



## A HEARTFELT NOTE

Actor Deepika Padukone took to the social media to reveal why she chose to be part of the film '83

LEISURE P2



## PAK WARNED

A top military commander of the Taliban-led govt has warned Pakistan against firing artillery towards Afghanistan

INTERNATIONAL P10



## INDIA IN COMMAND

KL Rahul's unbeaten century puts India in command against South Africa in the first Test at Centurion

SPORTS P12



## WORLD ECONOMY TO EXCEED \$100 TRN IN 2022

**LONDON:** The world's economic output will exceed \$100 trillion for the first time next year and it will take China a little longer than previously thought to overtake the United States as the No.1 economy, a report showed Sunday. British consultancy Cebr predicted China will become the world's top economy in dollar terms in 2030, two years later than forecast in last year's World Economic League Table report. India looks set to overtake France next year and then Britain in 2023 to regain its place as the world's sixth biggest economy, Cebr said. "The important issue for the 2020s is how the world economies cope with inflation, which has now reached 6.8% in the US," said Cebr deputy chairman Douglas McWilliams.



## NON-VENOMOUS SNAKE BITES SALMAN KHAN

**MUMBAI:** Hindi film superstar Salman Khan is "happy and absolutely healthy" after he was discharged from a hospital Sunday following a non-venomous snake bite, said actor-politician Bina Kak, a close family friend. According to sources, the snake bit Khan's hand Saturday night at his farmhouse near Panvel in the adjoining Raigad district. The actor was then taken to a hospital at Kamothe in Navi Mumbai and was discharged Sunday morning. "Salman was bitten last night and taken to a hospital. He was discharged after six hours. He is back home and well," sources close to the actor had said. Khan was back to his farmhouse, where he will be ringing in his 56th birthday Monday. Khan was recently seen on the big screen in "Antim: The Final Truth", which released last month.

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**HOLIDAY SEASON:** People through the Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar during the weekend leading to the New Year, Sunday. PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK



## State's Omicron tally rises to 8

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** Four people who returned to the state from foreign countries were found to be infected with the Omicron variant of COVID-19, a senior Health department official said Sunday. Two of the new patients returned from Nigeria, while the other two came back from UAE, said Director of Health Service (DHS) Bijay Mohapatra. With this, the state's Omicron tally rose to eight, he said. Odisha reported the first cases of Omicron variant December 21 as two persons who returned from foreign countries - Nigeria and Qatar - were found to be infected. On December 23, two more cases of Omicron were found as two people who returned from Nigeria tested positive. One person, who was among the four new cases, has already tested negative, the official said. There is no need to panic as the conditions of all the four are stable, Mohapatra said. As per the state government's directive, all foreign returnees from "at-risk" as well as other countries are being tested, and the samples of those found positive are being sent for genome sequencing, he said. The district administrations have been instructed to intensify surveillance on those returning from foreign countries to their areas, officials said.

# IN 5 YEARS POVERTY TO DIP BELOW 10%: CM

The BJD supremo said poverty in the state has come down from 63 per cent to 29 per cent. As many as 80 lakh people have gone above the poverty line

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** Asserting that the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) does not have a "boss in Delhi", Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday said that his party will continue to work for people of the state, and pledged to reduce its poverty rate to 10 per cent in the next five years. Addressing party workers and leaders on BJD's 25th foundation day, Patnaik, in a virtual address, said that the party is accountable to the people of Odisha, who have turned the party into a social movement. Attacking the state's two main Opposition national parties Congress and BJP, the Chief Minister said, "We (BJD) don't have a boss in Delhi. Whatever we do is for the people of Odisha, who are our boss." "Behind the success of BJD was the dream of the people for a prosperous and strong Odisha. The party will work for the next 100 years with the support of all residents of the state," the regional outfit's founding president said. "Born with the vision of the legendary Biju Patnaik, the BJD has now turned into a social movement. The party is a symbol of the trust and belief of 4.5 crore people of Odisha," he said. Claiming that BJD is the only party whose popularity is growing with each passing day, he said that 1 crore of the 4.5 crore people of Odisha are its members. Highlighting his government's successes, the Chief Minister said that Odisha has undergone a sea of change since 2000 and the poverty rate of the state has come down from 63 per cent to 29 per cent, and over 80 lakh people have been brought above the poverty line. "Odisha will create history by fur-



**We do not have any boss in Delhi. The people of Odisha are the boss of the BJD and we are only accountable to the people of the state**

NAVEEN PATNAIK | ODISHA CHIEF MINISTER

ther reducing the poverty rate to 10 per cent in the next five years. Our government will take all measures to achieve the goal," he said. Patnaik said that in terms of food grain production, the state has become third in the country from primarily being a buyer from other states. Giving credit to farmers for bumper crop production and ensuring Odisha's food security, he said that this reflects the state government's commitment towards expanding irrigation facilities. He said that the BJD, which is in power in the state since 2000, has successfully managed natural calamities like cyclones. "Odisha leads the country in disaster management, and has even been praised by United Nations and Niti Ayog among others for its exemplary work." Noting that the welfare of women, SCs, STs and OBCs are his government's priority, he said, "Odisha is providing 50 per cent reservation to women in panchayat and civic body elections. Over 70 lakh women have been empowered through Mission Shakti." The Chief Minister said that during the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situation, Odisha has received investments worth ₹4 lakh crore, which is the highest in the country. "This has opened new employment opportunities for lakhs of youths," he said. Stressing the role of 5Ts of his government, Patnaik said this formula is taking every sector, from education to farming, to new heights. P3

Last week, the Nagaland Assembly unanimously resolved to demand a repeal of AFSPA from the North-East, especially the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kohima/Guwahati, Dec 26:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio Sunday said that the Centre has decided to constitute a five-member committee to look into the withdrawal of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 or AFSPA from the northeastern state. The committee will be headed by the Ministry of Home Affairs Additional Secretary (Northeast), and will include the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Nagaland, besides Inspector General of Assam Rifles (North) and a representative of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The panel will submit its recommendations within 45 days, based on which the decision on whether to continue designating Nagaland as a "disturbed area" or withdrawing AFSPA from the state will be taken, a joint statement issued by Rio, Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton and Leader of Naga Peoples' Front Legislature Party TR Zeliang here said. The decision was taken during a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi

# Woman gang-raped at gunpoint

The miscreants held the victim's husband and minor son hostage and committed the crime in front of them

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jeypore, Dec 26:** Miscreants gang-raped a woman after holding her husband and minor son hostage at gunpoint in a village under Jeypore Sadar police limits in Koraput district, Sunday. The matter came to the fore after a complaint was filed at the Jeypore Mahila Police Station, Sunday. Police registered a case in this connection and started an investigation, IIC Mamata Panigrahi said. A scientific team was pressed



into service and it visited the victim's home to collect evidences related to the crime, Sunday. A special team has launched a manhunt to nab the two accused, SDPO Arup Abhishek Behera said. The victim also underwent a medical examination at the district headquarters hospital in Jeypore, Sunday. The horrific incident took place when the woman along with her husband and minor son were fast

asleep at their home under Jeypore Sadar police limits, Saturday. Two persons broke into the room from the backyard of their house and beat her husband black and blue. They even threatened to kill her son if they dared to raise an alarm. Later, one of them raped the woman while the other held her husband and son hostage at gunpoint, the survivor's husband alleged. The two accused took turns and raped the woman. The youths even assaulted the woman when she tried to resist their advances. The couple informed the villagers about their ordeal and with their help visited the Mahila Police Station to lodge a complaint. The villagers and the survivor have demanded immediate arrest of the culprits and exemplary punishment to them.

# Panel to look into demand for AFSPA repeal in Nagaland

Last week, the Nagaland Assembly unanimously resolved to demand a repeal of AFSPA from the North-East, especially the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

December 23 to discuss the present situation in Nagaland. Besides the trio that issued the statement, the meeting was also attended by North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) convenor and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. "A court of inquiry will initiate disciplinary proceedings against the Army unit and personnel who were involved in the Oting incident and action will be taken against on the basis of a fair probe. The identified persons facing the investigation will be placed under suspension with immediate effect," the statement said. Fourteen civilians were killed by security forces in firing incidents in Mon district earlier this month, giving strength to demands in Nagaland to withdraw AFSPA from the northeastern state. Government jobs will be provided to the next of the kin of the deceased, and Mon superintendent of police and deputy commissioner will carry out necessary procedures in consultation with the village councils concerned, it said. In line with the Konyak peoples' demand, the Nagaland delegation impressed upon Shah to replace the Assam Rifles unit in Mon with immediate effect, the statement said. The three Nagaland leaders expressed gratitude to Shah for taking up the matter with utmost seriousness, and appreciated the Centre for taking steps towards ensuring justice and also positively responding to voice of the people.

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, Dec 26:** Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa's anti-apartheid icon who won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting racial discrimination in the country, died Sunday. He was 90.

# SA anti-apartheid icon Desmond Tutu passes away at 90

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, Dec 26:** Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa's anti-apartheid icon who won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting racial discrimination in the country, died Sunday. He was 90.



President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that Tutu passed away in Cape Town in the early hours of Sunday. He was the last surviving South African laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize. Tutu, who previously survived tuberculosis, had undergone a surgery for prostate cancer in 1997. He was also hospitalised several times in recent years for various ailments. "The passing of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is another chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," Ramaphosa said as he shared condolence with the family and friends. More P10

# Judges appointing judges' a propagated myth: CJI Ramana

Justice Ramana said historically, prosecutors in India have been under the control of the government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amaravati, Dec 26:** The notion that "judges are themselves appointing judges" is a myth as the judiciary is just one of the many players involved in the process of selecting judicial officers, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said Sunday. He was delivering the fifth Sri Lavu Venkateswarlu Endowment Lecture on "Indian Judiciary -

Challenges of future" at Siddhartha Law College, Vijayawada. He also said that in recent times, physical attacks on judicial officers are on the rise and at times, there are concerted campaigns in the print and social media against judges if parties do not get a favourable order while these attacks appear to be "sponsored and synchronised." There is a need to liberate the institution of public prosecutors. Total independence must be granted to them and to make them answerable only to the Courts, he further said. "It is nowadays fashionable to reiterate phrases such as 'judges are



themselves appointing judges'. I consider this to be one of the widely propagated myths. The fact is the

Judiciary is merely one of the many players involved in the process," Justice Ramana said. Recently, Kerala MP John Brittas had reportedly said during a debate in Parliament on The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021 that judges appointing judges is unheard of anywhere. "Many authorities are involved, including the Union Law Ministry, state governments, Governor, High Court Collegia, Intelligence Bureau, and lastly, the topmost executive, who all are designated to examine the suitability of a candidate. I am sad to note that the well-informed also

propagate the aforesaid notion. After all, this narrative suits certain sections," Justice Ramana said. Appreciating the Centre for its efforts on appointing more judges, he said, some recommendations made by High Courts are yet to be transmitted to the Supreme Court by the Union Law Ministry. It is expected that the government needs to strictly adhere to the timelines laid down in the Malik Mazhar Case. The law enforcing agencies, particularly the specialised agencies, need to deal with malicious attacks on judiciary effectively, the CJI said, adding that it was unfortunate that unless the court interfered and passed orders, the au-

thorities generally do not proceed with the investigation. "The governments are expected and duty bound to create a secure environment so that the judges and judicial officers can function fearlessly," he said. New media tools have enormous amplifying ability, but appear to be incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong, good and bad and the real and fake. Media trials cannot be a guiding factor in deciding cases, he further said. He said historically, prosecutors in India have been under the control of the government. "Hence it is not a surprise that they do not act independently," Justice Ramana said.

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	27.0°C	28.0°C
TEMP MIN	17.5°C	16.8°C
Humidity	91%	91%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL

Forecast: Fog/mist in the morning

# leisure



## SCAR JO SEEKS BUYERS FOR HER NEW YORK PENTHOUSE

American actress Scarlett Johansson is struggling to find a buyer for her New York penthouse. The 37-year-old initially put the plush pad on the market 18 months ago for \$2.3 million, but she's now reportedly slashed the asking price to \$1.86 million.

## JESSE METCALFE FELT 'PRESSURE' OVER LOOKS

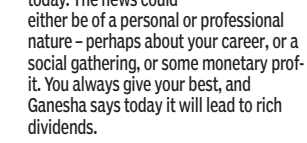
American actor Jesse Metcalfe felt a lot of 'pressure' over his appearance as hunky gardener John Rowland in *Desperate Housewives*. He said his looks were constantly 'picked apart' because of his frequently-shirtless role, and even when he wasn't filming. He felt he had to maintain the best shape possible or else he'd be criticised.



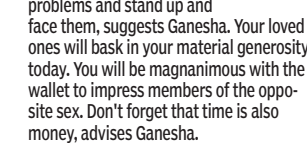
### FORTUNE FORECAST

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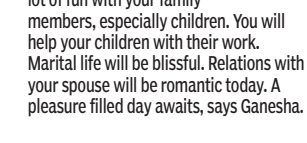
**ARIES**  
Some cheerful news could put you in really high spirits today. The news could either be of a personal or professional nature - perhaps about your career, or a social gathering, or some monetary profit. You always give your best, and Ganesha says today it will lead to rich dividends.



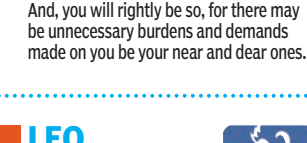
**TAURUS**  
It is about time that you stopped running from your problems and stand up and face them, suggests Ganesha. Your loved ones will bask in your material generosity today. You will be magnanimous with the wallet to impress members of the opposite sex. Don't forget that time is also money, advises Ganesha.



**GEMINI**  
A fun and frolic filled day awaits you. You will have a lot of fun with your family members, especially children. You will help your children with their work. Marital life will be blissful. Relations with your spouse will be romantic today. A pleasure filled day awaits, says Ganesha.



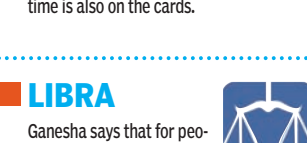
**CANCER**  
You have always been quite prudent when it comes to spending your hard-earned moolah, yet today you may feel stingier. And, you will rightly be so, for there may be unnecessary burdens and demands made on you by your near and dear ones.



**LEO**  
You may not get the desired results inspite of working hard. You need to keep your weaknesses in mind, and your mistakes, before starting anew again. You will need to do more than necessary, if required, to make sure that your business relationships stay strong.



**VIRGO**  
You will charm people with your flexibility of thought and willingness to adjust today. Those under the spell of love will see an unexpected turn of events; but don't panic, as things will eventually work out in your favour. Some quality family time is also on the cards.



**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that for people you may appear to be a miser but when it comes to your closed ones you will never hold back or hesitate to spend. Today is a good day to take your loved ones shopping. You may overspend your budget but the spending will give you a feeling of happiness and contentment.



**SCORPIO**  
If you have recently started a joint business venture, today you may take your first step towards sealing a profitable deal. However, you should buy some time before signing any contract today; also, be cautious that you do not get the short end of the stick.



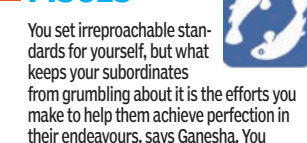
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your far-sightedness and brilliance will not only impress your peers, but also help you to rope in big clients and huge projects. Cheers to that! Thanks to your systematic and disciplined approach, you are entitled to be the 'most desirable' employee of the company.



**CAPRICORN**  
Now is the perfect time to showcase your talents and skills. You are all geared up to hit your target and do everything that is needed to be done. Your efforts will not go in vain as they will bear fruits for sure, says Ganesha. You will spend quality time with your family member and catch with old friends.



**AQUARIUS**  
You zoom in on research and development today. Your fabulous work speaks volumes and your commitment pays off. You're keen to play Romeo today, and all your gimmicks and surprises will work wonders! Love on, says Ganesha.



**PISCES**  
You set impeccable standards for yourself, but what keeps your subordinates from grumbling about it is the efforts you make to help them achieve perfection in their endeavours, says Ganesha. You inspire, they aspire.



## Deepika on why she chose to be part of 83

**Mumbai:** Deepika Padukone is currently basking in the success of her production venture 83. She recently took to her social media sharing a heartfelt note on what the film meant to her and why she chose to be a part of it.

She shared a video from the screening of the film. In the video, she speaks about what her family felt after watching the film with the entire cricket team. In the caption, she wrote, "My Dearest Amma, I did this film ONLY & ONLY for you. I've said this before and will say it again. We walk away with all the credit and glory but the sacrifice of a spouse and his or her family always goes unnoticed! My little contribution to #83the film is to recognise and acknowledge every homemaker who puts the dreams of her spouse, her children and her family ahead of her own...#UjjalaPadukone #Romidev #MiniMathur #ThisIs83."

83 showcases the story of India's iconic win at the 1983 Cricket World Cup. Deepika Padukone has been roped in to play Kapil Dev's wife Romi on screen. After several changes in the release dates due to the pandemic and lockdowns, the film hit the screens December 24, 2021 in 5 languages including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. IANS



## 3 IDIOTS CLOCKS 12 YRS Boman asked Hirani to offer his role to Irrfan

**Mumbai:** It's been 12 years since the release of one of the most wholesome films to come from the Hindi film industry.

3 Idiots starring Aamir Khan, R Madhavan, Sharman Joshi, Kareena Kapoor Khan, and Boman Irani was a blockbuster and continues to be one of the most entertaining and heart-warming



films. Boman Irani was lauded for his performance as

Viru, the Dean of an engineering college. However, he was reluctant about playing the role when it was offered to him by director Rajkumar Hirani. He had instead referred the late

Irrfan Khan for the role.

Boman said, "My role in 3 Idiots was very similar to the role in Munnabhai. If you put a magnifying glass, they are very similar characters. They were so similar- both were deans; both their daughters fell in love with a hero whom he saw as a pain in his eye. And I told Raju that it is the same role and then Raju said no. And I said I won't do it. I had refused the role of 3 Idiots."

"There was so much love and respect for a co-actor, a colleague, I said take Irrfan Khan for 3 Idiots. I said I think he will be superb in that role. Because whatever he does, he does it superbly. But Raju said that he is too young and then I asked that 'am I too old?' and then we laughed on it and went on to work on the character to make it a little different," he further said. IANS

### SPELLBINDING SHOW



Sayani Chakraborty and Subham Ojha from Bhubaneswar perform on the inaugural day of International Odissi Dance Festival held at Utkal Rangamanch of GKCM Odissi Research Centre, Bhubaneswar, Sunday

## Tips to ensure safety of your furry friend during celebrations

**THE FLURRY OF ACTIVITIES, MULTIPLE UNFAMILIAR PEOPLE, AND A HOTCHPOTCH OF COMMOTION AND CELEBRATION COULD MAKE DOGS FEEL VERY ANXIOUS, CONFUSED, AND STRESSED**

As the year 2021 draws to a close, many pet-lovers like to shower them with love, attention, and treats, revelling in the festivities together. However, while the sentiment is one of deep, familial love, there are a number of things that pet parents need to be mindful of during the festive season, to avoid causing unintentional stress or harm to their pets.

**Keep decorations out of reach**  
Be it Christmas or the New Year, decorations are a part and parcel of the celebration. So, dog parents must make sure that these decorations are completely secure and

out-of-reach, because many components in them such as plastics, artificial colours, and more, could be very harmful to the dogs.

**Be mindful of open flames**  
Needless to say, if candles, lamps, or any other items with a flame are a part of your decorations, you must ensure they are only placed where they



cannot be accessed by your dog. Besides being a massive fire hazard already, these small but potentially destructive objects can be easily knocked over by an enthusiastic dog, ending up hurting them, or in the worst case, burning down the house.

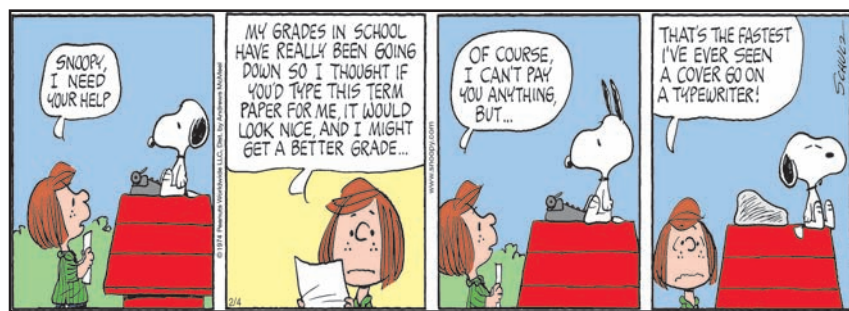
**Take care of electricals, wirings**  
Another quintessential component of New Year decorations are lights, and they can instantly warm up your house in a dreamy glow. So, while putting them up, one must make sure they are either hanging out of reach or are neatly tucked away so that your

dog doesn't end up tripping over them or inadvertently chew on them when you're not looking.

**Avoid giving human food**  
While the temptation to shower your dog with treats while you're gobbling on some delectable holiday specialities is fully understandable, what's good for you might be extremely dangerous for your pet. Holiday confectioneries, meals, and candies all contain substances that could be very harmful to dogs, from chocolate and dairy products to cooking spices and more. AGENCIES

### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



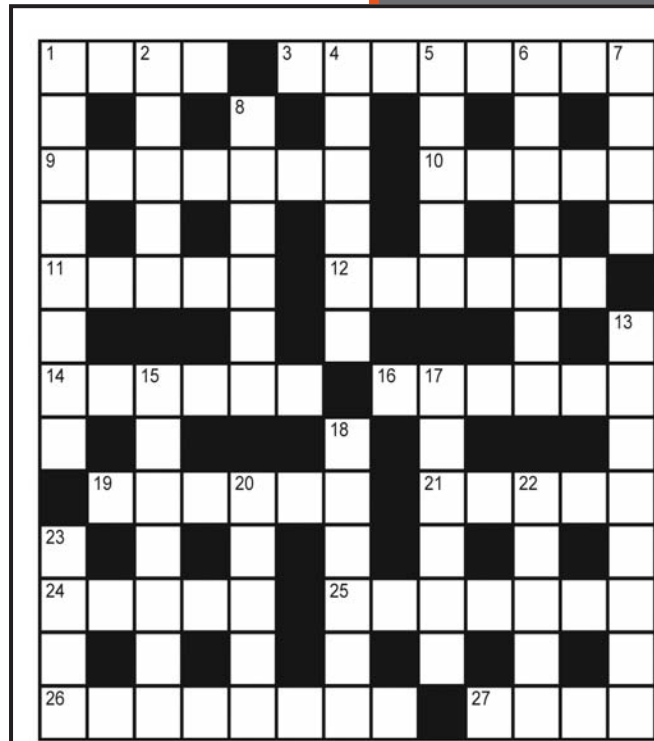
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



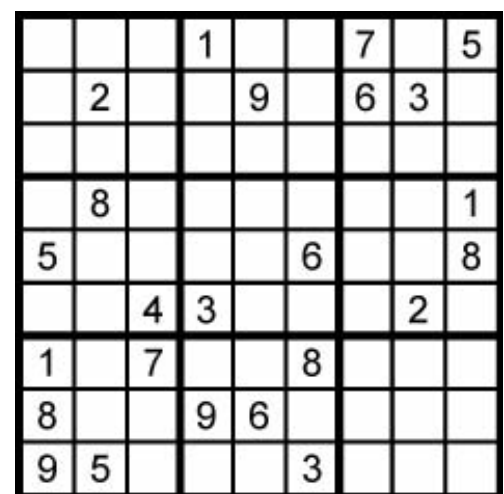
#### CROSSWORD



- Across**  
1 Cupola  
3 Qualified  
9 Break of day  
10 Vestibule  
11 Synthetic silklike fabric  
12 Passageways  
14 Hound dog  
16 Kind of iron  
19 Go-getter  
21 Precious stone  
24 Side dish  
25 Oboe kin  
26 Heightened  
27 Clairvoyant  
**Down**  
1 Depict  
2 Bank contents  
4 Wiggle room  
5 Talents  
6 Pungent herb (3,4)  
7 Nobleman  
8 Betrothed  
13 Lounger  
15 Like some prices (3-4)  
17 Modify  
18 Cheerless  
20 Once more  
22 Dropped a line  
23 Genuine

#### SUDOKU

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



#### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



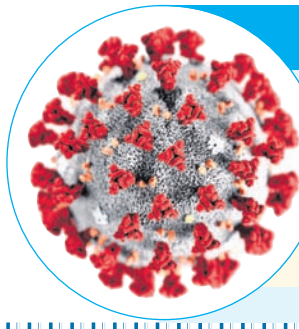
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## IN SYNC

Artists perform Gotipua dance at the 15th International Chausathi Yogini Mahotsav 2021 at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	27,99,39,177	25,01,99,305	54,15,197
India	3,47,86,802	3,42,30,354	4,79,682
Odisha	10,53,881	10,43,782	8,452

# 31-yr-old biker dies as kite string slits throat

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 26:** A 31-year-old biker died after his throat was slit by a kite string in Pirbazar area of Jagatpur here, Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Jayanta Samal of Bhayarpur. The incident occurred when Samal was returning home from Cuttack along with his wife in the evening, sources said.

"Some youths were flying kites at Pirbazar. The string of a low-flying kite slit Samal's throat as he could not see the ultrathin thread while travelling on the bike. He fell down from his bike," said a source.

On being informed, Jagatpur police rushed a profusely-bleeding Samal to a private hospital, where doctors declared him dead-on-arrival. "Samal's family has lodged an FIR in this regard. The body has



**KILLER THREAD**

REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

The deceased has been identified as Jayanta Samal of Bhayarpur

The incident occurred when Samal was returning home from Cuttack along with his wife in the evening

The administration had banned glass-coated kite strings in 2017. However, some people are still using glass-coated and ultrathin strings for kite flying due to poor enforcement of the ban order

been sent to SCB Medical College and Hospital for postmortem. We are looking into the circumstances that led to the tragic incident," said Jagatpur police in-charge Rabindranath Meher.

The Silver City had witnessed similar incidents in the past. Taking the issue seriously, the district ad-

ministration had banned glass-coated kite strings in 2017. The administration had allowed the people to use cotton threads for kite flying. However, some people are still using glass-coated and ultrathin strings for kite flying due to poor enforcement of the ban order, sources said.

## WASSUP TODAY CUTTACK

Birth anniversary of educationalist Jibananda Acharya, Sarangi Clinic and Research Centre, Link Road, 5pm

Remembering Jagat Mohan Lal, Sri Ramachandra Bhawan, 6pm

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

## State seeks district-wise data for vaccination of 15-18 age group

PNN & AGENCIES

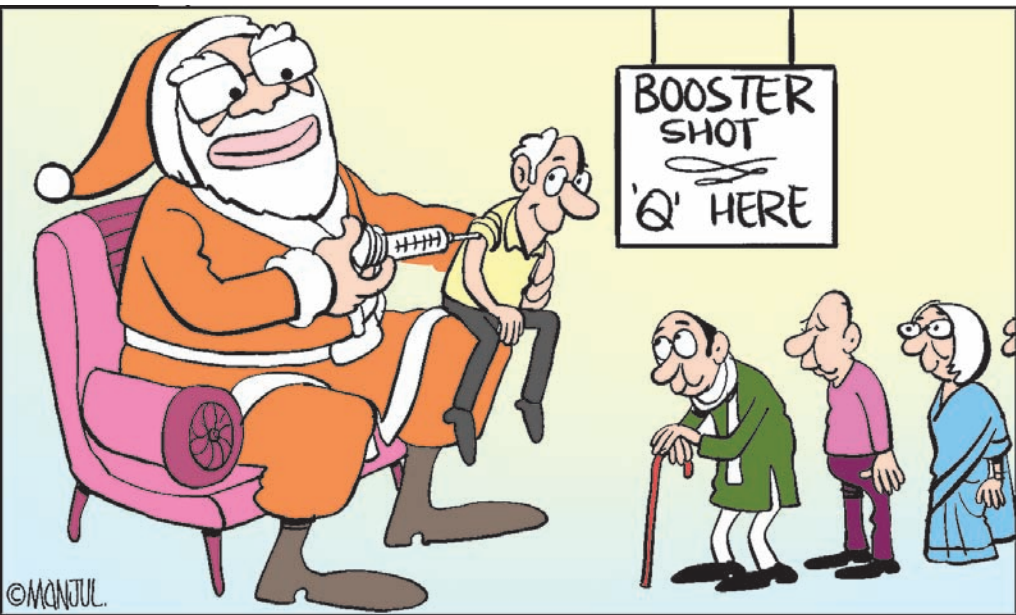
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** A day after PM Narendra Modi announced beginning of vaccination of children against Covid-19 from January, the state government Sunday said it has already started preparations for inoculation of those in the 15-18 age group.

Health Services Director Bijay Kumar Mohapatra said, "We've sought district-wise data of children

in the 15-18 age group. We've sufficient manpower to conduct the vaccination drive. If required, more manpower will be roped in. We'll take appropriate measures for the vaccination as per the standard operating procedure," he said.

About booster dose to health-care and frontline workers, Health Services Director said they are yet to receive a detailed guideline in this regard.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Goods trains collide

**Bhubaneswar:** Two goods trains collided in Jharkhand, following which a few rakes derailed, affecting services on the Hatia-Rourkela section, officials said Sunday. The accident happened Saturday night between Pakra and Kurkura railway stations, they said. There were no casualties as drivers and guards of both the trains escaped unhurt, they said.

## CLASSIFIED

### LOST

Original Registered Sale Deed No. 11131012886, dated 25.10.2010, Khata No. 667, Plot No. 2399, Area-A0.061 dec., Mouza-Daruthenga, P.S.-Chandaka, Dist.- Khurda has been lost. FIR has been lodged in Infocity Police Station, Bhubaneswar, Vide GD No. 13, dated- 24.12.2021. If found kindly contact - 9437087116.

# Bio-mining at Daruthenga to begin in January 2022

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) is all set to begin the bio-mining work at the Daruthenga dump yard in January next year with an objective to reclaim the land.

According to sources, the civic authorities here have signed an agreement with two private firms to install the plant and machinery of required capacity for bio-mining of the legacy waste and reclaim the land as per the Management of Solid Waste (MSW) Rules 2016, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guidelines and other applicable rules and regulations.

"Two firms have been roped in for the project. The bio-mining process will begin in January 2022," said a BMC official.

Notably, the National Green



Tribunal (NGT) had asked the civic body to clear legacy (old) waste at Daruthenga dump yard. As per a recent assessment by KIIT University, around 16 lakh tonnes of waste will be processed at Daruthenga.

According to sources, the civic authorities are planning to process around 2,000 tonnes of waste on daily basis and they will spend around Rs 100 crore for reclaiming the land through bio-mining.

At present, the BMC is diverting

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** The Indian Chemical Engineering Congress (CHEMCON-2021) and the 74th annual session of the Indian Institute of Chemical Engineers (IChE) began Sunday at CSIR- Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT), Bhubaneswar. The 5-day long hybrid mode event will conclude December 30.

CHEMCON-2021 was inaugurated virtually by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, with the virtual presence of CSIR Director General and DSR Secretary Shekhar C Mande as the guest of honour, along with invited dignitaries and participants.

The theme of the conference 'Sustainable Utilisation of Resources for Chemical & Mineral Sectors' focuses on providing a forum for substantial discussion on the availability and utilisation of mineral resources using the existing and emerging technologies. CHEMCON-2021 will feature a host



of events, which includes memorial lectures, plenary lectures, seminars, international symposiums, panel discussions and exhibitions.

In his inaugural speech as the chief guest of the introductory event, Naveen expressed immense pleasure and said, "This year's CHEMCON theme is extremely important for Government of Odisha as well. My Government has taken several measures over the years to ensure that we sustainably leverage our natural resources for the development of the state and its people. Odisha has been marching ahead on the path of industrial development

powered by the metals and mineral sector. We have consistently been ranked amongst the top states in terms of live manufacturing investments in India."

Speaking on the way forward, the CM said, "As we look towards the future, we have taken concerted efforts to diversify the industry portfolio of the state. In view of this, my Government has identified the Chemicals and Petrochemicals sector as a key focus sector. Taking the mantra of 'infrastructure-led-development', we are coming up with Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Region in Paradeep

## Odisha sees decline in new nCoV cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** Odisha logged 112 new coronavirus cases Sunday, 12 less than the previous day, taking the tally to 10,53,881, the Health department bulletin said.

The Covid-19 death toll mounted to 8,452 with another patient succumbing to the infection in Khurda district. Fifty-three other Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities in the past, the bulletin stated. Seventeen children were among the 112 new infections and Khurda district, of which state Capital Bhubaneswar is a part, registered 56 cases, the department said.

The coastal state currently has 1,594 active Covid-19 cases, while Kandhamal and Koraput districts have none. As many as 181 people recuperated from the disease Saturday, taking the total number of recoveries to 10,43,782.

A total of 54,208 samples were tested in the last 24 hours and the daily test positivity rate (TPR) is 0.20 per cent, it said.

# 'Koraput turning into cultural, tourism hub'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday virtually inaugurated the 4th edition of Koraput Literary Festival (KLF-2021) held in a City hotel.

The CM said, "Koraput is now turning into a cultural and tourism hub in the state. Famous writer Gopinath Mohanty, through his writing, showcased the richness of Koraput worldwide. Mohanty, during his posting in Koraput in 1940s, had penned novels like 'Dadi Budha', 'Paraja' and 'Amrutara Santana', all based on the Paraja and Kondh tribes of the district."

The CM added, "The state government is working on making Koraput a prime spot in country's tourism sector. By organising Eco Retreat in Koraput, we are trying to attract tourists from around the world to the district."

Governor Ganeshi Lal conferred

The theme of the conference 'Sustainable Utilisation of Resources for Chemical & Mineral Sectors' focuses on providing a forum for substantial discussion on the availability and utilisation of mineral resources using the existing and emerging technologies

CHEMCON-2021 will feature a host of events, which includes memorial lectures, plenary lectures, seminars, international symposiums, panel discussions and exhibitions

and port related industrial complex at Dhamra and Gopalpur that will further aid the growth of the chemicals sector in state. I assure you, the Government of Odisha will provide you the best-in-class facilitation and enabling environment for growth."

This year, the event is being organised collaboratively by IChE-Bhubaneswar Regional Centre, CSIR- IMMT Bhubaneswar, and Institute of Chemical Technology- Indian Oil Odisha Campus, Bhubaneswar.



Governor Ganeshi Lal conferred the Koraput Literary Award-2021 on two Odia litterateurs

the Koraput Literary Award-2021 on two Odia litterateurs along with cash awards of Rs 21,000 each.

Celebrated storyteller and author of children literature Dash Benhur and renowned poet and President of the Odisha Sahitya Akademi Hrushikesh Mallick received the awards for fiction and poetry respectively.

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FOCUS PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

# A GRADUAL DECLINE



Frequent incidents of washing out of periodic sessions of Parliament do not bode well for sustenance of democracy in India in the long run

The Parliament has come to be reckoned with as the most important component of parliamentary democracy that serves as a direct link between the ruler and the ruled. Undoubtedly, democracy is becoming a popular system of governance worldwide where many countries are trying to nurture and preserve the tenets of democracy for the wellbeing of their masses; nevertheless, a semblance of decline in the parliamentary system and democratic institutions is also becoming discernible. Along with other countries that are practicing parliamentary democracy, India is also witnessing a gradual decline in its parliamentary system as well as democratic institutions for some decades now.



Anil Singh

**LARGER NATIONAL INTEREST OF PRESERVING DEMOCRACY AND HARD-WON FREEDOM SHOULD PREVAIL OVER PETTY POLITICAL INTERESTS**

And almost all political parties, irrespective of their ideologies and hues, that happened to be at the helm of affairs on one time or the other, have contributed to this democratic decline and non-functioning of the Parliament. Washing out of the parliamentary sessions from time to time without transacting any meaningful business has become the norm of the day with major political parties squandering away taxpayers' money down the drain. Monsoon Session and the Winter Session of the Parliament held in 2021 have been washed out.

Winter Session was to commence from November 29 to December 23 this year, and this session was said to have assumed significance in the backdrop of Prime Minister's announcement November 19 with regard to his government's decision to repeal the three controversial farm laws. This Winter Session was expected to be stormy because of the issues of national importance such as the Pegasus spyware controversy, data protection Bill, electoral reform amendment Bill, issue of abolishing the NEET system, extending the jurisdiction of paramilitary forces in Punjab and West Bengal.

On the issues of farm laws and Pegasus spyware, the Modi government was seemingly on the back foot because it was reluctant

to invite discussion on these issues. Interestingly, the Pegasus issue had already rocked the Parliament in the Monsoon Session, with the nation watching unprecedented protests in the Lower House as well as Upper House. Besides, appointment of an independent technical committee by the Supreme Court to examine issues involved in Pegasus case had strengthened the Opposition's case and put the Modi government on the defensive.

Apart from these two controversial issues, the data protection Bill, specifically Section 35 of the Bill that empowers the government to exempt federal agencies from the application of the data protection law in the interest of 'sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign countries and public order,' and which had dissenting opinion of the Opposition members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on this Bill, was also expected to be a storm-raising issue.

Furthermore, Modi government's decision to extend the jurisdiction of BSF in the states of Punjab and West Bengal had already been opposed by the respective state governments alleging the Centre was violating the federal structure of the country, and any possibility of debate on this issue in the Winter Session was

prone to be stormy. Precedence mirrors the present and future as well and going by this measure, washing out of the previous Monsoon Session two days ahead of schedule with both Houses being disrupted time and again, even the Winter Session was likely to go the same way. As per PRS Legislative Research data, the Monsoon Session was the third least productive Lok Sabha session of the last two decades, with a productivity of just 21 per cent. Rajya Sabha logged a productivity of 28 per cent, its eighth least productive session since 1999.

As expected, the Winter Session proved stormy and was held from November 29 to December 22 and was adjourned one day ahead of schedule, having sat for 18 days. On the very first day, 12 MPs were suspended from Rajya Sabha for having not observed parliamentary conduct on the last day of Monsoon Session 2021. On the penultimate day of the session, another Rajya Sabha MP was suspended on the grounds of disorderly conduct. The Winter Session saw introduction of 12 Bills (excluding Appropriation Bills). In the current Lok Sabha, only 13 per cent of the Bills have been referred to committees. This is much lower than the last three Lok Sabhas.

The Winter Session saw legislative agenda being carried out

amid a storm of protests and chaos in both Houses. From the very start of the session, Parliament witnessed constant disruption and adjournment as Rajya Sabha chairman suspended 12 Opposition MPs for their 'unruly' behaviour during the previous Monsoon Session and other Opposition members had been demanding the revocation of the suspension in both Houses. Overall productivity of both Houses was said to be below expectations and transaction of business was carried out hurriedly.

The Winter Session witnessed Lok Sabha passing 35 per cent of Bills in less than 30 minutes. Lok Sabha sat for 77 per cent of its schedule time, while Rajya Sabha sat for 43 per cent of its schedule time. According to Union parliamentary affairs minister, during the Winter Session, Lok Sabha registered 82 per cent productivity while Rajya Sabha witnessed 47 per cent productivity. Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha said that the ruling NDA government deliberately suspended the 12 Rajya Sabha MPs so that the Bills could be passed easily despite the request by the Opposition for revoking the suspension so that the House could function smoothly.

Frequent incidents of washing out of periodic sessions of Parliament do not bode well for sustenance of democracy in India in the long run. For a nation that prides itself being an example worth emulating for successful functioning of parliamentary democracy, the sordid state of affairs prevalent in the country entail the likelihood of spoiling India's image of a successful democracy. India's credentials as a free and democratic country are coming under eclipse in the international comity of nations as reflected in various reports published by international institutions from time to time. Larger national interest of preserving democracy and hard-won freedom should prevail over petty political interests.

*The writer is a New Delhi-based senior journalist. Views expressed are personal.*

## The Left Surge

Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

SRI AUROBINDO



At a time when Left politics is being discredited across the globe, the victory of 35-year-old Left-wing leader, Gabriel Boric, in the presidential election of Chile marks a watershed moment in that country's politics and holds out new hope for the Left movement globally. A product of protest movements spearheaded by students and youth, Boric is to become the youngest President ever of Chile when he assumes charge in March of 2022. His opponents campaigned that his inexperience in governance disqualifies him as a future leader of the country. He countered his adversaries with his new mantra of 'burying neoliberalism' and building an alliance of social democrats and communists. In fact, his sweeping victory winning 56 per cent votes against his rival Republican Party's José Antonio Kast's 44 per cent shows how Chile has changed from being one of the bastions of the free market economic model to a Left leaning society. For over two years, it has been witness to protests against inequality and corruption that thrived under a regime that openly supported the rule of the US-backed military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, who had toppled the socialist President, Salvador Allende, in 1973. Pinochet's regime collapsed in 1990, but the state apparatus he built and the Constitution he introduced have survived. The victory of Boric is in a way a reflection of the mood of the country which is rewriting its Constitution through an elected Constituent Assembly to end Pinochet's influence.

Boric has pledged to fight the 'privilege of the few' and tackle poverty and inequality, while opposing big-ticket mining projects as part of his climate protection plan. He has ambitious goals to raise taxes by 8 per cent of GDP, abolish the unpopular private pension funds, shorten the working week from 45 hours to 40 hours, raise the minimum wage and create a universal healthcare system.

It will be a stupendous task for Boric to implement his electoral promises as his alliance does not have the numbers in the Parliament. The Senate is split between the right and the left, and in the 155-member Chamber of Deputies, his coalition has only 37 MPs. To revive the economy ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic and corruption, he needs a huge flow of funds that can be obtained through a new tax regime that will hurt the 1 per cent super rich controlling the country's 25 per cent resources. Nosediving growth and high inflation would be a limiting factor for the new government's spending agenda. If the new President carries out his promised tax reforms and raises taxes on the corporations, abolishes private pensions and announces a waiver of student debt, the private capital and the old political establishment would, not unexpectedly, put up the stiffest resistance possible. But, the young leader has already announced he is ready to take the plunge and weather the storm. Analysts also say by simply ensuring compliance of existing taxes, he would be able to mobilise much needed funds. Tax evasion is a major malaise in Chile, like in many other countries.

An interesting development in this presidential election is that the voter turnout was noticeably high among women and young Chileans. This is explained by the fact that Boric has consciously and in a calculated manner built an openly feminist platform. Young people clamour for transformation of the country's development model and Boric has paid attention to their voices. This is one of the main reasons for his meteoric rise.

This is not limited to Chile alone. In neighbouring Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a former President and a known Leftist, has garnered huge support and is expected to topple Bolsonaro. If one wishes to look, the left movement has started rolling of its own accord across the world. Today, the Left is no more bound within the writings of Engels, Marx, Lenin or Mao. The current trend is a desire of the common people, maybe born out of acute social and economic inequality, to confront the lies and mischief being spread by the Haves and the global super rich.

Worldwide, people's wish to opt for a change stems from their vision of their own future. Not based on some social and economic ideology of past political philosophers who were outdated within their own lifetime. The new Left, therefore, seems to be pro people. Not favouring any political establishment and the thoughts it espouses. It too will get corrupted and deviated, no doubt, but it will usher in a change for now.

### WISDOM CORNER

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.

DESMOND TUTU

The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires.

NELSON MANDELA

### WORDSWORTH

#### Quiz

We don't know for sure where it comes from, but it doesn't seem to be as old as Shakespeare's day. It was first recorded in the late 1700s, in the sense of an odd or eccentric person. Later it became another word for a joke or a witticism and only about the middle of the nineteenth century did it take on the modern meaning of a more-or-less formal set of questions. There is a famous tall tale about a Dublin theatre manager named James Daly, who accepted a bet that he could create a new word without any meaning and have everybody in the city using it within 24 hours. He is said to have employed a large number of urchins to go around the city and chalk the word quiz on every surface they could find so that the next day everybody was asking what this word meant. The story is best viewed through the bottom of a glass of something Irish.

#### Quocker-wodger

Most mysterious term, this appears in the middle of the nineteenth century, apparently originally an English dialect term for which no antecedents are known. The English Dialect Dictionary of the end of the century has quocken, to vomit or choke, and quocker, a man who goes harvesting at some distance from home, neither of which is any help at all in explaining a word that means a wooden puppet on a string. Older readers may remember the toy. It was a wooden puppet whose legs and arms were connected only loosely to its body. It was suspended by a single string connected to the head. By jerking the string you could make the puppet flail about in amusing and ridiculous ways. You can see how the political meaning could easily have grown out of that. Though it is widely recorded in dictionaries of slang in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with Farmer and Henley even describing it as common in Slang and Its Analogues in 1892, and it continues to be included in works on historical slang to the present day, it has rarely appeared in print. The only example I've been able to find is

### LOL

#### Pictures from police

A motorist was mailed a picture of his car speeding through an automated radar. A \$40 speeding ticket was included.



Being cute, he sent the police department a picture of \$40.

The police responded with another mailed photo -- of handcuffs.

### SPECTRUM SOCIETY

## Raise self-esteem of girls, not marriage age

Raising the age of marriage for girls in India from 18 to 21 is not a simple step that will bring all-encompassing goodness in terms of health and development. The claims of the government that this is in the interest of the girl child are not convincing, given that little concern has been shown about a host of other related health issues. For instance, the latest round of the National Family Health Survey tells us that anaemia among children as well as adults, men as well as women, pregnant as well as non-pregnant women, has increased over numbers recorded in NFHS-4 (2015-16). Consider that 57% of all Indian women in the age 15-49 were reported anaemic in NFHS-5 over 53.1% reported anaemic in NFHS-4. This points to the work that is required to be done in the area of women and child development.

In the midst of these challenges, the proposal to raise the age to 21 means the government is driving into more areas of regulation and policing that are contentious. If all that development required was the passing of a law, then India would have been a developed country by now, given the plethora of laws that governments have passed over the years. Each of these laws in some way expands the role of the State, and in a poor country like

India, it has the downside of State coercive power being wielded against the weakest classes. Worse, there is already societal pressure in the area that restrains freedom and stops young girls and boys from discovering life on their own, bringing in aspects of moral policing and State intervention on some pretext or another.

In a city like Mumbai, there have been situations where people have raised objections, the police intervened and a kind of campaign was run to stop couples spending time together. People visiting a quiet, green spot have run into moral vigilantes. Colleges don't like holding of hands, parks often offer trouble rather than tranquillity to young couples and many parents are still uncomfortable if boys and girls spend some time socialising even in larger groups.

If this is the state of affairs in a cosmopolitan megapolis like Mumbai, imagine what transpires in the interiors. Social media has many images and videos of young couples being beaten up, the girl dragged away to be taught a lesson at home and the boy warned never to be seen again. In this climate, the little agency that girls might have, whenever and wherever they are in a position to do so, gets taken away by this new proposed law because the act becomes illegal and

submission to a paternalistic household becomes more ingrained.

In many Indian families and for a variety of reasons, a daughter is looked upon as the property of the husband and his family, waiting to be sent off - the concept captured in the words 'paraya dhan'. Will this legal raising of the age of marriage stop the family, or will they not still look for ways to seal an alliance and then explore ways in which the girl will work with more controls and walk a tricky balance while she waits to get married and move to the husband's house, as tradition decrees? Will this reduce demands for dowry and allow the girl child to continue her education? Or will it torment her as she is pushed into preparing for her matrimonial home? None of these are settled questions. The fact remains that the law against dowry has not stopped the practise - anecdotally speaking, it may have even got worse in recent times.

What is not seen in this change is that the State has suddenly given itself more powers to intervene in families, in personal choices and brought the discourse of development into conflict. When a large number of people do not trust the action and are not sold on the idea of change that has aspects of being intrusive, then it is best to defer the action. Discuss, debate, and set the

stage for change rather than rush into effecting the change.

Union Minister Smriti Irani's speech earlier this week in Lok Sabha on the move was not a great presentation of a development paradigm at work. So, the best thing that can be said about the move is that the government has agreed to send the Bill to a select committee for a proper debate.

There is no need to rush the move in any case. As it is, the average age of marriage for women in India is already 22.1 years, according to a 2019 report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. If there is still a need to change the age of marriage, more options must be examined. If equality is desired, then one way to achieve it is to lower the age of marriage for boys to 18 instead of raising that of girls to 21. It is a fair point that citizens who can vote, be tried for any crime as adults, should have the minimal right to marry.

It is important to raise the self-esteem of girls, to support them to make their own decisions rather than force them into a tyrannical legal system where a new phase of their life begins with a police case or a court room.

*The writer is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press.*

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rusalgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Divided Opposition

Sir, In an interview, author, former diplomat and now national vice president of AITMC Pavan K. Varma has expressed the view that it is a fight between Modi and Mamata in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It is not unusual that any politician talks high of his party and its leader. Undoubtedly West Bengal is the stronghold of Mamata Banerjee. However, the influence of Mamata Banerjee confines only to West Bengal whereas the influence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is far and wide. Varma is right that all Hindus would not vote for BJP. This has been proved from the time the BJP was formed in 1980s. If all the Hindus had voted for BJP there would not have been a single state dominated by Hindus where non-BJP would have formed the government. With all the sagging image of the Congress, TMC is far behind it across the nation. Infiltration of Bangladeshis in West Bengal has been consistently helping Mamata to come to power. This condition has not been prevailing in other parts of India for Mamata to prove her mettle. If the Opposition parties rally behind Mamata and in case the Opposition parties come to power, there are many leaders to stake claim for the post of Prime Minister. Leaders of all other parties who are now maintaining low key will become active on the eve of elections. Experience shows that the Opposition parties have indulged in infighting for heading the government. Charisma of Modi is not on wane. Opposition parties have tough days ahead to fight BJP under the leadership of Modi.

KV Seetharamaiah, BANGALORE

### Weighable corruption

Sir, Buying a luxury car or building a palatial house for an honest government official is not possible. The politicians of many constituencies in India were also government officials in past, but their salary and their lifestyle do not match. For them building a mansion or buying swanky cars is a child's play. The property statement that the politicians have to file before the election though not accurate still is a lot that a government salary could ever afford. I have never seen anyone questioning the politicians on their property statement. From all these facts and figures we can say that corruption is weighable, if you put more than the weighing scale can hold you are labelled corrupt but if you maintain the balance between corruption and good work you are an honest politician.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)

# Viral video: Tapaswini asks Sumit to accept her as wife

COURT OF DISTRICT JUDGE TO HEAR PLEAS OF THE COUPLE TODAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 26:** All eyes are on the court of the district judge which is scheduled Monday to hear the appeals filed separately by Tapaswini Dash aka Dimple and her husband Dr Sumit Sahu.

The court of the sub-divisional judicial magistrate (SDJM) had heard the petitions filed by Tapaswini seeking permission to allow her to stay with her husband. The court of the SDJM heard the matter and issued order in phases. However, the lawyers of both Tapaswini and Sumit challenged the order of the SDJM court and filled separate petitions in the court of the district judge praying to quash the order delivered by the SDJM court December 2 and December 9.

Amid the ongoing face-off between the two, the woman has appealed the man to accept her as wife through a video message which went viral Sunday.

In the video, the Tapaswini pleaded to Sumit to allow her to live in his paternal house at Brahmanagar in this city.

"When I married Sumit, I thought we will lead a happy and prosperous life, but everything went wrong. I feel heartbroken when I realise that the person I had believed and married is on the verge of destroying my life," Tapaswini said in the video.

"I was a simple girl. Was my faith in him wrong? And if having faith in someone is wrong, no one will believe anyone from now on. I have been living on the verandah of his (Sumit's) house. But,

no one wants me to even stay on the verandah and they are threatening me and even have lodged false cases against me. My husband has also refused to stay with me," the woman said. "I truly love Sumit and do not want to malign him in any way. I want my husband back and want to live with him. I have nothing left with me. I have not changed and I am still the same girl he loved earlier. Please, take me back Sumit before I decide to end my life. I have been suffering from immense agony," Tapaswini said in her video message to Sumit.

Notably, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) sought an Action Taken Report (ATR) from Baidyanathpur Police in connection with barging of some local women including neighbours into Sumit's house December 20.



Tourists enjoy boating in Kanjhari dam near Gobindapur in Keonjhar district, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## SHORT TAKES

### 10 injured as bus overturns

**Kujang:** As many as 10 persons were injured after a Cuttack bound private passenger bus from Paradip overturned on Cuttack-Paradip State Highway here in Jagatsinghpur district, Sunday. Condition of one of them was said to be critical. The mishap disrupted traffic on the route for long hours but resumed after police cleared the road for traffic. The mishap occurred after the driver lost control over the wheels. The passengers had a close shave from any major casualties after the bus named Sagar overturned and got stuck with a roadside tree. On being informed, Kujang Police reached the spot and rescued the injured passengers and admitted them to the Kujang community health centre.

### Worker critical in factory fire dies

**Sambalpur:** A worker of a gutkha (chewing tobacco) manufacturing unit, which caught fire December 20, succumbed to his burn injuries while undergoing treatment at Ispat General Hospital in Rourkela, Sunday. The deceased was identified as Ram Raj Singh (32). Over 27 workers sustained burn injuries including 11 of them critical in the fire mishap. The rest of the injured workers are undergoing treatment, Ainthapalli police IIC Jyeshtha Panda said. He along with other critically injured workers was undergoing treatment at Ispat General Hospital (IGH) in Rourkela. Notably, a fire broke out at a tobacco manufacturing unit at Pardhiapali locality of Sambalpur December 20 in which several workers sustained critical injuries. Meanwhile, a case has been registered against the factory owner while the reports of labour department, state pollution control board, factories and boilers department are yet to be available, the IIC said. Action will be taken against the gutkha manufacturing unit after all the reports are available to us, he added.

### Andhra traders buying paddy

**Bissamkatak:** As many farmers in Bissamkatak area in Rayagada district failed to get tokens, they are facing a lot of problems in disposing off their paddy. Taking advantage of this situation, traders from Andhra Pradesh have become active in some areas and are trying to buy paddy from farmers at lower prices. It is alleged that some people are trying to register them as farmers on forged documents while officials have started scrutinising the documents to weed out fake farmers. Meanwhile, 240 people out of total 1,965 registered farmers were found to be fake. Farmers who are unable to sell their paddy at mandis are compelled to sell their produce to Andhra traders at throwaway price.

# Two jumbos mowed down by goods train



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** Two elephants have been mowed down by a goods train in Khurda district, a forest officer said Sunday.

A four-year-old tusker died on the spot, while a 10-year-old female pachyderm succumbed to the injuries inside a forest close to the railway line near Bhusandpur station at Tangi Saturday night, he said.

An eyewitness said that the incident took place when a herd of eight elephants was crossing the railway tracks in close vicinity of Bhusandpur level crossing and heading towards farmlands in search of food.

Locals spotted the carcasses and informed the personnel of Tangi Forest Division. As per reports, some other elephants of the herd were also injured in the mishap.

## Elephants kill two in Sundargarh

**Lefripada/Bonai:** In separate incidents, elephants have killed two people in Sundargarh district, a report said.

An elephant allegedly trampled a person to death at Dalki village under Lefripada range in Sundargarh district Sunday. The deceased was identified as Suraj Barla (45) of Dalki. According to reports, a tusker damaged the house of Suraj Saturday night. A part of the wall collapsed and fell over Suraj who could not escape. The animal trampled him to death. However, Suraj's four children and wife managed to get out of the house and saved their lives. Tipped off, forest officials and the police rushed to the spot and

seized the body for post mortem. Police have registered a case in this regard.

Another tusker went on a rampage at Sanadalki village Saturday night and damaged the house of a woman identified as Sambhari.

Sambhari and her daughter tried to flee the house when the animal dragged Sambhari and trampled her to death. However, her daughter managed to escape the fury of the animals. Forest and police officials started an investigation after they seized the body and sent it for post-mortem.

It may be noted here that elephants have been unleashing terror in this range for the last few weeks.

Both the Forest Department and the Railways have launched separate probes into the incident.

It is pertinent to mention here that, in the recently concluded win-

ter session of the Assembly, state Forest and Environment Minister BK Arukha had said that 14 elephants died in train accidents between 2016-17 and 2020-2021.

## Upkaganga tourist spot gets short shrift

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boden, Dec 26:** Upkaganga is a tourist spot in Nagapada panchayat under this block of Nuapada. Though the government has granted the scenic spot a tourist tag, it is yet to take up any step to develop the place, locals alleged.

The place with much religious importance is situated on the way from Jharnamal village to Kholibhitar. It was enlisted in the tourist map of Odisha, but in fact, the place has been left neglected.

Like Patalganga, another tourist spot nearby, here also water is always found oozing from the ground from a perennial spring. Two temples add to the beauty of the natural place—one for Lord Jagannath and another for Lord Shiva. A river flows nearby, making it more enchanting. In winter, the place becomes a paradise of picnickers. Tourists and devotees take holy dips in the river and worship in the temples.

Locals said that the place has remained out of bounds for tourists due to lack of basic facilities.

## Over 700 BJP, Cong workers join BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, Dec 26:** Ahead of the panchayat elections, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) received a shot in the arm as over 700 workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress in Bhanjanagar area of Ganjam district Sunday joined the ruling party.

According to reports, sarpanchs of Lalsingh and Baruda panchayats are backed by the BJP. The BJP received jolts in the two panchayats as scores of its workers switched sides with the ruling party at a merger meeting. Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha



welcomed them into the party.

At a merger meeting in Jagannathprasad, over 200 BJP and Congress workers from Gandadhar and Kadua panchayat joined the BJD in the presence of senior party leaders.

## One killed in group clash in Baisinga; 144 clamped

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baisinga, Dec 26:** A group clash erupted at Kalama under Baisinga police limits in Mayurbhanj district Saturday evening. Three people were critically injured while one of them died at the Balasore district headquarters hospital later Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Sheikh Jalani. One of them, iden-

tified as Sheikh Rafiq, is still under treatment at the Balasore DHH while the other, identified as Saroj Jena, was shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack as his condition deteriorated.

Police registered a case in connection with the group clash. Police personnel have been deployed in the area as tension gripped the village. The administration has imposed section-144 under CrPC in the area.

## MICRO CONTAINMENT ZONE RETURNS TO BHADRAK

# Saudi returnee tests positive; people panic over Omicron

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, Dec 26:** Amid fear of a third wave due to Omicron variant, the administration has announced a micro containment zone in Bhadrak Municipality Sunday. This step was taken after a returnee from Saudi Arabia has tested positive for Covid-19. The 22-year-old youth had returned from abroad December 18.

The youth was admitted to the Covid ward of the district headquarters hospital.

The case has sent the administration and health officials into a tizzy. His sample has been sent to Bhubaneswar for test to see if he is affected by the Omicron variant.

The municipality authorities have declared two houses in particular in ward-19 as micro con-



tainment zone. The area has been sanitised Sunday after this development.

Deviprasad Rout, executive officer of the Bhadrak Municipality said that contact tracing has been

started in the area while swab samples of the family members of the youth and his neighbours have been sent for test to Bhubaneswar.

Reports said that after this new case came to the fore, people of the civic body were panicked.

By December 20, as many as 193 people have returned from abroad while 27 of them are from 'red zones', it was learnt.

The administration has kept track of the returnees.

In view of infection, strict vigil has been on them. "Every 15 days, they have been asked to go through RTPCR tests and remain in isolation," said chief district medical officer Dr Santosh Kumar Patra.

The administration has identified 186 of the returnees while there has been no clue if the rest seven of them are in isolation, it is said.

# Bhitarkanika sees surge in poaching

Locals allege there has been a significant rise in poaching in the national park with year-end celebrations round the corner

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Dec 26:** With its wildlife thriving, Bhitarkanika National Park in the district has become a target of poachers who illegally hunt wild animals for meat, a report said.

Meat and organs of wild animals are sold at a premium by these poachers. Fakir Mohan Nayak, headmaster of Bagapatia Primary School, was arrested and later remanded to jail for poaching a deer in the sanctuary December 9. The district education department suspended him from service after he was sent to jail.

However, this is not a lone case as the forest department has arrested over 200 persons in over 100 cases this year. The arrest is indicative of the rampant poaching of wild animals and birds taking place in the sanctuary notwithstanding the restrictions imposed by the forest department.

The curbs have failed to arrest the



■ LOCALS ALLEGE THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT RISE IN POACHING IN THE NATIONAL PARK WITH YEAR-END CELEBRATIONS ROUND THE CORNER

■ KEEPING THE HIGH TOURIST FOOTFALLS IN MIND, POACHERS STRAY INSIDE THE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY TO KILL WILD ANIMALS AND BIRDS

rampant poaching in the sanctuary and illegal fishing in the sea. Locals allege that there has been a significant rise in poaching in Bhitarkanika with year-end celebrations round the corner. Poachers and illegal fishermen have become active. They have set their eyes on the wildlife sanctuary to make an easy profit.

Basant Kumar Hati, a resident of Rajnagar, said tourists flock to the sanctuary during Christmas and New Year and enjoy the day. Keeping

the high tourist footfalls in mind, poachers stray inside the wildlife sanctuary to kill wild animals and birds.

Migratory and indigenous varieties of birds flock to Bhitarkanika during winter and their presence makes it a veritable heaven for the poachers. The poached birds and animals are sold in the area and smuggled to Paradip, Dhamra, Jajpur and other parts of the state.

Dolagobinda Jena, a villager, said the fishermen also earn a hefty sum

from sale of crabs, fish and rare Olive Ridley turtles caught from sea. However, poaching of the rare turtles is not mentioned in any of the cases registered by the forest department.

Some poachers also lay live electric wires and deploy hunting dogs to kill animals like wild boars, deer, and sambhar. When contacted, Rajnagar DFO Jagnyadatt Pati said the forest department is aware of it and alerts have been issued to forest range officers.

**ODISHA POLICE  
DISTRICT HEAD QUARTER  
GANJAM, CHATRAPUR**

**Address:** Superintendent of Police, Ganjam, Chatrapur  
**Contact No.:** 06811263366  
**E-mail:** spgjm.orpol@nic.in  
No.3151/R.O. Date: 26.12.2021

**TENDER CALL NOTICE FOR HIRING OF VEHICLES FOR NH PATROLING**

Sealed tenders are invited from registered travel agencies for hiring of commercial light vehicles on monthly basis. Details regarding eligibility criteria, terms & conditions and the formats of submission of tender (Technical & Financial bid) are mentioned in the tender document which may be downloaded from the ganjam.nic.in website. Interested agencies may submit their tenders in a sealed envelope with superscribing on the top of the sealed envelopes as Tender for Hiring of Vehicles for NH Patrol on monthly basis to Supdt. of Police, Ganjam.

The tender should reach the office of the undersigned by **02.01.2022** (till 5.30 P.M.). The tenders will be opened on **04.02.2022** at DPO, GANJAM for finalization of Technical Bid. The Financial Bid will be opened on **05.02.2022** at DPO, GANJAM. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

**Sd./- Superintendent of Police  
Ganjam**

# BUMPY ROAD TO RECOVERY

The outgoing year saw stocks soar, IPOs explode and cryptocurrencies go wild as a resurgence in consumer demand fuelled by the reopening of the global economy pumped up corporate profits. However, skyrocketing inflation, worldwide supply-chain disruptions and a global economy still vulnerable to the uncertainty created by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus remained formidable challenges. **Orissa POST** picks some of the major happenings from the world of business

## NEW CORPORATE TAX ON THE BLOCK

October 13, 2021 was scripted in the arena of international tax. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) finalised a landmark agreement to subject multinational enterprises (MNEs) to a minimum 15% tax from 2023. A total of 136 countries, including India, have agreed to join the historic agreement. This agreement will help reallocate profits of over \$125 billion from over 100 large MNEs to help ensure firms pay a fair share of tax in the countries they operate in. What is the 'Two Pillar' solution? The 'Two Pillar' solution of the OECD seeks to address tax challenges that are an outcome of digitalisation of the world economy. Under Pillar 1, taxing rights on more than \$125 billion of profit are anticipated to be reallocated to market jurisdictions each year. A global minimum corporate tax rate of 15% is sought to be introduced under Pillar 2. This minimum tax rate will apply to companies with revenues over €750 million.

## Rise of Green Finance

2021 has been record-breaking for green finance, as governments, international institutions and lenders alike seek to support the shift towards renewables. In July eight of the world's largest insurers and reinsurers - AXA, Allianz, Aviva, Generali, Munich Re, SCOR, Swiss Re and Zurich - established the Net-Zero Insurance Alliance, a UN-convened body that has the goal of transitioning their underwriting portfolios to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The issuance of green bonds - financial instruments that fund environmentally sustainable projects - is forecast to reach a record-breaking level of \$500bn this year, according to the Climate Bonds Initiative. This is a 46% increase on last year's figure of \$270bn, which itself was an all-time record. Symbolic of the increased appetite for sustainable finance was the EU's \$140n issuance of green bonds in October, the largest ever of its kind. The money raised will be distributed among member states, to be used for clean energy projects and developments that help governments achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Although green bonds are the most prominent form of climate-focused finance, the development and expansion of a number of other innovative financial instruments has also supported the shift towards decarbonisation. Social bonds - which raise money for projects with positive social outcomes - and sustainability bonds - a mix of green and social bonds - have grown dramatically on the back of attempts to build a sustainable platform for post-coronavirus economic growth. Blue bonds have also gained traction throughout 2021, even while they account for a considerably smaller portion of market share. Similar in their function to green bonds, blue bonds are debt instruments issued to support investment in marine-friendly initiatives and the blue economy. The COP26 held in Glasgow in November provided a boost to other transition-related solutions.

## Tales from the Crypto

The year 2021 was marked by several major breakthroughs for cryptocurrencies. For one, new crypto applications like non-fungible tokens (NFTs) gained ground, with sales of these digital assets setting new records at major auction houses. Secondly, Bitcoin made strides towards the mainstream acceptance with major websites like Expedia and Microsoft accepting the coin as a means of exchange. Third, in September, El Salvador became the first country in the world to accept Bitcoin as legal tender. Understanding what motivates individuals to adopt Bitcoin has been a challenge for researchers. The conditions in the crypto space have made it increasingly likely that Bitcoin will become mainstream in the near future. First, there is increased activity in online communities like Twitter and Reddit, where even crypto novices can exchange information with seasoned investors to obtain word-of-mouth advice about price predictions and trading strategies. Second, there has been an explosion of new crypto-exchanges - or trading platforms where one can exchange fiat currency for crypto - and major investments into the technological infrastructure of existing exchanges. These infrastructure investments have expanded access to crypto markets and also piqued the interest of institutional investors. The last year has seen institutional players like the European Investment Bank - the lending arm of the European Union - take a stance on crypto. In April, the European Investment Bank issued a 100 million digital bond on the Ethereum blockchain. Goldman Sachs, Banco Santander and Société Générale were also involved in the issuance. Research has pointed to institutional adoption as a turning point for widespread crypto adoption and it would appear we are quickly heading there. The year 2021 brought a new wave of sales of NFTs. An NFT can offer proof of ownership of, for instance, digital art in the same way a physical canvas can offer proof of ownership of a Vincent Van Gogh painting. Although NFTs began as a way to formalise ownership of digital art, they have since expanded to include other types of digital property, including digital real estate. Sales of NFTs are set

ting new records - a recent one raised \$17.1 million at Sotheby's. As a result, the auction house launched Metaverse, an NFT-only marketplace to facilitate sales of digital works.

## El Salvador legalises Bitcoin



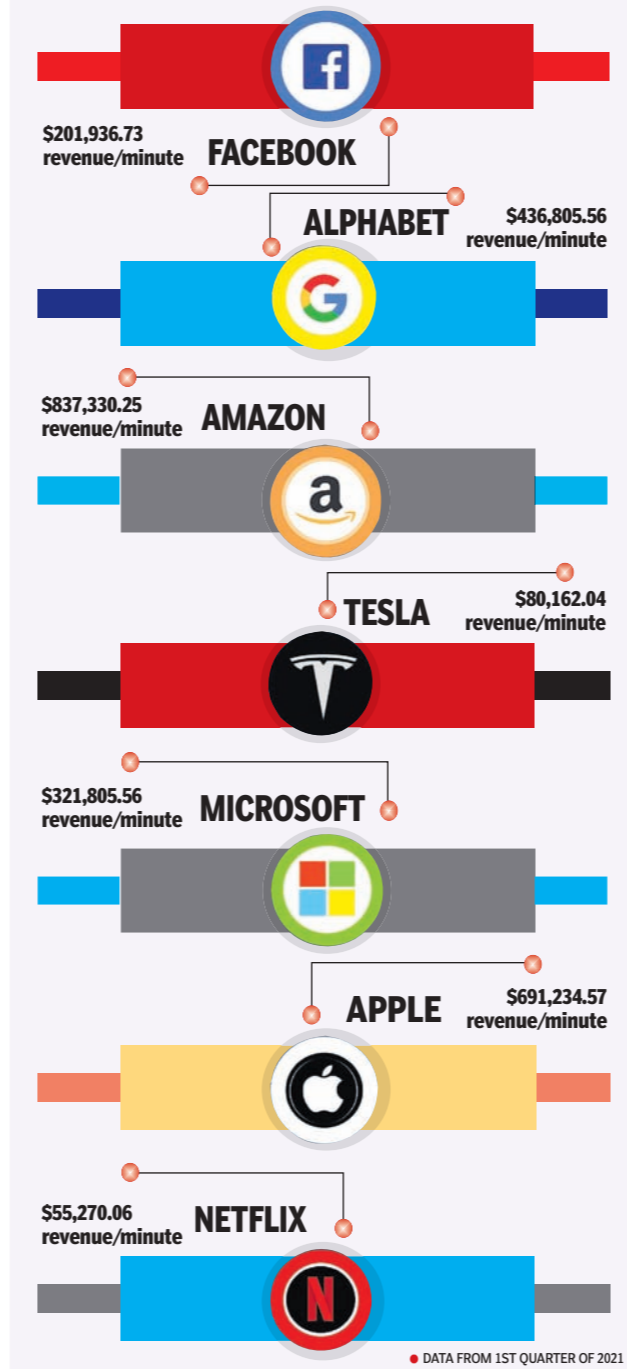
This year, El Salvador became the first country to use Bitcoin as legal tender, alongside the US dollar. Bitcoins are loaded onto digital wallets and accessed via a mobile app. In El Salvador, the wallet is called 'Chivo', which translates as 'cool' in the local dialect. To download the Chivo wallet, one needs a Salvadoran ID document. Users can configure Chivo to make payments either in Bitcoin or their dollar equivalent. To draw or deposit cash (in dollars), the government has erected 200 Chivo automatic teller machines countrywide. To pay for goods and services, both the buyer and seller must have the electronic app. Under a law pushed by President Nayib Bukele and passed within 24 hours by his parliamentary majority in June, "any economic agent must accept Bitcoin as a form of payment when it is offered by the person who acquires a good or service."



## Big Tech gets bigger

Each one of Facebook, Alphabet, Amazon, Tesla, Microsoft, Apple and Netflix - collectively known as FAATMAN - reported record-breaking sales in the outgoing year

### How much FAATMAN makes every minute?



## The Future of Mobility

A broader awareness about climate change is paving the way for automakers to lean towards greener vehicles. Valuations have also gained as money managers are increasingly factoring in ESG (environmental, social and governance) policies in their investments. The United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26 discussed various ways on how countries plan to address the looming threat of climate change. Electric vehicles emerged as one of the various ways countries can mitigate climate change.

In September, Tesla's Model 3 became the first EV to top sales in Europe. The company boasts of cars that do not emit gas since its foundation in 2003. Audi announced that all its new car sales from 2026 onwards will be electric. Volvo, Mercedes-Benz, and Jaguar have also revealed that they plan to make their new sales 100% electric by 2030. Ford and General Motors have set a target of increased EV sales of 40-50% annually.

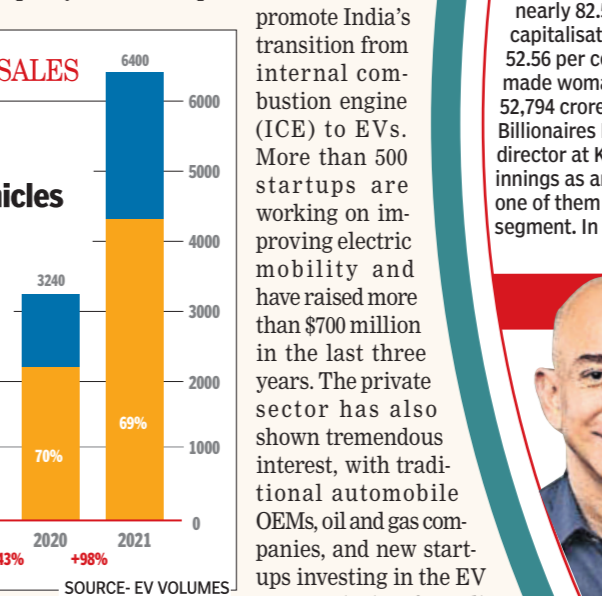
Japanese automaker Nissan aims to make all its new vehicles to be EVs by early 2030. Mitsubishi plans to increase the sales of EVs to 50% by 2030. Honda will abolish hybrid vehicles and aim to sell 100% of EVs and fuel cell vehicles by 2040. Harley-Davidson Inc's electric-motorcycle division will go public through a merger with a blank-check firm in a deal valued at \$1.77 billion, the company said December 13, as the 118-year-old brand bets on younger customers to boost volumes. The company launched LiveWire earlier this year, hoping to claw back lost market share as its core baby boomer customer base grows older and interest in motorcycles as a recreational activity fades.

In India, the EV revolution is still in its infant stage. However, it must be noted that a few Indian automakers have invested in the EV space. Tata Motors, which has the largest share of the country's electric car market, is aggressively betting on EVs. The company plans to push its presence in EVs and launch 10 new battery-EVs by 2025 across segments in India. The company said it will also invest in lithium-ion cell manufacturing in India and Europe to establish a proper supply chain for its zero-emission vehicles in the coming decade.

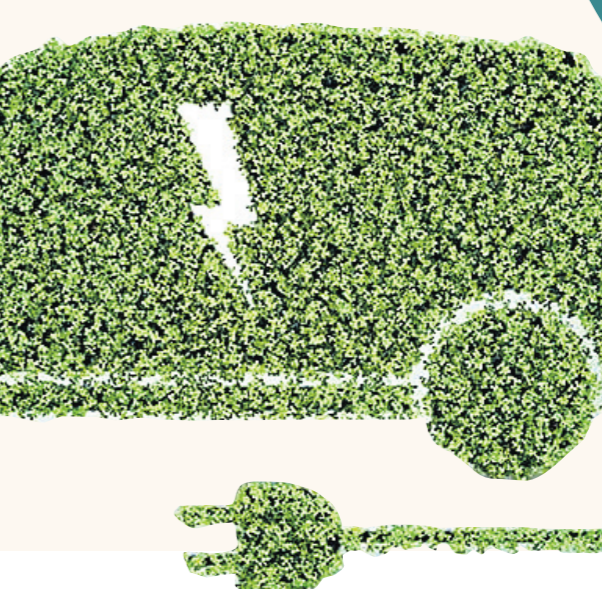
Hero MotoCorp is the largest two-wheeler manufacturer in the world. The company has a toe-hold in the domestic EV segment with a roughly 34.6% stake in EV start-up Ather Energy. Earlier this year, Hero MotoCorp partnered with Taiwan's Gogoro. Hero MotoCorp and Gogoro will establish a joint venture to bring Gogoro's battery swapping platform to India. The two will also collaborate on EV development to bring Hero-branded, powered by Gogoro Network vehicles to the market.

Ola Electric, September 16, launched its first e-scooter S1 and announced that it has sold e-scooters worth ₹600 crore in a day. "We sold 4 scooters every second! In fact in just 24 hours, we sold scooters worth over ₹600 crores." That's more, in value terms, than what the entire 2W industry sells in a day! Make no mistake, the age of EVs is here," the company said in a statement. The welcome received by Ola into the EV market once again proves that India is prepared for its EV revolution. Ola Electric Mobility Pvt. also plans to build the world's biggest electric scooter-mega-factory outside Bangalore.

Though it might not reflect on the road, India has come a long way since 2015 in electric mobility. Around 20 states in the country have already come up with either a draft or final state level electric vehicle policy. These state policies overall aim to promote India's transition from internal combustion engine (ICE) to EVs. More than 500 startups are working on improving electric mobility and have raised more than \$700 million in the last three years. The private sector has also shown tremendous interest, with traditional automobile OEMs, oil and gas companies, and new startups investing in the EV sector. It is time for India



to begin phasing out vehicles running on fossil fuel through time-bound targets. It has been established that EVs have a big future and now they will become an integral part of our lives.



## PERSON OF THE YEAR

It was a year of achievements for Tesla, Inc. founder Elon Musk, who garnered attention for becoming the richest person in the world in part due to the rise in Tesla's stock price. With SpaceX, Musk launched the first-ever mission to the Earth's orbit with a crew of only tourists and no professional astronauts. Musk is a visionary business leader like no other. This is how time magazine described him after naming him the Person of the Year: "The richest man in the world doesn't own a house and has recently been selling off his fortune. He tosses satellites into orbit and harnesses the sun; he drives a car he created that uses no gas and barely needs a driver. With a flick of his finger, the stock market soars or swoons. An army of devotees hangs on his every utterance. He dreams of Mars as he bestrides Earth, square-jawed and indomitable."



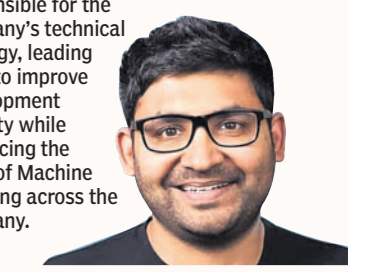
## SELF-MADE BILLIONAIRE

Investment banker Falguni Nayyar launched beauty and fashion e-commerce platform Nykaa from her father's office when she was 49. Almost a decade later, Nayyar became the country's wealthiest self-made woman entrepreneur. Nykaa made a blockbuster debut on the stock exchange November 10. The \$5,352-crore IPO of Nayyar's FSN E-Commerce Ventures Ltd was oversubscribed nearly 82.5 times. On the same day, the company's market capitalisation touched the ₹1 lakh crore mark. Nayyar, who owns 52.56 per cent stake in the company, became India's richest self-made woman billionaire, with a net worth of \$7.03billion (₹52,794 crore) as of November 26, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. It was around 2009 that Nayyar, then managing director at Kotak Mahindra Capital, started considering a second innings as an entrepreneur. By 2011, she had a couple of ideas, one of them was being a multi-brand retailer in the beauty segment. In March 2012, she quit her job and launched Nykaa.



## NEW TWITTER BOSS

Parag Agrawal became Twitter CEO after Jack Dorsey announced his resignation. The move was apparently months in the making. Parag was Twitter's Chief Technology Officer (CTO) before assuming the role as the CEO. Like another big Indian-origin tech CEO - Sundar Pichai at Google - Parag is also an IITian (IIT-Bombay). Parag has been at Twitter for a while and, apparently, he is well-liked by Jack Dorsey, one likely factor that helped him clinch the top post at the company. Parag joined Twitter in 2011 and has served as CTO since October 2017. As CTO, he has been responsible for the company's technical strategy, leading work to improve development velocity while advancing the state of Machine Learning across the company.



## SHOCKER FROM AMAZON

This year, Jeff Bezos had the time of his life. In July, the Amazon founder and second richest person on Earth travelled to space in a rocket built by his company Blue Origin for a 10-minute, 10-second flight before returning to Earth. What did he make of this profound, life-changing experience? "Best day ever!" he cried upon touchdown. Earlier in February, Bezos shocked the Amazon founder Jeff Bezos by nine days and his new role as executive chair. Alongside his adventures in space, he spends his time on the climate change-busting Bezos Earth Fund, to which he has pledged \$10bn. At the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November, Bezos announced \$2bn to help restore natural habitats and transform food systems. Amazon made \$110bn between July and September, and Bezos is likely to celebrate the New Year with a net worth of around \$200bn. The billionaire's wealth has ballooned during the pandemic as lockdowns forced people to turn to online shopping and services.



## HERALDING SPACE TOURISM

In a huge step toward making space tourism a reality, Richard Branson became the first private citizen to enter space in his own spaceship. The Virgin Galactic founder won the billionaire space race, rocketing into the July sky aboard the supersonic SpaceShipTwo, a winged spacecraft developed by his company. July 11, Richard Branson reached the edge of space and safely returned to the Earth, beating Amazon founder Jeff Bezos by nine days. Travelling to space must be "more accessible to all," the billionaire said during a news conference following his successful flight aboard Galactic's VSS Unity. Branson shared with the audience that he looked to start a space business 25 years ago when he registered "Virgin Galactic" and somewhat ironically, "Virgin Intergalactic" as his business names. This was the start of his journey into space, which culminated July 11.



## Sensex scales Mt 60k

This year the stock markets were on a roll. The BSE Sensex crossed the 60,000-mark for the first time ever, while Nifty hit lifetime high of 18,000 points. It has taken a little over 31 years for the Sensex to traverse from 1,000 points to the historic 60,000 mark. The Sensex has climbed from the 30,000 level to 60,000 in little over six years, reflecting the overall bullishness in the market. It took just eight months for the Sensex to cover the journey from 50,000 in January this year to scale the unprecedented 60,000 mark for the first time September 24. The rally in the domestic market was driven by positive global cues, strong inflows by FII/DIIs, good corporate earnings, falling COVID-19 cases, upbeat corporate commentaries and low cost of capital. However, with the emergence of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus that led to a rise in COVID-19 cases in African and European countries, and amid high inflation in large economies such as the US, Japan, the UK and India, markets witnessed selling pressure and the global cues spooked investors towards the later part of the year.



## IPO bonanza

Blockbuster Market Debut Beauty e-commerce platform Nykaa's parent company FSN E-Commerce Ventures made a strong debut on the bourses. The company made its way into the ₹1 lakh crore market capitalisation club with the stock closing at ₹2,206.70, almost double the offer price, prompting some concern over the rich valuation. The stock's first-day pop was higher than market expectations - it was listed at ₹2,001, a 78% premium over the IPO price of ₹1,125, having gone as high as ₹2,248.10. Nykaa raised ₹5,352 crore in its IPO. Founder Falguni Nayyar became India's richest self-made woman billionaire.



## Biggest IPO, Biggest Crash

After becoming India's largest-ever IPO, Paytm parent One97 Communications set another record on debut - the biggest drop on opening day for share sales worth more than ₹1,900 crore. The stock listed at ₹1,950, a discount of 9.3% to its offer price of ₹2,150, and closed at ₹1,564.15, down 27%. Investors lost nearly ₹5,000 crore of their ₹18,300 crore investment in the IPO. Post debut, about 350 current and ex-employees of Paytm have a net worth of at least ₹10 million.

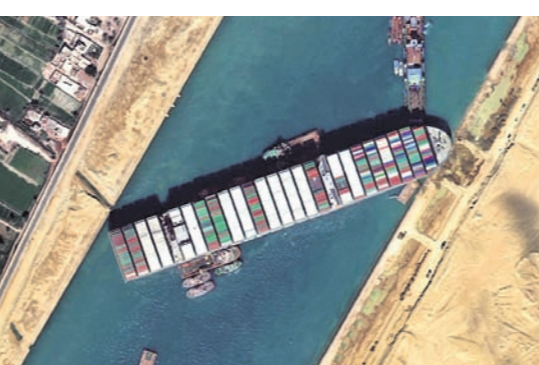


## It's raining Unicorns

It was a defining moment for India when inMobi became India's first Unicorn in 2011. A decade later, the country is home to 75 Unicorns with a valuation of close to \$26.5 billion, 42 of which were born in 2021 alone. Over \$38.4 billion has been raised till December this year, with several of the rounds producing Indian Unicorns in 2021. The Unicorn story of 2021 is the one with many firsts, as the ecosystem witnessed the entry of the first healthtech, social commerce, e-pharmacy Unicorns. India also emerged as the third largest startup ecosystem in the world this year after the US and China and the pace of growth is not showing any signs of slowing down. The US tops the list with 396 unicorns, while China is at the second spot with 277, showed data from Hurun Research Institute. With 31 startups, Bangalore is the startup capital of India followed by Delhi NCR (18) and Mumbai (13).



## Costliest traffic jam



Egypt's Suez Canal, one of the busiest trade routes in the world, connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea through the Isthmus of Suez. The artificial sea-level waterway plays a vital role in cargo transport supplying goods from one part of the world to another. However, the canal witnessed the most expensive traffic jam after a giant container ship got stuck March 23, 2021. It was the world's costliest traffic jam which prevented an estimated \$9.6 billion worth of daily trade and sent oil prices climbing on international markets. When Ever Given - a giant container ship as big as four football pitches - was buffeted and wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal March 23, it blocked one of the world's busiest trade routes. At least 369 ships remained queued to pass through the canal for six days until the vessel registered in Panama and operated by shipping company Evergreen was freed. About 12 per cent of global trade passes through the Suez Canal. The ship remained in place for six days before salvage crews freed it March 29, 2021.

## FB rebrands as Meta

Facebook rebranded itself as Meta in an attempt to own the metaverse, a concept for a 3D version of the internet that a number of companies are working on. Facebook, the company that owns platforms including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, rebranded as Meta October 28. CEO Mark Zuckerberg told attendees at the company's annual Connect conference: "Right now, our brand is so tightly linked to one product that it can't possibly represent everything that we're doing today, let alone in the future. Over time, I hope that we are seen as a metaverse company, and I want to anchor our work and identity on what we're building toward." This was similar to Google's 2015 corporate restructuring into a parent company called Alphabet. The name was chosen to echo the key product that Zuckerberg hopes Facebook - now Meta - will be represented by: the metaverse, the name for a shared online 3D virtual space that a number of companies are interested in creating as a sort of future version of the internet. "In this future, you will be able to teleport instantly as a hologram to be at the office without a commute, at a concert with friends, or in your parents' living room to catch up," Zuckerberg wrote in a letter announcing Facebook's rebranding as Meta.



## The chips are down

Semiconductors are in just about everything we use - cars, laptops, smartphones, household appliances and gaming consoles. They are essential also for social infrastructure that support our everyday life. To a great extent, the chip shortage has been a ticking time bomb, building since late 2020 due to a few (unrelated) supply-chain disruptions. When the pandemic caused a precipitous drop in vehicle sales in spring 2020, automakers cut their orders of all parts and materials - including the chips. Then in the third quarter, when demand for passenger vehicles rebounded, chip manufacturers were already committed to supplying their big customers in consumer electronics and IT. Geopolitical factors also played a role, specifically when the Trump administration began tightly regulating sales of semiconductors to Huawei Technologies, ZTE, and other Chinese firms. Those companies began stockpiling chips essential to 5G smartphones and other products. At the same time, American firms were cut off from chips made by China's Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation after the federal government blacklisted the firm. World leaders and executives at MNCs are worried about the global scarcity of semiconductors, which has hit manufacturing and sales in numerous countries and no early solution is in sight. The chip shortages are expected cause widespread shortages of everything, from electronics to medical devices to technology and networking equipment.

## Maharaja sold

Air India will return to its founder. Tata group nearly seven decades after it was nationalised, capping years of efforts by the government to privatise the debt-laden airline. India's largest conglomerate was named as the winning bidder for Air India October 8. This will give the group full control of Air India, and its low-cost unit Air India Express as well as a 50% stake in ground handling company Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd (AISATS), according to a finance ministry statement. Air India was founded as Tata Airlines in 1932 as the country's first airline but nationalised in 1953. Tata group holding company, Tata Sons Pvt Ltd, through its wholly owned unit Talaceo Pvt Ltd, submitted a winning bid of ₹18,000 crore as the enterprise value of Air India, against a reserve price of ₹12,906 crore. The group will also assume ₹15,300 crore of Air India's debt with the remaining ₹46,292 crore taken over by the government's Air India Asset Holding Ltd (AAHL), a special company set up to hold half of the airline's loans, four of its units and non-core assets. The Tata group will also have to pay ₹2,700 crore in cash to the government.



# national

## of the day quote

Karnataka would be completely freed from the drug menace with cooperation from the youth



**BASAVARAJ BOMMAI** | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

Increasing the marriageable age for women from 18 to 21 and bringing them on a par with men is a historic step towards the empowerment of women



**JP NADDA** | BJP CHIEF

The BJP government in Haryana neither introduced any developmental work nor carried forward the schemes approved by the previous government



**BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA** | CONGRESS LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### MP proposes to delay polls

**Bhopal:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Madhya Pradesh government has proposed to postpone the three-tier panchayat elections in the state. A decision on this regard was taken in a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Sunday. During the meeting, state Panchayat Minister Mahendra Singh Sisodia put forth a proposal before the Cabinet to rescind an ordinance which the state government had recently issued to conduct elections.

### AP Gov hosts high tea for CJ

**Amaravati(AP):** Andhra Pradesh Governor Bishwabhusan Harichandan Sunday hosted high tea honouring Chief Justice of India N V Ramana at Raj Bhavan here. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy along with his wife YS Bharathi Reddy were also present on the occasion, an official release said. Supreme Court Judges Vineet Saran, JK Maheswari and Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court Prasanth Kumar Mishra also attended.

### ED grills MLA Vijay Mishra

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Sunday said that it grilled UP MLA from Bhadohi, Vijay Mishra, in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) case. A team of elite officials of the ED reached Agra jail where Vijay Mishra is currently lodged to interrogate him. According to information, the ED in February had lodged a PMLA case against Mishra and his alleged aides. A team of ED office from Prayagraj is looking into the matter.

### 3 pedestrians killed after car hits them

**Bilaspur:** Three pedestrians were killed and one person was critically injured when a speeding car hit them in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur city, police said Sunday. The accident took place on Saturday night when the victims, who worked at a tractor agency near a bus stand in the city, were returning home on foot after duty, they said.

### Mandala puja held at Sabarimala

Sabarimala (Ker): The auspicious Mandala puja was held at the Lord Ayappa temple here Sunday, marking the end of the 41-day long first leg of the pilgrimage season. The puja, held in accordance with the prevailing COVID-19 guidelines.



Be it petrol, diesel, LPG gas or food items, prices are skyrocketing but the central government has failed to contain inflation

**SACHIN PILOT** | FORMER RAJASTHAN DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

## GREAT INITIATIVE

Japan has shown a keen interest to provide technical support and collaborate with the Haryana government on climate change and environmental issues, an official statement said Sunday



# Omicron brings new Covid curbs



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** With the Covid-19 positivity rate touching 0.55 percent, the Delhi government has decided to re-impose night curfew from Monday, according to sources.

Officials said the night curfew will kick in under the four-stage Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) if the positivity rate settles at 0.5 percent for two consecutive days.

Delhi reported 290 fresh coronavirus cases Sunday, the highest since June 10, and one fatality, while the positivity rate rose to 0.55 percent, according to data shared by the Delhi government's health department here. States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka have also reimposed night curfew.

Night curfew, closure of schools and colleges, and shops of non-essential items, and halved seating capacity in metro trains are the other restrictions that will come in place under the yellow alert. GRAP was approved by the Delhi Disaster

Management Authority in July in anticipation of the third wave of Covid-19. It aims to bring in a clearer picture of imposition and lifting of restrictions depending on the coronavirus situation.

Curfew from 10 PM to 5 AM will be imposed during Yellow, Amber and Orange alerts. If the 'Red' alert is sounded, there will be "total curfew". The 'Yellow' (level-1) alert will be sounded when the positivity rate crosses 0.5 percent or new cases increase to 1,500 or oxygenated bed occupancy reaches 500. The response will involve allowing construction, manufacturing activities and opening of shops of essential goods.

Shops and establishments of non-essential goods and services, and malls will be allowed to open between 10 AM and 8 PM based on the odd-even formula. Only one weekly market per zone with 50 percent of vendors will be allowed to open. Restaurants will be permitted with 50 percent capacity from 8 AM to 10 PM while bars can also operate with the same capacity, but from 12 noon to 10 PM. Marriages and funerals will be allowed with 20 people in attendance while all other types of gatherings will be prohibited.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh reported its first cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus on Sunday and in Kerala 19 more people tested positive for the Omicron variant of Covid-19. Maharashtra also reported as many as 31 new cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus Sunday, taking the tally of such patients in the state to 141, the health department said.

## For now, Covaxin likely to be only Covid vaccine available for children of 15-18 yrs

**New Delhi:** Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is likely to be the only Covid-19 vaccine available, for now, for children in the age group of 15-18 years, who will be inoculated from January 3, official sources said. Also, healthcare and frontline workers and citizens above 60 years of age with comorbidities would be administered the third dose of the same vaccine they had been given before. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a televised address to the nation on Saturday night, announced that vaccination against Covid-19 for children between 15-18 years will start from January 3, while "precaution dose" for healthcare and frontline workers would be administered from January 10. The decisions came amid rising Covid cases linked to the Omicron variant of the virus. More than 61 per cent of India's adult population has received both doses of the vaccine. Similarly, about 90 per cent of the adult population has received the first dose of Covid vaccine.

## Rajnath, Yogi lay foundation stone of BrahMos unit

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Dec 26:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here Sunday that India was not making BrahMos missiles to attack any country in the world.

"We want to make BrahMos so that India has such power that no country in the world dares to look at us with an evil eye," he said,

while laying the foundation stone of BrahMos Missiles production unit and DRDO Lab in Lucknow.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who was also present at the function, said that the new BrahMos Missile production unit will increase employment in the state. He said that new India is moving ahead fast in the defence sector.



## IN REMEMBRANCE



Women pay tributes to the victims of Tsunami 2004 on its 17th anniversary, at Foreshore Estate beach (Pattinappakkam beach) in Chennai

PTI PHOTO

## Entrance test must for admission across central varsities from 2022

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** The admission process in most of the central universities will change from the upcoming academic session as Central University Common Entrance Test (CUCET) will come into force for admission to all undergraduate courses in different central universities across the country.

The Union Education Ministry and the University Grants Commission (UGC) have informed central universities about the mandatory entrance test from next academic session, after which all central universities have started preparations for the CET. Delhi University (DU) has also made the CET mandatory for the academic session 2022-23.

These central universities have also passed proposals in their respective Academic and Executive Councils regarding the CET. According to renowned educationist CS Kandpal, this is a new system and its efficacy can be tested on the basis of experience. It is not proper to comment on the merits and demerits of the new system as of now. Educational institutions must see this as a positive change, he added. The entrance examinations can open new doors for students. If there are demerits in the system or in the



ANS

conduct or in the process of examinations in future, there is always a chance to improve, Kandpal said.

According to DU Professor Hansraj Suman, class 12 marks will not be completely neglected in the name of CUCET. Many central universities have approved CUCET in their academic council but class 12 board exam results will also be given importance.

The Union Education Ministry says that there has been a demand to implement the CUCET for a long time, but has come into effect now.

Hansraj Suman, also former member of DU Academic Council, said that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the process for awarding marks in class 12 board exams was misused by several schools

which presented exaggerated performance of the students.

The DU Professor is also in favour of completely revamping the admission process in his varsity. However, he says that while doing so the interests of the students from the marginalised and economically weaker sections must be kept in mind.

According to Suman, the way the CET is being introduced, coaching centres will see its importance rising as a result of which students from economically weaker sections may be left behind.

Now from the next academic session, students will now have to pass the CET with good marks to seek admission in DU, he said.

Other central universities are also following the same admission policy.

## Hundreds of tourists stuck near Changu lake amid heavy snowfall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Siliguri, Dec 26:** Hundreds of tourists were stuck near Changu Lake in Sikkim due to heavy snowfall, following which the Army began a rescue operation, officials said Sunday.

As the Jawaharlal Nehru Road closed due to the heavy snowfall Saturday, hundreds of tourists got stuck near Changu Lake, they said.

The Army rescued them and provided them shelter at their camp in the area during the night, officials said.



As the weather conditions improved a bit on Sunday morning, the tourists were divided into small groups and Army personnel were guiding them to reach Gangtok, around 40 km away, on foot, officials said.

The rescue operations, which were underway till the last reports were received, are likely to continue till Monday as hundreds of tourists were visiting Tsongmo or Changu Lake, near India's boundary with China, during the Christmas holidays.

## Boiler blast kills 7 in Muzaffarpur

SEVEN BODIES WERE PULLED OUT OF THE DEBRIS AND SENT FOR POST MORTEM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Muzaffarpur (Bihar), Dec 26:** Seven persons were killed and as many were injured when a boiler explosion inside a factory here brought the structure down and left many buildings in the vicinity severely damaged, a top official said.

District Magistrate, Muzaffarpur, Pranay Kumar said the boiler blast took place around 9.30 A.M. Inside a unit at Bela industrial area that manufactured noodles and other snacks. The sound was heard far and wide and the rooftops of many other buildings in the area were blown away by the impact of the collision which reduced the factory to rubble, said the DM. Officials of the local adminis-



Police personnel inspect after a boiler explosion at a factory in Bihar's Muzaffarpur

tration, police, and fire department rushed to the spot to carry out rescue operations. Seven bodies were pulled out of the debris

and sent for post mortem. Seven persons, who have sustained serious injuries, are admitted to the SKMCH referral hos-

pital where their condition was said to be critical. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced an ex-gratia of Rs four lakh for the next of kin of each deceased and constituted a team to investigate the cause of the blast and fix accountability.

According to the Muzaffarpur DM, three of the deceased have been identified and cheques of the compensation amount have been handed to their family members. "Efforts are on to identify the remaining deceased. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel assisted the administration in clearing the debris and we can say that there are no bodies trapped therein", he added.

# Urban Indians set to make their homes smarter in '22

HOME AUTOMATION SYSTEMS IN INDIA HAVE WITNESSED UNPRECEDENTED DEMAND IN RECENT YEARS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** As per a current report by Allied Market Research, the India dwelling automation market dimension was valued at \$1.79 billion in 2018 and is anticipated to attain \$13.5 billion by 2026, rising at a CAGR of 29.8 per cent in the course of the forecast interval.

Home automation programs in India have witnessed unprecedented demand in current years, due to elevated considerations about security and safety, particularly in city areas, the report stated.

According to Madhav Sheth, CEO, realme India, VP, realme and President, realme International Business Group, the 5G know-how will add to the extent of safety that good dwelling merchandise present due to its enhanced stage of encryption.

"5G is destined to enhance the smart home experience for consumers and cause major disruptions in the smart home segment," Sheth advised IANS.

"5G's ability to provide low latency and faster and seamless connectivity makes it ideal for smart home products," he added. From good vacuum cleaners to good light-



ISTOCK PHOTO

ing, from AI-pushed washing machines to 360-degree door cameras and clever espresso machines, city Indians are embracing IoT merchandise like by no means ear-

lier than "The need for comfort has been guiding purchase in the past few years with an increase in buying power of the urban middle class,"

stated Dinesh Aggarwal, Joint Managing Director, Panasonic Life Solutions, Panasonic India.

"The pandemic has added a desire for safety as an influencing factor. Thus a combined value proposition of safety, comfort, convenience and a connected experience are the influencing factors while purchasing appliances and devices," Aggarwal knowledgeable.

He talked about that in the course of the pandemic, the necessity for "protection" has elevated and as per the corporate's syndicated analysis, 81 per cent of shoppers are prepared to spend on IoT-enabled mer-

chandise for security and luxury.

"This 'IoTification' includes the remote operation of lights and switches, regulation of various appliances including air conditioner, TV, refrigerator, washing machines, etc. through a platform that interconnects them and is accessible through a smartphone or any other mobile device," Aggarwal knowledgeable.

Furthermore, components like a greater high quality of life, an increase in folks' disposable earnings, and elevated information of good automated programs have enhanced the nation's adoption of dwelling automation programs.

# national



This new Omicron variant is being constantly reviewed by our scientists. Every day they are getting new data and steps are being taken based on their suggestions  
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

## TIGER TRIGGERS PANIC

A man was injured Sunday morning after a tiger lunged at a group of people when they were looking for the big cat inside dense bushes in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, forest officials said



## of the day quote

Yes, I am a Congressman. Who told you I am not? 24 'Carat' Congressman. How does it matter if 18 Carats are challenging 24 carat?  
GHULAM NABI AZAD | CONGRESS LEADER

I am sure when the elections come, we'll sit down together again to defeat the divisive and communal forces  
FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

The central government has accepted my suggestion for a booster dose - this is a right step. The protection of vaccines and booster shots would have to be provided to all the people in the country  
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### PM to inaugurate Kanpur Metro Dec 28

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the completed section of Kanpur Metro rail project December 28. He will also inaugurate the Bina-Panki multiproduct pipeline project and attend the 54th convocation ceremony of IIT Kanpur.

### Fishermen's strike enters eighth day

**Rameswaram (TN):** The indefinite strike here by fishermen demanding the immediate release of fishers arrested by Sri Lanka entered the eighth day while community leaders Sunday said a 'massive rail roko' would be held January 1. Till such time the Centre secured the release of all arrested fishermen and their boats, the strike would continue to be on, said P Sesu Raja and S Emerit, leaders of separate fishermen's associations.

### Teen jumps off building, dies

**New Delhi:** A 15-year-old boy has died by allegedly committing suicide after jumping off the sixth floor of his residential building in the national capital, a police official said Sunday. According to the police, the incident took place at the Commonwealth Games village in east Delhi at about 8.30 p.m. Saturday. At the time of the incident, the boy was alone at his home as his parents had gone to the Mayur Vihar market.

### Jesus Christ statue vandalised in Ambala

**Ambala:** A statue of Jesus Christ at the entrance gate of a church in Ambala was allegedly vandalised by some unidentified people, police said Sunday. The incident occurred on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday at the Holy Redeemer Church in Ambala Cantonment, they said.

### Constable kills SI

**Hyderabad:** A Sub Inspector working for CRPF was killed Sunday after his colleague, a head constable in the force, opened fire at him at Venkatapuram village in Mulugu District, about 285 Km from here, a senior police official said. "This happened in the CRPF camp where one head constable fired upon an SI of CRPF. The SI died and the head constable is critical as he fired on himself. He tried to kill himself. The injured has been shifted to hospital," Mulugu Superintendent of Police, Sangram Singh said in a statement.

## STORM IN THE TEACUP

# Covid, falling exports continue to hurt tea industry

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** The perfect storm in the cost-intensive tea industry is expected to spill over into 2022, as concerns such as rising tea prices as well as subdued export demand continue to hurt the producers.

Tea production is a high-cost business, with 60-65 per cent of the input costs going into labour wages. The rest goes for coal, gas, fertiliser, and other machinery.

The rise in tea costs was led by the pandemic-led disruptions in the plucking activities initially. The leaves mature if they are left on the shrubs for too long, leading to

deterioration in the quality of tea.

Later, floods in some key tea growing regions of Assam and West Bengal also damaged crops and reduced yields. These two states produce the lion's share of the beverage in the country, almost 75 per cent of the total.

Then came the wage hike by both the state governments, just before the Assembly polls in the tea growing states. Votes of tea labourers, who are sizable in numbers, play a crucial role in many pockets of these two states.

Assam raised daily wage by Rs 50 at Rs 202, while West Bengal raised it by Rs 26 at Rs 202. Production loss and rising input



costs are just one side of the coin. Importantly, the export demand for Indian tea had also dampened as out-of-consumption of the commodity had tanked sharply amid the pandemic globally. As per the lat-

est data available on Tea Board of India's website, Indian tea exports during January-September fell 10 per cent to 138 million kg. The data for October and November are yet to be published.

Outlook for exports is still dim with the detection of the new Covid-19 variant - Omicron, tea producers said. "Outlook for tea exports is not very optimistic. Increased cost of production for crush tear and curl tea as compared to African prices are hurting the Indian market. African producers are making inroads in those markets, including Iran, where Indian tea was earlier dominant," said Anshuman Kanoria, Chairman of Indian Tea Exporters' Association. Kanoria also owns a few tea estates in Darjeeling.

Iran was predominantly a major importer of tea from India. Besides, higher freight rates also add worries for the exporters, Kanoria said.

# No plans to bring back farm laws again: Tomar

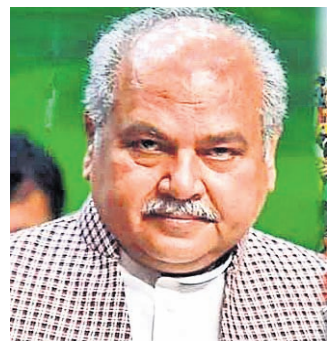
The minister hits out at the Congress party for indulging in "a negative work of spreading confusion to cover up its failures" and said farmers should be beware of this

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar Sunday clarified that the government has no plans to bring back the recently repealed farm laws, and urged farmers to be wary of "confusion" being created by the Congress on this issue.

Tomar, in a statement, said the three agriculture reforms laws were brought for the welfare of farmers. However due to the farmers' protest at Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to withdraw these laws.

The minister also mentioned that his statements on this issue



made during his address (at an agri event at Nagpur, Maharashtra) however, been misinterpreted and said his intention was not that is being shown.

"I had said (at that event) we have take a step back on the farm laws but the government will always move ahead to work towards the welfare of the farmers. Therefore there should not be any misunderstanding on this issue and the government has no intention to bring back the farm laws again," Tomar said. The minister also hits out at the Congress party for in-

dulging in "a negative work of spreading confusion to cover up its failures" and said farmers should be beware of this.

He also said that the Swaminathan Committee report that came in 2006 was not implemented by the Congress government.

In his address to the nation November 19, Modi had announced withdrawal of the three controversial farm laws in a bid to end a year-long massive protest by farmers at borders of the national capital.

These laws were passed in Parliament in September 2020 but the Supreme Court had stayed their roll out in March 2021 and finally were repealed November 29 by passing a bill due to mounting pressure from protesting farmers. The three laws were: The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

# SKM not to contest Assembly poll: Tikait

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Dec 26:** Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait Sunday said Samyukt Kisan Morcha is not contesting any election and he was not going to join politics.

The comment was made in context of farmers' organisations creating a political front to contest Punjab elections due in February.

Asked about his stance on Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, also due in February, he said he will speak on it after the model code of conduct comes into force.

He, however, said farmers will be in the role of king maker in UP. "Samyukt Kisan Morcha is not contesting any election. Some people had gone there 'on leave' for four months, someone is playing cards, someone is roaming... What can we do? After four months, we will see who has gone and who has done what," he said. "We are holding a meeting on the 15th and we will talk about this then," Tikait told reporters when asked about the farmers group forming a



Rakesh Tikait's comment comes after farmers' organisations came together and formed a political front to contest the Punjab elections due next February

political front in Punjab. He also alleged inaction on part of the BJP in the incidence of mowing down of farmers in Lakhimpur allegedly by son of Ajay Mishra, the Union Minister of State for Home.

# Ban sought on Sunny's latest track Madhuban...



Music label Saregama said the company will "change" the lyrics and the name of the song "Madhuban"

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** A Delhi-based lawyer has filed a complaint against actress Sunny Leone, among others, seeking a ban on her latest video album "Madhuban Me Radhika Nache" as her dance performance "hurts religious sentiments".

The parties to the complaint are the music company Saregama, actress Sunny Leone, lyricist Manoj

Yadav and singers Shaarib and Toshi, Kanika Kapoor, and Arindam Chakraborty.

"The lyrics, the theme and the seductive moves of Sunny Leone and her flamboyant performance on the song depicting Hindu goddess Radha - also known as Radhika - are highly condemnable and derogatory for the Hindu belief and their community's sentiments," advocate Vineet Jindal claimed in the complaint filed with the Delhi Police.

The song is on the subject of love between Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha, the pure divinity of which is of utmost significance to the Hindu community," the complaint read.

Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra Sunday warned actor Sunny Leone and singers Shaarib and Toshi to apologise and withdraw their music video 'Madhuban mein Radhika, jaise jungle me nache mor' within three days or else face action. The minister alleged that the video hurts the religious sentiments of Hindus.

## SHOWING CREATIVITY



Participants from West Bengal and Bangladesh during the 62nd All Bengal Bratachari Training camp in Kolkata. The training programme includes work education, physical education, folk dances, folk songs and social service

# Wet spell across northwest, central, east India: IMD

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday predicted a wet spell across northwest, central and east India in next 3-4 days.

A 'Western Disturbance', seen as a cyclonic circulation over east Afghanistan and adjoining Pakistan and an induced cyclonic circulation lies over southwest Rajasthan and neighbourhood at

lower tropospheric levels. Also, a trough runs from the cyclonic circulation over southwest Rajasthan and neighbourhood to Vidarbha across east Rajasthan and west Madhya Pradesh at lower tropospheric levels.

# Chemotherapy may not be needed to treat cancer: Research

THE RESEARCH BEARS SIGNIFICANCE AS THE WORK PROMISES A TREATMENT USING WHICH THE CANCER PATIENTS WILL BE SAVED FROM THE SIDE EFFECTS OF CHEMO AND RADIATION THERAPY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Prayagraj, Dec 26:** A team of 11 scientists from the Cleveland Clinic in the US and a researcher from Allahabad University (AU) have found a way in which chemo and radiation therapy will not be required to kill cancer cells.

The work of the team led by Yang Li, Professor of Cancer Biology at the Cleveland Clinic, and assisted by Munish Pandey, Assistant Professor at the Department of Biochemistry, AU, has been published in the prestigious journal 'Oncogene by Nature'. The research bears sig-

nificance as the work promises a treatment using which the cancer patients will be saved from the side effects of chemo and radiation therapy.

After its successful experiment on rats, efforts are now being intensified to apply it on the human body. Pandey said: "The study may give relief to cancer patient who undergoes chemotherapy. Chemotherapy uses radiation and other drugs which has many side effects and evoke immune system that causes severe pain and allergic reaction. The team has earlier developed knockout mice for miR-21 and the same was pub-



lished in 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences' of the US (PNAS) journal. MicroRNA-21 (small non-coding RNA) is one of the most abun-

dant microRNAs in mammalian cells that regulates apoptosis (programme cell death) and oncogenic effects. "I have worked along with the American scientists and

invented an alternative to chemotherapy and drugs in the treatment of cancer, which damage normal cells along with cancer cells during cancer treatment. This successful experiment was done by a team of 11 scientists in the Cleveland Clinic and Yang Li. Our team while experimenting on mice injected its anti-sense into mice to make miR-21 ineffective."

Following this, it was found that the tumour formed in the body of the rat gradually became smaller and some tumours disappeared completely. This experiment went on for a year in

America. However, it has not yet been used on the human body. Now the effort has been intensified to apply it on the human body, Pandey said.

He added that due to cancer, tumours are formed in the body which are eliminated through chemotherapy and drugs. In this process of treatment along with cancer cells, normal cells are also damaged and has a negative effect on the body.

The group is working on other programmed cell death mechanisms, microRNAs and chemerin antigen T-cell therapy to tackle carcinogenicity in mice model.

## NAGALAND KILLINGS

# CONGRESS DEMANDS PROBE BY HC JUDGE, ₹1 CRORE TO KIN

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** The Congress Sunday demanded independent probe by a sitting High Court Judge in Nagaland killings and Rs 1 crore compensation to the kin of the deceased.

Addressing a press conference Sunday, Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi and Ajoy Kumar said, "The SIT that has been announced by the government of Nagaland is an eye-wash and the Congress party believes that no meaningful resolution is possible as evidenced by the government's false statements in the aftermath of the incident in Mon. The Congress Party demands that a commission of inquiry headed by a sitting judge of the Gauhati High Court immediately should be set up as such an independent committee will enable the country to understand the true events that took place December 4-5 in which 14 (fourteen) people lost their lives."

## The party also demanded Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation

Both the leaders were part of Congress delegation constituted by Sonia Gandhi, which submitted its report Friday. It said that December 4, Saturday around 4.00-4.30 p.m., a unit of the '21 Para Special Forces' organised an ambush on suspected NSCN (K) Yung Aung faction cadre near Tiru village, Mon district, and instead of gunning down the suspected militants, killed eight civilian miners belonging to Oting village who were returning home in a pickup truck when the attack took place.

Out of the 8 (eight) miners, 6 (six) were immediately killed as a result of the ambush and 2 (two) were severely injured. The villagers on searching for the missing miners and discovering their bodies retaliated in anger on the local armed forces and in the ensuing firefight 7 (seven) more civilians and one jawan were killed.

## Health Secy to brief EC on Covid situation today

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** As the Election Commission prepares for assembly polls in five states early next year, its top brass is slated to interact with Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan Monday.

The commission is likely to seek updates from Bhushan on the Covid-19 situation and the emergence of Omicron, the new coronavirus variant, sources said Sunday. The terms of Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Manipur legislative assemblies are ending on different dates in March next year while the assembly's term in Uttar Pradesh will end in May.

The Election Commission (EC) is expected to announce election dates next month. The commission may also seek suggestions from Bhushan on improving its Covid-19 protocol for poll campaigning, polling days and the dates of counting.

The commission has already visited Punjab, Goa and Uttarakhand as part of its pre-poll stock-taking exercise.



# international

## of the day quote

My goal is to stop the bloodshed in the east of Ukraine. It's impossible to imagine security in Europe without ending the war in Donbas

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT

SAARC can provide a conducive and beneficial atmosphere to build economic synergies which can transform the quality of life of the people of South Asia

IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN PM

I welcome the de-escalation gestures of the Ethiopian government and the Tigrayan forces in the conflict-hit northern region of the country

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

## SHORT TAKES

### 8 dead in suicide bomb attack

**Beni:** At least eight people have died in a suicide bomber explosion late Saturday, in the middle of the Christmas celebration, in northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), said hospital sources Sunday morning. In a provisional assessment provided on Saturday night by General Ekeke Sylvain, spokesman for the governor of the North Kivu province, at least six people, including the suicide bomber, were killed and 13 others wounded in this "terrorist attack" in the city of Beni.

### Four security officers killed

**Mogadishu:** At least four security officers including their commander were killed in a roadside bomb blast Sunday near a hospital in the west of the Somali capital Mogadishu, officials said. A security official told Xinhua news agency on phone that al-Shabab militants were behind the killing.

### 41 killed in Burkina Faso ambush

**Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso):** Islamic extremists killed 41 people last week in an attack in northern Burkina Faso, including the prominent leader of a volunteer group helping the country's military, the government said. Alkassoum Maiga, the government spokesman, announced two days of mourning following the deadly ambush on a convoy in Loroum province on Thursday. Among the victims was Soumaila Ganame, also known as Ladjji Yoro.

### Toll rises to 46

**Kuala Lumpur:** The number of people who died in the massive floods in Malaysia has risen to 46, authorities said. Besides those confirmed dead, at least five other individuals have been reported missing, Xinhua news agency quoted Inspector-General of Police Acryl Sani Abdullah Sani as saying.

### Intruder arrested

**London:** A 19-year-old man with an "offensive weapon" has been arrested following a security breach at Windsor Castle, where Queen Elizabeth II is spending her Christmas, the police said Sunday. Prince Charles and wife Camilla are spending Christmas with the 95-year-old monarch at Windsor Castle in Berkshire, south-east England, after she took the decision to call off her traditional Christmas at Sandringham estate in Norfolk amidst a surge in COVID cases.

## Flight cancellations snarl holiday plans



AP PHOTO

**New York, Dec 26:** Airlines continued to cancel hundreds of flights Saturday because of staffing issues tied to COVID-19, disrupting holiday celebrations during one of the busiest travel times of the year.

FlightAware, a flight-tracking website, noted nearly 1,000 cancelled flights entering, leaving or inside the US Saturday, up from 690 flights scrapped on Friday. Over 250 more flights were already cancelled for Sunday. FlightAware does not say why flights are cancelled.

Delta, United and JetBlue had all said Friday that the omicron variant was causing staffing problems leading to flight cancellations. United spokesperson Maddie King said staffing shortages were still causing cancellations and it was unclear when normal operations would return. "This was unexpected," she said of omicron's impact on staffing. Delta and JetBlue did not respond to questions Saturday.

According to FlightAware, the three airlines cancelled more than 10 per cent of their scheduled Saturday flights. American Airlines also cancelled more than 90 flights Saturday, about 3 per cent of its schedule, according to FlightAware. American spokesperson Derek Walls said the cancellations stemmed from "COVID-related sick calls." European and Australian airlines have also cancelled holiday-season flights because of staffing problems tied to COVID-19.

For travellers, that meant time away from loved ones, chaos at the airport and the stress of spending hours standing in line and on the phone trying to rebook flights. Peter Bockman, a retired actor, and his daughter Malaika, a college

### Stricter curbs in UK

**London:** New tougher restrictions have come in force from Sunday in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland under devolved powers in a bid to curb rising coronavirus cases across the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Cabinet is expected to review the latest data and advice from experts on Monday to decide if further restrictions need to be brought in for England as well. The region is currently under Plan B measures, which call for working from home, compulsory face masks and COVID-19 vaccination certificates for entry to large venues.

student, were supposed to be in Senegal on Saturday celebrating with relatives they hadn't seen in a decade.

But their 7:30 pm flight Friday from New York to Dakar was canceled, which they found out only when they got to the airport. They were there until 2 am trying to rebook a flight.

"Nobody was organizing, trying to sort things out," he said, faulting Delta for a lack of customer service. "Nobody explained anything. Not even, Oh we're so sorry, this is what we can do to help you." Their new flight, for Monday evening, has a layover in Paris, and they are worried there will be issues with that one as well. They have already missed a big family get-together that was scheduled for Saturday. FlightAware's data shows airlines scrapped more than 6,000 flights globally for Friday, Saturday and Sunday combined as of Saturday evening, with almost one-third of affected flights to, from or within the United States.

## India-Lanka ties tested in 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo, Dec 26:** The India-Sri Lanka bilateral relationship was put to test in 2021 after Colombo unilaterally reneged on a tripartite deal with India and Japan to build a deep-sea container port here, and frequent incidents involving Indian fishermen as well as China's growing footprints in this country.

The year began with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visiting Sri Lanka in early January, saying "I am starting 2021 with a visit to Colombo, a visit to India's closest maritime neighbour and partner." Jaishankar, who met Sri Lanka's top leadership, also noted that it was gratifying to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has not been able to make a dent in India-Sri Lanka bilateral cooperation.

But the positive momentum in ties generated by the visit was disturbed by the death of four Indian fishermen in January following a collision between their vessel and a Sri Lankan naval craft.

India registered a strong protest in Colombo as well in New Delhi, emphasising the need to deal with issues pertaining to fishermen in a humanitarian manner. In December, India expressed concern over the detention of 68 Tamil Nadu fishermen from December 18 to 20 by Sri Lankan authorities and took up the issue of their "early release".

During the Covid pandemic period, India kept its air space open for travel for specific and urgent medical needs of Sri Lanka.

As part of the Indian government's Vaccine Maitri humanitarian initiative to provide COVID-19 vaccines to countries around the world, India gifted 500,000 doses of Covishield vaccine to the island nation, prompting it to launch its national coronavirus immunisation campaign.

Meanwhile, in a big jolt to India's investment plans in Sri Lanka, the Rajapaksa government unilaterally reneged on a tripartite deal with India and Japan to build the strategic deep-sea container port.

Sri Lanka, which had agreed in 2019 to develop the East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo port with India and Japan, scrapped the deal and termed the ECT "a wholly owned container terminal of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority". Colombo said it would instead de-

South Korea must have defence capabilities not only to deter North Korean threats but also to cope with its geopolitical position stuck between great powers

MOON JAE-IN | SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

## BOOSTING PROTECTION

The Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has created a special police unit to protect educational institutes across the country



## PALESTINIANS INJURED IN FIERCE CLASHES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Ramallah, Dec 26:** Hundreds of Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were injured during fierce clashes near the northern West Bank city of Nablus.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in a statement that 247 Palestinian protesters were injured by Israeli soldiers in the village of Burqa, northwest of Nablus, reports Xinhua news agency.

Among the injured, 10 were shot by live ammunition and 48 by rubber-coated metal gunshots, with one in critical condition after he was shot in the abdomen, said the statement. In the village of Bazarria, 54 Palestinians were injured during clashes with Israeli soldiers.

Israeli media reported that a soldier was injured during the clashes in Burqa and Bazarria, where troops opened fire to disperse Palestinians who threw stones at them. Palestinian witnesses said that fierce clashes broke out in Burqa between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli soldiers who arrived to protect Israeli settlers at an old settlement that was evacuated in 2005.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said that it holds the Israeli government "fully and directly responsible for the comprehensive Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people". In a statement, the Ministry said that the Israeli soldiers and the settlers "continue escalating their aggression against our people who are celebrating Christmas".

## Bodies of 27 migrants wash ashore in Libya

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Cairo, Dec 26:** The bodies of 27 Europe-bound migrants, including a baby and two women, have washed ashore in western Libya, the country's Red Crescent said.

The bodies were found late Saturday in two separate locations in the coastal town of Khoms, the Red Crescent's branch there said. Three other migrants were rescued, and search efforts were underway for others, it said.

The Red Crescent, a Muslim organization equivalent to the Red Cross, posted images purporting to show bodies floating in the Mediterranean Sea with its workers putting them in black burial bags. The dead migrants likely drowned in recent shipwrecks off Libya. There has been a surge in crossings and attempted crossings from Libya as authorities accelerated their deadly crackdown on migrants in the capital of Tripoli.

Around 1,500 migrants have drowned in numerous boat mishaps and shipwrecks in the Central Mediterranean route this year, according to the U.N. Migration agency.

Earlier this month, more than 160 migrants drowned in two separate shipwrecks off the North African country, the International Organization for Migration said.

Libya was plunged into turmoil by the NATO-backed 2011 uprising that toppled and killed long-time dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The North African nation has since emerged as a popular, if extremely dangerous, route to Europe for those fleeing poverty and civil war in Africa and the Middle East.

Human traffickers have benefited from the chaos in the oil-rich nation and smuggled migrants through the country's lengthy border with six nations.

## FIGHTING IT OUT



Yachts compete during the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race in Sydney, Australia

UNI PHOTO

## Taliban commander warns Pakistan against firing

AGENCIES

**Kabul, Dec 26:** A top military commander of the Taliban-led government has warned Pakistan against firing artillery towards Afghanistan, adding that Kabul was ready to respond if Islamabad did not stop, the media reported.

Save the Children said that two of its staff who were travelling home for the holidays after conducting humanitarian response work in a nearby community were "caught up in the incident and remain missing".

"This is precious soil. We have paid a large sacrifice for it. We want to be good neighbours but if they keep attacking our soil, we will certainly give them a response,"



he said. The commander's remarks come as residents of Kunar have claimed that Pakistan has been targeting several parts of the

province for the past two weeks. At least one civilian was also injured in mortar shelling by the Pakistani military on the Chogam

### Taliban govt dissolves Afghan election commissions

**Islamabad:** The Taliban dissolved Afghanistan's two election commissions as well as the state ministries for peace and parliamentary affairs, an official said Sunday. Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban government, said the country's Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaint Commission have been dissolved. He called them "unnecessary institutes for the current situation in Afghanistan." He said if there is a need for the commissions in the future, the Taliban government can revive them. The international community is waiting before extending formal recognition to Afghanistan's new rulers. They are wary the Taliban could impose a similarly harsh regime as when they were in power 20 years ago — despite their assurances to the contrary.

area of Shiltan district in Kunar, said the TOLO News report. Chogam area runs alongside the Durand Line that forms the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

"I was wounded by the mortar, a fragment hit my head. I was taken

to Asadabad during the night. I was in the hospital for two days," TOLO News quoted Anwar Shah, the injured person, as saying. Some residents have also claimed of seeing Pakistani drones operating in the province.

## DESMOND TUTU'S VOICE HELPED SLAY APARTHEID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, Dec 26:** Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa's anti-apartheid icon who won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting racial discrimination in the country, has died. He was 90.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that Tutu passed away in Cape Town in the early hours of Sunday. He was the last surviving South African laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize. Tutu, who previously survived tuberculosis, had undergone a surgery for prostate cancer in 1997. He was also hospitalised several times in recent years for a various ailments.

"The passing of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is an-

other chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," Ramaphosa said as he shared condolence with the family and friends.

"Desmond Tutu was a patriot without equal; a leader of principle and pragmatism who gave meaning to the biblical insight that faith without works is dead. "A man of extraordinary intellect, integrity and invincibility against the forces of apartheid, he was also tender and vulnerable in his compassion for those who had suffered oppression, injustice and violence under apartheid, and oppressed and downtrodden people around the world,"



Ramaphosa said.

The president also lauded Tutu for his role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Then

newly-elected president Nelson Mandela had appointed Tutu to lead the Commission in 1995. "As Chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he articulated the universal outrage at the ravages of apartheid and touchingly and profoundly demonstrated the depth of meaning of reconciliation and forgiveness.

"We pray that Archbishop Tutu's soul will rest in peace but that his spirit will stand sentry over the future of our nation," Ramaphosa concluded in his statement. Paying tributes to Tutu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he was a guiding light for countless people globally and his emphasis on human dignity and equality will be forever remembered.

Modi said: "Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu was a guiding light for countless people globally. His emphasis on human dignity and equality will be forever remembered. I am deeply saddened by his demise, and extend my heartfelt condolences to all his admirers. May his soul rest in peace."

Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 when he was still the Bishop of Johannesburg. Referring to Tutu as "Africa's Peace Bishop", the Norwegian Nobel Institute said Tutu's award was made "for his role as a unifying leader figure in the non-violent campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa."

"Tutu was saluted by the Nobel Committee for his clear views and

his fearless stance, characteristics which had made him a unifying symbol for all African freedom fighters. Attention was once again directed at the nonviolent path to liberation.

"Despite bloody violations committed against the black population, as in the Sharpeville massacre of 1961 and the Soweto rising in 1976, Tutu adhered to his nonviolent line," the Institute said on its website.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) recalled Tutu's relationship with Mandela after the two first met at a debating competition in the early 1950s until they first met again only before Mandela's release from 27 years as a political prisoner on February 11, 1990.

## of the day quote

I am quite optimistic about the Indian economy and its growth prospects. The next year (2022-23) is also expected to witness decent growth

JAYANTH R VARMA | ECONOMIST

While the current indications are positive, overall the PV industry next year will need to continue to manage issues related to commodity price inflation, increased freight costs and supply chain disruption

RAJESH JEJURIKAR | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA

We were able to grow our business to over ₹800 crore topline for this calendar year and as of last month we became profitable

KARAN VIRWANI | CEO, WEWORK INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Over 4.43cr ITRs filed till Dec 25

**New Delhi:** Over 4.43 crore income tax returns (ITRs) for the 2020-21 fiscal have been filed, which includes over 11.68 lakh returns filed December 25, the I-T department said Sunday. This comprises over 2.41 crore ITR-1 and 1.09 crore ITR-4 getting filed for FY2020-21 (Assessment Year 2021-22) till December 25, 2021. "A total of 4,43,17,697 #ITRs have been filed up to 25.12.2021 including 11,68,027 #ITRs having been filed on the day itself," the department tweeted. The department has been reminding taxpayers to file their returns for FY2020-21 by sending messages and emails. The extended deadline for filing ITR by individuals ends on December 31. The original deadline was July 31, 2021. For the 2019-20 fiscal, 5.95 crore ITRs were filed till the extended deadline of January 10, 2021.

### RBL Bank MD and CEO steps down

**New Delhi:** RBL Bank's Vishawvir Ahuja has stepped down as MD & CEO of the bank, and the bank has appointed Rajeev Ahuja as as the interim Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the bank with immediate effect. The Reserve Bank of India has also appointed its Chief General Manager Yogesh K Dayal as an additional director on the board of RBL Bank. RBL Bank in a regulatory filing said that the board of the bank has accepted "the request of Vishwawir Ahuja to proceed on leave with immediate effect". The board in a meeting held on Saturday appointed Rajeev Ahuja (currently the Executive Director) as interim Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of the bank with immediate effect, subject to the regulatory and other approvals, the bank said.

### Moopen plans to demerge Gulf ops

**Mumbai:** Dubai-based hospital chain Aster DM Healthcare, which is among the largest private sector healthcare chains in the Gulf region as well as in the country, is increasing its focus on India with a target of netting half of the revenue from here over the next five years and plans to hive off its GCC operations into a separate entity, the chairman has said. The 35-year-old and publicly-listed hospital began operations in December 1987 from Dubai and, today gets almost 80 per cent of revenue from the GCC markets though it offers only 1,000 beds there, and the rest come from India where it has 4,000 beds.



**We, therefore, request the Finance Minister to impose higher duty for import of clinker and cement**

N SRINIVASAN | PRESIDENT, SICMA

## MILESTONE MOMENT FOR AIRTEL PAYMENTS

Airtel Payments Bank crossed one billion transactions volume milestone on its platform during September quarter 2021-22, according to sources. This represents about 61 per cent YoY growth in transaction volume per quarter, underlining the bank's digital-first model and distribution of over 5,00,000 banking points that give it the ability to scale up rapidly



# Cos raise ₹9L cr from equity, debt routes

In the year passing by, fund mobilisation through debt markets has fallen sharply, while the equity fund raising has been robust and the stock market bull-run with liquidity all-around has resulted in record fund-raising through IPOs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** Indian companies have mopped up more than ₹9 lakh crore through equity and debt routes in 2021 to meet their renewed thirst for business expansion in a buoyant stock market brimming with liquidity and helped by recovering macroeconomic indicators after pandemic-ravaged first few months.

Unless the still-evolving Omicron situation plays spoilsport, the next year is expected to be much more robust in terms of fund-raising activities and there seems to be no dearth of funds, experts said.

"The banks have been sitting on surplus liquidity for quite a while and there should be enough appetite for quality borrowers," said Ricky Kirpalani, Lead Sponsor, First Water Capital Fund.

Despite the plunge in fund mobilisation through the debt route, it continued to contribute a lion's share to the overall fund-raising activity in 2021.

In the equity market, funds mostly came from initial share sales as ample global liquidity, robust equity market and massive equity participation pushed the IPO market to new levels this year.

Within the equity segment, the IPO route helped companies raise



### OUT OF TOTAL MOP UP

Funds totalling ₹5.53 lakh crore were mopped up from the debt market

₹2.1 lakh crore came from the equity market, ₹30,840 crore through REITs and INVTs and ₹1.06 lakh crore via the overseas route

A total of 63 IPOs mopped-up record ₹1.2 lakh crore, and Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) IPOs brought in ₹710 crore

In 2020, firms raised ₹11 lakh crore, including ₹7.91 lakh crore through debt and ₹2.12 lakh crore through equity

₹1.2 lakh crore, Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) route added ₹41,894 crore, rights issue of shares to existing shareholders accounted for ₹27,771 crore, while Offer for Sale (OFS) through stock exchange mechanism contributed ₹22,912 crore.

IIFL Securities' Sandeep Bhardwaj believes that bullish trajectory will continue in 2022 also for the IPO market and the new year might see a new record level of funds raised while the mega initial share-sale of LIC is also in the pipeline.

Apart from public issues, equity

fund-raising through QIPs dropped to ₹41,894 crore in 2021 from ₹84,509 crore last year, primarily on account of availability of cheaper debt and expectation of high valuations due to rising markets making promoters hesitant to dilute.

Another reason for the decline in QIPs fund-raising could be expectations of a further rise in stock markets as the markets were constantly

rising from the beginning of the year till mid-November.

Funds mobilised through the rights issue mode also plunged to 27,771 crore in 2021 from ₹64,984 crore last year. Bharati Airtel contributed a major chunk with its ₹21,000 crore rights issue this year.

The year 2020 had seen the largest ever rights issue of Reliance to the tune of ₹53,000 crore, making this year look pale in comparison. However, funds collected via the OFS route - used for dilution of promoters' holdings - rose to ₹22,912 crore this year, from ₹20,901 crore in 2020.

## RETRO TAX ISSUE

### Cairn drops lawsuits against govt in US, UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** Britain's Cairn Energy Plc has dropped lawsuits against the Indian government and its entities in the US and other places and is in the final stages of withdrawing cases in Paris and the Netherlands to get back about ₹7,900 crore that were collected from it to enforce a retrospective tax demand.

As part of the settlement reached with the government to the seven-year old dispute over levy of back taxes, the company - which is now known as Capricorn Energy PLC - has initiated proceedings to withdraw lawsuits it had filed in several jurisdictions to enforce an international arbitration award which had overturned levy of ₹10,247 crore retrospective taxes and ordered India to refund the money already collected.

Two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said Cairn November 26 withdrew the lawsuit it had brought in Mauritius for recognition of the arbitration award and took similar measures in courts in Singapore, the UK and Canada.

December 15, it sought and got 'voluntary dismissal' of a lawsuit it had brought in a New York court to seize assets of Air India to recover the money due from the government. On the same day, it made a similar move in a Washington court where it was seeking recognition of the arbitration award.

Sources said the critical lawsuit in a French court, which had attached Indian properties on the petition of Cairn, is in the final stages of withdrawal.

# Tweaks in GST law to start from Jan 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** The GST regime will see a host of tax rate and procedural changes coming into effect from January 1, including liability on e-commerce operators to pay tax on services provided through them by way of passenger transport or restaurant services.

Also, the correction in inverted duty structure in footwear and textile sectors would come into effect from Saturday wherein all footwear, irrespective of prices, will attract GST at 12 per cent while all textile products, except cotton, including readymade garments will have 12 per cent GST.

While the passenger transport



services provided by auto rickshaw drivers through offline manual mode would continue to be exempt, such services when provided through any e-commerce platform would become taxable effective January 1, 2022, at 5 per cent rate.

The procedural changes that would come into effect include e-commerce operators, such as Swiggy and Zomato, being made li-

able to collect and deposit GST with the government on restaurant services supplied through them from January 1.

There would be no extra tax burden on the end consumer as currently restaurants are collecting and depositing GST. Only, the compliance of deposit and invoice raising has now been shifted to food delivery platforms.

The other anti-evasion measures which would come into effect from the new year include mandatory Aadhaar authentication for claiming GST refund, blocking of the facility of GSTR-1 filing in cases where the business has not paid taxes and filed GSTR-3B in the immediate previous month.

# MFs add ₹7L crore to kitty this year

The AUM of the mutual fund industry grew by 24% to an all-time high of ₹38.45 lakh crore in 2021 by November-end itself, from ₹31 lakh crore at the end of December 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** Mutual Funds as an investment avenue won the confidence of investors in 2021 with the industry adding a staggering ₹7 lakh crore to their asset base during the year on the back of buoyant equity markets and a bunch of large new fund offerings (NFOs), but the new year could be tricky depending on the Omicron situation and possible interest rate hikes.

While it may not be an easy



money environment in 2022, some experts are hopeful that the impact of the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus may not be as severe as those witnessed in the first two waves of the pandemic.

"To a large extent, the world has learnt to live with Covid and as such with the rapid vaccination coverage in India, the impact of Omicron on the economy should not be as devastating as the previous waves have been," said Suresh

Soni, CEO of Baroda Mutual Fund. Low interest rates, increasing awareness about mutual funds and good investment performance will be the contributing factors for rise in assets under management (AUM) going forward, he added.

Vidya Bala, co-founder of Primeinvestor.in, believes that the final mutual fund AUM figure at December-end may settle a bit lower or flat with a consolidation round currently being underway.

# Antidumping duty on 5 Chinese goods



India's exports to China during the April-Sept 2021 period were worth \$12.26 billion while imports aggregated at \$42.33 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$30.07 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** India has imposed antidumping duties on five Chinese products, including certain aluminium goods and some chemicals, for five years to guard local manufacturers from cheap imports from the neighbouring country.

According to separate notifications of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), the duties have been imposed on certain flat rolled products of aluminium; sodium hydrosulphite (used on dye industry); silicone sealant (used in manufacturing of solar photovoltaic modules, and thermal power applications); hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) component R-32; and hydrofluorocarbon blends (both have uses in refrigeration industry).

These duties were imposed following recommendations of the commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR).

The DGTR in separate probes have concluded that these products have been exported at a price below normal value in Indian markets, which has resulted in dumping. The domestic industry has suffered material injury due to the dumping, the DGTR has said.

"The anti-dumping duty imposed

under this notification (on Silicone Sealant) shall be levied for a period of five years (unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier) from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette and shall be payable in Indian currency," the CBIC has said.

The CBIC has also imposed the duty on a vehicle component - Axle for Trailers in CKDSKD (complete and semi knocked down) to protect domestic makers from cheap Chinese imports.

Similarly it has also slapped the duty on imports of calcined gypsum powder from Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) for five years.

While DGTR recommends the duty to be levied, the finance ministry imposes it.

Countries initiate anti-dumping probes to determine if the domestic industry has been hurt by a surge in below-cost imports. As a counter-measure, they impose duties under the multilateral WTO regime. Anti-dumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry. Both India and China are members of the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation (WTO). India has initiated maximum anti-dumping cases against dumped imports from China.

## OMC bags People First HR Excellence Award

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** The goal to achieve excellence in all spheres of operations has brought in laurels to Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) at several platforms recently and the PSU has now bagged People First HR Excellence Award-2021 in "Leading Practices in Pandemic Response" category for its sustained efforts and strategy to contain the spread of Covid-19 at workplace and ensuring business continuity in its wider spectrum of CSR initiatives. The awards were presented in a virtual event organised by People First - one of the leading talent firms in Asia. In the present year, OMC's unique initiatives in areas like safety, environment, CSR, technological interventions, human resources management etc have been awarded at important platforms.

## PRIVATISATION, IDBI BANK DISINVESTMENT ON THE CARDS

# Banking sector to see significant reforms in '22

Going by the numbers, the banking sector has done reasonably well in 2021, notwithstanding the impact of the second wave of the pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** The banking sector is set to witness significant reforms in the coming year with privatisation of public sector banks and strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank on the agenda of the government for 2022.

All said, the emerging coronavirus situation, especially in the wake of the Omicron variant, might pose headwinds in the pace of reforms.

Pursuant to the government's 4Rs strategy of Recognition, Resolution, Recapitalisation and Reforms, Non-Performing Assets

(NPAs) of the banking sector have declined to ₹8,35,051 crore as March 31, 2021.

As per the Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in July 2021, macro-stress tests, on the basis of regression modelling, indicate that the Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks, under the baseline scenario, may increase from 7.48 per cent in March 2021 to 9.80 per cent by March 2022.

The net profit of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) surged to ₹14,012 crore in the first quarter and further rose to ₹17,132 crore in the sec-



ond quarter ended September 2021. The combined profit (Rs 31,114 crore) of the first half of the current fiscal is close to the total profit

earned (Rs 31,820 crore) in the entire previous financial year (2020-21).

Improved financial health cou-

NPAs have declined to ₹8,35,051 crore as March 31, 2021

GNPA ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks may increase from 7.48% in March 2021 to 9.80% by March 2022

Net profit of PSBs surged to ₹14,012 crore in Q1 and further rose to ₹17,132 crore in the Q2 ended September 2021

Capital Adequacy Ratio of PSBs increased to 14.3% at the end of June 2021 while the provision coverage ratio of rose to an 8-year high of 84%

a long pending financial sector reform. Unveiling the PSE policy in Budget 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that barring four strategic areas, PSEs in other sectors will be divested.

In line with the PSE policy, the Finance Minister had in the Budget also announced the privatisation of two PSBs as part of disinvestment drive to garner Rs 1.75 lakh crore.

The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, which may be introduced in the upcoming Budget session, is expected to help bring down the minimum government holding in the PSBs from 51 per cent to 26 per cent.

# INDIA RIDE ON RAHUL TON

OPENER'S 7TH TEST CENTURY PUTS VISITORS IN STRONG POSITION AGAINST SA

AGENCIES

**Centurion, Dec 26:** KL Rahul's (122 batting, 248b, 17x4, 1x6) unbeaten ton put India in a strong position on the opening day of the first Test against South Africa here Sunday. Opting to bat first after winning the toss, India at stumps were 272 for the loss of three wickets. With the pitch still playing easy a score of 450-plus is on the cards, if India manage to safely negotiate the first hour Monday.

Rahul batted with great determination as well as flair all through the day as the South African bowlers toiled. Lungi Ngidi (3/45) was the only successful bowler for the hosts as Rahul held the Indian innings together. He justified Virat Kohli's decision to bat first on winning the toss by putting on 117 runs for the first wicket with Mayank Agarwal (60, 123b, 9x4). Then after Cheteshwar Pujara's (0) golden duck exit, Rahul and skipper Virat Kohli (35, 94b, 4x4) brought the innings back on keel by putting on 82 runs for the third wicket.

After Kohli's departure, Rahul and Ajinkya Rahane (40 batting, 81b, 8x4) put on an unbeaten stand of 73 runs for the fourth wicket to push South Africa on the back-foot.

The day belonged to Rahul, who showed remarkable resolve and application during his seventh Test

hundred. He reached the three-figure mark in England earlier this year and has also scored a hundred in every country he has played in. Rahul played with absolute clarity knowing which balls to leave and which ones to go for his shots. His innings had all his attractive range of strokes, including the cover drives and his punch off the back-foot.

Rahul got to the 90s with a six off spinner Keshav Maharaj and stayed there for a while before reaching the milestone with a gentle steer off the left-arm bowler through point.

Pujara's place in the team will surely be under a cloud after his first ball dismissal. He was caught at short-leg trying to play a

defensive shot to a well pitched up delivery against Ngidi. Kohli, on the other hand, tried to play an expansive drive to a ball that he could have left alone and was caught at first slip. Kohli had done all the hard work and he should have controlled himself while going for the shot. His dismissal proved that he has been out of the game for a period now.



## SCOREBOARD

**India 1st innings:** KL Rahul batting 122, Mayank Agarwal lbw b Ngidi 60, Cheteshwar Pujara c Petersen b Ngidi 0, Virat Kohli c Mulder b Ngidi 35, Ajinkya Rahane batting 40; **Extras** (b-4 lb-4 nb-7) 15; **Total:** (for 3 wickets) 272.

**Fall:** 1/117, 2/117, 3/199.

**Bowling:** Kagiso Rabada 20-5-51-0, Lungi Ngidi 17-4-45-3, Marco Jansen 17-4-61-0, Wiaan Mulder 18-3-49-0, Keshav Maharaj 18-2-58-0.

Barring Ngidi, the South Africa pacers were not probing enough in their line and lengths and offered too many loose balls. Debutant left-arm pacer Marco Jansen made a nervous start to his career with Agarwal dispatching him for three fours in his opening over. The 6 feet 8 inch bowler's first ball in Test cricket was a gentle full toss which Agarwal duly dispatched through cover. Then the lanky pacer bowled a couple into the pads which were crisply flicked away by Agarwal.

The South African pacers bowled a tad too short in the first hour of play. They should have bowled fuller and allowed the ball to swing, which they did not. The Dean Elgar-led side also wasted a review early in the session.

However, overall it was a day when the Indian batters dominated the show and controlled proceedings.

# Australia take command

England batters fail to learn from past mistakes and throw wickets away

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Dec 26:** England's earnest dressing-room discussions about improving shot selection failed to bear fruit Sunday, the opening day of the third Ashes Test here. They provided another symbolic batting display and were bowled out for 185. In reply Australia put them firmly in the driver's seat to wrap up the series reaching 61 for one at stumps.

Australia captain Pat Cummins won the toss and invited under-siege England to bat first on a green-tinged, seaming MCG pitch. England was 61-3 at lunch. By tea, the tourists were in serious trouble at 128-6, having lost the key wicket of skipper Joe Root for 50

## Josh uncertain

**MELBOURNE:** Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood has a 'slight tear' in his rib cage muscle and he is 'not sure' if he will be available for the fourth Ashes Test starting January 5 at Sydney. "I'm still a little bit away, (this Test) is probably a week early," Hazlewood told 'SEN'. "We're still not sure, we're going to take this week as it comes and likely have a bowl at the nets on Day 3 or Day 5, see how that goes and then build up from there. There's a slight tear in the intercostals muscles," he added.



Pat Cummins celebrates with teammates after dismissing Haseeb Hameed of England at Melbourne, Sunday

(82b, 4x4). Cummins (3/36), off-spinner Nathan Lyon (3/36) and left-arm quick Mitchell Starc (2/54) took wickets at regular intervals to keep England under pressure.

A loose shot outside off-stump by Root, a questionable cut by Ben Stokes (25) and a wild heave by Jos Buttler (3) will attract heavy attention from England's press after another difficult day for the tourists, who trail two-nil in the five-match series.

It was Cummins who started England's downfall, picking up the wickets of Haseeb Hameed (0) and Zak Crawley (12). From then on

England were always on the back-foot. Before lunch Australia also saw the back of Dawid Malan (14). England went past the 175-run mark due to the efforts of Jonny Bairstow (35) and Ollie Robinson (22).

David Warner (38) and Marcus Harris (20 not out) shared an opening stand of 57 before the former was caught at gully off Jimmy Anderson. England were also guilty of misfielding during the closing stages of the game.

**Brief scores:** England 185 all out (Joe Root 50, Pat Cummins 3/36, Nathan Lyon 3/36); Australia 61 for 1. Match to continue.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Set for return

**New Delhi:** Former India fast bowler Sreesanth has been included in the 24-member preliminary squad of Kerala for the upcoming Ranji Trophy season. The 38-year-old is making a return to red ball cricket after a gap of nearly nine years. Sreesanth last played a first-class match in 2013. He served a seven-year suspension for his involvement in the 2013 IPL spot-fixing scam. "Feels great to be back after nine years playing Ranji trophy for my state, really grateful to each and every one of you, lots of love and respect," Sreesanth tweeted.

### Shoaib bereaved

**Islamabad:** Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar announced the demise of his mother on social media late Saturday. The news drew condolences from the cricketing fraternity including former India spinner Harbhajan Singh. "My mother, my everything, with the will of Allah taala, has left for heavenly abode. The funeral prayers will be held in Islamabad's sector H-8," Akhtar said on Twitter. Harbhajan was one of the first to offer his condolences. "Just wanted to reach out and let you know that you have my heartfelt condolences during this difficult time. May she rest in peace. Be strong my brother," Harbhajan wrote.

### Winning start

**Kalyani:** Defending champions Gokulam Kerala began their I-League title defence with a 1-0 win over last season's runners-up Churchill Brothers here Sunday. Gokulam skipper Sharif Mohammad scored the solitary goal of the match from the penalty spot early in the first half. Overall however, the game was tepid and dull with play restricted mostly in the midfield. The penalty was awarded when Ngangom Ronald Singh skillfully surged with the ball into the Churchill box and was brought down by Lebanese Shadi Skaf. Sharif made no mistake with the shot.

### Exciting finish

**Bangalore:** A last-second blunder from experienced defender Ravinder Pahal allowed Dabang Delhi's Naveen Kumar to secure a raid point and hold Gujarat Lions to 24-24 tie in the Pro Kabaddi League here Sunday. Delhi's star raider once again secured a Super 10 (11 points), his third in three matches of season VIII - but the team were lucky to escape with a tie after another match filled with mistakes from its defence. Gujarat will only have themselves to blame after Rakesh Sanogya and Rakesh Narwal had opened up a chance for them to win the encounter against the season VII runners-up.

# Sohini shines in U-14 nationals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** Odia girl Sohini Mohanty did the state proud by winning the doubles title and finishing runner-up in the AITA Under-14 National tennis tournament which concluded Saturday at Aurangabad in Maharashtra. In the doubles final, Sohini partnering Rishitha Reddy defeated Harshali Nagaraj and Snigdha Kanta (both from Karnataka) 6-2, 6-7, 10-7 (super tie-breaker third set).

Prior to her doubles win, Sohini also played a hard-fought three-set match in the singles final. However, in spite of making a strong start she lost 6-3, 2-6, 1-6 to Nagaraj. It should also be stated here that she had made the finals of both the singles and doubles events in her age group in the last nationals played in March

at Mumbai.

A student of Farhan Ali Tennis Academy here in this city, Sohini has been performing consistently in the national circuit in the under-14 segment. She has won over 70 titles and has also broken into the ITF rankings in her age category. Sohini played her first Asian-level tournament in September this year and won the singles title. Her coach informed that when the national rankings will be announced in January next year, she will figure in the top two.

"To progress and make a fruitful career in tennis and improve her game, Sohini now needs some financial support as tennis is a pretty expensive game," Farhan said. "She has the potential to become a top-ranked tennis player in India," he added. He also urged the Odisha government's Sports Department to support Sohini.



Sohini Mohanty

## DAY OF THE UNDERDOGS IN VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY FINAL

# Himachal stun TN to win title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Dec 26:** Himachal Pradesh reached their zenith in cricket Sunday, with a stunning 11-run victory over mighty Tamil Nadu in the final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here. Youngster Shubham Arora (136 n o, 131b, 13x4, 1x6) was the architect for the win with a scintillating knock as HP downed five-time champions Tamil Nadu under the VJD method to win their first ever domestic one-day championship.

Chasing a stiff 315, Himachal Pradesh reached 299 for four in 47.3 overs when bad light suspended play. At that point, HP needed 16 runs off 15 deliveries and they were declared the winners by the VJD method. They were 11 runs ahead of the Tamil Nadu score at the exact stage of the innings. The efforts of Rishi Dhawan (42 n o, 23b, 5x4, 1x6) and Amit Kumar (74, 79b, 6x4) also contributed to a great extent to Himachal's triumph.

Earlier, after being put in Tamil Nadu were all out for 314 in 49.4 overs. The hero of the Tamil Nadu innings was Dinesh Karthik (116, 103b, 8x4, 7x6) as he rescued his side who had slipped to 40 for four. Along with Karthik, important knocks played by Baba Indrajith (80, 71b, 8x4, 1x6) and Shahruckh Khan (42, 21b, 3x4, 3x6) were instrumental in taking Tamil Nadu past the 300-run mark.

On a day when veteran wicket-keeper-batter and former captain Dinesh Karthik smashed an entertaining 116, the young Himachal glovesman outshone the seasoned pro with his well-calculated, un-



MOMENT TO CHERISH: The victorious Himachal Pradesh team with the Vijay Hazare trophy

beaten century under pressure.

HP skipper Dhawan took another fine call in sending Amit Kumar ahead of him, as he chose to play the role of a finisher. The move paid dividends as the left-right combination of Arora and Amit added 148 for the fourth wicket in a match-winning partnership.

After Baba Aparajith gave TN the much-needed breakthrough by dismissing Amit, Himachal needed 71 from 54 deliveries, but Dhawan played his role to perfection, hammering the rival bowling attack to make it look easy in the end.

Eying a record sixth title in the tournament and a limited-overs double this season, Tamil Nadu, who recently won the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20, were lacklustre on the field. Skipper Vijay Shankar made a blunder as he fumbled when he was presented a crucial run-out

## BRIEF SCORES

Tamil Nadu 314 all out in 49.4 overs (Dinesh Karthik 116, Baba Indrajith 80, Shahruckh Khan 42, Pankaj Jaswal 4/59) lost to Himachal Pradesh 299/4 in 47.3 overs (Shubham Arora 136 n o, Amit Kumar 74, Rishi Dhawan 42 n o) by 11 runs (VJD method).

opportunity when Arora was on 113. "The team has backed me throughout the tournament. I just wanted to play my natural game and build on my innings after I got set," said Arora, who was declared man of the match said.

As expected Dhawan was elated after the win. "Finally we have won a title. It's the result of our hard work over the years. We knew the conditions well, so decided to stick out in the middle," Dhawan said.

# Bhagat beaten on home turf

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** In a major upset, Nitesh Rana of Haryana beat Paralympic gold medalist Pramod Bhagat 21-17, 21-19 to book a berth in the final of men's singles SL3 category in the ongoing 14th National Para Badminton Championships here Sunday. Bhagat, who is usually so dominant on court, seemed completely out of form. He committed unforced errors at regular intervals to hand the match on a platter to his opponent.

In SL3 classification, athletes with lower limb impairment compete. Bhagat is also the world champion in his category.

Paralympic champion Krishna Nagar however, continued his good form as he won three gold medals. Nagar repeated his 2019 national's feat of winning three gold medals as he emerged champion in all the categories he participated in - singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles.

Krishna beat Sudharshan 21-12, 21-12 in the men's singles SH6 category in a game that lasted just 20 minutes. In mixed doubles, Nagar and Nithya Sre breezed past Dhinaganar and Latatai Umrekar. In men's doubles, he and Raja Magotra defeated Dhinaganar and Sivarajan 21-15, 21-15.

# JFC, KBFC play out thrilling stalemate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vasco (Goa), Dec 26:** Greg Stewart struck a sensational goal but Jamshepur FC (JFC) eventually played out a 1-1 draw against Kerala Blasters (KBFC), who were saved by Sahal Abdul Samad's equaliser, in their Indian Super League match here Sunday.

Stewart scored a stunning goal from a free-kick in the 14th minute. However, his strike was cancelled out by Samad who scored in the 27th minute. It was third time he found the mark in three successive games. Both teams looked for the winning

JFC	M-8	W-3	D-4	L-1	P-13
KBFC	M-8	W-3	D-4	L-1	P-13

goal but had to be content with a point each in the end.

The result meant Kerala Blasters are now third in the table with 13 points from eight matches while Jamshepur are second, having the same number of points from eight games but ahead on goals scored.

Stewart showed early signs of continuing his purple patch with a wonderful first touch to receive a ball on the edge of the box but the Scottish forward's attempt went just wide

of goal. Minutes later, the 31-year old scored an incredible goal from a free-kick after Boris Singh was hacked down by Harmanjot Khabra on the left side of the field.

Showing skills of the highest order, Stewart curled a left-footer around the Kerala wall to beat the keeper all ends up and nestle in the back of the net off the crossbar.

Kerala did not take long to equalise largely due to Alvaro Vazquez's spade-work as he spun around Peter Hartley and then skipped past another white shirt to shoot on goal, only for TP Rehenees to dive low and pull off a good save,

but Samal scored off the rebound. Soon after the resumption of the second session, Stewart picked up a yellow card for a challenge on Khabra and at the other end Vazquez's delicious chip came off the crossbar after Hartley uncharacteristically failed to clear the ball.

Both sides upped the ante and it was end to end stuff in the last half hour or so. There were a couple of chances for both sides, but they failed to convert.