halted the Black Caps at 61/1 in the eighth over to draw the game.

Mumbai City FC thrash Odisha, regain top spot



Mumbai City players celebrate a goal at Kalinga Stadium

Bhubaneswar, Jan 2: Lallianzuala Chhangte struck a brace and set up another as Mumbai City FC defeated hosts Odisha FC 4-2 in a relentless second-half attack to extend their winning streak to seven matches in the Indian Super League (ISL) here Monday.

The home side had a solid defensive start and Mumbai City failed to breach the resolute defence of goalkeeper Amrinder Singh in the first half. But the Mizoram midfielder began the goal-spree when he opened the scoring in the 55th combining well with Jorge Diaz.

Diego Mauricio equalised six minutes later but Mumbai returned stronger to score through Bipin Singh (68th). Chhangte set up substitute Alberto Noguera (86th) to make it 3-1 before he virtually killed the contest, completing his brace in 79th minute.

Out of nowhere, Mauricio got into the act in the 90th minute and brought up his double but it was merely a consolation for the home side who suffered their fifth defeat from 12 matches to remain on 19 points. Unbeaten from 12 matches, Mumbai City FC secured their ninth win of the season to regain the top spot, two points clear of Hyderabad FC.