



## EXPERT OPINION

Actor Kriti Sanon has shared a tip on how and when to take the perfect picture

LEISURE P2



## PM GETS G7 INVITE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited by his UK counterpart Boris Johnson to attend the G7 summit in the UK as a guest

INTERNATIONAL P10



## IMPORTANT STAND

Shardul Thakur and Washington Sundar help India fightback in the Brisbane Test against Australia

SPORTS P12

# Vax deaths raise despair amid hope

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** While the roll out of Covid-19 vaccines has raised hopes of getting relief from the pandemic, many are concerned over the safety of the vaccines, especially among the elderly with serious underlying health conditions.

According to latest reports, at least 84 people have died in different countries due to complications following inoculation, while several others have suffered varied degrees of adverse effects.

At least 55 people have perished in the United States after receiving a Covid-19 vaccine, reports Epoch Times quoting the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), a federal database.

Norway, which witnessed death of 23 senior citizens Friday after receiving the vaccine produced by Pfizer and BioNTech SE, saw the fatalities climb to 29 Sunday. All the victims were in the age group of 75 from 80. Norway has given at least one dose to about 42,000 people and focused on those considered most at risk if they contract the virus, including the elderly.

In Portugal, a health worker died two days after getting the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine. According to a report in the DailyMail, Sonia Acevedo, 41, suffered a 'sudden death' at home on New Year's Day 48 hours after receiving the jab.



The mother-of-two, who worked in paediatrics at the Portuguese Institute of Oncology in Porto, is not said to have suffered any adverse side-effects after being vaccinated. Acevedo's father Abilio Acevedo told Portuguese daily Correo da Manha: "She was okay. She hadn't had any health problems."

A report from Jerusalem said that at least 13 people in Israel have suffered mild facial paralysis as a side-effect post Covid vaccination. The actual number of people suffering such side effects could be higher than what has been reported; WION reported quoting the Israeli Health Ministry. Experts are now apprehensive of giving the second

dose of the shot to these people, even though the Health Ministry has insisted on giving the jab once the paralysis heals.

Back in India, the Union Health Ministry Sunday said that 447 cases of minor complications have been reported after the coronavirus vaccines were rolled out across the country Saturday. In Delhi, 4,319 healthcare workers were vaccinated on the first day, among which one "serious" case was reported, the ministry added. The patient, a 22-year-old security guard who works at the AIIMS, was admitted to the ICU of the hospital and his condition is now 'stable.'

## ALL IS NOT WELL

At least 55 people have perished in the United States after receiving a Covid-19 vaccine, reports Epoch Times quoting the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)

Norway, which witnessed death of 23 senior citizens Friday after receiving the vaccine produced by Pfizer and BioNTech SE, sees fatalities climb to 29

51 people who received vaccine in Delhi reported adverse effects, one critical

Meanwhile, Reuters quoted Mexican authorities saying that they are studying the case of a 32-year-old female doctor who was hospitalised after receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine. The doctor, whose name has not been released, was admitted to the intensive care unit of a public hospital in the northern state of Nuevo Leon after she experienced seizures, difficulty breathing and a skin rash. She is said to have a history of allergic reactions.

In the US, the deaths have occurred among people receiving both the Moderna and the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, according to VAERS. VAERS reporting system is passive, meaning reports aren't automatically collected and

must be filed. VAERS reports can be filed by anyone, including healthcare providers, patients, or family members.

VAERS reports "often lack details and sometimes can have information that contains errors," according to the reporting system's website. Still, reports on VAERS represent "only a small fraction of actual adverse events," the site states, though underreporting is believed to be less common for serious events.

In some cases, patients died within days of receiving a Covid-19 vaccine.

One man, a 66-year-old senior home resident in Colorado, was sleepy and stayed in bed a day after getting Moderna's vaccine. Early the next morning, on Christmas Day, the resident "was observed in bed lying still, pale, eyes half open and foam coming from mouth and unresponsive," the VAERS report states. "He was not breathing and with no pulse."

In another case, a 93-year-old South Dakota man was injected with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine January 4 around 11 a.m. About two hours later, he said he was tired and couldn't continue with the physical therapy he was doing any longer. He was taken back to his room, where he said his legs felt heavy. Soon after, he stopped breathing. A nurse declared a do-not-resuscitate order.

Moderna and Pfizer didn't respond to requests for comment.

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## NAYAGARH MURDER

# HC refused to monitor SIT probe in Dec: RTI

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 17:** In a new development, the Orissa High Court has claimed that it had declined the state government's proposal to monitor the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into the alleged rape and murder of a minor girl in Nayagarh by a sitting judge of the court in December last year.

Amid a raging controversy on the issue, the Orissa High Court has given an additional reply to the RTI applicant who had sought information related to the crime. The HC had earlier claimed that it did not receive any proposal from the state government to monitor the SIT probe by a sitting judge of the HC.

In its latest reply, the court said that it received a proposal from the state Home department but diverted it to the confidential section of the HC office. Later, the HC declined to appoint a judge to monitor the probe December 1, 2020.

"The court while responding to the request of the state government to the referred letter to accord permission to monitor the investigation of the SIT by a sitting judge, pleased not to accept such request and thus the same has been regret-



ted and communicated to the state government confidentially on December 1, 2020," the Orissa High Court stated in its additional response to the RTI application.

The high court admitted that the state government had sent a request letter which was received by the Orissa High Court November 28, 2020. The court further said that the earlier reply from the HC which claimed that no proposal was received by the HC from the state government was "incomplete".

"I am to inform you that the information supplied to you dated December 15, 2020 since incomplete as the information was obtained from a particular section of the court, whereas the matter was dealt with in the confidential administrative side of the court..." the RTI response said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I don't know what is going on. He hasn't slept for the past 3 days. Busy deleting all his WhatsApp chats!

# GUNMEN KILL TWO FEMALE AFGHAN SC JUDGES

Govt officials, scribes and activists have been targeted in recent months, stoking fear, particularly in Kabul

REUTERS

**Kabul, Jan 17:** Unidentified gunmen killed two female judges from Afghanistan's Supreme Court Sunday morning, police said, adding to a wave of assassinations in Kabul and other cities while government and Taliban representatives have been holding peace talks in Qatar.

The two judges, who have not yet been named, were killed and their driver wounded, in an attack at around 8:30 am, police said, adding the case was being investigated by security forces.

A spokesman for the Taliban said its fighters were not involved. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a statement condemning attacks on civilians by the Taliban and other militant groups. Ghani said "terror, horror and crime" was not a solution to Afghanistan's problem and beseeched the Taliban to accept "a permanent ceasefire".

Government officials, journalists, and activists have been targeted in recent months, stoking fear particularly in the capital Kabul. The Taliban has denied involvement in some of the attacks, but has said its fighters would continue to "eliminate" important government figures, though not journalists or civil society members. Rising violence has complicated US-brokered peace talks taking place in Doha as Washington withdraws troops.

Sources on both sides say negotiations are only likely to make substantive progress once US President-elect Joe Biden takes office and makes his Afghan policy known. The number of US troops in Afghanistan has been reduced to 2,500, the lowest level of American forces there.

## READY FOR R-DAY



JAT contingent during the rehearsals for Republic Day Parade 2021 at Rajpath in New Delhi, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

# Woman hires killer to eliminate daughter

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Jan 17:** Police Sunday arrested two persons, including a woman, on charges of hiring the services of a contract killer to eliminate her daughter in lieu of ₹50,000 with a view to "save the honour of her family". The incident took place in the Sadar Police limits in Balasure district.

The body of the victim, Sibani Nayak, 36, was recovered from under Belnala bridge in the same police station's jurisdiction, January 13.

The startling crime was revealed by Sadar SDPO Prabhak Chandra Pal at a press meet,



Sunday. The police launched a probe after Asim Giri, brother of the victim, filed an FIR in this connection. The accused were identified as Sukanti Giri, 52, of Maida village under Sadar

Police limits, and the victim's male friend Pramod Jena, 37, of Raisuna village under Basta Police limits in the district.

The SDPO said that Sukanti, mother of the victim, tried to get rid of Sibani as she was allegedly involved in bootlegging and other illegal activities, which were tarnishing the honour of the family.

Accordingly, she sought the help of her daughter's male friend Pramod to kill Sibani and hatched a conspiracy with him.

The Sadar SDPO said the accused Sukanti had contacted Pramod to kill her daughter and had given an advance of

₹8,000 two months back while assuring to give the remaining ₹42,000 after Sibani was killed.

Pramod, who works as a driver, knew Sibani as she used to frequently travel with him to different places, said Pal. Though Sibani was married, she was staying near her parents' place for the last 11 years.

On the fateful day (January 12), Pramod took Sibani to an isolated place on the pretext of some work. Later with the help of two of his associates, Pramod made Sibani consume alcohol and later bludgeoned her to death using a stone. He dumped her body under the bridge, Pal said.

# Orissa HC directs woman to handover baby to his father

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Jan 17:** The Orissa High Court has allowed a man to take custody of his 15-month-old son observing that continuance of the custody of the toddler with the mother, who is now staying separately, would be detrimental to the child's mental and physical development and may also affect his psychology negatively.

The court direction came after watching a video in which it is seen that the mother was repeatedly torturing and beating the child mercilessly.

A Division Bench of Justices SK Mishra and Savitri Ratho Friday while allowing a writ of Habeas Corpus filed by one Chakradhar Nayak of Puri district directed his wife to hand over the baby boy to his father within seven days.

"In case of her failure to do so, the police shall take appropriate steps in taking the child from the physical custody of the mother and handover the child to the father", the high court directed.

"We found from the video that the mother was mercilessly beating the infant on several occasions. Finding the cruelty, torture and assault to the small boy, we directed the police to secure the attendance of the mother along with the child", the high court said.

Married for over five years now, Chakradhar and Rosalin of Paika Sahi under Gop police station have a disturbed marital life and on one previous occasion, the man was imprisoned briefly after his wife brought dowry charges and domestic violence allegations.

# Biden ropes in 20 Indian-Americans in his administration

For the first time, the Indian-Americans nominated for Biden admin include two who trace their roots to Kashmir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Jan 17:** US President-elect Joe Biden has nominated at least 20 Indian-Americans, including 13 women, to key positions in his incoming administration, a record for the small ethnic community that constitutes one per cent of America's population.

As many as 17 of them, including Neera Tanden who has been nominated as the

Director of Management and Budget, would be part of the Biden administration in the powerful White House complex.

The January 20th inauguration, the 59th in all, where Biden, 78, would be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States is already historic in the making as for the first time ever a woman, Kamala Harris, would be sworn as the Vice-President of the country.

Harris, 56, is also the first ever Indian-origin and African-American to be sworn in as the Vice President of the United States. It is also for the first time ever that so many Indian-Americans have been roped into a presidential administration ever before the inauguration.

Topping the list is Tanden, who has been nominated as Director of

the White House Office of Management and Budget and Dr Vivek Murthy, who has been nominated as the US Surgeon General.

Vanita Gupta has been nominated as Associate Attorney General Department of Justice, and Saturday, Biden nominated former Foreign Service official Uzra Zeya as the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights.

"The dedication that the Indian-American community has shown to public service over the years has been recognised in a big way at the very start of this administration! I am particularly pleased that the overwhelming majority are women. Our community has truly arrived in serving the nation," Indiaspora founder MR Rangaswami told this news agency.

Mala Adiga has been appointed as Policy Director to the future First Lady Dr Jill Biden and Garima Verma would be the Digital Director of the Office of the First Lady while Sabrina Singh has been named as the White House Deputy Press Secretary.

For the first time, the Indian-Americans nominated for Biden administration include two who trace their roots to Kashmir: Aisha Shah, who has been named as Partnership Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy and Sameera Fazili, who would occupy the key position of Deputy Director at the US National Economic Council (NEC) in the White House. White House National Economic Council also has another Indian-American, Bharat Ramamurti, as Deputy Director.

Gautam Raghavan, who served at the White House in the previous Obama administration returns to the White House as Deputy Director in Office of Presidential Personnel.

Among Biden's inner circle is his top confidant for years Vinay Reddy, who has been named as Director Speechwriting.

Young Vedant Patel is all set to occupy a seat in the White House lower press, behind the briefing room, as Assistant Press Secretary to the President. He is only the third-ever Indian American to be part of the White House press shop.

Three Indian-Americans have made their way to the crucial National Security Council of the White House, thus leaving a permanent imprint on the country's foreign policy and national security.





## TOM HARDY BREAKS LOCKDOWN RULES

Actor Tom Hardy seems to have broken lockdown rules as he was recently seen leaving a gym. According to photos from thesun.co.uk, the actor came out from a closed martial arts school in workout gear.

## ZOOEY DESCHANEL A PROUD MOTHER

Actress Zoey Deschanel says her five-year-old daughter Elsie is extremely independent and not open to everyone, while son Charlie, two years younger, is more sociable.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Someone new in your life is going to make you smile; remember, however, that it doesn't always have to be fur and diamonds. A song sung straight from the heart makes a greater impact, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
Today, Ganesh sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with some close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting.

**GEMINI**  
You will be able to put forward your proposal and explain your feelings to someone dear to you, and can expect a positive response from them. You will come across as honest and sincere and hence will be accepted. An auspicious and joy-filled day awaits, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You will help others and be cheerful, feels Ganesh. you will inspire and encourage others. Closeness with beloved will gladden you. You will be attracted to special person, and it could benefit you.

**LEO**  
You will spend the day with your family and friends today and feel closer to them. You will try to help others, as always. You will like to guide someone if your own situation is comfortable today. You will be able to fulfill the expectations placed upon you by someone and will garner a lot of well-wishes, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
You will be the flag-bearer for people around you, spreading hope and inspiration. Ganesh advises you to be the ideal family man today. By doing this you will radiate affection and love. This will, in turn, work remarkably in cultivating positive relationships.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that today will be a day where you will want to look good and feel good too. You will be able to attract people with your speech and your impressive personality today at social gatherings. Your social stature will also rise today. Romantic liaisons may take a serious turn today.

**SCORPIO**  
Today, you must spend most of the time in meditation and introspection. If you do not meditate, you will be surrounded by negative thoughts and bitterness for others. According to Ganesh, this may hinder your progress and growth in career.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your stars are mighty today and plan a pleasant day for you, says Ganesh. You are a thorough professional and garner compliments for this attitude. You also have a knack to sail through all the troubles at work.

**CAPRICORN**  
Normally, others, especially colleagues get jealous of one's success, but yours is a different case. They will not only motivate you, but also guide you while you take up new projects and assignments. Not everyone is blessed with such cooperative colleagues, says Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will finally end today and you will enjoy the fruits of your hard-work. You are very good at considering all the pros and cons of every situation/project, drawing a plan on paper and distribution of responsibilities, however, execution of those plans is a problem area for you.

**PISCES**  
You will come up trumps against your competition today. This will make you enthusiastic about your future prospects. You shy away from the spotlight usually, but today you will find yourself thrust into the role of a leader, as you take on new assignments.

## Kriti's tips on when to take perfect picture

**Mumbai:** Actress Kriti Sanon has shared a tip on how and when to take the perfect picture.

Kriti posted a picture on her Instagram Stories, where she is seen sitting in a restaurant dressed in a white sweater.

"When the light is perfect it's time for a picture," she wrote as the caption.

The actress is all set to start shooting for the upcoming film Bachchan Pandey starring Akshay Kumar.

She has also finished shooting for her next with actor Rajkumar Rao for Abhishek Jain's upcoming comedy Second Innings. The film also stars Paresh Rawal and Dimple Kapadia, and is scheduled to release next year.

Kriti's other upcoming film is *Mimi*, Laxman Utekar's film that casts her as a young surrogate mother alongside Pankaj Tripathi, Sai Tamhankar, Manoj Pahwa and Supriya Pathak.



## Twinkle still makes Akshay's heart flutter

**Mumbai:** Akshay Kumar and Actress-turned-author Twinkle Khanna have completed twenty years of marital bliss on Sunday and the actor says she still makes his heart flutter.

Akshay posted a picture along with Twinkle on Instagram. In the image, Akshay is seen sporting a white shirt while Twinkle is hugging the Kesari star from the back dressed in a stunning royal blue ensemble.

The actor captioned the image: "The surest I've ever been of a partnership...twenty years of togetherness and you still make my heart flutter and sometimes even drive me up the wall but then again I wouldn't have it any other way coz a smile is never far when you are near...Happy anniversary Tina."

Twinkle dropped a red heart emoji in Akshay's comment section. She also shared the same picture on Instagram and shared that Akshay is the beauty and the brawn in their marriage.

## 'Laddoos' work more for Taapsee than protein bars

**Mumbai:** Actress Taapsee Pannu says she is not a 'protein bar kind of a person' and that 'laddoos' work for her.

Taapsee posted a string of pictures on Instagram where she could be seen gorging on some besan laddoos.

"Not a Protein Bar kind of person. What works for me are 'laddoos' approved by my super-woman @munmun.Ganeriwal. Filled up with the goodness of besan, co-

conut, nuts, gond and ghee. She calls it the 'Protein Energy Balls', " she wrote as the caption.

Taapsee is currently busy shooting for her next film *Rashmi Rocket*.

In the film, Taapsee plays a runner from the Rann of Kutch who fights for her identity and becomes an athlete. Priyanshu Painyuli plays Taapsee's husband in the sports drama helmed by Director Akarsh Khurana.

Taapsee recently concluded the Jharkhand schedule for the film and is gearing up for the next schedule in Bhub.



## Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan no more

**Mumbai:** Legendary Indian classical musician Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan died Sunday at his Mumbai residence. Music artistes such as Lata Mangeshkar, A.R. Rahman and Amjad Ali Khan paid their tribute to the Padma Vibhushan awardee.

Khan was awarded the Padma Shri in 1991, Padma Bhushan in 2006 and Padma Vibhushan in 2018.

Melody queen Lata Mangeshkar on Sunday tweeted a photo of Ghulam Mustafa Khan and expressed grief over his demise. She said he was not only a great singer but also a great human being.

A.R.Rahman wrote, "The sweetest teacher of all... May the Ghafoor-ur-Rahim give you a special place in the next world #UstadGhulamMustafa."

Popular Sarod player Amjad Ali Khan was also left "very saddened" to know about the demise of Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan. Singer Harshdeep Kaur called him a 'gentle soul and a legendary artiste'. She considers his death to be a 'huge loss to our music fraternity'.

The last rites with state honours would be performed at

Mumbai's SantaCruz (west) Kabristan later in the evening.



## Shriya Pilgaonkar in Odia producer's short film

**BHUBANESWAR:** Odia ad film maker and producer Dayanidhi Dahima has roped in Shriya Pilgaonkar, who played a major role in popular web series *Mirzapur*, for his next Hindi short film *Sita*.

Produced under the banner of Daya Entertainment, the film also stars Om Kanojia, Lilliput, Debesh Ranjan and Trishan in pivotal roles. The film is being directed by Abhinav while the music has been scored by Aditya Mohanan. *Sita* will be premiered at various national and international film festivals and will soon be released on an OTT Platform.

*Sita's* main lead Shriya, the daughter of veteran actor Sachin and actress Supriya Pilgaonkar, became an overnight sensation playing a pivotal character in popular web series *Mirzapur*. Her roles in Hindi films *Fan*, *House*



Dayanidhi with Shriya during a shoot

Arrest and *Kaadan* and web series *13 Mussorie* and *Crack down* also earned appreciation of the audience.

Earlier, Dayanidhi's short film *Nauwab* was nominated for Filmfare Short Film Awards bringing laurels for Odisha.

Shriya Pilgaonkar

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

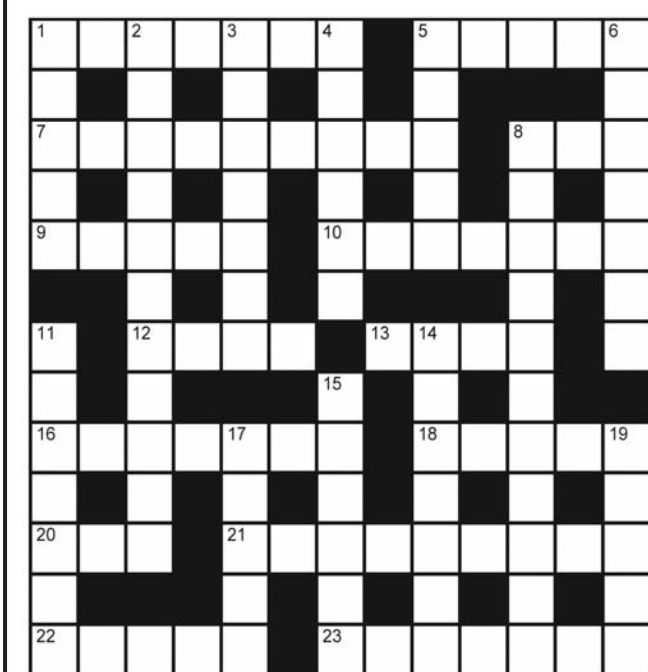


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Celebrations
  - 5 Picture puzzle
  - 7 Tangled
  - 8 Beachgoer's goal
  - 9 Cover story?
  - 10 Photos pasted together
  - 12 Requisite
  - 13 Conclusion starter
  - 16 Hug
  - 18 Writer Asimov
  - 20 King Kong, e.g.
  - 21 Authentically
  - 22 Kind of alcohol
  - 23 Circular dome opening
  - 3 Create mentally
  - 4 Sandwich filler
  - 5 Inert gas
  - 6 Earnest
  - 8 Free of deceit
  - 11 Garden-variety
  - 14 Port-au-Prince native
  - 15 Aromatic herb
  - 17 Heavenly worker
  - 19 Glasgow's river
- Down**
- 1 Boxing venue
  - 2 Stylish

### SUDOKU

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

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

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

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

**SUDOKU**

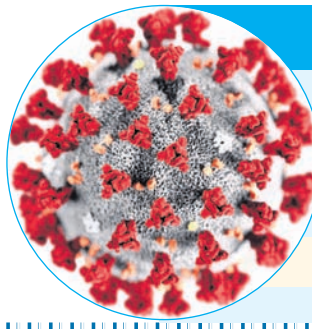
6	C	9	8	D	2	A	E	0	B	7	3	5	4	1
D	3	A	C	7	4	B	1	2	5	0	8	E	9	6
8	4	2	B	3	9	5	D	6	C	E	1	A	7	0
B	0	1	5	E	A	C	7	9	4	6	D	3	2	8
E	7	6	0	1	8	3	4	9	A	2	B	D	C	5
1	6	B	7	C	E	4	5	A	2	3	9	0	8	D
9	D	3	0	5	B	6	2	E	8	1	4	C	A	7
E	A	0	9	4	3	7	8	1	D	C	6	2	5	B
C	7	8	2	6	3	9	0	A	B	0	1	E	4	8
7	1	E	4	8	0	D	B	5	3	2	A	6	9	0
3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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



**WINGED BEAUTIES**

A group of cranes hovers over Mahanadi riverbank near Gadagadia ghat in Cuttack in the early morning of Sunday



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	9,51,19,284	6,79,35,247	20,33,779
India	1,05,57,985	1,01,96,885	1,52,274
Odisha	3,33,310	3,29,546	1,900

**5T Secy visits govt schools in City**

THE GOVT SCHOOLS HE VISITED INCLUDE THE ONES AT UNIT-VI, UNIT-I, CAPITAL HIGH SCHOOL, UNIT-IX GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL AND IRC VILLAGE HIGH SCHOOL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: State 5T Secretary VK Pandian Sunday visited several schools in Bhubaneswar to review the available infrastructure and preparation for the examinations ahead. He also sought suggestions from the teachers as to how the learning process and the study atmosphere can be improved in the schools.

The government schools he visited include the ones at Unit-VI, Unit-I, Capital High School, Unit-IX Girls' High School and IRC Village High School.

Pandian interacted with the teachers of the schools. The interaction featured various topics ranging from science laboratories, smart classrooms, library, reading room, sports facilities and HSC results.

Besides, the Secretary sought suggestions from teachers regarding steps that can be taken for improvement of students' performance in examinations.

The top bureaucrat also wished to know how active 'Mo School programme' is in the schools and the benefits of the programme. He further urged the teachers to give suggestions to improve the schools' ecosystem so that teaching can be made student-friendly, inspiring and scientific.



5T Secretary VK Pandian (L) during his visit to Capital High School, Sunday

**PANDIAN INTERACTED WITH THE TEACHERS OF THE SCHOOLS**

The Secretary sought suggestions from teachers regarding steps that can be taken for improvement of students' performance in examinations

The top bureaucrat also asked how active 'Mo School programme' is in the schools and the benefits of the programme

**We demand that the district and block level government high schools be declared Adarsh Vidyalaya**

**BASUDEV BHATT | CHAIRMAN, ODISHA PARENTS' FEDERATION**



The Secretary takes a tour of a classroom

Parents' federation for empowerment of govt schools

Meanwhile, Odisha Parents' Federation Sunday wrote to state 5T Secretary VK Pandian demanding empowerment of government schools in the state and to ensure free and compulsory education to all in the schools under Article 21A.

Basudev Bhatt, chairman of OPE, said that they demand the district

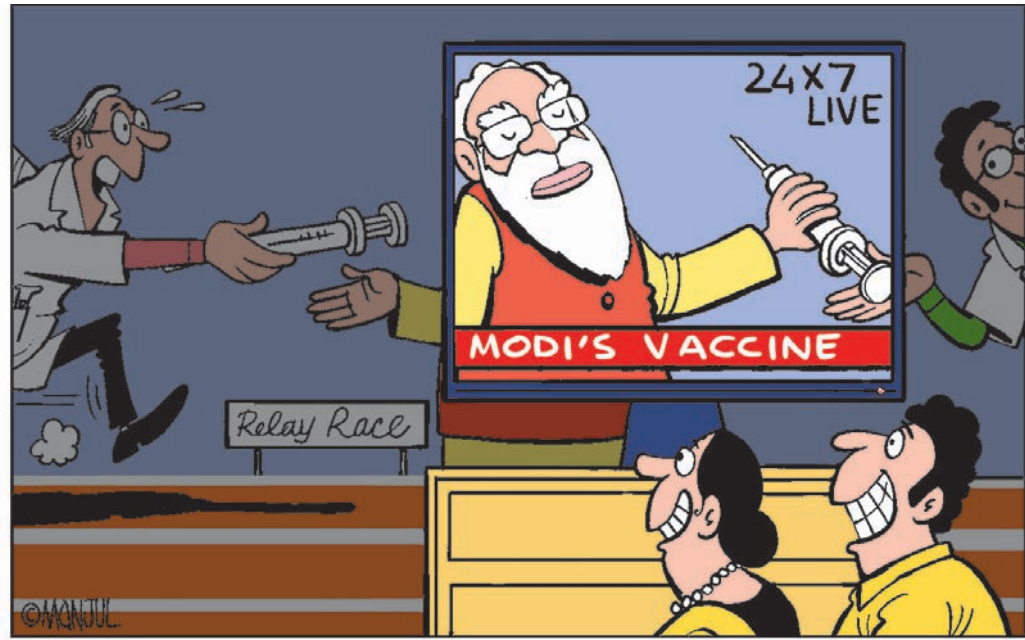
level government high schools be declared Adarsh Vidyalaya, instead of constructing new buildings in Odisha. "But our demands have been ignored."

Last year, the state government declared to upgrade 100 schools to Centre of Excellence under BSE affiliation to compete with CBSE/ICSE affiliated schools. As

per a report, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had announced to develop 101 government schools in 30 districts of the state as Centre of Excellence. These schools will have special infrastructure for soft skill training of students where spoken English will be introduced from Class I. However, it has remained a decision only, said a forum member. "We demand empowerment of government schools and new schemes to bring students from illegal and unauthorised private schools to government schools. The Andhra Pradesh government recently shifted 2.5 lakh students to government schools from private schools after Covid-19 pandemic."

We had also demanded to hold the closure of government schools and also requested closure of illegal private schools but no action has yet been taken, said another member.

**POLITICKLE by MANJUL**



**State tops list in road fatalities due to parking along shoulders**

A perusal of NCRB reports for the last couple of years reveals that fatalities in road mishaps due to illegal parking of vehicles in Odisha outnumber the fatalities caused by driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP



Despite authorities mandating helmets for pillion riders as well, denizens seem to give the norm a deaf ear and ride their bikes on a Bhubaneswar road sans helmet, Sunday

- In 2019, 295 accidents took place in the state due to illegal parking of vehicles on road shoulders
- As many as 238 people were injured in the accidents while 156 succumbed to the injuries
- As many as 114 persons died in accidents in which the driver was found driving under the influence of alcohol during the same period
- Only Uttar Pradesh registered more deaths (178) due to illegal parking than Odisha in 2019

factor-wise analysis of the road mishaps and fatalities across the country every year. The major factors mentioned by NCRB includes dangerous or careless driving, overtaking, over speeding, driving under influence of drug/alcohol, lack of road infrastructure and illegal parking of vehicles at road shoulders.

A perusal of the NCRB report for the last couple of years revealed that fatalities in road mishaps due to illegal parking of vehicles in Odisha outnumbered the fatalities caused by driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. In 2019, 295 accidents took place in the state due to illegal parking of vehicles on road shoulders. As many as 238 people were injured in the acci-

dents while 156 succumbed to the injuries. On the other hand, as many as 114 persons died in accidents in which the driver was found driving under the influence of alcohol during the same period.

Only Uttar Pradesh had registered more deaths (178) for illegal parking than Odisha in 2019.

Meanwhile, the state tops the list regarding road fatalities for parking on road shoulders in 2017 and 2018. As many as 318 persons died while 391 sustained injuries in 524 incidents of road accidents for vehicle parking along the roads in Odisha during 2017.

In 2018, the incidents of road accidents rose to 786 compared to 524 the previous year. The state recorded 241 deaths and 564 injuries in road accidents caused by illegal parking of vehicles on roads in 2018.

Recently, the Commissionerate Police launched a week-long drive to remove unclaimed and damaged vehicles parked on the road shoulders in Capital. The cops removed 188 vehicles causing traffic snarls in the City during the drive.

However, the situation on national and state highways still remains the same. One can find unused vehicles occupying major portions of the highways; endangering the lives of other commuters.

**RAJ BHAWAN PRESERVATION**



Governor Ganeshi Lal lays foundation stone for the retrofitting and preservation work of Puri Raj Bhawan, Sunday. Commissioner-cum-Secretary to Governor Pramod Meherda is also seen

**STF busts illegal coke depot in Cuttack, 10 held**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 17: The Special Task Force (STF) of the Odisha Crime Branch Sunday busted an illegal dump yard of stolen low ash metallurgical (LAM) coke in Nuapatna forest in Cuttack district. In the process, 54 metric tonne (MT) of stolen (LAM) coke was also seized. Ten persons were arrested for their involvement in this illegal trade, police said Sunday.

The STF had concrete information regarding the dumping of LAM coke at a depot in Nuapatna forest under Choudwar police limits. Accordingly, an STF team raided the depot where mafia had been hoarding and supplying illegally the costly material.

The STF found nine trucks loaded with LAM cokes parked at the depot. The modus operandi was LAM coke-loaded trucks en route to a particular place would be diverted to this depot. Then the miscreants would unload some of the load and send off the vehicles to their original destinations. People involved in this illegal activity would then load the stolen LAM coke and sell it to buyers who had been fixed beforehand.

**Demand for inquiry into custodial death**

Lodged for more than a decade, Rabi Dulal of West Bengal breathed his last Saturday at Jharpada special jail after suffering cardiac arrest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: Rabi Dulal, an undertrial prisoner, who had been in jail since the last 12 years, died Saturday at Jharpada Jail here. He was a native of Sanataranga village under Badasaranga police station of Bankura district in West Bengal.

Though police had registered nine cases against him, he was acquitted in five cases and due to long judicial process and delayed justice system he lost his mental balance, sources said. In the meantime, he kept sending petitions to the Human Rights Commission of West Bengal, NHRC and the courts where his trial was underway. But nothing happened and in the end he died due to such delayed bureaucratic as well as the justice system, sources said.

In this context Narendra Mohanty, Convener and Biswapriya Kanungo, advisor of Campaign Against Fabricated Cases (CAFC), Odisha demand a proper inquiry



FILE PHOTO

into the death of the undertrial prisoner and sought handing over the dead body to his family members as well as to implement the quick justice delivery system for other prisoners especially for political prisoners.

The deceased had spent more than a decade as an undertrial prisoner at Jharpada special jail in Bhubaneswar. As per reports he suffered a serious cardiac arrest while filling up drinking water Saturday morning. The authorities immediately rushed him to the Capital hospital where the doctors declared him brought-dead.

**Professionals take Pattachitra art to new heights**

I've mastered the art from my father and uncle Biswanath Swain who was a national awardee in palm leaf engraving. My professional degree would help me to take the art to another level

SHIBANARAYAN SWAIN

I'm doing graduation but have learnt the art at an early age. I will continue to balance studies with the art form. Even if I decide to do a job one day I will make sure that I keep finding time to do Pattachitra and other art forms our village Raghurajpur is famous for

PRAGYA VERNITA DAS

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: As three cars of tourists make their way into the heritage crafts village of Raghurajpur in Puri district which is famous worldwide for its 'Pattachitra' art, the villagers display anxious looks.

Sitting in the foyers of their houses which are artistically painted, they look up curiously at the visitors in



the car before passing a smile. Some turn back to carefully paint the 'Pattachitra' while some welcome the visitors with folded hands.

In the middle of the village which has houses in two rows facing each other, is the house of Bhagaban Swain, a 65-year-old retired school teacher. The four walls of the medium sized room are packed with shelves displaying the ancient Pattachitra paintings beside various other forms on wooden and stone carved pieces.

Bhagaban Swain's son Shibbanarayan Swain, 23 is doing MCA from Odisha University of Agriculture & Technology, Bhubaneswar and takes pride in displaying the art forms like Patta painting, Tasser painting and palm leaf engraving that has been the



tradition for not only his family but the approximately 160 houses in the village. His mother Sakhi too has mastered the art with perfection. "This is my ancestral work, though I am doing MCA, I will make sure I take the art forward and bring more acknowledgement and pride to Raghurajpur village. I have mastered the art from my father and uncle Biswanath Swain who was a national awardee in palm leaf engraving. My professional degree would help me to take the art to another level," Shibbanarayan Swain says as he carefully picks up a Pattachitra painting from the shelves.

There are others in the village too who are professional degree holders but have continued with the traditional art form. "There are many professionally qualified people in the village. They take pride in the art for the village. A man in the village is a chartered accountant, one is a supply inspector and another a traffic officer," Shibbanarayan said. A few metres away from the Swain house in the opposite lane, separated by a temple, a young girl Pragya Vernita Das stands with her younger brother. She has beautifully displayed the various miniatures of deities and temples on the door.

"I am doing graduation but I have learnt the art at an early age. I will continue to balance studies with the art form. Even if I decide to do a job one day I will make sure that I keep finding time to do Pattachitra and other art forms our village Raghurajpur is famous for," Pragya said with a smile.

A few steps ahead, five boys are seen cheering one who is playing a mobile game. A loud roar is heard, an indication the player Joyant Maharana has won. "I and my brother Chandan have learnt the village art from our parents. It is our duty to take the art forward and make Raghurajpur famous at the international front," said Joyant. The Tourism department of the state also has a development programme for the heritage village.

"We also have plans to develop the village Raghurajpur in near future as the village has much tourist and the traders' footfall from across the world. We would ensure better coordination between the villagers and the visitors," said Vishal K. Dev, commissioner-cum-secretary, Department of Tourism, Odisha.

Patta means cloth and Chitra means paintings, so Pattachitra is essentially a painting on a piece of cloth. The popular forms of Pattachitra are the paintings on cloth depicting scenes from mythology and epics, the Tassar cloth Pattachitra are also popular worldwide. The Pattachitra etched on dried palm leaves are picked up as souvenirs, also the paper mache masks and paintings on coconut. Apart from these, artists also engage in making miniature temples and deities and toys of stone and wood with paintings on them.

# State logs another Covid death

OF THE 183 NEW CASES, 106 HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM DIFFERENT QUARANTINE CENTRES, WHILE 77 DETECTED DURING CONTACT TRACING

AGENCIES & PNN

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 17:** Odisha's Covid-19 tally Sunday mounted to 3,33,310 after 183 more people tested positive for the virus, while a fresh fatality pushed the death toll to 1,900, a Health department official said.

Of the 183 new cases, 106 have been reported from different quarantine centres, while 77 detected during contact tracing.

Angul district recorded the highest number of 20 new cases, followed by Sambalpur (19) and Sundergarh (18).

The Health and Family Welfare department expressed regret over the death of a 52-year-old male Covid-19 positive patient from Bhubaneswar, who was also suffering from diabetes, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and had undergone renal transplantation.

With this fatality, Odisha's coronavirus death toll climbed to 1,900. Besides, 53 other Covid-19 positive patients have also died due to comorbidities, he said.

Of the total 1,900 fatalities reported so far, Khurda district, of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, accounted for 334 deaths

	CONFIRMED	ACTIVE	RECOVERED	DECEASED
Odisha	3,33,310 [+183]	2,039 [+182]	3,29,318	1,900 [+1]
India	1,04,95,816 [+15,903]	2,11,452 [+2,091]	1,01,28,457 [+17,347]	1,51,564 [+1,000]

Numbers vis-à-vis national data



FILE PHOTO

followed by Ganjam (248), Sundergarh (171), Cuttack (140) and Puri (1,171).

Twenty-five other districts reported fatalities below 100, he added.

Currently, the number of active coronavirus cases in the state stands at 2,039, while as many as 3,29,318 patients have recovered till date.

The state has so far conducted

over 73.76 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 30,798 Saturday

Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.52 per cent, the data released by the Health and Family Welfare department said.

Meanwhile, India's Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 1,05,57,985 with 15,144 new cases in a day, while 1,01,96,885 people have recuperated

Angul dist recorded the highest number of 20 new cases, followed by Sambalpur (19) and Sundergarh (18)

The 52-yr-old male patient, who succumbed to the infection, was also suffering from diabetes, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and had undergone renal transplantation

so far pushing the national recovery rate to 96.58 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated Sunday. There are 2,08,826 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 1.98 per cent of the total case-load, the data stated. The total coronavirus cases mounted to 1,05,57,985 and the death toll climbed to 1,52,274 with the novel coronavirus virus claiming 181 lives in a span of 24 hours in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stood at 1.44 per cent.

## POOR UPKEEP



Damaged height restriction bars near Madhupatna Railway Bridge in Cuttack pose threat to the commuters OP PHOTO

## BABY MARMOSET CHEER FOR NZP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Barang, Jan 17:** A marmoset Sunday gave birth to two babies at Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) here, said a zoo official.

However, the marmoset abandoned one of the two babies soon after giving birth to them. "The marmoset delivered the babies at enclosure no. 55. The mother marmoset accepted one newborn baby while rejected the other. We have rescued the abandoned baby marmoset and brought it to a rearing centre," said Nandankanan deputy director Bimal Prasanna Acharya.

According to Acharya, the number of marmoset monkeys at NZP has gone up to seven. "Now, we have three male marmosets and one female while the sexes of three marmosets are yet to be ascertained. We had purchased a pair of marmosets from a private agency in Madurai March 7, 2019," Acharya said.

According to wildlife experts, marmosets are a species of small monkeys having long tails. They are mainly found in South America countries like Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru.



The newborn marmoset

MARMOSETS ARE A SPECIES OF SMALL MONKEYS HAVING LONG TAILS

THEY ARE MAINLY FOUND IN SOUTH AMERICA COUNTRIES LIKE BRAZIL, BOLIVIA, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, PARAGUAY AND PERU

MARMOSETS REMAIN ACTIVE DURING THE DAY AND THEY LIVE IN SMALL GROUPS

"Similar in appearance to squirrels, marmosets are tree dwelling and they primarily eat insects, leaves and fruits. Marmosets remain active during the day and they live in small groups. Some people even keep marmosets as pets," said a wildlife expert.

## Digital database to keep an eye on state's forest cover

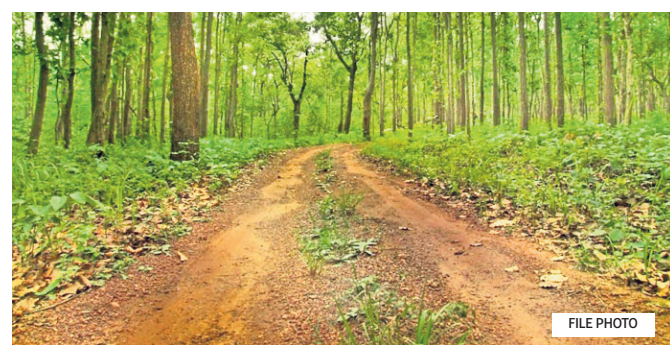
POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 17:** Chief Secretary Suresh Mohapatra Sunday chaired a review meeting of state-level Compensatory Afforestation fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) and directed the officials concerned to make a digital database of forest assets.

Mohapatra told the Forest department officials to ensure that the digital database is in public domain and updated regularly. The top bureaucrat of the state also asked the officials to increase the green areas on bald hills through plantation and regeneration activities. The department was asked to put in place a robust system for ground-level monitoring and public disclosure.

Directions were also passed to create land banks for compensatory afforestation and protection of the land through segregation to ensure human activities are not taken on the land and regeneration happens naturally.

Mohapatra also asked the officials concerned to make a three-year Action Plan for making the forest roads motorable for easy avail-



FILE PHOTO

ability of health and emergency services at the remote villages.

The Forest department, meanwhile, was asked to undertake solar fencing along the forest borders by taking the local people onboard to reduce the human-animal conflict.

Development Commissioner, Pradeep Kumar Jena asked the officials to undertake third party assessments of before and after conditions of the green cover densities against each plantation project. "All plantation projects should have monitorable objectives in terms of increase in green density and soil and moisture conservation," he said.

During the meeting, the Committee approved an Annual Action Plan of 2021-22 with a total

outlay of around Rs 903.39 crore. The major activities to be taken up under this included maintenance of previous year plantation, fodder and fruit bearing plantation, bamboo culture, wild life management, infrastructure development, block plantation, assisted natural regeneration, bald hill plantation, regeneration of bamboo forest, capacity building research and evaluation and others.

CAMPA CEO Uma Nanduri told the gathering that a total area of 56,958.73 hectares of forest area have been diverted for different public and developmental purposes in Odisha. She said that against this, afforestation has been done in 67,828 hectares.

## From today, each centre to vaccinate 200 persons daily

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 17:** The government has decided to administer the Covid vaccine to up to 200 persons at each vaccine centre across the state.

The state Health department meanwhile has also decided to increase the number of vaccine centres in the state. The government has decided that each medical college will now have five centres while facilities for vaccination will also be present in other selected health centres. Each centre can now be allowed to vaccinate a total of 200 persons in a day. Some of them will undertake two sessions for the same like in District Headquarter Hospitals (DHH).

"We are going to increase the vaccination centres now. The number of vaccination centres will increase from Monday. Each medical college now will have five vaccination centres each. DHH and Sub Division Hospitals will have two sessions with 100 beneficiaries in each session," Bijay Panigrahi, Director, State Health and Family Welfare Department said.

The state Health department has also issued orders to make the database for the second line of beneficiaries which will include em-



FILE PHOTO

**We are going to increase the number of vaccination centres... Each medical college will have five vaccination centres. DHH and Sub Division Hospitals will have two sessions with 100 beneficiaries in each session**

**BIJAY PANIGRAHI | DIRECTOR, HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT**

ployees from the Home department, Transport department, Revenue department and others. "The list will be uploaded on the CO-WIN portal by the end of January 25. In the fourth phase, people with above 60 years and below the age of 50 years but with co-morbidities will be given the vaccine," PK Mohapatra, state Health department's additional chief secretary said.

## TWO COPS SUSPENDED IN PURI DISTRICT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Jan 17:** Puri district Superintendent of Police (SP) Kanwar Vishal Singh Sunday suspended two police officials on charges of bribery and dereliction of duty.

Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Krushnaprasad police station, Ishwar Chandra Gumansingh,

was suspended on charges of accepting Rs 7,000 as bribe from a food vendor.

"Puri Sadar SDPO had been asked to probe the bribery allegation against Gumansingh. The ASI was suspended from his post after the allegation was found to be true. The accused ASI has also been arrested," said the SP.

In another incident, Puri

Sadar police Sub-Inspector Atashi Jena was suspended from her post on charges of dereliction of duty.

As per the allegation, Jena had raided a gambling den and seized Rs 14,000 and three mobile phones from the gamblers. However, Jena did not inform the incident to the Inspector In-Charge (IIC) of the police station.

## Srimandir ready for darshan sans Covid reports

THE SJTA AND THE DIST ADMIN HAVE MADE ALL ARRANGEMENTS TO FACILITATE DARSHAN FOR AROUND 30,000 DEVOTEES ON A DAILY BASIS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Jan 17:** The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and the Puri district administration Sunday held a meeting to take stock of the arrangements for allowing devotees to enter into Srimandir without producing the Covid negative reports from January 21.

The meeting discussed various issues for facilitating smooth darshan to the devotees with strict adherence to the Covid-19 norms.

"Devotees would not be required to produce their Covid negative reports to enter into the shrine from January 21. All devotees would be allowed to enter into Srimandir through the Lions' Gate. Special arrangements are in place for senior citizens and differently-abled persons," said Puri Collector Samarth Verma.

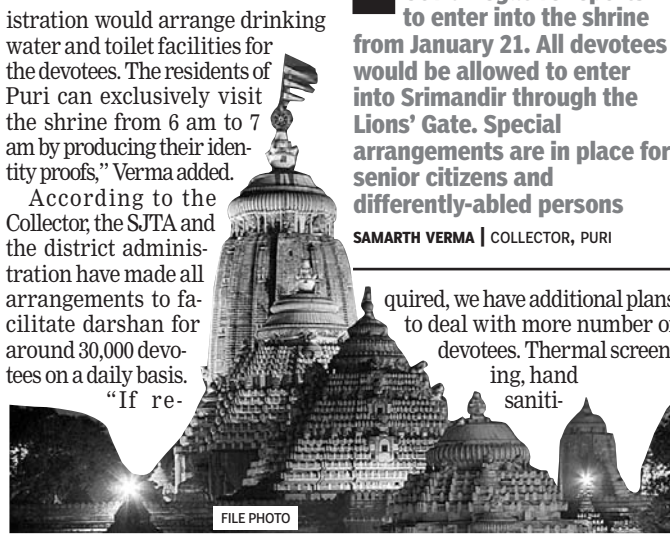
The Collector further revealed that the devotees would not be allowed to carry earthen lamps, flowers and other puja materials into the 12th century shrine. "The admin-



The meeting underway

**Devotees wouldn't be required to produce their Covid negative reports to enter into the shrine from January 21. All devotees would be allowed to enter into Srimandir through the Lions' Gate. Special arrangements are in place for senior citizens and differently-abled persons**

**SAMARTH VERMA | COLLECTOR, PURI**



FILE PHOTO

istration would arrange drinking water and toilet facilities for the devotees. The residents of Puri can exclusively visit the shrine from 6 am to 7 am by producing their identity proofs," Verma added.

According to the Collector, the SJTA and the district administration have made all arrangements to facilitate darshan for around 30,000 devotees on a daily basis. "If re-

quired, we have additional plans to deal with more number of devotees. Thermal screening, hand saniti-

ation and use of face masks are mandatory for the devotees," said the Collector.

It is worth mentioning here that Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath, was shut for devotees in March, last year in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

After remaining shut for more than nine months, the shrine reopened for people December 23, 2020. Initially, the family members of servitors were allowed to visit the shrine till December 25. Subsequently, the residents of Puri city were allowed to have a darshan of Srimandir deities from December 26 to 31.

However, the shrine gates were thrown open for all devotees from January 3, this year. But, Covid negative reports were made mandatory for devotees to visit the shrine. However, the provision of compulsory Covid negative report caused resentment among the devotees. Many of them could not visit the temple in the absence of Covid reports.

## BRAINSTORMING SESSION



CPM leader Janardan Pati speaks at the organisational convention of Odisha Sales Representatives' Union in Cuttack, Sunday

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# Farmers, Cong workers block NH over mandi closure

# Nabarangpur bridge collapse: Asst executive engineer held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri/Kalimela, Jan 17:** Traffic on National Highway-326 in Malkangiri district was severely hit after farmers led by the Congress party staged a road blockade over the abrupt closure of mandis before the farmers could sell their paddy stocks in Kalimela block, Sunday.

Hundreds of farmers and party members led by the district Congress president Gobind Patra and former MP Pradeep Kumar Majhi staged the road blockade demanding re-opening of the mandis.

The farmers put up their paddy sacks on the highway. Commuters had a harrowing time as the blockade disrupted movement of vehicles from Malkangiri to Motu and Padia blocks with hundreds of vehicles lying stranded on either side



## FARM WOES

The farmers put up their paddy sacks on the highway. Commuters had a harrowing time as the blockade disrupted movement of vehicles from Malkangiri to Motu and Padia blocks with hundreds of vehicles lying stranded on either side of the highway

Patra alleged that over 5,000 quintals of paddy are lying unsold with the farmers in the district due to the 'anti-farmer policies' of the Centre and state government

of the highway. Majhi warned of severe consequences in coming days if the administration fails to purchase paddy from all the farmers. He alleged that over 7000 sacks of paddy are lying unsold in Kalimela mandi while thousands of quintals are lying unsold in other mandis of the district due to the 'callous attitude' of

the state government. Patra alleged that over 5,000 quintals of paddy are lying unsold with the farmers in the district due to the 'anti-farmer policies' of the Centre and state government. The farmers who have received tokens were expecting they will soon be called to sell their paddy stocks. Reports said that the mandis were opened in November, last year. The district collector had as-

sured then that the paddy stocks of all the farmers will be procured. However, the mandis were shut down after 45 days with the authorities claiming that the procurement target has been achieved. This has disappointed the farmers. Many farmers have not received their tokens while the farmers who had received tokens are yet to sell their paddy stocks. There are 13 mandis under the

Local Area Multiple Primary Cooperative Societies (LAMPS) under Kalimela block. The farmers wishing to sell their paddy stocks had applied for 9278 mandi tokens. However, the LAMPS authorities issued 8618 tokens and procured 277968 quintals from the farmers. Reports said that the district had set a target of 10.54,000 lakh quintal for paddy procurement in this year but till date only 10.31,000 quintal of paddy have been purchased in the district.

When contacted, district civil supplies officer Ajay Kumar Rath said a proposal for paddy procurement in the second phase has been sent to the state government which will resume on receiving approval.

Among others, former party working president Ram Prasad Pattnaik, Kalimela block chairperson Mala Madhi, her Mathili counterpart Lakshmi Priya Nayak, Women's Congress president Kamala Baral and hundreds of farmers and party workers participated in the protest.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nabarangpur, Jan 17:** An assistant executive engineer was Sunday arrested in connection with the bridge collapse incident that took place near Talapadar village in Nabarangpur district in which a labourer died and three others were critically injured.

Umerkote police arrested assistant executive engineer Asit Patra from Tikiri in Rayagada district, police said.

With the arrest of Patra, the number of arrests in this case has gone up to two. Prior to Patra's arrest, contractor Ashish Biswal was also arrested. An FIR was lodged against Patra, Biswal and junior engineer Niranjan Sahu. Sahu is yet to be arrested.

Notably, a part of Biju Setu (bridge) across Nagi River in Talapada panchayat caved in January 10 leaving one dead and three injured.

As many as 30 labourers, including women, were working at the



FILE PHOTO

bridge across Nagi River in Talapada panchayat when the mishap occurred. They were engaged in concrete roofing when a slab came crashing down. The labourers were without safety gears or safety measures. The contractor concerned allegedly had not provided with them safety kits.

In the mishap, Mahendra Mali, a resident of Raigarh area and a Grade-IV employee were killed. Meanwhile, Santosh Bhoi (32) and Umesh Bhoi (50) from Patrapada village and Prakash Tandi (50) from Beherada village suffered critical injuries.

# Ghatagaon Tarini temple reopens for devotees today



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Jan 17:** After remaining out of bounds for visitors and devotees for over 10 months due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the famous Tarini temple at Ghatagaon in Keonjhar district will reopen January 18.

The Maa Tarini Thakurani Temple Trust Board has issued guidelines to ensure devotees' free

and safe darshan of the goddess at the shrine.

The temple will open at 6:00 am Monday, but darshan of the goddess will be restricted to two phases - from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm and from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm. The servitors of the temple and their family members will visit the shrine between 8:00 am and 9:00 am.

Children below 10 years have been restricted to visit the shrine.

Devotees will enter the shrine from gate no- 3 where there is a sanitisation facility and exit from gate no- 4. People coming to the shrine for puja of their new vehicles will enter from gate no-5, the temple authorities informed.

Tonsuring of children has been stopped for the time being. Similarly, there will be no cooked prasada offered inside the temple.

At any given time, there will be no more than 25 to 30 devotees inside the shrine. At the same time, taking coconuts, flowers, bhoga offerings, lamps and incense sticks have also been restricted. The shops inside the temple will remain closed till further orders by the district administration.

Use of masks and maintaining of social distancing will be mandatory inside and outside the temple. Besides, barricades have been installed to ensure proper entry into the shrine. For crowd management, there would be deployment of police officials and volunteers.

## DUAL SAFETY



Police personnel take part in an awareness drive on use of helmets for bikers and pillion riders in MV-79 area of Malkangiri, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## Denied money, youth kills mother

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rajgangpur, Jan 17:** A young man from Bahiyam village under Rajgangpur police limits in Sundargarh district Saturday night killed his mother after she refused to give him some money.

The deceased was identified as Laxmi Gouda (50) and the accused as Raju Gouda (23).

According to a source, Raju Saturday night asked his mother to give him some money. Laxmi, however, refused to do so. This led to a quarrel between them.

The scene turned ugly when Raju lost his cool, slit his mother's throat with a knife. He went out of the house, leaving his mother to die. Laxmi died on the spot owing to excessive bleeding.

On being informed, a team from Rajgangpur police station reached the spot, recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. A case has been registered and the cops have launched a manhunt to nab the accused.

## Racket pushes bogus beneficiaries

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Jan 17:** Benefits of construction labourers are allegedly being grabbed by the ineligible in various parts of Ganjam district through forged labour identity cards.

Besides, some genuine labourers are being provided fake identity cards. Many people have allegedly been falling prey to fraudsters in Chhatrapur, Ganjam and Sheragad blocks. It is suspected that a racket or more are involved in such fraudulent activities.

Lakhs of rupees are being swindled from innocent labourers on the assurance of labour identity cards.

Various quarters have demanded a high level investigation into the frauds.

Reports said some people are running Jan Seva Kendra and Net Zones where they are providing rations cards and labour identity cards.

Those interested to have such facilities have to pay Rs 300 to Rs 400.

## LABOUR WELFARE SCHEMES



People are asked to furnish Aadhar cards, photos and copies of bank accounts.

Against such documents, many people have been provided labour identity cards in various parts.

The fraud came to the fore when some people of Sheragad went to the district labour office at Chhatrapur along with their identity cards to apply for multiple labour benefits being provided by the government.

Scores of cards were found fake. The

labour department found the seals and signatures forged.

Besides, many people in Ganjam and Chhatrapur blocks have become victims of the fraud.

The affected people said that if action is not taken against the fraudsters, they will be encouraged to trap many people in their clutches.

They demanded that a high level investigation should be conducted into the fraud and the accused be brought to book.

## Forest cover depletes as mafia plunders teak wood

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boinda, Jan 17:** Timber mafia has become active in remote dense forested pockets of Dhandatopa range under Athamallik block of Angul district. This has raised concern among the local residents.

For the last few days, the mafia has been chopping down valuable trees in Bipradaha, Kansab, Korab, Maimura and Kenchuanali forests.

People of Maimura village brought the matter to the notice of the District Collector Saturday.

They alleged that the timber mafia has become active in these forested areas and is supplying timber on a daily basis while no action is being taken against the wrongdoers.

"Local mafia in league with timber traders from other areas has been running the racket. They are targeting teak wood trees in dense forests. After cutting down trees,

they are stocking the timbers in secret places before supplying them in luxury vehicles to evade the glare of the enforcement agencies," the villagers said.

They lamented that this has been happening for the last two months, but the forest department is sitting pretty.

Forest cover in these areas has been thinning. The villagers al-

leged that such illegal activities are not possible without the tacit support of some unscrupulous forest officials.

"If nothing is done to check the rampant tree felling, forests in the region will vanish," they said.

They demanded stern action against the timber mafia along with stepping up the vigil in these forests.



FILE PHOTO

## SMASHING ACROSS THE NET



Youths play volleyball at a tournament organised by Markona Athletic Association at Simulia block in Balasore, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## Big boost to mushroom farming in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Jan 17:** In a bid to augment income of rural people, particularly women, the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) has taken a major step to boost mushroom cultivation in Ganjam district. The aim is to make the district a mushroom hub. Steps have been taken to set up 503 mushroom farms in the district.

This was informed by DRDA Project Director, Shinde Dattatraya Bhausaheb on Twitter Sunday.

Mushroom farming will provide income opportunities for rural women associated with SHGs.

The DRDA will execute the project through the Odisha Livelihood Mission. SHG members promoted under Mission Shakti will be encouraged to take up mushroom farming. About 80 per cent of the population in the district depends on agriculture. Paddy straws are the



## INCOME GENERATING

The aim is to make the district a mushroom hub. Steps have been taken to set up 503 mushroom farms in the district. Mushroom farming will provide income opportunities for rural women associated with SHGs

The DRDA will execute the project through the Odisha Livelihood Mission. SHG members promoted under Mission Shakti will be encouraged to take up mushroom farming

main raw material for mushroom farming. As straw is abundantly available, it will be made good use for mushroom farming.

Paddy straw mushroom is the easiest crop for rural people. It is cultivated for at least 10 months in a year. This farming has potential to

make people self-employed. The DRDA has set a target to set up 503 mushroom farms in the first phase under MGNREGS.

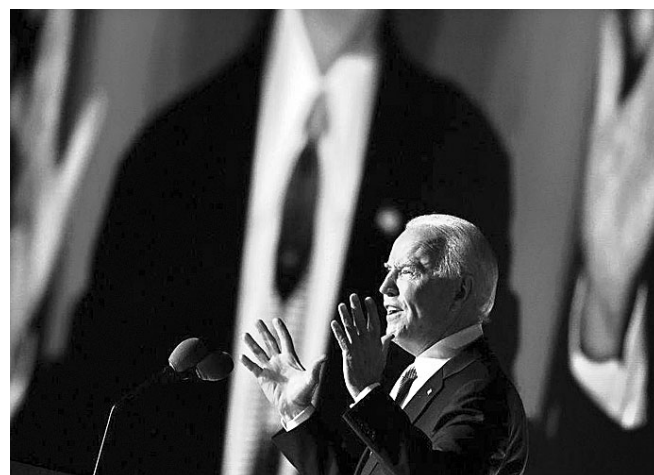
SHGs will manage these farms. Each SHG will be provided with Rs 1 lakh as assistance. Through the National

Horticulture Mission, SHGs will have to bear only 40 per cent for the cost. Technical assistance will be provided by the horticulture department.

It was learnt that Sabuja Ganjam Producer Company managed by SHGs will market the mushroom.

FOCUS WORLD ORDER

# CAN AMERICA LEAD AGAIN?



The US cannot have it both ways. It cannot withdraw from global leadership and refuse to allow anyone to take its place; if it insists, confrontation and brinkmanship will ensue

For many US policymakers, this was unacceptable: if the US bears the costs of sustaining a world order, they believe, it should get to ensure that its interests come first.

True to his promises of "America First," Trump withdrew the US from its previous global leadership commitments, pared down its engagement overseas, and built a wall. He delivered exactly what his voters wanted. But his policy inevitably produced a consequence that US leaders couldn't accept: China's rising profile, as it stepped in to fill the leadership vacuum the US left behind.

In response, the Trump administration portrayed China as America's mortal enemy, launched a ruinous trade war, and imposed a slew of sanctions. For Beijing, such hostility confirmed long-held suspicions that the US would never accept its rise without a fight, so it has reacted defensively. The resulting vicious cycle of mistrust and antagonism has yet to be broken.

For the Biden administration, two lessons stand out. First, the US cannot have it both ways. It cannot withdraw from global leadership and refuse to allow anyone to take its place; if it insists, confrontation and brinkmanship will ensue. Second, America's clash with China over the last four years has been as much a divorce from that country as a divorce from globalisation.

This means that, if the US is to reclaim the leadership position that will enable it to compete constructively with China – and retain it for more than an election cycle – the Biden administration must tackle inequality and the costs that globalisation has brought. Otherwise, Trump – or, worse, a more competent version of Trump – could well recapture the presidency in 2024 or 2028, and reverse whatever progress the Biden administration makes in the coming term.

The writer is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

US President-elect Joe Biden's impending inauguration has raised hopes that his administration will "make America lead again." If the United States is to transform its rivalry with China into constructive competition, this is the right approach. But whether Biden can restore and sustain America's global leadership depends on how effectively he mends domestic fractures and addresses deep-seated misgivings about globalisation held by segments of the US electorate.

Biden has repeatedly pledged to restore America's international reputation and global standing, which were severely damaged under Donald Trump. To that end, he will quickly rejoin multilateral institutions (such as the WHO) and international agreements (beginning with the Paris climate agreement) from which Trump withdrew the US.

These pledges point to a vision of the US back at the head of the liberal international order, a position from which it can more effectively compete – and cooperate – with China. But there is good reason to believe that many Americans do not want their country to lead again.

Biden's electoral victory in November fell short of the decisive repudiation of Trump and his toxic brand of populism that liberals expected. Yes, Biden won over 81 million votes – more than any US presidential candidate in history. But Trump received more than 74 million – the second-highest number on record – and increased his share across minority groups, compared to 2016. This is despite an unprecedented parade of scandals and a disastrously mismanaged pandemic.

What explains Trump's enduring popularity? One explanation, advanced by Peter Singer in November, is that nearly half of America has "lost its soul." This diagnosis is certainly true of the most disturbing elements of Trump's voter base, which includes the white nationalists and

neo-Nazis who stormed Capitol Hill on January 6. And even those who do not fit into this category did vote for an openly racist president, who refused to denounce white supremacy.

Still, it would be simplistic to dismiss support for Trump as nothing more than an endorsement of bigotry. It is worth remembering that 13 per cent of those who voted for Trump in 2016 voted for Barack Obama in 2012. And Trump received ten million more votes in 2020 than in 2016.

Trump draws support from a motley array of sources. Racism and xenophobia are among them, but so is anger among rural and working-class voters over stagnating incomes and rising inequality. Some Asian voters also fell for his hawkish stance on China. As a political outsider, Trump was able to exploit resentment of the political establishment, hack the Republican apparatus, and package himself as a champion of the disaffected.

These voters have been misguided to put their faith in Trump, who never intended to address

their grievances in any genuine way, and has no qualms about inciting them to mount an insurrection and then abandoning them. One structural factor has made it easy for Trump and his conspirators to dupe these voters: globalisation has created many losers alongside winners. The winners include big companies that shifted their manufacturing to cheaper locations, thereby considerably expanding their profit margins, and the developing economies – especially China – to which they moved. The losers include millions of American manufacturing workers who have lost their jobs. Mix in America's legacy of racism and the spread of fake news via social media, and the result is flammable.

But it is not only the working class that is disillusioned with globalisation. As the global economy's center of gravity has shifted toward emerging powers like China, these countries have gained a greater say in international institutions, which are supposed to represent all countries rather than only these institutions' architects.



Yuen Yuen Ang

THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT MANY AMERICANS DO NOT WANT THEIR COUNTRY TO LEAD AGAIN

## Vaccine Nationalism

India has joined the ranks of wealthier nations by beginning to inoculate health workers on January 16 in what is going to be the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Among the 195 countries in the world the United States, Britain, Israel, Canada and Germany have already adopted some measure of protection with at least one dose of vaccine. Over 35 million doses of various COVID-19 vaccines have been administered around the world, according to the University of Oxford. India is second to the US with 10.5 million confirmed cases, and ranks third in the number of deaths, behind the US and Brazil, with a toll of over 150,000 lives.

The vaccination programme was launched in India on a day when Norway expressed concern about the safety of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine on elderly people after at least 29 of them died within days of receiving the shot. The Norwegian authorities are reported to have decided to exclude elderly people from vaccination for the time being. The most striking difference between vaccination in the rich countries and in India is the fanfare the government of India is making over a life-and-death issue underplaying the risks involved in order to make political capital of it.

The government is in effect equating the drive with its political-economic slogan of "atmanirvar India" (self-reliant India) and "make in India" even though scientists and doctors across the globe have been working overtime to find out the right remedies to fight this pandemic. It is glossing over the fact that one of the two vaccines being rolled out – Covaxin – has not yet completed the third phase of clinical trial for which fears among the people about it, produced by Bharat Biotech, persist. They wonder whether they are being made guinea pigs by a politician-business nexus. Undermining the seriousness of the problem of unparalleled magnitude, ministers and politicians are singing paeans of praise for Prime Minister Narendra Modi giving him all the credit for the vaccination and making it a hilarious issue. Against the backdrop of the rising global COVID-19 death toll topping 2 million on 15 January, the clock is ticking to vaccinate as many people as possible. But the campaign has been uneven. Immunization drives have barely gotten off the ground in most countries and many experts are predicting another year of loss and hardship in places like Iran, Mexico, Brazil and India, which together account for about a quarter of the world's deaths.

India gave the nod for emergency use of two vaccines – one developed by Oxford University and UK-based drug maker AstraZeneca, and another by Indian company Bharat Biotech – on January 4 following which 16.5 million shots have been sent to different states last week. This was done dismissing health experts' worry that the regulatory shortcut taken to approve the Bharat Biotech vaccine without waiting for concrete data to show its efficacy could only amplify vaccine hesitancy. At least one state health minister has opposed its use.

The government's hurry to be populist over COVID-19 vaccination is understandable. It has handled the pandemic in a sordid manner. The country's economy is in shambles and its foreign policy has been so myopic that India is beset with dangers posed by a belligerent, ambitious and pro-active China. In such a backdrop its decision to roll out the vaccines without waiting for clearance for their safety may not be in the best interest of the common man.

The government is trying to convince the people that the country has the record of successfully administering polio and other vaccines and as such they can trust the government during the current programme. But, the vaccination against Covid-19 is not like running childhood vaccination programmes. Experts say countries that get enough vaccine for 20 per cent of the population will not be able to stop transmission. They will be in an "endless cycle". The coronavirus is not going away anywhere anytime soon. The whole world is watching how the Indian experiment pans out. The need is for an extremely cautious approach. Cynical political calculations should not dictate the timing of safe and efficacious vaccination and the scientific community should be given enough time to complete the due process.

## WISDOM CORNER

- Everything you can imagine is real. **PABLO PICASSO**
- Life seems but a quick succession of busy nothings. **JANE AUSTEN**
- Either you run the day or the day runs you. **JIM ROTH**

## WORDSWORTH

### Xenotransplantation

The shortage of suitable organs for transplants is now severe, to the extent that the invention in the late sixties by the science-fiction writer Larry Niven of organlegging – murdering people to resell their body parts – no longer seems so fanciful. One solution that is being considered is the use of organs from other species, and it was reported at the end of 1996 that doctors in India had successfully transplanted the heart of a pig into a person. Two reports on the technique the same year (one in the US, one in Britain) agreed that though such transplants were acceptable on ethical grounds, there was legitimate concern over the risk that infectious diseases might be introduced with the transplanted organs. Pathogens such as retroviruses that might be benign or even undetectable in the host animal could become virulent when moved to the new environment of the human body. The term xenotransplantation is a compound of transplantation with the Greek prefix xeno-, 'foreigner; stranger', which also turns up in xenophobia and in some specialised medical terms like xenobiotic. An instance of the technique is a xenotransplant, a word which doubles as the verb; a person undertaking the process is rarely called a xenotransplanter.

### Xenozoonosis

It's long been known that many communicable diseases – such as diphtheria, influenza, rabies, anthrax, chickenpox and mumps – were originally diseases of animals, which spread to humans once we began to domesticate them. The general name for such a disease is zoonosis (with plural zoonoses), which derives from the Greek words zoion, "animal", and nosos, "disease". As a result of current research into ways to transplant animal organs into humans, the risk of previously unknown diseases transferring with the grafts is greatly exercising medical minds, leading to calls for such techniques to be banned or at least closely monitored until the risk to health is better known. A disease which might be transferred in this way is a xenozoonosis, using the Greek xenos, "stranger", in the same specialised sense as it is beginning to be used in words such as xenotransplantation and xenograft, which means "something (transplanted) from a different species". The adjective is xenozoonotic.

## LOL

### MISSING WIFE

A man approached a very beautiful woman in the large supermarket and asked, "You know, I've lost my wife here in the supermarket. Can you talk to me for a couple of minutes?"



"Why?"  
"Because every time I talk to a beautiful woman my wife appears out of nowhere."

## SPECTRUM GLOBE

# No time to spare for Paris climate promise

COVID-19 turned the world upside down in 2020. But it has also shown us that when there is a political consensus for action, human ingenuity and innovation can be deployed at the scale and speed needed to meet global challenges.

With unprecedented speed, we have developed, tested, and begun to deploy multiple effective vaccines for COVID-19. Now we must bring the same resolve to bear on fighting the other great existential threat to humanity: climate change. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres put it last month, "our future security and prosperity depend on bold climate action."

And yet, even at the most recent Climate Ambition Summit on December 12, many leaders' commitments still fell far short of what is needed to meet this collective challenge. To be sure, the EU, the UK, and even some of the smaller countries that are most vulnerable to climate change have significantly strengthened their 2030 emissions-reduction targets. But the US, Japan, China, and other major greenhouse-gas emitters still need to follow suit, preferably well ahead of the UN Climate Conference (COP26) in Glasgow this coming November.

Five years ago, after long and painstaking negotiations, the world

came together to conclude the Paris climate agreement. This was one of the greatest triumphs of multilateral diplomacy in recent years, but it must not be taken for granted. Without an even greater commitment to action, the legacy of Paris risks being squandered altogether.

The events of the intervening half-decade have created a geopolitical landscape that would be unrecognizable to those who gathered in Paris. Back then, words like 'coronavirus' or 'Brexit' would have elicited little more than a puzzled shrug; now they command the fevered attention of policymakers and heads of state and government around the world.

But we cannot allow these developments to obscure the continuing and increasingly acute need for climate action, especially climate finance. Over a decade ago, the world's richest countries pledged to mobilise \$100 billion per year by 2020 to assist poorer countries with climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. That deadline has now passed, and these countries have yet to fulfill their promise.

Still, there is hope. I am delighted that US President-elect Joe Biden has reaffirmed his commitment to rejoin the Paris agreement immediately upon taking office. American leadership is sorely needed after the four wasted years

of unnecessary destruction under Donald Trump. A \$2 billion payment to the Green Climate Fund by the US to help meet its part of the \$100 billion commitment would be a concrete complement to rejoining the Paris accord. This money was already pledged during Barack Obama's presidency, so there is no excuse to keep it sitting in the US Treasury's coffers.

By the same token, other rich countries must not use the renewed focus on the US as an alibi for backpedaling on their own commitments. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's recent announcement that she will initiate a new international process on climate finance next year is a welcome declaration of intent. But past experience shows that we cannot count on lofty rhetoric.

Moreover, all countries in 2021 must give clear proof that they are reviewing and seeking to heighten the ambitions of their nationally determined contributions, the voluntary instrument through which signatories will uphold their commitments under the Paris agreement.

Solidarity and justice lie at the heart of both the Paris accord and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which were also adopted in 2015. These principles, and the responsibilities they entail, are more

important than ever as we chart a sustainable recovery from the shock of COVID-19.

The blunt truth is that we have wasted too much time in the five years since Paris. The policies we need to cut emissions – including an end to fossil-fuel subsidies, a meaningful carbon price, and investment in renewable energies – have been fitful, inconsistent, and uncoordinated. But the climate crisis, like COVID-19, observes no borders and is indifferent to national sovereignty.

While attention has properly been focused on the virus, the world has also witnessed ever more extreme weather phenomena, from wildfires in Australia and California to the costliest storm on record in the Bay of Bengal, which forced two million people to evacuate their homes.

As we move from Paris to 2030, global leaders, businesses, and citizens alike should expect to be judged by the actions that are (or are not) taken today. Neither our descendants nor the planet will tolerate more selfish short-termism.

The writer, a former President of Ireland and the UN high commissioner for human rights, is Chair of The Elders.

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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Ego war at the cost of governance

Sir, Generally, the common people or the Opposition go on 'fast' or 'dharna' protesting against the ineffective ways of a government. However, the people of Puducherry are eyewitness to a strange spectacle. Social welfare minister M Kandasamy is on a dharna seeking audience with Lieutenant Governor (LG) Kiran Bedi. Chief Minister V Narayanasamy joined him for a few hours. Ever since the former police officer came to Puducherry as governor in 2016, tussle between the state and the governor has done no good to the administration. The ego war between Narayanasamy and Bedi has no precedence in the Union Territory. The two have clashed on major as well as trivial issues. Narayanasamy would have been a much relieved man if the Centre had recalled Bedi. Bedi has had a brush with controversy quite often. The 'obstructionist' in Bedi is an extension of her police career and the AAP stint. The LG should know she merely 'shares' power with the CM and his Cabinet; she is not the 'power'. The LG is a nominal head and the CM is the 'real head'. Bedi has tried to usurp upon the domain of the government by picking holes in the government's ambitious scheme. Grants-in-aid are delayed by Bedi's inquisitive nature. As a consequence, according to Kandasamy, salaries and appointments are held-up much to the dismay of the workers. Interestingly, a few months ago, Kandasamy had advised the CM and the Governor to bury the hatchet for the sake of governance in the Union Territory. The Centre's clever ignorance to the happenings in the Union Territory under a Congress-led Secular Democratic Alliance (SDA) government cannot be coincidental. Narayanasamy would have been a much relieved man if the Centre had recalled Bedi. Armed with the Centre's support, Bedi is unlikely to blink first. The Narayanasamy government, however, can take solace in the fact that its 'tormentor' has only four months left in office before her term ends.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Shot in arm

Sir, India kept its trust with immunity, with over two lakh health workers getting inoculated on day one. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the countrywide COVID-19 vaccination drive through video-conferencing. Manish, a sanitation worker, earned the distinction of becoming the first recipient of the Covid vaccine in the country, at AIIMS in New Delhi. Touted as the world's most extensive vaccination drive, an estimated 300 million people in the country will line up for a shot in the arm.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

# Connectivity to Statue of Unity boosted Rivers remain highly polluted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Jan 17:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday flagged off eight trains connecting Gujarat's Kevadia, where the Statue of Unity of Sardar Patel is located, to different regions of the country. Modi said more tourists flock to the Statue of Unity than the Statue of Liberty in the US, adding nearly 50 lakh tourists have visited the former since it opened in 2018.

He referred to the Dedicated Freight Corridor project as "an example of the way things functioned in our country in the past."

"A few days ago, I inaugurated a large section (of the Dedicated Freight Corridor). On this very important project, in eight years work was done only on paper. From 2006 till 2014, not even one km track was laid. Now, in the next few months, 1,100-km work will be completed," he said.

Modi also inaugurated three railway stations and a broad gauge line connecting Dabhoi to Kevadia, via video link on Sunday.

The prime minister said this is possibly the first time that so many trains were flagged off at the same time for one destination.

With increased connectivity, over one lakh people will visit Kevadia daily in the near future, he said citing a survey.

The amount of work done to modernise the country's railway infrastructure in recent years is unprecedented, Modi said.

Unlike in the past when less focus was given to new ways of thinking and technology, wide changes



have been made in the railway system on many fronts, with the government's focus on self-reliance in railway manufacturing and technology being a big reason behind the change, he said.

Besides tourists visiting the Statue of Unity, the local populace will be the biggest beneficiary of the new rail connectivity, he said.

"Today, Kevadia is no longer a small place in a remote area of Gujarat. It is emerging as the world's biggest tourist destination," he said. Despite everything remaining closed for months during coronavirus pandemic, the number of tourists visiting Kevadia is increasing fast, he added.

He said the new Kevadia railway station is an example of his gov-

## BENEFITING LOCAL POPULACE

**P**M Modi inaugurated three railway stations and a broad gauge line connecting Dabhoi to Kevadia, via video link

**B**esides tourists visiting the Statue of Unity, the local populace will be the biggest beneficiary of the new rail connectivity

ernment's efforts to ensure that the Railways remain environment-friendly. "Kevadia station is the country's first to get green building certification from the beginning,"

he said. The Ahmedabad-Kevadia Jan Shatabdi Express, one of the eight trains, is equipped with the Vistadome coaches which offers large viewing areas with rooftop glasses and seats for passengers.

Modi said the Vistadome coaches on trains to Kevadia will make the travel attractive.

The amount of work done to modernise the country's railway infrastructure in the recent years is unprecedented, he said.

Unlike in the past when less focus was given to new thinking and new technology, the approach has changed to make wide changes in the railway system, and changes have taken place at once on many fronts, he said.

AGENCIES

**Gandhinagar, January 17:** The unchecked flow of untreated industrial effluent into rivers in Gujarat has led to increasing pollution in the Sabarmati, Mahisagar, Narmada, Vishwamitri and Bhadar. According to data from the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), the Sabarmati is among the most polluted rivers in the country.



## MAJOR CONCERN

**G**ujarat ranks fourth among the top five States with highly polluted rivers, with as many as 20 rivers in the critically polluted category

**R**ecently, a thick froth on the Mahisagar, along a stretch of several kilometres, prompted the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) to constitute a high-level committee to study the issue

**A**s per the official parameters, if the chemical oxygen demand (COD), which indicates organic pollutant load, is higher than 250 mg per litre, then it should not be released into the rivers

Gujarat ranks fourth among the top five States with highly polluted rivers, with as many as 20 rivers in the critically polluted category. Recently, a thick froth on the Mahisagar, along a stretch of several kilometres, raised serious concern, prompting the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB)

to constitute a high-level committee to study the rising level of pollution in the river.

"Pollution in rivers has emerged as a major threat in the last few years because the lackadaisical approach of the authorities has emboldened the industries to discharge untreated effluents into flowing rivers," said Vadodara-based environmental activist Rohit Prajapati.

He said that both treated and untreated effluent is released into the estuary of the Mahisagar and Gulf of Cambay, flouting the guidelines of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

As per the official parameters, if the chemical oxygen demand (COD), which indicates organic pollutant load, is higher than 250 mg per litre, then it should not be released into the rivers.

"Most of the Gujarat rivers where the effluents are dumped into, the

COD level is in the range of 700 to 1000 mg per litre. While Dissolved Oxygen (DO) level [indicating the health of a river] in perennial rivers like Mahisagar should be in the range of 6 to 8 mg per litre, it is actually below 2.9 mg per litre," he added.

In December 2020, Mr. Prajapati and a few others wrote a letter to the State authorities providing evidence, including videos and photographs, of how toxic effluents were being dumped into the Mahisagar and other rivers by industries.

"The Vadodara Enviro Channel Ltd, which runs a 55-km-long pipeline to discharge treated effluents into the deep sea, releases the effluents into the river. The effluents are not getting discharged into the deep sea as required," a former official of the Gujarat Pollution Control Board told The Hindu.

# MGR remembered on birth anniversary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 17:** Rich tributes were paid to Ruling AIADMK founder and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M G Ramachandran as he was remembered on his 104th birth anniversary on Sunday by leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Bharat Ratna MGR lives in the hearts of several people. Be it the world of films or politics, he was widely respected," Modi tweeted.

"During his CM tenures, he initiated numerous efforts towards poverty alleviation and also emphasised on women empowerment. Tributes to MGR on his Jayanti," the prime minister said.

Leading the birth anniversary celebrations in the state, Chief Minister K Palaniswami said the late leader slogged for the welfare of the people and devised many schemes for the benefit of poor and ordinary people.

Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, showering encomiums on MGR, said the former Chief Minister lived in the hearts of the people.

Panneerselvam and Palaniswami, coordinator and co-coordinator of AIADMK respectively visited the party headquarters here and garlanded the statue of MGR and hoisted the party flag. The two top party leaders distrib-



uted sweets to the cadres on the occasion. AIADMK functionaries organised functions in several places of the state and paid floral tributes to the late leader.

Welfare assistance was distributed and mass feeding programmes were organised by partymen across the state.

In New Delhi, AIADMK Rajya Sabha member A Vijayakumar garlanded the statue of MGR in the Parliament premises, a party release said.

Makkal Needhi Maiam chief Kamal Haasan, who latched on to the late leader's welfare legacy in his ongoing poll propaganda and Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam general secretary TTV Dhinakaran among the others paid floral tributes to a statue of the leader here.

# COURTS MUST BE OPEN TO SCRUTINY, SAYS SALVE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Jan 17:** Senior Supreme Court lawyer Harish Salve has said courts must be open to public scrutiny and criticism as "institutions of governance".

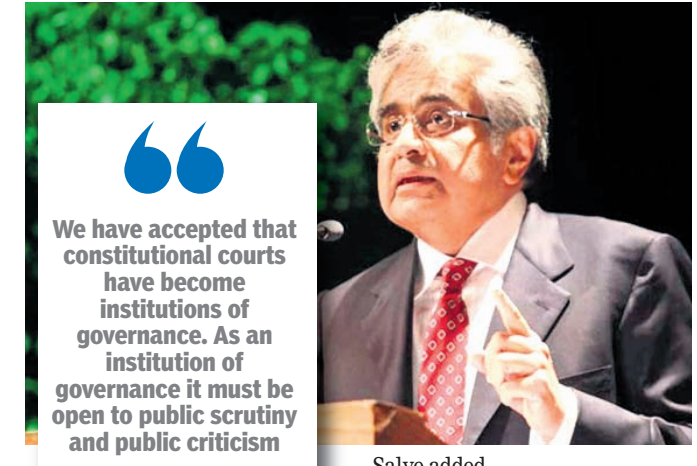
Addressing a lecture organised in Ahmedabad through video-conference on Saturday, Salve said criticism of judges, judicial overreach and the manner of functioning is not scandalising courts, and the language in which such criticism is addressed should be treated with a grin.

"We today have accepted that judges, or rather courts, and especially constitutional courts, have become institutions of governance. As an institution of governance it must be open to public scrutiny and public criticism," he said.

"We have always accepted that the decisions of courts can be criticised, including in language which may be impolite. So the decisions should be criticised. Can we criticise the decision-making process? Why not?" Salve said.

He was addressing the 16th Justice P D Desai Memorial Lecture on 'Criticism of judiciary, contempt jurisdiction and its use in the age of social media'.

"Governance has to be under the sharp blaze of sunlight...In fact, I



think a time may come when the Supreme Court may seriously consider a very large number of provisions of the Official Secrets Act, how far do they square with democracy," he said.

Most of them have fallen into disuse, said Salve, who was last year appointed the Queen's Counsel for the courts of England and Wales.

"To say an institution has lost its independence, to say that an institution is acting at the behest of someone, to allege corruption—that, if it is established to be untrue, is clearly undermining public faith,

Salve added. "This residue of power to deal with those who are capable of influencing public opinion...You may be in public life, influencer.

"Those are cases where courts must retain with itself this slender jurisdiction of addressing any rupture in public faith which may be caused," he said.

Salve further said "if we do need the principles of contempt, where do we draw the lines?"

The lines must be drawn in a way that the overall system of governance—the institutions and the criticism of the institutions—helps everybody march forward in this march of democracy.

# 'DEMOGRAPHY NEEDS TO BE LEVERAGED'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 17:** India's biggest strength is its 'demographic dividend' and people need to fully leverage it to fast-track the country's progress in various sectors, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu said here Sunday.

Naidu also called upon the youth of the country to be at the forefront in accelerating progress and scripting the country's growth story.

"One of our biggest strengths today is our demographic dividend. We need to fully leverage this to fast-track progress in different sectors - from agriculture to manufacturing and ensuring a sustained growth rate in coming years", he said, after releasing a biography on the former President A P J Abdul Kalam at the Raj Bhavan.

The book -- 'Abdul Kalam-Ninaivugalukku Maranamilla' (immortal memories) - has been penned by A P J M Nazama Maraikayar, the niece of the late President and by noted space scientist Y S Rajan.

"This is the time for the youth of the country to be at the forefront in accelerating the progress and scripting growth story", Naidu said.

Paying rich encomiums to Kalam, who was known as 'people's president', Naidu urged the youth to take a leaf out of the book and believe in themselves. They must as-



pire to become job creators rather than job seekers, he said.

Stating that Kalam would be remembered for his 'indomitable spirit' and "never-say-die attitude", Naidu said the former president pursued and persisted with discipline, hard work and confidence.

"Along with the development of India's indigenous satellite launch vehicles, he (Kalam) is also credited with the development of India's integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP)", the VP said.

Kalam can be credited with laying the strong foundation of 'AtmaNirbharta' in space and defence sectors on which scientists and engineers were building today, Naidu said. "The legacy of self-belief that Kalam left motivated us to develop our own vaccine today.

I must compliment the government and scientists for their untiring efforts in bringing out the vaccine for COVID-19. My hearty congratulations for the historic vaccination drive that kicked off yesterday", he said.

# Microfinance lending takes a plunge in Guj

AGENCIES

**Ahmedabad, Jan 17:** Because of the Covid pandemic and shrinking incomes of factory workers and workers in the informal sector, microfinance lending has taken a massive hit. Disbursals in the microfinance portfolio shrank by 84% in the September quarter in Gujarat, according to the latest quarterly report on microfinance lending by CRIF, a credit bureau.

The report states that Rs 785 crore was disbursed in the second quarter of 2020-21, against Rs 1,583 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2019-20.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced the launch of Rs 1,000-crore 'Startup India Seed Fund' to support startups and help budding entrepreneurs pursue innovative ideas. Addressing the 'Prarambh: Startup India International Summit', Modi exuded confidence that the growth of startups will help in generating jobs and improving lives of people



in the region.

The major set of borrowers in the microfinance sector are factory workers, farm labourers and people working in the informal sector including domestic workers, vegetable vendors, micro-enterprise owners, among others, according to lenders in the sector.

"Due to the lockdown, most people's jobs were affected and their very survival was at stake because more than 50% of businesses were shut, drying up their sources of income. As they struggled to make ends meet, loan repayments suffered, in turn affecting credit," said Mahesh Thakkar, director general, Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC).

# Kolam drawings mark Biden-Harris inauguration

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Jan 17:** Kolam, a traditional Indian art form of drawing geometric patterns on the floors as a sign of welcome, was part of the virtual kick-off ceremony of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and his deputy Kamala Harris, who traces her origin to Tamil Nadu where these auspicious designs adorn almost every household.

In Tamil Nadu, where Harris has roots, women draw Kolams on the ground to invite health and prosperity into houses where they are displayed.

Pictures of thousands of Kolam tiles were on Saturday woven into a video to welcome Biden and Harris in the spirit of 'Presidency for All' and to showcase the multi-cultural heritage of America.

More than 1,800 individuals from across the US and many from India participated in the online initiative to create thousands of Kolam designs to celebrate the historic event.

"Many believe Kolams symbolise positive energy and new beginnings. People of all ages from various communities collaborated from their homes to create tiles with eco-friendly materials. What started out as a local project spread way beyond our expecta-

## 'PRESIDENCY FOR ALL'

**P**ictures of thousands of Kolam tiles were woven into a video to welcome Biden and Harris in the spirit of 'Presidency for All' and to showcase the multi-cultural heritage of America

**M**ore than 1,800 individuals from across the US and many from India participated in the online initiative to create thousands of Kolam designs to celebrate the historic event

tions," said Shanathi Chandrasekar, an award-winning multimedia and multidisciplinary artist from Maryland who took the initiative along with several others.

The initial idea was to have these Kolam patterns from across the country in front of the White House as a symbol of good beginning to the new administration.

The Washington DC police gave permission to the organisers to have it near the Capitol Hill around the inauguration venue. However, due to the unprecedented security measures that have been enforced in Washington DC,

the permission was cancelled.

Pictures of thousands of Kolam tiles were on Saturday woven into a video to welcome Biden and Harris in the spirit of 'Presidency for All' and to showcase the multi-cultural heritage of America.

A date for the installation after the inauguration will be set up after a go-ahead from the local security, said Sowmya Somnath who is part of the Inauguration Kolam 2021 organising team in her volunteer capacity.

Washington DC Public Schools arts director Mary Lambert and visual arts manager Lindsey Vance joined Chandrasekar to combine thousands of Kolam drawings made by people from many different backgrounds to welcome Biden when he takes office in a few days.

Hundreds of artists, citizens and students from across the country collaborated online to combine thousands of local pieces.

"This is what we wanted when we planned to have thousands of Kolam tiles in front of the White House," said Somnath.

Lambert said the District of Columbia Public School arts curriculum focuses on equity and believes cultural representation is an important part of that effort.



# national



Now the government sends notices to farmers of the country from such agencies probing terrorists. What is the intention of the (Narendra) Modi government, after it dubbed farmers as terrorists, Naxals and agents of China and Pakistan? What are you trying to probe Modiji?  
RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONGRESS' CHIEF SPOKESPERSON

## COLD WAVE CONDITIONS PERSIST IN NORTH INDIA

Parts of north India remained under the grip of an intense cold wave on Sunday with night temperatures dropping below the 5 degrees Celsius-mark at some places and dense fog enveloping several areas



### of the day quote

Some people decided not to turn up at the last moment. The vaccination programme is completely voluntary. We cannot ask anyone to compulsorily take the shot even if the person has registered for it  
SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

Amit Shah is the only leader who has grown in stature of Sardar Patel. Like Patel, Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are ushering in revolution and taking the country to greater heights  
B.S. YEDIYURAPPA | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

Leave all work and first vote. The polling for Panchayati Raj Institutions has started in the state from today  
JAIRAM THAKUR | HIMACHAL PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

## Congress alleges govt procuring vax at inflated prices



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Congress Sunday questioned the procurement of Covid vaccines, alleging that the government has procured the vaccines at inflated prices despite the manufacturers claiming they would supply the vaccines without seeking profit.

Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, addressing a press conference, said, "Why should the Modi government pay Rs 95 per dose more to Bharat Biotech for a vaccine that has been developed with the expertise and experience of scientists of government-run ICMR and pay more for a vaccine that has only been tested on 755 individuals and is yet to be cleared after phase-3 trials?"

The Congress leader said the price of such a vaccine must be cheaper than AstraZeneca-Serum Institute of India's Covishield. "Why is the price of the vaccine at Rs 1,000 per dose in the open market?" he asked. Surjewala said, "Covishield is an AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured by Serum Institute of India.

Serum Institute is supplying this vaccine at Rs 200/dose to government. AstraZeneca has committed to supplying the vaccine at no profit while 'Covaxin', manufactured by Bharat Biotech, is being supplied at Rs 285/dose. Admittedly, Covaxin has been developed by Bharat Biotech in partnership with Indian Council

of Medical Research (ICMR)."

SII CEO Adar Poonawalla had said stated that his company will sell Covishield for Rs 1,000 per dose in open market, that is Rs 2,000 for 2 doses required for every individual. Surjewala said, "Why should export of vaccine be permitted without immunisation of India's population? 'Corona Vaccine For All' should be the stated policy of Modi government."

"However, the government's approach on free vaccination or cost of vaccination, cost to exchequer, profit margins of companies, etc, for India's 130 crore people is completely opaque and shrouded in secrecy," he said.

The first COVID-19 vaccine shots in India were given on Saturday to nearly two lakh frontline healthcare and sanitation workers as Prime Minister Narendra Modi rolled out the world's largest inoculation drive against the pandemic that has caused 1,52,093 deaths and upended millions of lives in the country. Modi asserted that the two vaccines being deployed will ensure a "decisive victory" for India against the coronavirus.

According to the government, the shots will be offered first to an estimated one crore healthcare workers, and around two crore frontline workers, and then to persons above 50 years of age, followed by persons younger than 50 years of age with associated comorbidities.

## CBI arrests railway officer in Rs 1 cr bribery case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: The CBI has nabbed a senior railway engineering service officer of 1985 batch along with two others in an alleged bribery case of Rs 1 crore, officials said Sunday.

A CBI officer said, "The arrested railway officer has been identified as Mahendra Singh Chauhan and the amount has also been recovered."

The official said that the CBI busted a racket on the allegations that some senior public functionaries of North Eastern Frontier Railways were involved in corrupt practices with private contractors for the on-going projects in the North Eastern Frontier Railways.

He said that the contractors were allegedly being facilitated in awarding the contracts processing of subsequent bills and release of payments by the public functionaries in lieu of illegal gratifications.

## Interfaith marriage triggers row in Raj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bikaner, Jan 17: An interfaith marriage here has led the Hindu woman's family to allege the alliance to be a case of "love jihad", prompting a Union minister to demand a law in Rajasthan against the alleged practice of marriage for religious conversion.

Union Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Chaudhary demanded the law in the state despite the girl in a video statement on social media and to the police asserting that she married on her own accord and police too rejecting the allegation. The controversy erupted after Bikaner resident Manisha Dudi, 18, married 22-year-old Mukhtiyar Khan last month after a brief love affair; prompting the woman's family to issue a statement on social media, terming the alliance to be a case of "love jihad".

While the woman's father, in his video statement, sought the community's help in the matter, her grandfather threatened that he would commit suicide with the entire family members if no justice is done to them.



The video statement by her family led the woman to issue a statement, asserting that she married the man on her own will on December 10 last year and instead of her converting to the Islam, the man himself has converted to Hinduism.

She also reached the Naya Sahar police station on Saturday to give her statement to the police and sought protection from it.

The Bikaner police said it was not a case of "love Jihad" and both the youths have married as per their own free will. "The rumours are baseless and the district police appeals to ignore such rumours," Bikaner police tweeted along with the video message of

the girl. On the other hand, MoS for agriculture Kailash Chaudhary, who is a member of Lok Sabha from Rajasthan, said the matter of "love jihad" should be investigated properly. "Such incidents are not good for social harmony. A law against love jihad should be enacted on the lines of Uttar Pradesh. The Bharatiya Janata Party stands with Bikaner's family and assures them that the BJP will enact a strong law in Rajasthan to prevent such incidents on coming to power in state in future," he tweeted.

The BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have brought in the stringent anti-conversion laws to tackle the alleged problem of "love jihad".

### SHORT TAKES

#### MP hooch tragedy: Main accused held

Bhopal/Morena (MP): The main accused in the January 11 Morena hooch tragedy in Madhya Pradesh which killed 24 people was arrested from Chennai Sunday, officials said. The home of main accused Mukesh Kiran in Chherra village was also demolished as part of the action following the tragedy, they added. Additional Chief Secretary Rajesh Rajora said Kiran was held from Chennai, while Jaura Sub Divisional Magistrate Neeraj Sharma confirmed that the accused's home had been brought down.

#### ED arrests two Chinese nationals

New Delhi: The ED has arrested two Chinese nationals in connection with its money laundering probe linked to an alleged hawala racket worth an estimated Rs 1,000 crore that involved shell or dubious firms, official sources said Sunday. The central probe agency arrested Charlie Peng alias Luo Sang (42) and Carter Lee under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) January 15. They were produced before a local court here Saturday that sent them to 14 days custody, they said.

#### 3 kids charred to death

Itanagar: Three minor siblings, who were at their relative's place, were charred to death when a massive fire broke out at the residence in Kamle district of Arunachal Pradesh, an official said Sunday. The deceased have been identified as Kabak Yani (10), Kabak Nanu (7) and Kabak Chaku (5), Deputy Commissioner Hengo Basar said. As their parents were away Saturday, the trio were putting up at a relative's place, he said, adding that the fire, which broke out around 11 pm, quickly spread to nearby homes, damaging property of neighbours.

#### 5-yr-old raped

Banda (Uttar Pradesh): A five-year-old girl was allegedly raped in a village in Banda district, and the police said the accused has been arrested. Circle officer (CO) Nareni, Siyaram said the 23-year-old accused had lured the minor to a secluded spot by offering her Rs 10. He allegedly raped the girl there. The incident took place Friday night.

## Plea in HC against LVB-DBS merger

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: A plea in the Delhi High Court has challenged the scheme of amalgamation of Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) with Development Bank of Singapore (DBS), contending that its shareholders have been "left in the lurch" and the Centre and the Reserve Bank have failed to protect their interests.

The petition was listed before a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh on January 13, but was adjourned to February 19 after the bench was told that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has moved a plea in the Supreme Court to transfer all pleas against the amalgamation scheme to the Bombay High Court. The petition in the Delhi High Court has been filed by lawyer Sudhir Kathpalia, who was also a shareholder in Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) and lost his 20,000 shares in the company due to the amalgamation scheme.

Kathpalia has sought quashing of the clause in the scheme which



states that from the date of merger, "the entire amount of the paid-up share capital and reserves and surplus, including the balances in the share/securities premium account of the transferor bank, shall stand written off". The petition has said that under the scheme, DBS was not required to give any shares to the LVB investors in return and they were "left in the lurch".

The amalgamation scheme was approved by the RBI on November

25, 2020 and the merger took place on November 27, 2020. The petition has contended that the Centre and RBI have failed to protect the interests of the shareholders.

It has also claimed that DBS was chosen for the merger without inviting bids from other banks and financial institutions. It has alleged that the "scheme of amalgamation was irregular, arbitrary, irrational, unreasonable, illegal and thus, void".

## Sanskrit emerges as 5th most widely used language in RS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: The use of regional languages during Rajya Sabha proceedings has increased more than five times and parliamentarians spoke in 10 of the 22 scheduled languages for the first time during 2018-20 with Sanskrit emerging as the fifth most widely used Indian language in the Upper House.

With 12 interventions in Sanskrit, all during 2019-20, it has emerged as the fifth most widely used language in the Rajya Sabha among the 22 scheduled languages after Hindi, Telugu, Urdu and Tamil.

Four of the 22 scheduled languages such as Dogri, Kashmiri, Konkani and Santhali were used for the first time in the Upper House since 1952, further to the introduction of Simultaneous Interpretation

Service in these four languages and Sindhi language at the behest of Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu in 2018.

Besides, six languages like Assamese, Bodo, Gujarati, Maithili, Manipuri and Nepali have been used after a long gap, a Rajya Sabha document reveals.

While Hindi and English are the widely used languages during the proceedings of the House, the use of 21 other scheduled Indian languages (other than Hindi) has increased more than five times (512 per cent) per sitting in 2020 over that of the 14-year period between 2004-17.

Rajya Sabha members spoke in 10 scheduled languages (other than Hindi) in the House on 269 occasions during 923 sittings between 2004 and 2017 at the rate of 0.291 per sitting.

## 103-yr-old casts vote in Himachal panchayat polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Jan 17: Despite his failing vision and aching knees, India's first voter Shyam Saran Negi reached his polling booth in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur on Sunday.

Negi, who is 103-year-old, cast his vote at the Kalpa polling booth, where he was given a warm welcome by laying a red carpet by the district administration. Kalpa went to polls in the first round of the three-phase panchayati elections in Himachal Pradesh Sunday.



Deputy Commissioner Hemraj Bairwa honoured Negi with a Kinnauri 'topi' and shawl. The DC said young voters should get inspiration from Negi, who turned up to cast his vote despite bad health. In his message to people, Negi said voters should participate in the election process to elect good and capable candidates.

Negi, who had made a special appearance in a Hindi film, "Sanam Re", said he never missed casting his vote, be it panchayat, assembly or the Lok Sabha polls. He appealed to people to elect honest candidates for their panchayats in the state.

Believed to be the first voter in the 1952 General Election, Negi was born July 1, 1917 and retired as a schoolteacher, as per official records. Remembering how he became the country's first voter, Negi had earlier said the India's first General Election was held in February 1952 but in tribal areas of the state, the voting took place five months in advance October 23, 1951 due to fears of inclement weather rendering the exercise impossible during winter.

## WHATSAPP, TELEGRAM OR SIGNAL?

# WELCOME TO THE ILLUSION CALLED DATA SECURITY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: As millions shun WhatsApp and download new chat platforms in search for a secure experience, mind you that security is nothing but an illusion and there is no guarantee that Telegram or Signal may not be hacked in the future, especially when nation-state actors with highly sophisticated tools and huge resources are on the prowl.

Encryption is fundamentally flawed and once hackers get to know any vulnerability or bug in the whole data travel journey - apps, mobile operating system, public Wi-Fi, Cloud and the physical data cen-

tres - your personal and sensitive information is always at their mercy

The Telegram development team is based in Dubai. The Telegram team had to leave Russia due to local IT regulations and has tried a number of locations as its base, including Berlin, London and Singapore. It does not store data within the boundaries of India.

Signal does not own its own data centres. The company is entirely Cloud based, which puts data at risk as cyber-attacks on Cloud-based services have increased in the recent past. In case the data is compromised, India which does not have a dedicated law on privacy or cyber security, will not be able to do much,



unlike Europe which has a strong General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that treats the safety of its users' data diligently and seriously.

According to Pavan Duggal, one of the nation's top cyber law experts and a seasoned Supreme Court

lawyer, if you are looking at complete and absolute security, you have to realise that security is a relative term.

"What was secure yesterday is not secure today and what is secure today will not be secure to-

morrow. Blindly relying upon these platforms would not suffice. There is a need for people to incorporate cyber security as a way of life," Duggal told IANS.

Be it Pegasus software attack on WhatsApp or the great Twitter crypto hacking last year that compromised accounts of celebrities like US President-elect Joe Biden, former US President Barack Obama, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos (you name it), people are always facing the risk of losing their data. The latest is the SolarWinds attack that has rocked the US agencies and several tech giants. It is not that the bad actors di-

rectly compromised their networks; they used a third-party software called Orion sold by IT management company SolarWinds to infiltrate the systems even of the US Department of Justice (DoJ).

The suspected Russian hackers installed a malware in the Orion software and accessed sensitive data belonging to at least 250 US government agencies and businesses. Around 18,000 private companies and government agencies downloaded the infected Orion software.

At least 24 big companies, including tech giants like Intel, Cisco, VMware Nvidia and even a cyber security firm FireEye, have suffered the 'SolarWinds' hack.



# national



There has been no case of adverse reaction or side-effects of COVID-19 vaccine in Maharashtra so far  
RAJESH TOPE | MAHARASHTRA HEALTH MINISTER

## ROAD SAFETY MONTH TO BE INAUGURATED TODAY

National Road Safety Month is all set to be inaugurated Monday to create awareness about road safety and reduce road accidents in India



### of the day quote

Bringing Karnataka-occupied Marathi-speaking and cultural areas in Maharashtra will be the true tribute to those who accepted martyrdom in the boundary battle. We are united and committed towards it. Respects to the martyrs with this promise

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

Doubling farmers' income is the biggest priority of the Narendra Modi government and that the three central farm laws would ensure manifold hike in their earnings

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

It would have been better had Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented an example like that of Joe Biden, the president-elect of the US, by getting himself vaccinated. By taking the COVID-19 vaccine shot, he would have injected confidence among people of the country. People are still feeling hesitant in getting themselves vaccinated

PRADEEP MATHUR | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

## Farmers to carry out tractor rally on R-Day

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 17: Farmer unions protesting against the Centre's agri laws said Sunday that they will go ahead with their proposed tractor parade in Delhi on Republic Day.

Addressing a press conference at the Singhu border protest site, union leader Yogendra Yadav said, "We will carry out a tractor parade on the Outer Ring Road in Delhi on Republic Day. The parade will be very peaceful. There will be no disruption of the Republic Day parade. The farmers will put up the national flag on their tractors." The authorities had moved the Supreme Court seeking an injunction against the proposed tractor march or any other kind of protest by farmers which seeks to disrupt the gathering and celebrations of Republic Day January 26. The matter is pending in court.

Another farmer union leader, Darshan Pal Singh, alleged that the National Investigation Agency (NIA) is filing cases against those who are part of the protest or supporting it.

"All farmer unions condemn this," Pal said, referring to the NIA summons reportedly issued to a farmer union leader in a case related to the banned Sikhs For Justice outfit.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been protesting at various border points of Delhi for over a month now demanding repeal of the three laws - the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act.

Enacted in September 2020, the central government has presented these laws as major farm reforms



### 'Ready for any alternative to law repeal demand'

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Sunday again appealed to the farmers unions to suggest ways to resolve the deadlock over the agrarian reforms implemented by the Modi government. Prior to the next round of talks scheduled on January 19 with the farmer unions leading the protests against the farm laws passed by parliament last year, he said that if the farmer unions could suggest any alternative solution, apart from the repeal of the three Central farm laws, the government would certainly consider it.

aimed at increasing farmers' income, but the protesting farmers have raised concerns that these legislations would weaken the minimum support price (MSP) and "mandi" (wholesale market) systems and leave them at the mercy of big corporations.

The government has maintained that these apprehensions are misplaced and has ruled out a repeal of the laws.

## Nitish woos NRIs to invest in Bihar

The Bihar government is also working on the tourism sector to attract domestic and foreign tourists

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Jan 17: In a bid to attract Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) of Bihar origin, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar held talks through video conference with members of the Bihar-Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA).

Nitish invited BJANA members on Saturday evening to visit Bihar and see for themselves what he said was the development undertaken in the state in the last 15 years.

He also promised all possible help on land acquisition and other necessary infrastructure development required for setting up new industrial units in Bihar.

The Chief minister said Bihar had come a long way in infrastructure development in the last 15 years with road connectivity to every village and towns with major



cities. "We have achieved the target to reach from any remote place to Patna in six hours and are now working to reduce the time to just five hours. The conversion of two-laned roads into four-laned and four-laned to six-laned ones are underway at many places. Besides, so many new bridges and roads have either been completed or 80 to 90 per cent complete," said Nitish

Kumar. "We had targeted to give electricity to every household in villages under the 'Saat Nischay Part-1' and we achieved it in October 2018. Now, we are facilitating more than 20-hour power supply to them," he said in a statement.

"The Bihar government has also achieved 90 per cent target of supplying drinking water under the 'Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal' programme

as well as 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' initiative and both these programmes will be completed under the 'Saat Nischay Part-2'," the Chief Minister said. "We have constructed many eco parks in Patna, Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir, Bhagalpur etc. We inaugurated the 'Venu Van' at Rajgir a few days ago and nature safari, zoo and 'glass walkway' will come up in the next few weeks at Rajgir. Bagaha is another wildlife adventure spot in north Bihar adjoining the Nepal border," Nitish Kumar said.

BJANA President Avinash Gupta said he hoped to become a part of the development of Bihar in the coming months. BJANA members Ajay Jha, Sanjay Rai, Ashok Ramsharan, Ajay Singh and Consul General of India in New York, Randhir Jaiswal, were present on the occasion.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Six killed in Raj bus mishap

**Jaipur:** Six passengers were burnt alive and more than 30 others injured when a bus caught fire after coming in contact with a live electricity wire in Rajasthan's Jalore district, police said. The incident occurred in Maheshpura village Saturday night when the bus driver lost his way and entered into a rural area where the vehicle came in contact with a hanging wire and caught fire, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Himmat Singh, said.

#### I&B Ministry notice to Amazon Prime

**New Delhi:** The Information and Broadcasting Ministry has issued notice to Amazon Prime, seeking its response to the complaints against its web series 'Tandav' starring Saif Ali Khan. Ministry sources that notice has been issued to the platform as it had released the series, and came as the ministry took serious notice of complaints against 'Tandav'.

#### 13-yr-old gang raped, 7 held

**Umaria:** A 13-year-old girl has been allegedly raped by nine men on separate occasions after being abducted twice in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria city earlier this month, a police official said Sunday. The girl's mother lodged a police complaint January 14 following which seven of the accused were arrested Friday.

#### Curfew in parts of Bhopal

**Bhopal:** The Bhopal district administration Sunday imposed curfew in three police station limits and prohibitory orders in some other areas as a precautionary measure over a construction work by a community in the old city area. The order, issued by Bhopal District Magistrate Avinash Lavania, said a community is carrying out construction in the old city and there is a possibility of opposition by locals.

#### Burning train

**Thiruvananthapuram:** A fire broke out in a luggage van of a running train in Kerala Sunday and was doused in time before it could spread to adjacent passenger coach, averting a possible major mishap, railway source said.

## SENA, CONG CLASH OVER AURANGABAD RENAMING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 17:** The Shiv Sena and the Congress, which are ruling allies in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, Sunday sparred over renaming Aurangabad city, with the Uddhav Thackeray-led party saying it is not "secular" behaviour if one finds "cruel and religiously blind" Mughal emperor Aurangzeb "dear".

Hitting back, the Congress accused the Sena and the opposition BJP of playing politics over renaming and asked them why they did not remember the issue while they were in power in Maharashtra for the past five years. Maharashtra Congress president Balasaheb Thorat, however, maintained that the MVA government of the Sena, NCP and Congress in the state is stable.

Thorat, who holds Revenue portfolio, also said the government works as per the common minimum programme (CMP) and there is no scope for the "politics of sentiment". Erstwhile allies, the Sena and the BJP, have been pitching for renaming Aurangabad as 'Sambhajnagar' after Chhatrapati

ERSTWHILE ALLIES, THE SENNA AND THE CONGRESS, HAVE BEEN PITCHING FOR RENAMING AURANGABAD AS 'SAMBHAJINAGAR' AFTER CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJI MAHARAJ, SON OF CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ

Sambhaji Maharaj, son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Writing for Rokhthok, the weekly column in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana', party MP Sanjay Raut said, "secular parties like the Congress are of the view that Aurangabad should not be renamed as Sambhajnagar". He said these parties feel that minority communities like Muslims will not be happy if Aurangabad is renamed and it will affect their vote banks, which will raise questions over their "secular image".

Without naming any party Thorat further said those who play politics using names of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj need not teach him or his party about the duo. "We are Marathi people and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj are our deities. We will not seek votes using our role models and we will strongly oppose if anyone does so," he added.

Notwithstanding the differences in views between the two MVA allies on the issue, the revenue minister said that the state government is stable and strong.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Jan 17:** Richa Dubey, wife of slain gangster Vikas Dubey, has sent a legal notice to the author of a book and the makers of a film on her husband's life.

Richa has sought a ban on any material based on her husband's life and the Bikru massacre in which eight policemen were allegedly killed July 3 last year by Vikas and his men. Richa has sent the notice through her lawyers and has said that if she did not receive a satisfactory reply within seven days, she would file a petition in the high court.

Richa's lawyers have also sought the intervention of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the matter.

Her lawyers said that the book and the film being made on the Bikru incident, sought to malign the image of her family. The lawyers, Prabha Shankar Mishra and Rishabh Raj, told reporters

## No 'drama' on Vikas Dubey

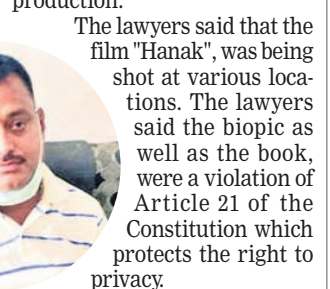
VIKAS WAS KILLED IN AN ENCOUNTER JULY 10 AFTER HIS ARREST FROM MADHYA PRADESH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

that a book with the title "Main Kanpur Wala" was being written by one Mridul Kapil and a film based on this book, was under production.

The lawyers said that the film "Hanak", was being shot at various locations. The lawyers said the biopic as well as the book, were a violation of Article 21 of the Constitution which protects the right to privacy.

Article 21 of the Indian constitution says that no person can be denied his right to life and personal freedom except through the process established by law. "No permission was sought from Richa Dubey and other family members before writing the book or making the film. This is an infringement of one's right to privacy. The family came to know about this only when the trailer of the film was released. The film is being made by Mohan Nagar and is being shot in Madhya Pradesh," the lawyers said.



Richa Dubey, wife of slain gangster Vikas Dubey, has sent a legal notice to the author of a book and the makers of a film on her husband's life. Richa has sought a ban on any material based on her husband's life and the Bikru massacre in which eight policemen were allegedly killed July 3 last year by Vikas and his men. Richa has sent the notice through her lawyers and has said that if she did not receive a satisfactory reply within seven days, she would file a petition in the high court. Richa's lawyers have also sought the intervention of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the matter. Her lawyers said that the book and the film being made on the Bikru incident, sought to malign the image of her family. The lawyers, Prabha Shankar Mishra and Rishabh Raj, told reporters



### PM's close IAS officer quits

In a surprise development, Arvind Kumar Sharma, a top IAS officer belonging to Gujarat cadre has tendered his resignation from service. Sharma who was considered very close to the Prime Minister since his days in Gujarat as Chief Minister, served in the Prime Minister's Office since 2014. However, in a sudden development

Sharma was sent packing to the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) under Nitin Gadkari last year. Sharma's sudden removal from the PMO had taken the bureaucratic fraternity by complete surprise. Sharma is a 1988 batch of the IAS and has many years to go in service. The government promptly accepted his request to quit and a gazette notification was issued late night. Insiders in the bureaucracy say that Sharma had fallen out with the PMO for some unknown reason. Pandemic may

### Cabinet reshuffle buzz begins

With the BJP chief JP Nadda completing re-organisation of the party and sending several leaders packing, the stage is set for a Cabinet reshuffle. There are

enough vacancies with the lowest number of ministers - just 54 including the PM. As many as eight ministers holding charge of three to four ministries as Arvind Sawant (Shiv Sena) & Harsimrat Badal (Akal Dal) exiting and Ram Vilas Paswan (LJP) and Suresh Angadi (BJP) died due to pandemic. The Janata Dal (U) remains outside the Modi Cabinet so far. The size of the ministry could be 78 plus. Jyotiraditya Scindia's name figures on the top of the list of likely inductions, who gifted Madhya Pradesh in BJP's kitty single-handedly. All his MLAs have been accommodated in the Shivraj Singh government. It is now Scindia's turn to be gifted with a coveted post in the Modi Cabinet. There are indications that the BJP may induct a new Muslim face in the Council of Ministers to send a message as part of Modi's 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.'

### Priyanka trying to tame Pawar

There is an interesting tale as to why Maharashtra strongman Sharad Pawar suddenly developed national ambitions and jumped into Opposition unity fray without actually donning the mantle of the UPA chairman's post. It was Leader of the opposition Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad who called up Sharad Pawar pleading with him to come out of Maharashtra and play a role at the national level. After Azad a couple of other dissident Congress leaders also talked to Sharad Pawar. The moment Priyanka Gandhi got a whiff of such a political move, she immediately called up Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma and others. She invited them individually over a cup of tea at her Sujan Singh Park residence for a free & frank dialogue. These

leaders melted as Priyanka was very persuasive and made them agree for a meeting with Sonia Gandhi where all issues would be resolved. These leaders refused to meet Rahul Gandhi, sources say. Reason! No useful purpose will be served as he will continue to be on his own trip. But Priyanka assured them that his brother is only trying to strengthen the agenda and no agenda of holding any post. Another reason for Priyanka's worry was Congress dissidents. Rahul Gandhi had started ignoring the public. When Rahul Gandhi went to the residence of Ahmed Patel for the last "darshan" Anand Sharma and Bhupinder Singh Hooda neither wished Rahul Gandhi nor got up to show courtesy. Whether dissidents will listen to the Gandhis or Pawar will ever fulfill his national ambitions is another story. But the day was won by Priyanka Gandhi.

### Pandemic may over by June

Strange it may sound but true. The Modi government signed the vaccine purchase agreement with the two Covid vaccine manufacturers (Serum Institute, Pune & Bharat Biotech Ltd, Hyderabad) only at the eleventh hour. Many other nations including the WHO financed billions of dollars for vaccines. But Modi showed his true Gujarati skills and waited till the end when sellers were desperate as they had stock-piled. Modi could do this largely because the pandemic is receding in India and there is no clamour among the people to get vaccinated like in the West. Many in the PMO say that India will overcome the pandemic by May-June without vaccinating 80 crore people. He may, perhaps, get rid of his grown up beard then.



Distancing rules will be toughened, with people asked to stay 2 meters apart instead of 1 meter. They will also be told to wear full protective masks in public transport and shops

SEBASTIAN KURZ | CHANCELLOR, AUSTRIA

## CARGO SHIP SINKS IN BLACK SEA, 2 DEAD

A cargo ship sank off Turkey's Black Sea coast, leaving at least two people dead, an official said. The governor of Bartin province announced the shipwreck off Inkumu in northern Turkey.



## of the day quote

Drug Regulatory Authority Pakistan (DRAP) has granted approval for emergency use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine across the country



FAISSAL SULTAN | SPECIAL HEALTH ASSISTANT, PAKISTAN

The NHS vaccination programme, the biggest in NHS history, is off to a strong start with more than three million people receiving the life-saving jab, including more than a third of those aged 80 or over



RUTH MAY | CHIEF NURSING OFFICER, ENGLAND

If Biden wants to send some messages about reconciliation and bipartisan cooperation, working closely with Gen. Mark Milley wouldn't be a bad place to start



MICHAEL O'HANLON | DEFENSE ANALYST, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

# GUARD TROOPS POUR INTO DC UK invites PM for G7 summit

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 17: By the busload and planeload, National Guard troops were pouring into the US capital, as governors answered the urgent pleas of defense officials for more troops to help safeguard Washington even as they keep anxious eyes on possible violent protests in their own states.

Military leaders spent chunks of Thursday evening and Friday calling states in an unprecedented appeal for more National Guard troops to help lock down much of the city in the days before President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

In dribs and drabs, governors responded, some agreeing to send an extra dozen, 100 or even 1,000, while others said no.

The calls reflect fears that violent extremist groups are targeting the city in the wake of the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6. The threats range from armed insurgents to possible attempts to plant explosive devices at so-called soft targets.

But as Washington begins to resemble an armed camp, with more than 25,000 Guard due in the city by early next week, concerns about violence at state capitals has grown.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said she turned down the federal re-



## On Day 1, Biden will sign a dozen actions

On the first day of his presidency, Joe Biden would sign roughly a dozen actions on four overlapping and compounding crises that the US is facing -- the COVID-19 crisis, the resulting economic crisis, the climate crisis, and a racial equity crisis -- the incoming White House Chief of Staff said. All of these crises demand urgent action. In his first ten days in office, President-elect Biden will take decisive action to address these four crises, prevent other urgent and irreversible harms, and restore America's place in the world, he wrote in the memorandum dated January 16.

quest to send at least 100 more National Guard troops to D.C. "I didn't think that we could safely fill that commitment," Brown said.

Oregon has already agreed to send 30 to Washington, but state leaders are worried about violence at the state capitol in Salem.

Others agreed, setting off a dizzying torrent of military flights and convoys into the region.

"The peaceful transfer of power is a central tenet of American democracy, and Connecticut stands ready to aid in the protection of our country," said Connecticut Gov.

## Harris to be sworn in by Justice Sonia

Kamala Harris, who will script history as the first female, first Black and first South Asian US vice president Wednesday, will be sworn in by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Hispanic justice in the US Supreme Court. The 58-year-old vice president-elect was inspired by Justice Sotomayor's background, ABC News reported, ahead of the presidential inauguration event on January 20. They have both previously served as former prosecutors -- Harris in California, Sotomayor in New York. Sotomayor, 66, is third female justice in US Supreme Court history.

Ned Lamont, who had initially approved sending 100 Guard and on Friday agreed to send 200 more.

All told, more than 130 U.S. Air Guard flights in the past 72 hours have carried at least 7,000 Guard troops to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, according to U.S. Officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal numbers. Thousands more are in buses and military trucks, thundering up highways toward Washington.

AGENCIES

New Delhi/London, Jan 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited by his UK counterpart Boris Johnson to attend the G7 summit in the UK as a guest in June this year. The summit will be held in England's Cornwall region from June 11 to 13. Last year, US President Donald Trump had extended an invite to Prime Minister Modi for an expanded G7 meeting to discuss China.

On Sunday, an official statement issued by the British High Commission in New Delhi said that Prime Minister Johnson will use the G7 presidency to unite leading democracies to help the world build back better from coronavirus and create a greener, fairer and more prosperous future.

The G7 - UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US - along with the EU is the only forum where the world's most influential and open societies and advanced economies come together for close-knit discussions.

The UK has also invited heads of Australia and South Korea to attend as guest countries to deepen the expertise and experience around



the table. The statement said that Prime Minister Johnson's ambition is to use the G7 to intensify cooperation between the world's democratic and technologically advanced nations. Between them the 10 leaders represent over 60 per cent of people living in democracies around the world.

Describing the G7 as the most prominent group of democratic countries, Johnson said it has long been the catalyst for decisive international action to tackle the greatest challenges we face. "From cancelling developing world debt to our universal condemnation of Russia's annexation of Crimea, the world has looked to the G7 to apply our shared values and diplomatic might to create a more open and prosperous planet," he said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Boy reported dead at sea

Gran Canaria: Spanish rescuers reached a boat carrying over 30 migrants and brought them safely to the Canary Islands, but not in time to save one child who reportedly died at sea. Rescuers said the small boat was discovered late Friday some 160 kilometers south of Gran Canaria island. On board there were 11 men, 20 women and three children travelling in very poor conditions. The survivors said a 9-year-old boy had died during the journey and they had tossed his body overboard.

# Indonesia quake toll rises to 73



AGENCIES

Mamuju (Indonesia), Jan 17: Indonesian rescuers on Sunday retrieved more bodies from the rubble of homes and buildings toppled by a strong earthquake, raising the death toll to 73, while military engineers managed to reopen ruptured roads to clear access for relief goods.

More heavy equipment reached the hardest-hit city of Mamuju and the neighboring district of Majene on Sulawesi island, where the magnitude 6.2 quake hit early Friday, said Raditya Jati, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson.

A total of 73 people died in Mamuju and nine in the neighboring district of Majene.

Power supplies and phone communications also began to improve. Thousands were left homeless and more than 800 have been injured, more than half still receiving treatment for serious injuries, Jati said.

The disaster agency's data showed nearly 27,850 survivors were moved to shelters. Most of them went to makeshift shelters that have been lashed by heavy monsoon downpours. Only a few were lucky to have tarpaulin-covered tents.

They said they were running low on food, blankets and other aid, as emergency supplies were rushed to the hard-hit region.

"We are unable to return to our destroyed homes," said a father of three who identified himself only as Robert.

He said his bed was shaking when he awoke and realized that it was an earthquake. He then removed a drip from his hand and ran out. He had seen several nurses helping patients who were unable to move before the building collapsed.

## Virus found on ice cream in Tianjin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 17: The coronavirus was found on ice cream produced in eastern China, prompting a recall of cartons from the same batch, according to the government.

The Daqiaodao Food Co, Ltd in Tianjin, adjacent to Beijing, was sealed and its employees were being tested for the coronavirus, a city government statement said. There was no indication anyone had contracted the virus from the ice cream.

Most of the 29,000 cartons in the batch had yet to be sold, the gov-

ernment said. It said 390 sold in Tianjin were being tracked down and authorities elsewhere were notified of sales to their areas.

The ingredients included New Zealand milk powder and whey powder from Ukraine, the government said. The Chinese government has suggested the disease, first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019, came from abroad and has highlighted what it says are discoveries of the coronavirus on imported fish and other food, though foreign scientists are skeptical.

## LAST RESPECTS



Nepalese Buddhist monks play traditional instruments during a procession after the body of Tsikey Chokling Rinpoche, arrived at the Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling monastery in Nepal, Sunday

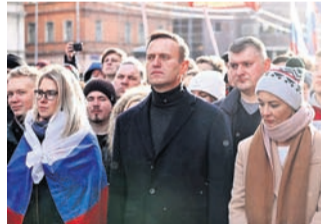
## Navalny plans to return to Russia

AGENCIES

Berlin, Jan 17: Leading Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny plans to fly home to Russia on Sunday after recovering in Germany from his poisoning in August with a nerve agent.

Navalny announced Wednesday that he would return, despite Russian authorities' threats to put him behind bars again. He is expected to fly from Berlin to Moscow. On Thursday, Russia's prison service said that he faces immediate arrest once he returns.

Navalny, who has blamed his poisoning on the Kremlin, charged that Russian President Vladimir Putin was now trying to deter him from coming home with new legal



motions. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied a role in the opposition leader's poisoning.

At the end of December, the Federal Penitentiary Service, or FSIN, warned Navalny that he faced time in prison if he fails to immediately report to its office in line with the terms of a suspended sentence and probation he received for a 2014 conviction on charges of embezzlement and

money laundering that he rejected as politically motivated. The European Court for Human Rights had ruled that his conviction was unlawful.

The FSIN said Thursday it issued an arrest warrant for Navalny after he failed to report to its office. The prison service, which has asked a Moscow court to turn Navalny's 3 1/2-year suspended sentence into a real one, said it's "obliged to take all the necessary action to detain Navalny pending the court's ruling."

Navalny fell into a coma while aboard a domestic flight from Siberia to Moscow on August 20. He was transferred from a hospital in Siberia to a Berlin hospital two days later.

### Mexico sees 2nd day of 20K cases

Mexico City: Mexico posted its second straight day of more than 20,000 coronavirus cases Saturday, suggesting a surge in a country already struggling in many areas with overflowing hospitals. There were 20,523 newly confirmed cases Saturday, after 21,366 infections were reported Friday. That was about double the daily rate of increase just a week ago. Reporting normally declines on weekends, suggesting next week may bring even higher numbers. The country also recorded 1,219 more deaths, a near-record.

### Uganda Prez wins sixth term

Kampala: Uganda's electoral commission said Saturday that President Yoweri Museveni won a sixth five-year term, extending his rule to four decades, while top opposition challenger Bobi Wine dismissed "cooked-up, fraudulent results". In a generational clash watched across the African continent with a booming young population and a host of aging leaders, the 38-year-old singer-turned-lawmaker Wine posed arguably Museveni's greatest challenge yet.

AGENCIES

Belgrade, Jan 17: Vaccines from the West, Russia or China? Or none at all? That dilemma faces nations in southeastern Europe, where coronavirus vaccination campaigns are off to a slow start -- overshadowed by heated political debates and conspiracy theories.

In countries like the Czech Republic, Serbia, Bosnia, Romania and Bulgaria, vaccine skeptics have included former presidents and even some doctors.

Serbian tennis champion Novak Djokovic was among those who said he did not want to be forced to get inoculated.

False beliefs that the coronavirus is a hoax or that vaccines would inject microchips into people have spread in the countries that were for-

merly under harsh Communist rule. Those who once routinely underwent mass inoculations are deeply split over whether to get the vaccines at all.

"There is a direct link between support for conspiracy theories and skepticism toward vaccination," a recent Balkan study warned.

"A majority across the region does not plan to take the vaccine, a ratio considerably lower than elsewhere in Europe, where a majority favors taking the vaccine."

Only about 200,000 people applied for the vaccine in Serbia, a country of 7 million, in the days after authorities opened the procedure.

By contrast, 1 million Serbians signed up for 100 euros (USD 120) on the first day the government offered the pandemic aid.

Hoping to encourage vaccina-



tions, Serbian officials have gotten their shots on TV.

Yet they themselves have been split over whether to get the Western-made Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or Russian Sputnik V, more divisions in a country that is formally seeking European Union membership

but where many favor closer ties with Moscow.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic on Saturday greeted a shipment of 1 million doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine, saying he will receive a shot to show that it is safe.

## FALSE BELIEFS

False beliefs that the coronavirus is a hoax or that vaccines would inject microchips into people have spread in the countries that were formerly under harsh Communist rule

Those who once routinely underwent mass inoculations are deeply split over whether to get the vaccines at all

division among pro-Russians and pro-Westerners in Serbia.

In neighbouring Bosnia, a war-torn country that remains ethnically divided among Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats, politics also are a factor, as the Serb-run half appeared set to opt for the Russian vaccine, while the Bosniak-Croat part likely will turn to the Western ones.

Sasa Milovanovic, a 57-year-old real estate agent from Belgrade, sees all vaccines as part of the "global manipulation" of the pandemic. "People are locked up, they have no lives any longer and live in a state of hysteria and fear," he said.

Djokovic has said he was against being forced to take a coronavirus vaccine in order to travel and compete but was keeping his mind open.



**India's economic growth is not recovering as fast as the government is showing because the unorganised sector has not started recovering and some major components of the services sector have not recovered**  
ARUN KUMAR | ECONOMIST

## FRANCE WANTS SUSPENSION

The EU and the incoming admin of US President-elect Joe Biden should suspend a trade dispute to give themselves time to find common ground, France's foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Sunday. "The issue that's poisoning everyone is that of the price escalation and taxes on steel, digital technology," he said



## of the day quote

Going ahead, the market could be volatile given the ongoing earning season and the weak global cues. Run-up to the Budget would also add to the volatility



**SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA** | HEAD (RETAIL RESEARCH), MOTILAL OSWAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

It will take another 6-8 months for sales to recover 100 per cent. By the next festive season, we expect sales to surpass numbers of the previous financial year



**YOGESHWAR SHARMA** | EXEC DIR & CEO, SELECT CITYWALK

Anything which is a deterrent to the demand in the (auto) sector we should stay away because at the end that will cause problem



**MARTIN SCHWENK** | MD & CEO, MERCEDES-BENZ INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### BharatPe raises ₹139 cr debt

**New Delhi:** Fintech company BharatPe Sunday said it has raised ₹139 crore (about \$20 million) in debt from venture debt firm Alteria Capital and ICICI Bank that will be used to strengthen its lending business and provide credit to merchants. Founded by Ashneer Grover and Shashvat Nakrani in 2018, BharatPe offers merchants a single interface for all UPI apps like Paytm, PhonePe, Google Pay, BHIM, Mobikwik, Freecharge and others. It also facilitates loan facility for its merchant partners.

### 'Session for tech entrepreneurs'

**Palakkad:** Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) is organising a special session January 19 for tech entrepreneurs to know more about the service and support system being provided by its incubation centre in Palakkad. The hour-long incubation programme would provide the participants a chance to explore the ecosystem at the KSUMS centre in this city, a press release said. The session would have experts providing advice on technical aspects and trade scene besides tips on support to investment and basic infrastructure.

### Excise duty mop up jumps 48%

**New Delhi:** While the pandemic pummelled tax collection across the board, excise duty mop up jumped 48% in the current fiscal on the back of a record increase in taxes on petrol and diesel, that more than made up for the below normal fuel sales. Excise duty collection during April-November 2020, was at ₹1,96,342 crore, up from ₹1,32,899 crore mop-up during the same period in 2019, according to data from the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

### NMDC sets 100 MT production target

**New Delhi:** State-owned NMDC aims to utilise 97% of its production capacity to produce 35 million tonne (MT) of iron ore this fiscal and has set an ambitious target of producing 100 MT by 2030, in a bid to ensure a continuous and smooth supply of the mineral for steel makers, according to a senior official. By 2030, the government also aims to increase India's total steelmaking capacity to 300 MT. Iron ore is the main ingredient used for producing the metal besides coking coal.

# 'Will agitate against complex, arbitrary GST system'

ACCORDING TO CAIT, THE GST HAS BECOME A HURDLE IN THE SMOOTH RETAIL TRADE BECAUSE OF THE COMPLEXITIES AND ARBITRARINESS OF ITS PROVISIONS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has announced that it will launch a nationwide movement against the present Goods and Services Tax (GST) system which it claims has become "extremely complicated" because of several "arbitrary" amendments.

According to CAIT, the GST has become a hurdle in the smooth retail trade because of the complexi-

ties and arbitrariness of its provisions. In a statement Sunday, the traders' body said that it will convene a three-day conference of trade leaders of all states from February 8-10 at Nagpur to chalk out the future course of action. About 200 prominent trade leaders from across the country are likely to participate.

"Post-Covid, the retail trade is fighting hard for its survival and in such a situation, the GST system has become a devil for the business community due to several arbitrary amendments. In such a scenario, we have decided to oppose such amendments tooth and nail," the CAIT said in a statement.



CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said that implementation of various programmes of the central Government have become a cause of severe pain for the traders, of which GST is one of the causes.

The present GST violates its basic fundamentals which were announced at the time of its implementation in 2017, he said.

"In place of 'Good and Simple Tax', it has become an obnoxious and complicated taxation system,"

he said. Khandelwal added that the CAIT conference will also discuss e-commerce and the proposed e-commerce policy, empowering women entrepreneurs, appraisal of Mudra Scheme, easy availability of finance for traders, among others.

He was of the view that the retail trade stands neglected, although it generates an annual business turnover of ₹80 lakh crore. As many as 8 crore traders in the country employ around 40 crore persons.

# Budget 2021: Real estate sector seeks input tax credit

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** The government should allow commercial real estate developers to set off GST paid on inputs like cement from the tax liability on rental income to avoid double taxation and give a boost to the office market to help India maintain its advantage in various sectors like IT and startups, realty firms and consultants said Sunday.

In its Budget recommendation for the 2021-22 fiscal year, industry body CII has demanded that Section 16 read with Section 17(5) of the CGST Act should be amended to enable the real estate players to avail ITC (input tax credit) on procurement of goods and services during the construction phase where the said immovable property is intended for commercial leasing or renting.

The denial of ITC, leads to blockage of funds for a real estate player, it said.

"In case of commercial leasing of properties and outlets at malls, the renting of such premises attracts 18 per cent which is available as credit to the client. Disallowance of credit during the construction phase leads to the increased cost

## DEVELOPMENT OF LEASED COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES



Allowing input tax credit to developers, can be a big impetus. As of now, they have to pay GST on various goods and services while constructing a project

**SAHIL VACHANI** | MD & CEO, MAX VENTURES & INDUSTRIES

of construction, working capital loss, increased financing costs impacting the entire supply chain," CII said.

Tata Realty & Infrastructure Ltd MD & CEO Sanjay Dutt mentioned that as per current GST provisions, input GST credit during the construction phase (for commercial properties) is not available for set-off against output GST liability on earning of rental income.

"In other words, the GST charged

on input services (like procurement of cement, steel, works contract services, etc) is required to be capitalised to the cost of construction. Since the input GST rates on this score are significantly high (in the range of 18% to 28% for cement, steel and other big-ticket items), the developers are losing/foregoing substantial cash flows on this score," Dutt said.

He demanded that input tax credit should be allowed in commercial real estate properties meant for leasing purposes.

"It would immensely help the commercial real estate developers in conserving significant cash flows and help developers to sustain themselves...if such input GST is permitted to be utilised to be off-set against the output GST liability," Dutt said.

"This will keep India's competitive advantage in the IT & ITES sector and startups through commercial real estate, he added.

Dutt said this would help the Indian office market, which witnessed a decline in net leasing during the 2020 calendar year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

# Bank credit to manufacturing muted amid Covid

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** Bank credit to manufacturing sector has remained muted in the current financial year amid the pandemic, while few sectors, including construction and trade, have witnessed resilient flows.

According to the Financial Stability Report of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for January, credit growth in the manufacturing sector in October 2020 contracted by 2%, while that in construction witnessed a growth of 5.1% and credit to trade, hotels and restaurants was up 13.9%.

"An analysis of sectoral credit growth, specifically to those that are critical in terms of gross value added (GVA), shows resilient flows to sectors such as construction, trade and hospitality, while bank credit remained muted to the manufacturing sector," the report said.

It said that the profile of wholesale credit in first half of 2020-21 and in the third quarter of 2020-21 (up to November) reflects a subdued credit situation across bank groups, pointing to risk aversion and



muted demand weighing on the outlook.

With the onset of Covid-19, retail credit growth (y-o-y) has suffered, while wholesale credit growth has held up though at low levels.

"With stress tests pointing to a deterioration in asset quality of banks, early identification of impairment and aggressive capitalisation is imperative for supporting credit growth across various sectors alongside pre-emptive strategies for dealing with potential NPAs," it said.

As per the report, the gross non-performing asset (GNPA) of scheduled commercial banks (SCB) are likely to increase to 13.5% by September 2021 in the existing scenario.

# Kharif paddy procurement leaps 22% in state: Report

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 17:** Kharif paddy procurement is in full swing in all 30 districts of the state. A total of 35 lakh 6 thousand 183 MT of paddy has been procured so far which is 22 percent higher in comparison to last year paddy procurement till date, says state government's report.

It also says that state procured 28, 81,475 MT of paddy by Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department Last year on same day.

Minister of Food Supply & Consumer Welfare, Cooperation Ranendra Pratap Swain has directed all officials to ensure smooth and hassle free paddy procurement. All steps should be taken so that the registered farmers can

sale their paddy in the PACs/LAMPs/WSHG with ease. The Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department is procuring paddy through P-PAS and issuing advance token to the registered farmers to make it more efficient and transparent.

So far, 6,65,048 MT of paddy has been procured in Bargarh district which is 13 percent more in comparison to last year procurement on this day. Similarly, 2,84,493 MT of paddy procured in Bolangir, 1,14,325 MT in Ganjam, 4,12,645 MT in Kalahandi, 2,11,217 MT in Koraput, 1,35,618 MT in Nabarangapur, 1,20,967 MT in Nuapada, 3,37,233 MT in Sambalpur, 2,81,435 MT in Subarnapur, 1,02,656 MT in Sundargarh and 1,03,082 MT in Malkangiri district.

# 'India among fastest growing markets for Amazon Prime'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** India is among the fastest growing markets for Amazon Prime Video (APV) globally, and the content streaming platform is focussing its investments on bringing more content and expanding the service to a larger audience in the country, a top company official said.

APV, which has recently partnered with Airtel to bring a mobile-only plan (a global first) for Indian users, competes with platforms like Netflix, Disney+Hotstar, Zee5 and others in the country.

"We've been in the country for the last four years and growing very steadily...APV is watched in over 4,300 cities and towns in the country, and India is amongst the fastest



growing markets for Prime and APV. Our investments in content across 10 languages, both originals and films, have helped us," Amazon Prime Video India Director and Country General Manager Gaurav Gandhi told PTI.

He added that as more customers opt to watch content online, there

would be as many people watching video online as those watching television over the next three to four years.

The company does not disclose country-specific subscriber numbers. While previously, APV service was bundled with the Prime offering of the e-commerce giant, the latest partnership with Airtel will allow prepaid users of the telecom major to watch APV content as a standalone offering.

Streaming services have had multiple tailwinds that have fuelled its growth in India over the past few years. Factors like affordable data, ubiquitous availability of mobile phones and engaging content have driven adoption of these services, especially among the millennials.

# How to file a claim under your home insurance policy?

Most of us invest our lifetime's savings and pay huge EMIs to own a home, but even this important asset is not invincible. Natural calamities are becoming more frequent than before which can not only affect the structure of the house, but also the contents within. We take all necessary measures to secure our homes and yet there is a risk of theft and burglary. Home insurance, here, plays a crucial role as it covers you for financial losses caused by damage to the structure and the contents within.

Currently, there are various kinds of home insurance policies which provide wide-ranging coverages and you need to pick one that suits your requirement the best. While you are opting for an insurance policy, the first major step is to have a look at the terms and conditions of the policy to understand its coverages and exclusions. It's equally important to also know the claim procedure so that you are aware of what to do and what is required when an unfortunate event strikes. While most insurers have a defined claim process

under home insurance, below are some requirements and steps which are important to follow to have a seamless claim experience.

- Now-a-days most insurers have a digital claim process, so always keep a soft copy of the policy document handy which is easily accessible. In the event of any loss you must first notify the insurer via email or telephone and give them brief information of accident or incident with respect to your policy.
- In case of damage to the home appliances/portable items, check with your insurer whether they can provide a hassle-free cashless repair service for them by having the

damaged items picked up and dropped to your home.

- Once you understand what is expected out of you, fill the claim form and ready the necessary documents as requested by the insurer. If your insurer has a digital platform, right from claim notification to submission, all the required documents can be done digitally. Below is a common (but not limited to) list of documents that will be required to file the claim:
  - In case of accidental unforeseen damage: Narration about the



PRAVEEN CHHAJED

loss, purchase invoice of the damaged item(s), repair(s) estimate, repair bill, payment receipt, etc.

- In case of theft or burglary: Details of lost items covered under the policy, purchase invoice of the lost item, narration about the incident occurred, First Information Report (FIR), Final Police Report, etc.
- If loss is above ₹1 lakh, insurer may appoint an independent surveyor for verification and assessment of loss. Upon the visit, show the surveyor all the damages and also keep a list of lost/damaged items. In case you have any receipts of these items, share those with the surveyor too. Once you submit necessary information with the surveyor, s/he will then submit the final survey report to insurer with relevant assessment.

Insurer may later get in touch with you in case any further information or document is required. Usually, it takes 5-7 working days to settle small claims of up to ₹1 lakh and around 10 working days for large claims above ₹1 lakh once all the documents have been submitted by the insured. While the insurance company will pay the claim as per terms and conditions (T&C) of the policy, it is also the responsibility of the policyholder to take necessary steps for minimising the damage. For instance, dousing the fire with water immediately or safeguarding contents as much as possible to avoid damage in case flood water enters the house.

Whether you are a house owner or a tenant, having a home insurance policy ensures that you don't suffer huge financial losses in case of any damage to your home and/or its contents due to an unfortunate event. It is always advisable to understand the (T&C) of the policy along with its claims procedure, so that at the time of claim you are not caught unaware.

The writer is the Senior Vice President & Head - Non-Motor Claims, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance

123-RUN PARTNERSHIP FOR 7TH WICKET RESTRICTS AUSTRALIA'S 1ST INNINGS LEAD TO JUST 33 RUNS

# SHARDUL, SUNDAR SAVE INDIA

AGENCIES

**Brisbane, Jan 17:** Debutant Washington Sundar (62, 144b, 7x4, 1x6) and Shardul Thakur (67, 115b, 9x4, 2x6) punched above their weights with splendid half-centuries to keep Australia at bay at stumps on the third day of the fourth and final Test at the Gabba here Sunday. Riding on the performances of the two, India finished on 336, just 33 runs behind Australia in their first innings. It was a score which did not seem possible when India had been reduced to 186 for six with the dismissal of Rishabh Pant (23).

Australia's openers - David Warner (20 batting) and Marcus Harris (one batting) - saw out six overs, and extended the home team's lead to 54 by stumps.

Australia's lead could have been much more had it not been for a delightful 123-run partnership for the seventh wicket between Sundar and Shardul, who defied and then attacked the rival bowling attack

with gusto. Pacer Josh Hazlewood (5/57) was the best among the Australian bowlers while his pace part-

ners Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins finished with two wickets each. Symbolising the courage shown by the visitors, Sundar and Shardul mixed caution with aggression to bail their team out of a precarious position.

First, they turned unlikely saviours after three soft dismissals pushed India on the back-foot, and in the final session, the two opened up and went after the world-class Australian attack.

Shardul was

gutsy all through. Other than the nine boundaries, Shardul hit Nathan Lyon for a six to bring up his maiden Test 50 fifty in style. In fact, Shardul opened his account with a hooked six off the

world's No.1 bowler, Pat Cummins. Sundar while reaching his half century became the first visiting cricketer in Australia in 74 years to grab three wickets and smash a 50 on debut. The one before him was also an Indian, Dattu Phadkar, who made 51 while batting at No.8 and took three wickets during the 1947/48 tour.

Earlier it seemed that India were on trouble as Cheteshwar Pujara (25), Ajinkya Rahane (37), Mayank Agarwal (38) and Pant fell. All the batsmen, save Pujara, after getting a look-in, fell to shots that could have been avoided. Pujara however, got a brute of a delivery from Hazlewood which he had to play and was caught behind.



Washington Sundar

## Scoreboard

**Australia (1st innings): 369**  
**India (1st innings, overnight 62 for 2):**  
Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Hazlewood 25, Ajinkya Rahane c Wade b Starc 37, Mayank Agarwal c Smith b Hazlewood 38, Rishabh Pant c Green b Hazlewood 23, Washington Sundar c Green b Starc 62, Shardul Thakur b Cummins 67, Navdeep Saini c Smith b Hazlewood 5, Mohammed Siraj b Hazlewood 13, T Natarajan n o 1, EXTRAS: (B-5, LB-7 NB-2) 14, Total: (all out in 111.4 overs) 336.  
Fall: 1-11, 2-60, 3-105, 4-144, 5-161, 6-186, 7-309, 8-320, 9-328.  
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 23-3-88-2, Josh Hazlewood 24.4-6-57-5, Pat Cummins 27-5-94-2, Cameron Green 8-1-20-0, Nathan Lyon 28-9-65-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-1-0-0.  
**Australia 2nd innings:**  
Marcus Harris batting 1, David Warner batting 20, Total (for no loss) 21.  
**Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 2-1-12-0, T Natarajan 3-0-6-0, Washington Sundar 1-0-3-0.



Shardul Thakur

# Shastri's advice helped: Thakur



TWO TO TANGO: Shardul Thakur and Washington Sundar have some words to share during their century stand at the Gabba, Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Brisbane Jan 17:** When Shardul Thakur stepped out to bat Sunday, rescuing India from a precarious 186/6 was not the only target on his mind. Shardul was also keen to impress the Australian crowd after being told how 'rewarding' it would feel by coach Ravi Shastri. India were virtually down and out when Thakur (67) joined debutant Washington Sundar (62).

"When I walked in, the situation was difficult I would not deny that. The crowd was cheering for Australian bowlers. But I remembered our coach Ravi Shastri's prophecy. He said at the start of the ODI series that 'if you perform in this country, you will be rewarded'. This inspired me to play well and I batted to the best of my abilities," said Thakur. "That one thing was on my mind that people are going love me," added Thakur. Batting at No.8, Thakur impressed with his stroke-play, his

**I had not batted with Sundar much. We were not looking at the scoreboard. The idea was to spend as much time possible in the middle**

SHARDUL THAKUR

drives coming straight out of coaching manuals. "Eventually at the end of the day it would help my team; that thought was the biggest positive," Thakur informed.

Cheered, he definitely was by not just the crowd, but also his teammates. They gave him a standing ovation on his way back to the dressing room. Thakur spoke about his love for batting and how he waited for such an opportunity.

"I have some batting talent. Whenever the throw-down specialists with the team are available, I practice. These are the moments you train and wait for and you could do something for the team," he signed off.

## Washington's dad wanted a century

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** While fans and former cricketers are pleasantly surprised at India's tail wagging with No. 7 and No. 8 scoring half centuries, Washington Sundar's father is upset at his son for not getting a Test ton. Sundar was the ninth man to be dismissed at the Gabba Test in Brisbane after scoring 62.

"I am disappointed he did not get a ton. When Siraj came, he should have hit fours and sixes. He is capable of that. He should have gone for sixes. He could have gone for pulls and big hits. Perhaps, he thought of trying to come close to Australia's total as the lead was very less," his father M Sundar stated from Chennai. "I speak to him in Australia every day. I told him last (Saturday) evening whenever you get a chance, get a big score. He said, 'sure I will'."

Sundar's father is upset because he feels that his son's batting capabilities are not being utilised. He is also surprised that Sundar is not a part of the Tamil Nadu Ranji Trophy team for the last three years. "He has played 12 first class matches for Tamil Nadu. He has performed whenever, he has got an opportunity," pointed out M Sundar.

Back in 2017, he was called up for the (pink-ball) Duleep Trophy final just a month short of his 18th birthday. The off-spinner and left-handed batsman picked 11 wickets and scored 130 runs (88 and 42) to help India Red beat an India Blue side that comprised the likes Ishant Sharma, Pankaj Singh and Jaydev Unadkat as well as Suresh Raina.

## SHORT TAKES

### Emotional message

**New Delhi:** India all-rounder Hardik Pandya penned down Sunday an emotional letter for his late father who passed away recently. Himanshu Pandya, father of cricketers Hardik and Krunal, died Saturday after suffering a cardiac arrest. He was 71. "To my daddy and my hero, to lose you is one of the most difficult things to accept in life but you have left us so many great memories that we can only imagine you smiling!" Hardik wrote on Instagram. "Your sons are standing where they are right now is only because of you, your hard work, your self-belief and you were always happy. This house without you would be less entertaining!" he added.

### Back after ban

**Dhaka:** All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was Sunday included in the Bangladesh squad for the upcoming home ODI series against the West Indies. It thus marks his return to international cricket after a one-year ban for not reporting a corrupt approach. The three match ODI series will start January 20 in Mirpur. Shakib, 33, was handed a two-year ban in October, of which one year was suspended, after he accepted three charges of breaching the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Anti-Corruption Code. The all-rounder was Bangladesh's captain in T20Is and Tests at the time. He returns to the ODI squad as an ordinary member with Tamim Iqbal leading the side.

### Best-ever show

**Honolulu:** Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri improved on his personal best at the Waialae Country Club here Saturday with a third round six-under 64 for a share of the 17th position at the Sony Open here. That brought his 54-hole aggregate to 12-under in his first start on the PGA Tour in 2021. Lahiri is five behind the new leader, Brendan Steele (61) after Saturday's round. His 65 Friday was his previous best. Lahiri's 64 included a double bogey on 18th, his ninth hole. "I think even on the front nine (of the course) I played really well. It was unfortunate I had a couple of very aggressive lip-outs (when putted balls touch the lip edge) of the cup and do not fall in) else I could have probably shot another couple of shots," Lahiri said.

## 'Losses teach a lot'



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**COVID-19 has taught me to remain positive all the time. It doesn't matter when you lose, because you learn a lot from those defeats**

PV SINDHU

**New Delhi, Jan 17:** World Champion shuttler PV Sindhu was disappointed when the Tokyo Olympics were postponed last year, but she utilised the free time to work on rectifying her mistakes. The ace Indian shuttler recently returned to the court at the Thailand Open but crashed out in the first round. Sindhu says losses remind her of the need to come back stronger the next time.

"I learnt a lot last year. The first thing was patience, because we had no tournaments for a couple of months. We couldn't step out or play badminton, and we needed to have patience," Sindhu said as she talked about her feelings during the COVID-19 crisis.

"I spent a lot more time with my family because (earlier) all the time

was spent travelling to tournaments and back. This was the first time I had quality family time. I was training at home. One thing I've learned is patience, and being positive all the time," added the world champion, whose life has inspired a biopic, which is currently under development.

"Last year around March and April, we were getting ready for the Olympics. Unfortunately that got postponed. I was a bit sad, but then I took it in a positive way thinking I now had a lot more time to learn, rectify my mistakes and work on my strokes. So, that way (I learnt) to stay positive and move forward in life," the shuttler added.

For the 25-year-old, losses are as important as wins. "When you start, you lose some and you win some. When you lose, it is always a sad thing (because) you always want to win. That doesn't happen. But you will learn a lot more from your losses," she shared. "I have learnt a lot more from my losses, and the need to come back stronger the next time," she added.

## PLAYERS COMPLAIN AFTER BEING PUT IN HARD QUARANTINE

# COVID-19 hits Australian Open

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Jan 17:** Grand Slam champions are among the elite players in hard lockdown after four positive tests for COVID-19 emerged from two of the charter flights bringing players, staff, officials and media to Australia for the first tennis Major of the season.

Some players were angry at being classified as close contacts merely for being on board those flights with people who later tested positive. Therefore these players were forced into a harsher quarantine than the broader group of players who'll be allowed out of their rooms to practice for up to five hours per day.

Three cases were announced Saturday and Victoria state's COVID-19 quarantine commissioner Emma Cassar told a news conference Sunday that there'd been a fourth positive test involving a person flying in for the Australian Open. So far, not a single player has tested positive.

Three cases emerged from the flight from Los Angeles to here while the other person who tested positive was in the flight from Abu Dhabi.



Victoria Azarenka is one of the players undergoing hard quarantine in Melbourne

Sylvain Bruneau, who coaches 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreescu, posted on social media to say he was on the flight from Abu Dhabi and had tested positive. Two-time Open champion Victoria Azarenka and the 2014 US Open runner-up Kei Nishikori were reported to be on the flight from Los Angeles. All passengers from both of those flights are in hard lockdown.

Several players in quarantine, including Sorana Cirstea of Romania, Belinda Bencic of Switzerland and Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan complained on so-

## 'UN may decide fate of Olympics'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Sydney, Jan 17:** Kevan Gosper, a former International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice-president has suggested the United Nations may decide on the fate of the postponed Tokyo Olympics. The Olympics are to open July 23 but face mounting opposition at home as COVID-19 cases surge in Tokyo, across Japan and across the globe.

Gosper is still an honorary IOC member. "If you were looking for a third party that recognises that this has gone beyond being an issue just related to sport then it could be a case to go the United Nations and seek their involvement," Gosper told the ABC's "The Ticket" programme.

The IOC and local organisers have said the Olympics cannot be postponed again. They will be cancelled this time if they can't be held.

"We've done this before in the IOC, we've gone to the United Nations to give us assistance. This is because we are talking about something that potentially is going to involve representatives from 205 countries," asserted the former IOC official.

# Top teams cruise to easy victories

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Jan 17:** Odisha Green, Odisha Red and Odisha Violet won their respective games of the ODI Women's Cricket League played Sunday at different venues.

In the first game of the day, Odisha Green beat Odisha Purple by eight wickets with 73 balls to spare. After being put in, Odisha Purple could only muster 127 all out. Alipasa Biswal (37) top scored for them. DJ Reddy (5/14) was the standout bowler for Odisha Green. In reply Odisha Green scored 128 for two in 37.5 overs to win the game comfortably. Pragyan P Mohanty (44 n o) batted well for the Green side.

In the second game, Odisha Red, riding on a fine century by skipper Madhuri Meheta (102, 12x4), scored 198 for seven in their 50 overs. They then restricted Odisha Yellow to 160 all out, to win the game by 38 runs. Anjali Singh (46) batted well for the Yellow side while Rajashree Swain (2/21) and Sriya Chakra (2/15) picked up crucial wickets for Odisha Red.

In the third match of the day, Odisha Violet scored 218 for five in their 50 overs. One of the star attractions of this tournament, Sushree Dibyadarshini scored a quickfire 89 of just 69 balls with 11 hits to the fence. She was well-sup-



DJ Reddy



Madhuri Meheta

ported by Rashmita Chinchara (62). In reply the Odisha Orange could only manage 153 for nine in their 50 overs. Sumit Murmu was the best batswoman for them with 70 runs. Sujata Mallick, Preeti Priyadarshini and Tanmayee Behera picked up two

wickets apiece for the Violet side.

### ODISHA LOSE 4TH GAME IN A ROW

The men's senior Odisha cricket team lost their fourth match in succession in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 cricket tournament at Kolkata,

Saturday night. The Odisha team went down to Jharkhand by 54 runs.

After being put in, Jharkhand scored 182 for four in their 20 overs. Ishan Kishan (60, 36b, 6x4, 3x6) and Virat Singh (67, 37b, 10x4, 1x6) put the Odisha bowlers to sword. Only Tarini Sa (2/37) managed to make some impression. The two top pace bowlers from the Odisha side, Suryakant Pradhan and Sunil Roul went for 38 and 36 runs in their quota of four overs.

In spite of 66-run opening partnership in just eight overs between Gourav Choudhury (36) and Govind Poddar (28), Odisha failed to keep the momentum going. They were bowled out for 128 in 17.5 overs. Bal Krishna (4/21) bowled well for Jharkhand.

From none for 66, Odisha were reduced to 68 for three with Choudhury, Poddar and Biplab Samantray (0) falling in quick succession.

Subhranshu Senapati (19) and Rajesh Dhupar (13) tried to stem the rot. However, by that time the required run rate for Odisha had climbed to over 12 runs per over. It was quite clear that they were not going to win from that position.

Krishna, then got into the act again dismissing Senapati and Dhupar to put the final nail on the coffin for Odisha. The others did not get going at all.

## Javelin throwers Neeraj, Shivpal motivate juniors



Shivpal Singh (3rd from left) and Neeraj Chopra (right) with budding junior javelin throwers at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 17:** Olympic-bound javelin throwers Neeraj Chopra and Shivpal Singh graced the Odisha athletics selection trials here Sunday at the Kalinga Stadium. The trials are being conducted to select the team for the National Junior Athletics Championship in Guwahati. Both Neeraj and Shivpal interacted with the budding athletes, inspiring them to give their very best of their performances during the trials. The athletes were thrilled to have the two sports icons of javelin, amidst them.

Neeraj and Shivpal specifically engaged with the promising javelin throwers of Odisha. They also

shared few tips and aspects of Javelin, encouraging them to try to better their own distance of throw without being dissuaded by continuous attempts.

Wishing the participants, the very best for their trials they stayed on at the stadium.

On the second day of the trials, a total 62 events were scheduled in which more than 150 boys participated. The participants were either in the under-18 or under-20 age groups. Four events were cancelled due to non-participation.

The selection trials are being jointly organised by Sports and Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha and Odisha Athletics Association.