



MIRA'S CHRISTMAS PLANS

Actor Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira Rajput takes to Instagram to share a video where she is seen decorating a new Christmas tree

LEISURE P2



PROVOKING NATURE

Russia continues to build up its forces near Ukraine border as per new satellite images provided by a private US company

INTERNATIONAL P10



BHAJJI BIDS ADIEU

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh retires from all forms of cricket marking an end to his 23-year-old career

SPORTS P12

MEETING OF LEGENDS



World Champion and Paralympics gold medalist shuttler Pramod Bhagat felicitates Paralympic Committee of India's president Deepa Malik during the inaugural function of the IVth National Para-badminton tournament at Bhubaneswar, Friday. Later in the evening Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also felicitated the Paralympians present at the tournament

Former Odisha finance minister dead

Bhubaneswar: Former Odisha finance minister and veteran politician Ramkrushna Patnaik passed away here Friday. He was 81 and breathed his last at around 9.30am at his residence here. Ramkrushna's daughter Anita Subhadarshini informed. Later in the evening his body was cremated at Swargdarwaj in Puri. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed grief at the demise of Ramkrushna. "Late Ramkrushna Patnaik was an eminent leader and administrator. Inspired by Biju Babu's (Patnaik) ideals, he devoted himself to public service. He made significant contributions to the development of Ganjam district and Odisha," Naveen said. Ramkrushna served as minister during the tenure of both Biju Patnaik and Naveen.



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Curbs on Xmas, New Year feasts

Keeping in mind that the Omicron variant spreads rapidly, the government has decided to impose restriction on all public activities

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Keeping in view the detection of Omicron variant of coronavirus in the state, the Odisha government Friday imposed new restrictions on celebration of Christmas, New Year and other such festivities. The new restrictions will be in force December 25 and from December 31 to January 2, the government said in an order.

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra in the order said that to protect the health of the people and to prevent the spread of the new variant, the government has restricted Christmas celebrations. A maximum of 50 participants can join the Christmas mass by strictly following Covid-19 protocols and specific conditions imposed by district magistrates, municipal commissioners and local authorities while giving permission for it. "Zero Night" celebrations and New Year's Eve celebrations in hotels, clubs, restaurants, parks,



convention halls, kalyan mandaps and other such venues are completely banned across Odisha, the order said.

The order also said that no celebrations other than weddings will be allowed in the state. Receptions and ancillary functions connected to weddings too will not be allowed. While funeral rites will be permitted with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols, the order said there will be strict vigilance on crowding and gathering during the occasions.

"No community feast is allowed and no social gathering, rallies, orchestras, dance and other cul-

tural programmes are allowed," the order said. It added that district magistrates and collectors, the police commissioner of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar police commissioner and the municipal commissioner will scrupulously implement these guidelines and take all measures to enforce them.

"They may impose any additional restrictions as may be felt necessary for containing the spread of coronavirus and to ensure that Covid-19 appropriate behaviour is followed by all concerned," the order said.

Persons violating restrictions will be liable to be prosecuted as per

GENOME TESTING OF ALL +VE CASES

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government has decided to conduct genome sequencing of samples of people testing positive for Covid-19 in the state. "The genome sequencing of samples of all Covid-19 cases will be carried out to ascertain the spread of infections caused by the Omicron variant," informed Health Director Bijay Mohapatra here Friday. To contain the spread of Covid-19, the government is focusing on observance of Covid protocols, surveillance, crowd control and vaccination, Mohapatra added. According to a study by IIT-Kanpur, the new Omicron variant may trigger a third wave in India which will reach its peak by February next year.

the provisions of different laws, including the Disaster Management Act, 2005, it added.

Even though there was no addition to Odisha's Omicron tally Friday, the government is not taking any chance. So far the state has reported four cases of the Omicron variant. Among them are a 15-year-old and an 11-year-old girl, both of whom returned with their parents from Nigeria a couple of weeks back.

Bangla boat fire claims 40 lives

DHAKA: At least 40 people were killed and over 150 injured after the packed three-storey ferry 'MV-Abhijan-10' carrying around 800 passengers caught fire early Friday on the Sugandha River in southern Bangladesh, officials said. The toll may rise as many of the passengers who had jumped into the river to avoid the blaze are still missing late into the evening, officials informed. The accident occurred in south Jhalakathi district, 250 kilometres from here. However, on the passenger list there were only 310 names, though officials informed that the actual number was higher. Junior Minister for shipping Khaled Mahmud Chowdhury told reporters at the accident site that boat owners frequently overload launches putting lives at stake.

12 ZP chief seats reserved for SC, ST

The Odisha government had informed the High Court that it would come out with a new list after some anomalies were noticed in the first one

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Following the order of Orissa High Court, the state government has revised its seat reservation list for the post of Zilla Parishad chairpersons in all 30 districts for the upcoming three-tier Panchayat elections.

The government has reserved 12 seats for Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates. Seven seats have been reserved for ST candidates while five are for SC nominees.

In the earlier notification, four ZP seats had been reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). However, in the latest notification published Friday, not a single seat has been reserved for this community.

As per the notification published by the Panchayati Raj department, the government has reserved the ZP chief posts in Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Boudh and Bhadrak districts for SC candidates. On the other hand ST nominees will head the ZPs in Kandhamal, Koraput, Nabarangpur,



Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Rayagada, and Sundargarh districts.

The Zilla Parishad chief posts of 10 districts - Angul, Cuttack, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Gajapati, Deogarh, Nayagarh, Bargarh, Balasore, and Sonepur have been put under the unreserved category.

However, the notification did not mention anything on the reservation of chairperson seats for the districts of Khurda, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Dhenkanal, Nuapada, Puri, Bolangir and Sambalpur districts. Sources said that the list for these districts will be announced at a later date.

The state Government has also reserved 50 per cent of all ZP chairperson posts for women candidates. The districts are - Kalahandi, Kendrapara, Koraput, Khurda, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Dhenkanal, Nuapada, Puri, Bolangir, Boudh, Malkangiri, Jajpur, Rayagada and Sambalpur.

Cabinet nod for power projects

Some major decisions were taken during the Cabinet meeting among which were improving power supply and water distribution in various districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: In an aim to ensure quality and uninterrupted power supply to consumers, the state Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik gave the nod to execute Phase-IV of Odisha Distribution System Strengthening Project (ODSSP) at a cost of ₹1,796.73 crore, here Friday.

Briefing mediapersons after the meeting, Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra said the government had launched ODSSP during the 2013-14 fiscal for installing 473 numbers of 33/11 KV primary sub-stations and its associated lines across Odisha.

Based on the load flow analysis carried out by distribution com-

panies, the Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL) has come up with a proposal for installation of 99 numbers of 33/11 KV primary sub-stations and independent 33 KV lines of 812.05 km length at a total estimated cost of ₹1,796.73 crore, Mahapatra said. He added that the project will be implemented over a period of three years effective from the 2021-22 fiscal.

The Cabinet has also approved another proposal for implementation of five transmission projects worth ₹259.43 crore in low voltage pockets with 30 per cent (₹77.83 crore) equity support from the state government. The projects will be taken up in the pockets where mega lift irrigation points are located.

The panel also approved a tender of ₹888.50 crore for implementation of redevelopment and expansion of SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack under Phase I. The work is to be completed within two years.

Similarly, three irrigation projects also got the nod from the Cabinet during the meeting. A tender of ₹443.21 crore was approved for the construction of underground pipeline irrigation system (gravity flow) of Rengali Right Irrigation Project (Phase-I) in Dhenkanal and Cuttack districts. Also a tender of ₹257.46 crore has been approved for construction of the distribution system in Balasore district while another tender of ₹126.46 crore was approved for Sandul barrage project in Kalahandi district.

It was decided at the meeting to regularise 3,328 MLE Sikshya Sahayaks, who were recruited from the tribal candidates of 17 districts having requisite qualification in 2013 under Samagra Shikshya.

Moreover, the State Cabinet has also approved the exemption of electricity duty on power consumption in favour of Indian Oil Corporation Limited's (IOCL), Paradip Refinery unit as per the signed agreement.

Police arrest 2 in Palai murder case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 24: The Crime Branch (CB) claimed to have blown the lid off the mysterious death of Chittaranjan Palai, a personal assistant to the state Planning Board deputy chairperson Sanjay Das Burma, with the arrest of two persons, Friday.

Jagannath Sarangi alias Jaga, Palai's friend, and Ashok Upadhyaya, spouse of the mysterious woman of Basudevpur area in this town, have been arrested under Sections 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence), 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC in connection with the death, CB DSP Sisir Mishra said during a press meet at the SP office here.

Mishra said the accused were produced before a local court which sent both to 14-day judicial custody. The investigating agency is planning to bring the duo on seven-day remand for further probe.

The Crime Branch officials, however, did not reveal the exact turn of events or cause behind Palai's murder. They said that the information would hinder the probe process. The officials also informed that efforts are on to trace weapons that were used to kill Palai.

Palai, a native of Sanabandhakera village in Brahmagiri tehsil of Puri, was found dead with multiple injuries on his body in Nuana, on the morning of December 13.

On the basis of a complaint by his family, Sadar police registered a murder case. The director general of police handed over the investigations to the CB, December 15. It should be stated here that some of Palai's relatives had alleged that Das Burma was involved in the 'murder' of Palai.

Earlier the post-mortem report of Palai was submitted to Puri Sadar police. It said Palai died due to drowning. However, the report was later sent to the State Forensic Science Laboratory for further confirmation.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Leave them alone. It is not any of those comedy shows. It is just hate speech!

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	57124.31 ↓ 190.97
NIFTY	17003.80 ↓ 68.80
DOLLAR	75.33 ↓ ₹0.20
EURO	84.88 ↓ ₹0.09
GOLD	₹48,195 ↑ ₹43
SILVER	₹62,316 ↑ ₹5

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 27.2°C	27.0°C
	MIN 12.4°C	11.6°C
Humidity	86%	84%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

₹150cr seized from Kanpur businessman's premises

While conducting raids on offices and godowns of a tobacco and pan masala manufacturer, CBIC and GST officials chanced upon some documents which turned out to be a Pandora's Box for them

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 24: Tax raids at premises linked to Piyush Jain, a Kanpur businessman who is part of the perfume industry, have led to the seizure of more than ₹150 crore cash, Vivek Johri, the chairman of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) was quoted as saying by a website Friday. "This is the biggest recovery in the history of the CBIC. However, no arrest has taken place so far," Johri was quoted as say-

ing by 'NDTV.com'.

Meanwhile the directorate general of GST said Friday that they launched searches in Kanpur following a tip-off against the manufacturers of Shikhar pan masala and tobacco products. It led them to raiding the premises of the owners of Ms Trimurti Fragrance Pvt Ltd. Raids were also conducted at the office and godowns of Ms Ganapati Road Carriers.

"They were clandestinely supplying goods without making payments of applicable tax. The transporter reportedly used to generate multiple invoices in the name of non-existent firms, all below ₹50,000 for one full truck load, to avoid generation of e-way bills while moving the goods. The transporter was also collecting the sale proceeds of such clandestine supply in cash and



Officials count Friday, seized cash piled neatly in stacks from a businessman's residence in Kanpur

handing it over to the manufacturer, after deducting his commission," informed a GST official.

The official said that during physical stock taking, shortage of raw materials and finished prod-

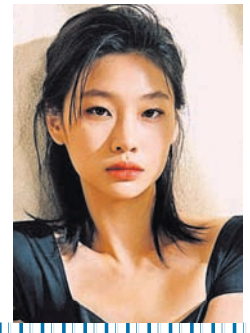
ucts was noticed. This happened as the finished products had been cleared clandestinely. During the questioning, the authorised signatory of the company admitted to have cleared goods without GST.

Later, the GST and CBI officials conducted searches on the premises of the partners of Ms Odochem Industries, who were supplying perfumery compound, mostly against cash, to the said company. One of the partners was Jain.

During the search proceedings at the residential premises, a huge amount of cash, wrapped in papers, were found inside two cupboards in a building owned by Jain.

"We had to call officials of Bank of India to count the cash. Counting is still on and so far we have seized over ₹150 crore in cash from the residence of Mr Jain," an official informed.

leisure



SQUID GAME STAR HOYEON JUNG OPENS UP ABOUT WEIGHT LOSS

Squid Game star HoYeon Jung said she shed eight pounds in 10 days as she was promoting Netflix's hit series *Squid Game* in the US. "There was no time to eat," the 27-year-old South Korean actress told Star News (via AllKpop) in a recent interview about her hectic schedule while visiting America, reports *pagesix.com*.

ALEC BALDWIN THANKS FANS FOR SUPPORT DURING A TOUGH TIME

Veteran star Alec Baldwin has shared that he's going 'through a tough time'. He said: "I wanted to take a moment to say thank you to all the people who sent me such kind words and best wishes and strength and hope and prayers, thoughts and lots of encouragement."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will focus your attention today on your beloved. You will feel very energetic, but your commitment to work will falter. So don't be surprised if your superiors are annoyed. However, Ganesh says today is a day for romantic pursuits.

TAURUS
This day you will be prone to be stubborn and uncompromising in your business and professional dealings and thereby inviting unnecessary problems. Ganesh urges you to guard against this tendency and conduct yourself cordially and amiably with your colleagues and clients. The day will turn out well for executives and administrators.

GEMINI
A hectic and busy day awaits you, which will probably leave you feeling bored and listless. Find creative ways to beat the boredom, or take a break and do things which appeal to you today, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will be involved in a team effort and associated with work like inspection and examination. You will base your opinions on your friends' choices. So select good friends, says Ganesh. You will spend time with close circle.

LEO
It is an important day for you. Everyone in the office will accept your capabilities and will praise you. You may incur expenses on entertainment and luxuries. Your financial difficulties will now be solved. It is better to have an eye on long term gains. A progressive day on the whole, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Today you will feel monetarily much stronger than you have ever felt, says Ganesh. You will realise the need to make monetary arrangements for some unforeseen financial instability that may occur in the future. Your leadership qualities will be appreciated by people around you.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be able to improve your relations abroad. There will be good news coming from friends or relatives living abroad. Your working ability and efficiency will make you popular in the office today. In the day today you shall have a variety of good and bad experiences

SCORPIO
An electric wire of 440 volts is apt to describe you today. According to Ganesh, you are in a belligerent mood today and can burst like a fireball. Meditation and yoga is likely to improve the situation. Remember, treat others the way you want to be treated by them.

SAGITTARIUS
Suddenly, you become ambidextrous and plan to multi task today, says Ganesh. Your instincts will guide you today, trust them and move ahead. You may come across few challenges. But, anyway, who wants an easy way out, right?

CAPRICORN
Your interests are guarded by the Almighty, so don't worry about them. Not that you are not ambitious, but you are satisfied with what you have and gained. You have set some realistic goals for yourself and you are making sincere efforts to achieve them. You are a simple person and you like your life to be uncomplicated.

AQUARIUS
You are close to your family, and now is the time to enjoy the company of your loved ones at home. You will take them out for shopping, go with them on picnics and pamper them in every possible way, says Ganesh. Not that you made them feel special with a selfish motive, but your show of affection will work wonders for you.

PISCES
Ganesh asks you not to undertake any new project or business venture due to the alignment of the planets being unfavorable. You will do well in tasks that do not require too much creativity and innovation. Do not take sides when you are not required to and it make have heavy consequences in future.

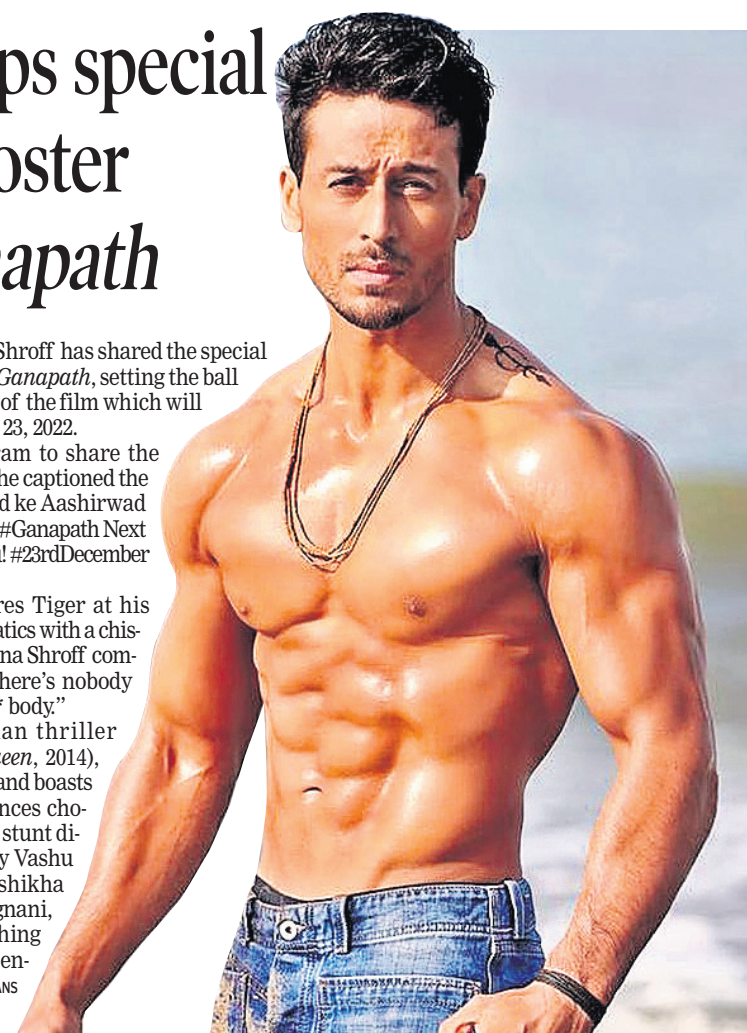
Tiger drops special motion poster from *Ganapath*

Mumbai: Action star Tiger Shroff has shared the special motion poster from his film, *Ganapath*, setting the ball in motion for the countdown of the film which will arrive in theatres December 23, 2022.

Tiger took to his Instagram to share the countdown motion poster as he captioned the asset: "Taiyyar Rehnaa !!! God ke Aashirwad Se Janta ko Milne Aa Rela Hai #Ganapath Next Christmas in cinemas near you! #23rdDecember #1YearToGanapath."

The motion poster features Tiger at his usual self of pulling off acrobatics with a chiseled body. Tiger's sister, Krishna Shroff commented under the video, "There's nobody doing it like you... No p***** body."

Ganapath, is a dystopian thriller directed by Vikas Bahl (*Queen*, 2014), which also stars Kriti Sanon and boasts of high-octane action sequences choreographed by international stunt directors. The film, produced by Vasu Bhagnani, Vikas Bahl, Deepshikha Deshmukh, and Jacky Bhagnani, has almost reached the finishing line in London after an extensive schedule.



Mira's Christmas is all about her lost tree

Mira Rajput took to her Instagram handle to share a video where she is seen decorating their new Christmas tree. The star wife reveals in the caption that she has lost her old tree.

She wrote, "The one where the Tree got lost. Yes.. We lost the Christmas tree. I've used the same beautiful 6ft tall, deeply coniferous green tree for the last 4 years and added a couple of new ornaments each year. Every year it comes out from a box labelled "Christmas" and goes back in promptly on the 26th of December (as much as I love seasonal decoration, I'm a creature of habit with ocd so I like things to be cleared out pronto)."

Elaborating further, she added, "This year I even set up a Christmas Party for the kids where the main activity was decorating the tree! But as luck would have it we searched the ENITRE house and could NOT find the box with the tree, the skirt and the stockings. Just the box of decorations. Sucks! That's why diya painting actually came on as a backup plan at the party and I was super bummed despite acting cool in front of the kids. This was a last minute tree that I bought, and yea I don't love it but the kids loved decorating it. They did it entirely this time and I didn't meddle so the decorations aren't evenly spaced but that doesn't matter; they loved it. The Star is also too big for this baby stand-in, but well it looks sweet and it was easy for Zain to decorate." AGENCIES



Tata Steel Bhubaneswar literary fest in January

The event will also showcase the life and times of Odia icon Manoj Das as well as internationally acclaimed filmmaker Satyajit Ray

Bhubaneswar : Tata Steel Bhubaneswar Literary Meet is back again to celebrate literature and allied cultural activities including music and theatre over the weekend of January 8-9, 2022. The sixth edition of the meet will be held here at Bhubaneswar Club.

The event will be inaugurated by Odisha's celebrated poet Padma Bhushan Ramakanta Rath, and acclaimed author Jnanpith recipient Amitav Ghosh.

The festival will showcase the life and times of Odia icon Manoj Das as well as filmmaker Satyajit Ray. Gourahari Das, Jatindra Nayak and Sangram Jena will discuss Das while actors Dhritiman Chatterjee and Barun Chanda alongside Odia author Devdas Chhotray are scheduled to shed light on Ray's legacy.

Writings on the marginalised and unseen will be discussed by former Odisha bu-

83 delivers an unforgettable experience

THE NARRATIVE OF THE FILM IS UNABASHEDLY MANIPULATIVE, BUT IT DELIVERS A CINEMA EXPERIENCE ONE WON'T BE ABLE TO FORGET ABOUT ANYTIME SOON

Director Kabir Khan's *83* is a recreation of a momentous event — the Indian cricket team's first-ever World Cup victory in 1983. Despite being predictable, the film offers an exhilarating and occasionally touching experience that has viewers leaving the auditorium caught up in an afterglow of excited patriotism.

The film focuses only on cricket and has everything that cricket fans could have possibly hoped for. The narrative-highlights and flashes the crucial matches and the moments in-between them, bringing back memories to the big screen after nearly 38 years.

It is invigorating to witness the matches once again and your mood swings like Kapil's bat. You cheer for him when he creates history with a fabulous 175- not out against the Zimbabwe team, and your blood boils when you realise that the legendary game was not recorded on camera because BBC did not think



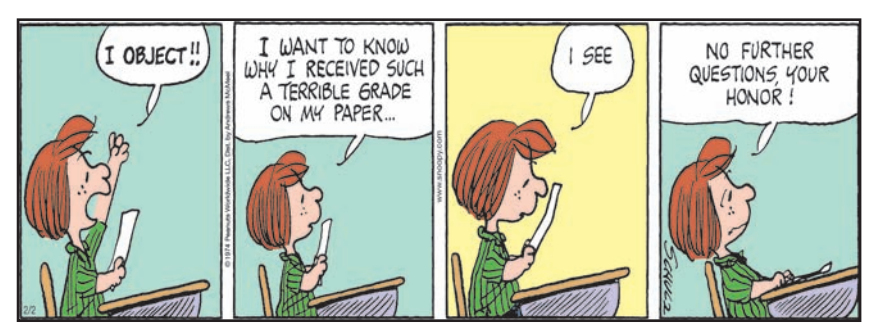
the captain of the team, Saqib Saleem plays Mohinder Amarnath, Tahir Raj Bhasin essays Sunil Gavaskar, Jatin Sarna is Yashpal Sharma, Jiiva is K. Srikkanth, Harry Sandhu is Madan Lal, Nishant Dahiya is Roger Binny, Ammy Virk plays Balwinder

Director: Kabir Khan.
Cast: Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone, Pankaj Tripathi, Neena Gupta, Boman Irani and others

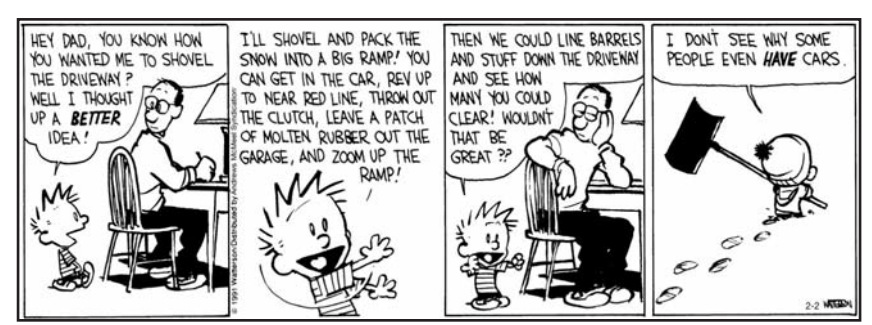
Sandhu, Addinath Kothare is Dilip Vengsakar, Dhairya Karwa is Ravi Shastri, Chirag Patil is Sandip Patil. Boman Irani as the commentator Farrokh Engineer, Pankaj Tripathi as PR Man Singh, Neena Gupta as Kapil's caring and supportive mother, and Deepika Padukone as Kapil's wife Romi have their moments of on-screen glory.

Overall, the narrative — like most of Kabir Khan's films — is unabashedly manipulative, but this one delivers a cinema experience one won't be able to forget about anytime soon.

PEANUTS



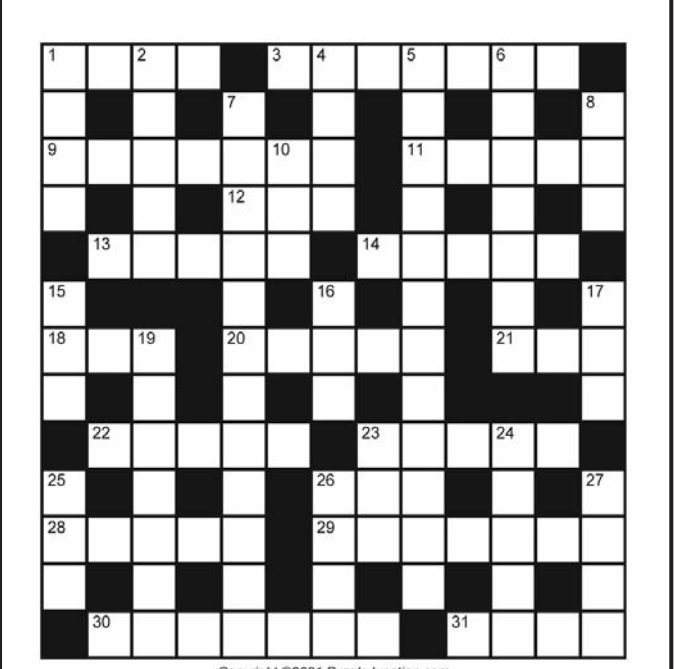
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



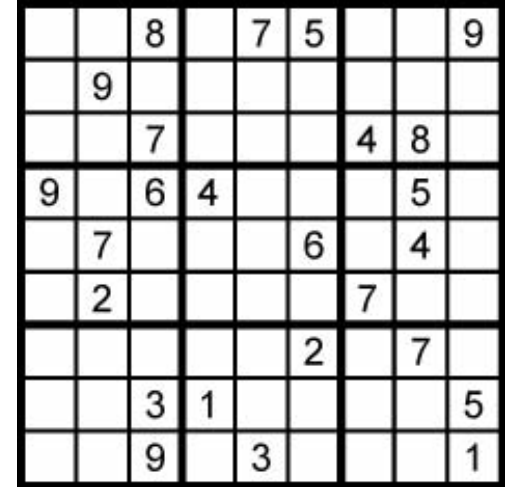
FUN post CROSSWORD



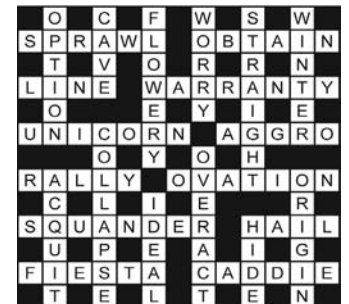
- Across**
- 1 Tardy
 - 3 Fully ripened sweet red pepper
 - 9 Art movement (3,4)
 - 11 Family relative
 - 12 Nancy Drew's boyfriend
 - 13 English poet
 - 14 Lucifer
 - 18 Jewel
 - 20 El __, Spanish painter
 - 21 Acquired
 - 22 Conform
 - 23 Truehearted
 - 26 Sleazy paper
 - 28 Rice and raw fish wrapped in seaweed
 - 29 Double-decker
 - 30 Enigma
 - 31 Four's inferior
- Down**
- 1 Camera part
 - 2 Yellowish brown
 - 4 Coffee choice
 - 5 Perfumed liquid (3,2,7)
 - 6 Like a clock
 - 7 Outlook (7,5)
 - 8 Slightly insane
 - 10 Ex-serviceman
 - 15 In the past
 - 16 Yellow, for one
 - 17 Consumed
 - 19 Freedom from conceit
 - 23 Run away
 - 24 Brownish-yellow
 - 25 Inquire
 - 26 Bellow
 - 27 Spot

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

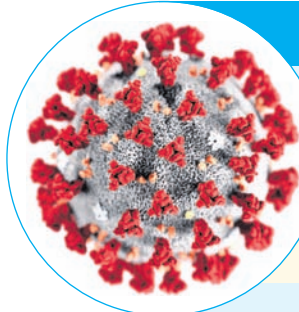


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	27,86,67,015	24,94,34,284	54,03,714
India	3,47,72,626	3,42,15,977	4,79,133
Odisha	10,53,645	10,43,601	8,450



CENTENARY FETE

Ex-bureaucrat Sahadev Sahu, OPSC Chairman Satyajit Mohanty, Ravenshaw University VC Sanjay Nayak among others at the centenary celebration of East Hostel in Cuttack, Friday

BJP-BJD war over OBC quota in rural polls

The Odisha government's announcement of giving preference to OBC candidates in the upcoming panchayat polls is all but tokenism

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | BJP LEADER

Has OBC reservation ever been a priority? Why are you not bringing Central legislation for ensuring OBC reservation in India & filing petition for this in the Supreme Court?

PRANAB PRAKASH DAS | BJD LEADER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Friday indulged in a war of words on Twitter over reservation of seats for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the ensuing panchayat elections.

Citing recent Supreme Court orders, the Orissa High Court had December 22 directed that there must be no reservation for backward classes in the forthcoming three-tier panchayat elections in the state. The BJD, however, said that it would give preference to OBC candidates in the reservation list.

In this backdrop, BJP leader and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and BJD's organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das have locked horns on the microblogging site Twitter.

"The Odisha government's announcement of giving preference to OBC candidates in the upcoming panchayat polls is all but tokenism. The anti-OBC face of the Odisha Government is evident from its lack of will in implementing the reservation quota for OBCs in local body elections," Pradhan said.

The BJP leader said the Madhya Pradesh (MP) government and the Centre are planning to move the Supreme Court over its quota ruling to ensure that local body elections in MP are held with reservation for OBC candidates.

He further criticised the Odisha government for not showing any intent to pursue this matter logically.

The state government could also have approached the SC against the recent order of the Orissa HC, especially when its own SLP for reservation beyond 50 per cent limit is pending with SC, he pointed out. The state government must answer the people why it is against OBC reservations, said Pradhan.

BJD leader Das said, "You are Union Minister, elected to Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh. For how many years was your party in power there? Why did you fail to ensure OBC reservation in MP? More so, now, with the Supreme Court striking down MP's OBC reservation policy for polls."

Das said, "Has OBC reservation ever been a priority? Why are you not bringing Central legislation for ensuring OBC reservation in India & filing petition for this in the Supreme Court? Where is your commitment for OBCs?"

The BJD leader urged Pradhan to introspect into his and Centre's commitment to OBC and stop doing politics. Stating BJD is committed to give 40 per cent OBC reservation in panchayat polls, Das said, "We might even go upto 50% reservation. We will also publish a list of these OBC candidates who have been provided reservation in BJD tickets." He dared Pradhan to do the same for BJP.

CM distributes ₹3k assistance to street vendors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday distributed special Covid-19 assistance of Rs 3,000 to each of the 1.01 lakh street vendors spread over 114 urban areas of the state in the third phase. Earlier, assistance of Rs 6,000 was given to street vendors in two phases - in March 2020 and June 2021.

Addressing the vendors, Patnaik said that Covid-19 has impacted the livelihood of all sections of people.

The Chief Minister stated that he understands the plight of vendors and assured them that the government is always with them and ready to provide support.

"The street vendors play an important role in the economy of a city. There are shopping malls and big shops in cities and towns, but the street vendors are and will remain a vital part of the city. They have an important role to play in the development of a metropolis and will continue to do so in future as they cater to the demands of all classes of people," Patnaik said.

"The pandemic has affected everybody's livelihood and I can feel your pain. The government is always with you and therefore, it has decided to set up vending zones in 87 urban areas with an estimated expenditure of Rs60 crore. I am sure this will be of use to all of you," Patnaik added.

The CM also requested vendors not to become complacent in the fight against Covid-19 and asked them to follow guidelines properly.

He pointed out that with Omicron threat looming large, they should not let down their guard even for a single minute as it could mean inviting danger.

Merry Christmas



(Clockwise from top) Girls offer prayers at a church at Satya Nagar in Bhubaneswar; books arranged as a Christmas tree by Bakul Foundation in Capital city; people light candles at a church at the Cantonment Road in Cuttack and Christmas celebration at Esplanade Mall in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Respite from cold

Bhubaneswar: People of Odisha can soak in the Yuletide spirit on Christmas Eve without worrying about chilly weather conditions as the cold wave gripping the state for the last few days finally subsided Friday. Thirteen places recorded minimum temperatures below 10°C, even as it saw a marked rise in some areas in coastal and southern Odisha Friday, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said. Kandhamal continued to experience biting cold, with district headquarters Phulbani logging 6.5°C, the lowest minimum temperature in the state, and Daringbadi hill station recording 7.5°C, it said. Bhubaneswar recorded a low of 12.4°C, which was 2.6 notches below normal, while it dropped by 2.4 to settle at 11.6°C in Cuttack, a bulletin stated.

CLASSIFIED LOST

Original Gharabari RoR bearing Khata No. 741/501, Plot No. 821/1907 (548), Area Ac.0.027 dec. of Mouza: Cuttack Sahar, Unit - 27, Gandarpur has been lost. The finder may please be inform Manjulata Barik, W/o. Late Ganeshwar Barik, Plot No. 548, Mahanadi Vihar, Cuttack, Mob.: 6370631168.

I, Smt. Kusum Mishra, W/o Narasingha Mishra, Post/PS/Dist.- Bolangir, Odisha declare that, the deed of sale related to Mouza-Bolangir-Kha-Khata No.888/1538 and Plot No.617/1482 to an extent of area Ac-0.060, Vide Regd. Deed of sale bearing No.-2687 of 1976 dated 08.06.1976 has been lost on dated 18.12.2021 recorded in my name. I wishes to create a mortgage of the said landed property for a loan / credit facility from Union Bank of India, P.O./Dist.- Bolangir. In this context a FIR also has been lodged at Town Police Station, Bolangir Vide GD No.-20 dated 18.12.2021 regarding loss of original deed of sale.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



HC for cop action in blackmail case

Cuttack: The Orissa High Court Friday directed the Bhubaneswar DCP to take action in connection with a blackmail case involving a youth from the Capital city and his fiancée, a resident of Berhampur in Ganjam. A division bench of Justice Biswajit Mohanty asked the DCP to inform the youth, the petitioner in the case, within two weeks regarding the action taken by the police. As per the case proceedings, the engagement ceremony of the duo was held July 21 this year and the wedding ceremony was scheduled to be held in December. Later, the girl asked the youth to make a fixed deposit of Rs 10 lakh in her name as a precondition for the marriage. She had refused to tie the knot and threatened to lodge a rape case against the youth.

Varsities to appoint asst profs picked by OPSC

Bhubaneswar: The Higher Education (HE) Secretary Friday directed five universities of the state for appointment of

NEWS SNIPPETS

candidates, recommended by the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC), to the vacant posts of assistant professors. In his letter to the vice chancellors of Ravenshaw University, Rajendra University, Utkal University, Sambalpur University and Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanj Deo University, HE Secretary Saswat Mishra said that the state-run universities had submitted their requisition to OPSC for recruitment to the vacant assistant professor posts. The OPSC recommended the names of nine candidates to the HE department after completion of the recruitment process.

Plus II form fill-up from December 27

Bhubaneswar: The Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) Friday notified the online schedule for filling up of forms for 2022 Plus-II Board Examinations. As per the notification, online registration for regular, ex-regular and correspondence course exams will begin December 27. In a letter to the principals, headmasters and headmistresses of all affiliated higher sec-

ondary schools, the CHSE has shared the schedule and guidelines for online filling up of forms.

Covid norms flouted at Ravenshaw event

Cuttack: The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Friday served a show-cause notice on the Sports Committee of Ravenshaw University over alleged violation of Covid protocols during the recently held concluding event of a sports competition. Sources said the civic body took cognisance of a video doing the rounds on social media purportedly featuring hundreds of youths dancing in an event flouting social distancing norms. CMC commissioner Ananya Das said, "It is unexpected, especially from educated youths, at a time when the world has been battling the pandemic. A show-cause notice has been served on the Sports Committee of RU in accordance with the Pandemic Act. Action will be taken accordingly." On the other hand, RU Sports Committee's Anjan Khuntia refuted allegations of violation of Covid norms.

CITY COPS NAB 209 FUGITIVES IN 2021

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: The city police has arrested 209 fugitives while executing non-bailable warrants (NBWs) issued by various courts between January and November this year. The data was released by office of the DCP, Bhubaneswar here Friday.

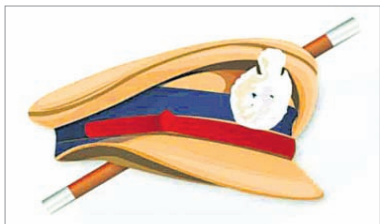
The police stations in the city received 499 NBWs during the above period. Similarly, execution of 2,039 NBWs were pending for the previous years.

The city cops managed to execute 209 while 772 NBWs were either called off or returned for various reasons. Khandagiri police arrested the maximum number of absconders in 2021. As many as 32 persons against whom warrants had been issued were arrested by Khandagiri police in 2021.

The cops of Mancheswar and Airfield police stations succeeded in arresting 29 and 18 fugitives respectively.

As many as 337 NBWs are pending at Jatni police station while Nayapalli police are yet to execute 320 NBWs.

On the other hand, the licensing cell at DCP office has issued 3,883 licences



THE POLICE STATIONS IN THE CITY RECEIVED 949 NON-BAILABLE WARRANTS DURING JANUARY TO NOV THIS YEAR

EXECUTION OF 2,039 NON-BAILABLE WARRANTS WAS PENDING FOR THE PREVIOUS YEARS

for marriage and thread ceremony programmes till December 24, 2021. As many as 137 licences were issued for hosting Durga Puja while 48 licences were given for holding rallies and protests.

During the Covid-19 restrictions, the cell had granted 1,422 licences through online and 780 licences offline for funeral and marriage programmes during the above period.

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FOCUS SOCIETY

DEMOCRACY BY DESIGN?



Most people do not appreciate the extent to which civilisations depend on pillars of norms and conventions. Some of these have evolved organically over time, while others required deliberation and collective action. If one of the pillars buckles, a civilization could well collapse

years by the COVID-19 pandemic, is causing huge strains. Increased outsourcing of production has contributed to hyper-nationalism, which in turn is fueling the rise of anti-democratic leaders who exploit people's desperation.

These changes have come so swiftly that deliberate collective action is needed to defend democracy. We do not have the luxury of waiting for our norms and institutions to evolve.

Fortunately, we are better equipped for this task today than ever before, because of a methodology that we lacked a century ago. Game theory, which began as an abstruse, mathematical discipline, is now a staple of the social sciences, from economics to politics, in domains such as moral contracts and the negotiation of conventions and constitutions.

To understand the power of such strategic analysis, consider why some authoritarian leaders, like former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, succumb to popular rebellion, while others, like Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, remain in power. When a vast majority of a country's population is ready to rebel, as seemed to be the case

in Belarus in the summer of 2020, and the leader has limited capacity to suppress the uprising, how can he or she prevail?

To address this question, I developed an allegory I call the Incarceration Game. One million citizens of a particular country want to join a rebellion to overthrow the tyrannical leader, who can catch and jail at most 100 rebels. With such a low probability of being caught, each person is ready to take to the streets. The leader's situation looks hopeless.

Suppose he nonetheless announces that he will incarcerate the 100 oldest people who join the uprising. At first sight, it appears that this will not stop the rebellion, because the vast number of young people will have no reason to abandon it. But, if people's ages are common knowledge, the outcome will be different. After the leader's announcement, the 100 oldest people will not join the revolt, because the pain of certain incarceration is too great even for a good cause. Knowing this, the next 100 oldest people also will not take part in the revolution, and nor will the 100 oldest people after them. By induction, no one will. The streets will be empty.

Authoritarian rulers' intentional or unwitting use of such an approach may help to explain why earlier revolts crumbled when on the verge of success. To demonstrate this empirically in history or in recent cases, like that of Belarus or Myanmar, will require data that we do not have yet. The Incarceration Game is a purely logical conjecture. What it does, importantly, is to remind us that toppling a dictator requires a strategy to foil such a tactic. Good intentions alone are not sufficient; the upholding of democracy needs a strategy based on sound analysis.

So do we. Today, we can marshal this kind of strategic analysis to advance the honourable aims that motivated Biden's Summit for Democracy. In some respects, the world is now at a similar stage to that of late-eighteenth-century America. We need a minimal global constitution that provides a set of guarantees, like basic human rights and press freedom, and authorises countries to intervene when a government violates these fundamental rules. This will have to rely on creating an edifice of self-enforcing beliefs.

Drafting such a universal constitution cannot be left to any particular country, however democratic and powerful it may be, because self-interest will invariably intrude. If the United States took on this task, then no matter what the initial intention, it would end up defending its own economic interests in the name of helping the world, as it has done many times already.

While Biden should be applauded for taking the lead on reinvigorating democracy, he should establish an autonomous group to draft the necessary strategy and then create an autonomous multilateral authority to help achieve it. It would, of course, be naive to think this will be easy. But we have an existential reason to try.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

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Kaushik Basu

EFFORTS TO COUNTER THE CURRENT THREATS TO DEMOCRACY SHOULD START WITH THE FACT THAT EVERY ECONOMY IS EMBEDDED IN CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONS

US President Joe Biden's recent Summit for Democracy was an important global event, but it slipped by almost unnoticed. With democratic norms fraying from Southeast Asia to Central Europe, Biden was right to warn of "the sustained and alarming challenges to democracy and universal human rights." But too few acknowledge that rising authoritarianism around the world, like climate change and the evolution of lethal viruses, can pose an existential risk to humanity.

Most people do not appreciate the extent to which civilizations depend on pillars of norms and conventions. Some of these have evolved organically over time, while others required deliberation and collective action. If one of the pillars buckles, a civilization could well collapse.

Efforts to counter the current threats to democracy should start with the fact that every economy is embedded in culture and institutions. As Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson have argued, long-run growth may depend more on institutions than on anything else. But institutions are not always exogenous. As the growing field of cultural evolution shows, human beings are adaptive learners who rely, often unwittingly, on social learning to entrench norms that are necessary for a society to flourish.

Likewise, Avinash Dixit and Simon Levin argue that, in some contexts, we may need to take deliberate steps to instill pro-social preferences that can help us adapt to our changing world. We can do this through education, and by deliberating and deciding as citizens to promote certain kinds of collective behaviour. That is what happened when delegates from American states convened in Philadelphia in 1787 to revise the existing Articles of Confederation and ended up drafting the US Constitution, which became the cornerstone of the new country's long-term growth and prosperity.

We are in a similarly challenging situation today, as cross-border flows of goods, services, and capital flatten the world economically. The rapid advance of digital technology, accelerated over the last two

SPECTRUM INDIA

Neither Quad nor RIC



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

WE ARE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

The focus of the recent meeting between the United States of America and China was on Hong Kong, South China Sea, Taiwan and Xinjiang. The Indo-China border conflict did not figure among the issues at hand. This shows that the primary focus of America is on East Asia which also has interface with Japan and Australia. In other words, the bonhomie between America and India is designed to use India as a fodder for helping America to attain its interests in East Asia. The United States does not intend to prod its friends in Japan, Australia and Taiwan to support India. Rather America intends to use India to support its interests in Taiwan, Hong Kong and South China Sea. The choice before us is between the four-country alignment of Quad consisting of Australia, Japan, India and the USA or the three-country alignment RIC consisting of Russia, India and China. The focus of Quad has been on Hong Kong, South China Sea, Taiwan and Xinjiang. Quad has not been active

in supporting India in the Indo-China border dispute.

The main difference between Quad and RIC for us is that we are getting certain frontline technologies from Quad, which will not be available from RIC. We are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. If we hitch our wagon to the Quad, we may get some technologies but we will be used as fodder to promote American interests in East Asia. On the other hand, if we move closer to the RIC then we may not be used as a fodder but we may not get advanced technologies either.

The only way for India is to pull herself up by her bootstraps. We may take a lesson here from the growth of China during the 1980s and the 1990s. First, the domestic savings rate of China during that period was around 45 per cent while that of India is between 20 and 25 per cent today. The high savings rate meant that China was able to garner the funds required for the development of advanced technologies. For example, China has built her own fighter jets and

does not rely on Boeing, Sukhoi or Rafale. These technological advances are possible only because China had a high rate of savings and invested large amounts in these technological advances.

Second, the national paradigm in China during the 1980s and the 1990s was that of economic growth. The slogan then was "to be rich is glorious." I read recently that China has a policy of giving promotions to those bureaucrats who are able to increase the economic growth rate in their regions. Thus economy takes precedence in the national dialogue. In comparison, the national dialogue in India revolves around issues like the Ram temple, Uniform Civil Code, Article 370, 1962 war with China and the continuing conflict with Pakistan in Kashmir. In other words, the Indian mindset does not see the necessity of securing high economic growth and feels that India can become a powerful country even without developing a robust economy. This, in turn, leads to the devaluation of economic issues; and a corresponding focus on so-

cial and cultural issues which are important in themselves but do not lead to economic development and power. Let us not forget that Bihar under Lalu Yadav was culturally vibrant for the first 10 years of his rule. I was told at that time by a businessman in Varanasi that Bihar is going to be transformed after Lalu Yadav's first stint. But after 15 years we saw that Lalu Yadav led to economic decline of Bihar despite whatever social advances the state may have made.

The fact is that economy is the bedrock on which we have to develop our prowess. If we do not improve our economic performance, if we do not improve our domestic savings rates and if the national dialogue does not move toward economic empowerment, then we will not be successful by hitching our wagon either to the Quad or to the RIC.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore. Views are personal.

UNSC and climate change

Sir, This refers to the article "Climate change and national security," *Orissa POST*, December 24. The UNSC draft resolution on climate change, piloted by Ireland and Niger with the backup of developed nations and the support of a majority of the UNSC members, was voted down by India and Russia, while China abstained. Their position is that the UNSC's primary responsibility is "maintenance of international peace and security" and climate change-related issues are outside its ambit. But the supporters of the resolution argue that the climate is creating security risks in the world, which will exacerbate in the future with water shortage, migration and livelihood destruction. While the urgency to take action to tackle climate change is appreciated, the attempt to securitise the climate agenda could have unintended consequences. Bringing the issue under the UNSC would also give more powers to the world's industrialised countries, which hold a veto power, to decide on future action on climate-related security issues. It is wrong to look at climate change through the prism of security. Each nation faces different challenges in transitioning into a greener economy. Also, rich nations which are big polluters have not met the promises they made with regard to climate action. The least developed and developing countries should be encouraged to keep the promises they made with financial assistance.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Time to fight Omicron

Sir, Difficult as it would seem, the international community has been gearing up for the battle against the Omicron variant of coronavirus. Now that people have been willing to get vaccinated against COVID-19 in large numbers across the world, the current fight against Omicron variant is only going to give the expected results. Firstly, there should be no place for unnecessary fear and panic about this new variant among the people. More to the point, people should continue wearing masks whenever they venture out. For this, the media from across the world should pitch for awareness campaigns spreading relevant news content. As of now big news TV channels like BBC and CNN have been churning out many interesting stories about Omicron. In this context, let us all pledge to check this new variant doing everything possible like wearing masks. After all, countries have to grow their agriculture and businesses. For this purpose, unnecessary restrictions and lockdowns should not be imposed on people.

P. Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI

What men call knowledge, is the reasoned acceptance of false appearances. Wisdom looks behind the veil and sees.

SRI AUROBINDO



Aggrieved Officers

The Indian Forest Service (IFoS) and forest officers are important but more so in Uttarakhand than anywhere else because of its geography. With Assembly elections looming, the state government cannot afford to have a large section of forest officers feeling disgruntled.

The recent transfer of 30 IFoS officers including the Forest Chief, the Chief Wildlife Warden and the Principal Conservator of Forests by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama for alleged illegalities in the Corbett Tiger Reserve has created an uproar in the service. Serving forest officers in Uttarakhand claim that the transfers are 'arbitrary' and in violation of the service rule book.

The postings have also opened up the door to the airing of old grievances of the forest officers. One major complaint is that IFoS officers are often given state deputation without their consent and that many posts meant for IFoS officers are filled by Provincial Forest Service (PFS) officers with 'questionable' track records. The state has a sanctioned strength of 113 IFoS officers.

The President of the IFoS Association of Uttarakhand Kapil Lal has reportedly protested with the government and the aggrieved officers are keen to pursue the matter and get themselves heard. Incidentally, the trigger for the current unrest within the ranks is because the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has confirmed several illegalities in the Kalagarh tiger division of the Corbett Tiger Reserve. But the forest officers insist that the transfers violate a Supreme Court order of 2013 in which the apex court had directed that IFoS officers must be given an assured minimum term in posting.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

DoPT frowns on CSS babus

The Centre has taken a serious view on the rising number of transfer requests from assistant section officers (ASO) from the Central Secretariat Service (CSS) cadre forwarded via ministers and MPs, something that until now was considered par for the course. Yet, going by the order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) this may soon be a thing of the past. The directive from DoPT Secretary Pradip Kumar Tripathi makes the government's stand clear:

Apparently, the department is flooded by numerous requests for inter-cadre transfer on personal or medical grounds to attached or outstation ASO rank officers of various ministries. These are usually forwarded from ministers and Members of Parliament to strengthen the said officer's 'case'. Even though ASOs are Group B non-gazetted officers, they are a key component of the Central Secretariat, manning the middle-level posts.

The government is apparently serious about this issue and such officers can face disciplinary action if they use ministers and MPs to press their case for a transfer of their choice. The directive from DoPT states clearly that no government servant "shall bring or attempt to bring any political or other outside influences... to further his interests." We'll have to wait and see how that pans out.

Punjab CM bows to Sidhu's demand

As is expected, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi is making careful, well-calibrated moves, knowing Assembly elections are around the corner. He recently removed senior IPS officer and state Director General of Police (DGP) Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota and named Siddharth Chattopadhyay as the officiating DGP. An officer of the 1986-batch IPS, Chattopadhyay will hold this charge until a regular DGP is appointed from a panel of three IPS officers shortlisted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

According to sources, Sahota who is a 1988-batch IPS officer was also the CM's choice and appointed after Channi became the Chief Minister of Punjab.

It is more than likely that people, some even from within his government and party, may make some noises about Channi's latest move, even though some suggest that he has relented to pressure and obliged state Congress president and his political rival Navjot Singh Sidhu, who had been pressing for Sahota's removal for long. He plugged for Chattopadhyay who during an earlier Congress government had led the investigation into the financial dealings of senior Akali Dal leaders. Earlier too, Sidhu had forced Channi to replace the state's Advocate General APS Deol.

These moves are necessitated by the approaching elections and before the Election Commission announces the poll dates, most likely in January, when the code of conduct will come into play. Keeping his flock together in a rather fluid scenario for the Congress party may be just one of Channi's many concerns.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

Let my soul smile through my heart and my heart smile through my eyes, that I may scatter rich smiles in sad hearts.

PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

The real man smiles in trouble, gathers strength from distress, and grows brave by reflection.

THOMAS PAINE

Remember even though the outside world might be raining, if you keep on smiling the sun will soon show its face and smile back at you.

ANNA LEE

WORDSWORTH

Quincunx

A quincunx is a set of five objects, arranged so that four are at the corners of a square or rectangle and the fifth is at its centre. Take a look at the five on a dice (a die if you're American), or the five of a suit of cards. In each case the dots or pips are arranged in this distinctive shape. The word comes to us from Latin, in which it literally means "five twelfths", from quinque, five, plus uncia, a twelfth. The latter word, by the way, is also the source of our inch and of ounce (there are sixteen ounces to the pound that is used in some countries today, but that's a medieval innovation — the troy pound employed for precious metals and gems keeps the older twelve ounces). The Romans used quincunx as a symbol or marker for five-twelfths of an as, the latter being a Roman copper coin which at one time weighed twelve ounces (which could be classed as an item of small change only if you are halfway to being a giant). Learned Englishmen brought it into the language in the seventeenth century to refer to things arranged in this characteristic way. An early user was Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Garden of Cyrus* of 1658; this is a work of fantasy in which he traces the history of horticulture down to the time of the Persian King Cyrus. The king is credited with having been the first to plant trees in a quincunx, though Browne claimed to have discovered that it also appeared in the hanging gardens of Babylon. The diarist John Evelyn soon followed Sir Thomas's lead — in his book on orcharding, *Pomona*, he suggested it was a convenient way to lay out apple or pear trees. At about the same period, quincunx began to be used in astrology to refer to an aspect of planets that are five signs of the zodiac apart (out of the twelve). If you need the adjective (although hardly anyone ever does), it's quincunxial.

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

OrissaPOST

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DRAMA FEST



Artists of a cultural outfit participating in a play 'Satyabati' on the inaugural day of state-level Veer Surendra Sai drama competition in Sambalpur

Kalahandi marching ahead with a new identity: Naveen

Chief Minister lays the foundation stone for development of Maa Manikeshwari shrine in the district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday laid the foundation stone for the development of Maa Manikeshwari temple in Thuamul-Rampur of Kalahandi district. ₹2 crore will be spent for this project.

Describing Maa Manikeshwari as a symbol of faith and belief of lakhs of people, Patnaik said the development work would add glory to the shrine and develop tourism as well. Notably, the development work of the shrine

has commenced under 5T initiative. While stating that Maa Manikeshwari has bestowed her blessings on all of us, the CM said it is due to the deity's blessings and efforts of the people that Kalahandi has been transformed today. "Today Kalahandi is marching ahead with a new identity of development. Every family every person of Kalahandi, be it a farmer or a worker, a youth, general public or women, all have contributed to this development. Kalahandi is marching ahead. Today Kalahandi's farmers provide food to the entire country. The demand for Kalahandi's cotton has increased. Industries have brought in new opportunities," Patnaik stated. Kalahandi University, Government Medical College and Government Engineering College have become the new identity for the youth in the district. There has been an improvement in the power supply too, he added.

SHORT TAKES

₹172cr for drinking water project

Baliapal: The state government has allocated ₹172 crore for a mega drinking water project in Baliapal of Balasore district where people in most parts are deprived of fresh water due to saline nature of the groundwater along the coast. The project will come up at Kudamansingh village under this block. Basta MLA Nityananda Sahu laid the foundation stone for the project. According to reports, Mumbai-based Blue Star Construction has been awarded the project. However, there is no information about the deadline for its completion. The drinking water project will ensure piped water to 144 villages in 21 panchayats under this block. It is said that people in these 21 panchayats have long been demanding safe water as the water available from tube wells and other sources is saline in nature and unfit for consumption.

Youth killed in Sambalpur

Sambalpur: A youth was brutally murdered by miscreants near Chhamunda bus stand under Jujumara police limits in Sambalpur. Police seized the body Friday. Preliminary investigation pointed out that it was an organised attack that led to the death of the youth, aged nearly 30. His identity could not be ascertained as the face of the body were disfigured beyond recognition. IIC Rajkumar Biswal said a group of five people had brutally attacked the youth. On inquiry, locals said the youth doesn't belong to their area. Police have started an investigation. Police have seized a blood-stained cloth, a stick and a towel from the crime scene. The IIC said police are looking for clues left by miscreants at the crime scene.

Belamguda as Adarsh Gram

Chandrapur: Belamguda village under Chandrapur block in Rayagada district has been listed under the Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana. This is the only scheduled caste-dominated village in the block. Several projects will be taken up for the village in the current year. The Union welfare ministry has sanctioned ₹48 lakh while works on various projects are on. Officials are routinely monitoring the works in the village. CDPO Lalita Pujari called for concerted efforts to end child marriage to make it a model one.

KHURDA-BOLANGIR RLY PROJECT INORDINATELY DELAYED

ALLOCATED ₹5,000CR, USED ₹1,344CR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 24: The long-awaited Khurda-Bolangir railway project is nowhere near completion despite an agreement signed by the state government and the railways in 2015 to speed up its work.

It is said that the project is known for its inordinate delay while its cost has been escalating by year.

Such an agreement between a state government and the railway ministry is the first one in the country for expeditious construction of a railway project. As per the agreement, the project should have been completed by 2021. However, six years after this agreement, there has been no headway in the project. It was alleged that the project has been a victim of neglect and apathy from both sides.

RTI activist of Bolangir Hemanta Kumar Panda alleged that the railway project which was supposed to bring about a lot of changes in the above-said districts is still wallowing in neglect. He added that the railway ministry still nurtures an apathetic attitude towards the railway sector in Odisha.



Given the inordinate delay of this project, the state government and the railways had signed an agreement in 2015 to expeditiously carry forward its work and complete it by 2021

According to the agreement, the cost sharing of the railway project was made on 50:50 basis. Besides, the state government had agreed to provide land for the project free of cost.

As per RTI data obtained by Panda, between 2015-16 and 2020-21 the railways has spent ₹1090.96 crore while the state government has contributed only ₹480 crore for the project.

In the 2021 budget, the railways announced ₹1050 crore more for the project. If the budgetary allocations in the last 10 years are taken into account, ₹5,000 crore has been allocated for the project. But in fact only ₹1344 crore has been spent for its work till date.

It was earlier decided that rail service would be launched between Bichhupalli and Jhartarba (a distance of 10.35 km) in the current year. But it missed the deadline, Panda lamented.

In January 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that the work of the railway project would be expedited. It seems the assurance of the Prime Minister has failed to meet the expectations of the people. Meanwhile, the deadline of the railway project has been extended to 2024.

In fact, the railway authorities have not yet obtained stage-1 environment clearance for a stretch of 68 km of this project.

The project was sanctioned in 1994, but it has not yet obtained the stage-1 clearance. It shows the sheer neglect of the central government to this ambitious railway project.

NO LET-UP IN ANDHRA BID TO WEAN AWAY KOTIA PEOPLE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, Dec 24: Andhra Pradesh government has not given up its efforts to intrude into Kotia panchayat in Koraput despite a Supreme Court order to maintain status quo in the area.

In the latest development, the administration of the Vijaynagar district has started constructing the building of an Anganwadi centre (AWC) at Talaganjeipadar village. As soon as the news reached the district administration, the latter halted the work.

Following a directive from Collector Abdaal M Akhtar, a team of officials comprising sub-collector Lalit Kumar Kahnr, tehsildar Haripad Mandal and IIC Kaibalya Seth along with police force rushed to the village.

The officials asked the villagers about the AWC work and directed officials of the Salur block who were monitoring the construction work to leave the place. The Andhra officials had to return after the work was halted.

However, villagers were unhappy over Odisha officials' opposition to the Anganwadi building made by the Andhra government.

Following this development, Dibakar Gemel, a sarpanch from one of the bordering panchayats of Andhra Pradesh along with some villagers lodged a written complaint with the project administrator of Parvatipuram ITDA.



Following a directive from Collector Abdaal M Akhtar, a team of officials comprising sub-collector Lalit Kumar Kahnr, tehsildar Haripad Mandal and IIC Kaibalya Seth along with police force stopped the AWC work at Talaganjeipadar village.

Villagers were unhappy over Odisha officials' opposition to the Anganwadi building being made by the AP govt. Dibakar Gemel, a sarpanch from a bordering panchayat, complained about it at Parvatipuram ITDA.

It is apparent from the fact that

people of Talaganjeipadar are lured by the work of the Andhra government. Notably, the neighbouring government has long been trying to wean away the people in Kotia villages by offering them various sops and making encroachments.

The Andhra government had held panchayat elections in Kotia panchayat in February 2021 despite opposition from the state government.

Later, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Andhra government on a contempt petition filed by Odisha for notifying panchayat elections in disputed inter-state border villages despite a status quo from the top court.

Security tightened in Daringbadi ahead of Christmas celebrations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, Dec 24: Many parts of Kandhamal district have an air of festivity ahead of Christmas celebrations.

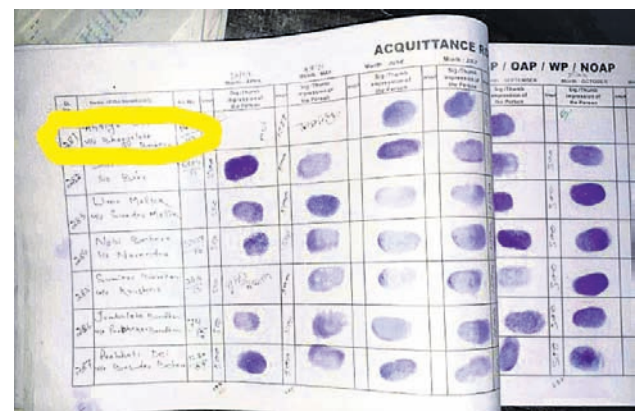
Brahmanigaon, Daringbadi and other communally sensitive areas are under a cover of elaborate security. As these areas had witnessed communal flare-ups in the past, security has been beefed up in these sensitive pockets ahead of Christmas celebrations December 25. The district administration and police have taken up various security measures to ensure peaceful conduct of the festival.

Round the clock patrolling has been intensified along with checking of vehicles at vulnerable places. All places of worship, particularly churches in Daringbadi and Brahmanigaon, have been put under security cover.

Keeping in view the Omicron fears, police are checking mask-wearing at this time of festivity. Armed forces have been deployed around selected churches and areas having minority population to maintain law and order. Anti-socials and history-sheeters are under police scanner.

It may be noted here that the district had witnessed communal violence on Christmas-eve in 2007. It was followed by a second round in August 2008 when VHP leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati was killed. The violence that followed his death claimed 38 lives, mostly Christians and hundreds of houses had been burnt.

Allowances embezzled in names of dead persons



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 24: Allowances are embezzled every month by showing names of over 20 dead persons as beneficiaries in Sayedpur panchayat under Binjharpur block of Jajpur district.

Sources said there have been massive misappropriations of allowances given through Madhu Babu Pension, Widow Pension and Disability Pension schemes under the Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD).

A standing instruction by the government says allowances should be disbursed at the district-level to beneficiaries in digital mode. Unscrupulous government employees have been allegedly managing the things by using fake finger-prints.

Interestingly, names of persons being shown as beneficiaries have reportedly died about four to five years ago. Their allowances were embezzled between April and October this year.

A close associate of local sarpanch is said to be involved in the embezzlement.

When contacted, Binjharpur block development officer (BDO)

Minati Jagadev said, "We have not yet received any complaint in this regard from anyone. Appropriate steps will be taken if a comprehensive list of beneficiaries, who have already died, will be provided to us."

Accordingly, actions will be taken against wrongdoers after conducting a probe into the allegations. As allowances are being disbursed in digital mode, such allegations could be baseless, the BDO added.

It is pertinent to mention here that a number of corruptions pertaining to the work carried out under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), construction of check dams and allocation of houses under Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana (BPGY) in Binjharpur block were proved during departmental probes.

Many physically disabled beneficiaries also do not get an additional amount of ₹200, which was earlier sanctioned by the government along with their regular allowances under SSEPD. Jajpur District Social Security Officer (DSSO) Sanayasa Kumar Behera had sought a report from the Collector in this regard.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, BHADRAK
At: Bhadrak, P.O./Dist.- Bhadrak, PIN - 756100
e-mail: ori-bhadrak@nic.in
Adv. No. /2021-22 Date: 24.12.21
TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. 7504 Dt. 24.12.2021
No. i-302: Sealed tenders (Percentage Rate) in conformity with the DTCN are invited from "B" Class and above contractors registered with Central Govt./MES/Railways the State Govt. for execution of civil works under Panchayat Samiti, Bhadrak. The tender document (BOQ & DTCN) obtained from Block Development Officer on Dt. 27.12.21 to 07.01.22 till 3.30 P.M. and only 10.30 A.M. to 3.00 P.M. on Dt. 07.01.22 i.e. last date. The tender will be received upto date 07.01.22 till 3.00 P.M. & same will be dropped in tender box available at Panchayat Samiti, Bhadrak, Dist.- Bhadrak, PIN - 756100 through Registered/Speed Post & No Courier Service shall be accepted. The tender shall be opened at 3.30 P.M. on Dt. 07.01.22 in the Office of the Panchayat Samiti, Bhadrak. The incomplete bid in any form is liable for rejection. The details terms & condition can be seen at NIC website (www.bhadrak.nic.in).
Sd./- Block Development Officer, Bhadrak
OIPR-19031/11/0005/2122

CHECK DAM IN RESERVE FOREST, LOCALS ALLEGE SCAM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Saraskana, Dec 24: Farmers here have alleged a check dam has been built inside a reserve forest at Murunia panchayat under Saraskana block in Mayurbhanj district. A major part of the fund has been embezzled by the contractor while the location where the project has come up is of no use for agriculture.

The farmers said ₹9 lakh has been spent for the project under MGNREGS. People of Murunia,



Ganali, Joditapa and Nuasahi alleged that the project was deliberately made inside a reserve forest and the fund was looted.

Another problem is that a large number of

teak plants have been felled to make space for the project. This is a violation of the forest protection Act. They sought to know if the forest department has granted permission for the project in a reserve forest. Santanu Dev Bhuyan, junior engineer of Murunia panchayat, said the work of the project is underway and no one had ideas that the project area was a reserve forest.

Saraskana BDO said the allegation will be investigated. Contacted, ranger Ajay Das said the forester will look into the matter.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER No. O-1536
RURAL WORKS DIVISION No.-1, KEONJHAR
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works
Identification No. Online NCB-12/2021-22
1. Name of the Work : 1 No. Road Work. 2. Total Number of Work : 1 No. 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.22.11 Lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor : As per Annexure. 5. Period of Completion : As per Annexure. 6. Other details:
Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender online for bidding Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification Date & Time of Opening of Tender
1 2 3 4 5 6
Superintending Engineer, R.W. Divn. Road Works N.C.B. No.- 27.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. 31.12.2021 at 5.00 PM 30.12.2021 at 5.00 PM 03.01.2022 at 11.00 AM
No.-1, Keonjhar 12/2021-22
Further details can be seen from the Website: www.tenderorissa.gov.in
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, R.W. Divn. No.-1, Keonjhar
OIPR-25110/11/0011/2122



NOW OR NEVER



The Earth is our home. We are part of this planet and its destiny is our own. We are aware that global warming disturbs everyone and everything - climate, people, animals and much more. Life on this planet will be gravely affected unless we embrace new practices, ethics, and values to guide our lives. Climate change has become one of the most pressing concerns around the globe. Leaders and activists are working towards taking measures to curb carbon emissions and tend to our ailing planet. The impacts of climate change may be far worse than what we assume. **Orissa POST** takes a close look at the ongoing worldwide issue

AIR EMERGENCY

New Delhi struggles with pollution year-round, but the problem becomes acute during fall and winter months. Around the world, researchers closely track levels of airborne particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter — known as PM 2.5 — because it can lodge in the lungs and other organs, causing long-term health damage. In 2020, 13 of the 15 cities with the most polluted air were in India.

With its size, population and aggravating air pollution, India needs 1,600 to 4,000 air quality monitors but has only 804 as of September 16, 2021, most of which are concentrated in urban areas, shows research.

India's national capital New Delhi's air was most polluted from November 1 to 15, according to an analysis of the PM 2.5 levels of the past five years. The average PM 2.5 value is 285 micrograms per cubic metre during this period. Officials said this is the only period that has been put in the 'severe' range when the PM 2.5 concentration is more than 250 micrograms per cubic metre.

Air pollution is a serious threat to human life — the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that seven million people die every year worldwide due to polluted air

Delhi has shifted highly polluting industries to the outskirts, moved its public transport to CNG, closed power plants, imposed strict emissions norms on vehicles, restricted entry of heavy vehicles, restricted gentry, and distributed LPG cylinders.

To curb the pollution the Supreme Court directed the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to examine various intervening applications seeking lifting of construction ban and relaxation on industrial restrictions within a week.

India has nine of the 10 most polluted cities in the world, but with 200 particulate matter (PM) 2.5 monitoring sites in operation during the 2010-2016 period, India's air quality monitor density—about 0.14 monitors per million people—is below China (1.2), the United States of America (3.4), Japan (0.5) and Brazil (1.8), according to research from 2019.

Prolonged exposure to air pollution leads to increased rates of respiratory illness, cardiovascular diseases, premature births and other health concerns, said Jessica Seddon, an air pollution expert at the World Resources Institute.



2021: A CRITICAL YEAR

EVEN IF THE PROMISES MADE AT COP26 ARE IMPLEMENTED, IT WON'T BE ENOUGH TO STOP CATASTROPHIC WARMING. 2022 IS A CHANCE TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION A STEP FURTHER

2021 was a critical year for climate policy and diplomacy. Some of the world's biggest emitters announced new, ambitious climate targets: the European Union, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Canada, India and the United States built on commitments already made by China and Japan.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) flagged a 'code red for humanity', focussing hope for genuine, concerted action on the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) held in Glasgow in November. Extreme weather events in 2021 shattered records around the globe. Many of these events were exacerbated by climate change.

Scientists say there are more to come — and worse — as the Earth's atmosphere continues to warm through the next decade and beyond. Despite all that invested hope, COP26 is not likely to solve the 'wicked problem' of climate change. Glasgow produced important outcomes, such as an agreement to curb methane emissions, but leaders didn't do the job they had set themselves in Paris: they didn't ensure that global warming would be limited to 'well below' 1.5 degrees.

They did make more promises to cooperate. In the dying days of the summit, the world's biggest emitters — the US and China — made the surprise declaration that they would work together to try and achieve that 1.5 degree goal, through regular meetings of a new joint working group. That agreement is an important step, but more so for diplomacy than for the climate. Some analysts suggest climate could still become yet another arena of tension in an already rocky relationship, as the



US and China compete over 'green' markets and technology.

Questions remain, too, over US President Joe Biden's commitment to renewed global leadership on climate. At COP26, American negotiators may have talked big about climate action, but behind closed doors, some claim their long tradition of realpolitik and the pursuit of calculated self-interest continued.

When it comes to the role of the US, the future looks much the same. The administration's continued willingness to support the extraction and burning of fossil fuels makes it extremely unlikely that American leadership will come to the rescue of the climate.

The far-reaching influence of the US makes concerted global action on climate much less likely. In turn, that means the global geopolitics of climate and energy transition will not be straightforward. If the transition is not carefully planned and managed, it is likely to be extremely disruptive. Current attempts to manage that transition look familiar: they are overwhelmingly dominated by Western commitment to current global economic and power structures.

The complex, technocratic maze of pledges, schemes and mechanisms represent, as some political ecologists have recently argued, "the corporate-friendly, market-based regime that has dominated climate politics for decades".

It means that 2022 is shaping up to be an even more important year for climate than the last. Next year, all eyes will be on Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, for COP27.

Every nation is tasked with bringing more ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets. They will do so in the

HOPE FOR A BETTER 2022

2022 will be a milestone year in the history of climate politics. It will mark 50 years since the first ever global conference on the environment: the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm, Sweden. It will have been 30 years since the Rio Summit, which adopted the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and 25 years since the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, the first legally binding emissions reduction agreement. Critical hope, not naïve hope, is to be found in the efforts being built upon in 2022.

In the European Union, they are using the considerable economic and diplomatic influence of the 27 member states to reshape trading relationships and supply chains. Voices from other regional and civil society organisations, especially in the Pacific and Caribbean, are becoming louder and more insistent. In Australia, states and regional authorities are leading the way, picking up slack where the federal government has failed. South Africa's

shadow of not one, but three new IPCC reports. The signs so far are that COP27, just like COP26, will further expose the power imbalance in climate diplomacy, and continue to sideline and ignore Indigenous voices. Changes will be incremental. Pace will be glacial.

Despite the frustrations, the COP meetings are, at least for now, the only global mechanism that we have to act on climate, and they are achieving something—even if that is only creating space for action rather than compelling it.



Looking towards 2030, the end of this most critical decade, it will become increasingly obvious that COP meetings are part of a much bigger architecture: of action at the local and regional levels, continued efforts to centre First Nations voices, and the overarching transformational agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We can find hope not in feel-good stories of individuals taking their own isolated actions. Not in 'technology not taxes' or in billionaire investors. But in communities, big and small, acting together in pursuit of a livable planet for all.

ON THE BOIL

Extreme weather events in 2021 shattered records around the globe. Hundreds died in storms and heatwaves. Farmers struggled with drought, and in some cases with locust plagues. Wildfires set new records for carbon emissions, while swallowing forests, towns and homes.

JUNE: Hundreds died during a record-smashing heatwave in the US and Canadian Pacific Northwest, which scientists concluded would have

JULY: A record heatwave and drought in the US West gave rise to two massive wildfires that tore through California and Oregon and were among the largest in the history of both states. Scientists say both the growing frequency and the intensity of wildfires are largely attributable to prolonged drought and increasing bouts of excessive heat from climate change.

AUGUST: In the Mediterranean, a hot and dry summer fanned intense

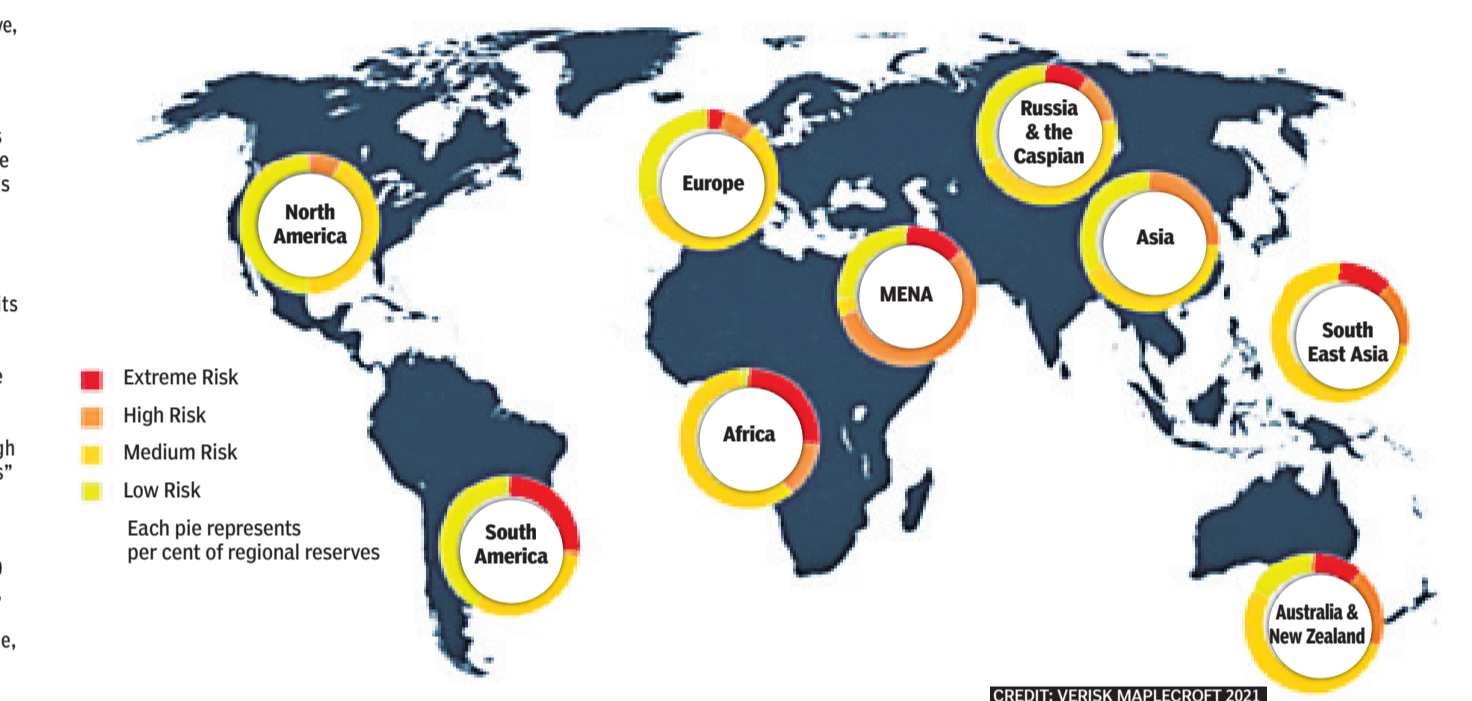
blazes that forced thousands of people to evacuate their homes in Algeria, Greece and Turkey. The fires, which killed two people in Greece and at least 65 in Algeria, struck amid an intense heatwave. In some places in Greece recording temperatures of over 46 Celsius (115 Fahrenheit).

LATE AUGUST: Nearly all the world's mountain glaciers are retreating due to global warming. In the Alps, Swiss resort employees laid protective blankets over one of Mount Titlis's glaciers during the summer months to preserve what ice is left. Switzerland already has lost 500 of its 1,500 that remain by the end of the century if global emissions continue to rise, the government said. 38 degrees Celsius measured in Siberia last year as a new record high for the Arctic, sounding "alarm bells" over climate change, as per the latest UN report. The sweltering heat — equivalent to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit — was seen June 20, 2020 in the Russian town of Verkhoyansk, marking the highest temperature ever recorded above the Arctic Circle, the World Meteorological Organisation said.



Climate change imperils world's oil and gas reserves

Over 40% of commercially recoverable oil and gas reserves are highly exposed to the effects of climate change



WAKE-UP CALL

MILLIONS OF CLIMATE ACTIVISTS DEMONSTRATED ACROSS THE WORLD SEEKING URGENT ACTION TO TACKLE GLOBAL WARMING. PROTESTS TO DEAL WITH CLIMATE CHANGE WERE ORGANISED ALL OVER THE WORLD. BELOW ARE A FEW GLIMPSES OF THE PROTESTS WORLDWIDE



TIME TO ACT

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE? Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the Sun's heat and raising temperatures.

PAY THE BILL NOW Climate action requires significant financial investments by governments and businesses. But climate inaction is vastly more expensive. One critical step is for industrialised countries to fulfil their commitment to provide \$100 billion a year to developing countries so they can adapt and move towards greener economies.

OUR CHALLENGE The planet is experiencing unprecedented fires, droughts, floods and other extreme weather. These threats will only intensify as the world continues to warm. The effects of climate change will take the harshest toll on poor and otherwise marginalised communities. Research shows that the world needs to cut its emissions at least in half by 2030 and reach net-zero by mid-century to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Yet despite this urgency and the massive economic and health benefits of taking climate action, most countries, businesses, states and cities have yet to make the economic and societal shifts required to secure a better future.

NO TIME TO WASTE The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that scientists are observing changes in the Earth's climate across every region and the whole climate system. Although some of these changes are irreversible, the report states that "strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change". However, it warns that unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in emissions, limiting global warming to 1.5C or even 2C will be beyond reach.

PLANNING OUR FUTURE The goal of the Paris Agreement is to keep warming well below 2 degrees Celsius. But current global government pledges commit us to 2.9 degrees Celsius by 2100. Based on our emulator projections, we believe these pledges would lead to a 50 per cent higher (70cm) Antarctic contribution to sea-level rise by the year 2300 than if warming remains at or under 2 degrees Celsius. But even if we meet the Paris target, we are already committed to sea-level rise from the Antarctic ice sheet, as well as from Greenland and mountain glaciers around the world for centuries or millennia to come.

A PACT AGAINST PERIL

The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance, signed in 2016. The agreement's language was negotiated by representatives of 196 state parties at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Le Bourget, near Paris, France, and adopted by consensus 12 December 2015. As of March 2019, 195 UNFCCC members have signed the agreement, and 186 have become party to it. Under the Paris Agreement, each country must determine, plan, and regularly report on the contribution that it undertakes to mitigate global warming. Under the agreement, the earliest effective date of withdrawal for the US is November 2020, shortly before the end of President Trump's current term. In July 2017 French Environment Minister Nicolas Hulot announced a plan to ban all petrol and diesel vehicles in France by 2040 as part of the Paris Agreement. Hulot also stated that France would no longer use coal to produce electricity after 2022 and that up to 4 billion will be invested in boosting energy efficiency. To reach the agreement's

emission targets, Norway will ban the sale of petrol and diesel-powered cars by 2025; the Netherlands will do the same by 2030. Electric trains running on the Dutch national rail network are already entirely powered by wind energy. The House of Representatives of the Netherlands passed a Bill in June 2018 mandating that by 2030 the Netherlands will cut its 1990 greenhouse-gas emissions level by 95 percent—exceeding the Paris Agreement goals. India is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases and accounts for 2.46 billion metric tonnes of carbon or 6.8% of the total global emissions. The average carbon footprint of every person in India was estimated at 0.56 tonne per year—with 0.19 tonne per capita among the poor and 1.32 tonne among the rich.

During his or her lifetime, a child born in 2021 will experience on an average twice as many wildfires, between two and three times more droughts, almost three

Kids likely to witness severe days

A new research has revealed that kids, especially in low-income countries, are to face disproportionate increases in lifetime extreme events like heatwaves, flood, and droughts, among others



"We have another climate crisis today. A climate of mistrust is enveloping our globe. Climate action can help rebuild trust and restore credibility" RAULINO GUTIERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

times more river floods and crop failures, and seven times more heat-waves compared to a person who's for instance 60 years old today. This will be the situation worldwide climatically under the current greenhouse gas emission reduction pledges by governments across the world. The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Science'. "Our results highlight a severe threat to the safety of young generations and call for drastic emission reductions to safeguard their future," said lead-author Wim

Thiery from Vrije Universiteit Brussel. "We even have strong reasons to think that our calculations underestimate the actual increases that young people will face," added Thiery. Regarding droughts, heat-waves, river floods and crop failures, people under the age of 40 today will live what the researchers call "an unprecedented life".

Weather extremes can hit India's crop production

Rice is a staple crop in India as well as in many parts of Asia and Africa, but climatic extremes including rising sea levels—which causes inland salinisation—can seriously affect its production. More

reliance on a single crop—Rice, could render India's food supply more vulnerable to rising threats of climate change, says a new study, urging farmers to selectively expand areas planted with alternative grains to counter the loss. Researchers found that the yields from grains such as millet, sorghum, and maize are more resilient to extreme weather in India; their yields vary significantly less due to year-to-year changes in climate and generally experience smaller declines during droughts. But yields from rice, India's main crop, experience larger declines during extreme weather conditions.



UP imposes night curfew from today

Thirty-one new COVID-19 cases were reported across UP Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow: Night curfew has been announced in Uttar Pradesh - from 11 pm to 5 am, starting Saturday - amid growing concern over the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

In addition, UP also said only 200 people could attend marriages and social functions, at which all necessary Covid-safety protocols must be followed. Government sources said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also asked all shopkeepers and traders to follow the "no mask, no goods" policy.

Officials have also been asked to ensure that all those arriving in UP from abroad, and other states, are tested for Covid, with particular attention to be paid to railway and bus stations.

Poll-bound UP becomes the second state, after Madhya Pradesh, to impose night-time restrictions.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan Thursday said a night curfew of 11 pm to 5 am would be enforced effective immediately. The state hasn't yet recorded an Omicron Covid case.

The Uttar Pradesh night curfew order also comes a day after the Allahabad High Court requested the Election Commission to consider postponing Assembly



elections due in two months.

With memories of thousands of people - not wearing face masks or practicing social distancing - at campaign rallies in Bengal and other states ahead of elections there earlier this year, the High Court also requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ban poll-related gatherings in the state.

Thirty-one new COVID-19 cases were reported across UP Thursday - much lower than the tens of thousands of cases detected daily in April-May. The state has reported

two Omicron cases so far.

Across the country fewer than 7,500 new COVID-19 cases were detected in the previous 24 hours.

The total number of Omicron Covid cases in India, as of Friday morning, is 358. However, although the daily numbers are low, experts are worried about the steadily increasing 'R' factor, or reproduction rate, of the virus, which warns of a potential explosion of infections.

The Centre, in a letter to all states and UTs, Thursday warned

■ UP ALSO SAID ONLY 200 PEOPLE COULD ATTEND MARRIAGES AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS, AT WHICH ALL NECESSARY COVID-SAFETY PROTOCOLS MUST BE FOLLOWED

■ CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH ALSO ASKED ALL SHOPKEEPERS AND TRADERS TO FOLLOW THE "NO MASK, NO GOODS" POLICY

governments that the Omicron variant was three times more infectious than the Delta strain that led to the deadly second wave.

The centre called on states and UTs to re-activate Covid 'war rooms' to better plan and coordinate testing, tracking and containment strategies in anticipation of a new wave of COVID-19 cases.

The letter - signed by the Union Health Secretary - also listed a series of prevention and containment measures that included extensive testing, night curfew and regulation of gatherings.

The Health Secretary also warned states and UTs to guard against the Delta variant too, noting that this strain remains present in different parts of the country.

POLITICAL MURDERS

Kerala police to book social media admins spreading hate

Kerala DGP Anil Kant Friday directed district police chiefs to take stringent action against those spreading fake news and false message through social media



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 24: In view of the recent back-to-back murders of two political activists in the state, Kerala DGP Anil Kant Friday directed district police chiefs to take stringent action against those spreading fake news and false message through social media and book the administrators of such platforms who allow discussion on them.

It has been noticed that several messages, inciting communal hatred, are being circulated through social media after the murders of the BJP functionary Ranjith Sreenivas and SDPI's KS Shan earlier this week, Kant said here in a statement.

"The admins of social media groups who permit discussions (inciting communal hatred) will be booked. The cyber wing of the state

police has been asked to intensify its surveillance in all districts to check such propaganda," he said.

Not just those directly involved in the murders, but also its perpetrators, those who provided them weapons, phones and logistics support would be nabbed at the earliest, he said, adding that action would be taken to find the source of money of criminal gangs.

The DGP also directed to prepare a list of criminals and history-sheeters belonging to both groups on a district-level basis, arrest absconding criminals and also ensure that those released on bail are not violating the bail conditions.

Police Thursday made it clear

that as many as 30 cases had been registered across the state in the last five days against some people for spreading provocative messages through social media platforms in a manner that incites communal hatred.

One person was arrested in a case registered by the West Police in Kollam district in this regard, an official statement said.

Shan, the state secretary of SDPI, was killed by a gang Saturday night while he was on his way home in Alappuzha, while the BJP OBC Morcha state secretary Sreenivas was hacked to death in front of his family by some assailants in his house Sunday morning in the same district.

Meanwhile, ADGP (Law and Order) Vijay Sakhare, who is heading the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the two separate cases, said as all those directly involved in the crime had managed to escape outside the state, Kerala police has sought assistance from their counterparts in the neighbouring states to nab them.

Not only those took part in the larger conspiracy of the murders but also those who provided the killers any kind of help would be booked for conspiracy, he said.

Women begin to find toe-hold in UP politics

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 24: Women and their issues are gradually finding a toe-hold in Uttar Pradesh politics after Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra put the focus on women by releasing a women-centric poll manifesto and announcing 40 per cent reservation for women in the upcoming Assembly elections.

The Congress apparently wants to build up women as a vote bank and cut through caste and religion barriers in politically divided Uttar Pradesh.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has brought 'women agenda' to the forefront in state elections with her slogan 'Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon'.

Other parties are gradually turning towards women and their lead-

The Congress apparently wants to build up women as a vote bank and cut through caste and religion barriers

ers feel that they may lose a chunk of votes if they do not include women in their political agenda this time.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this week addressed an all-women rally in Prayagraj where he listed the various welfare schemes his government had launched for the benefit and empowerment of women.

Samajwadi Party (SP) president, Akhilesh Yadav recently said that

the 2022 poll manifesto of his party would take special care of women. SP sources said that party leaders preparing the manifesto had been specifically asked to include 'sops' for women. The party is expected to give more tickets to women this time.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president, Mayawati said Wednesday that 50 per cent population was of women but they were still deprived of their rights.

"BR Ambedkar had made constitutional provisions to empower women and the BSP had been following his directives," she added.

Priyanka said, "It was after we announced 40 per cent tickets for women, all parties have woken up to the power of women votes. I am happy that other parties are working in this direction."

Probe ordered after Mayor breaks protocol during Prez visit

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 24: Several agencies have begun a probe if there was a violation of protocol done by the vehicle carrying the Thiruvananthapuram Mayor, Arya Rajendran when the visiting President Ram Nath Kovind was travelling from the airport to attend an event in the capital city.

Kovind, who is on a state visit, arrived from Kochi Thursday morning at the airport in state capital.

He was to be present at the inauguration of the event to unveil a statue of the late PN Panicker, the pioneer of learning, literacy and library movements, in the city.

Ker min's washroom costs more than home under govt scheme

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 24: The Kerala government has sparked off controversy for sanctioning ₹4.10 lakh for a new washroom in a minister's office when it grants only ₹4 lakh to build a house for the poor under its "Life Mission project".

The order from the General Administration Department came out December 21 sparking discussions all around.



State Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, for whom the amount has been sanctioned, is a

The order from the General Administration Department sparked discussions all around

two-time legislator of the CPI(M) and was a surprise choice for a Cabinet Minister post in the second

Pinarayi Vijayan government. There were several seasoned legislators more experienced in race for the post.

Cherian, 56, won his first Assembly election when he was fielded by the party in the Chenganoor Assembly seat in Alappuzha district after sitting party legislator KKRamachandran Nair passed away in 2018.

In the April 6 Assembly polls, he retained his sitting seat and was made a State Minister.

This expensive bathroom for Cherian is being built at a time when the state is passing through one of its worst financial crisis.

A political observer said this is a recurring phenomenon.

"Such things happen irrespective of the political party in power. The general norm not long ago was that the Left does not indulge in all this but the belief is now history and they are also no different from others," the observer said.

OMICRON FEARS

EC panel to visit UP next week to decide on deferring polls

"JAAN HAI TOH JAHAN HAI (THE WORLD EXISTS ONLY IF YOU ARE ALIVE)," JUSTICE SHEKHAR KUMAR YADAV SAID WHILE HEARING A PETITION

AGENCIES

Dehradun/ Prayagraj, Dec 24: A day after the Allahabad High Court suggested deferring the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections due to a possible Omicron-led third Covid wave, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra Friday said an appropriate decision will be taken on the issue after his UP visit next week.

A bench of Justice Shekhar Yadav had Thursday urged the government and the poll panel to consider postponing the UP



Assembly elections for a month or two and banning all political rallies amid the fears of an impending third wave of Covid.

"I will be visiting UP next week. An appropriate decision as required by the situation will be taken after we review it," CEC Chandra told reporters here in reply to a question on the high court's observation.

The CEC was asked whether deferral of polls was possible as the Allahabad High Court had expressed concern over the rising

cases of the Omicron variant of the Coronavirus.

On Uttarakhand situation, Chandra said he had asked Chief Secretary SS Sandhu about Omicron cases in the state and was told that there was only one case of the latest variant of COVID-19 in the state.

The CEC also spoke of various safeguards taken by the commission due to Covid but sought to assure that whatever is required will be done as per the "Constitutional position" to check

the spread of the virus.

Earlier, The Allahabad High Court urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday to consider postponing the 2022 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh by a month or two in the wake of the rising cases of Covid-19 cases caused by the new Omicron variant.

"Jaan hai toh jahan hai (the world exists only if you are alive)," Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav said while hearing a petition for bail that

he granted. His comments on Covid-19 and the elections came after he observed that the court was very crowded.

"If possible, consider postponing the election, because rallies and meetings can be held later when we all survive," he said.

"Our Constitution has given us the right to life under Article 21," he said and directed that a copy of the order be sent to the Registrar General of the Allahabad High Court, ECI and the Central government.

Justice Yadav began by expressing concern over the rising number of Covid cases.

"In view of this growing menace, several countries, like China, the Netherlands, Ireland, Germany and Scotland, have imposed partial or total lockdowns."

"The third wave is knocking at our door. We have seen the devastation in the second wave. Many people were infected during the panchayat polls and West Bengal elections. Now the Uttar Pradesh elections are round the corner. Parties are holding rallies attended by lakhs of people where it is impossible to follow Covid protocol. If this is not stopped in time, the results will be more devastating than the second wave."

"Election rallies of political parties should be banned to save the public from the third wave of corona. Parties should be asked to campaign through Doordarshan and newspapers," he added.



It was when the presidential convoy with Kovind travelling second in the 14 vehicle-cavalcade was moving towards Poojapura, nearly 8 km from the airport, the vehicle carrying the Mayor was trying to enter into the convoy as she was also to be present on the stage with Kovind at the event.

After travelling a few kilometres, her vehicle got into the convoy near the General hospital and followed the eighth vehicle of the convoy. According to sources, this was a serious lapse done by the district Mayor and as soon as her vehicle entered into the ninth position, vehicles behind her had to halt

national

of the day quote

Many people are angry with me because I have brought in prohibition. They say we should at least exempt those coming from other states. Do people come to Bihar to drink?



NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM

Fear has been dispelled from among the people in Manipur by the BJP helmed government of N Biren Singh, which has ensured "innovation, infrastructure and integration" in the north eastern state



JP NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

The city government will not compromise on pollution and will take necessary action if air quality in the capital keeps deteriorating



GOPAL RAI | DELHI ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Two terrorist associates held

Srinagar: Security forces Friday arrested two individuals linked with the terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district. The arrests were made in a joint operation by the police, counter insurgency force Rashtriya Rifles, and the CRPF in Chadoora area of Budgam district, officials said.

Hizbul militant killed in Anantnag

Srinagar: A Hizbul Mujahideen militant, involved in the killing of an inspector and BJP workers among others, was killed in an encounter with security forces in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir Friday, police said. The terrorist identified as Shahzad Ahmad Seh, a resident of Sehpora in Kulgam, was killed and his body was retrieved from the site of the shootout, the spokesman said. Seh was involved in the killing of police Inspector Mohammad Ashraf Bhat in Anantnag in October last year, he said.

Lifer for raping autistic woman

Lucknow: A special court sentenced a man to life imprisonment and imposed a penalty of ₹50,000 after declaring him guilty of sexually assaulting an autistic woman. The incident took place three years ago when the man was 37 years old, and the woman was around 24 years old. Ashutosh Pandey, prosecution ADG, said, "The DNA sampling of the rape survivor's 19-week foetus at that time and regular monitoring of the case by the prosecution helped take action against the accused. The case was different as the survivor had neuro-developmental disorder and was unable to express herself or identify the person." The convict, Khushal Singh, was the girl's trainer and outraged her modesty at the training centre near Ram Ram Bank crossing in Madaon, taking advantage of her disorder.

4 killed in blast

Gandhinagar: Four people, including a mother-daughter, were killed in a boiler blast at Canton Laboratories in Vadodara district of Gujarat on Friday morning. Sixteen others were injured in the incident. The blast was so massive that it destroyed the entire boiler crushing many. The fire fighters arrived and controlled the fire. The blast was so massive that the walls of surrounding houses came crashing down and the glasses of buildings around 1.5 kms shattered. The Vadodara police and the 108 ambulance reached the spot. The injured were rushed to hospitals.



Democracy is based on debates and dialogue. But continuous disruption of debates in the House and lack of decorum is a matter of concern

OM BIRLA | LOK SABHA SPEAKER

KHUKRI DECOMMISSIONED

Indian Navy Ship (INS) Khukri, the first of the indigenously-built missile corvettes, has been decommissioned after 32 years of service, the Defence Ministry said Friday



World witnessing 4th surge, India must be on guard: Govt



A healthcare worker collects swab samples of a policeman for Covid-19 test amid concern over rising Omicron cases in Jammu

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 24: Noting that the world is witnessing a fourth surge in COVID-19 cases, the government Friday cautioned people against lowering the guard, particularly during year-end festivities.

It urged people to avoid crowding and unnecessary travel and stressed on COVID-19-appropriate behaviour and expedited vaccination. Addressing a joint press conference on the pandemic, a senior official said the predominant strain in India continued to be Delta, including in recently identified clusters.

India has so far reported 358 cases of the Omicron variant, of which 183 were analysed and 121 of them were found to have foreign travel history. Of the 183 Omicron cases analysed so far, 91 per cent

were fully vaccinated with three having booster shots, 70 per cent were asymptomatic, and 61 per cent were males, the government said.

Citing the World Health Organisation's findings, the government said Omicron has significant growth advantage over Delta and is spreading fast through communities with a doubling time of 1.5 to 3 days.

The world is witnessing a fourth surge in COVID-19 cases and having an overall positivity rate of 6.1 per cent. The government said the COVID-19 case positivity rate in Kerala and Mizoram is much higher than national average and a cause for concern.

It said 20 districts across country were reporting a weekly positivity rate between 5 and 10 per cent and two districts over 10 per cent.

Centre launches study

New Delhi: The Centre has initiated a study of 3,000 individuals who received their both doses of Covid vaccines to determine the need for booster dose amid the looming scare of Omicron. The study will be conducted by the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI) under the Department of Biotechnology. The participants who have already received their both doses of Covid vaccines will be given booster doses to determine the impact on their immunity level. The study is expected to cover all three vaccines used in India -- Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V.

The government cautioned people against lowering the guard, particularly during Christmas and New Year festivities. It said about 61 per cent of India's adults are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and 89 per cent have been administered the first dose.

In view of the emergence of the Omicron variant, the government appealed to the private health sector to be ready as it has to play an important role in managing the pandemic.

According to the Union Health Ministry data updated at 8 am, India recorded 6,650 new coronavirus infections, taking its tally of cases to 3,47,72,626, while the count of active cases has declined to 77,516. The death toll due to the disease has climbed to 4,79,133, with 374 daily fatalities being recorded.

Kapurthala lynching: One held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kapurthala, Dec 24: The Punjab Police Friday arrested the caretaker of a gurdwara here on a murder charge over the lynching of a man whom he had accused of trying to commit sacrilege, police said.

"We did not find any sacrilege attempt or any evidence to back it," Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi told reporters in Chandigarh earlier in the day. He said the FIR registered earlier will be modified as probe so far indicated murder.

Police said the caretaker, Amarjit Singh, has been remanded to their custody for two days. They also recovered a pistol fired that day. The killing took place at Nizampur village in Kapurthala on Sunday, a day after another man was lynched in a similar manner in Amritsar's Golden Temple over an alleged sacrilege bid.

Amarjit Singh had claimed that he saw the man "disrespecting" the Sikh religious flag, the "nishan sahib" at the Kapurthala shrine. He also made the allegation on Facebook, police had said earlier.

The body of victim, who still remains unidentified, bore about 30 injury marks, mostly sharp cuts indicating that swords were used in the attack. Addressing a press conference here on Friday evening,

Jalandhar Range Inspector General of Police Gurinder Singh Dhillon also said there was "no visible sign of sacrilege."

"We have modified the already registered FIR in the incident and added offences including Sections 302 (murder) and 307 (attempt to murder), and arrested the main accused Amarjit Singh for murder," he said. The IG said the accused had hatched a conspiracy by calling his associates to kill an innocent person. An angry mob inflicted 25 to 30 serious injuries on him, the officer said.

According to the FIR about 100 people were involved in the attack. Between 25 and 30 of them were Amarjit Singh's accomplices and armed, Dhillon said. "Since an SHO was present, he will be able to identify them during the investigation and the due course of law will follow," he said.

The IG said videos and photographs are also available from that day. The mob killed the man even after police reached the spot. A medical board has taken DNA samples in an effort to identify the victim. The IG said main accused also was involved in a car theft case over five years back in Nawanshahr.

When asked whether police see any foreign involvement in a conspiracy to create communal tensions, the IG refused comment.

TMC's national ambitions: The road ahead and the roadblocks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 24: The West Bengal poll results on May 2, 2021 might become a game-changer not only in the state but in national politics as well. The overwhelming majority of the Trinamool Congress in the assembly polls and its subsequent plan to expand its base in the North-East, North-West and the Western tip of the country is not only a warning bell for the ruling BJP but it is aggressively cutting its way through the traditional Congress base which might - in the near future - reshape the political equations in the country.

The BJP's defeat in Bengal is surely a big lesson for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Despite the huge presence of the top leadership of the party, Mamata Banerjee nearly single-handedly took away the game from under the nose of the Modi-

Shah duo. The Trinamool Congress got 215 seats in the 294 strong assembly in the state. The BJP that was dreaming of forming the government managed to get only 77 seats.

According to available data Prime Minister Narendra Modi held 23 rallies in 14 days and Union home minister Amit Shah held 79 rallies, roadshows and town halls in 20 days. The ruling party at the Centre deployed over 52 Union ministers, MPs, chief ministers and cabinet ministers of BJP-ruled states to campaign in Bengal. Around 15 to 17 senior BJP and RSS leaders were stationed in Bengal for more than three months.

Since Modi took over the reins of the country and the party for the first time perhaps, barring Delhi, the Modi-Amit Shah combination failed to read the sentiments of the people in West Bengal result-



ing in a convincing loss for the saf-ron brigade. This not only destroyed the moral backbone of the BJP from which the party is yet to recover but at the same time decimated the two traditional mainline groupings in the state - the Congress and the Left Front. Both the Congress and the Left Front failed

to get even a single seat creating a new political equation in the state.

Buoyed by the success of the party in the state, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's approach to expand the horizon of the party beyond the corridors of Bengal is threatening the traditional vote base of the Left and the Congress.

Will lead U'khand campaign: Rawat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi held frantic parleys Friday and brought about a truce between warring factions in poll-bound Uttarakhand, with senior leader Harish Rawat who had declared a virtual revolt announcing that he would lead the party's election campaign.

The party, however, made it clear that its chief ministerial candidate will be picked only after the election outcome. It has been a bone of contention between various factions of the party.

The damage control exercise was led by Rahul Gandhi who met Rawat and other state leaders.

The meetings came two days after Rawat had declared a virtual rebellion, saying the leadership had abandoned him and he felt he had had enough. Emerging from the meeting, the former Uttarakhand chief minister said, "We put our problems before the leadership and accept whatever decisions are taken by them. I will lead the party campaign in Uttarakhand elections."

"Kadam kadam badhaye ja, Congress ke geet gaye ja (Keep marching ahead together, sings paeans to Congress)," he said, adding that he will continue to work for the welfare of Uttarakhand.

The Congress president has the special right to decide on the leader of the Congress Legislature Party after talking to elected legislators, Rawat said. He said everyone honours that and will abide by the decision of the Congress president.

Rahul Gandhi also separately met state Congress chief Ganesh Godiyal, who supported Rawat in the ongoing factional war within the state unit. Rawat, it is learnt,



The damage control exercise was led by Rahul Gandhi who met Rawat and other state leaders

is keen to be projected as the chief ministerial face of the party, but Gandhi has said that the decision would be taken after the elections.

Rahul Gandhi also met AICC in-charge of Uttarakhand Devendra Yadav, with whom Rawat is reportedly not getting along well, and several other leaders, including Rajya Sabha MP Pradeep Tamta, Congress Legislature Party leader Pritam Singh, Yashpal Arya and former state unit chief Kishore Upadhyay.

It was made clear in the meeting that Congress president Sonia Gandhi will take a decision on who would be the chief minister after the elections if the party bags majority.

"We had a very successful meeting," Yadav said and mentioned about the decision on the chief ministerial face. Godiyal said an atmosphere as required by Rawat would be created and everyone would support him. Uttarakhand goes to assembly polls early next year and the Congress is trying to return to power in the hill state.



Homeless people warm themselves on a cold winter morning in New Delhi, Friday

PTI PHOTO

MiG-21 crashes in Raj, pilot dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jairpur, Dec 24: A MiG-21 plane of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer Friday night during a training sortie. The pilot killed in action was Wing Commander Harshit Sinha, the IAF said.

The plane crashed in the Desert National Park area under the Sam police station, Jaisalmer SP Ajay Singh told media. The SP said local police reached the spot.

The IAF said on Twitter, "This evening, around 8.30 pm, a MiG-21 aircraft of IAF met with a flying accident in the western sector during a training sortie." It added that an inquiry "is being ordered".

"With deep sorrow, IAF conveys the sad demise of Wing Commander Harshit Sinha in the flying accident this evening and stands firmly with the family of the braveheart," it stated. Sam police station SHO Dalpat Singh said the plane crashed in sand dunes near Sudasari.

Meanwhile, an eyewitness, who lives in a hamlet near the Desert National Park, said he saw the plane burst into flames. He claimed the plane caught fire before hitting the ground.

Jaisalmer collector Ashish Modi and Superintendent of Police Ajay Singh reached the spot.

international



The state can't put on a protective mask for us. It also can't get vaccinated for us. No, it comes down to us — to every one of us. I thank the large, often silent majority in our country that has acted cautiously and responsibly for months
FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER | GERMANY PRESIDENT

RUSSIAN COURT FINES GOOGLE

A Moscow court fined Google nearly \$100 million Friday over its failure to delete content banned by local law, a penalty that reflects Russian efforts to step up pressure on big technology companies



of the day quote

Today, I signed the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. The United States will continue to use every tool at our disposal to ensure supply chains are free from the use of forced labour — including from Xinjiang and other parts of China
JOE BIDEN | UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

The American act maliciously denigrates the human rights situation in China's Xinjiang in disregard of facts and truth. It seriously violates international law and basic norms governing international relations and grossly interferes in China's internal affairs. China will make further responses depending on the development of the situation
ZHAO LIJIAN | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN

Tokyo will conduct free Covid-19 tests from Saturday amid growing worries over the variant, Koike said, adding that the government is planning to conduct 30,000 tests per day for those wishing to be tested at 180 locations in the capital.
YURIKO KOIKE | GOVERNOR OF TOKYO

China flays US law banning imports from Xinjiang

US President Joe Biden Thursday signed the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act which prohibits American businesses from importing goods from Xinjiang unless they can be proven not to have been made by forced labour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 24: China Friday expressed firm opposition to the new US law that restricts imports from its volatile Xinjiang province over the allegations of forced labour against Uyghur Muslims, saying it violated international laws and interfered in its internal affairs.

China is battling allegations of human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims in the last few years from the US, the UK and the European Union. The allegations include incarceration of thousands of Uyghurs in mass detention camps and forced labour in manufacturing units of the resource-rich Xinjiang, where mass migration of the dominant Han-Chinese is also taking place.

Researchers have accused Chinese officials of forced abortions, and mass indoctrination and other such crimes. Beijing says its security crackdown in Xinjiang was aimed at the separatist East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which is affiliated to the Al-Qaida faction operating in Xinjiang. The labour camps have been called regular job training.

The US-China ties are going through a tense phase as Biden has already announced a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics which is to be held in February next year. Reacting to the latest development, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said, in a statement, that

the American "act maliciously denigrates the human rights situation in China's Xinjiang in disregard of facts and truth. It seriously violates international law and basic norms governing international relations and grossly interferes in China's internal affairs". He asked the US government to immediately correct its mistakes and stop using Xinjiang-related issues to spread lies, interfere in China's internal affairs and contain the country's development.

"China will make further responses depending on the development of the situation," he said. Noting that Xinjiang-related issues are not about human rights at all, but about fighting violence, terrorism and separatism, he said conspiring and scheming on Xinjiang-related issues cannot stop China's development.

"What the US has done runs counter to market rules and business ethics. It will only destabilise the global industrial and supply chains and disrupt the international trade order," he said. State-run Global Times said the US legislation hurts the interests of US companies as China produces 22 per cent of the world's cotton of which 84 per cent comes from Xinjiang and many American firms are bound to face shortage.

On Thursday, American microchip maker Intel Corp. Apologised over a letter urging suppliers to not source products or labour from China's Xinjiang region.



40 dead in B'desh ferry fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 24: A crowded three-storey ferry carrying around 800 passengers caught fire on the Sugandha River in southern Bangladesh early Friday, killing at least 40 people and injuring over 70 others, officials said, in the latest maritime tragedy to hit the country criss-crossed by rivers.

The fire broke out around 3:00 am (local time) Friday in the engine room of the Barguna-bound MV Abhijan-10 launch that started a journey from Dhaka, police and fire service officials said, adding that



scores of other passengers were missing.

Officials familiar with the rescue efforts said 40 people were killed in the blaze, including nine being drowned, but some private television channels, quoting officials, reported 41 deaths from the

accident in southern Jhalakathi district, 250 kilometres from the capital Dhaka.

"The rescue campaign is still underway, we can update you about the casualties later," a district administration official told reporters. The record suggests 310 listed passengers were travelling in the ferry, but we assume the actual number was much higher," junior minister for shipping Khaled Mahmud Chowdhury told reporters after he visited the accident site.

He said three separate investigations have been launched to find out the background and other de-

tails of the predawn accident. Doctors at the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in the neighbouring Barishal district said they were currently treating 70 people while fire service officials said some 50 more were being treated at other health facilities.

Coastguard, fire service and police personnel are spearheading a search campaign covering rivers in three downstream districts. The accident took place at the confluence of rivers as a huge number of people crowded on the river banks and hospitals to find their relatives.

Pak, Afghan to resolve border fencing issue

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kabul/New Delhi, Dec 24: Pakistan and the Taliban government have reached an understanding to resolve the issue of border fencing through talks after Taliban soldiers last week tried to disrupt the fencing along the eastern province of Nangarhar, Express Tribune reported.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said a local intelligence chief of the

Taliban tried to remove the fence, and it was not a decision approved by the Taliban leadership, the report said.

Soon after the incident, Pakistan and the Taliban established contact at the highest level and agreed to resolve the issue through talks. "Both sides have reached an understanding not to escalate the situation," the official said, adding that there were some issues of alignments about the border fencing, which the two sides would resolve mutually.

Virus weighs again on Christmas festivities in Bethlehem

AGENCIES

Bethlehem, Dec 24: Musicians banging drums and playing bagpipes marched through the biblical town of Bethlehem Friday to the delight of smaller than usual crowds — a mix of conviviality and restraint reflected in celebrations around the world on a Christmas Eve dampened once again by the coronavirus.

A ban on nearly all incoming air traffic by Israel — the main entry point for foreign visitors heading to the occupied West Bank, home to the traditional birthplace of Jesus — kept international tourists away for a second year. The ban is meant to slow the spread of the highly con-

tagious omicron variant. Instead, local authorities were counting on the Holy Land's small Christian community to lift spirits.

It was a theme seen around the world as revellers, weary from nearly two years of lockdowns and safety restrictions, searched for ways to return to rituals that were called off last year, while still celebrating safely. "We can't let the virus take our lives from us when we're healthy," said Rosalia Lopes, a retired Portuguese government worker who was doing some last-minute shopping in the coastal town of Cascais.

She said she and her family were fed up with the pandemic and determined to go ahead with their



celebrations with the help of safety measures like vaccines and booster

shots, rapid home tests and wearing masks in public. She planned

a traditional Portuguese Christmas Eve dinner of baked cod. "We have to take precautions, of course, but we're really looking forward to it," she said.

In Germany, church services were scaled back and one cathedral held a special Christmas vaccination campaign. Spain ordered people to wear masks, even outdoors, and in France, hospital workers decorated a Christmas tree in a crowded intensive-care unit. Bethlehem's mayor, Anton Salman, said the town was optimistic that 2021 would be better than last year's Christmas, when even local residents stayed home due to lockdown restrictions, and marching bands paraded through empty streets.

"Last year, our festival was virtual, but this year it will be face to face with popular participation," Salman said.

In the afternoon, hundreds of people gathered in the town's central Manger Square as a line of bagpipe-and-drum-playing bands streamed through the area ahead of the arrival from Jerusalem of Latin Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the top Roman Catholic clergyman in the Holy Land.

The church is built on the grotto where Christians believe Jesus was born. Before the pandemic, Bethlehem would host thousands of Christian pilgrims from around the world, bringing a strong dose of holiday spirit to the town and a huge jolt to the local economy.

MERRY CHRISTMAS



People walk past a house decorated with colorful Christmas lights in Toronto, Canada

UNI PHOTO

Russia still building up forces near Ukraine

The Kremlin reiterated Friday that it reserves the right to move its own forces on Russian territory as it sees fit and that Western countries were carrying out provocative military manoeuvres near its borders

REUTERS

Kremlin, Dec 24: New satellite images captured by a private US company show that Russia has continued to build up its forces in annexed Crimea and near Ukraine in recent weeks while pressing the United States for talks over security guarantees it is seeking.

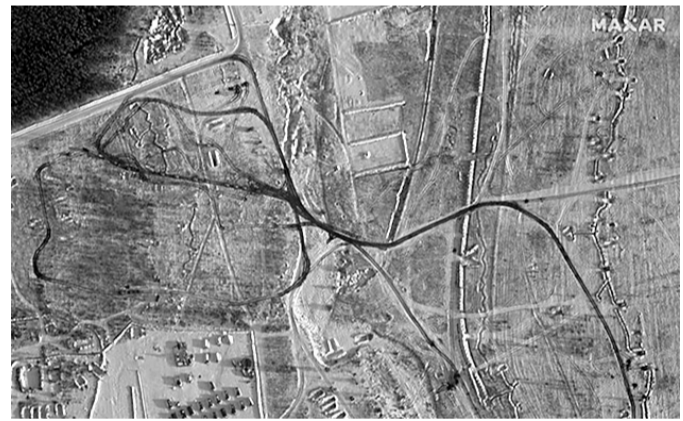
Reuters could not independently verify the latest images from US-based Maxar Technologies. The Kremlin reiterated on Friday that it reserves the right to move its own forces on Russian territory as it sees fit and that Western countries were carrying out provocative military manoeuvres near its borders.

US, European and Ukrainian leaders have accused Russia of building up troops again near Ukraine's border since October after an earlier brief buildup in April, when Maxar also released images. U.S. President Joe Biden and other leaders say Moscow appears to be weighing an attack on Ukraine as soon as next month, something Moscow has repeatedly denied.

The images released late Thursday showed a base in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, packed with hundreds of armoured vehicles and

tanks as of Dec. 13. A Maxar satellite image of the same base in October showed the base was half empty. Maxar said a new brigade-level unit, comprised of several hundred armoured vehicles that include BMP-series infantry fighting vehicles, tanks, self-propelled artillery and air defence equipment, had arrived at the Russian garrison.

"Over the past month, our high-resolution satellite imagery has observed a number of new Russian deployments in Crimea as well as in several training areas in western Russia along the periphery of the Ukraine border," Maxar said in a statement.



It cited increased activity at three sites in Crimea and at five sites in western Russia. President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that Russia wanted to avoid conflict, but needed an "immediate" response from the United States and its allies to its demands for security guarantees. Moscow has said it expects talks with U.S. officials on the subject to start in January in Geneva.

When asked on Friday about the build-up of Russian troops near Ukraine, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow was acting to defend its own security.

Russia says it wants NATO to halt its eastwards expansion and is seeking guarantees that the Western military alliance will not deploy certain offensive weapons to Ukraine and other neighbouring countries.

'Omicron likely to be dominant strain in 2022'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Dec 24: The new and highly transmissible Omicron variant of the deadly coronavirus has increased immune escape compared with the Delta variant and appears likely to become the dominant SARS-CoV-2 strain globally in 2022, according to Singapore-based experts.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for the world to pull together to end the Covid-19 pandemic next year. "2022 must be the year we end the pandemic," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva Monday.

But Singapore-based experts said much depends on how potent the Omicron variant is and asserted that it was "futile" to try and predict when the pandemic will end.



"It appears likely that Omicron will become the dominant SARS-CoV-2 strain globally in 2022," Public health expert Associate Professor Natasha Howard said, adding that the Omicron variant is more transmissible and has "increased immune escape" compared with the Delta strain.

The rise of the more transmissible variant, increased case numbers and hospitalisations are likely, said Howard, the interdisciplinary health policy and systems researcher from the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health in Singapore.

"The implications of this are still unclear, but it shows that the pandemic is not controlled yet and until initial and booster Covid-19 vaccine doses are accessible to everyone eligible globally, we can expect new variants to emerge," she warned.

For the Singapore population, it is clear that two Covid-19 vaccine doses are not enough to provide reasonable protection against Omicron and people should get booster shots as soon as they are eligible, she said. Citing Imperial College modelling data, she said that the risk of reinfection with the Omicron variant is more than five times higher and it does not appear milder than the Delta variant.

SHORT TAKES

Two killed in LA store shooting

San Francisco: Two people, a 14-year-old girl, were killed during a shooting incident at a store in Los Angeles, authorities said. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) said officers responded to an assault with a deadly weapon in progress at the Burlington store in North Hollywood at around 11.45 a.m. Thursday, reports Xinhua news agency. At the location, officers encountered the suspect who was in the process of assaulting another person, the LAPD said on Twitter.

China issues yellow alert for cold wave

Beijing: China's National Meteorological Centre Friday issued a yellow alert for cold waves, forecasting low temperatures and gales in vast regions of the country. From Friday to Sunday, temperatures are expected to drop by 6 to 10 degrees Celsius in some areas of north, central, east and south China, Xinhua news agency reported. The forecast added that some areas could see a temperature drop of more than 14 degrees Celsius.

Dozens injured in West Bank clashes

Ramallah: Dozens of Palestinian protesters were injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers in a village northwest of the West Bank city of Nablus, according to medics and witnesses. At least 42 Palestinians, including a local journalist, were injured by rubber-coated metal gunshots and 83 others suffered from suffocation after inhaling tear gas fired by the Israeli soldiers in the village of Burqa, northwest of Nablus, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in a statement Thursday.

SK will grant special pardon to ex-Pres

Seoul: The South Korean government said Friday it will grant a special pardon to former President Park Geun-hye, who is serving a lengthy prison term for bribery and other crimes. The Justice Ministry said in a statement that Park's pardon is aimed at overcoming past divisions and promoting national unity in the face of difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.



The evidence is still forming and strong conclusions from its analysis may be premature, but India's monetary policy is, by design, financially inclusive and it will reap the benefits of this strategy in the future

MICHAEL D PATRA | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

DAIMLER LOGS RECORD EXPORTS

Daimler India, the 100 per cent subsidiary of Stuttgart-based Daimler has breached pre-Covid levels on its exports, up more than 10 per cent from previous record, the commercial vehicle maker said Friday. Since the beginning of 2021, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles said it has set a record by shipping over 9,000 commercial vehicles



of the day quote

Next year (FY 2022-23), we are expecting a sizeable leap in coal production. Next (financial year), we are hoping that they (CIL) produce around 680 MT. So, between this year and next year, we expect an increase of 40 million tones



ANIL KUMAR JAIN | COAL SECRETARY

Indian Missions all over the world would also be sensitised about the need to promote entrepreneurship in India and this would open doors across the world to Indian startups



PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

By the end of 2022, we will be around 22 per cent of the current market size. In terms of tonne, it will be 11,000 tonne. We are planning to invest close to around Rs 300 crore



NITIN GUPTA | CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, ATTERO RECYCLING

SHORT TAKES

Forex reserves dip by \$160mn

Mumbai: The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$160 million to stand at \$635.667 billion in the week to December 17, RBI data showed Friday. In the previous week ended December 10, the reserves had decreased by \$77 million to \$635.828 billion. It touched a lifetime high of \$642.453 billion in the week ended September 3, 2021. During the reporting week ended December 17, the dip in the forex kitty was on account of a decline in foreign currency assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves.

BFSL, Navy launch RuPay credit card

New Delhi: BOB Financial Solutions (BFSL) and the Indian Navy have launched a co-branded RuPay credit card for the defence personnel. BFSL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bank of Baroda, said the card will have contactless features and the navy personnel up to the age of 64 years can avail the benefits of this card. The base variant of the card will be offered as a Life Time Free (LTF) credit card, the other two variants will be offered with a joining and annual fees, with easily achievable spend-based fee reversal/waiver, BFSL said.

Shares of Data Patterns soar 29%

New Delhi: Shares of Data Patterns (India) Ltd, which supplies electronic systems to defence and aerospace sector, on Friday listed with nearly 48 per cent higher against the issue price of Rs 585 and settled with 29 per cent gains. The stock listed at Rs 864, reflecting a premium of 47.69 per cent from the issue price on BSE. It settled at Rs 754.85, a jump of 29.03 per cent. Shares of the company listed at Rs 856.05, a jump of 46.33 per cent on NSE. The company commanded a market valuation of Rs 3,916.66 crore.

Okaya launches e-scooter Faast

Mumbai: Okaya Electric Vehicle Friday said it has launched high-speed e-scooter Faast at an introductory price of Rs 89,999 (before subsidies) at the EV Expo 21 held at Greater Noida. The company also announced the opening of bookings with an initial payment of Rs 1,999 through the Okaya EV website or at dealerships, it said in a release. Besides, Okaya also showcased its upcoming e-motorcycle Ferrato, which is expected to be launched in the second quarter of FY22.

BRIGHTER DAYS AWAIT

Money in RE likely to cross \$15bln in '22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: After witnessing cloudy skies this year, the country's renewable energy sector is expected to boom with a likely investment of over \$15 billion in 2022 as the government focuses on electric vehicles, green hydrogen, manufacturing of solar equipment as well as achieving the ambitious 175 GW renewable capacity target.

India, which has an installed renewable energy generation capacity of a little over 150 GW, aims to reach 175 GW in 2022. Out of the total mix, 100 GW would be from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro power projects.

"In 2022, we expect the investment in renewable energy to cross at least \$15 billion," Union Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy R K Singh told PTI.

During the 2014-2019 period, renewable energy programmes and projects in India attracted investments of \$64.4 billion, as per REN21 Renewables 2020 Global Status Report.

Data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Industrial Trade (DPIIT) showed that Indian 'Non-Conventional Energy' sector received about \$7.27 billion as FDI from 2014-15 up to June 2021. Out of the total amount, FDI to the tune of \$797.21 million came in 2020-21.

On the country's march towards achieving the renewable energy capacity of 175 GW in 2022, the



New investment made in the clean energy sector stood at \$6.2 billion in 2020, \$9.3 billion in 2019 and \$10.8 billion in 2018

India aims to reach 175 GW in 2022. Out of the total mix, 100 GW would be from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro power projects

Renew Power in 2021 became the first Indian Renewable energy company to list on Nasdaq

We have also opened the gates for installation of RE and selling it through open access. Now, anybody can set up RE capacity and sell it wherever it wants

R K SINGH | UNION MINISTER FOR POWER AND NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

minister said, "We will achieve the 175 GW of renewable energy capacity target which was set by us (excluding large hydro)."

In November, Singh said, the country achieved an installed capacity of 150 GW of renewable energy, including large hydro projects. There is 63 GW of renewable energy capacity which is under installation, which is expected to be completed

next year, he noted. As November 30, the country's installed renewable energy capacity stood at 150.54 GW, comprising solar (48.55 GW), wind (40.03 GW), small hydro power (4.83 GW), bio-power (10.62 GW) and large hydro (46.51 GW). The nuclear energy-based installed electricity capacity is at 6.78 GW.

As November 30, 52 solar parks have been sanctioned with a cumulative capacity of 37.92 GW in 14 states. Solar power projects of an aggregate capacity of around 9.2 GW have already been commissioned in these parks.

Under the rooftop solar programme Phase-II, a total of 5.7 GW solar capacity has been set

Engineering exports to China doubles in Nov

New Delhi: India's engineering goods shipments to China more than doubled in November this year to \$434.6 million, the Engineering Export Promotion Council India said Friday. In November 2020, exports of such goods were worth \$205.3 million, the council said. The US, however, remained the top buyer of Indian engineering goods at \$1,196 million during the month, registering a growth of 36 per cent. The EEPC also said that it is important to note that after four months of continually hitting almost the \$9 billion mark, total engineering exports volume in November came down to around \$7.7 billion. "The slowdown seems indicating the distress exporters are facing given volatility in world demand and the uncertainty regarding the pandemic which has been triggered by the new variant Omicron. Experts around the globe have already predicted that while the global trade growth is remarkable it is not even across the countries," EEPC India Chairman Mahesh Desai said. The EEPC urged the Centre to look into matters such as growing inflation, rising raw material prices as well as logistics issues, scarcity of containers, with an urgency.

up as November 30. Against the target of 4 GW for residential sector under Phase-II, allocation of 3.4 GW has already been made to various states UTs and 1.07 GW has been installed.

Govt imposes stock limits on soyameal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: The Centre Friday imposed stock holding limits on soyameal, which is used as a raw material in the poultry feed industry, till June 2022 to curb hoarding as well as check price rise.

The limits will be in place till June 30, 2022 and an order in this regard was issued with effect from December 23, an official statement said. Besides, the government has notified an order under the Essential Commodities Act to declare 'soyameal' as an essential commodity up to June 30, 2022 by amending the Schedule of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Government-registered trading companies, traders and private chaupals can hold a maximum stock of 160 tonne with a defined and declared storage location. It should be ensured that the soyameal stock is regularly declared and updated on the portal, the statement said.

Soyameal processors, millers and plant owners can hold a maximum stock of 90 days production and are required to declare the storage location

The data on the portal will be regularly monitored and any follow-up action will be taken by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying. "The above measures are expected to stop any unfair practices (like hoarding, black marketing etc) in the market having the potential to hike the prices of soyameal," the statement said.

The stock limits have been set in consultation with the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying. The move will help to curb unfair market practices and enhance the availability of the commodity for consumers like poultry farm and cattle feed manufacturers, the statement said.

Nabard's workshop on ACABC, AIF, new AMI



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Nabard, Odisha Regional Office, organised a state level workshop on ACABC, AIF and New-AMI scheme Friday at Hotel Swosti Premium here. The workshop was jointly inaugurated by Chief General Manager of Nabard C Udayabhaskar, and state Agriculture & Food Production Director M Muthukumar who graced the occasion as the chief guest.

SLBC convenor Arupnand Jena, Deputy Agriculture Marketing Advisor to Government of India BK Tiwari, senior officials from line departments and banks, and entrepreneurs participated in the meeting.

Sai Maheshwari from Manage, Hyderabad and Amaresh Dey C-PMU, AIF, Ministry of Agriculture, DA&FW, GoI respectively joined virtually. Susanta Mishra, GM, SR Panda, DGM, All DDMs and RO officials participated in the meeting. Presentations on ACABC, AIF and

AMI scheme were made during the workshop.

Udayabhaskar in his inaugural address stressed that through the development of various agri infrastructures, especially at the post harvest stage, the produce can be optimally utilised with opportunity for value addition and fair deal for farmers. He advised for creation of more awareness among all stakeholders through SMS, awareness literature and review of these schemes regularly in SLBC, DCC and BLBC etc. NABARD will proactively continue to work with line departments and bankers to promote the ACABC, AIF and new-AMI schemes so as to reach the benefits to maximum number of farmers.

Muthukumar advised all bankers and line departments to work hard to promote these schemes amongst the farmers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders, so that maximum benefit can be derived. He appreciated the efforts of NABARD and assured Government of Odisha co-operation in this regard.

BofA sees 8.2% GDP growth

Pencilling in average CPI print at 5.6% in FY23, the report said rising inflation could turn out to be a key macro concern for all as global commodity prices remain high



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 24: Warning that the new year will be riskier than the previous two in terms of growth, inflation and the perils of monetary policy normalisation on consumption demand in particular, along with other external risks, a

Wall Street brokerage has pencilled in an 8.2 per cent GDP growth next fiscal, with more downside risks to the projection.

The biggest risk to the projection is a derailed consumption demand that has been the main growth driver in the past many years, said the Bank of America (BoFA) Securities India house economists

who still believe that consumption demand will remain the key driver of growth next fiscal as well.

These economists expect higher growth next fiscal on the back of higher overall gross value add (GVA) growth due to the lower outgo onto subsidies next fiscal, along with stable agri growth at around 4 per cent and robust services growth, adding up to an overall GVA growth of 7 per cent, down from a likely 8.5 per cent in FY22 and an 8.2 per cent GDP growth in FY23, down from 9.3 per cent in FY22.

Since GDP is GVA plus the indirect taxes on goods net of subsidies, a hike in subsidies like last year, leads to wider gap between GDP and GVA growth, as last year, its report said.

Telcos to archive data for 2 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: Department of Telecom (DoT) has extended the duration of archiving call data and internet usage records of subscribers to two years from one year due to security reasons.

The amendments in the licences were issued December 21 and extended to other forms of telecom permits December 22.

"The licensee shall maintain all commercial records call detail record exchange detail record IP detail record with record to the communications exchanged on the network. Such records shall be archived for at least two years for scrutiny by the licensor for security reasons..." the DoT circular said.

Telecom companies may destroy the data stored thereafter if there is no direction from the DoT thereafter. The circular said that the amendment is necessary in public interest or in the interest of the security of the state or for the proper conduct of the telegraphs.

The amendment mandates telecom companies to maintain internet data records of subscribers including login and logout details of all subscribers for services provided such as internet access, e-mail, internet telephony services like calls made from mobile applications or wifi calling for at least two years. Earlier the rules mandated the archive call data and internet usage records for at least 1 year.

2021: An year of record trade amid frozen India-China ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 24: India and China achieved a major milestone this year when their bilateral trade crossed the landmark figure of \$100 billion but it did not generate any fanfare in both capitals as the two Asian giants are going through a "particularly bad patch" in their relations due to a set of actions by Beijing in violation of agreements that led to the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Starting with a modest \$1.83 billion in 2001, the bilateral trade crossed \$100 billion-mark in the first 11 months this year, a significant milestone for which the two countries carried out campaigns to boost trade and build it as a major stakeholder to improve the relations between two nations, whose ties otherwise remained frosty over the festering boundary dispute and strategic rivalry.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a panel discussion in Singapore in November said that India and China are going through a "particularly bad patch" in their ties because Beijing has taken a set of actions in violation of agreements for which it still doesn't have a "credible explanation".

Also, former Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri, who in his virtual farewell call on Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi December 6 said challenges had overpowered vast opportunities in Sino-India ties. "Our relations comprised both opportunities and challenges, and even though certain challenges

since last year had overpowered the vast opportunities in the relationship," Misri told Wang, apparently referring to the Ladakh standoff which posed a major obstacle for the ties.

The two countries had decided to establish a High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue (HETD) mechanism which was to be headed by

the Vice Premier of China and Finance Minister of India.

It was expected to look into all issues related to bilateral trade and business cooperation including India's concerns related to the trade deficit. China had set up such a high-level mechanism only with the US to improve trade ties.

Sadly, due to the chill in bilateral ties following the eastern Ladakh standoff, the initiative failed to take off. While the HETD has not met so far, the two countries have not held a single programme of the 70 events planned.

Highlighting China's stand on the current state of ties, Wang in his meeting with Misri said that without mutual trust, it is difficult to bring the two sides together, even if there are no mountains in the way. "China and India should become partners and friends" and should not be a threat to each other, he said.

5-BOWLER TACTIC ON CARDS



India vice-captain KL Rahul has something to talk about with his skipper Virat Kohli during one of the team's practice session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 24: India vice-captain KL Rahul Friday indicated that the team will continue with their five-bowler strategy in the first Test against South Africa but agreed that the choice between Ajinkya Rahane and Shreyas Iyer for the No.5 slot is a tough one.

India have been practising here for a week ahead of the opening match, starting Sunday, and the newly-appointed vice-captain believes that a good start is needed to set the tone in the Rainbow Nation where they have never won a Test series.

Asked if playing four bowlers, which allows an extra batter in the line-up becomes a workload management problem for the team, Rahul replied in an affirmative.

"Every team wants to pick up 20 wickets to win Test match. We have used that tactic and it has helped us in every Test match that we have played away," Rahul said during a virtual media interaction.

"Workload also becomes slightly easier to manage with five bowlers and when you have that kind of quality (in Indian ranks), I think, we might as well use it," the senior opener made it amply clear that a fourth pacer will play.

Shardul Thakur, because of his superior batting skills holds an advantage over senior pro Ishant Sharma, it could mean that only one among Iyer, Rahane and Hanuma Vihari will get a look in as Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant select themselves.

"It is a very difficult decision to make obviously. Speaking about Ajinkya, he has been an important member of the Test team, played very, very crucial knocks in his career," Rahul was waxed eloquent about his senior teammate.

"In the last 15-18 months, he has played some crucial knocks, that partnership with Pujara at Lord's, was important for us in winning the Test. Shreyas, obviously has taken his chances and got a brilliant hundred (along with a fifty) in Kanpur

and he is very exciting. Hanuma has done the same for us, so it's a tough decision"

It was but only natural that Rahul, as a part of team management, kept cards close to his chest. "We will start having a chat today or tomorrow and you will get to know in couple of days time."

Rahul also agreed with rival seamer Suanne Oliver's assertion that Supersport Park track is slow to begin with and quickens up later only to again taper off towards the

end of the match.

"I think Duane Oliver will know these conditions a lot better than us and yes, last time, we played here, the wicket started off bit slow and then quickened up and then became slow again.

"It's been that kind of a pitch, we have had centre wicket practice and we experienced the same things, we tried to prepare accordingly."

The bounce in South African tracks isn't similar to that in Australia where it's faster and the

bounce is more even, reckons Rahul.

"It's pace and bounce in pitches here which is very different to every other country. We have come early and tried to get adjusted as it has been a great week of preparation.

"Sometimes pitches can be a bit different because of its tennis ball bounce. In Australia, pitches can be fast and bouncy. We have had a lot of sessions and we are trying to understand and adjust to the conditions."

Mayank follows head coach Dravid's words

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 24: India opener Mayank Agarwal says his time away from the national team was spent in understanding his mind space, something which India coach Rahul Dravid has always emphasised on and it benefitted him immensely as he reclaimed his place in the side.

The 30-year-old from Karnataka had lost his place in the team after being ruled out of the first Test in England due to concussion. He then made a strong comeback to the Test set-up with scores of 150 and 62 in the second Test against New Zealand recently as India won the series against World Test Champions 1-0.

"It is not a fresh start. The last one year that went by was a lot to do with understanding myself and



understanding what ticks me, and what hadn't worked for me," Agarwal told fellow opener and India vice-captain KL Rahul during a chat, a video of which was posted on bcci.tv. "I am glad that I could come back and put in the

performances and I look to do the same."

Talking about chief coach Dravid's contribution in the process of understanding himself, Agarwal said, "For me, he has just been a person who talks about under-

standing yourself and understanding your mind space. If you can work that out and sort that out then more often than not you are giving yourself best possible chance to succeed."

"Knowing him, he is a man who really strives and puts the onus on a good strong preparations. We had quality sessions here and we are looking forward to playing the Test match," he said but did not elaborate what exactly he learned.

Agarwal and Rahul have shared the dressing for the Karnataka state team and have also opened the innings together for Punjab Kings in the IPL for the last four years.

Rahul hoped their camaraderie will help them to score runs together and win India matches, starting with the opening Test against South Africa beginning December 26.

Jonathas goal saves Odisha the blushes



Jonathas (with ball) reacts after scoring against FC Goa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vasco, Dec 24: FC Goa started off the Derrick Pereira era with a 1-1 draw against Odisha FC in Indian Super League game here Friday.

In a game of two halves, the Gaurs saw themselves take the lead thanks to an Ivan Gonzalez goal before being pulled back in the second half when Odisha struck through their Brazilian striker Jonathas.

Pereira, in his first game as FC Goa head coach decided to go for an unchanged XI with Edu Bedia again leading the side. The former Indian international was without the services of Glan Martins, Brandon Fernandes and Jorge Ortiz owing to injuries and suspensions.

Kiko Ramirez, on the other hand, rang in five changes to his side with a view to bring to end Odisha's recent slide down the table which

has seen them lose three of their last four games.

Goa started the stronger of the two sides and looked the likelier of the two sides to open the scoring in the first 20 minutes. However, Odisha custodian Kamaljit Singh put the Gaurs at bay with some fine saves.

The breakthrough finally came in the 42nd minute through a corner kick. Gonzalez came up with his first of the season, getting on the end of a free-kick from the left after Dohling did well to flick it on at the near post.

FC Goa came out the stronger of the two sides following the break. However, against the run of play, Odisha equalised. Jonathas made the most of his physical prowess as he bundled the ball over the line in the 53rd minute after a deflected cross from the left by Nandhakumar caught out the Gaurs' defence.

Medal-winning para shuttlers felicitated



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday felicitated the para shuttlers who won medals at the Tokyo Paralympics.

Patnaik felicitated Deepa Malik (president of Paralympic Committee of India), Prabhakar Rao (chairman, Para Badminton India), Gaurav Khanna (head coach, para badminton Indian team), Shiba Prasad Das (head coach, Odisha Para badminton), Paralympics gold winner Pramod Bhagat, Krishna Nagar (gold medallist), Manoj Sarkar (bronze medallist) as well as Paralympians Tarun Dhillon, Parul Parmar and Palak Kholi.

Malik thanked Patnaik for his initiatives for development of sports in the country. She lauded Odisha as a model for sports development and for the support of the state towards the sportspersons and para-sports persons.

The capital city is hosting the 4th National Para Badminton Championships, which began Friday and will finish December 26. More than 400 para shuttlers from across the country are participating in this event, which is the largest so far in this field.

Malik and the para-Olympians praised the government and the state association for making such good arrangements for the comfort of the para shuttlers.

Ex-India goalie Sanat Seth dies

KOLKATA: Former India goalkeeper Sanat Seth, who was part of the 1954 Asian Games squad, died here Friday after prolonged illness. Seth, 91, was suffering from age-related problems and breathed his last on Friday morning, according to family sources. He lost his wife last year and has left behind his son. Known for his acrobatic saves under the bar, Seth began his journey at the Eastern Railway FC in 1949 before moving to Aryan Club in 1951. He then moved to East Bengal in 1957 and the next year he joined their arch-rivals Mohun Bagan, where he played for six years. "I was born at Railway FC, Aryan is my uncle's house while East Bengal and Mohun Bagan are my aunt's places," he had once said famously. He was also part of the national squad which won the Quadrangular Cup in 1953, 1954 and 1955.

Fencer Bhavani Devi gets government aid

NEW DELHI: India's first-ever Olympian fencer Bhavani Devi is set to take part in four international competitions in the next calendar year after the Sports Ministry sanctioned an amount of Rs 8.16 lakh to facilitate her participation in the events.

According to a ministry statement, the amount was sanctioned via the Annual Calendar for Training and Competition (ACTC) scheme. Bhavani, who won her first round individual sabre event before going down in the Round of 32 match at the Tokyo Olympics earlier this year, will be taking part at a training camp in Tbilisi, Georgia from January 4, before competing at the International Fencing Federation (FIE) World Cup in the same city from January 14 to 16.

Harbhajan: A match-winner who stood tall amongst all

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: A small spot jump followed by a two step angular run-up and a fast action that hoodwinked batters.

Harbhajan Singh would repeat this on sunny days, dreary afternoons and those nippy floodlit evenings for a decade at a stretch, winning matches for India. And then one day, it all came to a screeching halt.

Not all beautiful love stories have perfect endings and one can bet that as he bid adieu to the cricket field, the 41-year-old would have ideally liked a happier ending to his cricketing script.

But there shouldn't be any regrets as it was a lovely journey, full of experiences that make life worthwhile and anyone who knows him closely, would vouch that the 'R' word in his dictionary never stood for 'regret'.

He was semi-retired for the past few years having last worn the India blues back in 2016 but every story - good, bad or ugly - requires a closure and for India's Turbanator, his announcement of retirement officially marks an end to one of Indian cricket's most fascinating chapters.

With 100-plus Tests and 400-plus wickets, most of them not exactly coming on rank turners, Harbhajan's name will always fig-

ure among true blue cricketing elites of India. And with two limited-overs world titles under his belt, it's an enviable CV for any top-flight cricketer.

He was unique in his own way with all his frailties, heartburns and controversies and the many imperfections that made him even more endearing.

For him, his leader was always Sourav Ganguly, someone whose foresight perhaps stopped him from migrating to the United States in early 2000 after his father's death.

And during those ugly days of Greg Chappell versus Ganguly, he was the only cricketer who went on record to support his skipper only to be hauled up by the BCCI.

He would never shy away from what he felt was the truth and thus protesting against stale food supplied by the National Cricket Academy led to his expulsion by then chief Hanumant Singh.

There would be questions raised about his action and twice he had to undergo tests to come out clean.

The infamous 'Monkeygate' episode when he was accused of racial abuse by Andrew Symonds did mentally take a toll on him and he realised it as time passed.

The controversy related to shoving S Sreesanth during the IPL was avoidable but then in those days, he could well be on short fuse and the incident that led to his sus-

pension happened during that event's first edition.

The colorful patkas, roar of a lion at every dismissal and the love for a good scrap made Harbhajan a true blue rockstar in those early days of the new millennium when Indian cricket team under Ganguly

was trying to pick up pieces after being shaken to the core by the match-fixing scandal.

Extremely combative, bordering on combustible with skills to match, Harbhajan, in his pomp, displayed the kind of swag that very few can even now.

MAJOR REACTIONS ON HIS RETIREMENT

- SACHIN TENDULKAR**
What a wonderful & fulfilling career, Bhajji! I first met you at India nets in '95 - over the years, we've been part of wonderful memories. You have been a great team man, playing with all your heart. Both on the field and off it - it is always fun to have you as part of any team. I cannot forget all those moments of laughter. You have done your best for India in your long career, we are all very proud of you. Wishing you happiness and success in the 'doosra' phase of your career.
- SHIKHAR DHAWAN**
Congratulations on a wonderful career Pajhi Your contribution to cricket has been immense and it was a pleasure to play alongside you. Enjoyed our great moments together on and off the field. Wishing you luck for your next innings.
- VVS LAXMAN**
Hearty congratulations to my great mate Harbhajan Singh on a remarkable career! A tremendous exponent of off-spin, a gifted batsman and a true competitor who fashioned many a wonderful Indian victory. Best wishes for the future, Bhajji, go well!
- S SREESANTH**
Harbhajan Ur gonna be the one of the best ever played cricket not just for India but in world of cricket. It's a huge honour to know u and to have played with you b bhajipiaWill always cherish the lovely hugs (lucky for me) before my spells. Lots of love and respect.
- GAUTAM GAMBHIR**
Those who say cricket is becoming a batsman's game should look at your career. You're a true superstar @harbhajan_singh!



All good things come to an end and today as I bid adieu to the game that has given me everything in life, I would like to thank everyone who made this 23-year-long journey beautiful and memorable. From the narrow lanes of Jalandhar to becoming the Turbanator of Team India, it has been a beautiful journey of past 25 years. Like all cricketers, I too wanted to bade adieu in Indian jersey but fate had something else in store for me

HARBHAJAN SINGH