

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Sir, we have not fulfilled a single promise you have made to public, I think you should start using an armoured car now!

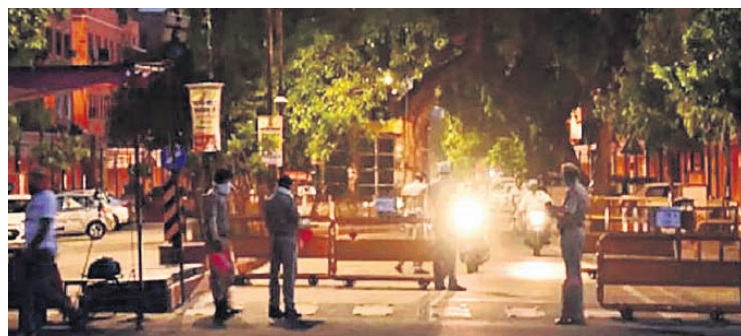
Night curfew returns

■ The Odisha government issued new guidelines for the month of January as the number of daily Covid-19 cases including that of the Omicron variant is on the rise in the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: In view of the rise in Covid-19 cases in Odisha and the emergence of the Omicron variant of coronavirus, the state government has released new guidelines for the month of January 2022 that will continue till 5.00am of February 1.

As per the notification issued by the Special Relief Commissioner's (SRC) office, night curfew will return in all urban areas of Odisha from 10.00pm of January 1 till 5.00am of



February 1. There shall be no movement of vehicles except for those used for emergency services.

The guidelines released Thursday said all social/religious gatherings will be prohibited in the state. Political gatherings will be limited to not more than 100 persons with full compliance to Covid-19 protocols. Exhibitions/trade fairs/expos and melas will not be

allowed. However, official events may be allowed with prior approval of the government.

The guidelines also prohibit picnic in parks, nature clubs, beaches and other spots. Cultural events including dance programmes will not be allowed in hotels, parks, malls, convention centres and kalyan mandaps, the notice said.

MORE ON P3

Kishore Mohanty breathes his last

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Sitting Brajarajnar BJD MLA and former Speaker of the Odisha Assembly, Kishore Mohanty breathed his last Thursday at a hospital in Jharsuguda after suffering a massive heart attack. He was 64.

Mohanty, who was elected to the Odisha Assembly thrice from the Jharsuguda

Assembly Constituency, functioned as the Speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly (2008-2009). Prior to that, he was the Chief Whip (2004-2008). In the 2019 Assembly elections he contested from the Brajarajnar constituency and defeated BJP's Radha Rani Panda.

Mohanty also worked as Chairman of the Western Odisha Development Council from 2014 to 2019.



JSW Cement
The Leaders' Choice
1800 266 266 1 (toll free)

Naveen help for MoC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Amid the ongoing controversy over the Centre not allowing the renewal of accounts of Missionaries of Charity (MoC) that deal with foreign funding, Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik has come to the aid of the organisation. Patnaik directed all district collectors Tuesday to ensure

that the non-profit organisation in the state suffer from any kind of distress.

"Wherever needed, funds from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) can be utilised for this purpose," Patnaik said in a letter to all collectors.

It should be stated here that many leprosy homes and orphanages are being run by the MoC in Odisha.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	57794.32	↓ 12.17
NIFTY	17204.00	↓ 9.60
DOLLAR	75.12	↓ ₹0.34
EURO	84.50	↓ ₹0.21
GOLD	₹47,650	↓ ₹189
SILVER	₹61,522	↓ ₹316

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	27.0°C	28.0°C
TEMP MIN	16.6°C	16.2°C
Humidity	81%	72%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Generally cloudy sky

5 more test Omicron +ve

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Another five persons have tested positive for Omicron variant of coronavirus, taking the total number of cases in Odisha to 14. Speaking to reporters here Thursday, Director of Health Services Bijay Mohapatra said four males and a female in the age group between 22 to 44 years have tested positive for the Omicron variant.

Four of the new Omicron infected persons have history of foreign travel having returned from Qatar, Congo and the UAE. However, the fifth infected does not have any history of foreign travel, but had visited Raipur and

Hyderabad recently, the health official said. Mohapatra also said that four of the five are undergoing treatment in hospitals and their condition is stable.

Contact tracing of all these five Omicron positive patients are being done. One person who had come in contact with one of those infected has tested positive and his sample has been sent for genome sequencing, the official informed. Results of other persons who had come in contact with those infected are awaited.

So far, 14 Omicron cases have been detected in Odisha. Of them, 13 are foreign returnees. One person has already tested negative.

AFSPA extended in Nagaland

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 30: Nagaland will continue to be a 'disturbed area' for another six months under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) as the condition of the state remained 'dangerous'. The Centre's announcement came amid the growing clamour for withdrawal of the Act after a botched ambush by the Army left 14 civilians dead in Mon district of Nagaland in a case of mistaken identity.

Prominent Naga outfits heavily criticised the Centre's decision to extend AFSPA. They said the measure was 'unacceptable' and made

with the intention to 'suppress Nagas for generations to come'.

"Government of India has ignored the wishes of the Naga people. All Naga people have been pleading with the GoI for repeal of the Act. We will go to any extent to press the GoI to repeal the Act," said K Elu Ndang, general secretary of 'Naga Hoho', an influential body of Naga tribes in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.

In a notification issued Thursday, the Ministry of Home Affairs said that AFSPA in Nagaland has been extended for six months from December 30. The state has been under the controversial AFSPA

since 1958. The Act is an offshoot of Britishers Armed Forces Special Ordinance of 1942.

The extension of the AFSPA has surprised many in Nagaland as it comes three days after the Centre constituted a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Registrar General and Census Commissioner Vivek Joshi with Additional Secretary in the Union Home Ministry Piyush Goyal as its Member-Secretary. The committee is supposed to submit its report within 45 days.

The Nagaland Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution demanding the withdrawal of AFSPA.

AKADEMI AWARD FOR HRUSHIKESH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Three litterateurs from Odisha have been selected for the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award 2021. Poet Hrushikesh Mallick will receive the award for his book 'Sarijaitiba Opera'. The two others who have been honoured are Digaraj Brahma and Debabrata Das. Mallick has been editing the literary supplement 'Sahityayana' of Dharitri since 2014.



ESPLANADE
#WECARE
100% VACCINATED STAFF

WELCOME
2022
UPTO
70% OFF*

Everything you need for a smashing new year at the BEST prices.

SHOP FOR Rs. 10,000 AND GET A CHANCE TO CHOOSE FROM A TV, A REFRIGERATOR, A WASHING MACHINE AND A MOBILE PHONE*

*T&C Apply. Offer valid till stocks lasts. Fresh stock available on full price.

lifestyle | KHADIM | iconic | TRENDS | max | homecentre | BIG BAZAAR | Cinépolis | FOREVER NEW | AND | RARE RABBIT
W | BIBA | globaldesi | Being Human | U.S. POLO ASSN. | NIKE | ARROW | LOUIS PHILIPPE | VAN HEUSEN | Inc.5

leisure



HENWICK ALMOST QUIT ACTING BEFORE LANDING MATRIX ROLE

Actress Jessica Henwick has shared that she was in a weird space prior to finding stardom and almost gave up on her acting dreams just before taking on the role of Bugs in *The Matrix Resurrections*.

KANYE TRYING HARD TO REKINDLE ROMANCE

Rapper Kanye West is desperate to rekindle his romance with Kim Kardashian and he recently bought a \$4.5 million home on the same street as his estranged wife. A source told Entertainment Tonight: "Kanye really wanted to buy a home near Kim and their kids to be close to them."



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Today, the stars put you on high alert... and not for nothing. You will save yourself from being swindled. Though you will easily manage to stay ahead of others, you may make a few enemies on your way. It's not a good day if you're looking to buy a house or vehicle, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
This day, you will be able to express and communicate your ideas and feelings very convincingly, assures Ganesh. All those to whom you come in contact with you today will be clear, and appreciative about whatever you tell them. At work your superiors are likely to be responsive and helpful. Al said and done, you are not likely to face any difficulties or disappointments today.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to be rather emotional and sentimental, says Ganesh. Your love for performing arts may make you take up lessons in classical music or traditional dance. And much to your delight, your sweetheart will treat you to a surprise candlelit dinner.

CANCER
You are likely start the day in the best of spirits today. Your enthusiasm and cheerfulness will be infectious, and you will be able to lift the mood wherever you go. However, your enthusiasm can be short-lived and pummelled under the weight of some bad news, leaving you distraught. Take a break in case you feel stressed out, advises Ganesh.

LEO
Talk of being busy! It seems like today, you shall take the cake, and perhaps, be the icing on it as well, says Ganesh. It is likely that the day is going to be very hectic for you in terms of work and business. You may be engaged in official conversations and dealings.

VIRGO
You will spend most of today in the company of family and friends, says Ganesh. Students may focus on upcoming examinations and will learn to balance study and leisure time, in equal measure. It is a good day to buy real estate.

LIBRA
"Every man has specific natural abilities", said Aristotle. This seems to be true for you today. Your natural talents will be acknowledged and documented at work. This might prompt your equals to hold you up above the rest, and for your seniors to positively encourage you to scale greater heights.

SCORPIO
You will find yourself thinking with your heart rather than your head today, says Ganesh. You may not be able to repress your feelings, and you should not even try. But you should be careful about how you express them, particularly in public as people may judge you wrongly on the basis of it, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, your superiors at work are going to trust you with many complicated assignments. But, after exerting yourself, you are sure to come out with flying colors and have your work appreciated. Do not be surprised if cash incentives come your way. Such may indeed be your fortune, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
A good day always begins with a good start. It will be a good day for you today as you will start the day with a positive attitude to life, says Ganesh. Your unremitting dedication and determination will not only put you ahead of others, but will also help you get an edge over them.

AQUARIUS
You are a polished diamond. Adversities come and go, yet you remain unruffled. Today, you manage to please your boss, and beloved, and that is a feat! It is yet another day of contentment. And in a cyclical process, this again rejuvenates you into giving your best, says Ganesh.

PISCES
Do not let your emotions influence your strategies in any way. Mixing business with sentiments is only for super spies. Keep a close check on your emotions and do not get carried away. Travel for business purposes is indicated, says Ganesh.

CM unveils Kalinga Art Gallery, five regional galleries in state

A world-class museum complex will also be set up in Odisha, says Patnaik



A work of art in Kalinga Art Gallery

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated Kalinga Art Gallery and five Regional Art Galleries, Thursday.

The Kalinga Art Gallery is the largest art gallery of the state located on the premises of the State Museum while the regional galleries have been set up in five districts - Chhatrapur (Ganjam), Puri, Balasore, Sambalpur and Koraput. The Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi has

taken the initiative for setting up of these galleries.

Attending the event in virtual mode, the Chief Minister announced that a world-class museum complex will soon come up in the State. He said that he has directed the Culture department to develop a comprehensive master plan for it with different facilities for history, art and culture.

Highlighting the cultural glory of the state, Patnaik said, "We have unique traditions of painting, architecture, sculpture and

handicrafts while art runs in our blood and has been ingrained in our psyche. We owe a responsibility to our artistic traditions and should do everything to protect, conserve and promote this unique tradition."

Earlier he said that the Kalinga Art Gallery will be a power house of art and artists of the state. It will be a confluence of artists from different regions. It will also help art aficionados to learn about Odisha's glorious artistic traditions.

Patnaik also said that regional galleries in five districts will encourage local artists to showcase their skills and promote local art forms. These galleries will be a focal point of interaction among the young and budding artists and help them learn and evolve over the time.

Joining the programme, Minister of Tourism, Odia Language, Literature & Culture Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi said that these art galleries will boost the confidence of local artists.

SS Rajamouli explains reason behind RRR title



Mumbai: Director SS Rajamouli has revealed the reason behind titling his upcoming film *RRR*. He will be seen as a special guest along with the film's stars Jr NTR, Ram Charan and Alia Bhatt, on *The Kapil Sharma Show*.

Kapil Sharma asks Rajamouli to reveal the reason for naming his film *RRR*.

Rajamouli shares: "In the beginning, we didn't know what to put the title as, so we thought we should refer to the project as *RRR* because of - Ram Charan, Rama Rao (Jr NTR) and Rajamouli.

We started putting hashtags as *RRR* and the response of the audience was overwhelming so we kept *RRR* as the title."

The Kapil Sharma Show airs on Sony Entertainment Television.

Mumbai: Actress Parineeti Chopra credits 2021 for bolstering her belief in picking subjects that are ahead of the curve as she showcased her acting prowess through films like *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*, *The Girl On The Train* and *Saina*.

She said: "It's a year filled with gratitude for me. 2021 was the year I had been waiting for, having taken the biggest plunge of my career in the form of *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*, *The Girl on the Train* and *Saina* and thankfully, each one of them paid off."

Parineeti added: "2021 made me realise that audiences expect me to be clutter-breaking and I couldn't agree with them more; I am more thankful to them for showering me with all the love for my performances."

Parineeti feels blessed that the makers, producers and her fans didn't give up on her, and pushed her to do her best work.

Parineeti will be seen next in films like *Uunchai* with Amitabh Bachchan, and *Animal* opposite Ranbir Kapoor.

2021 turns lucky for Parineeti

Lara Dutta over the moon sharing screen with Naseer



Mumbai: Actress Lara Dutta is over the moon on sharing the screen with veteran star Naseeruddin Shah in the series *Kaun Banegi Shikharwati*. She says the actor was on her wishlist for the longest time ever.

"*Kaun Banegi Shikharwati* is an extremely special show. With all the kinds of content that's now available

on OTT platforms, very rarely do you see the content that can be watched and enjoyed by the entire family," said the *Andaaz* actress.

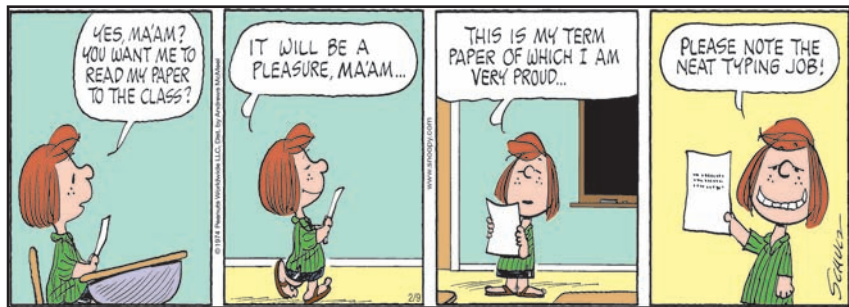
She added: "I think in today's times, there is content made which caters to different audiences - some of it is edgy, some thriller and some dark. But I think it is important for all of us who've kind of grown-up sitting in our homes and watching television together to be able to watch something with our kids and parents and in a way we all are sort of dysfunctional families one way or the other."

Kaun Banegi Shikharwati is a dramedy based on the life of a royal king played by Naseeruddin and his dysfunctional family.

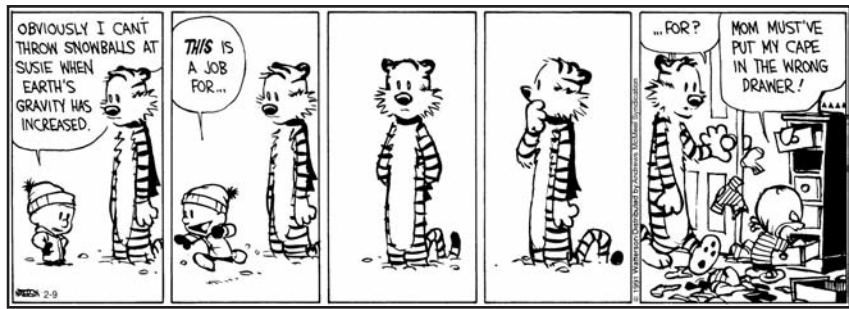
The series premieres January 7, 2022 on ZEE5. IANS



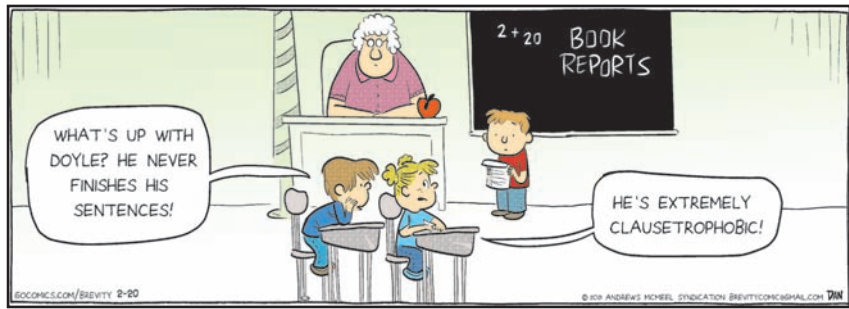
PEANUTS



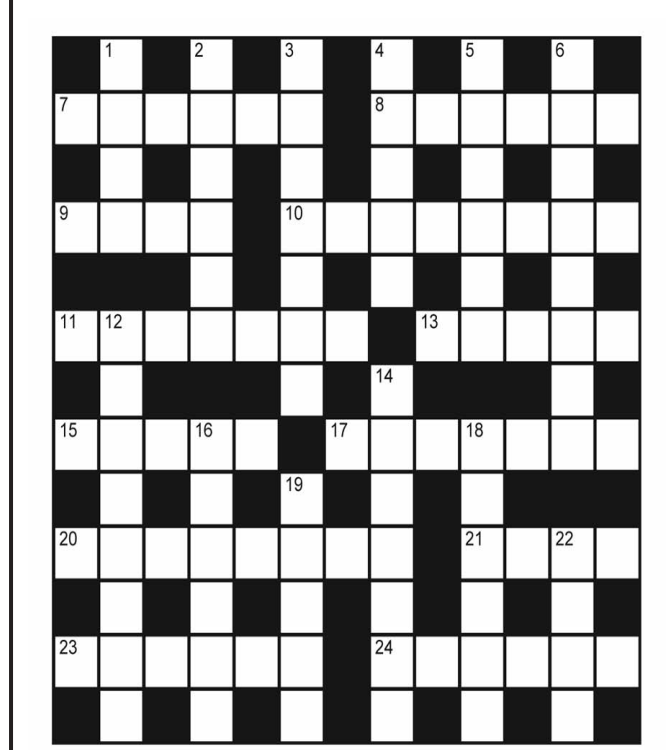
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



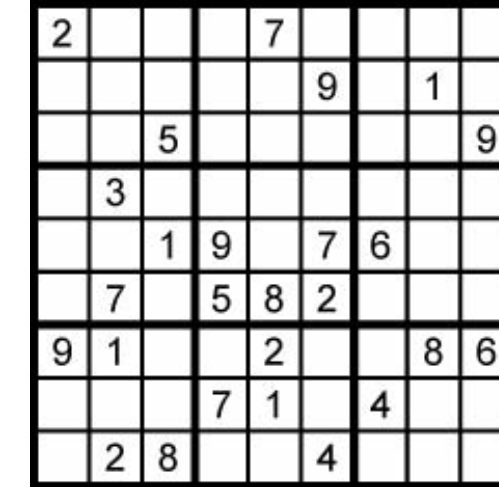
FUN post CROSSWORD



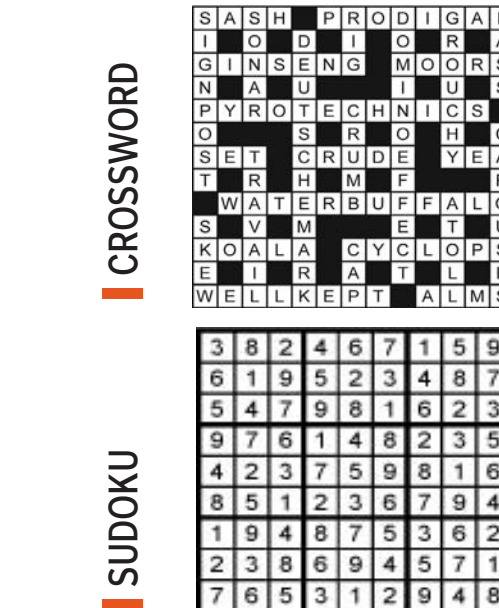
- Across**
- 7 Water, e.g.
 - 8 Owl, for one
 - 9 Secluded valley
 - 10 Chinese restaurant order (4,4)
 - 11 Set apart
 - 13 Oktoberfest souvenir
 - 15 Roly-poly
 - 17 Conjunctivitis
 - 20 Adversary
 - 21 Walk in water
 - 23 Kingdom
 - 24 Lifted up
- Down**
- 1 Uma Thurman movie, "Kill ___"
 - 2 Rabbit warren
 - 3 Teach
 - 4 Fire a gun
 - 5 Bournewmouth's county
 - 6 Peace
 - 12 Auguste Rodin, e.g.
 - 14 Marsh heron
 - 16 Work shoe
 - 18 OPEC member
 - 19 False move
 - 22 Sketched

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



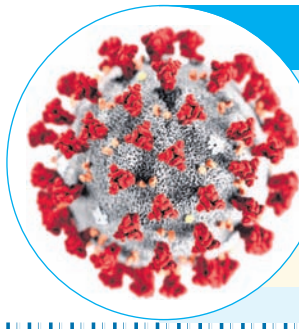
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



SPOILT FOR CHOICE

A girl buying decorative items from a stall at 'Sisir Saras 2021' at Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	28,50,85,850	25,27,88,209	54,41,629
India	3,48,22,040	3,42,58,778	4,80,860
Odisha	10,54,606	10,44,594	8,458

Tenders invited again for auction of 3 mineral blocks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The state government has again issued notice inviting tender (NIT) for online auction of three mining blocks including two virgin blocks.

The Directorate of Mines has issued the notice for grant of mining lease for Teherai iron ore & manganese block (Sundargarh), Behera-Banjipali limestone block (Bargarh) and Naringapanga graphite block (Rayagada).

Out of the three mineral blocks, Behera-Banjipali and Naringapanga are virgin blocks while lease of Teherai has expired.

Interested and eligible bidders will have to register themselves on the website of MSTC Limited (<https://www.mstccommerce.com/>)

auctionhome/mlcl/index.jsp).

As per the notification, the interested bidder can purchase the tender documents after payment of a fee on the website of e-auction platform till February 2, 2022 while February 7, 2022 (3pm) is the deadline for submission of the bid.

The tender fee for Teherai iron ore and manganese block is Rs 5 lakh and Rs 2 lakh each for other two blocks.

The bidders who had purchased the tender document for Teherai block in response to the Notice Inviting Tender dated July 7, 2021 and the tender documents for Behera-Banjipali and Naringapanga blocks in response to the NIT dated October 22, 2021, need not pay tender fee again to avail the document for that particular block, it said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The State Election Commission (SEC) has issued a bunch of symbols to be used by the candidates in the upcoming panchayat elections in the state.

Symbols have been issued for the posts of samiti member, sarpanch and ward members as no candidate can use symbols of any political party for these posts.

While 19 symbols including kettle, stool, bus, lock & key, spectacles, glass, football, kite and aeroplane have been issued for the candidates contesting for the post of samiti sabhya, 32 symbols including banyan tree, motor car, lantern, brinjal, basket, candles and others have been issued for sarpanch

THE SEC HAS ALMOST COMPLETED ITS PREPARATIONS FOR THE RURAL POLLS, WHICH ARE LIKELY TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY

THE POLL PANEL IS LIKELY TO IMPOSE SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS DURING THE ELECTIONS IN VIEW OF THE COVID-19 SITUATION

contestants. Similarly, 15 other symbols were issued for ward members.

The SEC has also notified 19 symbols including cot, boy & girl, bucket, letter box, drum, jug ring and saw for the independent candidates to contest for the post of zilla parishad (ZP) member. Notably, candidates of affiliated political



parties like BJD, BJP and Congress can use their party symbols for ZP member posts.

The Secretary to the office of SEC, RN Sahu, has informed all district Collectors about the symbols and their use. Candidates will be assigned with the symbols as per Odia alphabetical order, sources said. The poll panel has asked the

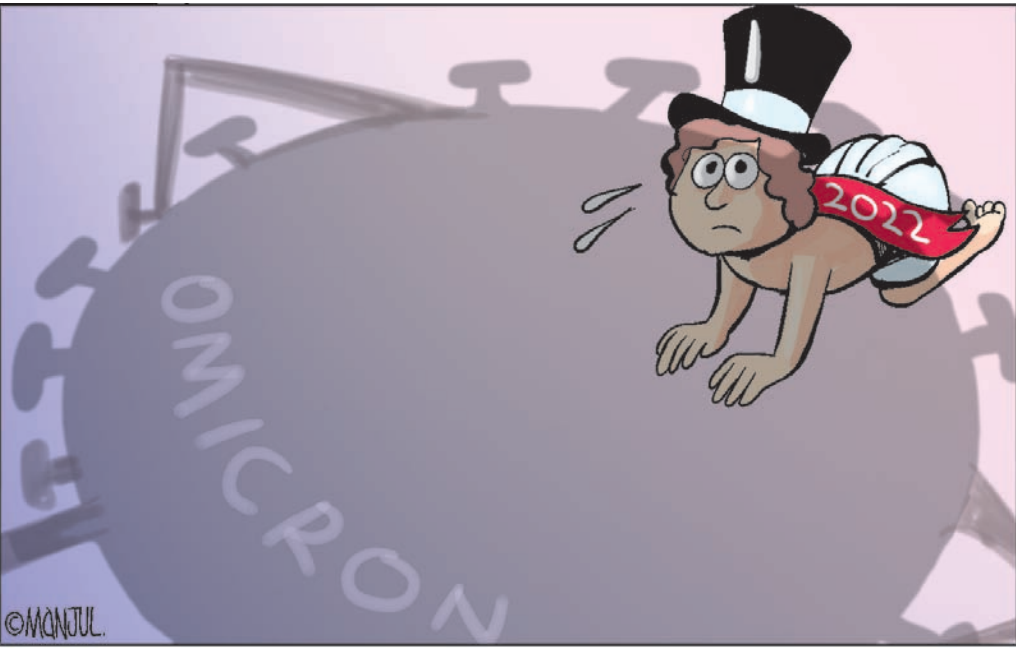
Collectors to display the nomination papers and the affidavits submitted by the candidates contesting for ZP office posts in the official website of the district administration. The nomination papers will remain on the website from the date of submission of nomination paper till the declaration of the results.

However, the affidavit submitted by those contesting to the office of sarpanch and panchayat samiti member will only be displayed in the notice board of election officer.

The SEC has almost completed its preparations for the rural polls, which are likely to be held in February. The SEC is likely to impose special restrictions during the elections in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Notably, Opposition BJP and Congress are demanding postponement of the rural polls demanding reservation for the OBCs. All eyes are now on the direction of the Supreme Court on a case pending on reservation of OBCs for rural and civic body elections in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



THWART LARGE GATHERINGS: SRC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The state government Thursday directed all the district Collectors, municipal commissioners and the twin city Police Commissioner to prevent large gatherings at public places.

In a letter, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena said that keeping in mind the

possible gatherings at public places December 31, 2021 and January 1 and 2, 2022, the government had earlier imposed restrictions for containment of Covid-19.

It is again reiterated that following actions may be taken on these days that include random checking of crowd and gatherings at public places such as picnic spots/malls/shopping com-

plexes/hotels/clubs/restaurants/parks/convention centres and kalyan mandaps. Strict enforcement of Covid-19 safety protocols such as wearing of masks, maintaining social distance of at least six feet at public places will have to be ensured. Additional restrictions as may be felt necessary in the interest of containment of the spread of Covid-19 may be implemented, the notice said.

In case of violation of Covid-19 protocols, heavy penalties may be imposed as decided by the local authorities, the notice further stated. **225 new cases; highest in 20 days**

Odisha Thursday logged 225 new Covid-19 cases, the highest in the last 20 days, taking the tally to 10,54,606, the Health department said in its bulletin. The toll mounted to 8,458 as a 57-year-old woman from Khurda district succumbed to the highly infectious disease.

BMC: City shrines closed till Jan 2

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Thursday announced closure of all religious institutions in the City till January 2, in a bid to contain the spread of Covid. As per BMC, all religious institutions like temples, mosques, gurdwaras and churches will remain closed for public from December 31 to January 2, 2022. "With a view to protecting the health of public and preventing spread of the Covid-19 virus including the newly detected highly contagious Omicron variant due to congregation of large number of citizens, it has been decided that all religious institutions like temples, mosques, gurdwaras, churches, etc. will remain closed for public from 31st Dec 2021 to 2nd Jan 2022 within BMC jurisdiction," the order read.

Mo School projects worth ₹18.30 crore get nod

BHUBANESWAR: The 31st Executive Council meeting of Mo School Thursday approved projects worth Rs 18.30 crore in 23 districts of Odisha. In the last one month, more than 11,000 alumni have joined the Mo School Abhiyan. The alumni have provided an assistance of Rs 4.86 crore for the development of their schools.

Induction of 6 judges bolstered HC in 2021

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, Dec 30: The year 2021 infused strength in the flattening fleet of the Orissa High Court with the induction of six judges in the court which was working with almost half of its sanctioned strength.

While there was only one recommendation to Orissa High Court by the Supreme Court Collegium in 2020, the latter headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana recommended appointment of four judges and transfer of three judges to the Orissa High Court in September.

The SC Collegium had, September 29, approved the proposal for elevation of advocates Aditya Kumar Mohapatra and Mruganka Sekhar Sahoo, and Judicial Officers Radha Krishna Pattanaik and Sashikanta Mishra as judges in the Orissa High Court. The appointments of these four as judges were made in October and November this year.

Earlier in September, the Supreme Court had also recommended transfer of three judges to the HC. The collegium had recommended transfer of Justice Jaswant Singh from Punjab and Haryana High Court and Justices Arindam Sinha and Soumen Sen from Calcutta High Court to Orissa High Court. However, the transfer of Justice Soumen Sen has not been notified by the Union government yet. The collegium had also recommended the transfer of Justice SK Mishra from Orissa High Court to Uttarakhand High Court in September.

Significantly, the new appointments and transfer of three judges added the much needed strength in the fleet of the High Court.

Before these inductions, the High Court was functioning with half of its working strength. It was left with 13 judges, less than half of its sanctioned strength of 27, after the retirement of Justices Pramath Patnaik and Sanju Panda in the months of June and July respectively. Due to the aforesaid appointments and transfers, the working strength of judges rose to 18, including the Chief Justice.

It is pertinent to mention here that the



The Supreme Court Collegium had, September 29, approved the proposal for elevation of advocates Aditya Kumar Mohapatra and Mruganka Sekhar Sahoo, and Judicial Officers Radha Krishna Pattanaik and Sashikanta Mishra as judges in the Orissa High Court

The collegium had also recommended transfer of Justice Jaswant Singh from Punjab and Haryana High Court and Justices Arindam Sinha and Soumen Sen from Calcutta High Court to Orissa High Court

However, transfer of Justice Soumen Sen has not been notified by the Union government yet, while Justice SK Mishra's transfer from Orissa High Court to Uttarakhand High Court was recommended in September

Before these inductions, the High Court was functioning with half of its working strength with 13 judges, less than half of its sanctioned strength of 27.

After the appointments and transfers, the working strength of judges in the High Court rose to 18, including the Chief Justice

vacancies in the HC are filled from two sources, 18 from the Bar and nine from the Higher Judicial Service of the state. To adjudicate the whopping 1,94,224 cases, there is a dire need for filling all the vacancies at the High Court.

FAMILY ROBBED OF LAKHS AT GUNPOINT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Unknown miscreants robbed cash and gold ornaments worth lakhs at gunpoint from the house of a person at Bhotapada under Mancheswar police limits here early Thursday morning.

The Commissionerate Police started investigations into the matter after registering a case (462/21) on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim.

Sources revealed that around five robbers entered the residence of Dinabandhu Das, the district organisation secretary of BJP, and held the family members captive by threatening them with firearms and sharp weapons. The miscreants also attacked Das and his family members when they tried to resist their act.

Das's wife sustained minor injuries on her head too, said the complainant. Later, the robbers decamped with gold and silver ornaments weighing around 300 grams, worth over Rs 12 lakh, and Rs 3 lakh in cash by holding the family at gunpoint. The couple, however, alleged political rivalry behind the robbery. They claimed that the miscreants also threatened them to leave the City.

Police sources said all the angles to the case are being examined. Cops are also checking the CCTV footage of the nearby areas.

Capital witnessed 258 abduction cases in '21

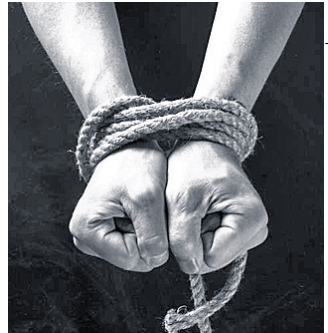
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: As many as 258 kidnapping cases were registered at various police stations in the Capital city till November 30 this year.

With 23 cases, Nayapalli police recorded the highest number of abductions under its jurisdiction in 2021.

As many as 20 cases were registered at Mancheswar PS while Capital and Badagada police stations recorded 17 cases each. Saheed Nagar and Chandrasekharpur police stations registered 15 such cases each during the above period.

As per the data, the city police managed to close 147 cases after rescuing the kidnapped persons. Meanwhile, the city police with



the help of the 'Kidnapping and Man Missing Cell' has rescued 154 abducted minors from January 1 to November 30.

The cell has traced around 1,169 kidnapped minors in the cases pending since 2008.

The police also arrested 40 persons involved in the kidnappings.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Sambalpur, I Debaki Pradhan, W/o. Army No.4572770K, Rank-L HAV, Name-Bhabani Shankar Pradhan, C/o. 56 APO Unit-12 MAHAR REGT, R/o. Vill./PO-A.Katapali, Burla, Dist.-Sambalpur, Pin-768006 (Odisha) declare that I have changed my name from Deviki Pradhan to Debaki Pradhan for all purposes.

SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA **DEMAND NOTICE**
STRESSED ASSETS RECOVERY BRANCH (SARB), SAMBALPUR
At: Hussain House, PO: Ainthapali, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN-768004

Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

A notice is hereby given that the Borrower(s): **Smt. Geetarani Ghosh & Late Priya Ghosh, Legal Heirs of Late Priya Ghosh: 1) Sri Kamlesh Ghosh, 2) Sri Ankit Ghosh (Minor)** have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non Performing Assets (NPA). The notices were issued to the below mentioned Borrower(s)/Legal Heir(s) of Borrower under Section 13(2) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 on their last known addresses by Registered Post with A/D, but they have been returned undelivered/un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of this public notice.

BRAJRAJNAGAR BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) of Borrower / A/c. No.	Details of Property/ies / Address of Secured Assets to be Enforced	Date of Demand Notice	Date of NPA	Amount Outstanding
Borrowers: 1) Smt. Geetarani Ghosh, W/o: Sri Shankar Kumar Ghosh, 2) Late Priya Ghosh, Legal Heirs of Late Priya Ghosh: 1) Sri Kamlesh Ghosh, 2) Sri Ankit Ghosh (Minor), Represented by Father/Guardian Sri Kamlesh Ghosh, All are At: Station Road, Lambibahal, PO: Brajrajnagar, Dist.: Jharsuguda, State: Odisha, PIN-768216 / A/c. No.: 35841841404 (TL)	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Land & Building standing in the name of Smt. Geetarani Ghosh, bearing Khata No.: 610/832, Plot No.: 860, Area: Ac.0.083dec., KISSAM: Gharabari, situated at Mouza: Brajrajnagar Town Unit No.-1, PS: Brajrajnagar, Tahasil/Dist.: Jharsuguda, Odisha	29.11.2021	16.12.2020	₹ 23,98,691/- as on 24.11.2021 with further interest and incidental expenses, costs, charges etc.

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above Borrower(s)/Legal Heir(s) of Borrower are hereby called upon to make payment of outstanding amount within **60 days** from the date of publication of this notice, failing which further steps will be taken after expiry of **60 days** from the date of the demand notice under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. The Borrower(s)/Legal Heir(s) of Borrower are also put on notice that in terms of sub-section 13 of section 13, they shall not transfer by sale, lease or otherwise the said secured assets mentioned in this notice without obtaining written consent of the Bank. This notice is without prejudice to the Bank's right to initiate such other actions or legal proceedings, as it deems necessary under any other applicable provisions of Law. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 30.12.2021
Place: Sambalpur

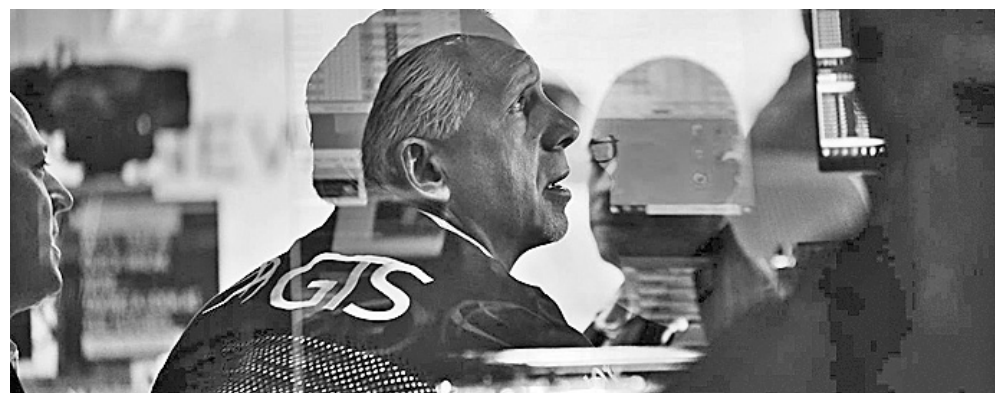
Authorised Officer
State Bank of India

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri-Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

FOCUS THE YEAR AHEAD

CLOUDS OVER 2022



Although major economies and markets fared well in 2021 despite all the uncertainties surrounding new variants of the coronavirus, 2022 will bring new challenges. In addition to central banks shifting toward policy normalisation, geopolitical and systemic risks are multiplying

Despite dips and disruptions from new variants of COVID-19, 2021 turned out to be a relatively positive year for economies and markets in most parts of the world. Growth rose above its potential after the severe recession of 2020, and financial markets recovered robustly. This was especially the case in the United States, where stock markets reached new highs, owing partly to the US Federal Reserve's ultra-loose monetary policy (though central banks in other advanced economies pursued radically accommodative policies of their own).

But 2022 may be more difficult. The pandemic is not over. Omicron may not be as virulent as previous variants – particularly in highly vaccinated advanced economies – but it is much more contagious, which means that hospitalisations and deaths will remain high. The resulting uncertainty and risk aversion will suppress demand and exacerbate supply-chain bottlenecks.

Together with excess savings, pent-up demand, and loose monetary and fiscal policies, those bottlenecks fueled inflation in 2021. Central banks' resolve will be tested if policy-rate hikes lead to shocks in the bond, credit, and stock markets. With such a massive build-up of private and public debt, markets may not be able to digest higher borrowing costs. If there is a tantrum, central banks would find themselves in a debt trap and probably would reverse course. That would make an upward shift in inflation expectations likely, with inflation becoming endemic.

The next year also brings mounting geopolitical and systemic risks. On the geopolitical front, there are three major threats to watch.

First, Russia is preparing to invade Ukraine, and it remains to be seen whether negotiations on a new regional security regime can prevent escalation of the threat. Although US President Joe Biden has promised more military aid for Ukraine and threatened harsher sanctions against Russia, he also has made clear that the US will not intervene directly to defend Ukraine against an attack. But the Russian economy has become more

resilient to sanctions than it was in the past, so such threats may not dissuade Russian President Vladimir Putin. After all, some Western sanctions – such as a move to block the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline – could even exacerbate Europe's own energy shortages.

Second, the Sino-American cold war is getting colder. China increasing its military pressure on Taiwan and in the South China Sea, and the broader decoupling between the Chinese and US economies, is accelerating. This development will have stagflationary consequences over time.

Third, Iran is now a threshold nuclear state. It has been rapidly enriching uranium to near-weapons grade, and the negotiations over a new or refurbished nuclear agreement have gone nowhere. As a result, Israel is openly considering strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities. Were that to happen, the stagflationary consequences would likely be worse than the oil-related geopolitical shocks of 1973 and 1979.

The New Year also brings several systemic concerns. In 2021, heatwaves, fires, droughts, hurricanes, floods, typhoons, and other disasters laid bare the real-world implications of climate change. The COP26 climate summit in Glasgow offered mostly cheap talk, leaving the world on track to suffer a devastating 3°C of warming this century. Droughts are already

driving a dangerous spike in food prices, and the effects of climate change will continue to worsen.

Making matters worse, the aggressive push to decarbonise the economy is leading to underinvestment in fossil-fuel capacity before there is a sufficient supply of renewable energy. This dynamic will generate much higher energy prices over time. Moreover, climate refugee flows toward the US, Europe, and other advanced economies will surge just as those countries are shutting their borders.

Against this background, political dysfunction is increasing in both advanced economies and emerging markets. The US midterm elections may offer a preview of the full-blown constitutional crisis – if not outright political violence – that could follow the presidential vote in 2024. The US is experiencing near-unprecedented levels of partisan polarisation, gridlock, and radicalization, all of which poses a serious systemic risk.

Populist parties (of both the far right and the far Left) are growing stronger around the world, even in regions like Latin America, where populism has a disastrous history. Peru and Chile both elected radical leftist leaders in 2021, Brazil and Colombia may follow suit in 2022, and Argentina and Venezuela will remain on a path to financial ruin. Interest-rate normalisation by the Fed and

other major central banks could cause financial shocks in these and other fragile emerging markets such as Turkey and Lebanon, not to mention the many developing countries with debt ratios that are already unsustainable.

As 2021 draws to a close, financial markets remain frothy, if not outright bubbly. Public and private equity are both expensive (with above-average price-to-earnings ratios); real-estate prices (both housing and rent) are high in the US and many other economies; and there is still a craze around meme stocks, crypto assets, and SPACs (special purpose acquisition companies).

As long as central banks were in unconventional policy mode, the party could keep going. But the asset and credit bubbles may deflate in 2022 when policy normalisation starts. Moreover, inflation, slower growth, and geopolitical and systemic risks could create the conditions for a market correction in 2022. Come what may, investors are likely to remain on the edge of their seats for most of the year.

The writer, Professor Emeritus of Economics at New York University's Stern School of Business, is Chief Economist at Atlas Capital Team, CEO of Roubini Macro Associates, and Co-Founder of TheBoomBust.com.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Perfect health, sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self-control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches.



SRI AUROBINDO

The Euro at 20

Twenty years ago, January 1, 2002, citizens of 12 European countries began using new euro banknotes and coins. A larger-than-life project – emblematic of a time when European leaders were bold enough to step into the unknown – thus became a tangible reality.

This flawless transition crowned an endeavor that was imagined in the 1970s, designed in the 1980s, and negotiated in the 1990s. Expectations were high: the euro's advocates hoped that it would deliver economic and financial integration, policy convergence, political amalgamation, and global influence.

Two decades on, it is difficult to avoid feeling disappointed about economic integration. Early assessments of the single currency's trade impact found that it barely exceeded 2%. Recent research by the European Central Bank puts the effect at perhaps 5%. That is still small, and by itself not worth the effort. Two regions within Europe trade with each other on average six times less if they are not in the same country. Because of history, languages, networks, judicial systems, and reluctance to unify regulations, national borders still matter considerably.

The financial services story is more dramatic. In the first years, banks extended credit abroad, often recklessly, until the euro crisis a decade ago triggered a precipitous retreat behind national borders. Regulators, applying the famous aphorism that banks are global in life, but national in death, told them to stop sharing liquidity with non-national subsidiaries. Fragmentation ensued.

The bold decision to launch a European banking union in June 2012 was a response to this. But implementation has been only partial: whereas eurozone banks are now supervised by the ECB, insolvency cases de facto end up in national hands. Financial integration has recovered somewhat, but momentum is weak. Although pan-European banks would be able to diversify risk on a broader scale, national governments remain reluctant to relinquish privileged relationships with "their" banking systems.

Policy convergence toward the best performers was meant to result from self-discipline, as well as from fiscal-policy rules and the creation of coordination processes. But, having given up monetary-policy autonomy, many governments rejected further requirements from Brussels. For ten years, credit growth and inflation rates diverged, with few apart from then-ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet worrying much. When the euro crisis eventually erupted, it put northern and southern EU member countries squarely at odds with each other.

Convergence has improved since. Under duress, competitiveness gaps have narrowed. The ECB has helped quell eurozone exit speculation, ensuring that borrowers in all member states have access to similarly priced credit. The response to the COVID-19 shock was remarkably cooperative, with the support of the European Commission and the ECB. And the recovery program launched in summer 2020 broke with long-standing taboos.

There is now a debate as to how much more reform Europe's macro-economic policy system needs. Some claim that current arrangements would work fine if governments played by the rules. But as I and a group of economists and lawyers recently argued, today's changed environment means that policy priorities cannot focus merely on fostering discipline in every member state.

Instead, high debt ratios, low interest rates, the likelihood of recurring turbulence, and secular challenges like climate change call for coordinating monetary and fiscal policies, reforming fiscal rules, and making provisions for jointly tackling shocks. Encouragingly, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and French President Emmanuel Macron endorsed such reforms in a recent commentary.

Political agglomeration, a longstanding European goal, was expected to follow monetary union. Hans Tietmeyer, the late German central banker, liked to quote Nicolas Oresme, a medieval philosopher who said that money belongs to the community rather than to the prince. The euro's supporters hoped, somewhat confusedly, that a common currency would create a sense of community.

This did not happen directly. During the 1991-92 negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty, governments were supposed to discuss political union alongside monetary union. But many countries, starting with France, rejected federal blueprints. Citizens initially treated euro banknotes as a technicality, not as a sign of belonging. Moreover, the new, mainly central and eastern European member states that joined the EU in the mid-2000s did not share the post-national ethos of the Union's founding fathers. The euro crisis confirmed that solidarity remained in short supply.

But the euro may still engender a sense of community indirectly. Although fear, not love, has so far prevented countries from leaving it, in some ways the result is the same. Far-right populist politicians such as Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy have toned down their criticism of the euro. No major politician wants to bet against it anymore.

The writer, a senior fellow at Brussels-based think tank Bruegel and a senior non-resident fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, holds the Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa chair at the European University Institute.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Jean Pisani-Ferry

The euro's advocates hoped that the single currency would deliver economic and financial integration, policy convergence, political amalgamation, and global influence

Nouriel Roubini
THE NEXT YEAR BRINGS MOUNTING GEOPOLITICAL AND SYSTEMIC RISKS. ON THE GEOPOLITICAL FRONT, THERE ARE THREE MAJOR THREATS TO WATCH

SPECTRUM FOREIGN POLICY

Strategic shift in 2021?

Quite a few India's foreign policy analysts contend that

New Delhi over the last year has taken a strategic shift in dealing with the world. It is a spectacular departure from the policy adopted under Prime Minister Narendra Modi 1.0. The new term, Modi 2.0 began to recalibrate the external policy, in articulation as well as implementation. If 2019 began the process, 2020 gripped by the pandemic, stalled the progress. It is in the year gone by that the strategic changes were visible. Let us examine the claims as we reflect on the year 2021.

One of the changes identified is the policy of conciliation towards the neighbours. In the previous stint of the current government, the policy 'reeked of hegemonism'. It was also partly a reflection of Hindutva in the external affairs. For instance, relations with Nepal, the blockade in favour of the Madhesi, interference in their Constitution-making, the Citizenship Amendment Act leaving out Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and hegemonic attitude towards Sri Lanka, policy of untouchability with Taliban until they took over the reins there – all of it did

not help good relations with these countries in the region.

In 2021, it is argued that New Delhi has adopted a pragmatic policy towards the neighbours devoid of religio-ideological bias and an imperious inclination. It has regained the goodwill and confidence of Bangladesh. President Ram Nath Kovind was present on the Golden Jubilee celebration this year of the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. New Delhi is talking to and assisting the Taliban regime with relief and development aid. India-Sri Lanka relations are returning to normalcy.

The second claim of change of strategy is retrieving the traditional strength and role of balancer in the bi-polar world. The third shift stemming from the second is New Delhi's contribution to genuine multilateralism. New Delhi is being credited with balancing USA and Russia, even though it is being perceived being closer to the former. Likewise, New Delhi is balancing huge contradictions in the Middle East, between the Arab states and Israel, between Saudi Arabia and Iran and so on. The West Asia Quad is a success story in the balancing

act. New Delhi's relation with China is another act of super balancing skill of New Delhi. Even during the military stand-off, India-China trade increased by 62.7 per cent in the first half of 2021.

In multilateralism, New Delhi is dealing with several countries, regional blocks and major issues. It helped with vaccines and other medical support during the pandemic. In the climate change negotiations New Delhi has played a commendable role and is leading the International Solar Alliance. In the face of irritants between Western Europe, namely France and Germany and the US, New Delhi is doing business with Paris in many areas in addition to the purchase of Rafal fighter aircrafts.

On the balancing role, New Delhi is holding on to its long-term friend Russia on defence purchase. India has been importing armaments from Moscow since the 1971 treaty. Our defence apparatus has been too dependent on Soviet supply, now Russia, to cut off so soon. In fact, it is America's overture to India that has drawn other countries closer to New Delhi. Quad has America in the lead. West Asia Quad is brokered by USA. It con-

sists of USA, its closest ally Israel and UAE, apart from India. On China, India cannot decouple economically as its economy, like those of many other countries have been sucked into Chinese manufactures. India and other counties have not built alternative, shorter and multiple supply chains. That is the challenge China poses.

In fact, there is no multilateralism in power terms. The countries can have bilateral relations with each other. But world politics has been dominated by two super powers in the past – USA and USSR, and now USA and China, the latter tacitly backed by Russia. This rivalry also is reflected in two world systems in conflict – one of democracy and free will, and the other of autocracy and repression. Is it too difficult for India to choose if it believes and prides in its democracy and pluralism? By not making a clear choice, and muddling through both the blocks, which the traditionalists euphemistically call the balancing act, New Delhi has not helped itself.

The writer is Professor of International Politics, JIMMC.

-INFA

WISDOM CORNER

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest. **CONFUCIUS**

Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children. **KHALIL GIBRAN**

If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the military, nothing is safe. **LORD SALISBURY**

LOL
FIRST FOOTBALL MATCH



Two elderly sisters donated \$5 to a charity and, to their surprise, won tickets to a football game. Since they had never seen a live football game before, Madge thought the free tickets would provide an excellent opportunity for doing so. "I think so, too," said Mabel. "Let's go!" They soon found themselves high in a noisy stadium overlooking a large, grassy expanse. They watched the kickoff

and the seemingly endless back-and-forth struggles that comprised the scoreless first half. They enjoyed the band music and cheerleader performance that followed. Then came the second half. When the teams lined up for the second-half kickoff, Madge nudged her sister. "I guess we can go home now, Mabel," she said. "This is where we came in."

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Doctors' protest

Sir, A year ago doctors were praised as warriors, but today they are being called anti-nationals. Police had to act on the protesting doctors in New Delhi. Doctors who have passed their MBBS and completed internship have to appear for the NEET-PG course to pursue studies for a specialisation. This test usually takes place in January, but in November last year the National Board of Examination postponed it until further notice in view of the Covid-19 situation. It was to be held in April but was further pushed to September. However, the counselling and admission process for the PG students could not begin due to the large number of cases related to the newly introduced quota for the economically weaker sections pending in the Supreme Court. The doctors have been demanding that the Supreme Court fast-track the hearing and the Union Health Ministry expedite the submission of the report on annual income for eligibility of the quota. The junior resident doctors form the backbone of the services offered at major medical college-associated hospitals across the country. However, the lack of an incoming batch has resulted in one-third staff shortfall across such hospitals. To make up for the shortfall, the existing doctors have been working between 100 to 120 hours every week at the height of the pandemic. The delays have also cost nearly 45,000 medical students one year of their education. They are still waiting to join the workforce.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Selfish love

Sir, A survey conducted by an advisory board of Mars Pet Care and Animal Welfare revealed that during the lockdown, when people were forced to stay indoors and away from all kinds of activities, the trend of adopting pets was high. For most people, this seemed to be an easy way to overcome their loneliness and these innocent animals proved to be good friends. But as the world unlocked, these companions of loneliness began to become a burden. This trend was visible across the world, but India was at the forefront. Of the nine countries in where the survey was conducted, India was found to be in the worst position in terms of homeless pets. Interestingly, even when the trend of adopting pets was increasing during the lockdown, incidents of pet abandonment were happening on a large scale in the country. Whether it is intentional or not, these instances of playing with the lives of innocent animals raise a big question on our sensitivity.

Nitesh Mandwariya, NEEMUCH (MP)

SHORT TAKES

Killer thread injures one

Sajanagad: While kite threads coated with glass dust have already claimed one life in Cuttack and critically injured another in Puri, a biker luckily evaded the killer thread with minor injuries in Nilagiri area of Balasore, Thursday. According to reports, Ranjan Parida, a youth of Gopa area, was on his way back home from the local market. All of a sudden, he got entangled with a kite thread around his neck at Gopa Chhak. As he fell down along with the bike on road, another bike coming from behind hit him. Tension prevailed in the area following this incident. Locals have been looking for people who were flying kites, paying no heed about the danger such threads pose to people.

Rungta steel plant gets green nod

Satamile: The Rungta mines has received environmental clearance for expansion of its integrated steel plant from 3.55 MTPA to 7.53 MTPA at a public hearing camp held at the Ranjagol RI office at Khajuriakata under Hindol block in Dhenkanal, Thursday. The public hearing camp was held to attend to the complaints of the affected people. Sashanka Sekhar Das, additional district magistrate (ADM) presided over the meeting held during the camp where Anup Mallik, the regional officer (RO) of state pollution control board (SPCB) attended to the complaints raised by the project-affected villagers. Residents of 17 villages like Jhadabandh, Galapada, Tarkabeda and Kothalu, adjoining the steel plant demanded education, healthcare, drinking water, pucca roads, schools, houses, and employment to their youths.

1 killed, 8 hurt in road mishap

Bhawanipatna: A person was killed on the spot and eight others sustained grievous injuries after a speeding truck collided head-on with a sports utility vehicle (SUV) carrying the members of a marriage party late Wednesday night. Condition of three among the eight injured persons is stated to be critical. The fatal accident took place on Biju Expressway near Bhursaguda under Ampani police limits in Kalahandi district. The deceased has been identified as 35-year-old SUV driver Rukmana Sahu of Uramal village in neighbouring Chhattisgarh. After solemnising the marriage at Dumerpadar village under Maidapur block of Nabarangpur district, the members were on their way back to Sargiguda in Nabarangpur district. Some locals rescued the injured and rushed them to Dharmagarh sub-divisional hospital. The mishap took place at around 11.30pm when the marriage party was returning to Sargiguda village. Ampani police reached the accident site. The critically injured SUV driver was initially sent to community health centre (CHC) at Kokasara in Kalahandi district. However, doctors at the government-run health facility declared him brought dead.

BSF DG reviews anti-Red ops in Swabhiman Anchal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Dec 30: Director General of Border Security Force (BSF), Pankaj Kumar Singh, Thursday visited Swabhiman Anchal under Chittrakonda block in Malkangiri district Thursday. He reviewed the ongoing anti-Maoist operations in the area. He reached Janbai by a helicopter and held discussion with the BSF officials in this regard. He advised the BSF officials about how the jawans would win trust of the people in the tribal-dominated district while dealing with Left wing extremism in the area. As many as six BSF camps are

functional at Badapada, Badapadar Gorasetu, Jadamba, Ghanabeda and Hantalguda while over 3,000 jawans have been deployed in the fringe areas. The jawans ensure that the ultras do not enter Chittrakonda through the fringe areas of Andhra Pradesh. The BSF DG focused on patrolling by boats in the Chittrakonda reservoir while AP Police is sharing intelligence inputs about the Maoist activities across the borders. It was learnt that Maoists affiliated to Andhra-Odisha Border Zonal Committee are provoking people in Korukonda, Kudumuluguma, Boipariguda and some other areas to oppose police activities.



Youths registering their names at a district-level job fair held at Surajmal College ground at Rampella under Rengali block in Sambalpur district, Thursday. OP PHOTO

IDCO to form land bank for petrochemical projs

IDCO RECEIVED A POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM RESIDENTS AT A PUBLIC HEARING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Dec 30: The state-owned Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) will acquire over 284.15 lakh sqm (28,414 acre) of land to form a land bank for establishment of petrochemical projects near 111 villages in Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara districts, a report said. The land will be acquired within the next 20 years for establishment of petrochemical projects. The matter came to the fore after IDCO's bid for establishment of land bank received an overwhelming support from residents at a public hearing camp held Wednesday.



Jagatsinghpur district administration at the Kalyan Mandap at Madhuban in the port town. In the public hearing, very few people spoke on the land acquisition while over half of the attendees expressed strong support for land acquisition for establishment of the land bank. Kanhu Charan Dhir, additional district magistrate and Dillip Kumar Das, regional officer of state pollution control board (SPCB) attended the camp and heard the opinions of residents. Ashok Mishra, CGM, IDCO and RK Mohapatra, regional head IDCO said that the proposed land bank is not new but the state government has proposed for formation of a land bank since 2007. Hyderabad-based Environment Protections Training and Research Institute has done environment impact assessment of the area and

ruled out any damage to the local environment due to establishment of industries on the proposed land bank. The land bank will cover around 26 villages of Ersama block, 21 villages under Kujang block, 12 villages of Marshaghai block and 52 villages of Mahakalapara block. These lands will be acquired in a phased manner in the next 20 years and will be kept under the IDCO land bank. Petrochemical projects will be established on acquired lands for which raw materials will be made available from the Indian Oil refinery project at Paradip. After acquiring the land, IDCO will develop infrastructures on these acquired lands. All those industrial firms wishing to establish their industries here will no more face hurdle in land acquisition.

GANGRAPE AT GUNPOINT

BJP OBSERVES 12-HR BANDH IN JEYPORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, Dec 30: Koraput district unit of BJP Thursday observed bandh from dawn to dusk in Jeypore town demanding justice for the survivor who was allegedly gang-raped with her husband kept in hostage at gunpoint. A source said that the bandh started at 6.00am and continued till 6.00pm. Shops and other commercial establishments remained close during the bandh. Some senior leaders of the district unit met the family members of the victim at her parent's house and consoled them. "BJP demands immediate arrest of key accused in the case," a worker of the saffron party who took part in the agitation said. Meanwhile, a team headed by an Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) has been constituted, which is presently investigating the sensational gang rape case, a senior official informed. It is pertinent to mention that two miscreants gang-raped the woman after holding her husband and minor son hostage at gunpoint in a village under Jeypore Sadar police limits in Koraput, Saturday. The matter came to the fore after an FIR was lodged at Jeypore Mahila Police Station Sunday morning. Police registered a case in this connection and launched a probe, IIC Mamata Panigrahi said. A scientific team was pressed into service, which visited the victim's house and collected evidences.

LOWER SUKTEL PROJECT

Agency directed to expedite dam work



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 30: The works on the Lower Suktel irrigation project got a fillip as Bijay Kumar Mishra, engineer-in-chief of the state water resources department visited the project site in this district and asked the construction agency to expedite the dam works, Thursday. Mishra was accompanied by Bibhuti Bhushan Das, managing director of Odisha Construction Corporation Ltd (OCCCL). The two senior officials visited the work site and asked the construction agency to expedite the works which are scheduled to be completed by January 2024. The Lower Suktel irrigation project is termed as the lifeline of Bolangir district. Meanwhile, 82 per cent of the spillway work of the dam and 52 per cent work on the soil embankment

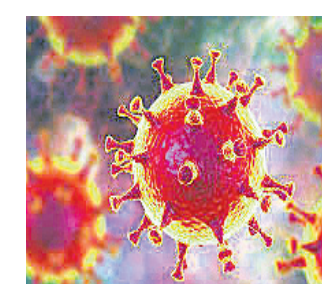
has been completed. The construction of the dyke will begin soon. The work on the dyke will be taken up in forested area for which the forest department has given its clearance. However, the dam works have not progressed as expected due to shortcomings for which the construction agency has been asked to make good of the loss by expediting the project works in January. The dam work will be finished within the timeline if some works are expedited, Mishra said. The project works are being reviewed at the state-level and the secretary-level meetings every month. The Chief Minister is also reviewing the project works in every two to three months. Stress is being laid on early completion of the project and compensation to the project-affected people.

Scam in Covid fund: BDO to return ₹30L

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Dec 30: Covid fund to the tune of ₹30 lakh was allegedly misappropriated by the BDO of Khajuripada block in Kandhamal district. The district administration has directed BDO Rabindranath Kahar to immediately return the embezzled amount. On the other hand, the administration is carrying out an investigation into the alleged bungling of ₹1.70 crore which was sanctioned for temporary medical centres (TMCs - civil construction). The BDO is unable to give details of how the fund was utilised. Besides, he has not furnished documents pertaining to the same. The district administration has asked him to return the fund within

a certain timeline. During the pandemic, the government had made provision of TMCs in all panchayats to keep the returnees from other states in temporary quarantine. BDOs were looking after the arrangement of beds, bed sheets, pillows, mugs, buckets, mattresses and assets for the TMCs. An investigation revealed that 90 per cent of the usable items of the TMCs were purchased by BDOs. The reports also said that a total of 647 migrants had returned to Khajuripada. As per the SRC guidelines, hygienic kits worth ₹300 were purchased for each migrant. Going by the calculation, ₹1,94,100 would have been spent for purchase of kits for 647 returnees at the TMCs. The investigation revealed that the kits purchased were sub-standard while the Khajuripada BDO had



misappropriated ₹9,67,131. Besides, there are no documents showing purchase of the kits. The BDO in his report stated that 133 beds were purchased for 30 beds are available while there is no trace of remaining beds. It was learnt that the government had not ordered for purchase of beds. In fact, records show that 917 beds

were purchased for the TMCs. The government had ordered for hiring generator sets, but the BDO has shown in records that he had purchased 14 generator sets worth ₹14.40 lakh from a Jajpur-based agency. In fact, 17 TMCs were functional while returnees had stayed at 11 TMCs. But interestingly, the BDO had purchased 14 generator sets for 11 TMCs. The BDO has also made a bill of ₹1.07 crore towards civil construction. The district administration in its report has suggested investigations by the Vigilance and the GST officials. However, the BDO said that he has not received the investigation report. It was alleged that Covid fund worth over ₹2 crore had been embezzled in Khajuripada block.

MCL Mahanadi Coalfields Limited
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)
Jagruati Vihar, Bura - 768020, Dist. - Sambalpur, Odisha
Ph. (EPABX) : 0663-2542461 to 469 Website : www.mahanadicoal.in

Notice

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in, respective subsidiary Company, (MCL, www.mahanadicoal.in), CIL e-procurement portal https://coalindiatenders.nic.in and Central Public Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal https://gem.gov.in". R-5087

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, SORO
DIST.- BALASORE
Notice No.3050 Dated: 29.12.21

SEALED LIMITED TENDER ENQUIRY NOTICE

Sealed Limited Tender Enquiry Bids are invited from reputed Manufacturers / Suppliers / Agencies, their authorized dealers / GeM registered Firms for supply of "Dual Desk Bench and Chair" intended for 12 Nos. of 5T High Schools under Soro Panchayat Samiti. The detailed information of tender process is available in http://www.baleswar.nic.in

The date and time of receipt of Sealed Bid Documents are from 29.12.2021 to 07.01.2022 upto 4.00 P.M. on working days only.

Sd./- Block Development Officer Soro

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender No. eT-CRW-MCS-EL-10-2021
NAME OF WORK : OVERHAULING OF DC TRACTION MOTOR FITTED IN MOTOR COACH OF MEMU AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR 24 MONTHS.
Advertised Value : ₹ 81,56,679.20
Period of Completion : 24 Months.
Bidding Start Date : 07.01.2022.
Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 21.01.2022.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-Tender documents and corrigendum is available in website http://www.ireps.gov.in
By, Chief Electrical Engineer/ PR-688/M/21-22 CRW/Mancheswar

सेन्ट्रल इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोकेमिकल इंजीनियरिंग एण्ड टेक्नोलॉजी (सिपेट)
CIPET CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PETROCHEMICALS ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (CIPET)
(Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India)
S-3/79, Sector -A, Zone-B, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751019
Email: cipetsat@gmail.com/mcti/cipet.gov.in, Website: www.cipet.gov.in

CIPE:CSTS/BBSR/PP REPROCESS-COLOUR/2021-22/12 Date:31.12.2021

INVITATION FOR QUOTATION

Sealed quotations are invited from reputed Manufacturers/Suppliers/Distributors/ Authorized Dealers for the supply of **Plastics Raw Material (PP REPROCESS-colour-red, blue, green)** at CIPET: CSTS Bhubaneswar. Interested bidders may submit their quotation on or before 07.01.2022 at the above address. The other details are available at CIPET website - www.cipet.gov.in.
Principal Director & Head, CIPET: CSTS Bhubaneswar reserves right to accept or reject any/all quotations without assigning any reasons thereof.
Principal Director & Head

Drop in Luna water level sparks concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 30: Summer season is yet to return to the state. However, a drop in the water level of Luna river this winter season has sparked concern among the residents of this district.

It is apprehended that the decline in water level will seriously affect agriculture and drinking water supply to Kendrapara town. Things have come to such a pass that the riverbed is visible from a distance. Locals alleged that rampant sand mining has led to a change in river's course and subsequently a drop in the water level. It has brought the lives and livelihood of the residents under threat. It is apprehended that over 10,000 hectare of farmland will remain uncultivated due to lack of irrigation facilities from the river. Drinking water is being supplied to Kendrapara town from a pump house on the banks of Luna river, jointly installed by the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO)



and Water Resources department. The water level in the river adjoining the pump house has dropped abysmally since this December. Alarmed over the development, the PHEO officials dug up a channel up to the pump house from the opposite side of the river to ensure that water supply to the town is not disrupted. However, the channel also dried up soon. A social activist Sukhadananda Pradhan said that the water level in the river is declining for the last few years. The construction of a barrage on the upstream of Mahanadi is one of the reasons behind the drop in water level

of Luna river. Similarly, various industrial firms are lifting the river water through bore wells for their use, which is another reason behind the drop in its water level. The problem could be resolved by adopting river linking and construction of barrages on the river, it was said. The water resources department has constructed check dams at Padagayapur, Gayaspur, Thauri, Chadheiguan, Rajgarh and Anguli to irrigate the farmlands. Senior citizens claimed that the river water could irrigate over 10,000 hectare in Marshaghai and Mahakalapara blocks if it was dug up. Zilla Parishad mem-

ber Ganesh Chandra Samal said illegal sand and soil mining, encroachments and river bank erosion have forced the river to change its course. He said that mismanagement has not only affected the Luna river but all the seven rivers and 27 branch canals flowing through the district. Over 15,850 hectare of farmland does not have any facility to drain out the water. Over 32,350 hectare of farmland is in saline regions while 34,952 hectare is flood-affected. Similarly, 84,910 hectare is drought prone. Samal said that the drinking water and irrigation problem could be resolved if a canal was dug up from the river about 15 km from the coastline. When contacted, Prabodh Kumar Rout, executive engineer of water resources department said that various plans are being implemented for development of the river. The district administration is keeping a check on illegal sand mining while the water resources department is working to strengthen the river embankments, he added.

A YEAR OF VAX AND CHALLENGES

DEMOCRACY UNDER SIEGE



NEWS SNIPPETS While the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions continued into 2021, the biggest news stories this year include return of Taliban in Afghanistan, farmers' protest in India, climate change, Pegasus scam and killing of civilians by the Army in Nagaland

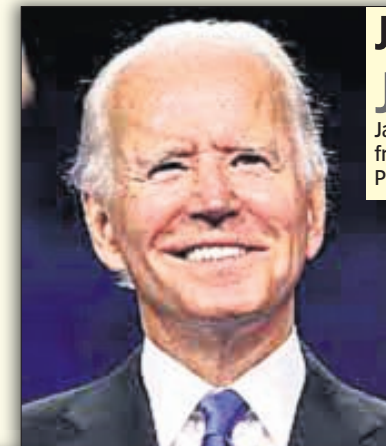
A greater number of countries are sliding towards authoritarianism, while the number of established democracies under threat has never been so high, as per the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Populist politics, the use of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions to silence critics, a tendency of countries to mimic the anti-democratic behaviour of others, and disinformation used to divide societies are mainly to blame, the Stockholm-based intergovernmental organisation said in a report. "More countries than ever are suffering from 'democratic erosion'," IDEA said in its 2021 study on the state of democracy, relying on data compiled since 1975. "The number of countries undergoing 'democratic backsliding' has never been as high," it said, referring to the regressive turn in areas including checks on government and judicial independence, as well as media freedom and human rights.

"In fact, 70 per cent of the global population now lives either in non-democratic regimes or in democratically backsliding countries," the report said. "The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a surge in authoritarian behaviour by governments. The study said that there was no evidence that authoritarian regimes were better at fighting the pandemic, despite Chinese state media reports to the contrary. "The pandemic provides additional tools and justification for repressive tactics and silencing of dissent in countries as diverse as Belarus, Cuba, Myanmar, Nicaragua and Venezuela," the report said.

Although the outgoing year brought us the much-awaited Covid-19 vaccines, the world saw the immunity acquired through the shots eventually waning which emerged as a major challenge for governments across the globe. The world witnessed more unemployment, more natural calamities and even erosion of democracy in many regions. As far as India is concerned, the year witnessed a number of life-changing events from the coronavirus pandemic to farmer protests, poll violence and medals raining in Olympics and Paralympics. Perhaps the most important news of the year for Indians was the culmination of the farmers' stir. On the brighter side, many new Indians became billionaires, while Neeraj Chopra heralded a new era in Indian athletics with his colossal Tokyo Olympics gold earning him a superstar status. As the year draws to a close, Orissa POST recaps some of the prominent events that took place in 2021

MOVERS & SHAKERS

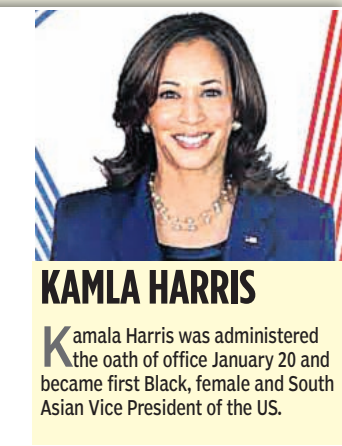
From Joe Biden to Xi Jinping to Neeraj Chopra, prominent people have contributed to this year being the roller-coaster that it was and we have some of the top newsmakers listed for you here



JOE BIDEN Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. took oath as the 46th President of the United States January 20. He overcame stiff challenge from the Republicans to defeat incumbent President Donald Trump.



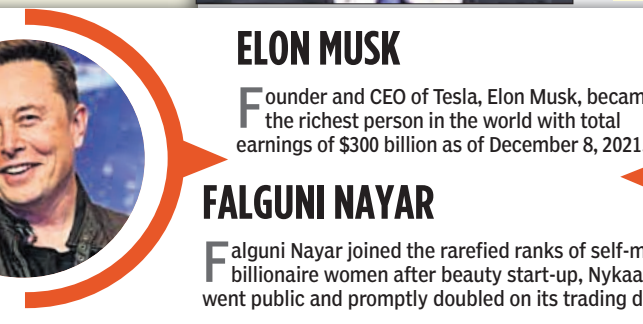
XI JINPING Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered the first doctrine on Communist Party history by a Chinese leader in 40 years, giving him a mandate to potentially rule for life as a major meeting wraps up in Beijing.



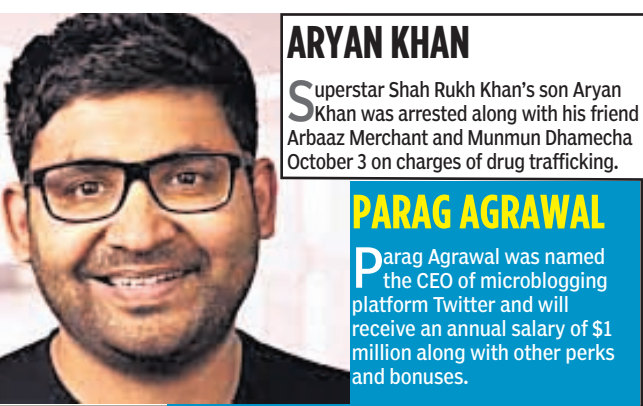
KAMLA HARRIS Kamala Harris was administered the oath of office January 20 and became first Black, female and South Asian Vice President of the US.



HARNAAZ WINS HEARTS Actor-model Harnaaz Sandhu made history December 13 as she was crowned Miss Universe 2021 - beating contestants from 90 countries - 21 years after India last brought home the title. The previous Miss Universe from India were Sushmita Sen and Lara Dutta.



ELON MUSK Founder and CEO of Tesla, Elon Musk, became the richest person in the world with total earnings of \$300 billion as of December 8, 2021.



FALGUNI NAYYAR Falguni Nayyar joined the rarefied ranks of self-made billionaire women after beauty start-up, Nykaa, went public and promptly doubled on its trading debut.



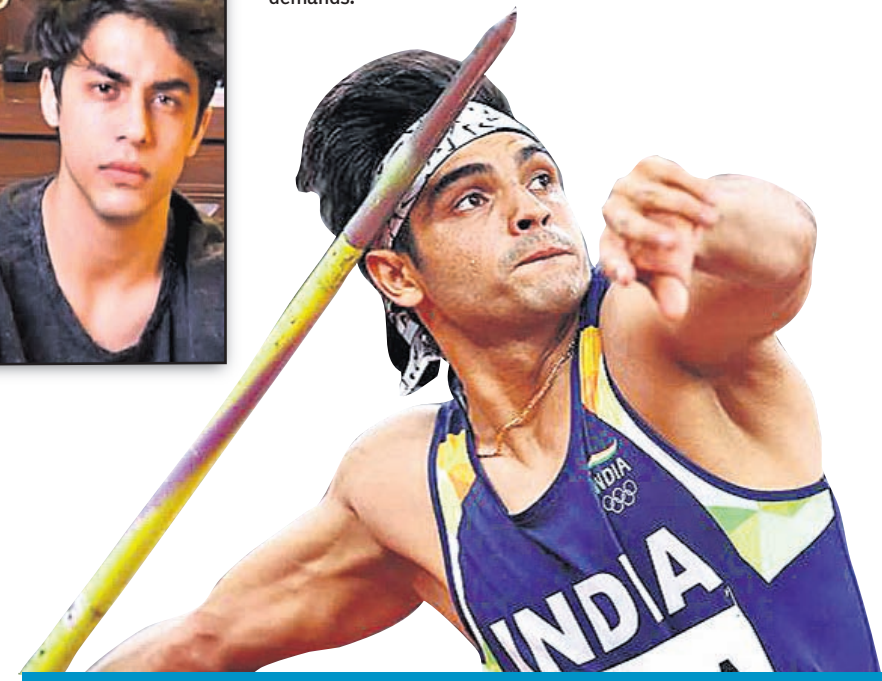
ARYAN KHAN Superstar Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was arrested along with his friend Arbaaz Merchant and Mumun Dhamecha October 3 on charges of drug trafficking.



RAKESH TIKAIT Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait hogged the headlines for spearheading the agitation demanding scrapping of the Union government's controversial farm laws. The 15-month long agitation finally bore fruit as the Centre buckled under the pressure of farmers' demands.



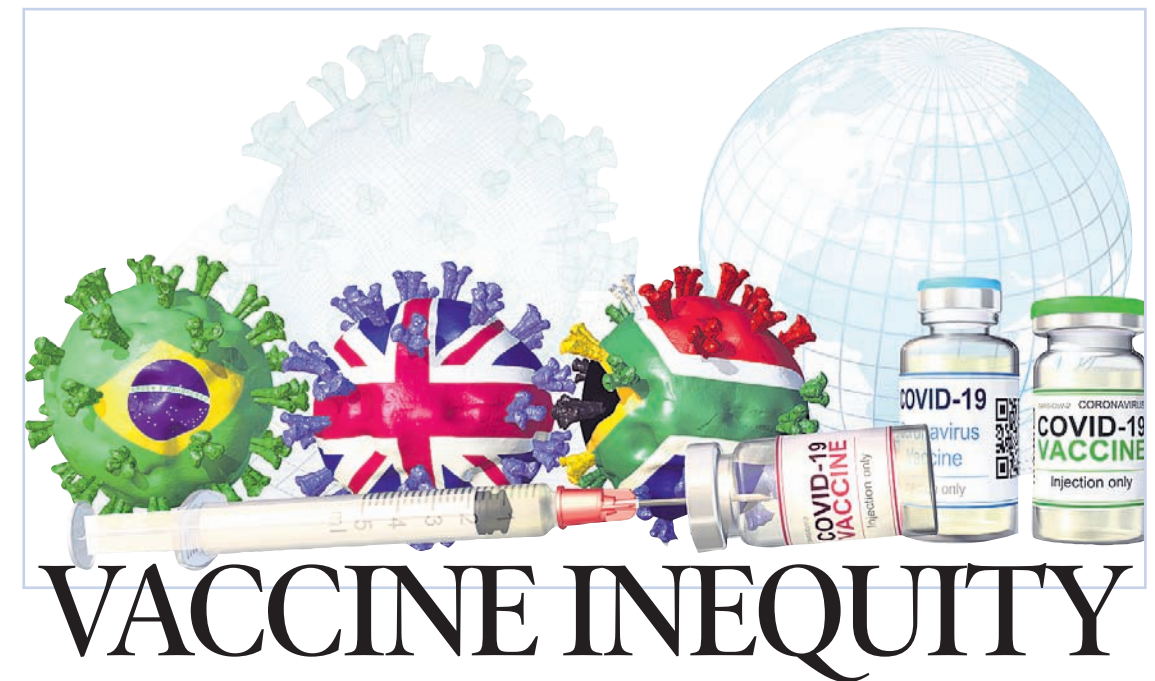
PARAG AGRAWAL Parag Agrawal was named the CEO of microblogging platform Twitter and will receive an annual salary of \$1 million along with other perks and bonuses.



INCREDIBLE NEERAJ India first participated in the Olympics in 1900 in Paris and it took over a century for the country to win gold in athletics. Neeraj Chopra, a Haryana lad, secured the first individual gold for India in athletics at the Olympics with a throw of 87.58m. His second-best throw of 87.02m was even higher than that of the silver winner Jakub Vadlejch (86.67m) of Czech Republic.



AJAZ PATEL New Zealand's left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel became the third cricketer, after England's Jim Laker (v AUS) and Anil Kumble (v PAK), to scalp 10 wickets in an innings, achieving the feat in the 2nd Test against India in Mumbai. GOLDEN BOY BHAGAT Capabilities of the para shuttler from Odisha were well known even prior to the Paralympics. He had already won three singles gold and a couple of doubles gold at the World Championships. When badminton was included in the Paralympics for the first time, Pramod Bhagat found a new goal and secured the yellow metal.



VACCINE INEQUITY For almost as long as Covid-19 has been around, scientists, academics and campaigners have called on wealthy nations to share vaccines around the world - not only to protect people in those countries, but also to reduce the risk of new mutant variants emerging that could evade vaccines for everyone. Those sounding the alarm have repeated the same mantra: No one is safe until everyone is safe. Despite these warnings, this is exactly what appears to have happened, some of these experts say. The new omicron variant emerged in southern Africa with a large number of mutations that experts say may allow it to transmit more easily and possibly reduce existing immunity. "Africa right now is essentially a superincubator," said Andrea Taylor, assistant director of programs at the Duke Global Health Innovation Centre, a leading authority on global vaccine supply. "While we still need to know more about omicron, we do know that as long as large portions of the world's population are unvaccinated, variants will continue to appear, and the pandemic will continue to be prolonged." Dr. Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a leading partner in the global vaccine sharing program COVAX, said in an email. "We will only prevent variants from emerging if we are able to protect all of the world's population, not just the wealthy parts," Berkley added. "The world needs to work together to ensure equitable access to vaccines, now." The debate has refocused attention on global vaccine inequality - which Taylor says is "worse than ever" - and accusations that rich countries have been hoarding shots for themselves. Low-income countries, most of which are in Africa, have received just 0.6 per cent of the nearly 8 billion shots that have been administered, according to the World Health Organization. Just 1 in 4 front-line health workers on the continent are fully vaccinated, the WHO said last week.

THOSE WHO LEFT US

A collection of portraits and brief biographies of several prominent figures who passed away in 2021, including Bipin Rawat, Colin L. Powell, Dilip Kumar, Milkh Singh, Michael K. Williams, Soli Sorabjee, Prince Philip, Desmond Tutu, and Biju Kumar Sahoo.



VICTORIOUS FARMERS The 2020-2021 Indian farmers' protest was against three farm Acts that were passed by the Parliament in September 2020. The Acts have been described as "anti-farmer laws" by many farmer unions, and politicians from the Opposition who say it would leave farmers at the "mercy of corporate". The farmers have also demanded the creation of a minimum support price (MSP) Bill, to ensure that corporates cannot control the prices. Soon after the Acts were introduced, unions began holding local protests, mostly in Punjab. After two months of protests, farmer unions began a movement named Dilli Chalo, in which tens of thousands of farming union members marched towards the nation's capital. On November 19, the Centre decided to repeal the Bills.



THE RETURN OF THE TALIBAN The US war in Afghanistan ended as it started twenty years earlier: with the Taliban in power. In 2020, President Donald Trump struck a deal with the Taliban that required withdrawing all US troops by May 1, 2021. Two weeks before that deadline, President Joe Biden ordered that a complete US withdrawal be concluded by no later than September 11, 2021 - the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. As the withdrawal proceeded, the Afghanistan national army collapsed and the Taliban overran the country. Kabul fell August 15, trapping thousands of foreigners in the capital city.

CLIMATE TALKS FAIL AGAIN "A code red for humanity." That's how UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described the UN report released in August that concluded that humanity faces catastrophic climate change unless the emission of heat-trapping gases is slashed. But one didn't need to read the 4,000-page report to know that. Record drought wrecked the American southwest. Record flooding devastated Belgium and western Germany. Epic wildfires tore through Greece. Late season monsoons ravaged India and Nepal. Climate optimists could find some developments to cheer in 2021. President Biden committed the US to rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement on his first day in office. At the COP-26 meeting in Glasgow, countries pledged to take steps to address climate change. But pledges aren't accomplishments.



NSO GROUP SCANDAL OF THE YEAR It all started in July 2021, when 16 German publications at once published materials of their own investigation into a mysterious program capable of hacking any smartphone using so-called zero-day vulnerabilities. The investigation revealed that NSO Group was selling malware to special services of different countries. They used it to spy on people. Those exposed in surveillance stated only the best intentions, which were supposedly limited to the necessary fight against terrorism. However, very well-known names were found on the surveillance lists, which clearly do not belong to terrorists. Among them, for example, French President Emmanuel Macron, and 600 officials and politicians around the world.

MAMITA MURDER The sensational missing and then murder of 24-year-old Mamita Meher, a schoolteacher of Kalahandi, kept the BJP govt on the back foot right since the news broke. The alleged involvement of junior Home Minister Ditya Shankar Mishra in the case supplied continuous fodder for the opposition's unity. Alleged sexual harassment of inmates at Mahaling's Sunshine Public School where Mamita worked made the case even more serious. Though prime accused Gobinda Sahu was arrested, the political slugfest continued till the end of the year.

NAGALAND KILLINGS On 4 December 2021, a unit of 21st Para Special Forces, the special forces unit, killed six civilians near the Oting village of the Mon district in Nagaland. Eight more civilians and a soldier were killed in subsequent violence. The Army claimed to have only opened fire when instructions to the vehicle to stop were not followed. The two survivors reject the claims, as did Nagaland Police upon a preliminary inquiry. The Army said troops were attacked by machete-wielding villagers and opened fire only under compulsion, as one infantryman was dead and others injured.

BSKY - Boon for the poor The outgoing year saw yet another significant milestone in health care history of Odisha as the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) covered all 30 districts of the state December 16, 2021 when Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched distribution of the smart health card in Jajpur and Kendrapara districts. The campaign started August 20 from Malkangiri district. Patnaik gave the first smart health card to Sukri Dhangda Majhi from Bonda, a PVTG, at Malkangiri, 650 km from the state capital. As per the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), as many as 3.5 crore people from 96 families of the state have been included in the smart health card scheme.

CONTENTIOUS KOTIA The long-standing Kotia dispute raised its ugly head again in 2021 as despite opposition from Odisha government, the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh conducted panchayat polls in Kotia of Koraput district. Andhra CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik met in Bhubaneswar November 9 with an aim to iron out a slew of issues including the Kotia dispute. The meeting decided to form a panel comprising the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and AP that will set up an institutional mechanism to deliberate on the issues.

of the day quote

Ever since the Chandigarh MC results have come out, people in the country are saying that the BJP and the Congress can be defeated. The two parties first bit the dust in Delhi and now in Chandigarh

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

Delhi government supports protest of traders against increase in goods and services tax on textile, and will raise the issue in GST council meeting

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CM

Bullying us into silence by penal action warnings will not work

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Man refuses to remove watch

Bangalore: Security checks at Bangalore's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) were held up briefly after a man refused to remove his expensive Rolex watch and place it on a tray for the mandatory screening process of passengers by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel. A video posted by a witness about the incident that took place on Tuesday media has gone viral. According to sources at the airport, the man, who was boarding a Vistara flight to Delhi, declined to remove Rolex Submariner and maintained that it, is worth Rs 40 lakhs and that it may get stolen during the screening.

FIR against Tej Pratap Yadav

Samastipur (Bihar): An FIR has been registered against Rashtriya Janata Dal MLA Tej Pratap Yadav for allegedly not disclosing details of his property in the affidavit filed during the 2020 Assembly elections in Bihar, police said Thursday. Rosera sub-divisional officer Brajesh Kumar lodged a complaint against Yadav, the elder son of party supremo Lalu Prasad, for suppressing details of his property in Gopalganj, a senior officer said.

Seven injured

Patna: Seven women sustained injuries during a stampede outside the distribution unit of fertilisers in Araria district of Bihar Thursday. The injured were rushed to hospitals of Araria where their condition is stated to be stable. Ram Pukar Singh, the Sub-Divisional Police Officer of Forbisganj range confirmed the incident which took place at 10 a.m.

Man ends life

Shahjahanpur (Uttar Pradesh): A 35-year-old man allegedly ended his life by hanging after he learnt that a fake account had been opened in his name in 2015 in a private bank and that it was being used for committing fraud worth nearly Rs 1 crore. Bank officials were allegedly forcing him to deposit the money to clear dues and he did not get any help from the bank manager.

IVF donor held

New Delhi: The police have rescued a two-year-old child who was kidnapped from the western part of the national capital eight days ago by an IVF donor and her associates, an official said here Thursday. Four people, including a 20-year-old woman, were apprehended for the crime. The accused have been identified as Tanu, Vipin, Md. Salman and a minor.

R naught value is 1.22, cases increasing: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: India's R naught value, which indicates spread of COVID-19, is 1.22, the government said on Thursday, warning that cases are increasing, not shrinking, as it highlighted that Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Karnataka and Gujarat were emerging as states and UTs of concern on the basis of weekly infections and positivity rate.

Addressing a press conference, NITI Aayog Member (Health) Dr V K Paul said there has been an uptick in coronavirus cases since the last few days and some states are showing a trend which is going up. India recorded the highest single day rise of Omicron infections with 180 fresh cases, taking the total tally of such infections in the country to 961, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

Delhi recorded the maximum number of 263 cases followed by Maharashtra at 252, Gujarat 97, Rajasthan 69, Kerala 65 and Telangana 62.

The daily rise in COVID-19 cases



A healthworker collects a swab sample of a traveller to test for COVID-19, at Dadar railway station in Mumbai, Thursday

crossed the 13,000 mark after around 49 days, taking the total tally to 3, 48, 22,040, while the active cases increased to 82,402, according to the data updated at 8 am.

"We believe on the scientific basis R0 is 1.22 as per the available data... So the cases are now increasing, not shrinking. As the scenario emerges, we believe what we are witnessing could be part of the global rise in cases pushed by

the Omicron variant... We are already aware that this variant is highly transmissible and that perhaps explains the speed with which it is rising in the world." As we have explained, the severity issues are answered and we quote WHO statement - severity (is) hopefully mild but cannot be taken for granted. This is work in progress," he said.

He, however, urged people not to panic, saying, "Because as a nation we are prepared. As a nation we have experience and the massive shield of very high coverage of the vaccine. I repeat no need to panic. But there is a need to be prepared, to be responsible and disciplined."

Several state governments have taken appropriate measures, Paul said, adding that all variants enter

MAHA SEES FIRST OMICRON DEATH

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Thursday saw its first death of an Omicron patient, while it continued to report a massive spike in Covid-19 cases for the second consecutive day, leading to prohibitory orders clamped in Mumbai till January 7 and appeals to people to avoid New Year parties. The state notched a staggering 198 new cases of Omicron, taking up the state tally from 252 to 450, with Mumbai accounting for the highest number, at 190, health officials said.

SIX MILITANTS, JAWAN KILLED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 30: Six Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militants, including two Pakistani nationals involved in the December 13 attack on a police bus on the outskirts of the city, were killed in twin encounters in south Kashmir that also left an Army jawan dead, officials said Thursday.

While three militants were killed in an overnight encounter in Anantnag, three others were killed in the gunfight which took place in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday evening, the officials said. Two jawans and a police personnel were injured during the Anantnag operation, they said.

The encounters took place after the forces launched cordon and search operations in Nowgam Shahabad area in Anantnag district, and Mirhama area of Kulgam - both in south Kashmir - after specific inputs about the presence of militants in these areas on Wednesday evening.

"In the last about five days, security forces have carried out multiple operations across the valley resulting in 11 hardcore terrorists being neutralised, killed.

On Wednesday night, in two separate operations, six terrorists, including two Pakistani terrorists, of JeM cadre have been neutralised in Kulgam and Anantnag," General officer Commanding of the Army's 15 Corps, Lt Gen D P Pandey said.

He was addressing a joint press conference along with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, at Qazigund in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. The GoC said during the operation, Sepoy Jasbir Singh lost his life.



Tourists during snowfall at Ghum, the highest railway station in India of the World Heritage Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

126 TIGERS DIED IN 2021: NTCA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: As many as 126 tigers died in India in 2021, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) said Thursday, asserting that it is looking into the cause of the recent death of a big cat in Madhya Pradesh.

A tiger was found dead in Chhindwara of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, taking this year's toll in the state to 44. According to reports, two days ago, a tigress died in the state's Dindori area allegedly due to poisoning.

An official from the NTCA said the number of tiger deaths has increased in 2021, and investigations



PTI FILE PHOTO

are ongoing. The official, who did not wish to be named, said several measures are being taken to protect tigers which include patrolling and arresting people for poaching. He said there can be many causes

GROWING SCARE

The West Bengal government said Thursday it is suspending all direct flights from the UK and those emanating from other high-risk countries from January 3, amid growing scare over the rise in number of Covid cases of the Omicron variant



Nagaland SIT grills Army personnel



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dibrugarh/Kohima, Dec 30: A special investigation team (SIT) of the Nagaland government Thursday interrogated the personnel of Indian Army's 21 Para Special Forces in connection with the killing of 14 civilians in Mon district in firing by security forces.

This is probably the first time that a unit of the Indian Army is being quizzed by a civilian government. According to sources in Assam and Nagaland, the 22-member SIT interrogated the Indian Army personnel at the Rain Forest Research Institute in Jorhat district of Assam.

Sources said that the interrogation by the SIT, which is headed by Nagaland Police Additional DGP (Law and Order) Sandeep M Tamgadge, continued till late evening of Thursday and will resume again on Friday morning.

Repeated attempts to elicit official comments from Nagaland Police and Indian Army on the interrogation did not yield any result.

This is probably the first time that a unit of the Indian Army is being quizzed by an investigation team formed by a civilian government

The RFRRI campus has been put under heavy security cover and entry of media persons was barred.

The Nagaland government had Wednesday expanded the five-member probe team to a 22-member one and divided it into seven small groups.

Officials said the government wants to complete the probe into the violence as soon as possible for quick justice. On December 4, six coal miners returning from work were killed in a botched anti-terrorist operation by the security forces at Oting village, while seven others were gunned down when angry villagers scuffled with them after discovering the bullet-riddled bodies of the labourers on an Army truck.

KALICHARAN CHARGED WITH SEDITION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Raipur/Bhopal, Dec 30: Religious leader Kalicharan Maharaj has been charged with sedition after he was arrested from Madhya Pradesh early Thursday for making derogatory remarks against Mahatma Gandhi at an event - 'Dharma Sansad', in Chhattisgarh capital Raipur.

An FIR against Kalicharan was filed at Tikrapara police station in Raipur by a Congress leader Pramod Dube, who was also present at the 'Dharma Sansad'. "He (Kalicharan) has been booked under section 505 (2) (creating and promoting enmity hatred) and section 294 (obscene act at place) of the IPC. On the basis of investigation, we have also included charges under section 153 A (1), 153 B (1) etc of IPC," the Chhattisgarh police said in a statement.

Chhattisgarh police arrested the religious leader in Madhya Pradesh near Khajuraho early on Thursday. "He (Kalicharan) was staying at a rented accommodation near Bageswar Dham, 25 km from Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh. Raipur police arrested him at 4 a.m. on Thursday," a police officer said.

Kalicharan, who was a guest at the 'Dharma Sansad' organised in Raipur on December 25-26, allegedly abused Mahatma Gandhi, and praised his assassin Nathuram Godse. Kalicharan's arrest by Chhattisgarh police, however, has led to a spar between the governments of two neighbouring states - the BJP-led Madhya Pradesh, and the Congress-led Chhattisgarh government.

PM wanted BJP, NCP to form govt in Maha: Pawar

AFTER THE 2019 MAHARASHTRA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, THE SHIV SENA PARTED WAYS WITH LONG-TERM ALLY BJP OVER THE ISSUE OF SHARING THE CHIEF MINISTERIAL POST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Dec 30: Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar has claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted the BJP and the NCP to come together in Maharashtra to form government in 2019, but he told the PM that "it was not possible".

Reacting to Pawar's comments, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut, whose party shares power with the NCP and Congress in Maharashtra, on Thursday claimed that after the 2019 Assembly polls, the BJP was desperate for power and ready to hold anyone's hand for it.

Raut also said they were aware who was talking to whom and therefore, the BJP did not succeed in



its "attempt" to form government in the state.

After the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly elections, the Shiv Sena parted ways with long-term ally BJP over the issue of sharing the chief ministerial post. The Uddhav Thackeray-led party

then forged an alliance with the NCP and Congress to form the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state.

On Wednesday, during an event organised by Marathi daily 'Loksatta', Pawar was asked if during discussions after the 2019 state polls, he had told Modi and Union minister Amit Shah that the NCP and BJP could come together if the latter replaced Devendra Fadnis as chief minister.

To this, Pawar said it is true he and PM Modi had meetings. "It was his wish that we (NCP and BJP) come together. However, I went to his (PM's) office and told him it was not possible. I told him that we do not want to keep him in the

dark. Our stand is different," said Pawar. Questioned about the PM's reaction to his response, Pawar said Modi asked him to "think over it". Pawar said after the Maharashtra Assembly elections, for almost 90 days, the government was not formed.

With this proposal, PM Modi might have thought that by doing this (aligning with the NCP), a stable government could be formed in the state, he said.

When asked about his views that the BJP, which targeted the NCP over various alleged scams during elections campaigns, had sought help from the same party, Pawar said he would not say that the BJP sought help from the NCP.

He also said that after the Maharashtra Assembly elections, during several meetings between the Congress and NCP, the bitterness between leaders of the two parties had increased.

"Perhaps, the BJP leadership thought that an advantage can be taken of this situation, and that is what they tried to explore," he said. Pawar also recalled his one statement after the 2019 state elections - that if Fadnis was short of some MLAs to form government, the NCP would think about it seriously - "further widened the gap between the Shiv Sena and BJP". After this, the Shiv Sena was sure that BJP leader Fadnis will make a move.

national

of the day quote

The police in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district are violating law by asking Union minister Narayan Rane to visit a police station to record his statement in a case in which his son is named as an accused

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tells people to wear mask, but he himself doesn't wear one. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray wears mask, but Modi is the leader of the nation. I follow the prime minister and therefore, I do not wear a mask, and even people do not wear masks

Over 17 lakh persons in Gujarat were given jobs through employment exchanges in the last five years, making the state number one in the country in providing employment through exchanges

SHORT TAKES

Man killed

New Delhi: Three people stabbed a 24-year-old man to death in the national capital over his illicit relationship with a married sister of one of the accused, an official said here Thursday. The accused have been identified as Zuber, Zafar and Aditya of Seema Puri. Zuber and Aditya have been arrested. DCP (Shahdara) R. Sathiyasundaram said a PCR call was received on Wednesday around 5 p.m. stating that some boys are stabbing a man near B-253, Ration Wali Gali, Old Seema Puri in the city.

Boy injured

Chennai: An 11-year-old boy was grievously injured Thursday after being hit by a stray bullet fired during a Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) training session at Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu. The personnel were training at the CISF shooting range at Pasmalaipatti in Pudukottai. The Tamil Nadu police are investigating the matter and the Deputy Superintendent of Pasmalaipatti police Sivasubramanian, while speaking to mediapersons, stated that the boy was 2 km away from the shooting range at Pasmalaipatti and was at his grandparents home.

Racket busted

Aurangabad: Five persons have been arrested in connection with a counterfeit currency racket in Maharashtra's Aurangabad city, police said Thursday. Based on specific information, the police raided premises in Mukundwadi area on Wednesday night and seized counterfeit currency of various denominations valued at ₹1.2 lakh and seized printing material worth over ₹3 lakh, an official said. The Pundliknagar police first nabbed a man who purchased liquor using a counterfeit note, he said.

4 killed, 2 hurt

Betul: Four people were killed and two others critically injured after their car hit a tree in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district on Thursday, police said. The accident took place before dawn near a sugar mill on Betul-Indore National Highway, about 30 km from the district headquarters, when the victims were returning after attending a wedding party, Chicholi police station's inspector Ajay Soni said. The car driver lost control over the wheels, following which the vehicle hit a roadside tree, he said.

All parties in UP want polls on time: CEC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 30: Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra Thursday said all political parties in Uttar Pradesh want the Assembly elections to be held according to schedule while ensuring Covid protocol.

The CEC also asked the state to step up coronavirus vaccination. The number of polling booths will be increased and the voting time enhanced by an hour, he said, adding polling officials will be vaccinated and those eligible will be given a booster dose.

Chandra said some parties have also expressed concern over hate speeches, paid news and "biased" officials. On a three-day visit to Lucknow to review preparations for the elections slated to be held before mid-March, Chandra held a series of meetings with representatives of political parties as well as state and district-level officials.

The Allahabad High Court had on December 23 suggested the Union government defer the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections due to a possible Omicron-led third Covid wave.

"I have been told that 86 per cent of people in the state have got the first dose and 49 per cent the second shot of Covid vaccine. We have



Coronavirus-related restrictions cannot be imposed everywhere as it may impact the economy as has been the case since the onset of the pandemic

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

WINTER CHILL INTENSIFIES

Intensifying the winter chill, Delhi's minimum temperature Thursday plunged to 3 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department



Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra addresses a press conference at Vojna Bhawan in Lucknow, Thursday

CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER SUSHIL CHANDRA SAID THE NUMBER OF POLLING BOOTHS WILL BE INCREASED AND THE VOTING TIME ENHANCED BY AN HOUR

THE ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT HAD DECEMBER 23 SUGGESTED THE UNION GOVERNMENT DEFER THE UTTAR PRADESH ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS DUE TO A POSSIBLEOMICRON-LED THIRD COVID WAVE

been assured that in 15 to 20 days, all eligible people will get their first dose. We have asked for increasing vaccination," he told reporters on the last day of his visit.

He said because of the pandemic, the number of polling booths in the state will be increased by 11,000 to maintain proper social distancing. "Earlier, a booth was made for 1,500 voters. But keeping in mind the Covid pandemic, the number of voters in each booth has been reduced to 1,250. Because of this, the number of polling booths has increased by 11,000. So, a total of 1,74,351 polling booths will be set up," he said.

Chandra said besides the Naxal-infested areas, polling time will also be increased by an hour across the state. Polling officials will be vac-

inated and those eligible will be given a booster dose, he said.

Thermal scanners and masks will be provided at all polling booths and special care will be on maintaining social distancing and proper sanitisation, he said. Chandra said all officers on poll duty will necessarily have to be fully vaccinated and orders have been issued to give the status of frontline workers to the officers related to the elections.

Every polling booth will function as per the COVID protocol, he said. For the first time, senior citizens above 80 years of age, people with disabilities and those affected by COVID-19 will be provided with the alternative facility of postal voting sitting at home.

If they want to come to the

polling centre to cast their vote, they are welcome or else the commission will reach their doorstep, he said. The list of all such voters will be given to political parties and a videography team will go to their homes.

During this, care will be taken that the secrecy of voting should not be disturbed, he said.

The CEC said some of parties expressed concern over the election rallies being held without following the coronavirus protocol. Apart from this, some parties complained about the "biased" attitude of some in the administration and police, he said.

Representatives of political parties have also expressed concern over hate speeches and paid news, he said, stressing that the Commission is committed to make the voting process smooth, simple and temptation free.

Chandra said there will be at least 800 women-managed polling stations. A mobile application named "CVIGIL" has been launched to prevent any malpractice in voting, he said. If there is any irregularity or unethical work being done in the elections, the related picture or information or both will have to be uploaded and prompt action will be taken on it, Chandra said.

Cong govts delayed projects, says Modi

Modi said the Lakhwar project was thought of in 1974 and took nearly 46 years to see the light of day



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates and lays the foundation stone of various development projects in Haldwani, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haldwani/Dehradun, Dec 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday accused successive Congress governments at the Centre and in Uttarakhand of dragging their feet for decades over development projects, forcing people to migrate from their villages in the state.

Addressing a rally in Haldwani, Modi accused the previous Uttarakhand government of being interested only in "looting" the state and doing nothing for its development. He also inaugurated and laid foundation stones of projects worth over ₹17,500 crore, including the ₹5,747 crore Lakhwar hydropower project.

Modi said the Lakhwar project was thought of in 1974 and took nearly 46 years to see the light of day. "Wasn't it sinful on part of those who were in power before us to delay the project. Would you forget their sin?" he asked a cheering crowd during the rally at the MB Inter College ground in Haldwani.

"Generations of people in Uttarakhand villages were forced to leave their homes in the absence of roads and other facilities and migrate somewhere else," he said. Modi said the Lakhwar project if implemented earlier would have addressed electricity, irrigation and drinking water needs in Uttarakhand hills.

He said there are two approaches to keep the hills deprived of development and the other to work day

and night for their development. The prime minister accused the previous government in Uttarakhand of being interested only in "looting" the state and said it did nothing for its development.

In a veiled attack on Congress leader Harish Rawat, Modi said one of those in power earlier said, "You may even loot the state but save my government. Those who love Uttarakhand cannot even think of something like that."

His reference was to a purported video in which Harish Rawat was allegedly heard negotiating a money deal to buy back the support of rebel MLAs in the state in 2016. Modi said the implementation of the projects whose foundation stone was laid today are his commitments.

"I am working with my heart and soul for the development of Uttarakhand," he said. Modi inaugurated six projects worth ₹3,420 crore and laid the foundation stones of 17 others worth ₹14,127 crore.

The inaugurated projects include three different stretches of the Char Dham all-weather road, which have been widened, Nagina-Kashipur National Highway, Suring Gad hydel project and sewage works under the Namami Gange programme at Nainital.

An AIIMS satellite centre for Kumaon worth ₹500 crore, Moradabad-Kashipur four-lane road, improved road connectivity with Nepal and an Aroma Park in Kashipur are among the key projects whose foundation was laid by the prime minister.

Cops conduct identification parade of donkeys

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Dec 30: In a bizarre case reported from Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan, police have had to conduct an identification parade of donkeys at a police station after 70 donkeys went missing and their owners lodged complaints of theft in the district in Khuiyan town area.

In the meantime, police found 17 donkeys and conducted their identification parade. However, their owners said they were lookalikes of their animals and refused to take them.

Earlier, soon after the complaints were registered, the police allegedly preferred to sit on them. However, a protest staged by the owners and CPI(M) workers at the police station on Tuesday evening forced the police to go in search of the missing donkeys.

SOAKED IN DEVOTION



Pilgrims offer prayers ahead of the upcoming Gangasagar Mela-2022, at Gangasagar island in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal

PTI PHOTO

New year, new polls, but results will be far-reaching for BJP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: As the new year arrives, the BJP finds itself on the cusp of the most consequential cycle of state polls since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections as the results will tell if the road ahead in its bid for a third straight term at the Centre is getting any bumpy or a strong opposition challenge remains elusive.

If 2021 marked the rare occurrence of the Narendra Modi-led government bowing to organised protests, mounted by farmers in north India against three agriculture reform laws, and the BJP's enviable election machinery coming up short against a popular regional satrap in West Bengal, 2022 will reveal if the ripples these developments caused have made impact beyond their immediate implications.

And, political experts believe, Uttar Pradesh assembly polls will hold the key. It was its massive win in the state in 2017 that had made the BJP favourites for the 2019 general elections, and some preceding setbacks in state elections, including in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, did little to dampen the tide the Uttar Pradesh results had generated in its favour.

As the BJP won 312 seats in the 403-member Uttar Pradesh assembly, National Conference leader Omar Abdullah had then tweeted that "at this rate we (opposition) might as well forget 2019 & start plan-

ning/hoping for 2024". His comments were mocked by many but turned out to be prescient.

Uttar Pradesh will go to the polls with Uttarakhand, Manipur, Goa and Punjab, with the Election Commission likely to announce the dates anytime next month. Its sweeping victory in India's largest state in two back to back Lok Sabha polls has been central to the BJP winning a majority of seats nationwide.

Always battle-ready, top BJP leaders have already begun touring the poll-bound states with Modi himself addressing quite a few public meetings in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, launching development projects and targeting the opposition. He has also addressed one public meeting in Goa.

Home Minister Amit Shah, acknowledged for his keen grasp of Uttar Pradesh's political dynamics woven around religion, caste identity, regional peculiarities and local heavyweights besides governance issues, has been frequenting the state, as the party believes that another emphatic win there will do more than anything else to set the tone for the next Lok Sabha polls.

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, too, has mounted an aggressive challenge and sought to counteract the BJP's Hindutva pitch under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath by joining hands with regional caste leaders and questioning the state government's development claims. A win for the BJP, especially by a handsome margin, will also be a further boost to its ideological project, but any setback will have far-reaching impact.

In Uttarakhand, the BJP is going to the polls with a third chief minister, Pushkar Singh Dhami, at the helm in last five years. While it would have been considered an obvious disadvantage to the ruling party, infighting within the opposition Congress combined with the ruling party's strong organisation and 'Modi factor' have made the battle keen.

No. MM-329

FOREST DEPARTMENT ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, JHARSUGUDA FOREST DIVISION
 Email: dfo.jharsuguda@gov.in, Ph.: 06645-295040

TENDER CALL NOTICE

Tender Call Notice No. 331 Dated: 24.12.2021
 Sub.: Tender Call Notice for Construction of following works at Kollighugar, Belpahar Forest Range of Jharsuguda Forest Division for the year 2021-22.

1. GI Chain Link Fencing 1800m with 06 Nos. Chain Link Gazebos.
2. a. Picnic Pindis - 20 Nos.
 b. Pathways
 c. Public Toilet - 01 No.
 d. Viewing Deck - 02 Nos.
 e. Renovation of Existing Cycle Stand
 f. Retaining Wall
3. a. Plumbing works with 10 Nos. drinking fountains including fixtures and fittings.
 b. Electric works
4. a. Small Temple Bridge - 01 No.
 b. Pre Fab Souvenir Shop - 06 Nos.

Sealed tenders are invited from eligible contractors ("A", "B", "C" & "D" Class Contractor) with valid licence for execution of construction works under the establishment of Jharsuguda Forest Division during the year 2021-22 so as to reach in the O/o, the Divisional Forest Officer, Jharsuguda Forest Division on or before 01.01.2022 upto 05.00 P.M. through Registered/Speed Post/Courier Service/By Hand.

The application form of tender containing Technical Bid & Financial Bid information and terms and conditions for construction of civil works at Jharsuguda Forest Division can be downloaded from www.dfojharsuguda.org/www.jharsuguda.nic.in and also can be obtained from the Head Clerk, Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Jharsuguda Forest Division, Jharsuguda from 24.12.2021 to 01.01.2022 during office hours on production of Tender Paper Cost. Tender Paper Cost as mentioned in Tender Documents in shape of Non-refundable Demand Draft from any State Bank of India drawn in favour of "Divisional Forest Officer, Jharsuguda Forest Division" in the sealed bid document should be submitted.

The Technical Bids will be opened on 03rd January 2022 at 11.00 A.M. & Financial Bid will be opened on 04th January 2022 at 11.00 A.M. in presence of the bidder or his authorized representatives in the office of the undersigned. Final selection of the bidder shall be done on L1 basis. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer
 Jharsuguda Forest Division
 OIPR-08054/11/0001/2122

COLLECTORATE, RAYAGADA
 (Emergency Section)
QUOTATION/TENDER CALL NOTICE
 No. F-282: Sealed quotation/tenders are invited from the interested reputed Travel Agencies/Tour Operators or Private Individuals for providing of vehicle on hire charges on or before 10.01.2022 by 11.00 A.M. For specification details please visit our official website: www.rayagada.nic.in.
 Sd./- Collector, Rayagada
 OIPR-24169/11/0036/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SONEPUR (R&B) DIVISION, SONEPUR
E-Procurement Notice
 No. B-924
 BID IDENTIFICATION No: SE/R&B/SNPR/ 27 / 2021-22
 E-mail - ewpsdnpnr@gmail.com Phone -06654-221081
 No.5440 Dt. 27.12.2021

1. The Superintending Engineer, Sonepur (R&B) Division, Sonepur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Single Cover System in Online Mode for construction of Road & Building works detailed in the DTCN from the eligible Class of Contractors.
2. No. of work : 02 (Two)
3. Tender Cost : Rs. 6,000/- for Serial No.1 & 2
4. Class of Contractor : "C" & "B" Class Contractor for Serial No.1
 "D" & "C" Class Contractor for Serial No.2
5. Date and time available in Website & receipt of Bids : From 10.00 A.M. of 30.12.2021 to 5.00 P.M. of 05.01.2022.
6. Date of Opening of Tender : 06.01.2022 at 11.30 A.M.
7. The Bidders have to participate in Online bidding only, further details can be seen from the Web Site.
8. Any Corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer,
 Sonepur (R&B) Division, Sonepur
 OIPR-34081/11/0020/2122

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KASHINAGAR, GAJAPATI
 Ph & Fax No. 06815-284215, e-Mail: kasinagarn.hud@nic.in
 Notice No. 2617/NAC Date: 28.12.2021

e-Procurement Notice
BID REFERENCE No.: KNGR/NAC/04/2021-22
 No. C-1723: Bid documents consists of specification, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the Govt. website i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

1. Nature of work: Civil, 2. No. of works: 03 Nos., 3. Bid Value: Rs.63,67,661/- to Rs.93,38,130/-, 4. Period of Completion: As per DTCN, 5. Date and time of availability of the documents in portal: 30.12.2021 from 10.00 A.M. to 14.01.2022 upto 6.00 P.M., 6. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal: 20.01.2022 upto 6.00 P.M., 7. Time & Period documents required to be submitted: As per DTCN, 8. Technical Bid shall be opened on: 20.01.2022 at 01.00 P.M., 9. Name & address of the Officer Inviting Tender: Executive Officer, Kashinagar NAC, Gajapati.

Sd./- Executive Officer, N.A.C., Kashinagar
 OIPR-13116/11/0004/2122

international

of the day quote

My life work has been destroyed. My values had been trampled on. And I have been made a scapegoat



ASHRAF GHANI | AFGHANISTAN'S FORMER PRESIDENT

Covid-19 is not a temporary infectious disease, so securing beds, medical systems and containment systems should be sustainable



MOON JAE-IN | SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

The combat mission of the international coalition has ended and all the combat equipment withdrew outside Iraq



MUSTAFA AL-KADHIMI | IRAQI PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Oz states allow NY celebrations

Sydney: Australia's three most populated states, currently battling the country's largest Covid-19 outbreaks, have allowed New Year celebrations with slightly modified versions of their traditional fireworks displays. On Thursday, the most populous state of New South Wales (NSW) reported 12,226 new cases, 746 hospitalized patients and one related death, reports Xinhua news agency.

Australia jolted by Indonesian quake

Canberra: Parts of northern Australia was jolted by a 7.4-magnitude earthquake that hit off the coast of Indonesia Thursday, with no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The tremor was felt at about 3.55 a.m. in Darwin, capital of Northern Territory, Xinhua news agency quoted the local media reports as saying. There was no tsunami threat, said the Australian Bureau of Meteorology on Twitter.

4 killed in Pak clash

Islamabad: Four people were killed and three others injured in a clash in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local reports said Thursday. The incident took place late Wednesday night in Landi Kotal area, where members of a group opened fire at a car, whose passengers fired back in retaliation, reports Xinhua news agency. People from both sides were killed and injured in the attack.

Masks to be mandatory

Paris: Residents and tourists in Paris will be required to wear face masks outdoors starting Friday as France sees a surge of Covid-19 infections fueled by the omicron variant. The Paris police prefecture said the mask rule will apply to people ages 12 and over, although individuals will be exempt while riding bicycles or motorcycles, traveling in vehicles and doing exercise. Those who do not comply face fines of 135 euros (\$153).

NK discusses 2022 Budget

Seoul: North Korea has discussed the country's budget for the new year at the third-day session of an ongoing meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, state media reported Thursday. North Korea opened the 4th Plenary Meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's 8th Central Committee on Monday amid expectations Pyongyang could unveil its new policy directions on the economy and foreign affairs for the new year, reports Yonhap News Agency.

WHO warns of 'tsunami of cases' from Omicron, Delta



AGENCIES

Geneva, Dec 30: The World Health Organization (WHO) has cautioned that the more transmissible Omicron together with the currently circulating Delta variants might lead to "a tsunami of cases," putting immense pressure on national health systems. Recapping WHO's response since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a press briefing that he's "highly concerned that Omicron being more transmissible, circulating at the same time as Delta -- is leading to a tsunami of cases."

"This is and will continue to put immense pressure on exhausted health workers and health systems on the brink of collapse and again disrupting lives and livelihoods," he added, citing the pressure as not only new Covid-19 patients requiring hospitalisation but also a large number of health workers getting sick themselves. Tedros reiterated his concern over a recent narrative that Omicron has been causing milder or less severe diseases, Xinhua news agency reported. "But we are undermining the other side at the same time -- it could be dangerous... we shouldn't

Covid hospitalisation surge among US kids

Within weeks, the Omicron variant has fueled thousands of new Covid-19 hospitalisations among US children, raising new concerns about how the many unvaccinated Americans under the age of 18 will fare in the new surge. The seven-day-average number of daily hospitalisations for children between December 21 and December 27 is up more than 58 per cent nationwide in the past week to 334, compared to around 19 per cent for all age groups, data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show.

undermine the bad news just focusing on the good news," he said. "We don't want people to be complacent, saying this is not severe, this is mild. And we have to be very careful in that narrative," he added. According to Mike Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, though Omicron looks like being more transmissible, having a shorter incubation period, and causing a mild disease, it's based on the largely young population that the variant has been infecting.

Top US lawmakers take a dig at Musk

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 30: Top US lawmakers, including Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, have criticised Elon Musk, the world's wealthiest man and Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk for bragging about paying \$11 billion in taxes.

In a tweet Wednesday, Texas Senator Ted Cruz said, "Got it. You don't like @elonmusk Who else do you want to loot?" The Republican Senator's tweet was in response to a post on Twitter by Jayapal, a Democrat, taking a dig at Musk for showing off his tax bill. "Elon Musk made \$36 BILLION in one day, but wants to brag about paying an \$11 billion tax bill," she said in a tweet. "Oh yeah, he also added more than \$270 BILLION in wealth just since the pandemic started," she said. The CEO of Tesla Motors and Space-X, Musk had December 20 tweeted: "For those wondering, I will pay over \$11 billion in taxes this year."

The tax bill is considered as one of the highest in US history. Earlier, Democratic Party Senator Elizabeth Warren, referring to Musk, had tweeted, "Let's change the rigged tax code so The Person of the Year will actually pay taxes and stop freeloading off everyone else."

Pak buys 25 Chinese J-10C fighter jets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 30: Pakistan has acquired a full squadron of 25 multirole J-10C fighter jets from its all weather ally China in response to India's purchase of Rafale aircraft, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has said.

Speaking to the media in his home city of Rawalpindi on Wednesday, Rashid said that a full squadron of 25 all-weather aircraft comprising J-10C will attend the Pakistan Day ceremony on March 23 next year. Apparently, China has come to the rescue of its closest ally by providing J-10C, one of its highly reliable fighter jets.

The minister, who often characterises himself a 'graduate of Urdu-medium institutions'



electronic warfare aircraft, while Pakistan participated with the JF-17 and Mirage III fighter jets.

HK editors charged with sedition

AGENCIES

Hong Kong, Dec 30: Two former editors from a Hong Kong online pro-democracy news outlet were charged with sedition and denied bail Thursday, a day after one of the last openly critical voices in the city said it would cease operations following a police raid on its office and seven arrests.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam defended the raid on Stand News amid a wider crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous city, telling reporters that "inciting other people... Could not be condoned under the guise of news reporting".

According to a charge sheet, national security police filed one count each of conspiracy to publish a seditious publication against Chung Pui-ken and Patrick Lam, former editors at Stand News. Police also said they would prosecute the company for sedition.

The cases were brought to West Kowloon court Thursday, police said in a statement. Lam was not present in court because he was in the hospital. Both were denied bail.

The others have been detained for further questioning. They include four former Stand News

Our performance again indicates that the world needs India to be at the horseshoe table permanently
T S TIRUMURTI | INDIA'S ENVOY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

TEHRAN LAUNCHES ROCKET INTO SPACE

Iran Thursday announced it launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three devices into space, though it's unclear whether any of the objects entered orbit around the Earth



Disputed Chinese fertiliser firm threatens tough action against SL

AGENCIES

Colombo, Dec 30: A Chinese firm is pushing for economic sanctions to be imposed on Sri Lanka, including restrictions on sea imports for rejecting their consignment of organic fertiliser stocks, a move that comes when the island nation is in the midst of a severe economic crisis, a media report said Thursday.



In September, the Sri Lankan government had rejected a 20,000-tonne consignment of organic fertiliser stocks from Shandong-based Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co. Ltd over "what Chinese sources call shady claims of quality issues." Nevertheless, the Sri Lankan government decided to pay \$6.7 million to the Chinese firm. But the firm said the episode had 'damaged their reputation', The Daily Mirror newspaper reported, ahead of the planned visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Colombo from January 8 to 9.

Discussion on this issue is expected during the visit of Wang here, the report said.

Interestingly, Wang's visit will mark the 65th anniversary of China-Sri Lanka diplomatic relations and the 70th anniversary of the Rubber-Rice Pact between Colombo and Beijing.

Top officials at Seawin Biotech have approached the Shandong Provincial government to put pressure on the Chinese government to impose sanctions on Sri Lanka, the report said.

The Chinese firm is also planning to escalate this issue on an international level, the report said. Earlier this month, Seawin Biotech had also launched an international arbitration against Sri Lanka on this issue in Singapore.



board members, including Ho and former lawmaker Margaret Ng. Ho was released from police custody Thursday afternoon.

Chan Pui-man, a former editor at the pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper and Chung's wife, was also arrested. Apply Daily was forced to cease operations earlier this year after its publisher, Jimmy Lai, and top editors were arrested and its assets frozen.

The seven were arrested Wednesday under a crime ordinance that dates from Hong Kong's days as a British colony before 1997, when it was returned to China with a promise from Beijing that it would keep Western-style freedoms for 50 years. If convicted, they could face up to two years in

prison and a fine of up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$640).

'JOURNALISM IS NOT SEDITION': US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the raid and wider crackdown on press freedom by China and "local authorities undermine Hong Kong's credibility and viability".

"Journalism is not sedition," Blinken said. "A confident government that is unafraid of the truth embraces a free press." The city has been transformed after the powerful security law was imposed a year ago, empowering authorities to arrest pro-democracy activists and bar anyone considered disloyal from running for public office.

ON THE BOIL



A man chants slogans during a protest to denounce the October military coup, in Khartoum, Sudan

PTI PHOTO

China renames 15 places of Arunachal Pradesh in its map

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Beijing/New Delhi, Dec 30: Two days ahead of China implementing new border law, the Chinese government renames 15 places of Arunachal Pradesh in its map.

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs issued a statement stating that they have 'standardised' names for 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh, to be used on Chinese maps.

This is the second time China has renamed the names of the places of Arunachal Pradesh. Way back in 2017, China had changed names of six places.

Renaming of names comes just two days ahead of implementing new border law. On October 23, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislative body, passed a new law citing "protection and exploitation of the country's land border areas". The committee had stated that the new law will come into effect from January 1. The law is not meant specifically for the border with India. China shares its 22,457 km



land boundary with 14 countries including India, the third longest after the borders with Mongolia and Russia. The new border law has 62 articles and seven chapters. As per the law, People's Republic of China shall set up boundary markers on all its land borders to clearly mark the border.

The type of marker is to be decided in agreement with the relevant neighbouring state. The law further stated that People's

Liberation Army (PLA) and Chinese People's Armed Police Force will maintain security along the border. This responsibility includes cooperating with local authorities in combating illegal border crossings.

The law prohibits any party from indulging in any activity in the border area which would "endanger national security or affect China's friendly relations with neighbouring countries".

The hunger story of every household in Afghanistan

AGENCIES

Bamiyan (Afghanistan), Dec 30: Chilling winters bring new challenges for Afghans, and life continues to go from bad to worse for many families who are unsure about their next meal.

Kubra, an Afghan widow, resides in Bamiyan. All her firewood was stolen when they had fled their home amid the chaos after the Taliban moved towards Kabul in August this year, while the flour she bought months back is going to end in a couple of days. Kubra says she is not sure how she will get



fuel to heat her room in the chilling winter season and from where would she get the next meal for herself and her grandchildren. "We got two sacks of flour last

spring, which we're still using. After that, we have to have faith that God will help us," said 57-year-old Kubra. Kubra says she is well aware that no one will offer her or her family a single piece of bread in the coming days, as scarcity of food and water has left every other household at the mercy of God.

Kubra's dire condition is the same as every other house in Bamiyan and the rest of the country, as severe drought with dried out money inflow has made each day a matter of survival for the locals.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan resulted in seizure of

Poverty forces kids out of school

Kabul: Driven by extreme poverty amid the economic collapse of Afghanistan, the number of children employed in hazardous jobs instead of going to schools has increased, a media report said. Afghanistan is considered the worst place to be a child, as 4 million children are out of school and 2 million are working as child labourers, according to estimates by international organisations. Speaking with TOLO News, some of these children, who stopped their education to help their parents financially, said that they were severely disappointed about their bleak futures. The hunger story of every household in Afghan

all foreign aids, which constituted over 80 per cent of the country's economy. With the US and the global community uncertain about trust-

ing the new Taliban regime, coupled with sanctions imposed by the US on various top leaders of the Taliban, foreign aid remains barred

for the country, inflicting major crisis of water and food.

As per estimates by the United Nations (UN), about 23 million Afghans are facing extreme levels of hunger, with nearly 9 million at risk of starvation as winter takes hold. Kubra's family, like many others in the region, banks on working in farms during spring, earning potatoes as payout for their hard work. "My son used to collect pieces of scrap metal, but right now he has no work," she says, sitting at her one-room house, which is not enough to accommodate the whole family.

business



The government's food subsidy is expected to be a little less than ₹4 lakh crore in the financial year 2021-22 as against ₹5.29 lakh crore in the previous fiscal

SUDHANSHU PANDEY | FOOD SECRETARY

VOLVO TO HIKE PRICES FROM JAN

Swedish luxury carmaker Volvo Thursday said it will increase prices of select models in India ranging between ₹1 lakh and ₹3 lakh from January 1 to offset rising input costs. Companies like Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Citroen and Tata Motors have already announced plans for price hikes from January



of the day quote

Next calendar year is going to be better than the current year. Next year, we are hoping that many of the projects which are being bid out, awarded this year and which have come to a certain stage, will be completed

GIRIDHAR ARAMANE | UNION ROAD TRANSPORT SECRETARY

As you are aware, while transacting in US dollars or UK Pounds or Japanese Yen between any two countries, the payment is routed through the corresponding banking system and a transaction fee is paid

KK KAPILA | CHAIRMAN, CEAI

2021 was characterised by an acute shortage of bestseller stocks due to various macro factors. Despite this, the growth witnessed after the lifting of lockdown has been exceptionally strong

AVIJIT MITRA | MD AND CEO, CROMA

States oppose GST hike on textiles

Industry too has opposed the rise in tax from 5 per cent, citing higher compliance cost especially for the unorganised sector and MSMEs besides making poor man's clothing expensive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: Ahead of the GST Council meeting, several states Thursday flagged higher tax rate on textile products from January 1 and demanded that the rate hike be put on hold.

In the pre-budget meeting chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, states like Gujarat, West Bengal, Delhi, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu said that they are not in favour of a hike in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate on textiles to 12 per cent, from 5 per cent currently, with effect from January 1, 2022.

The 46th meeting of the GST Council, chaired by Sitharaman and comprising state FMs, is scheduled December 31, with a single agenda to consider Gujarat's demand of putting the rate hike "decision on hold", as also representations received from trade in this regard. Tamil Nadu Finance Minister P Thiaga Rajan said, "It is one point agenda (for tomorrow's Council meet). It is an agenda that many states have raised. In the agenda item it says that it was raised by Gujarat but I know that many states raised it. It should be stalled (move to raise GST rate on textile)." Rajasthan Education Minister



THE GST COUNCIL IN ITS PREVIOUS MEETING SEPT 17 HAD DECIDED TO CORRECT THE INVERTED DUTY STRUCTURE IN FOOTWEAR AND TEXTILE SECTORS

WITH EFFECT FROM JANUARY 1, 2022, ALL FOOTWEAR, IRRESPECTIVE OF PRICES, WILL ATTRACT GST AT 12%, AND ALL TEXTILE PRODUCTS, EXCEPT COTTON, INCLUDING READYMADE GARMENTS WILL HAVE 12% GST

If a common man buy clothes of ₹1,000, he has to pay GST of ₹120. "Delhi is not in favour of this"

MANISH SISODIA | DEPUTY CM, DELHI

Subhash Garg said the Friday's GST Council meeting is likely to be on rate hike on footwear and textiles and Rajasthan does believe that rate hike on textiles should be rolled back especially when countries like Bangladesh are giving us stiff competition in such sector.

West Bengal's former finance minister and current advisor to

state Chief Minister Amit Mitra had earlier urged the Centre to roll back a proposed hike in textile from 5 per cent to 12 per cent saying this would lead to closure of around 1 lakh textile units and 15 lakh job losses.

Telangana Industries Minister KT Rama Rao too had made a case for withdrawal of its proposed plan to increase GST rates.

ROBUST REVENUE MOP-UP

Fiscal deficit to come down to 6.6%: Report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 30: Despite an additional expenditure of ₹3.73 lakh crore announced earlier this month, the government is set to undershoot the fiscal deficit target by 20 bps at 6.6 per cent on the back of overall robust revenue collections and under-spending by many ministries, according to a report by ICRA.

"Rising revenue will take care of the additional expenditure planned," it added.

The India Ratings report came a day after the Reserve Bank in its second financial stability report for the current fiscal said the government would miss the 6.8 per cent budgeted fiscal deficit target for the current year and most analysts also feel the same. The RBI did not offer a number as to by how much the target will be missed.

In the report Thursday, the rating agency said higher tax and non-tax revenue collections this fiscal are expected to more than offset the likely shortfall in investment revenue, leading to the fiscal deficit printing at 6.6 per cent of GDP, which is 20 bps lower than budgeted.

The government finances show that tax collections so far have hugely benefited both from growth and inflation. While GDP growth is benefiting from the low base effect, higher inflation (GDP deflator) has led to the economy logging in higher nominal growth, which

GDP deflator growth in Q1 FY22 was the highest at 9.7% and in Q2 the same was second highest at 8.4%

As a result nominal GDP growth printed at 31.7% in Q1 and 17.5% in Q2

in turn is helping higher tax mop-up.

The agency estimated gross tax revenue collection to be at ₹5.9 lakh crore this fiscal -higher than the budgeted figure. Of the total tax mop, the share of corporation tax will be 28.4 per cent, income tax 16.3 per cent, GST 14.7 per cent, customs duty 14.2 per cent, excise duty at 2.4 per cent and others will be 3.9 per cent. Accordingly, the share of direct tax in the expected additional gross tax collection will be 44.7 per cent and indirect tax will be 55.3 per cent. On the whole, the share of direct taxes in gross tax revenue is expected to rise to 48.9 per cent in FY22 from 45.8 per cent in FY21, as per the report.

The agency also expects even non-tax revenue mop-up to be higher than the budgeted in FY22 as well. Non-tax revenue is forecast to reach ₹3.1 lakh crore this fiscal as against budgeted ₹2.4 lakh crore in FY21.

Non-tax revenue collections already crossed ₹2.1 lakh crore till October, clipping at a whopping 78 per cent year-on-year. This is already 85.1 per cent of the budgeted amount.

SHORT TAKES

SBI, Paytm tie up for tokenisation

New Delhi: SBI Cards and Payment Services has tied up with Paytm for card tokenisation to protect data of the cardholders. SBI Card has collaborated with Paytm to enable cardholders to tokenise their cards on devices and make payments through Paytm. SBI Card said in a regulatory filing Thursday. Tokenisation refers to masking the original card number by replacing it with a set of unique characters, termed as token, which secures the customer's card details when a transaction is under process.

RBL Bank appoints Ahuja as MD, CEO

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank has approved the appointment of Rajeev Ahuja as the interim MD and CEO of RBL Bank for three months or till there is a regular appointment. In a sudden turn of events, the board of the bank had on last Saturday sent the then MD and CEO Vishwavir Ahuja on leave and elevated Rajeev as the interim MD and CEO to take care of the day-to-day operations of the bank, subject to regulatory and other approvals.

ITC collaborates with Invest India

New Delhi: Diversified entity ITC Ltd Thursday said it has collaborated with Invest India, a non-profit venture by the central government for national investment promotion and facilitation, to crowdsource innovative ideas for single-use plastic substitution and automate waste segregation. "Under the collaboration, ITC Paperboards and Specialty Papers Division has launched the ITC Sustainability Innovation Challenge, which would support innovative startup ideas on sustainable packaging and smart waste management solutions," the company said in a statement.

ATGL launches Greenmosphere

New Delhi: Adani Total Gas Ltd (ATGL), the city gas joint venture of Adani Group and Total Energies of France, Thursday said it has launched a new green initiative that targets afforestation, outreach to millennials, and energy audits. "Titled Greenmosphere, the initiative will drive mass tree plantation programmes, spread awareness about climate change among the young, and encourage sustainable energy practices through energy audits," said a company statement.

Deadline to submit annual GST returns extended till Feb 28

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: The government has extended by two months till February 28 the deadline for businesses to file GST annual returns for 2020-21 fiscal ended March 2021.

"The due date for furnishing annual return in FORM GSTR-9 & self-certified reconciliation statement in FORM GSTR-9C for the financial year 2020-21 has been extended from 31.12.2021 to 28.02.2022," the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) said in a late-night tweet Wednesday.

GSTR 9 is an annual return to be filed yearly by taxpayers registered under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). It consists of details regarding the outward and inward supplies made or received under different tax heads.



GSTR-9C is a statement of reconciliation between GSTR-9 and the audited annual financial statement. Furnishing of the annual return is mandatory only for taxpayers with aggregate annual turnover above ₹2 crore while a reconciliation statement is to be furnished only by the registered persons having aggregate turnover above ₹5 crore.

OMICRON UNCERTAINTY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the last date for periodic Know Your Customer (KYC) update till March 31, amid Omicron uncertainties and has advised banks and other regulated entities not to take restrictive action against customers till the fiscal end.

Earlier in May, the RBI had ex-

tended the last date for update of KYC by regulated entities till December-end because of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

"In view of the prevalent uncertainty due to new variant of Covid-19, the relaxation provided in the ... circular (relating to Periodic Update of KYC - Restrictions on Account Operations for Non-compliance issued in May)



ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

Samsung India rejigs roles and operations

New Delhi: In a bid to further expand its footprint in India, Samsung Wednesday announced key organisational changes in the country to generate more synergies among its various businesses. The South Korean major appointed CH Choi as the new division leader for the Consumer Electronics business, while Jinsok Lee will be the division leader for the Network business. Lee will be based in Mumbai and Jongbum Park will continue to be the division leader for the Mobile business. Mohandeep Singh will be the new Head of Sales, Marketing and Operations for the consumer electronics business, while Raju Pullan will be the new Head, Sales and Retail for the Mobile business. Aditya Babbar will lead Product Marketing for the Mobile business.



Toyota announces changes in structure



New Delhi: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) Wednesday announced organisational changes with effect from January 1, 2022. "Key resources have been aligned and assigned responsibilities in a way, so as to drive synergy and efficiency throughout the organisation," the automaker said in a statement. As part of the senior level restructuring, the company has appointed Raju B Ketkale as Executive Vice President, Manufacturing and Yoshinori Noritake as Executive Vice President & Chief Technical Officer. Tadashi Asazuma has been appointed as the Executive Vice President, Sales & Customer Services, Swapnesh R Maru as Executive Vice President.

M&E revives to pre-pandemic level

India's M&E industry has significant headroom for growth basis global benchmarks and has been among the highest growth markets along with China globally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: The Indian Media & Entertainment industry has revived to pre-Covid levels and is expected to grow to \$55-70 billion by 2030 with a CAGR of 10-12 per cent, driven mainly by strong growth in OTT, gaming, animation and VFX, said a report titled "Blockbuster Script for the New Decade: Way Forward for Indian Media and Entertainment Industry".

The industry continues to showcase multimodal growth with digital video leading the consumption boom, which is outstripping all other segments, said a joint report from the CII and Boston



Consulting Group (BCG).

"TV ad volumes have bounced back to pre-Covid levels and are expected to continue growing in the future, driven by an increase in advertising on regional channels & growth in new advertisers," it said.

TV penetration in India has remained flat and ARPU's have also been steady, with both trends expected to continue in the medium term. "Subscriptions will be driven by the strong performance of regional channels and cost advantage vis-à-vis OTT," the report said

adding "cord cutting is nascent and is expected to be limited in the medium term."

Over the Indian OTT (Over The Top) segment, the report said it is currently in "scaling stage with strong subscription growth and increased investments" in premium & original content.

According to the report, there is a "remarkable surge" in the SVID (Subscription video on demand) over last few years and is expected to overtake AVOD (advertising-based video on demand) in the coming years.

Gold to add glitter in 2022; likely to cross ₹55K/10gm

GOLD PRICES ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO RISE IN THE MEDIUM-TERM AMID INFLATION WORRIES AND UNCERTAINTY OVER THE OMICRON VARIANT OF CORONAVIRUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 30: Gold, which lost its sheen to some extent in the second half of 2021, is likely to regain the glitter in the New Year and cross the ₹55,000-per-10-grams level amid pandemic woes, inflation worries and stronger US dollar.

After a stellar run up in 2020 when the yellow metal touched a record high of ₹56,200 on the MCX in August, the prices are near ₹48,000 per 10 grams now. This is roughly 14 per cent lower from the all-time highs and 4 per cent lesser compared to January 2021 levels.

All said, the current level is still 3 per cent higher than overall international prices, largely thanks



to a weakening rupee.

CommTrendz Co-Founder and CEO Gnanasekar Thiagarajan said "the reason behind the underper-

formance this year was the rush of liquidity in the equity markets."

According to him, tightening of rates would make the US dollar

The introduction of the regulatory framework for the International Bullion Exchange and a framework for domestic trading underpinned by creation of a new security Electronic Gold Receipt' mark would be potentially transformative in the next few years

SOMASUNDARAM PR | REGIONAL CEO, WORLD GOLD COUNCIL

more appealing relative to currencies bound for relatively looser monetary policies such as the euro and yen. Spot gold was at over \$1,791 an ounce level in the inter-

national market while in India, MCX gold futures was at ₹47,740 per 10 grams December 29. Falling stock markets and gold's inflation hedge status should keep it well supported on the downside. Meanwhile, if any geo-political tensions were to erupt, that could again boost sentiment.

"We expect prices to move in the range of \$1,700-1,900 an ounce in the first half of 2022 and cross \$2,000 in the second half. In the domestic markets we can expect prices to be in a range of ₹45,000-50,000 and cross ₹55,000 in the second half of 2022 for MCX," Thiagarajan said.

HDFC securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said the US inflation and development

on real bond yields may still cause some triggers to the gold rally.

The short-term resistance of gold lies at \$1,833 and \$1,870 with support at \$1,670 per ounce, he said, adding that for the long-term trend, \$1,970 is expected to be the key resistance for 2022, with support at \$1,580 per ounce.

On the other hand, the introduction of mandatory hallmarking in 256 districts and a see-saw in Hallmarking Unique ID threatened to create trade disruptions. However, deft handling by policy makers ensured its successful implementation, he pointed.

As on date, 1.27 lakh jewellers have taken registration from BIS for selling hallmarked jewellery.

INDIA BOWLING ATTACK SUBDUES SOUTH AFRICA TO TAKE 1-0 LEAD IN THE TEST SERIES AND BECOME THE FIRST ASIAN SIDE TO WIN AT SUPERSPORT PARK IN THE TRADITIONAL FORMAT OF THE GAME

CENTURION CITADEL BREACHED



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 30: India's once-in-a-generation pace unit destroyed a listless South Africa with its relentless attack to fashion an emphatic 113-run win in the first Test here Thursday, setting the team on the path towards an elusive series-victory in the Rainbow nation.

The 2021 started with India breaching the Fortress Gabba Down Under, then conquering London (wins at the Lord's and the Oval) and it couldn't have been a better end as they have now brought down Proteas' citadel for the longest time.

The target of 305 on a track with a lot of uneven bounce was always out of question for a South African unit that is low on quality and the script unfolded as per the narrative set.

The home team folded for 191 in 68 overs to give India a 1-0 lead in three-match series. Such was the command of Indian pacers that they even took rain out of equation despite one full day being lost.

It was pity to see South Africa, that boasted of some great names of the yore, couldn't even post 200 runs in the both the innings with skipper Dean Elgar's 77 off 156 balls not exactly being a saving grace.

Quinton de Kock will be missing from the line-up from the next Test as he will be on paternity leave and it will certainly make it easier for India to claim their first series win in South Africa since they first toured here in 1992.

For India, the four pacers took

INDIA'S TEST EXPLOITS IN 2021

They began the year with a fighting draw at Sydney before breaching Gabba fortress and second successive series win in Australia. They conquered London, winning at the Lord's and the Oval, taking 2-1 lead in the 5-Test series in England before the final Test was postponed to 2022 due to Covid outbreak. And it couldn't have been better end when they became the first Asian country to win in Centurion.

18 wickets between them and Ravichandran Ashwin (2/18) wrapped up the South African tail just after the lunch session to complete formality.

The three men who won the match for India were, vice-captain KL Rahul (123 & 23) for that first innings hundred that gave the team platform, supremely talented Mohammed Shami (5/44 & 3/63) who had a match-haul of eight wickets and peerless Jasprit Bumrah (2/16 & 3/50).

Bumrah is perhaps Indian cricket's biggest gift, a freaky fast bowler; who can provide moments of magic as he did on fourth evening to close the match for India.

Mohammed Siraj (1/45 & 2/47) and Shardul Thakur were the perfect supporting cast in one of the better and comfortable overseas wins for Virat Kohli's men.

"They bullied South Africa in their backyard and it's not often seen," said former South Africa pacer and broadcaster Morne Morkel.

Bumrah set the tone for the final morning by removing the dogged Proteas skipper Elgar while Siraj and Shami also got into the act knowing that there is forecast for some rain

in the late afternoon session.

Having gauged the variable bounce of the track, skipper Elgar knew that survival isn't an option and he needed to counter attack right at the onset.

With the stodgy Bavuma for company, 36 runs were added in the first 45 minutes but the best part was that there was no let up in the intensity of the Indian attack as skipper Kohli and wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant were constantly heard cheering the bowlers on.

Shami dropped Elgar off his own bowling but it was Bumrah, who kept on asking probing questions to the Proteas skipper. One such delivery was angled into the left-hander as he shuffled way too much and

leg before was one of the easiest of decisions that umpire Adrian Holdstock had to make in this match. Hoping against hope, Elgar appealed for DRS but he already knew that he was gone for good.

De Kock (21) came in and hit couple of delicious shots off Bumrah, trying to knock off as many runs possible off the target. The hardworking Siraj bowled one with the scrambled seam and just like first innings, tried to cut with very little room for execution with the ball coming into him.

Wiaan Mulder (1) got a delivery from Shami that was way above his skill-set. The ball pitched on length while landing on seam. Mulder shaped for one that would come back but it straightened enough to kiss the outside edge off his bat into Pant's gloves.

Brief scores: India 327 & 174 beat South Africa 197 & 191 (Dean Elgar 77, Temba Bavuma 35 n o, Quinton de Kock 21, Jasprit Bumrah 3/50, Mohammed Shami 3/63, R Ashwin 2/18, Mohammed Siraj 2/47) by 113 runs.

SKIPPERS' TAKES

Virat Kohli

Praising bowlers: Just the way these guys bowl together, it's just a hallmark of our team getting a result from that position, not just in this game but also in the last two-three years

Impressive openers: The discipline that the batters showed... Winning the toss, batting first overseas is a tough challenge. Credit to Mayank and KL the way they set it up. We knew we were in pole position with anything over 300-320. We have a lot of belief in our bowling unit and knew the bowlers will get the job done

Happy with result: It's a top start for us. We have to understand one day was washed out - shows how well we played. It's always a difficult place to play against South Africa. We got so much confidence out of Johannesburg last time. It's a ground we love playing at.

Shami show: He is absolutely world class talent. For me he's in the best three seamers in the world at the moment. His strong wrist, his seam position and his ability to hit a length consistently. Very, very happy for him to get 200 wickets and have an impactful performances."

Dean Elgar

Disappointing result: Obviously not a nice thing knowing we lost a Test here. Did a few things wrong. Lot of positives coming out that we can use in the next two. Always the nature here. Always going to be tough because the wicket's playing slower (first morning).

Paid for mistakes: Indian openers did the fundamentals right. We didn't quite execute the lengths well. After some good chats our bowlers executed the lengths and restricted India to what we thought was a par score.

Blaming batters: New ball is something you have to get through playing here. Can't emphasise enough on the hard work our bowlers put in to get 20 wickets. Our batters let us down. I'd say the batting was the difference between the two sides.

Next up: We'll have a little sit-down with myself and the management to strategise. Didn't do a lot of wrong things. Not all doom and gloom for us. We thrive under the pressure which is a positive for us.



It's a super special year for team India. The kind of achievements that we have gotten this year has been truly special. I think it will go down as one of the greatest years in Indian cricket history. It has taken a lot of hardwork and discipline. We have worked really hard as a team for few years

KL RAHUL, I MAN OF THE MATCH

CRICKET FRATERNITY HAILS INDIA FEAT

SACHIN TENDULKAR: Superb bowling by an attack that can pick 20 wickets in a Test match anywhere in the world. Congratulations to Team India on a convincing victory!

VVS LAXMAN: Began the year with great resilience at Sydney, followed by an incredible win at the Gabba, the Lord's win was special and India end the year with a brilliant win at the Centurion. Has been a brilliant Test Match year for Team India.

Congratulations on a wonderful win.

RAVI SHASTRI: Wohoo Brisbane, Oval, Lord's and now Centurion... Congratulations Virat Kohli, Rahul Dravid and the entire contingent on becoming the first Asian nation to win at Centurion

VENKATESH PRASAD: A phenomenal 2021 in Test Match Cricket for Team India. To become the first Asian Team to win at Centurion, this is a special

team and a special win. Shami was exceptional but KL Rahul's masterclass was a delight and the major difference

VIRENDER SEHWAG: Dream 2021 for Team India in Test Cricket. Gabba, Lord's, Oval, Centurion and who can forget the amazing fight to draw at Sydney. Wishing a happy and even better 2022 for Team India

Man City tighten grip on Premier League title



Phil Foden celebrates his goal at Brentford

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, Dec 30: Manchester City's grip on its Premier League title hasn't been this strong all season. A 1-0 win at Brentford Wednesday, coupled with Chelsea conceding a stoppage-time goal to draw 1-1 against Brighton, left the defending champions with an eight-point lead heading into the new year.

It has been an almost perfect 24 hours for City, which saw Liverpool - another rival for the title - surprisingly lose 0-1 at injury-hit Leicester Tuesday. Chelsea have moved a point ahead of third-place Liverpool before their meeting at Stamford Bridge Sunday, when at least one of the teams will drop points.

Liverpool have a game in hand, but will soon lose star forwards Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane to the African Cup of Nations.

City wasn't at its fluent best

MANDHANA NOMINATED FOR ICC AWARD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 30: India opener Smriti Mandhana was Thursday nominated for the ICC Women's T20 Player of the Year 2021 award along with three more cricketers.

Besides Mandhana, England cricketers Tammy Beaumont and Nat Sciver and Ireland's Gaby Lewis are the other contenders for the honour.

In 2021, Mandhana scored 255 runs in nine T20 matches at an average of 31.87 with two half-centuries. She played a major role in the first of the two wins, smashing 48 off just 28 balls against South Africa, chasing 113 in the final T20. The win saved India the blushes, as they managed to avoid the clean sweep.



Mandhana was India's top run-scorer in the T20I series against England with 119 runs but didn't

find enough support from the rest of the batters. She was India's top-scorer in both the matches that India lost, including a 51-ball 70 that went in vain in the final T20I.

Mandhana scored her second T20I half century of the year against Australia in the final match of the series, but India fell short by 14 runs.

However, no Indian features among the nominees for ICC Men's ODI Player of the Year 2021.

The four players who are in the running for the recognition are Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan, Pakistan skipper Babar Azam, Janneman Malan of South Africa and Ireland's Paul Stirling.

The ICC Awards 2021 will recognise the outstanding achievements and feats in cricket over the past year.

Rasheed guides India to U-19 Asia Cup final



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sharjah, Dec 30: Shaik Rasheed hit an unbeaten 90 (108b, 3x4, 1x6) as India dished out a clinical performance to thrash Bangladesh by 103 runs here Thursday and set up a summit clash with Sri Lanka in the U-19 Asia Cup.

One-down Rasheed helped India post 248/8 after being invited to bat. He paced his innings to perfection after India lost both their openers - Angkrish Raghuvanshi (16) and Harmoor Singh (15) - inside the 50-run mark, inside the 17 overs.

Bawa (23), Ostwal (28 n o) and Hangargekar (16) also played useful hands to provide Rasheed support from the other end. For Bangladesh U-19, left-arm orthodox spinner Rakibul Hasan (3/41) was the pick of the bowlers.

The Indian bowlers, then, produced a cohesive effort to bundle out Bangladesh for 140 runs in 38.2 overs.

Ariful Islam was the top scorer for Bangladesh with a 77-ball 42, while opener Mahfijul Islam made 26.

Bangladesh's chase never got going as the Indian bowlers picked up wickets at regular intervals, with only Ariful providing some resistance.

For India, Ravi Kumar (2/22), Vicky Ostwal (2/25), Raj Bawa (2/26) and Rajvardhan Hangargekar (2/36) shared eight wickets between them, while Kaushal Tambe (1/5) and Nishant Sindhu (1/25) picked up a wicket each.

India will face Sri Lanka in the title clash in Dubai Friday. Sri Lanka defeated Pakistan by 22 runs in another semifinal clash.

BRIEF SCORES: India U-19 243/8 (Shaik Rasheed 90 n o; Rakibul Hasan 3/41) beat Bangladesh U-19 140 (Ariful Islam 42; Ravi Kumar 2/22, Vicky Ostwal 2/25, Raj Bawa 2/26, Rajvardhan Hangargekar 2/36) by 103 runs.

NEWS IN BRIEF

World Blitz Chess: Vaishali in second spot

WARSAW (POLAND): Twenty-year old Indian player R Vaishali is in second place with 7.5 points from nine rounds in the women's section of the World Blitz chess championship here while her countrywoman Koneru Humpy is in joint third. In the next round, Vaishali will face Bibisara Assaubayeva, who is leading the chart with eight points, of Kazakhstan next. Humpy, the country's top player, has a share of the third place along with Russian Alexandra Kosteniuk. The other Indians - Vantika Agrwal and Padmini Rout are placed 32nd and 57th respectively with 5 and 4.5 points each.

Skier Arif qualifies for 2 events in Winter Games

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir-based alpine skier Arif Mohammed Khan has become the first Indian athlete to qualify for two different events of the Winter Olympics, set to be held in Beijing from February 4, next year. Khan achieved the rare feat recently by qualifying for the his second event - giant slalom - a month after booking his first Winter Olympics ticket in alpine skiing slalom category in an Olympic qualifier in Dubai. While India was represented by two athletes - Jagdish Singh (cross country skiing) and Shiva Keshavan (luge) - in the 2018 edition, Khan is the only person to have qualified for the 2022 edition so far.

Ross Taylor to retire from internationals

WELLINGTON: Veteran New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor says he will retire from international cricket after the current domestic season. The second Test against Bangladesh next month, in which he likely will equal Daniel Vettori's record of 112 Tests for NZ, will be his last. Taylor won't play in the Black Caps' Test series against South Africa in February but will play ODI series against Australia in Australia in February and against the Netherlands at home in late March and early April. The fourth ODI against the Netherlands in Taylor's home town of Hamilton April 4 will be his last match for the Kiwis.