



## TRUE DIVA

Actor-singer Shruti Haasan says music allows her to show a valued part of herself and her spirit

LEISURE P2



## VHP SLAMS MAMATA

The VHP slammed Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee for not delivering her speech at 'Parakram Diwas' celebration

TWO STATES P7



## BIDEN DIALS JOHNSON

Joe Biden in his first call as US President to British PM Boris Johnson, discussed NATO alliance, climate change and Covid-19

INTERNATIONAL P10

Naveen is India's best CM: India Today survey



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has once again emerged as the most loved politician in the state. He has been adjudged the best performing Chief Minister at the state-level in India Today's 'Mood of the Nation' (MOTN) January 2021 poll. The survey shows that 51 per cent respondents from Odisha rated him as the best performing Chief Minister.

Naveen has stayed away from national limelight and has remained focused on the affairs in Odisha. For more than two decades of his tenure in Odisha, Naveen has been successful in keeping the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress at bay, showcasing the dominance of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha, the magazine stated.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is in second place with 41 per cent respondents from Delhi voting for him as best CM, followed by Yogi Adityanath (39%), Maharashtra's Uddhav Thackeray (35%) and Telangana's K Chandrashekar Rao (35%).

Recently, the ABP News-C Voter 'Desh Ka Mood' survey had also adjudged Patnaik as the best CM in the country.

# China breaks pact, mobilises troops

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Even as the Indian and Chinese armies Sunday held the ninth round of Corps Commander-level talks with an aim to move forward on disengagement of troops from all friction points in eastern Ladakh, the Chinese side violated a crucial confidence building measure proposed by the Chinese army to defuse tensions in the region four months ago.

According to reports, the Chinese army has further consolidated its positions in eastern Ladakh and gradually increased its troop numbers at the friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) despite proposing that the two sides should refrain from sending more troops to the troubled front.

Ground assessments along the LAC confirm that the PLA has not only reneged on the joint statement issued following the sixth round of talks September 21 last year, but done so stealthily.

A day after talks last September, the two sides had issued a joint statement that was seen as a substantive forward movement after months of deadlock. As per the joint statement, the two sides had "agreed to earnestly implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, strengthen communication on the ground, avoid misunderstandings and misjudgements, refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground, stop sending more troops to the frontline and avoid taking any actions that may complicate the situation."

Four months later, that most crucial confidence building measure is practically useless. Top Army sources confirm that the Indian Army has had no choice but to mirror the gradual build-

up on the Chinese side. In some sectors, foreseeing fresh Chinese concentrations, the Indian Army has conducted preemptive actions. As a result, despite the deep winter chill, opposing troops, tanks and armoured personnel carriers are nearer to each other than they have been in the past four months.

China has also been steadily consolidating its positions in northern Ladakh's Depsang plains, with new positions emerging even closer to Daulat Beg Oldie. Indian Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria recently paid a visit to this high altitude air base to review security and arrangements.

The Indian Army has been forced to mobilise in a historically big way in this sector owing to Chinese hostile postures here.

The ninth round of talks held Sunday at Ladakh's Chushul sector, an area south of the Pangong lake that is presently dominated by Indian Army infantry. However, China continues to enjoy tactical advantages at many of the other friction points, though the Indian Army's inevitable counter-mobilisation has led to the very definition of a deadlock, with entrenched positions at high altitude. One assessment within the government is that the Indian Army's unyielding stance has upset the Chinese plans, with the PLA still figuring how to handle the abrupt distribution of leverage between both sides in Ladakh.

Elsewhere on the India-China frontier, permanent defences have been constructed across the border from Sikkim's Naku La, an escalation from the troubled status quo in the area, which has involved large training PLA contingents conducting high level training exercises close to the Sikkim border.



## LADAKH STAND-OFF

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## Farmers' R-Day tractor rally on, but with riders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Farmers protesting against the Centre's new farm laws have received permission to hold a tractor rally on Republic Day. The Delhi Police, however, has issued a series of restrictions, saying permission was given only to show respect for the farmers' demand. "Protesting farmers can enter Delhi but can't disturb the Republic Day parade," the Delhi Police said this evening, declaring that the tractor rally will begin after the day's traditional big parade on Rajpath, which terminates at the iconic Red Fort close to noon.

The farmers - who have been sitting on protest outside the borders of Delhi for nearly two months - will have to enter the city to access the Ring Road. The green signal came after a series of

meetings - including some with the farmers, who have promised a peaceful rally that will move along a road encircling the city.

The farmers, the police said, can enter Delhi for few kilometers and then exit at designation spots. While the number of participating tractors is yet to be decided, the route has been fixed in such a way that it can be protected indicating that stringent security will be provided for the rally, the Delhi Police said their personnel, who will be posted for Republic Day parade, will have to be ready for further deployment on short notice.

The government has opposed the rally on the Republic Day, saying it would be an "embarrassment for the nation" because of the timing. The Supreme Court, where it appealed, however left the decision to the Delhi Police.



## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I used to eagerly wait for the Budget when I was running this shop. Now I don't care.

# Sorry saga of state Excise dept

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** The menace of unbridled consumption of drugs and alcohol has been spreading rapidly across the state, which, in turn, has led to rise in illegal activities. This aside, many are victims of spurious liquor. But the state Excise department seems to turn a blind eye to the catastrophe.

Data collected by Orissa POST through RTI in connection with the performance of the Excise department in the state shows that 20,587 Excise cases were registered and 17,196 persons were arrested under the NPS Act and Excise Act in the four zones of the state during 2017-18. However, the rate of conviction has been miserably low.

For instance, 1,900 persons were arrested in Gajapati district alone under the NDPS Act and Excise Act between 2009 and 2019, but the Excise department was able to prove the involvement of only three



persons in illegal activities before the court. During this period, three accused were convicted under the above Acts, while 1,827 people were acquitted.

In Sundargarh district, 13,934 persons were arrested under the Excise Act, but 4,744 of them were acquitted. The remaining cases are sub judice. Not a single accused arrested was convicted under the NDPS Act.

The performance of the Excise department is similar in the other districts too. There was no conviction under Excise Act in

Jharsuguda district during the same period, while almost all the arrested accused were acquitted.

As many as 28 NDPS cases were registered in Jajpur between 2009 and 2019, but none has been convicted. Meanwhile, of the 2,846 who were arrested under Excise Act only seven have been convicted and 700 people were acquitted in this district during 2017-2018.

Unfortunately, the district Excise officials even did not bother to move the higher courts against the acquittal of the accused in any of the cases though the Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasised that in case of acquittal in criminal case, the erring investigating officer "must suffer the consequences of his lapses".

However, in response to the RTI application, the district Excise authorities revealed that no action has been taken against the officers responsible for the acquittal of the accused in Excise and NDPS cases between 2009 and 2019.

# Prachanda faction expels Prime Minister Oli from party

AGENCIES

**Kathmandu, Jan 24:** Discord and division continue inside the Nepal Communist Party, which has not split formally but has virtually fallen apart after Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli unilaterally decided to dissolve the House of Representatives December 20 without the party's consent.

Since then, the Nepal Communist Party is acting like two parties - one headed by Oli himself and the other led by former Prime Ministers Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal. Both sides are running separate programmes across the country under the same banner as they await official recognition from the Election Commission. Amid this row, the Prachanda-Nepal faction has taken disciplinary action against Oli.

A Standing Committee meeting



of the faction held on Sunday decided to expel Oli from the party, its spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha told the media.

The dissident faction has alleged Oli breached the party discipline and is liable to expulsion from the party. It had earlier relieved him from the post of party Chairman.

According to Pampha Bhusal, leader of the dissident faction, Sunday's meeting decided to expel Oli even from the general membership, accusing him of violating the party statutes.

# Tesla likely to set up its India base in Gujarat

AGENCIES

**Ahmedabad, Jan 24:** The Gujarat government has reportedly assured Tesla will receive all possible assistance and incentives for setting up base in the state.

Tesla, the American electric car-maker, recently confirmed its India entry by registering a subsidiary under the name - "Tesla India Motors and Energy Private Ltd" in Bangalore. Now, it is reported that the Gujarat has made a strong pitch to invite the EV maker to set up base in the state, according to ETAuto. The EV giant is reportedly in talks with five Indian states, including Gujarat, to set-up its operations in the country. The Karnataka government has reportedly offered space to Tesla in Tumkur, on the outskirts of Bangalore.

Gujarat has emerged as a preferred destination for global automobile manufacturers, particularly for electric cars. Banking on the same, the state is reportedly making a strong pitch to Tesla to set-up a base in Gujarat. Manoj Das, Additional Chief Secretary, Chief Minister's Office and in-charge ACS, industry and mines department, told ETAuto that the Gujarat government is in discussions with Tesla regarding the same. Moreover, the government has assured the EV maker that it will receive all possible assistance and incentives for setting up base in the state.

The official said to ETAuto, "The world's top most automobile companies have set up manufacturing plants in the state, which has become an automobile hub with key MSME players supporting large companies. Major electric car manufacturers and vehicle battery manufacturers are setting up facilities in Gujarat. We are hopeful that like other global automakers, Tesla will prefer Gujarat."

# BJD plans to hold cricket & football tournaments across state

BJD IS DRAWN INTO THE POLITICS OF SPORTS TO ATTRACT THE YOUTH OF THE STATE. CRITICS SAY THIS IS BEING DONE WITH A VIEW TO BOLSTER THE PARTY'S PROSPECTS IN THE UPCOMING PANCHAYAT AND URBAN BODY POLLS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** The ruling BJD has come up with a plan to organise football and cricket tournaments from panchayat to the district level in a bid to further strengthen its rural base following the BJP making inroads into the interior areas of the state, party sources said Sunday.

The BJD is drawn into the politics of sports with a view to attract the youths of the state and bolster the party's prospects in the upcoming panchayat and urban body polls.

After stiff challenge from the BJP in the 2019 general elections when the saffron party won eight



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

out of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha, only four less than the BJD's 12, the ruling Biju Janata Dal is making all efforts to regain its influence in the rural and tribal areas of the state.

The tournaments will be organ-

ised by the youth and students wings of the BJD without having the party's election symbol (conch), but its logo will carry the picture of legendary leader and former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik after whom the regional outfit is named.

The party has chosen tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district on pilot basis where the BJD appears weak in terms of electoral politics.

State Sports Minister TK Behera, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Sudam Marndi, BJD youth wing president Byomkesh Ray and BJD MLA Pranab Balabantray unveiled the logo, jersey and trophy for the Mayurbhanj Premier League (MPL-2021) at a function held at Baripada Saturday.

"The party will later extend the programme to other districts after witnessing the success of MPL," a senior leader said.

He said holding tournaments from panchayat to district level is

the brainchild of BJD's organising secretary Pranab Prakash Das, who is also in-charge of Mayurbhanj district.

The Mayurbhanj district is chosen for piloting the sporting experiment as the ruling party performed poorly in both the previous panchayat polls in 2017 and later in general elections in 2019.

The ruling party candidates could win only in three of the nine Assembly segments in Mayurbhanj. Opposition BJP won six Assembly seats and Mayurbhanj Lok Sabha seat in 2019 general elections.

This apart, the BJP also dominated the rural pockets of Mayurbhanj by winning 49 of the

56 Zilla Parishad seats, while the ruling party finished with only seven seats.

While the football tournaments will start from February 8, the cricket leagues will begin from February 9, according to the match fixture.

Party sources said that similar events will also be held in the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Kalahandi and Nuapada in 2021.

Opposition BJP and Congress have ridiculed the ruling party for using sports for its political gains, while the BJD described it as an attempt to discover hidden sporting talents in the districts.



## NO MORE INTERESTED IN DOING HORRIBLE SEX SCENES: KEIRA

Hollywood actress Keira Knightley says she will not film sex scenes with male directors as it makes her uncomfortable. "I feel uncomfortable exposing my body on a film set since giving birth to two daughters. It's partly vanity (but) partly also it's the male gaze," the 35-year-old actress said.

## JUSTIN BIEBER REFLECTS ON GETTING ARRESTED IN 2014

Pop star Justin Bieber is looking back at the time when he was arrested in 2014, and shared that he is not proud of that moment in his life. In 2014, the singer was arrested on the suspicion of drinking under influence, resisting arrest and sitting behind the wheel without a valid license.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

#### ARIES

Logic and reasoning will hold court, while creativity takes a backseat today. There are challenges at work, but you are a dynamo and will meet them upfront. All tensions will be relieved by the loving touch of your near and dear.

#### TAURUS

This one of those ordinary days that, somehow, do not turn out too well. Unexpected expenses, that could totally upset your budget, cannot be ruled out. Something or the other is likely to give you an uncomfortable stomach upset.

#### GEMINI

Today will prove to be an emotional and engaging day for you, predicts Ganesh. Fortune will favour you, though your emotions may cloud your reasoning and slow down your progress. Your spare time will be spent on devising methods to make the best use of your knowledge.

#### CANCER

Today, you will use money to fulfil your needs. If there is anything that according to you needs changing, you will throw some money to get it changed. Your loved ones will celebrate your financial gains and spend some more of it in the process.

#### LEO

Maybe it is the weather, or just one of those days, but today, you are extremely prone to wild mood swings, says Ganesh. You must remember that nothing is permanent, except change.

#### VIRGO

Something you achieve in a most unexpected manner will make you very happy today. But your happiness may possibly be marred by getting agitated about the problems you are facing.

#### LIBRA

Love is in the air, and passion lurks right around the corner. So keep your eyes and ears open, because you may soon find yourself entrapped in a passionate love episode. But the price of new love is always steep, and your beloved may burn a hole in your pocket.

#### SCORPIO

You shall groom yourself all prim and proper today. The thought of how you look dominates your mind today. You are likely to capture the imagination of people - both at work and at social gathering. Cash will exit left, right and centre from your pockets on account of fun and entertainment.

#### SAGITTARIUS

You take the path of spirituality for the peace of mind and to stay away from the daily humdrum of life. You will not only seek love, but also spread love around you. In a nutshell, a pleasant day in store for you, says Ganesh.

#### CAPRICORN

Certain revelations about a relationship will draw your attention; you will find it intriguing and will spend a good amount of time trying to solve the mystery, says Ganesh. Besides, your impressive communication power will help dissolve conflicts that may have arisen because of misinterpretation.

#### AQUARIUS

You have managed to carve a niche for yourself. Today, you may see the tangible benefits of all your past hard work. But business rivals may poke and pinch; even your health may trouble you. However, you will manage to smile and take things in the right spirit, approves Ganesh.

#### PISCES

You are unlikely to be your calm and lucid self today. You will likely catch yourself worrying unnecessarily and putting in more efforts than required at work. However, some leisure time will come your way in the evening wherein you will regain your usual perspective, says Ganesh.

## Danish film Into The Darkness wins Golden Peacock award at IFFI-2021



A screengrab of Into The Darkness

**Panaji:** Danish film Into The Darkness won the prestigious Golden Peacock award for the Best Film at the 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI).

The Best Director award was presented to Chen-Nien Ko, who directed the Taiwanese film Silent Forest. Tzu-Chuan Liu, who was the lead actor in Silent Forest was honoured with the Best Male Actor award.

The awards were presented at the closing ceremony of the festival here Sunday. Best Female Actor award was won by Polish actor

Zofia Stafiej for her performance in the Polish film I Never Cry.

The Special Jury award was presented to the film February by Bulgarian filmmaker

Kamen Kavlev.

The Best Debut Director award and a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh was won by Brazilian Director Cassio Pereira Dos Santos for his film Valentina.

Assamese Filmmaker Kripal Kalita won the Special Mention award from the jury for the film Bridge.



Chen-Nien Ko

## Swayam Pravash, Prakruti team up for Bewajah Ishq

**Bhubaneswar:** Popular playback singer Swayam Pravash Padhi and National Award-winning actress Prakruti Mishra have joined hands for a Hindi music video *Bewajah Ishq*. Apart from lending his voice, Swayam will also be seen sharing the screen space with Prakruti in the video. Earlier, the two had a video together in 2020.

Of late, Swayam is remaining active on YouTube channels with his music videos in Odia. For the first time he is associated with a video in Hindi.

*Bewajah Ishq* had a special screening at a city mall

which was attended by the fans and media. A host of celebrities including Ankit Kumar, Chinmay Mishra, Pupal Bhuyan, Antara Chakraborty were also present on the occasion to cheer the duo. Needless to say, the song was an instant hit among the audience present during the special screening.

The song has been written by Roshan Vaishnav while Eureka Apta directed the video. Produced by Digital Sketch Films, *Bewajah Ishq* was released on Swayam's YouTube channel January 22 and has so far garnered 1.61 lakh views.



## Shruti promises more music to fans in 2021

**New Delhi:** Actress-singer Shruti Haasan plans to focus as much on music this year as her film career. Beyond acting in films, Shruti has sung a plethora of songs in the English indie zone and over the years done playback in films, too.

The actress, who is currently seen in the Ravi Teja-starrer Telugu blockbuster *Krack*, promises more music to fans in 2021.

"You will definitely see more music this year from me and I'm so excited to share it with everyone. For years I had to place music to the side but I'm finally learning the balance, and I'm thrilled to be able to do both. Cinema allows me to play various beautiful characters and music allows me to show a valued part of myself and my spirit," Shruti said.

The actress will soon be seen in Netflix's first Telugu original, *Pitta Kathalu*, and says she is really looking forward to its release. She also reveals that she is doing more OTT content.



## Designer Sabyasachi launches his summer collection

**Bhubaneswar:** Renowned fashion designer Sabyasachi Satpathy launched his summer wear collection online, Sunday.

Titled *Prakruti by Keemabant* for Men and Women, the collection is a reflection of flora and fauna as well as the wildlife of Odisha, said Sabyasachi.

"The pandemic has taken a heavy toll on normal life and the fashion industry is no exception. In order to infuse a bit of life into the fashion scene, I have created this beautiful collection which will be available shortly in select outlets of the state. Interestingly, the clothes designed by me are made out of Khurda gamucha, a pure coarse cotton fabric woven by master weavers in Khurda of Odisha.

In fact, I thought the fabric used in gamucha is so smooth to use, so why not make a whole collection out of it," added Sabyasachi who became a household name in India after he participated in Big Boss 11.

The patterns of the prints are based on Ikkat while the motto of the collection is to save Mother Nature, environment and wildlife. The designer was pretty hopeful that his collection will be showcased by few of his TV friends and B-town celebrities.



Model Akashdeep showcasing a summer wear

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

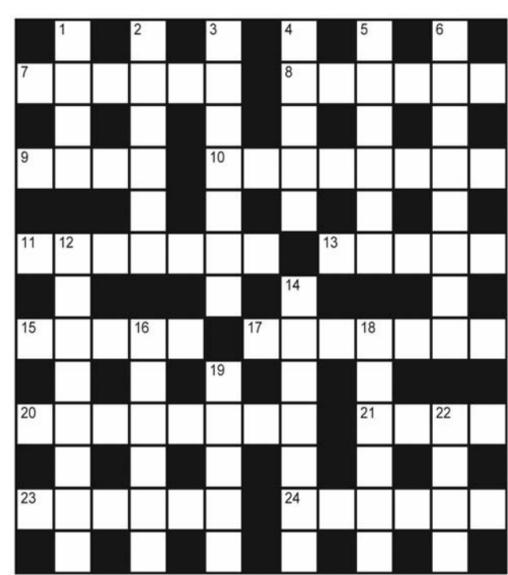


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Seoul native
  - 8 Spurred on
  - 9 Some are corny
  - 10 Common raccoon
  - 11 Cell phone accessory
  - 13 Park sit down
  - 15 Angler's basket
  - 17 Book part
  - 20 Sing
  - 21 Food grain
  - 23 Salad starters
  - 24 Unusual
  - 4 Go-between
  - 5 Palace
  - 6 Average
  - 12 Seaports
  - 14 Words to a sad sack (5,2)
  - 16 Crown covering
- Down**
- 1 Sharpen
  - 2 King's clown
  - 3 Menu items
  - 18 Iran, once
  - 19 A bit lit
  - 22 Fish bait

### SUDOKU

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

C	1			7		A			2	9		3	
	A		5	2	6		3						
		8		D								C	0
	9			C		0		E				6	
		2	0	A	B			E	8	3		D	
	9		1	6		5	C		4			B	
			B		0	D	4				C	5	
								9	A			D	
			8			3			2	B	4	6	
	0	E	D					7	6				
	A		7			4			0	8		B	
						7	E		2	5			
	7			1	B					9			
	4	5	B	E		6				A		2	
								2	D	8		A	

### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD

P	U	M	F	A	C	E	C	A	R	D	
E	O	A	C	U	N	P	E				
R	E	D	F	L	A	G	N	A	P	E	
I	E	J	U	U	R	K					
L	I	L	A	C	S	P	I	G	O	T	
O	H	T									
U	N	I	T	E	S	R	E	C	E	D	
S	N										
M	E	R	I	N	O	O	I	L	E		
E	R	R	D	I	H						
T	E	T	R	A	E	M	L	A	T	E	
N	A	M	A	R	E	T	T	O	S	N	A
A	M	A	R	E	T	T	O	V	A	S	T

#### SUDOKU

0	7	6	C	D	B	8	9	4	3	5	1	A	E	2
D	1	2	8	3	4	A	B	E	6	9	C	7	0	5
3	4	9	E	2	7	5	D	C	0	A	B	8	1	6
E	C	B	A	5	1	6	0	2	8	D	7	3	9	4
A	5	8	0	6	9	1	3	7	E	4	2	B	D	C
9	6	C	1	0	D	B	4	A	7	8	3	2	5	E
1	3	7	2	A	E	0	8	5	D	C	6	9	4	B
8	E	0	5	B	C	2	6	3	9	1	4	D	A	7
2	A	4	6	9	8	7	E	D	0	5	C	3	1	6
5	8	0	7	4	3	0	1	A	2	E	6	8	9	4
4	0	9	7	4	3	0	1	B	A	E	6	8	9	4
6	9	E	D	1	A	4	2	8	C	7	0	5	8	3
7	2	1	8	6	5	9	4	3	8	0	C	A		
B	0	A	3	B	E	C	1	6	2	E	9	4	7	D
C	8	3	4	7	0	E	A	B	5	6	D	1	2	9

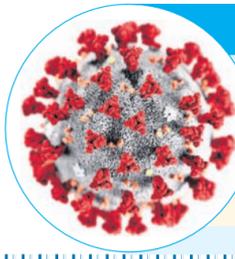
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## PATRIOTISM IN THE AIR

A roadside vendor sells the Tricolour near Kalpana Square in Bhubaneswar ahead of the Republic Day, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	9,94,08,263	7,14,83,118	21,32,072
India	1,06,26,586	1,02,83,240	1,53,069
Odisha	3,34,300	3,31,144	1,905

# 'Sexual favours' during audit of funds

A VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE IN CAPITAL FOR DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PERSONS HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF PROVIDING SEXUAL FAVOURS TO VISITING OFFICIALS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** A woman Saturday accused the authorities of an organisation, providing vocational training to differently-abled persons, of engaging Divyang girls and other women employees to give sexual favours to the visiting officials.

The training institute for Divyangas (differently-abled persons) is located at Pallaspali under Airport police limits here, sources said.

A video of some illegal activities at the training centre has reportedly gone viral in social media. In the video, a person was spotted

A viral video shows a person locking the door after leaving a girl inside the room of a visiting official at the institute

The complainant alleges that the officers, who came for inspection and audit of utilisation of funds received from the govt under various schemes, were offered sexual favours from the authorities of the institute



**I came to know about the incident from the media. We will investigate into the matter. We have taken suo motto cognizance on the issue. I will personally go to the site and speak to the inmates**

**SULOCHANA DAS | STATE COMMISSIONER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

locking the door after leaving a girl inside the room of a visiting official.

The complainant alleged that the officers, who came for inspection and audit of utilisation of funds received from the government under various schemes, were offered sexual favours from the au-

thorities of the institute.

On the other hand, the Airport police sources revealed that they have not received any complaint regarding the sexual favour issue.

Sources claimed that the lady had lodged a complaint in November, 2020 accusing the secretary of the organisation of duping her of around ₹4 lakh. The woman also alleged that she had been sexually misbehaved by the institute secretary. The secretary has reportedly been on the run following the police complaint by the woman.

## Suo motto cognizance taken

**BHUBANESWAR:** The State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities has taken a suo motto cognizance of the matter. Sulochana Das, State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Sunday informed the media on the issue. She said, "I have come to know about the incident from the media. This is a very unfortunate incident. Definitely, we will investigate into the matter. We have taken suo motto cognizance on the issue. I will personally go to the site and speak to the inmates," she said. She added, "I will collect the documents from the media. Those who are indulged in such activities will be punished. After ascertaining the truth and a proper investigation we will speak to the media again."

## Human chain to sensitise slum dwellers in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** In a bid to sensitise the slum dwellers for the protection of girl child, the Bhubaneswar Young Urban Women forum (BYUWF) in association with the Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD), Sunday, organised a human chain in the Capital city here to mark the National Girl Child Day.

Many slum girls holding placards and shouting slogans like 'Kanya Ratna Kara Jatna', 'Stop Female Foeticide' and 'Say No to Child marriage', participated in the human chain.

"Girls have touched the height of success in many sectors like science, technology, politics, defence and social work. But the irony is that our society still believes boys are better than girls. The gender discrimination creates many social problems like child marriage, child trafficking and violence against girl children and women. On the other hand, education for girls is also not so encouraging in our society due to gender differences and poor infrastructure in various institutions," said CCWD secretary Sadasiv Swain.

Swain further said that there is an urgent need to create awareness among slum dwellers with regard to the rights and protection of girl child.

# Govt creating awareness through communication

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** In an attempt to intensify actions to address various forms of discrimination and violence against girls and women, the Department of Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti released a communication package on the occasion of National Girl Child Day, Sunday.

While the government has been taking several steps for strengthening institutional mechanisms that cater to the needs of women and girls, a 360-degree approach in communication is being adopted to create awareness and change the mindset of the community with respect to women's rights and entitlements. The communication package developed in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) aims at addressing discrimination and violence faced by girls and women in their lifetime. The communication package includes animated videos and posters with Tiki Mausi, the mascot of the department, as the protagonist.

Women and Child Development department principal secretary, Anu Garg, said that the law alone cannot have a significant impact on social issues, unless there is a change in attitude and actions by



One of the items of the communication package

the family, the community and at work places in order to create a society that is just towards girls and women. Through these initiatives, the state hopes to check such gender-based prejudices that compromise basic human rights of women.

The communication package covers issues with regard to preference to sons, gender discrimination, child marriage, dowry, domestic violence and sexual

**The laws alone can't have a significant impact on social issues, unless there is a change in attitude and actions by the family, the community and at workplaces in order to create a society that is just towards girls and women. Through these initiatives, the state hopes to check such gender-based prejudices that compromise basic human rights of women.**

**ANU GARG | WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT PRINCIPAL SECRETARY**

harassment at the workplace. The Department plans to make these videos and information available at every village and town of Odisha through the wide network of Anganwadi Centers and Women's Self-Help Groups to create a definite social impact.

The information, education and communication (IEC) materials will also be available on the website of Women and Child Development department for use by all departments of the government and NGOs. This apart, the materials will be disseminated through social media and mass media platforms.

# Focus on eco-friendly practices to boost tourism

ODISHA IS PRIMARILY KNOWN FOR PURI BEACH AND KONARK SUN TEMPLE, BUT THE STATE GOVT IS NOW OPENING UP PATHS TO LESSER KNOWN AND UNEXPLORED LOCATIONS, KEEPING IN MIND THEIR ECOLOGY

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** From eco-tours in the wild and environmentally conscious retreats on beaches, the state government has gone completely green as far as the Odisha's tourism is concerned.

Although Odisha is primarily known for two locations—Puri beach and Konark Sun temple—the state government is now opening up paths to lesser known and unexplored locations in the state, keeping in mind their ecology.

"In the last Budget session, there was a 400 per cent hike in tourism budget. We want people to explore the unexplored in our state, and there has been active social media engagement by our Chief Minister. But we are not interested in aggressive promotion. Instead, we want tourists to become our brand ambassadors," Tourism Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi said.

One of the major components of this endeavour is the eco retreats that promote the idea of luxury camping at different locations across the state.

As part of this programme, a temporary retreat is set up over a span



**In the last Budget session, there was a 400 per cent hike in tourism budget. We want people to explore the unexplored in our state, and there has been active social media engagement by our Chief Minister. But we aren't interested in aggressive promotion. Instead, we want tourists to become our brand ambassadors**

**JYOTI PRAKASH PANIGRAHI | TOURISM MINISTER**

of three months, allowing tourists to experience the best of what the state has

to offer.

"For many years, tourism was not a priority for Odisha, but we have worked on it over the last two years. Through the eco-retreat initiative, we want to highlight and showcase some of the hidden gems of the state," Tourism Secretary Vishal Kumar Dev said.

The eco-retreat initiative was started by Odisha a year ago with one location—Konark.

The success of the programme led the government to add four more locations this year—Daringbadi, Satkosia, Bhitarkanika and Hirakud,

Dev said.

Dev said that the Konark retreat saw 81 per cent occupancy last year, and the Daringbadi location had recorded 60 per cent occupancy for January 2021.

"All eco-retreats function under ecologically compliant practices, including solid and sewage waste management systems," a Tourism official said.

While the retreats are a once-in-a-year phenomenon, Odisha has a vibrant ecotourism scene that can be enjoyed throughout the year.

According to Forest officer Anshu Pragna Das, the state's eco-tourism programmes give nature tourists an opportunity to experience wild landscapes in a sustainable way.

Owing to the permanent nature of eco-tours, the government has developed the programme in a community model by involving the local forest dependent communities to manage the tours. The government renders its support by providing hospitality training to the members of the local communities.

"We have 47 eco-tourism destinations which have 350 rooms that are managed by Forest dependant local communities. Odisha has 40 per cent forest coverage and at least 50 per cent

## Kanya Kiran celebrates National Girl Child Day

**BHUBANESWAR:** The National Girl Child Day was celebrated by 'Kanya Kiran', an initiative of KIIT and KISS, across 34 places including 30 district headquarters of the state Sunday. On the occasion, a national virtual webinar on 'Kanya Kiran - Educating Girl Child for Building an Equitable Society' was organised at KIIT.

of the population resides within or nearby forest areas. Currently, at least 600 households have been engaged in maintaining these destinations," Das, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Ecotourism said.

"We also have programmes like poachers-turned-protectors, where individuals who were once poachers are now engaged in forest preservation activities," she added.

Odisha's latest claim to fame has been bagging the Blue Flag for its Golden Beach in Puri. The certification is a globally recognised eco-label given by the Foundation for Environment Education, Denmark. It has 33 stringent criteria, including water quality, environment management and conservation, to be complied, based on which a beach is certified and permitted to hoist their flag in these beaches.

The work on the 900-metre-long beach had begun in June 2019, and after a year-long renovation, the application for the Blue Flag certification was filed in March 2020.

The Golden Beach in Puri was awarded the Blue Flag in October 2020. One of the major reasons why the Golden Beach bagged the certification was its efficient waste management system.



## POLITICKLE by MANJUL

# Mo Khata is seeing increase in demand among denizens

SINCE ITS INCEPTION JANUARY 8, THE MO KHATA COMPOST KIOSK AT JANPATH IN THE CAPITAL CITY HAS SOLD ABOUT 500 PACKETS OF 5 KG EACH OF MO KHATA BAGS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** To reduce burden on landfills, the Mo Khata, or compost manure manufactured from household wastage is now seeing an increase in demand, both online and offline, among the citizens here.

As per sources, since its inception January 8, the Mo Khata compost kiosk at Janpath here has sold about 500 packets of 5 kg of Mo Khata bags. Moreover, an online demand of 25 quintals is also in process. To cater to the demand, a stock of 10 quintals has been reinforced.

"We have observed a great increase in demand of the compost soil. Presently, due to lesser collection of the compost we are running a bit short on supply. The production will be increased soon after citizens will be fully oriented with segregation," said Suvendu Kumar Sahoo, Deputy Commissioner, Sanitation.

Sahoo also added that Micro Composting Centres (MCCs) at Ward nos. 28 and 29 are expected to produce compost by mid-February which will cater to the rising de-



FILE PHOTO

mand. Presently, the three MCCs and the Temporary Transit Station at Sainik School are jointly producing of about 30 quintal compost on a weekly basis.

Mo Khata is a high-quality compost made of wet waste being generated in the city after being processed at Micro Composting Centres. It's a sustainable waste management technique which will help in keeping the city clean as well as garbage-free while reducing the burden on landfills. This intervention would create employment opportunities for members of WSHGs and local volunteers.

Moreover, BMC has completed the process for engaging vehicles with

partitions that will collect dry and wet waste from households. Intensive awareness campaign is being conducted in respective wards through Swachha Sathis in close guidance of the sanitation experts of the BMC.

It can be mentioned here that Mo Khata was introduced in the city to reduce the burden of waste management at landfills such as at Bhuasuni dump yard. The compost outlet at Rajmahal square is being managed by an SHG to promote women empowerment and involve them to take a lead role in converting waste to resource. The BMC is said to have planned 43 kiosks of Mo Khata.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (Under Regulation 32 and 33 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016)	
RELEVANT PARTICULARS	
1. Name of the corporate debtor	Maadurga Thermal Power Company Limited
2. Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	December 15, 2008
3. Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered	Registrar of Companies - Cuttack
4. Corporate identity number / limited liability identification number of corporate debtor	U40102OR2008PLC010501
5. Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	Registered Office: CADD Centre Building, 2nd Floor Press Chik, Madhupatna, Cuttack, Orissa - 753010 Plant Location: Bainchua, Tangi, Cuttack - 754022, Orissa
6. Liquidation commencement date of the corporate debtor	June 25, 2019
7. Name, address, email address, telephone number and the registration number of the Liquidator	Name: Pankaj Dhanuka Registered Address with IBI: FE 328, Sector 3, Salt Lake City, Kolkata, West Bengal, 700106 Registered Email Address: pankajdhanuka@gmail.com Telephone: +91 98300 18128 Registration No.: IBI/PA-001/IP-P01205/2018-2019/11911 Communication Address: Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, 13th Floor, Building - Omega, Bengal Intelligent Park, Block - EP & GP, Sector - V, Salt Lake City, West Bengal 700091 Communication Email Address: inmtclip@deloitte.com
8. Date of E-Auction	Auction Start Date & Time: February 15, 2021 @ 11:00 a.m. Auction End Date & Time: February 15, 2021 @ 04:30 pm
9. Manner of Obtaining the Process Document	The detailed terms and conditions of the auction process are set out in the process document, which can be obtained by the bidders by sending an email request at inmtclip@deloitte.com
10. Last Date of Obtaining the Process Document	February 13, 2021
11. Subject Matter of Auction Process	Acquisition of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern
12. Manner of Submitting Bid	As set out in the process document to be issued by the liquidator of the Corporate Debtor.
13. Mode of Sale	The mode of sale is open e-auction, where bidders can view other competitive bids from other bidders during the open window. The acquisition of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern shall be on an 'as is where is' basis, without any representation, warranty or indemnity by the Corporate Debtor or the liquidator.
14. Reserve Price	The reserve price for the purpose of conducting this e-auction of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern is determined at INR 54 Crores.
15. Earnest Money Deposit requirement	Bidder(s) shall be required to submit an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of INR 50 lakhs in order to Bid for acquisition of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern.

Note: Nothing contained herein shall constitute a binding offer or a commitment to sell the Corporate Debtor as a going concern or any of its assets. Bidders must note that the aforementioned auction process is being conducted in accordance with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 ("Code") and the relevant regulations thereunder. In the event, if any assets of the Corporate Debtor are realised by existing charge holders in terms of Section 52 of the Code read together with the applicable regulations, the same shall be excluded from the ambit of the auction process being conducted by the liquidator, as and when such an option is exercised by the relevant charge holder. The liquidator reserves the right to amend and/or annul this invitation including any timelines or the process therein, without giving any reason, at any time and in any respect. Any such amendment in the invitation, including the aforementioned timeline, shall be notified on the website of the Corporate Debtor [www.mtpcl.in](http://www.mtpcl.in).

For Maadurga Thermal Power Company Limited  
Sd/-  
Pankaj Dhanuka  
Insolvency Professional - Regn. No.: IBI/PA-001/IP-P01205/2018-2019/11911  
Registered Address: FE 328, Sector 3, Salt Lake City, Kolkata, West Bengal, 700106  
Registered Email: [pankajdhanuka@gmail.com](mailto:pankajdhanuka@gmail.com)  
Communication Address: Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, 13th Floor, Building - Omega, Bengal Intelligent Park, Block - EP & GP, Sector - V, Salt Lake City, West Bengal 700091, Communication Email: [inmtclip@deloitte.com](mailto:inmtclip@deloitte.com)

Date: January 25, 2021  
Place: Kolkata

# COVID INFECTION SLOWS DOWN

## SANITISATION AT SRIMANDIR

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** State's Covid-19 tally Sunday mounted to 3,34,300 as 150 more people tested positive for the infection, while one fresh fatality pushed the coastal state's coronavirus death toll to 1,905, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The new cases were detected in 24 of the state's 30 districts, with 89 reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 61 are local contact cases.

Sundargarh district reported the highest of 22 new positive cases followed by Bargarh (18) and Cuttack (15).

Six other districts—Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nayagarh and Rayagada—did not register any new positive cases since Saturday.

"Taking to the Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform the demise of 74-year-old female Covid positive patient of Sundargarh district."

Apart from 1,905 fatalities reported so far, 53 other Covid-19 positive patients have also died in Odisha due to comorbidities.

Khurda district of which the



FILE PHOTO

state capital Bhubaneswar is a part alone accounted for 335 deaths followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (171), Cuttack (141) and Puri (117). As many as 25 other districts reported fatalities less than 100, said the official.

Currently, the state has 1,380 active Covid-19 cases, while as many as 3,30,962 patients have so far recovered from the disease.

Odisha has so far conducted over 75.48 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 22,725 Saturday. The state's positivity rate now stands at 4.43 per cent, the data released by the H&FW department said.

Meanwhile, official sources said

**IN NUMBERS**

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Khurda alone accounts for 335 deaths followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (171), Cuttack (141) and Puri (117)

Odisha has so far conducted over 75.48 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 22,725 Saturday

The state's positivity rate now stands at 4.43 per cent



Barricades at the Lions' Gate of Srimandir being sanitised, Sunday. As per the Covid norms, the 12th century shrine would remain closed for people on Sundays to facilitate sanitisation work

OP PHOTO

as many as 1,52,371 frontline workers have so far been inoculated against Covid-19.

Odisha has been witnessing a sharp decline in Covid cases and deaths. The state registered as many as 222 Covid cases January 14 and after that cases remained between 100 and 200. On the other hand, five persons succumbed to the infection December 17. After this, the number of deaths has been decreasing.

Though cases are decreasing day by day, the H&FW department has been urging the people to maintain social distance while going outside to stay safe from Covid-19. "Avoid

large gatherings, maintain hand hygiene, wear facemask properly and sanitise your surroundings regularly," said the department.

On the other hand, India added 14,849 coronavirus cases Sunday, placing its overall number at 1.06 crore cases, the Health Ministry's data showed. The number of fresh infections reported Sunday was 4 per cent higher than that of Saturday. In this period, the country reported 155 deaths linked to the virus, taking the total number of Covid fatalities to 1,53,339.

# Beefed up security in place Republic Day in Capital

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** The Director General Police Abhay Sunday reviewed the security arrangements at the Lower PMG road here ahead of the Republic Day parade. Other senior police officials, including Commissioner of Police Sudhanshu Sarangi, were also present during the full dress rehearsals here, Sunday.

Speaking to media persons after the review, Abhay said that the school and college students will

not take part in the Republic Day parade this time in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infection.

He also informed that adequate security arrangements have been placed for the state-level parade, January 26. The DCP and Twin City Commissioner of Police will make armed security arrangements for the event while the Director of Intelligence will be in charge of other security and intelligence matters for the event.

As many as 25 platoons of po-

lice force will be deployed during the state level Republic Day celebrations. The entire lower PMG area will be under strict CCTV surveillance during the event. A control room will also be set up near the parade area to ensure smooth conduct of the celebrations.

Sources revealed that four bands, 14 contingents of Odisha Police and Fire Services department and two from Central government forces will participate in the rehearsal. IPS officer S Sushree will lead the contingents during celebrations.

## RLDA VC inspects Cuttack rly station

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) vice chairman Ved Parkash Duda Sunday inspected the Cuttack railway station to assess the requirement for its redevelopment, official sources said.

RLDA, a statutory authority under the Ministry of Railways, has been entrusted with the task of redeveloping the railway station on a priority basis, sources said.

According to sources, the railway station will be upgraded in accordance with the modern day requirements, while preserving its historical significance as well.

"The station will be equipped with state-of-the-art passenger amenities including excellent road connectivity with multimodal transport integration, security as well as ultramodern surveillance system. The redevelopment will be executed on a Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer model under the Public-Private Partnership mode," said a source familiar with the ambitious initiative.

Currently, RLDA is working on redevelopment of 62 stations in a phased manner, while its subsidiary, Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation (IRSDC), has taken up another 61 stations for their upgradation. The railway stations across India will be redeveloped on a PPP mode as a part of Smart City Projects launched by the Centre, the source pointed out.

It added that the Indian Railways currently has around 43,000 hectare of vacant land across the country. RLDA has over 84 commercial (greenfield) sites across India for leasing and the eligible developers.

# BANKER 'DUPED' OF ₹35L BY REAL ESTATE COMPANY

Panigrahi has paid the accused ₹35, 64,000 for the flat as per the agreement

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** The employee of a private financial institution has lodged a complaint with the Deputy Commissioner of Police alleging police inaction against a real estate firm owner accused of duping the victim by selling a sold-out flat at Palasuni under Mancheswar police limits. The victim lodged a complaint against the directors of the firm, Suwendu Dash and Subodh Dash, with Khandagiri police in August, 2020.

However, the police have reportedly not taken any action against the accused despite the lapse of more than six months after the registration of the case (482/20).

According to the application, the victim, Gyan Ranjan Panigrahi, purchased the flat from the accused



REPRESENTATIVE PIC

tificate from the Tehsil office. Panigrahi was shocked to find that the builder had already sold the flat to Niranjan Routray prior to selling the same to Panigrahi. The accused signed an agreement with Routray June 22, 2015.

Panigrahi, who had secured a loan of ₹30 lakh from a private bank, alleged that the accused had produced fake documents before a private bank. He even accused the bank officials' involvement in the fraud as they did not bother to verify the documents including the encumbrance certificate.

Later, Panigrahi approached police seeking action against the persons responsible for this fraud, but to no avail. Interestingly, Panigrahi has been paying the monthly installments for the loan he has taken to purchase the flat.

## WARMING UP



OP PHOTO

Security personnel during a full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

# Kalikesh points at glitches in paddy procurement website

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** Former Bolangir Lok Sabha MP Kalikesh Singh Deo Sunday took a dig at the state Food Supply and Consumer Affairs department regarding paddy procurement process.

He said that due to glitches in the website of the department, farmers are unable to sell their crops. He also batted for increase in target of procurement for Bolangir to prevent hardships faced by the farmers. He has also written a letter to the department minister Ranendra Pratap Swain on the matter. He said that many farmers have failed to sell their produce due to low targets set.

"I wish to inform you that 48,988

farmers had registered their names for sale of their paddy during Kharif season of 2019-20 against which a total of 31,28,378.71 quintal of paddy has been procured from 43,819 farmers. In comparison to the above mentioned figure, 66,728 farmers have registered their name to sell their paddy; 36 pc more than the previous year," he said.

He also added, "Yet, till date a total target of only 30,68,600 quintals has been allotted to the district so far. Since token generation is continuing from the state without providing sufficient target it has created unrest and suspicion amongst the farmers for selling their surplus paddy within the time limit. The token of many farmers have lapsed due to non availability of target."

# DENSE FOG PREDICTED IN 9 DISTS

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** As many as nine districts in Odisha are likely to witness dense fog Monday, predicted the Meteorological department.

The department further said that most parts of the state may witness dry weather while some districts are likely to witness moderate fog Monday.



There is no warning of dense fog for the next three days but shallow to moderate fog can be seen in some areas, said the MeT department.

# '30 mins post vaccination crucial to monitor adverse effects'

**Dr Swayam Pragyan Parida is an Associate Professor with the Community Medicine department at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar. She also monitors the vaccination centre at the hospital. In an interview with Orissa POST, the expert talks on different facets of COVID-19 vaccination drive. Excerpts:**

**MANISH KUMAR, OP**

**OP: How does a vaccine work in human beings?**

**Dr Parida:** Vaccines trigger immunogenic response against a particular pathogen when injected. Here, the part of the inactivated pathogen is injected into the human body which doesn't cause the disease but helps the body to prepare itself to fight against the disease against which the vaccine was given. There are two ways through which people get immunity—one is when they get infected, which is painful and traumatic, and another is getting vaccinated which is least invasive and the easier way.

**OP: There are some concerns about the safety of these vaccines among some sections as the vaccines were made in a very short duration. Your reaction to it.**

**Dr Parida:** Yes, these have been in short duration of time because they were prepared in a way that the different phases of development of the vaccines were done simultaneously. That is why the time was reduced but the quality control mechanism was followed. The only thing is that there were parallel trials of the vaccine.

cines of different phases. Emergency use authorization of vaccines has been obtained as there is an urgency to prevent the disease.

**OP: Do the vaccines have side effects? Can we be assured of their safety?**

**Dr Parida:** Allergy or any adverse reaction is normal to human being when any outside product enters the body. Several vaccinations, like the COVID vaccines, cause minor reactions in a few people like dizziness, fever and others. In case of the COVID vaccines, there are lesser adverse effects and they are within the safety limits.

**OP: Then why do some people develop reactions post vaccination, although the number is small as government data claims?**

**Dr Parida:** It depends on many factors. Constituents of a vaccine act differently in different sets of people. The genetic makeup is different from person to person, and also the psychological conditions. Some people get over-anxious too. So, it depends on the genetic makeup and other health conditions which some-

times show more reaction when an outside object enters into the body.

**OP: You handle one COVID vaccination centre at AIIMS. How has been your experience?**

**Dr Parida:** We have seen two types of beneficiaries. One group we find little bit apprehensive of the vaccine while the others accept it without fear. We have undertaken counseling for apprehensive people to make them understand about the vaccine and safety and take them in confidence before vaccination.

**OP: Is there any health scrutiny of the vaccine takers?**

**Dr Parida:** Yes. There previous health data, co-morbidities are recorded. They are meanwhile, also asked if they currently suffer from any temporary disease. Only healthy and fit people are given the vaccines. If we find some people aren't fit for the vaccination, we ask them to come later as per the norms.



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# Illegal mining, mineral stocking go unabated



A report from Barbil said, mines officials got a tip-off about the stocked mineral along a road near OMC Colony. Officials seized the mineral valued at ₹1.5 lakh. The mines department has started an investigation about who had stocked it, from where it was brought and where it was to be transported

A report from Joda said the officials of the mines department seized 30 tonnes of illegally extracted iron ore at Antaramantara Chowk under Bamebari police limits in Joda mining circle Sunday. Sources said the mineral mafia had been pilfering iron ore from various rail sidings and stocking it there

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Barbil/Joda, Jan 24:** Forest, police and mines officials have been seizing illegally mined minerals for the last several weeks in various parts of Keonjhar district.

According to a report, mines officials seized over 50 tonnes of iron ore fines stocked in Serenda area

under Barbil police limits Sunday.

The mines officials had got a tip-off about the stocked mineral along a road near OMC Colony. Officials seized the mineral valued at Rs 1.5 lakh. The mines department has started an investigation about who had stocked it, from where it was brought and where it was to be transported.

A report from Joda said the officials of the mines department seized 30 tonnes of illegally extracted iron ore at Antaramantara Chowk under Bamebari police limits in Joda mining circle Sunday.

Official of the Joda mining circle such as Ajay Giri, Kalakar Behera and Bhaskar Singh conducted raids in the area and seized the stocked mineral. Sources said the mineral mafia had been pilfering iron ore from various rail sidings and stocking it there.

It may be noted here that earlier this month a heavy vehicle carrying huge quantities of illegally mined manganese ore from Nayagad forest was seized by a team of forest officials in a forest under Champua range.

Forest officials from Champua, Joda, Balibandh and Bamebari while conducting night patrolling in the night of January 12 had caught the truck with 35 tonnes of manganese ore. However, the driver managed to escape under the cover of darkness. Before that, some local youths had spotted piles of manganese ore in a bushy area in Joda police station area.

The illegally mined manganese ore weighing over 10 tonnes and covered under palm leaves amid bushes was valued at over Rs 1 lakh.



Police personnel, staff of RTO, volunteers, construction workers, social activists take part in a bicycle rally during an awareness drive marking 32nd National Road Safety Month at Jeypore, Sunday

## Post croc census, Bhitarkanika reopens for tourists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kendrapara, Jan 24:** After remaining out of bounds for tourists for over a week, the Bhitarkanika National Park and its scenic wetland sites in Kendrapara district reopened Sunday, a senior forest official said.

The national park was closed for visitors from January 15 to January 23 for the annual census of estuarine crocodiles. "Restrictions were imposed on visitors to prevent noise

pollution during the headcount of the reptiles in Bhitarkanika," Divisional Forest Officer, Rajnagar Mangrove Forest Division (Wildlife), Bikash Ranjan Dash, said. The purpose was to keep the place free from human interference for carrying out the census meticulously, he said.

Sound pollution following human activity distracts wildlife and hinders a foolproof census exercise, Dash said. "We are ready to play host to do-



mestic and international tourists after a nine-day break. We receive about one lakh tourists in a year. Our emphasis is on ensuring safe and comfortable sojourn of visitors who throng here in large numbers to savour the warmth of the ecosys-

tem and unique environs of its wetlands," the forest officer said.

It has been made mandatory that visitors must submit identity proofs to get entry permits to the national park, he added. The national park has 70 per cent of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles, the conservation of which was started in 1975.

Sunday, Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan visited the national park along with state government officials.

## Road laid at a cost of ₹2.5cr remains unused



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kesinga, Jan 24:** A road connecting Boringpadar Square on National Highway-26 to fire station in Kesinga NAC of Kalahandi district constructed at a cost of Rs 2.59 crore is lying unused these days. This is so due to the whimsical attitude on part of the public works department (PWD).

In 2016-17, MSBK Construction was awarded the road work. While the estimated cost of the 1,500-metre long road from Boringpadar to the fire station was Rs 3,04,84,688, it was laid out spending Rs 2,59,15,339 in 2017-18.

As of now, it seems the money has gone down the drain given the road has since been lying unused.

The road was laid across a patch of land owned by Jogendra Majhi, a 65-year-old villager, who is paralysed and bedridden for the last 10 years. When the road was being laid, Jogendra's family members had pleaded with the contractor engaged to spare their portion of land. But the contractor didn't pay

**AS OF NOW, IT SEEMS THE MONEY HAS GONE DOWN THE DRAIN WITH THE ROAD LYING UNUSED**

any heed to their demands and rather forcefully got the road constructed. The road has encroached upon a piece of land measuring 34 decimals.

Over the years, the family has met the sub-collector, PWD officials, executive engineers, tehsildars pleading for justice, but to no avail. With no option left, the affected family finally heaped earth on the road, shelving its fate. The family has demanded compensation as per the present government value of the land.

When contacted, PWD executive engineer, Ajit Kumar Babu, said the matter would be settled after a probe.

## Concern over declining groundwater level in Paradip

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paradip, Jan 24:** Even as the governments at both the state and the Centre are laying stress on rapid industrialisation its negative impact is being felt on natural resources like drinking water, a report said.

Rapid industrialisation has seriously affected the groundwater level in this port town which is declining day by day. Back in 2015-16, groundwater was available at 200-250 mtrs in Paradip but with rapid industrialisation the water level has gone down and is available at 350 mtr in the same area. This has raised concern among the residents.

According to reports available from the public health engineering organisation (PHEO) fresh water is available at 300-315 mtrs at Bijaychandrapur locality under ward no-5 of Paradip Municipality. Similarly, the water level has gone down to 350-400 mtrs at Bhitarghar locality under ward-5 of the civic body. In Nuabazaar area, water level can be found at 250-270 mtrs while in Sandhakuda area water level can be found at 200-250 mtrs.

Environmentalist Amaresh Naresh Samant said that the groundwater level has gone down due to sharp decline in water flow in natural water bodies like rivers and canals and loss of green cover. He warned that freshwater will soon become a thing of the past for coming generations if urgent steps are not taken for its conservation.

When contacted, Manas Ranjan Murmu, junior engineer, public health, said that five years back water level was at 50-100 mtrs but it has drastically gone down now.



FILE PHOTO

**Fresh water collected from the ground is rich in iron content while the rainwater, which the port town receives, flows into the sea as there is no water conservation system in place**

He said that about 210 tube wells have been installed at various places in the port town for supply of drinking water to the people.

However, the depth of each tube well remaining different in various areas speaks of the falling water level. Moreover, fresh water collected from the ground is rich in iron content while the rainwater which the port town receives flows into the sea as there is no water conservation system in place.

According to a 2019-20 report of

the PHEO, the quantity of water used by people was very less till 1990 as people used to depend on rivers, ponds and canals. The per head use of water was 50-80 litres in 1990 which has gone up to 135 litres per head in recent times. It has become a difficult task to supply so much water to all the people in the town.

Moreover, restrictions have been imposed in water supply during summer season in the Paradip industrial area over the last six years while the water requirement has gone up in the localities and industries.

The water in Taladanda canal has fallen short of requirement for which the number of tube wells installed at various places has gone up. This apart, many industrial units are also drawing ground water to meet their water needs in violation of government norms which is also a major reason to blame for the falling water level in the port town.

## GOPALPUR-DIGHA HIGHWAY PROJECT TO BOOST INFRA OF COASTAL REGION: PRADHAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kendrapara, Jan 24:** Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said here Sunday the coastal highway project worth Rs 7,500 that will link Gopalpur in Odisha and Digha in West Bengal will boost infrastructure and economy of Odisha.

Briefing reporters after visiting Bhitarkanika National Park, the minister said that the 452-km long highway will emerge as an economic corridor for the transport of agricultural and pisciculture produce to Paradip and Dhamra ports "It will also act as a protective barrier for vulnerable seaside villages from the onslaught of cyclones and floods," the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas said.

Dwelling on the tourism potential of the region, he said, the Centre will extend all possible support to the state for improving tourism infrastructure at Bhitarkanika National Park and Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary in Kendrapara district.



"Eco-tourism will be further developed here without causing damage to vegetation and wildlife," he said. Eco-tourism in Bhitarkanika will generate employment opportunities for women and youths, fishermen, boatmen, and lead to socio-economic development of villages lying in the fringes of the national park, he added.

"Dense mangrove forests, exciting trekking trails, birds chirping in colonies, creeks and canals teeming with wildlife, Bhitarkanika National Park spoils you for choices. An off-the-beaten track, a visit to Bhitarkanika is a must during this time of the year," Pradhan tweeted after visiting the national park.

## Man slits niece's throat in Ganjam, held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 24:** A girl is battling for her life after her uncle allegedly slit her throat with a sharp-edged weapon at Banapalli village under Buguda police limits in Ganjam district Sunday.

The man attacked her over a family dispute. Meanwhile, police have detained the man. According to a source, Dhanurdhar Nayak had a quarrel with the girl's father Sunday morning. As their verbal

duel escalated, the girl intervened and tried to pacify them. Far from being pacified, Dhanurdhar got angry.

He picked up a sharp-edged weapon and attacked the girl. In the attack, she got her throat slit besides suffering multiple injuries.

The girl was immediately rescued and rushed to Buguda government hospital where she is battling for her life.

Meanwhile, a police investigation is underway.

## Mafia uses novel ways to push drug trade

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, Jan 24:** Despite repeated raids by STF (Crime Branch), the police and excise officials, drug peddling has not yet been curbed in Jaleswar and some other parts of north Odisha. The Jhadeswarpur slum area under Jaleswar block in Balasore has now turned out to be a hub of drug trafficking, a report said.

It was alleged that raids are often being carried out in the area, but the illegal activities are yet to be stemmed.

On the other hand, the drug mafia has been adopting novel ways to push the trade by hoodwinking the enforcement officials.

A few days ago, the drug mafia was using a minor boy in the illicit trade. Saturday, police conducted raids in the area and detected another novel way of drug peddling which was to evade the glare of enforcement agencies.

A team of police officials led by IIC Manas Deo raided the slum area. Two people, on seeing the police, managed to flee the spot. The



POLICE FRANTICALLY SEARCHED THE AREA AND FOUND A PILE OF SAND FROM WHERE THEY RECOVERED 250 GM OF BROWN SUGAR IN A PACKET. THE SEIZED BROWN SUGAR IS VALUED AT ₹25 LAKH

EXCISE OFFICIALS OF A MOBILE SQUAD HAD SEIZED BROWN SUGAR WORTH ₹12 LAKH AND ARRESTED THREE PERSONS ON NH-60 NEAR JAMALAPUR UNDER JALESWAR BLOCK, MARCH 31, 2019

police could not catch them, but suspected bad motive behind their presence in the area.

They frantically searched the area and found a pile of sand from where they recovered 250 gm of brown sugar in a packet. The seized brown sugar is valued at Rs 25 lakh.

January 15, the police had arrested two drug peddlers and seized 22 gm of brown sugar from them in Puruma Bazar area of Bhadrak. February 6, 2020, the police had busted a drug racket in Jaleswar and seized 50 gm of brown sugar worth Rs 5 lakh.

Three drug peddlers were arrested.

June 22, 2020, an STF team of Crime Branch had arrested two drug peddlers in Jaleswar and seized brown sugar worth Rs 40 lakh from them. The two were the associates of notorious drug trader Sheikh Saeed. In June, 2019, the police had seized a huge cache of drugs. Brown sugar weighing 1.655 kg was seized with the arrest of four youths on the Balasore-Phuladi road. This racket had been pushing dug peddling in the area. Their trade had extended from Balasore to Bangladesh via

West Bengal.

March 31, 2019, excise officials of a mobile squad had seized brown sugar worth Rs 12 lakh and arrested three persons on NH-60 near Jamalapur under Jaleswar block. Acting on intelligence inputs about the drug trafficking, excise officials had raided a hotel and a car. Three youths were carrying 120 gm of brown sugar from West Bengal and taking it to Bhubaneswar. The officials also seized the car, three cell phones and cash.

## TAKING OATH



Women affiliated to Mahila Arogya Samiti take a mass pledge for safety of girl children at an awareness programme marking the observance of National Girl Child Day at Sahadevkhunta in Balasore, Sunday.

OP PHOTO

FOCUS BUDGET

# HIGH DEBT VS DUTY HIKES



The Budget needs to loosen purse strings, inject cash for boosting consumption, raise funds for stimulus, lower bank NPAs, give more funds for rural schemes, give special support to stressed sectors like tourism, aviation and make industries competitive

needs a boost. Besides, there are rumblings of hiking import duties on 50 items -- from smart phones, electric vehicles to refrigerators and air-conditioners -- being raised possibly by 5 to 10 per cent. Though it may increase prices of many goods it is expected to raise ₹20,000 crore. Various duties and cess on petrol also being reviewed as the country has the highest price on fuel. There are suggestions to reduce it as it causes general inflation. The pandemic has given a blow to India's exports leading to a 25-month high of trade deficit in December as growth in merchandise imports outpaced exports. It is obvious that the government would have to depend on direct and indirect borrowings. The revenue raising measures are imperative as they may impact farm incomes also as secondary sales of farm products are likely to be brought under GST. This means while sale by farmers would not have a tax but all sub-genuine sales by a trader or arhatiya would be called for GST details. It would also lead to im-

position of income-tax on them. This can constrict the farmer's income and rural cash flow. With thousands having lost their jobs and many more having had to undergo a salary cut across the country due to the pandemic, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman might be looking at possible ways to put more disposable income in the hands of people. One way is to raise the I-T threshold to ₹5 lakh but it is a big if. Some minor cuts may be announced but that might be taken away by some major steps. In reality, it would be prudent to have no income-tax as less than three crores are I-T payees and construction of their incomes comes in the way of market growth. It is necessary to lubricate the economy as India's per capita income in 2017-18 is ₹44,901 or ₹3,741 per month as per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Longitudinal Ageing Study. According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), it is ₹29,896 annually (₹2,491 a month). (A private Indian Human Development Survey mentions it

as ₹1,26,968 or ₹10,580 a month). Either of the figures is not representative of the earnings of average citizens hinting that income-tax in such a poor country is euphemism and a burden on society as collection costs are more. About 2.99 crore resident Indians filed ITR-1 returns till 10 January 2021 which is less than 3.11 crore filed till September 2019. However, to include technological changes the I-T Act may be amended. This Budget is not considering scrapping I-T though it needs to be done as overall industrial production (IIP) growth contracts to 1.9 per cent, manufacturing 1.7 per cent and capital goods output declines by 7.1 per cent reflecting demand contraction. In reality, the process of contraction was evident even in November 2019. This has implication on revenue earnings as also on job growth. These are critical issues that the Budget has to address calling for an impetus to overall economic activities. The pandemic-stimulus ensured loans for low-income people but now banks say that most of these have turned into NPAs. The Budget may also increase divestment target to ₹3 lakh crore through long-pending privatisation of Air India, BPCL, Concor and Shipping Corporation of India. Further, it is also looking at tax issues related to business organisations, mergers and amalgamation and restricting forwarding of losses in case of change in shareholding with a view to mopping more revenues. Post Covid, the economy remains in critical condition and medium-term growth will remain slow, Fitch Ratings says. It is to remain at that level till 2026. Clearly, Budget making would be a herculean task as nominal GDP is 4.2 per cent lower than the previous year. Eyes are riveted on how taxes are raised and funds are earmarked to mark growth of Modi's dream for ₹5 trillion economy.

INFA

The Union Budget to be tabled on 1 February has many hearts beating, a lot of hopes rising and will set the pace for the economy. However, the high expectations may not match the formulations that are unlikely to be easy, if not tough.

Amid the raucous voices on the farm laws, RSS top leader Suresh Bhayajoshi has suggested a middle path to resolve the issue. A top magazine survey reports that 73 per cent of people have faith in Prime Minister Modi which the pandemic, recession and protests could not dent.

This makes the government confident in presenting its Budget proposals which are likely to have some sops but may have many sugar-coated harsh pills. Also, some showpiece programmes may have to be kept in abeyance.

The Budget needs to loosen purse strings, inject cash for boosting consumption, raise funds for stimulus, lower bank NPAs, more funds for rural schemes, special support to stressed sectors like tourism, aviation and make industries competitive.

Though it is not the Centre's direct concern but while crafting the Budget it would have to take care of the historical high in combined fiscal deficit of the States hitting a peak of ₹8.7 lakh crore or 4.7 per cent of their GDP, according to a Crisil study.

The large deficits of States and Centre together of around ₹20 lakh crore would have a sticky impact on expenditure as committed expenses like salaries, pension and interest payments would take a major share of thin earnings. The government naturally would have to struggle with developmental and day-to-day running expenditures which are difficult to cut at such difficult times that require boosting of economic activities.

The housing sector is in focus and a credit-linked subsidy may be introduced along with liberalised FDI. The retail sector also



Shivaji Sarkar

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO DEPEND ON DIRECT AND INDIRECT BORROWINGS

## Wuhan Anniversary

At a time when vaccines against Covid-19 are being rolled out in phases in many countries across the world, there are reports of palpable anger and dismay from Wuhan. Just about this time last year this Chinese city earned the opprobrium of being the villain of the piece for the global pandemic. Side by side, relaxed scenes are also being witnessed with elderly dancers pirouetting in parks and crowded bars selling "Wuhan Stay Strong" craft beer. This is in sharp contrast to continuing lockdowns, surging death rates and hospitals teeming with corona-hit patients and, above all, crumbling economies in other countries. Most countries have, in the meantime, adopted a hide and move ahead policy for facing this crisis. Administrations across the globe are said to be lowering testing numbers, hiding death numbers and refraining from reporting positive cases.

The current show in Wuhan could be yet another Chinese strategy to impress the World Health Organisation (WHO) team camping there to investigate how the virus is believed to have originated from that place. On the first anniversary of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, the people are annoyed with the government's narrative of triumphalism. Many feel it is too soon for the government to declare victory. Those among them, who have lost their relatives in the pandemic, barely conceal their anger at the government for not acting more quickly and openly.

Exactly a year back, Wuhan gave global currency to the hated word - lockdown - and government after government had to herd their people into their homes and accept the choice of economic paralysis. Now, Wuhan is observing the anniversary with a fair dose of pride which may be contrived by the government. There are confirmed reports that there is usual hustle and bustle on the streets and sidewalks and citizens are packing public transport and parks. According to news clips emanating from that city, young joggers on the streets even go maskless. One of them declared "Life is like before now."

But memories of Wuhan's ordeal are fresh among many citizens who feel the government let them down with its inadequate response in the early stage. The anger then was so uncontrollable that when Vice Premier Sun Chunlan visited Wuhan during quarantine in March, 2020, she was greeted with shouts that the government's claim of fighting the pandemic was "fake." Such belligerence is unthinkable in China, but it did happen. The wounds are still raw for many. The virus has killed at least two million people globally, but in China the authorities have reported fewer than 5,000 deaths with Wuhan accounting for most of them. It is likely that China has dished out an official propaganda narrative on Wuhan as an example of "heroic" Chinese response and recovery.

People of Wuhan, the industrial and transportation hub along the Yangtze river with a population of 11 million, started falling ill in December 2019. The growing number of patients sent alarm bells ringing, prompting China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention to dispatch a team to investigate. The city was locked down on January 23, 2020 with little or no warning. The hardships endured and lives lost became a source of both sorrow and pain for residents once the 76-day-long lockdown was lifted on April 8. Today, citizens across the world can claim to have suffered in the same manner.

The lockdown anniversary coincides with the presence in Wuhan of WHO experts who, in a few days, are to begin a planned investigation into the origins of Covid-19. The WHO, however, is quick to dismiss the impression that it is moving from conclusion to premise regarding the origin of the pandemic. "All hypotheses are on the table," said WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan.

A commentary in the Beijing News praised the aggressive lockdown as a model for the world while noting Wuhan's sacrifices and the persistent virus threat. "We must not lose the hard-won results of the epidemic to negligence. Pay tribute to Wuhan and fearless Chinese people," it said. This is all very good. But humanity will be truly served on this anniversary if China cooperates with the WHO team to find out the genesis of the pandemic and understand the virus better instead of suppressing truth. China is sole creator of the massive crisis. It started off with falsehood and kept the seriousness of the pandemic hid from the world for a very long period. Resultantly, the final outcome of this lie for the human race is visible to anyone willing to see.

### WISDOM CORNER

- To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance. OSCAR WILDE
- There are no strangers here; Only friends you haven't yet met. WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS
- You can preach a better sermon with your life than with your lips. OLIVER GOLDSMITH

### WORDSWORTH

#### Zemblanity

In an ideal lexicographical world, every word ought to be matched with its opposite, its antonym. Ever since 1754, when Horace Walpole created serendipity -- the ability to make unexpected and fortunate discoveries -- it has had to survive without one. It is only recently appeared: So what is the opposite of Serendip, a southern land of spice and warmth, lush greenery and hummingbirds, seawashed, sunbasted? Think of another world in the far north, barren, icebound, cold, a world of flint and stone. Call it Zemblia. Ergo: zemblanity, the opposite of serendipity, the faculty of making unhappy, unlucky and expected discoveries by design. Serendipity and zemblanity: the twin poles of the axis around which we revolve -- Armadillo, by William Boyd, 1998. Boyd's source may be a strangely constructed novel by Vladimir Nabokov of 1962, Pale Fire, which features the "distant northern land" of Zemblia and a series of apparent coincidences that are actually a deliberate linkage of events. Nabokov's reference is surely to Novaya Zemlya, a group of Arctic islands owned by Russia, which were at one time commonly referred to in English as Nova Zembla. Zemlya means earth or land in Russian, a prosaic word, but not in itself unpleasant. Zemblanity hasn't achieved mainstream status, though Mr Justice Michael Peart used it in a legal judgment in Ireland in 2012 and it has been borrowed as the title of a bit of madcap physical theatre, which was performed, for example, at the 2009 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

#### Zilch

Dictionaries are almost uniformly cautious about the origin of this word, which means "nothing; zero". It appears first in print in the mid 1960s (the first example in the big Oxford English Dictionary is from a slang collection at the University of South Dakota dated Winter 1966). Some reference books suggest the Ballyhoo humour magazine, first published in 1931, was a possible source. This had as one of its characters a Mr Zilch (actually there were several of them: the front page of the first issue advertised "President Henry P. Zilch, Chairman of the Board Charles D. Zilch, Treasurer Otto Zilch"). The character was not actually pictured in cartoons in the magazine, but was obviously present, so he was "the little man who wasn't there." This name may have come from college slang of the 1920s, in which Joe Zilch was the archetypal average student -- the average Joe, in fact, marching in the same column as Joe Blow, Joe Doakes and the more recent Joe Sixpack. That sense is still around and sometimes used in the same way as John Doe, to refer to an individual who is otherwise unidentified. In the 1920s, however, Joe Zilch could also be an insignificant person or a loser. The spelling suggests a European origin (and Zilch is a real German surname of Slavic origin). The name was probably borrowed with zero and nil in back of the creator's mind. But the years between 1930s and 1960s are a complete blank as far as the development of the word is concerned, so we have no way of confirming that this is the source. Indeed, the long gap might be indirect evidence that it isn't.

### SPECTRUM PANDEMIC

# The ethics of prioritising Covid vaccination



Peter Singer

THE GOAL IS TO SAVE MORE LIVES, WHICH SHOULD BE OUR OVERRIDING CONCERN

Now that Covid-19 vaccines are being rolled out, policymakers are wrestling with the question of how to distribute them quickly and equitably. There has been wide agreement that health workers should be vaccinated first, because they are needed to save the lives of those who are ill because of the virus. But deciding who should come next has spurred considerable debate. One relevant fact is that people over 65 have a higher risk of dying from Covid than younger people do, and those over 75 are at even higher risk.

Another relevant fact is that, in the US and some other countries, members of disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities have a lower-than-average life expectancy, and therefore are under-represented among those over 65. If we give priority to older people, the proportion who are members of those minorities will be lower than their proportion in the population as a whole. In light of the many disadvantages members of these minorities already experience, this seems unfair.

This sense of unfairness appears to motivate the suggestion by Kathleen Dooling, a public health official at the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, that a different approach be taken. In a presentation to the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunisation

Practices, Dooling argued that "essential workers" -- a group numbering approximately 87 million -- should be vaccinated ahead of the 53 million Americans aged 65 and older, even though this would lead to between 0.5 per cent and 6.5 per cent more deaths.

A policy of making older Americans wait longer for the vaccine on the grounds that they are disproportionately white would therefore sacrifice lives to avoid the apparent inequity of giving priority to a group in which disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities are under-represented. But that's not all. The under-representation of these minorities among people over 65 years old is slight compared to the huge over-representation of people over 65 among those who die from Covid. As several commentators, among them Matthew Yglesias and Yascha Mounk, have pointed out, giving preference to essential workers would thus also cause more deaths in the minority communities that are supposed to be receiving more equitable treatment.

The CDC's Advisory Committee rejected the suggestion that all "essential workers" be given priority, and instead narrowed the group to about 30 million "frontline essential workers," such as emergency responders, teachers, and grocery store employees. In addition, it recommended that

people aged 75 and over have the same priority.

These recommendations are a compromise between giving priority to those most at risk, and giving priority to all essential workers, frontline or not. It is clearly important to keep those who really are frontline essential workers safe and at work. Giving a similar level of priority to those aged 75 and over will mean that fewer people overall and fewer members of disadvantaged minorities die from the virus.

The CDC recommendations are not binding, and states can and should fine-tune them, both to treat disadvantaged minorities equitably and to save more lives. Ngozi Ezike, the director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, gave a clue to how this could be done in a recent New York Times roundtable discussion on vaccine distribution. She pointed out that there are medical conditions for which the guidelines on the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities differ from those that apply to whites.

The example she gave was prostate cancer screening. Because the disease is more common in African-American men than it is in white men, it is recommended to screen African-American men at an earlier age than that recommended for white men. The point is to screen everyone who is at the level of risk

for which the screening is considered worthwhile.

If the US retains the current vaccination priorities, but adds the principle of equal treatment for people at an equal level of risk, policymakers will need to estimate at what age members of African-American, Latinx, and Native American communities run the same risk as 75-year-old white or Asian Americans, and then consider race and ethnicity in deciding who is eligible at what age. I do not have data indicating how much difference this would make, but it might mean that, say, an African-American 72-year-old man is eligible while a white 74-year-old man is not.

Some may object that this is a kind of reverse racism. It is not. In the absence of more individualised evidence, race is used as an indicator of risk from the virus. The guiding principle is not that members of different racial and ethnic groups should be vaccinated in numbers proportionate to their share in the community as a whole. That is not ethically significant. The goal is to save more lives, which should be our overriding concern.

The writer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and founder of the non-profit organisation The Life You Can Save. PROJECT SYNDICATE

## 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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### Simplify taxes

Sir, The coming Budget offers narrow scope for sweeping tax reforms, and the focus must be on making existing taxes work efficiently. The steep cut in corporate tax rates in 2019-20 to 22 per cent for domestic companies and 15 per cent for domestic new manufacturing companies from 30 per cent provided they give up exemptions and the minimum alternate tax would take some more time to work through the system and stabilise revenues. Lowering the GST rates and widening the tax base is the remit of the GST Council. And a reduction in personal income-tax rates can wait given the huge shortfall in revenues due to growth contraction. A possible reform is to raise the tax-exempt limit of ₹1.5 lakh on savings schemes for individuals, unchanged since 2014-15, to let taxpayers diversify their financial savings to more rewarding instruments. Deploying big data analytics to assiduously pursue audit trails thrown up by GST is the way to widen the tax base. Following up on sales of basic and intermediate goods produced down the transaction chain will curb evasion. The average customs tariff of 14 per cent is way too high. Imports are treated as inter-state sales within the country and attract integrated GST that is eligible for the input tax credit. Ideally, a uniform import duty of 5 per cent on raw materials, intermediate goods, and final goods, giving all lines of value addition the same rate of effective protection, will end classification disputes and help fight inflation. The dispute-resolution mechanism must also be strengthened. Clear and simple tax laws, stability and certainty in these laws, and an efficient tax administration will make India an attractive investment destination. Kanhu Charan Rout, BHADRAK

### Welcome move

Sir, The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has done a commendable job for opening doors of opportunities for the transgender community by handing over the responsibility of managing parking areas to them. To make a safe world for them the Ministry of Home Affairs has written to all chief secretaries of Union Territories and States on protection of rights of transgender persons and also directed them to sensitise police and prison officials in this regard. Adequate measures are taken to prevent discrimination against transgender persons, including setting up of a Transgender Protection Cell under the charge of District Magistrate in each district and a State Level Cell under the DGP, to monitor cases of offences against transgender persons and ensure timely registration, investigation and prosecution of such offences. Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI



# Yedi makes U-turn on quarrying

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mysuru/Shivamogga, Jan 24:** Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa made a U-turn on illegal mining and quarrying as he went from first declaring that his government will not allow them, only to retract it later, asserting that such activities can be regularised.

"I will not allow illegal mining. Whoever wants to take up mining can do so only after obtaining a licence," Yediyurappa had told reporters here before leaving for Mysuru and thereafter to Shivamogga, his home district, where a massive explosion killed five people late.

In Mysuru, Yediyurappa told reporters that mining and quarrying are inevitable for development. "There are road works and high-way projects for which mining and quarrying are needed. But illegal



**There are road works and highway projects for which quarrying is needed. But illegal mining can't be allowed. It's not good for anyone, including those indulging in it**

BS YEDIYURAPPA | CM, KARNATAKA

mining can't be allowed. It's not good for anyone, including those indulging in it," he said, adding that illegal miners can file an application to regularise the illegal mining and continue their activities. "We will have no objection. If they fail to get their mines regularised, deputy commissioners have been instructed to do a spot inspection and take appropriate action," he said.

After visiting the blast site in Shivamogga, Yediyurappa contradicted his own cabinet ministers' statements that the quarry where the massive explosion took place was in the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ).

"How can a quarry or mining be allowed in an eco-sensitive zone," he asked.

He reiterated that a comprehensive probe has been ordered to look into the blast incident. "What caused the blast? Who gave permission for such a huge amount of explosives to be transported? All these will be looked into and we will take action against those found guilty," he said.

As soon as Yediyurappa's statements were aired on local news channels, they drew sharp reactions from the Leader of the Opposition, Siddaramaiah. "Isn't illegal mining a crime? What's the punishment for that? How can he talk of regularisation being in a

**Isn't illegal mining a crime? What's the punishment for that? How can he talk of regularisation being in a responsible position**

SIDDARAMAIAH | LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

responsible position," he asked.

Yediyurappa's statement amounted to "cooperation" for illegalities, Siddaramaiah said. "Regularising illegal mining cannot be equated to regularising illegal homes or lands. In that case, what's the relevance of the existence of the mines and geology department," he asked.

The Congress leader also claimed he has spoken to the deputy commissioner of Shivamogga. "Gelatine and dynamite were brought in without licence from Andhra Pradesh. This is the first offence. That they weren't stored safely is the second offence. It's clear that the incident took place due to the negligence of the officials," he said, adding that Yediyurappa and the minister in-charge of Shivamogga, K.S. Eshwarappa, must take the blame.

# 'CM appeasing 30% of WB population'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 24:** Senior BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya Sunday claimed that Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refused to deliver her speech on Netaji's birth anniversary, after being greeted with 'Jai Sri Ram' chants, as she wanted to appease a section of people.

Vijayvargiya, the saffron party's national general secretary, alleged that the chief minister has only been sensitive to the needs and the interests of 30 per cent of the state's over nine crore people.

"Jai Sri Ram is used to greet people. It was chanted when Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived, and also when he was leaving the Netaji Research Bureau. Why did Mamata didi feel insulted? Why did she feel upset on hearing 'Jai Sri Ram' or 'Bharat mata ki jai' chants?" he told reporters at Jalpaiguri, where he is scheduled to attend a party programme.

Asserting that Banerjee's move was aimed at "appeasing 30 per cent of the voters in the state", Vijayvargiya, who is also the BJP's Bengal milder, said "for the remaining 70 per cent, it has always been a tale of neglect."

Minorities, especially Muslims, constitute 30 per cent of the state's population.

"People of Bengal will give a be-

## PM mum on Didi's insult

The TMC Sunday expressed regret over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the "reprehensible treatment" meted out to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee by a section of audience, who raised 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans ahead of her speech on Netaji's birth anniversary. State minister Bratya Basu, during a press meet here, said the incident reflects the "misogynistic mindset" of certain people. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was present at the programme, did not utter a single word condemning the behaviour of a section of audience... This shows that the BJP has no respect for Netaji and has no idea what he stood for," he claimed.

fitting reply to her in the next elections," the BJP leader added.

The chief minister on Saturday declined to speak at an event, organised to celebrate Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary, after 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans were raised there, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The TMC supremo said such "insult" was unacceptable.

# Sasikala is stable, says hosp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Jan 24:** Expelled AIADMK leader VK Sasikala, who is serving a jail term in a corruption case and has been hospitalised for COVID-19 is stable, according to the hospital where she is undergoing treatment.

The symptoms have reduced and she is now stable, authorities at Victoria Hospital where Sasikala is being treated said on Sunday.

Her sister-in-law J Ilavarasi, who is also serving a prison term in the corruption case, has tested positive for coronavirus and has been admitted to Victoria Hospital.

In a bulletin issued by Dr C R

Jayanthi, the Dean and Director of the Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, which manages Victoria Hospital, said the 66-year old Sasikala's symptoms have reduced and her condition is stable.

"Conscious, alert and well oriented. Stable and comfortable, taking oral food normally and walking with support," the bulletin said.

Sasikala is being continuously monitored in the ICU of the hospital, Jayanthi said.

Sasikala, the former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's close aide, who is serving her jail term at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, had complained of fever and breathlessness Wednesday.



# R-DAY READY



Mounted police personnel during a cold and foggy morning, at Maidan in Kolkata, Sunday

# QUESTION PAPER LEAK

## Govt to dismiss accused officials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Jan 24:** Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa Sunday said the officials allegedly involved in leaking the first division assistant (FDA) examination question papers may be dismissed from service, even as eight more people were arrested in connection with the leakage, taking the total number of arrests to 14.

The exam conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) was to take place Sunday but ahead of the city police arrested six people with Rs 24 lakh in cash and the question papers.

The police said the leaked question papers were allegedly sold to job aspirants. Based on the expose, the KPSC postponed the FDA examination.

"We will initiate stringent action against all those involved in the

**Exam postponed**

The exam conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) was to take place Sunday but ahead of the city police arrested six people with Rs 24 lakh in cash and the question papers.

The police said the leaked question papers were allegedly sold to job aspirants. Based on the expose, the KPSC postponed the FDA examination.

"We will initiate stringent action against all those involved in the

case. I am not only ready to suspend them but also dismiss them from the service," the Chief Minister told reporters.

Stating that the officers concerned have been suspended, he said he would get the matter investigated.

"It is an unpardonable act to leak the question papers even before the exams are held," Yediyurappa said.

Meanwhile, the Bengaluru Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Sandeep Patil, in a statement, said based on the inputs given by the kingpins of the racket - Rachappa and Chandru - 12 people have been arrested taking the total arrested to 14.

According to police, six people were arrested on Saturday while on Sunday eight more were arrested.

# VHP slams Mamata for protest

BJP LEADER AND GRANDNEPHEW OF NETAJI, CHANDRA KUMAR BOSE, SAID THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH THE SLOGAN AND NETAJI'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY SHOULD NOT BE MIXED WITH POLITICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 24:** The VHP leadership Sunday came down heavily on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for not delivering her speech at the main 'Parakram Diwas' celebration here after 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans greeted her, saying it reflects her "anti-Hindu" mindset and efforts to appease a particular community.

A visibly agitated Banerjee, who was called to deliver her speech at the Netaji birth anniversary ceremony at Victoria Memorial Saturday, had fumed over the "insult" and said, it was a government programme and not a political event.

"What Mamata Banerjee did



yesterday reflects her anti-Hindu mindset and her efforts towards appeasement politics. Lord Ram is soul of the country. Why does she get angry with 'Jai Shri Ram'

slogans? We fail to understand," international joint general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) Surendra Jain told PTI. When a section of the

crowd continued with their chanting, the chief minister had said, before returning to her seat. "I thank the Prime Minister and the Union culture ministry for holding this programme in Kolkata. This is a government programme and not a political programme. There has to be dignity. It doesn't behove anybody to invite people and insult. I won't speak. Jai Bangla, Jai Hind."

BJP leader and grandnephew of Netaji, Chandra Kumar Bose, said there was nothing wrong with the slogan and Netaji's birth anniversary should not be mixed with politics.

The Congress and the Left Front had backed Banerjee and slammed the BJP for the incident.

# Case against Tandav producers, actors



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Jan 24:** A case has been registered by the City police against the cast and crew of the controversial web series 'Tandav' starring actor Saif Ali Khan, for allegedly hurting religious sentiments of Hindus.

Based on a complaint by Kiran Aradhya, the case was registered on Friday against 'Tandav' director Ali Abbas Zafar, producer Farhan Akhtar, actors Mohammed Zeeshan Ayub and Saif Ali Khan and the head of India Originals of Amazon Prime Video, Aparna Purohit.

In his complaint, Kiran alleged that the cast and crew made the deity of Hindu religion Lord Shiva spell invective to hurt the Hindu sen-

timents. Cases have been registered under section 295A, 298, 153A and 34 of the IPC for insulting religious belief and promoting religious enmity between groups.

Several cases have been filed against the makers and cast of the web series in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

At least two scenes were removed from the nine-part starry political saga on Amazon Prime Video amid calls for boycotts, FIRs and protests over its alleged depiction of Hindu deities.

The cast and crew of 'Tandav' have apologised and said they had decided to implement changes to address the concerns raised.

# Need to induct leaders from other parties: BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 24:** Amid a spate of defections from the ruling TMC to the saffron camp in Bengal ahead of the assembly polls, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh Sunday allayed apprehensions that the turncoats would be given more importance than the old timers, bringing relief to some of the party's angst-ridden leaders.

Switching political allegiance doesn't always guarantee leadership positions, he asserted.

Ghosh, however, insisted that the party, in order to expand its base and come to power in Bengal, needs to induct people from other political outfits.

In an interview to PTI, he also clarified that everybody has to abide by the rules and regulations of the party, be it the old-timers or the newcomers.

The BJP is a growing force in West Bengal. Our organisation is getting strengthened with each passing day; people from other parties including the TMC are joining us. If we don't take people from other outfits, how will we grow?

"No matter who joins the camp, I would like to add that everyone has to abide by the rules and regulations of the party



**No matter who joins the camp, I would like to add that everyone has to abide by the rules and regulations of the party**

DILIP GHOSH | PRESIDENT, WB BJP

to abide by the rules and regulations of the party. No one is above the party," he said, when asked about reports of infighting in certain pockets of the state over induction of leaders from the TMC.

"There could be complaints against some leaders, but one has to understand that not everyone who joins us will be given a position

## Murmurs of discontent

MANY SENIOR TMC LEADERS, INCLUDING POLITICAL HEAVYWEIGHT SUVENDU ADHIKARI, 14 OTHER MLAS AND A SITTING MP, HAVE SWITCHED OVER TO THE SAFFRON CAMP

ACCORDING TO SAFFRON CAMP SOURCES, SEVERAL PARTY CADRES AND THE RSS - THE BJPS IDEOLOGICAL PARENT -- ARE NOT VERY HAPPY WITH THE INDUCTION OF CERTAIN LEADERS

a "washing machine" that cleanses corrupt turncoats after inducting them. Ghosh said taking someone into the party fold does not mean justifying his wrong deeds.

"We are not certifying or justifying anyone or anything. If someone is proven guilty, he or she will have to face the consequences. It's the TMC that believes in the culture of corruption.

"In our society, a section of people are into politics, and wherever this section goes, that party grows from strength to strength. If there are some politicians who are will-

ing to join us, we will welcome them. Law, on the other hand, will take its own course," he stated.

Ghosh, however, maintained that the party has put in place a mechanism to look into the profile of cadres and workers before inducting them.

"We are not here to judge anyone. But, that doesn't mean we will induct each and every one. There is a screening process and everybody has to go through it. We can never deliver good governance if we don't come to power. For that, we need to expand our base," he said.

Referring to the "outsider versus insider" debate in West Bengal, the state BJP chief said the TMC has raked up the issue as it has nothing else to talk about.

"The TMC, after a decade in power in the state, has nothing to talk about, it seems. Ours is a national party, and our leaders will come here to assist us. But, those who are fighting elections or are working at the grassroots level are residents of this state. So the allegations are baseless," he underlined.

Exuding confidence that the BJP will come to power with more than two-thirds majority, Ghosh said the party would draft a road map for the development of the state.



Indian scientists have done their duty by developing the COVID-19 vaccine and now we have to fulfill ours by defeating through the right information every network spreading lies and rumours  
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

### RAFALE ON EXPRESSWAY SOON

Combat aircraft, including the top-of-the-line Rafale or Sukhoi, will soon be able to land and take off from an airstrip being developed on the 340-km long Purvanchal Expressway in Uttar Pradesh



### of the day quote

Instead of protesting against the alleged negative stand of the Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi in approving government proposals, the BJP was trying to gain political mileage



V NARAYANASAMY | PONDICHERRY CHIEF MINISTER

The God will not grant you boon if you only receive Lord Muruga's Vel. The boon will be only for the AIADMK



K PALANISWAMI | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

Our main priority is the farmers' agitation and we plan to strongly raise the farmers' issue both in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. We will make use of all measures such as adjournment motion to discuss and debate the issue



KODIKUNNIL SURESH | CONGRESS' LOK SABHA CHIEF

## CBSE restructures affiliation system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is restructuring the affiliation system for schools and making the process completely digital and based on data analytics with least human intervention, officials said.

The new system, which will come into effect from March 1, has been restructured as per various recommendations for systemic reforms laid down in the new National Education Policy (NEP). "The board is restructuring the affiliation system and process as per recommendations of education reforms in the NEP. Although, the CBSE affiliation system has been online since 2006, the restructured system will be completely digital and based on data analytics with least human intervention," CBSE Secretary Anurag Tripathi said.

"The restructuring will help in establishing ease of doing business in the CBSE affiliation system, attaining the goal of minimum government, maximum governance, automated and data driven decisions, achieve transparency, bring more accountability in the entire systemic processes and achieve quick and time-bound disposal of all applications," he added.

Tripathi said the board will soon come out with detailed guidelines on the restructured system. "A detailed document on the CBSE affiliation system containing the restructured online procedure for affiliation, documents required for affiliation application, modalities and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for inspection, guidelines for the inspection committee, videos for various process, will be released soon," he said. The board has also revised timelines for application

process as per the restructured system.

As per the revised timeline, every year the application window for fresh affiliation and upgradation of affiliation will open three times - March 1 to 31, June 1 to 30 and September 1 to 30.

"The application for extension of affiliation will be accepted from March 1 to May 31 every year. Other applications such as those for additional subject, section increase, change of name of school, change of society or trust, will be accepted through the year," Tripathi said.

Procuring digital signatures of a school from authorised service provider or AADHAAR-based signatures; uploading mandatory documents such as no objection certificate, land certificate, safety certificate and certificate by district education officer, are among the prerequisites for application for affiliation. "After the online submission of application, details submitted by the school will be analysed

in accordance with the CBSE by-laws and inspection committee will be constituted immediately for the purpose of inspection. Schools will be able to get in-  
spection done on any of the dates mentioned in the letter," he said.

The CBSE had introduced a facility for virtual inspection of schools for upgradation of affiliation in August last year in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. The board is also in the process of setting up a facilitation centre to address queries, and problems of schools and inspection committees related to the virtual inspection. The board had revamped its norms in 2018 for granting affiliation to schools, leaving the onus of the infrastructural audit on states and limiting its own role to academic quality monitoring.



Tourists enjoying water sports in Beas river at Kullu in Manali district

UNI PHOTO

## 'Pak Twitter handles created to disrupt farmers' rally on R-Day'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: Delhi Police Sunday claimed that over 300 Twitter handles have been generated from Pakistan to disrupt the tractor rally proposed by protesting farmers on Republic Day.

Detailing the plan for the tractor parade, Deependra Pathak, Special Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) said the rally Tuesday will be conducted amid tight security after the Republic Day celebrations conclude.

"Over 300 twitter handles have been generated from Pakistan during January 13 to 18 to disrupt the tractor rally by farmers only by misleading people. There are inputs about the same from different agencies too. It will be a challenging task for us but the rally will be conducted amid tight security after the Republic Day parade is over," Pathak said at a press con-



ference. Since November last year, farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting against the Centre's three new agriculture laws at several Delhi border points, including Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, demanding that the legislations be repealed.

While police tried to convince farmer leaders to hold their tractor parade outside the national capital,

they were adamant on holding the proposed rally on Delhi's busy Outer Ring Road.

Earlier, there have been three rounds of meetings between the unions and police officers from Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, but it was during the fourth round of talks over the tractor parade on Friday where both sides reached an agreement.

## North India to experience fresh spell of chill: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: Parts of north and central India will experience a fresh spell of chill during the next three-four days with 'cold to severe cold wave' conditions likely over the plains, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday.

With the movement of the western disturbance further north-eastwards on Sunday from Jammu and Kashmir, dry north-westerly winds are likely to pick up from afternoon of January 25 and persist during the subsequent 3-4 days over plains of north and adjoining parts of central and western India. Under its influence, the current spell of dense to very dense fog in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, north Rajasthan is likely to persist over these areas till January 26 and decrease thereafter.

"Cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets over north Rajasthan and cold wave conditions in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh during January 25-27 and over west Uttar Pradesh and west Madhya Pradesh during January 26-27," the IMD said. Cold day to severe cold day conditions are also very likely in some pockets over Uttar Pradesh during the next three days (till January 26) and cold day conditions in isolated pockets over Punjab and Haryana and Chandigarh during the next 2 days.

### SHORT TAKES

#### 2 found dead inside vehicle

**Banihal/Jammu:** Two men were found dead inside a mini-truck Sunday in Banihal along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, which was opened for Kashmir-bound stranded vehicles after remaining closed for a day due to snowfall, officials said. The 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, was cleared Sunday afternoon for vehicles going to Kashmir, they said.

#### 145 more birds found dead in Raj

**Jaipur:** A total of 145 birds were found dead in various districts of Rajasthan Sunday, taking the count of such avian deaths recorded in the state to 6,595. The 145 birds include, 112 crows, five peacocks, 11 pigeons and 17 other birds, an official report said. So far, bird flu has been confirmed in 67 samples from 17 districts.

#### Man attempts suicide inside PS

**Nagpur:** A 25-year-old man arrested in a theft case tried to kill himself inside the lock-up of a police station here in Maharashtra by swallowing a screw, police said Sunday. The incident occurred Saturday afternoon at Lakdaganj police station when Naresh Mahilange removed a screw of the door of the washroom and swallowed it, an official said.

#### 6 charged under NSA

**Bhopal:** In the wake of a hooch tragedy in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, authorities have cracked the whip against those involved in illegal liquor trade in Bhopal and booked six persons under the stringent National Security Act (NSA). The action by District Magistrate (DM) Avinash Lavania came under Sections 34 (1) and (2) of the Excise Act, 1915, after police seized illegal liquor from these persons.

#### Farmer dies

**Fatehpur (UP):** A 45-year-old farmer died allegedly due to cold here in a village in Kishanpur police station area while irrigating his field, police said Sunday. SHO of Kishanpur police station Pandhari Saroj said Kamta Nishad (45) of Mahrauli village had gone to irrigate his field Saturday.

## Not sexual assault if there is no 'skin to skin' contact: Bombay HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 24: Groping a minor's breast without "skin to skin contact" cannot be termed as sexual assault as defined under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Bombay High Court has said.

Justice Pushpa Ganediwala of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court, in a judgement passed on January 19, the detailed copy of which was made available now, held that there must be "skin to skin contact with sexual intent" for an act to be considered sexual assault.

She said in her verdict that mere groping will not fall under the definition of sexual assault.

Justice Ganediwala modified the order of a sessions court, which had sentenced a 39-year-old man to three years of imprisonment for sexually assault-

ing a 12-year-old girl. As per the prosecution and the minor victim's testimony in court, in December 2016, the accused, one Satish, had taken the girl to his house in Nagpur on the pretext of giving her something to eat. Once there, he gripped her breast and attempted to remove her clothes, Justice Ganediwala recorded in her verdict.

However, since he groped her without removing her clothes, the offence cannot be termed as sexual assault and, instead, constitutes the offence of outraging a woman's modesty under IPC section 354, the high court held.

While section 354 entails a minimum sentence of imprisonment for one year, sexual assault under the POCSO Act entails a minimum imprisonment of three years. The sessions court had sentenced him to three years of imprisonment for the offences under the

POCSO Act and under IPC section 354. The sentences were to run concurrently.

The high court, however, acquitted him under the POCSO Act while upholding his conviction under IPC section 354.

"Considering the stringent nature of punishment provided for the offence (under POCSO), in the opinion of this court, stricter proof and serious allegations are required," HC said.

"The act of pressing of breast of the child aged 12 years, in the absence of any specific detail as to whether the top was removed or whether he inserted his hand inside the top and pressed her breast, would not fall in the definition of sexual assault," it said.

Justice Ganediwala further said in her verdict that "the act of pressing breast can be a criminal force to a woman/ girl with the intention to outrage her modesty".

### NEW UK COVID STRAIN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 24: With reports now showing the new UK Covid-19 strain to be not just more infectious but also associated with a higher degree of mortality, health experts have cautioned that Indians need not panic over the mutations, but the country needs to stay vigilant.

So far 150 people in India have tested positive for the UK variant of coronavirus, according to the Union Health Ministry Saturday.

This is despite India temporarily suspending all flights from the UK for about a week earlier in the month and also increasing screening measures for travellers from that country later.

However, India's total active case-load has continued to show downward movement over the past few

## India needs to stay vigilant: Experts

INDIA HAS SO FAR VACCINATED OVER 15 LAKH PEOPLE AGAINST COVID-19

weeks as the numbers on Saturday dropped to 1.85 lakh.

India's present active case-load consists of just 1.74 per cent of India's total positive cases.

But the fear of the new UK strain spreading faster in the country has become a cause for concern in some quarters. "We have now learned that, in addition to spreading more quickly the new variant of the virus may also be associated with a higher degree of mortality," UK PM Boris Johnson said in a tweet on Friday.

However, health experts here have said that Indians have no reason to panic.

"The new strain of the Covid virus is among one of the new strains that will come up in the future. So the approach to ensure prevention of infection from these strains is to always be vigilant and



maintain measures of social distancing, hand hygiene and wearing a mask," Richa Sareen, Consultant, Pulmonology and Critical Care Medicine, Fortis Hospital Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, told IANS.

"The new vaccine is known to

be protective against these new strains, as well. So there is no need to panic," Sareen said, advising people to just keep calm and adopt preventive measures.

The government is "taking adequate measures of quarantining the people who come in from out-

side and of doing gene sequencing, and then isolating these patients separately," she pointed out.

The UK prime Minister also said that the current vaccines are still effective against the new variant.

"We should be vigilant about it (the new UK variant) as we have done in the past, but we need not panic as vaccination process also started and from what we have learnt from the experts, the present vaccine is good enough for the new variants also," said Arun Kumar P, Senior Consultant at Apollo Telehealth.

He said that new variants are common in this group of viruses as is the case with influenza virus. Moreover, people who are especially vulnerable to the disease should still avoid going to public places and follow other preventive measures.

## Fuel pellets to help raise UP farmers' income

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 24: The Yogi Adityanath government will now be paying money for the agricultural wastes of the farmers. This is a part of the government's commitment to double the income of farmers in Uttar Pradesh.

Besides providing a solution to stubble burning, this will also assist in protecting the environment. According to a government spokesman, the chief minister had directed the department of agriculture to increase the income of the farmers and also to reduce their cost and on his initiative, a bio-coal production unit has been set up in Risia in Bahraich district.

The trial of the fuel briquette pellets, manufactured from agro waste, has also been completed in the plant and agricultural wastes like paddy straw, corn stalks and sugarcane leaves are being bought at Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 per quintal from the farmers of the region. About 10,000 quintals have been also been bought from the farmers so far. The unit has also received an order for pellet supply of 1,000 tonnes per day by Unchahar unit of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC).

This unit has also provided direct and indirect employment to over a 100 people and at the same time, the farmers are getting extra income for their agriculture residue.

of the day quote

I wish Lalluji gets well soon. When we were apart as political adversaries, too, even then I used to enquire about his health if he was unwell, but now we only get information about him through newspapers



NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER

I don't think a person like me can do anything in politics. So, I don't have that intention at all



KUMAR SANU | SINGER

Jai Sri Ram is used to greet people. It was chanted when Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived, and also when he was leaving the Netaji Research Bureau. Why did Mamata didi feel insulted? Why did she feel upset on hearing 'Jai Sri Ram' or 'Bharat mata ki jai' chants?



KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA | SENIOR BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Cong MP assaulted at Singhu border

**Chandigarh:** Congress MP Ravneet Singh Bittu was Sunday allegedly assaulted, pushed around and his turban pulled off in what he described as a "murderous attack" by some "mischievous elements" during a 'Jan Sansad' programme at the Singhu border. The Ludhiana MP's vehicle was also damaged in the attack at the Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Memorial where he had gone with Congress' Amritsar MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla and party MLA Kulbir Singh Zira to attend the event. "I was ambushed by a group of people armed with sticks and weapons. Though the attack was carried out in a planned manner, we left immediately because we did not want the farmers' protest to be disrupted due to some miscreants," Bittu told reporters.

Soldier injured

**Jammu:** An Army soldier injured in a ceasefire violation by Pakistan on the Line of Control in J&K's Rajouri district, succumbed to his injuries Sunday. An Indian Army statement said, "Pakistan Army had resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation on the LoC in Sunderbani sector of J&K January 18 which was responded to strongly by our own troops."

Godown gutted

**Thane:** A godown of construction material was gutted in a fire that broke out in the early hours on Sunday at Titwala in Thane district of Maharashtra, an official said. Nobody was injured in the incident. The blaze erupted in the godown located in Patilwadi area around 3.30 am, the Fire Brigade official said.

Kuru Kolumn

12 in Race for CBI chief post

Intense speculation is rife as to who will head the CBI once current incumbent R K Shukla retires February 1. According to sources, the Department of Personnel under the Prime Minister, has short-listed a panel of more than a dozen senior-most IPS officers from across the country for consideration. Rakesh Asthana, DG Border Security Force & Narcotics Control Bureau

Terror groups in Pak switch to new messaging apps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 24:** Amid a raging debate over privacy offered by messaging platforms like WhatsApp, terrorist groups and their handlers from Pakistan are switching to new applications which include one developed by a Turkish company, officials here said.

The three new applications came to light after evidence was collected following encounters with terrorists or those who surrendered before the Army gave details about their mode of radicalisation by Pakistan-based terrorist groups, they said.

The new applications have the ability to work with the slowest internet connections where Enhanced Data for Global Evolution (EDGE), used in the late 2000s, or 2G is in operation.

The government had suspended internet across Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of the special status of the erstwhile state in August 2019. Early last year, 2G internet services were restored.

Terror groups had virtually stopped using WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Later, it was found that they have switched over to new applications available free of cost on the world wide web, a security official said.

All encryption and decryption happen directly on the devices, therefore, reducing third party in-



Over 700 militants of different outfits have laid down their arms and ammunition and joined the mainstream of life in the entire Northeastern region and J&K  
AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

GREAT INITIATIVE

Gorakhpur became the first district in Uttar Pradesh to begin work for providing free coaching to students for the competitive exams



'PANDEMIC AN EYE-OPENER'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Jan 24:** The Covid-19 pandemic should serve as an eye-opener for the government to increase allocation for the health sector in the Union Budget 2020-21, feel representatives from the sector.

Pointing out that the pandemic exposed the "shortcomings" in the healthcare system, they have urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to hike the allocation in the Budget to be presented in Parliament February 1.

According to them, the pandemic posed a serious threat to the healthcare system and consequently to the supply chain of medicines and materials used for the care of those affected. They believe that the situation has forced everyone to think about the money India spends to strengthen its healthcare sector.

Sitharaman had allocated ₹69,000 crore or 1.28 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for health in the last fiscal. However, the situation India faced due to the health emergency exposed the

shortcomings of the healthcare system.

Doctors and health professionals appealed to the government and to the Finance Minister to increase allocations to ensure healthcare reaches all sections of society, both urban and rural.

"I sincerely hope the Minister increases allocations to the health sector in the 2021-22 Budget, and a major portion of this allocation must be spent to strengthen primary healthcare and improve the quality of healthcare delivery mechanism. India needs better healthcare facilities which will work towards improving the economy. Covid-19 pandemic must work as an eye-opener to increase Budget allocations for the health sector," said Dr Guru N Reddy, founder and director, Continental Hospitals.

Dr Rahul Medakkar, COO, Care Hospitals-Banjara Hills, said that in addition to increase in allocations, the government must consider the option of giving enhanced tax incentives for individuals and groups who intend to invest in the health sector.

BIG THREAT

- The names of the messaging apps have been withheld for security reasons
- While one of the applications is owned by a company based in the US, the second is from Europe
- The latest is an application developed by a Turkish company that has been frequently used by terrorist group handlers and their prospective recruits in the Kashmir valley



tervention at any point and these apps use encryption algorithm RSA-2048 which was adopted as the most secure encrypted platform.

RSA is an American Network Security and Authentication company that was founded in 1982 by US-born Ron Rivest, Israeli-born Adi Shamir and US-born Leonard Adleman. The acronym RSA is used worldwide as the foundation key in the cryptosystem.

One of the new messaging apps used by terrorists to radicalise the youth in the Valley does not even ask for phone numbers or emails for enabling complete user anonymity, the officials said.

Efforts are on to block such applications in Jammu and Kashmir, they said.

This comes at a time when the security agencies in the Valley are fighting the menace of virtual SIM cards. Terror groups have been increasingly using these to connect with their handlers in Pakistan.

The penetration of this technology came to light in 2019 when a request was sent to the United States to seek details from a service provider of virtual SIMs used by a Jaish-e-Mohammed suicide bomber in the attack on a CRPF convoy in Pulwama that left 40 personnel dead.

However, a detailed investiga-

tion done by the National Investigation Agency and other security agencies indicated that over 40 virtual SIM cards were used in the Pulwama attack alone, and there are probably more of them floating in the Valley's cyberspace, the officials said.

MATTER OF FAITH



Devotees take a holy dip in Ganga on the occasion of Ekadashi in Prayagraj

'Shot in the arm' for Indian Aviation

Currently, India plans to vaccinate around 300 million of its population by July 2021

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** India's civil aviation industry professionals will be considered for anti-Covid vaccination during the second stage of the national inoculation drive.

The industry has played a crucial role in evacuation of millions and re-connecting supply chains to ferry essentials during the pandemic period.

The sector is considered as crucial for fast economic recovery, as air passengers' numbers rise and markets re-open.

The industry provides the solid logistical backend in supply of vaccines to various hubs and regional

centres across the country. In this context, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has written to the Health Ministry requesting that industry professionals be considered to be inoculated in the second phase.

Civil Aviation Ministry's Joint Secretary Usha Padhee said: "We have already submitted an application and requested the Ministry of Health to consider the airline and airport staff in the second stage of vaccination." "Since, they are involved in travel and also in the vaccine movement, we will enumerate the number of people who interact directly with the public for the vaccination. We are pursuing it," Padhee told IANS.

Chinese link in instant loan apps scam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Jan 24:** A month after the Telangana Police began the crackdown on illegal instant loan apps following suicide by five persons, the investigation showed a deeper Chinese link to the scam.

After taking at least four Chinese nationals into custody for running the illegal apps, the police is now probing the role of some other Chinese. In the latest incident, Cyberabad police arrested three persons in connection with instant personal loan apps on January 22. Those arrested are Hemant Kumar Jha, director of Flash Cash Pvt limited, Gurugram, V. Manjunath, HR Manager at Juss IT Technologies Pvt LTD., Bengaluru and Abdul



Lauk, Manager/Team leader at TGHY Trust rock Pvt. limited, Bangalore.

These arrests were made during the investigations into the suicide of one G. Chandra Mohan (38). He had taken ₹70,000 loans from 11 different apps. "He repaid ₹2 lakh to these apps in installments but he was still being harassed for being a defaulter. This drove him to suicide," said P.V. Padmaja, Deputy Commissioner of Police

include Gomti Nagar, Indira Nagar, Alambagh and Hazratganj.

The panic buttons will be installed traffic light poles and will be connected to the smart city command and control centre.

Any person who meets with an accident or has a sudden health emergency, can press the button to reach out to the command centre, which, in turn, will provide immediate

help. Artificial Intelligence cameras will also be installed to capture the image of persons in need of help.

After capturing the image, the command centre will alert the nearest police station for rapid action. Lucknow Smart City CEO Ajay Dwivedi said: "The panic button will be beneficial for citizens in the case of an emergency like accident, health issues, theft, crime and traffic jam. It will also play a crucial role in ensuring women's safety."

PANIC BUTTONS AT ROAD INTERSECTIONS IN LUCKNOW

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Jan 24:** The Lucknow Police Commissionerate will soon install panic buttons at several intersections in the Uttar Pradesh capital city to assist people in case of any emergency.

These buttons will also be installed near pink toilets being constructed under the Safe City Mission. The project has already been implemented in Agra and Delhi.

The areas to be covered in the state capital in the first phase, in-



Cong slams govt over rise in fuel prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** The Congress on Sunday slammed the Centre over fuel prices touching an "all-time high" and demanded that the excise duty hike affected by the Modi government during its tenure be immediately rolled back to give relief to the masses.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the Centre over the rise in fuel prices, saying people are suffering due to inflation while the Modi government is busy in tax collection.

The party's attack on the government came a day after petrol and diesel prices in the country touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time in the week.

Congress spokesperson Ajay Maken said in Delhi on Sunday the petrol prices have reached an all-time high of ₹ 85.70 per litre and diesel has reached ₹75.88 a litre.

"What is more shocking is that during the Congress' regime when we left power in May 2014, the international crude oil was USD 108 per barrel, but petrol and diesel prices were at ₹71.51 and ₹57.28 per litre respectively, which have increased to ₹85.70 and ₹75.88 in Delhi today despite the crude oil prices coming down to half of that time," he said at a media briefing.

The Modi government has earned ₹20,00,000 crore in the last six and a half years by increasing the excise duty on petrol and diesel alone, Maken alleged.

Why was Bharat Biotech chosen?

No answers are available to many questions relating to Covaxin jointly produced by Bharat Biotech and ICMR. With raising any doubts over the Covaxin, the question has not been answered till date as to why Covaxin could not have waited for another month as its phase-III trial would have been over by January 31. But the government cleared it using its Emergency clauses. Interestingly, even the price of the Bharat Biotech vaccine is higher than Covidshield- its price at ₹206 compared to Covidshield of ₹200. But this ₹206 is a misnomer as BBL has given 15 lakh doses free. If the free doses are removed, the cost will go beyond ₹300. No answers are available as to why Bharat Biotech company was chosen by the ICMR to make a Coronavirus vaccine in the first place in May last year. To top it all, the government through ICMR also wanted the company to come out with the vaccine by August 15, 2020.

No doubt, ICMR has been working closely with Bharat Biotech and other companies for years on various vaccines. It had earlier partnered with Bharat Biotech for Rotavirus and H1N1 vaccines too. But no one has a clue of the clauses of the agreement between the BBL-ICMR till date. What is known is that the ICMR said in a statement in May, 2020 that it had transferred the virus strain isolated at the National Institute of Virology, Pune (an ICMR institute) to BBL for making the vaccine. That was a big achievement by the ICMR scientists. But ICMR decided to go to BBL and not other researchers. Bhargava warned that non-compliance will be viewed very seriously. But the ICMR had to eat the crow when BBL did not produce the vaccine by August 15, 2020 and run for cover.

Modi's baffling gift to Yogi

The nomination of A K Sharma, Prime Minister Modi's most trusted bureaucrat, as BJP MLC in UP continues to baffle the political class. Sharma was among Modi's inner circle of

officers when he was Chief Minister of Gujrat in 2001. Be it P K Mishra, K Kailashnathan, J C Murmu, R K Asthana, A K Sharma etc, they were all part of Modi's CMO. When Modi moved to Delhi in 2014, a battery of around 12 officers moved along. But Modi decided to keep K Kailashnathan in Ahmedabad itself as Anandiben Patel's CMO. The status of KK, as Kailashnathan is known in the bureaucratic fraternity, didn't change even after Vijay Rupani took over as CM. KK was Chief Principal Secretary of Modi in 2013 and remains so in 2021 irrespective of who is CM, Gujrat. He is considered "Saheb's proxy" because Modi talks only to KK and the wheels of administration move accordingly. PK Mishra replaced Nripendra Mishra as Principal Secretary in the PMO and RK Asthana continues to be a powerful IPS officer. J C Murmu was Made Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir to be Modi's eyes & ears in Srinagar. But somehow, he could not pass the muster and was brought back to Delhi as CAG. Therefore, the shifting of A K Sharma being sent to UP for a political innings is baffling given Modi's style of functioning.

# international



Unless we continue the hard work to suppress Covid-19 activity across Canada, there is a risk that more transmissible virus variants could take hold or even replace less transmissible variants

## US NSA TALKS TO ISRAELI COUNTERPART

Reaffirming Biden Administration's unwavering commitment to Israel's security, US NSA Jake Sullivan in a call with his Israeli counterpart Meir Ben Shabbat extended an invitation to begin a strategic dialogue in the near term, the White House said



## of the day quote

Currently, we are not interested in making any direct contact and we think that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the right format, and talks should be conducted in that framework



In (these) four years the world has changed, the region has changed and Pakistan has changed and you have to engage with this new Pakistan



This (rollback of citizenship data) is a major step towards an honest and fair redistricting process, helping ensure that everyone is represented in new districts



## SHORT TAKES

### Beijing issues yellow alert

Beijing: China's capital Beijing has issued a yellow alert for heavy air pollution which took effect from Sunday, prompting officials to take a series of steps to contain the smog. A series of measures will be taken from Sunday, including the suspension of a number of outdoor construction operations, and halting or restricting production by manufacturing companies, the municipal air pollution emergency response office said.

### Canadian drug baron arrested

Paris: A suspected Canadian drug baron has been arrested in the Netherlands on an Interpol warrant, according to Dutch and Australian police. The 57-year-old was detained Friday and is of "significant interest" to Australian and other law enforcement agencies, according to a statement Sunday from the Australian federal police. It says he was targeted as part of an operation that dismantled a global crime syndicate in 2019 that was accused of trading large amounts of illegal drugs and laundering the profits.

### Portugal gets new president

Lisbon: Portugal held a presidential election Sunday, with the moderate incumbent candidate strongly favored to earn a second five-year term as a devastating Covid-19 surge grips the European Union nation. The head of state in Portugal has no legislative powers, which lie with parliament and the government, but is an influential voice in the running of the country.

### NZ reports 1st community case

Wellington: New Zealand has reported its first case of community transmission in more than two months, although there was no immediate evidence that the coronavirus was spreading. Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said Sunday the case was a 56-year-old woman who recently returned from Europe. Like other returning travellers, she spent 14 days in quarantine and being tested negative before being returning home January 13.

# Argentina's abortion law enters force under watchful eyes

AGENCIES

Buenos Aires, Jan 24: Argentina's groundbreaking abortion law goes into force Sunday under the watchful eyes of women's groups and government officials, who hope to ensure its full implementation despite opposition from some conservative and church groups.

Argentina became the largest nation in Latin America to legalise elective abortion after its Senate December 30 passed a law guaranteeing the procedure up to the 14th week of pregnancy and beyond that in cases of rape or when a woman's health is at risk.

The vote was hailed as a triumph for the South American country's feminist movement that could pave the way for similar actions across the socially conservative, heavily Roman Catholic region.

But Pope Francis had issued a last-minute appeal before the vote and church leaders have criticized the decision.

Supporters of the law say they expect lawsuits from anti-abortion groups in Argentina's conservative provinces and some private health clinics might refuse to carry out the procedure.

"Another huge task lies ahead of us," said Argentina's minister of



women, gender and diversity, Elizabeth Gómez Alcorta, who has acknowledged there will be obstacles to the law's full implementation across the country.

Gómez Alcorta said a telephone line will be set up "for those who

cannot access abortion to communicate."

The Argentine Catholic Church has repudiated the law and conservative doctors' and lawyers' groups have urged resistance.

Doctors and health professionals can claim conscientious objection to performing abortions, but cannot invoke the right if a pregnant woman's life or health is in danger. A statement signed by the Consortium of Catholic Doctors, the Catholic Lawyers Corporation and other groups called on doctors and lawyers to "resist with nobility, firmness and courage the norm

that legalizes the abominable crime of abortion."

The anti-abortion group Unidad Provida also urged doctors, nurses and technicians to fight for their "freedom of conscience" and promised to "accompany them in all the trials that are necessary."

Under the law, private health centers that do not have doctors willing to carry out abortions must refer women seeking abortions to clinics that will.

Any public official or health authority who unjustifiably delays an abortion will be punished with imprisonment from three months to one year.

# Biden, Johnson discuss transatlantic ties, Covid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/London, Jan 24: Joe Biden conveyed his intention to strengthen the "special relationship" with the UK in his first call as the US President with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, during which the two leaders re-committed to the NATO alliance and agreed to cooperate on combating climate change and containing the Covid-19 pandemic.



The conversation with Johnson over phone Saturday was Biden's third involving a foreign leader since his inauguration on Wednesday after he spoke with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador Friday.

"Great to speak to President Joe Biden this evening. I look forward to deepening the longstanding alliance between our two countries as we drive a green and sustainable recovery from Covid-19," Johnson said in a tweet.

It seem that a new trade agreement was not on the list of priorities for both sides. While the Downing Street readout of the phone call referred to Johnson reiterating his intention to resolve existing trade

Great to speak to President Joe Biden this evening. I look forward to deepening the longstanding alliance between our two countries as we drive a green and sustainable recovery from Covid-19

BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER, UK

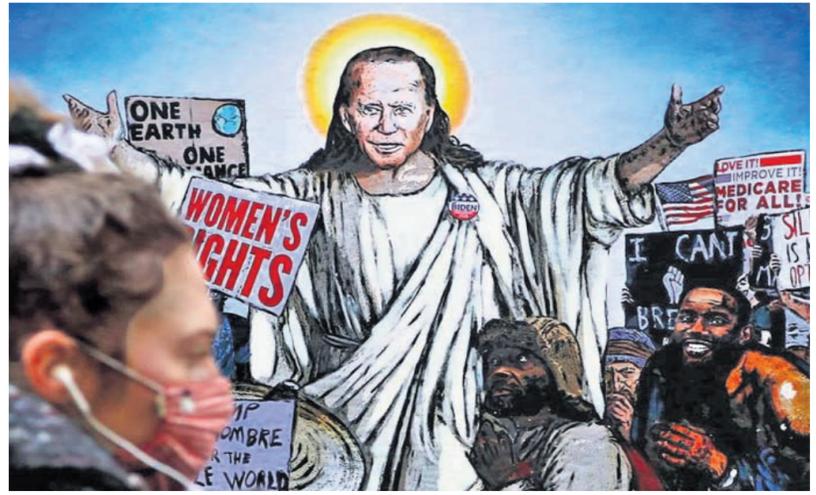
issues as soon as possible, the White House communique of the call only referred to "strengthening the special relationship".

"The president conveyed his intention to strengthen the special relationship between our countries and revitalise transatlantic ties, underscoring the critical role of NATO to our collective defense and shared values," the White House said.

"Building on the UK and US' long history of cooperation in security and defence, the leaders re-committed to the NATO alliance and our shared values in promoting human rights and protecting democracy. They also discussed the benefits of a potential free trade deal between our two countries, and the Prime Minister reiterated his intention to resolve existing trade issues as soon as possible," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

The UK is keen to conclude a post-Brexit free trade agreement with the US, but the new American administration has been less vocal over this amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

## ALL HOPES PINNED



A woman walks past a mural depicting President Joe Biden as Jesus addressing crowds of people titled 'The Saviour', created by artist Harry Greb in Rome, Italy

# 11 trapped miners rescued from gold mine in China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 24: Eleven miners, trapped underground for two weeks following a blast in a gold mine in east China's Shandong Province, have been rescued, the state media reported Sunday.

Authorities have been racing to dig out 22 miners trapped underground in the partially built gold mine in the city of Qixia in Shandong Province, since the explosion blocked their exit on January 10.

The rescuers set free two workers Sunday, bringing the number of rescued miners to 11, the state-run

Xinhua news agency reported.

The first miner was rescued from the mine in the morning. The worker, said to be in "extremely weak condition", was rushed to the hospital for treatment, the report said.

Currently, 633 people and 407 equipment are at the site for rescue operations.

Before Sunday, rescuers had established contact with only 10 of the miners, who were in good physical and psychological condition. Another is believed to have been dead, the report said, adding the deceased worker had been in a coma.

Efforts have been underway to



reach the workers since the blast occurred about 240 meters from the mine's entrance, but Chinese officials said Thursday it could take 15 days to drill through 70 tons of debris trapping many of the miners. Food, medical supplies, blankets,

and batches of nutrient solution have been passed down a shaft to the 10 workers who have been located, Xinhua reported. According to state media, rescue teams are hoping to pull the miners out through a 711-millimeter diameter passage. By noon on Thursday, rescuers had drilled 18 meters into the mineshaft but heavy debris could slow efforts.

Concern has been growing for the uncontacted miners. Some of the workers in the chamber are trying to help rescuers locate their missing colleagues by using laser pointers and loudspeakers, but they have received no response.

# Mental health of front-line workers affected

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Jan 24: The unrelenting increase in Covid-19 infections in Spain following the holiday season is again straining hospitals, threatening the mental health of doctors and nurses who have been at the forefront of the pandemic for nearly a year.

In Barcelona's Hospital del Mar, the critical care capacity has more than doubled and is nearly full, with 80% of ICU beds occupied by coronavirus patients.

"There are young people of 20-something-years-old and older people of 80-year-old, all the age groups," said Dr Joan Ramon Masclans, who heads the ICU. "This is very difficult, and it is one patient after another."

Even though authorities allowed gatherings of up to 10 people for



Christmas and New Year celebrations, Masclans chose not to join his family and spent the holidays at home with his partner.

"We did it to preserve our health and the health of others. And when you see that this isn't being done (by others) it causes significant anger; added to the fatigue," he said.

A study released this month by Hospital del Mar looking at the impact of the spring's Covid-19 surge on more than 9,000 health workers across Spain found that at least 28% suffered major depression.

That is six times higher than the rate in the general population before the pandemic, said Dr Jordi

A study released this month by Hospital del Mar looking at the impact of Covid-19 surge on more than 9,000 health workers across Spain found that at least 28% suffered major depression

Alonso, one of the chief researchers.

In addition, the study found that nearly half of participants had a high risk of anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks or substance and alcohol-abuse problems.

Spanish health care workers are far from the only ones to have suffered psychologically from the pandemic.

# Vaccinated people may still transmit Covid-19, warns England's CMO

AGENCIES

London, Jan 24: One of England's leading medical officers Sunday urged the public to continue to follow the strict lockdown rules because any vaccine-related immunity from Covid-19 takes at least three weeks to kick in.

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer (CMO), also warned that there is no clear evidence yet to show that vaccinated people cannot transmit the deadly virus on to others.

"Regardless of whether someone has had their vaccination or not, it is vital that everyone follows the national restrictions and public health advice, as protection takes up to three weeks to kick in and we don't yet know the impact of vaccines

on transmission," said Van-Tam.

His warning comes as the UK registered another high daily death toll from the virus of 1,348 this weekend, taking the country's total to 97,329.

However, he pointed to an additional 32 vaccination sites coming on stream to add to the thousands of venues where the National Health Service (NHS) has been delivering 140 jabs a minute, taking the vaccinated total to over 5.8 million.

"The vaccine is rightly something to celebrate - let's stay patient, stay at home and support the NHS as it continues to roll out the vaccine," he said.

A Living Museum where the BBC filmed a hit drama series 'Peaky Blinders' based on the notorious Birmingham gang in the 1920s is among the new vaccine sites.

# From presidents to faded stars, all welcomed by Larry King

FOR 25 YEARS UNTIL 2010, "LARRY KING LIVE" WAS A FIXTURE ON CNN'S WEEKNIGHT SCHEDULE, AND THAT WAS AFTER A LENGTHY CAREER AS A LATE-NIGHT RADIO HOST

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Jan 24: Larry King was easy to poke fun at, particularly late in his career at CNN: the pinched nose, guffaws and coke-bottle glasses, the suspenders and old-time microphone on the desk in front of him. He was grandpa trying to dance to Drake at a wedding.

But at least grandpa tried, didn't he? And if you sat down to talk with him, he could take you places with his words, and you would enjoy the journey. You'd certainly be sorry if he wasn't there.

Hearing about King's death Saturday at age 87 stirred a similar feeling. The Brooklyn-born King was a classic conversationalist, a

throwback to a different era in showbiz and media even during the height of his on-air career.

For 25 years until 2010, "Larry King Live" was a fixture on CNN's weeknight schedule, and that was after a lengthy career as a late-night radio host. King talked to politicians and musicians, the serious and the silly, not as a newsman but as anyone would if suddenly thrust into the room with a famous face.

Sometimes it felt that way; King would never be accused of over-preparing for an interview. Journalists at CNN gnashed their teeth at missed opportunities to show off their toughness and knowledge if they'd been in his place asking questions of premiers or pres-



idents. He described himself as a minimalist whose chief goal was to make his guests look good.

"I ask short questions," he said

once. "I have no pretense at intellectuality." King could fill a blooper reel of gaffes of moments that would have been fatal to the careers of lesser personalities. He mistakenly

addressed Ringo Starr as "George," and notoriously asked Jerry Seinfeld if it was his choice to leave his namesake sitcom or if the network had cancelled it.

But, hey, "Seinfeld" aired at 9 p.m. On Thursdays. So did "Larry King Live." He was busy.

"You're not a reminiscencer?" he asked Prince once. "Is that a word, Larry?" Prince asked. "I invented it," King said.

While King may have sat down to talk to authors without reading their books, he did homework, said Tammy Haddad, his producer for the first eight years King was on CNN. And he wasn't necessarily an easy inquisitor. Ross Perot didn't intend to announce his candidacy for pres-

ident on King's show in 1992, but the host pressed him - both on the air and during commercial breaks - until he did, Haddad said.

He would make interview subjects feel so comfortable that sometimes they'd reveal more than they had intended, she said.

"Whenever you sat down in Larry King's TV living room, you felt like you were just having a conversation with a friend and forgot that millions around the world were watching you," singer Tony Bennett tweeted Saturday.

The lineup for King's 25th anniversary shows - LeBron James, Bill Gates, Barack Obama and Lady Gaga - spoke to the eclectic mix he tried to bring to "Larry King Live."

# business



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PS RAVI | EXEC DIR (RETAIL), BPCL

## AIRASIA INDIA COMMENCES FLIGHT

AirAsia India commenced Bhubaneswar to Pune direct flight operation from Biju Patnaik International Airport Sunday. Commerce and Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera flagged off the flight operation. He said it would boost the tourism sector



## of the day quote

LG has been showcasing and unveiling some exciting stuff in reputed exhibitions like MWC and CES, but on the ground, we haven't seen them gaining much in the recent years. Honestly, I don't see their exit having any impact on the industry

FAISAL KAWOOSA | FOUNDER & CHIEF ANALYST, TECHARC

Rupee has appreciated back to 73 levels. In September 2020, when rupee came near these levels, RBI bought dollars aggressively and did not allow it to strengthen further

DEVARSH VAKIL | DEPUTY HEAD OF RETAIL RESEARCH, HDFC SECURITIES

We manufacture, distribute and market personal hygiene products. We believe there is tremendous (growth) opportunity as income rises and awareness increases. Poree sanitary pads is already a ₹100 crore brand

SAHIL DHARIA | FOUNDER & CEO, SOOTHE HEALTHCARE

# 7 cos willing to construct undersea tunnel

The bullet train project will have a 21-km long underground corridor from BKC to Kalyan Shilphata in Maharashtra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** At least seven Indian companies have shown interest for the construction of the undersea tunnel for the ambitious Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor during the pre-bidding stage, officials said Sunday.

A National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) official told IANS, "Seven Indian companies had participated in pre bid meeting for constructing the undersea tunnel of the corridor."

The official said that the tender for the construction of the tunnel has been floated and bids are invited till February 19, 2021.

The bullet train project will have a 21 km long underground corridor from BKC to Kalyan Shilphata in the state of Maharashtra.

The official said that around 7 km of this underground corridor is under the Thane creek. Of this, 1.8 km long section will be developed under the sea bed, while the remaining part of the stretch is to be built under the mangroves marshland on either side of the creek.

The official said that tender is for the development of tunnel, which includes testing as well as commissioning for double-line high speed railway for the project using tunnel boring machine (TBM) and a new Austrian tunnelling method (NATM). A geo-technical investi-



gation of the undersea tunnel area was carried out earlier by a team of engineers from NHSRCL, RITES and Japan's Kawasaki Geological Engineering firm.

In order to study the sea bed structure, a static refraction tech-

nique (SRT) survey was carried out by the team, which involved firing a high energy sound wave towards the seabed from below the water surface as well as mapping the refracted sound wave in order to determine the density of the rock

under the sea bed. The team had also submitted the final report with the NHSRCL. Last year, the NHSRCL awarded civil contracts for the construction of 64 per cent of MAHSR alignment which includes five HSR stations at Vapi, Billimora, Surat, Bharuch, Anand/Nadiad, train depot at Surat and one mountain tunnel of 350 metres. The bullet trains are expected to run at 350 km per hour, covering the 508-km stretch in about two hours. Trains plying on the route take over seven hours and planes about an hour. Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on September 14, 2017 laid the foundation stone for the ₹1.08 lakh crore (\$17 billion) HSR project.

# 'India sees 19 IPOs worth \$1.84bn in 2020 Dec qtr'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Reflecting strong momentum, India witnessed 19 initial public offers worth \$1.84 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020 and market sentiment remains positive in what could be a stellar 2021, according to a report.

Leading consultancy EY's India IPO Trends Report: Q4 2020 showed that there were a total of 10 Initial Public Offers (IPOs) in the main market and 9 in the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) segment during this period.

In the latest December quarter, there were 19 IPOs valued at \$1.836 billion and the largest was that of Gland Pharma with an issue size of \$869 million. There were just 11 IPOs in the year-ago period.

India ranks ninth globally in terms of the number of IPOs in 2020, with 43 IPOs raising \$4.09 billion, as per the report.

"There is a strong momentum in the IPO markets, and we are seeing an increased interest from companies across sectors looking to raise capital in the near term. Additionally, companies are keenly awaiting guidelines for direct listing in overseas markets. The market sentiment remains positive for what could be a stellar 2021," Sandip



**India ranks ninth globally in terms of the number of IPOs in 2020, with 43 IPOs raising \$4.09 billion**

Khetan, Partner and National Leader, Financial Accounting Advisory Services (FAAS) at EY India, said.

During the 2020 December quarter, main markets had 10 IPOs compared to 5 in the same period a year ago.

Real estate, hospitality and construction and diversified industrial products were the most active sectors (in terms of the number of IPOs) with three IPOs launched in each sector (including main and

SME markets), the report said. The report said that in 2020, global IPO volumes continued to accelerate, increasing by 19 per cent to 1,363 while proceeds increased 29 per cent year-on-year to a total of USD 268 billion.

Last year, IPO activity proved resilient to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic supported by low interest rates and expansionary monetary policies, it said.

"Despite a challenging year, 2020 activity in the Asia-Pacific region surpassed 2019, increasing 20 per cent (822) by volume and 45 per cent (\$136.2 billion) by proceeds in 2020. "In fact, the region saw the highest proceeds since 2010. Industrials led the sectors with 181 IPOs raising \$20.8 billion in proceeds," the report said.

# CAIT seeks action against e-comm cos for 'daylight robbery'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) in a communication sent to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal demanded immediate action against e-commerce entities including Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy and others.

"It is a case of daylight robbery of e-commerce entities in India and therefore demand immediate action against the erring e-commerce portals and online mechanism providers," CAIT said.

CAIT has accused Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy and various other e-commerce entities for violation of mandatory display of Country of Origin and Manufacturer, seller details on products sold through their respective E-Commerce Portals as required under the Consumers Protection (E Commerce) Rules, 2020, Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Act, 2011 and guidelines of Food Safety & Standards Authority of India.

CAIT has asked Goyal to take action against E-commerce entities including Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy and others.



"It is a case of daylight robbery of e-commerce entities in India and, therefore demands immediate action against the erring e-commerce portals and online mechanism providers," CAIT said.

CAIT National President BC Bhartiya and Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal in a communication to Goyal said that e-commerce entities conducting business in India including Amazon, Flipkart and others are highly violating the mandatory conditions spelled out in above Acts.

"It is a pity that particularly in e-commerce every guidelines, Rules & Regulations, Laws and policies are being flouted openly and no department has so far taken any cognisance of compliance issues resulting in a highly vitiated and mess like e-commerce trade of India," CAIT said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Home sales improve by 50%

**New Delhi:** Home sales across major cities improved by 50% in October-December 2020 on a quarter-on-quarter basis, according to a report by 99acres.com. A total of 21,800 units were sold during the last quarter of 2020 across eight major cities, it said. The '99acres.com Insite' report attributed the improving home buying sentiment, to the widened negotiation window, competitive home loan interest rates and festive demand.

### Luminous aims ₹6K cr turnover

**New Delhi:** Luminous Power aims to achieve a target of ₹6,000 crore turnover in the next five years, helped by its solar and the home electrical businesses, said a top company official. The company, now completely owned by French engineering company Schneider Electric, has planned to invest around ₹500 crore in the next three years for raising manufacturing capacity and boosting logistics as well as marketing.

### Reliance spins off chemical unit

**New Delhi:** Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has completed spin-off of the firm's oil-to-chemical business into a new unit that will help it pursue growth opportunities with strategic partnerships, the company has said. The oil-to-chemical (O2C) business unit holds Reliance's oil refinery and petrochemical assets and retail fuel business but not upstream oil and gas producing fields such as KG-D6 and textiles business.

### SAIL to set up ethanol plant

**New Delhi:** SAIL with the help of the Centre is planning to set up India's first gas to ethanol plant at its ferro alloy plant in Chandrapur in Maharashtra, according to an official. Mukesh Kumar, the Director of Steel Research & Technology Mission of India (SRTMI) told PTI that the plan is in line with the government's aim to reduce the country's dependence on import for crude oil besides addressing the issue of carbon emissions.

# 'Country's economy gradually recovering'

AGENCIES

**Pune, Jan 24:** The country's economy, which contracted in the first two quarters of the current fiscal, has started recovering at a gradual pace, former deputy chairman of erstwhile Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia said Sunday.

The economy contracted by a massive 23.9 per cent in the first quarter and 7.5 per cent in the second quarter on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We had jumped off a cliff in the first quarter of this financial year because of the lockdown, which was necessitated by the pandemic. The economy is now climbing

back. I think it's a gradual recovery but it is a clear recovery," Ahluwalia said at a virtual event.

According to the first advance estimates of national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the country's GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during the current financial year (2020-21).

An article published in the Reserve Bank of India's January Bulletin has stated that the country's GDP is within the striking distance of attaining positive growth. Ahluwalia said the manufacturing sector is recovering and has got back to where it was in 2019-20.



# 'State's wireless user base rises'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** Number of total wireless subscribers in Odisha increased from 32.97 million at the end of June, 2020 to 33.31 million at the end of September, 2020, thereby showing a quarterly growth rate of 1.01 per cent, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) report said.

According to TRAI's data, during second quarter, net addition of 0.33 million wireless subscribers has been recorded in the state. Wireless Tele-density in the state increased from 75.09% at the end of June 2020 to 75.77% at the end of September 2020.

Quarterly growth rates of both rural and urban wireless subscriptions in Odisha are about 66.50 per cent in quarter end of September, 2020. About 33.31 million subscribers from rural and urban were added in



second quarter of current fiscal. Out of total, 22.17 millions were from rural areas and 11.13 from urban, TRAI's circular revealed.

According to data available in TRAI website, telecom operator Jio added around 15,35,017 subscribers in second quarter of FY'21 while Bharti Airtel added 51,89,422. Similarly, state's owned BSNL added 13,67,606 and Reliance Jio added 39,02,705 subscribers in the same period of time.

# Markets may witness profit-taking after 50K peak; all eyes on Budget

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** The Indian stock market which added another feather to its cap by scaling the 50,000-mount for the first time ever may witness some profit-taking ahead but for now, all eyes are on the upcoming Union Budget that will influence the onward journey of the bluechip index, according to analysts.

From witnessing gigantic losses to record-shattering gains, investors witnessed a wide array of emotions in 2020. Markets showed volatile trends last year, with the benchmark crashing to its one-year low of 25,638.9 on March 24, only to roar back to reach record highs in the later part of the year.

The record-breaking run has

been continuing, with the benchmark reaching the momentous 50,000-mark January 21. The 30-share BSE index jumped to its record high of 50,184.01 during the trade on Thursday.

"Expect markets to go into consolidation phase in the second half of this calendar year and again resume the upward trajectory from CY22 onwards," Rusmik Oza, Executive Vice President, Head of Fundamental Research at Kotak Securities, said.

The entire plot changed for the markets in just ten months from massive losses to record-breaking peaks and this came at a time when the world is facing a health crisis.

Market analysts have attributed the sharp rebound in the market following the March crash to a host



of factors such as abundant liquidity injected into the global financial system by leading central banks of the world, unprecedented retail investor participation and in recent months, on hopes of successful vaccines.

Driven by the improved investor

sentiment, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies is also making new records and is currently at over ₹194 lakh crore. The BSE-listed companies market cap had crossed the landmark ₹100 lakh crore November 28, 2014.

In 2020, investors grew richer by

Expect markets to go into consolidation phase in the second half of this calendar year and again resume the upward trajectory from CY22 onwards

RUSMIK OZA, EXEC VP, HEAD OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH, KOTAK SECURITIES

₹32.49 lakh crore helped by massive returns in the equity market which had a roller coaster ride during the year hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

From March 23, 2020 when the benchmark indices posted their worst ever one-day crash till now, the investor wealth has risen by a whopping ₹92,48,551.09 crore. During the entire 2020, the 30-

# BPCL expects to expand customer base 10-fold to 1mn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 24:** Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) expects to expand its customer base 10-fold to one million under a new customer loyalty campaign, said a senior company official.

The new campaign 'Get 100X Bonus Petromiles' under its programme 'SmartDrive' will offer customers benefits like extra bonus reward points on each transaction of fuel purchase through a scratch card in the SmartDrive App, it said in a statement. The campaign is open till March 31, it added.



Currently, the state-owned company has a customer base of one lakh with over ₹20 crore worth of monthly transactions under its current 'Smart Drive' programme, it added.

"We are excited to take a step further in strengthening the digitisation process while ensuring consumer safety and trust with our brand."

# POULTRY TRADE HIT BY BIRD FLU SCARE



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** For the first time, the number of states affected by the outbreak of bird flu has reached double digits in India, although wild birds are worst affected by this disease. The poultry trade has not yet recovered from the outbreak. However, the demand for chicken at hotels and restaurants has seen an improvement over the previous week.

Though, bird flu has been confirmed in poultry birds in nine states, but its impact is quite low. Experts point out that the new avian influenza virus is not dangerous to humans.

The poultry industry of the country had not yet recovered fully due to the havoc caused by Covid-19, and now the recent outbreak of bird flu at the beginning of the year has severely affected the poultry business. Despite the elaborate arrangements made by the central and state government agencies for prevention of outbreak of bird flu, it is safe to eat cooked chicken and eggs. The difficulties faced by poultry farmers have not subsided as they have been forced to sell cocks of ₹100 at ₹50.

The Commissioner of Animal Husbandry in the Union Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Dairy, Praveen Malik, said that bird flu cases were first detected in India in 2006, but till now it was reported in a small number of states simultaneously, but this time its reporting has been good.

share BSE Sensex made monthly gains in seven while closing with losses in five of them.

The Sensex, the country's first equity index, was launched in 1986. On July 25, 1990, it had closed above 1,000 mark. In another milestone, the benchmark closed above 10,000 mark on February 7, 2006.

"Indian markets have been witnessing strong momentum over the past few months on hopes of a faster economic recovery after the pandemic lockdown.

Also positive global cues, sustained FII inflows and strong corporate earnings kept the sentiments high. Buzz around the upcoming Budget has also added strength to the markets. The Budget could potentially lay the foundation for a long term economic growth path.

SHORT TAKES

No hope left

**MELBOURNE:** Acknowledging that his Test career is as good as over, Australia's flamboyant all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is focused on white-ball formats, which includes three World Cups in as many years. Maxwell has not been able to replicate the same form in the longest format as he has done in white ball cricket. He played his last Test in 2017. "I don't think I stand anywhere near it (Test squad selection), to be honest," the 32-year-old was quoted as saying by the 'Herald Sun' newspaper. "They've got their idea of what they want. They've got guys in there at the moment who are very good first class players. So I don't see myself in the Test squad anymore," 'Mad Max' as Maxwell is known as, added.

Sanga's new role

**NEW DELHI:** Sri Lankan batting great Kumar Sangakkara was Sunday appointed as the director of cricket by IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals (RR) for the upcoming season. Sangakkara will be responsible for overseeing the entire cricketing ecosystem of the franchise including coaching structure, auction plans and team strategy, talent discovery and development. "To oversee the cricket strategy of a franchise in the leading cricket competition of the world, as well as building the development programmes and cricketing infrastructure that will provide the future foundation of the IPL team's on-field success, is an opportunity that really motivated me," Sangakkara was quoted as saying in a media release.

SAI seeks report

**NEW DELHI:** The Sports Authority of India (SAI) took cognisance Sunday of an alleged breach of COVID-19 protocols during the ongoing Wrestling National Championships in Noida. SAI has sought a report from the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) by Monday. "We have taken up the matter with WFI. We have impressed upon them that the SOP for competitions has to be adhered to strictly. We have also sought a report from the federation on alleged violation, by Monday," SAI director general Sandip Pradhan said in a statement. "The federation has assured compliance of protocol," he added.

'Major challenge'

**KARACHI:** South African veteran Faf du Plessis has said playing cricket while staying in a bio-secure bubble for months could soon become a 'major challenge' for all players across the world. He said it is not sustainable in the long run. Cricketers have to now follow strict protocols while touring with their respective teams due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "We understand that this is a very tough season and a tough challenge for a lot of people. But if it's back-to-back bubble life, things would become a big challenge," du Plessis said during a virtual press conference Saturday. Du Plessis is in Pakistan to represent South Africa in a two-Test series and three T20 Internationals.

Dominant show

**BANGKOK:** Reigning Olympic badminton champion Carolina Marin and Denmark's Viktor Axelsen came out with dominant performances Sunday to win the respective women's and men's singles titles at the Toyota Thailand Open tournament. In the women's singles final, Marin defeated top seed Tai Tzu-Ying 21-19, 21-17 in a match that lasted 48 minutes. In the men's singles final, Axelsen eased past Hans-Kristian Solberg Vittinghus 21-11, 21-7 in just 40 minutes to seal his second title within a span of two weeks in Thailand.

Maiden victory

**KOLKATA:** After three back-to-back draws, Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) dished out a clinical performance to grab their first win of the I-League this season, blanking Chennai City FC 2-0, here Sunday. An own goal by Elvedin Skrijeli and a 69th minute Bidyashagar Singh strike handed TRAU a much-deserved win in a match that was largely dominated by them. TRAU adopted a high pressing style, restricting Chennai City FC in their own half and forcing them to play out from the back. They could have scored twice in the first 10 minutes, but wasted chances. In spite of scoring a goal, Bidyashagar missed a couple of very easy chances. AGENCIES

Tamil Nadu all-rounder confident about his batting abilities  
**SUNDAR**  
eyeing Test opener's slot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Coach Ravi Shastri's dressing room stories of grit and determination work as a tonic for young Washington Sundar. He is ready for any challenge even if it means opening the batting for India in Test matches. In his under-19 days, Sundar was a specialist top-order batsman. However, he then honed his off-spin to such an extent that he is now an automatic choice in India's T20 team.

Sundar was one of the heroes of India's epic triumph in Brisbane. It was his and Shardul Thakur's half centuries in the first innings that kept India in the game.

"I think it will be a blessing for me if I ever get an opportunity to open the batting for India in Tests. I think I will accept the challenge just like our coach Ravi (Shastri) sir did during his playing days," Sundar said Sunday.

"Ravi sir tells us very inspiring stories from his playing days. Like how he made his debut as a specialist spinner, got four wickets and batted at No. 10 against New Zealand on

CAREER STATS	Tests	M-1	R-84	H-62	50s-1	W-4
	ODIs	M-1	DNB	W-1		
	T20s	M-26	R-40	W-21	BB-3/22	

**NATARAJAN WAS UNDER PRESSURE**

**CHENNAI:** Taken to Australia as net bowler, pacer Thangarasu Natarajan ended up making history by debuting in all three formats. He said he didn't expect to get the opportunity and was under pressure in his first match in India colours. "I was keen to do my job. I didn't expect to get an opportunity in the ODIs. When I was told that I will be playing there was pressure. I wanted to make use of the opportunity. Playing and taking a wicket was like a dream turning into reality," Natarajan told reporters Sunday at Chinnappampatti in Salem district. "I cannot express my happiness in words about playing for India...It was like a dream. I got a lot of support from the coaches, players," he added.

debut. And how from there, he became a Test opener and played all those great fast bowlers. I would love to open batting in Tests like him," added the all-rounder.

Washington was asked to stay back in Australia after the white ball series as a net bowler in order to help

the Test team prepare. It meant that he was bowling a lot at the nets with the red kookaburra.

"It certainly helped my overall game as I was asked to stay back for Test matches," said Sundar. He also stated 'it was dream come true' after dismissing Steve Smith.

"Obviously, on the first day in Brisbane, the pitch wasn't doing a lot for spinners but it was like a dream come true to get Smith as my first Test wicket," Sundar pointed out.

During the epic final day chase, Sundar said he was confident that he and Rishabh Pant could pull it off. "I knew with Pant on the other side, their bowlers will be under pressure. If we could quickly get 25 or 30, then we were confident about winning," Sundar stated.



COMING CLEAN ON DRAWBACKS

Gill was petrified of facing bouncers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** If there is one person who caught all the attention during India's victorious tour of Australia, it has to be opener Shubman Gill. It was his innings of 91 that set up India's platform for a historic victory at Brisbane and India emerged 2-1 winners of the series. Gill revealed Sunday he used to be 'petrified of bouncers' before eventually overcoming all his fears to get his Test career off to a rollicking start against some of the world's fastest bowlers.

In the six innings that he batted against the likes of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, the Indian youngster never looked in any sort of discomfort. But it wasn't so easy many years ago.

"When you get hit by a ball, your fear disappears. You are only scared

until you get a blow but once you get hit, you feel like it was pretty normal! And then you lose the fear entirely," Gill was quoted as saying by his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on the website www.Kkr.In.

"When I was young, I used to be petrified of bouncers. I used to be prepared for the chest-height balls way in advance. I used to practice drives a lot so I got mature in playing the pull shot with a straight bat. I also developed the cut shot by moving away from the line of the ball," Gill added.

Gill said he learnt a lot from legends such as Rahul Dravid (U-19 World Cup and India A), Jacques Kallis and Brendon McCullum (at KKR). "When you have such legends in your dressing room, one can just only learn. Certainly what they have taught me has helped me in my career," Gill pointed out.



Shubman Gill utilised the cut shot to his advantage against the Australian fast bowlers in the just-concluded series Down Under

The fear of the short ball remains till the time you get hit. Once you get hit, the fear completely disappears. The same has happened to me  
SUBHMAN GILL

'England spinners need patience to achieve success'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, Jan 24:** Former England off-spinner Graeme Swann wants England's tweekers to stay patient in the upcoming Test series in India. He has picked Jack Leach to play a key role during the tour: The spin duo of Jack Leach and Dom Bess had five-wicket hauls in England's win in the first Test against Sri Lanka, but returned wicket-less in the home team's first innings of the ongoing second Test in Galle. Swann has

YOU WILL NEED TO BE PATIENT AGAINST INDIAN BATSMEN AS THEY PLAY WITH RESPECT. BUT IF YOU ARE PATIENT WICKETS WILL COME  
- GRAEME SWANN

picked up 60 of his 255 Test wickets in the Indian sub-continent. He is aware of the skills required to succeed on pitches in this part of the world.

"The one thing that I used to say to myself is, it's going to spin and it does spin - even on day one when they are fairly flat pitches," Swann said on the 'Hussain and Key Cricket'

show. "If you bowl well enough, especially against India, they play you very respectfully. There is not a Virender Sehwag in that current team; Virat Kohli when he bats against spin waits for the bad ball. India are very patient but if you are willing to be patient as well and bowl all day you will take wickets," observed the 41-year-old.

The former off-spinner said Leach will be key to England's success in India. "Jack Leach is the one for me in India - he has to run up and be prepared to bowl nothing but straight deliveries, pitching middle-stump and hitting middle," Swann advised.

"If Leach can do that and almost tie one end up bowling 40 overs a day, then you can rotate the strike bowlers in (Mark) Wood, (James) Anderson and (Stuart) Broad and get the other spinner attacking more," he added.

Pahariya hits double century

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** The under-19 teams of Jajpur, Puri, Bargarh and Bhubaneswar-B won their matches convincingly in the Inter-District 50 overs cricket tournament played at different grounds Sunday in Cuttack.

In a match played at the Nimpur Ground in Cuttack, it was run feast by the Jajpur team who scored 458 for five in 49 overs. Swapan Pahariya (204, 125x4, 25x4, 6x6) and Adarsh Mohanty (126) mauled the bowlers of Gajapati district. In the process, Pahariya became the first double centurion this season in local cricket.

After putting up a huge total on the board, Jajpur bowlers then restricted Gajapati to 146 all and emerge clear winners. Subham (3/27) bowled well for Jajpur.

In another game, Bargarh were propped up by a brilliant century from Harjeet Singh (105, 112b, 10x4, 2x6) at the BOSE ground in Cuttack. He was well-supported by Sourav K Sahu (79). Riding on their knocks Bargarh posted an impressive 314 for six wickets in their 50 overs.



Sangeeta Khadia of Odisha Yellow gets the Woman of the Match award

Then they restricted Koraput to 128 all out to win the game convincingly. Binaya Sahoo (2/3) and Prashant Painkra (2/18) bowled well Bargarh.

OTHER MATCHES

**(At Ravenshaw Ground-2):** Kalahandi 73 all out in 30 overs (Sushil Barik 5/29) lost to Bhubaneswar 76 for three (MG Kumar 30 n o) by seven wickets.

**(At DRIEMS Ground):** Puri 214 all out in 46.3 overs (Nishan Das 72, Omkar Mohanty 3/27) beat

Jagatsinghpur 79 in 23.2 overs (Nishan Das 4/11) by 135 runs.

**(At Ravenshaw Ground-1):** Balasore 161 all out in 28.3 overs (Sahini V Raj 54, Subhasis Palo 3/19) beat Kandhamal 99 all out in 35.2 overs (SS Barik 3/29 SK Aslam 3/30) by 62 runs.

**(At Bidanasi Ground):** Nabarangpur 47 all out in 13.2 overs (Kumar K Sahoo 7/13) lost to Bhadrak 51 for one in eight overs by nine wickets.

Easy win for Odisha Yellow

Odisha Yellow beat Odisha Violet by six wickets in a match of the MGM Odisha Women's T-20 cricket tournament played Sunday in Bhubaneswar.

Batting first Odisha Violet posted 107 for two in their 20 overs. Anjali Singh (58) emerged the top scorer for her side. In reply, Odisha Yellow scored 108 for four in 19.4 overs to win the match by six wickets. Women of the match, Sangita Khadia (46) was instrumental in helping her side win the game. She was well-supported by Sasmita Mahalik (28).

Indian junior eves win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Santiago (Chile), Jan 24:** The Indian women's junior hockey team extended their unbeaten run by notching up a 2-0 victory over the Chile senior side at the Prince of Wales Country Club here Saturday. Playing their fifth match of the tour of Chile, goals from Sangita Kumari (48th minute) and Sushma Kumari (56th minute) in the last quarter gave India a convincing victory.

It was a very open contest between the two teams during the first three quarters, with neither side managing to break the deadlock. India looked like they were under pressure during a phase of play in

the second quarter when they conceded back-to-back penalty corners. However, some good defending inside the striking circle made sure the hosts didn't take the lead.

It was India who drew first blood as they orchestrated a beautiful team move to open the scoring through Sangita. The young forward took her chance confidently and maintained her goal-scoring form.

In the 56th minute, it was the visiting team's turn to get a penalty corner, which proved to be the decisive moment in the match. A well executed drag-flick and a successful strike off a rebound by Sushma hit the back of the net to seal victory for India.

AGENCIES

**Margao (Goa), Jan 24:** An eighth minute strike by Diego Mauricio helped Odisha FC (OFC) earn a draw against Bengaluru FC (FC) in their ISL encounter here Sunday. However, this one point also would not have been possible had it not been for the brilliance of Arshdeep Singh under the OFC bar. It was Arshdeep who made a number of stunning saves to salvage a point for OFC. On the other hand, Eric Paartalu got the equaliser for BFC late into the second half.

BFC came into the match after losing five of their last six games. However, they did not start well and

Arsenal beaten, City survive

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Southampton, Jan 24:** Last season's FA Cup winner Arsenal were eliminated from the competition in the fourth round thanks to Gabriel's own-goal in a 0-1 loss to Southampton, while Manchester City survived a scare to beat fourth-tier team Cheltenham 3-1 in games played Saturday.

In an otherwise close game, Gabriel's decision to try to block a shot from Kyle Walker-Peters proved decisive for Arsenal losing their hold on the Cup.

Right-back Walker-Peters was allowed plenty of space to overlap the Arsenal defense, but his shot looked to be heading narrowly wide of the far post before Gabriel's failed attempt deflected the ball off the post and in. It was the first goal Arsenal had conceded since December 26 after five consecutive shutouts.

"I'm very disappointed because we wanted to continue in the competition. We had a dream to do it again like last year and the dream today is over," Arsenal manager



IMPORTANT STRIKE: Phil Foden (left) rejoices after scoring Manchester City's equaliser against Cheltenham

Mikel Arteta said. "We shouldn't have conceded a goal in that manner," he added.

Cheltenham came close to one of the biggest shocks in the 150-year history of the FA Cup before Pep Guardiola's Manchester City scored three late goals. A long throw-in from Cheltenham captain Ben Tozer caused a mix-up in the City defence and Alfie May seized on a deflection to stab the ball into the net.

In the 81st minute City finally pulled level as Phil Foden met Joao Cancelo's cross at the far post and knocked the ball into the net. Gabriel

Jesus scored City's second three minutes later to avoid extra time, though his goal may have been deemed offside if the video review system had been in operation. Ferran Torres added a third in stoppage time to ensure City move on to play Swansea in the fifth round.

"We learned to suffer and at the end the quality made the difference. We won the game and we are happy to win this game in this type of competition," Guardiola said. "We knew how tough it would be and the response from the players was magnificent," he added.

Odisha, BFC share goals, points



Diego Mauricio of OFC thanks his stars after scoring against BFC in their ISL encounter played Sunday. Photo courtesy: ISL

fell behind to an early goal. Jerry Mawimhinganga of OFC took a quick free-kick and found Manuel Owu on the right flank. The latter made a run and squared the ball inside the box to Mauricio who just had to tap-in to give Odisha the lead.

BFC's first real look at the OFC goal came in the 18th minute. However, Rahul Bheke's header was way off target. Late into the first half Arshdeep made two stunning saves. First he kept away a pile-driver from Paartalu and then he was in position to parry away a Bheke header. It was because of Arshdeep only that OFC went into the break with a one-goal advantage. In the second session BFC were all

over the opponents with OFC just playing the waiting game and defending doggedly. However, it was OFC who on the counter-attack got an opening. However, Gupreet Singh Sandhu under the BFC made a stunning save off Jerry flinging himself to the right to keep his team in the game.

Midway into the second session, Sunil Chhetri set up a lovely through ball for Cleiton Silva but he shot wide. Immediately after that Cleiton was unlucky to see his free-kick clip the crosspiece and go over with Arshdeep out of position.

Then came the equalizer with Cleiton curling in a corner into the OFC box. Paartalu jumped above all others to nod the ball in.