



DREAM ROLE
Actor Bhumi Pednekar says playing a freedom fighter would be among her most cherished opportunities



RUSSIA SENDS TROOPS
Russia sends paratroopers to Kazakhstan to crush the country-wide violent uprising currently on



'NO ENTRY' FOR DJOKO
Novak Djokovic's Australian Open winnings dreams dashed as his visa is cancelled on arrival at the airport

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4 ex-J-K CMs lose SSG cover
Srinagar/New Delhi: Four former Chief Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir - Farooq Abdullah, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti are likely to lose their Special Security Group (SSG) protection as the Union Territory's administration has decided to 'right-size' the elite unit established in 2000, officials said Thursday. They said the decision was taken by the Security Review Coordination Committee, a group that oversees the threat perception of leaders in Jammu and Kashmir. All the four will now be provided security cover by the NSG. Except for Azad, the other three are residents of Srinagar. **P8**

Main accused in 'Bulli Bai' case nabbed from Assam
New Delhi: Delhi Police have arrested the 'main conspirator' in the 'Bulli Bai' case from Assam, officials said Thursday. The accused Neeraj Bishnoi (21) was brought here Thursday afternoon. He was arrested by the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of Delhi Police. Bishnoi is the main conspirator and creator of the 'Bulli Bai' app on the platform 'GitHub' and also the main Twitter account holder of 'Bulli Bai', a senior official informed. This is the fourth arrest in the case. Earlier two persons from Uttarakhand and an engineering student from Bangalore were arrested in the case. **P9**

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL

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Odisha registers 1st Omicron death

■ The woman who died due to the Omicron variant did not have any history of foreign travel. Confirmation regarding the presence of Omicron variant came only after her death



Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Amid the rapid increase in Covid-19 cases in Odisha, the state reported Wednesday its first victim to the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. The deceased was a 45-year-old woman from Agalpur locality of Bolangir district. Bolangir district CDMO Dr Snehalata Sahoo informed Thursday that the woman had died December 27 last year. However, her genome testing report which turned out to Omicron positive was received by the health department officials late Wednesday evening. She was undergoing treatment at the VIMSAR in Burla. The woman, a resident of Dunguripali village was first admitted to the Bhima Bhoi Medical College & Hospital here December 20 after she collapsed on the village road. Doctors said she had suffered a massive heart attack and she also tested positive for Covid-19.

There were contradictory reports that she had suffered an accident. After her condition worsened, she was referred to VIMSAR. She was again tested and her swab sample was sent for genome sequencing. The woman however, passed away before the report for genome sequencing arrived. Dr Sahoo also said that all the persons who had come in contact with the deceased in have been tested and their reports are awaited. VIMSAR Superintendent Lalit Mohan Nayak however, contradicted the statement of Dr Sahoo. He said that the woman had died due to 'intracerebral haemorrhage' and not due to the Omicron variant of Covid-19. He also said that woman was undergoing treatment at VIMSAR for brain haemorrhage

and not Covid-19. Meanwhile as per the directions of Bolangir District Collector Chanchal Rana two teams of health officials have already reached the village of the deceased women. They have started contact tracing of all those who attended the women's cremation. These people have also been asked to remain in isolation for a fortnight and abide by Covid-19 protocols implemented by the Odisha government. On a day which saw Odisha register its first Omicron death, the state also witnessed a massive spike in cases. Odisha reported 1,897 new Covid-19 cases, an increase of more than 600 new patients in comparison to the 1,216 positive cases reported Wednesday. The total number of cases reported Thursday is

STATE GEARS UP TO TACKLE THIRD WAVE
Bhubaneswar: Director of Health and Family Welfare department Bijay Panigrahi said Thursday that the Omicron variant has spread to almost all the districts in Odisha and transmission will further increase in coming days. "We are however, geared up to tackle the third wave," Mohapatra said. Though severity of the situation is currently less, the Odisha government is taking all precautionary measures keeping in view the possible spike in the number of cases. He also informed that the government is in the process of procuring the testing kit approved by ICMR to detect Omicron variant of Covid-19

the highest in the last five months. It took the state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) to 2.62 per cent. In a separate development Thursday, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation said that all passengers disembarking at the international airport here will have to undergo mandatory RT-PCR tests on arrival. However, transit passengers will not have to undergo any tests. This step was taken due to the sudden surge in positive cases witnessed in the state for the last few days. **MoreP4**

Panel to probe security breach

■ BKU leader Rakesh Tikait wants investigation into whether 'angry' farmers prompted Modi to return without attending rally

New Delhi, Jan 6: Even as the Punjab government, constituted a two-member panel to probe into the alleged 'security breach' in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy Wednesday near Ferozepur, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait had a different view regarding entire episode. Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Tikait said that an investigation should take place to confirm if the anger of the farmers against the PM and his unpopularity led to the cancellation of the rally. "While those in the BJP are saying that the rally was cancelled due to a lapse in security of the prime minister others are saying that the PM returned because of empty chairs at the venue. Now it is necessary to investigate whether there is a lapse in the security or the anger of the farmers which led to the PM's return!" Tikait tweeted in Hindi. The committee formed to probe the security breach will submit its report within three days, said an official spokesperson. The panel com-

PLEA IN SC FOR INVESTIGATION
New Delhi: The Supreme Court will Friday hear a plea seeking a thorough investigation into the breach in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security in Punjab and ensure that there is no such recurrence in the future. A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana took note of senior advocate Maninder Singh's submission that a serious breach in the prime minister's security took place Wednesday in Ferozepur, Punjab. "Serve the copy (of the petition) to the state (Punjab) government. We will take it tomorrow (Friday) as the first item," the bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, said Thursday when the issue was mentioned for urgent hearing Thursday itself.

prises Justice (Retd) Mehtab Singh Gill and Principal Secretary, Home Affairs and Justice, Anurag Verma. "In order to carry out a thorough probe into the lapses that occurred during the Prime Minister's visit to Ferozepur yesterday (Wednesday), the Punjab Government has constituted a high level committee," the spokesperson said. "It will submit its report in three days," the spokesperson added.

LACK OF PROPER ROAD CLAIMS NEW MOM'S LIFE

■ This is not the first time that patients have suffered in Odisha as ambulances have failed to reach their destinations due to lack of motorable tracks

Sundargarh, Jan 6: The lack of a proper motorable road in the Talasera Patratoli slum of Birmitrapur in this district has led to the death of a pregnant woman in the intervening night between Tuesday and Wednesday. It happened as the ambulance summoned, failed to reach the house of the victim. It prevented the woman from availing of emergency services. As per information available, Draupadi Majhi developed severe labour pains Tuesday. Her family members immediately called for an ambulance to take her to a hospital. However, the vehicle could only reach a place which was approximately three kilometres away from the woman's hutment. It could not proceed further as there was no motorable road. Unable to bear the pain anymore, the woman gave birth to a girl at her home only under supervision of older women. However, after giving birth, the condition of the woman deteriorated. Seeing her predicament, her family members decided to carry her in a cot to the ambulance. However, they had to walk slowly as the condition of Draupadi was worsening by the minute. By the time they reached the vehicle, the woman had breathed her last. Locals said they regularly suffer due to the lack of a proper road.

India slams China for 'illegal' construction

■ MEA says that land on which the bridge is being built is illegal, but does not talk about preventive measures

New Delhi, Jan 6: India said Thursday that the bridge being built by China across Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh is in an area that has been under illegal occupation for around 60 years and it has never accepted such action. At a media briefing, External Affairs Ministry (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi also slammed China for renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh. He said Beijing should work constructively with India to resolve the outstanding friction points in eastern Ladakh. Bagchi was asked about the bridge being built in the Pangong lake area. He said the government has been monitoring this activity. "As regards reports about a bridge

being made by the Chinese side on Pangong lake, the government has been monitoring their activity very closely," Bagchi informed. "This bridge is being constructed in areas that have been under illegal occupation by China for around 60 years now. As you are well aware India has never accepted such illegal occupation," he added. Bagchi said India has been taking all necessary steps to ensure that its security interests are fully protected. "As part of these efforts, the government has also, in the last seven years, increased significantly the budget for the development of border infrastructure and completed more roads and bridges than ever before," Bagchi informed. "These have provided much-needed connectivity to the local population as well as logistical support to the Armed Forces. The government remains committed to this objective. At no point of time, India's security will be compromised," Bagchi asserted.

'SUJAL' FOR CUTTACK



Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Pratap Jena drinks water in the presence of other dignitaries from a tap as CM Naveen Patnaik virtually inaugurates the 'Sujal-Drink from Tap Mission' at the Balyatra ground in Cuttack, Thursday (REPORT P3)

Sans staff, cybercrime PSes lack teeth

■ Nine days have elapsed since 14 offices were inaugurated with much fanfare to tackle cybercrimes. However, none of the offices are fully functional till now



Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Keeping in view the rising cases of cybercrime, the Odisha government inaugurated 14 Cyber Crime and Economic Offence police stations at different places including Bhubaneswar December 29 last year. They are located at Cuttack, Bhubaneswar,

Keonjhar, Angul, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Rourkela, Sambalpur, Berhampur, Puri, Koraput, Bhawanipatna, Bolangir and Kandhamal. Since then nine days have elapsed and yet these 14 police stations are not fully functional. This is due to the lack of manpower with technical knowledge and infrastructure.

The cybercrime PS in the state capital is situated inside the premises of the DCP office at Vani Vihar. It currently has four persons including inspector-in-charge (IIC), Rashmita Jena. Sources claimed that no formal notification regarding the appointment of staff has been released yet till date except the IIC. In fact on close observation one spotted workers engaged in construction work inside the police station. The officials are confused about the types and categories of economic offences that are to be dealt with at the police station, as no notification or SOP has been issued in this regard till now.

Meanwhile, people have been raising questions over the haphazard manner in which the cyber crime police stations were started without proper planning. Some victims who lodged complaints here at the newly-established police station complained about delay in getting copies of the FIR. According to sources, no officers-in-charge have been appointed at some of these cybercrime PSes. Some do not have a building of their own in a few districts. Notably the Odisha government had earlier announced the appointment of 154 officials and 90 experts at the 14 cyber police stations recently inaugurated.

272 POST OFFICES IN RED-HIT AREAS SOON

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: To strengthen mobile and internet connectivity in remote villages of Odisha, the Union Government has decided to install 2,379 new towers covering 3,933 villages for 10 aspirational districts of Odisha. A total of 272 post offices will also be opened in Left Wing Extremist (LWE) districts of Odisha. Union Minister of Communications and Electronics & Information Technology of India, Ashwini Vaishnaw gave this information here Thursday. "A total of 3,933 unconnected vil-

lages of Odisha in the districts of Bolangir, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Rayagada will get 4G mobile tower connectivity," Vaishnaw said. In addition to the above scheme, another 483 mobile towers are being installed at an estimated cost of ₹421.66 crore in nine districts of Odisha under LWE project Phase-II which is likely to be completed by March, 2023, sources said. The Department of Posts will extend its network in LWE districts of Odisha and open 272 branch post offices, Vaishnaw said. **P4**

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	59601.84 ↓ 621.31
NIFTY	17745.90 ↓ 179.40
DOLLAR	74.83 ↑ ₹0.07
EURO	84.37 ↓ ₹0.25
GOLD	₹47,536 ↓ ₹485
SILVER	₹60,453 ↓ ₹1785

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	29.0°C	27.5°C
TEMP. MIN	14.4°C	14.0°C
Humidity	94%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Shallow to moderate fog very likely	



LEROY-BEAULIEU SAYS FRENCH PEOPLE LACK SENSE OF HUMOUR

Emily in Paris actress Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu says French people have no sense of humour. The 58-year-old actress told the *New York Post* newspaper's Page Six column: "The French know how to laugh at other people but they don't know how to laugh at themselves."

MOVIE HORSE WANTED TO KILL ME: NICOLAS CAGE

Hollywood actor Nicolas Cage has claimed the horse he rode in *Butcher's Crossing* was determined to kill him. The 57-year-old actor shared the screen with an equine named Rain Man while shooting *Butcher's Crossing* and he has never had such a difficult experience with an animal.



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ARIES

You already feel deeply connected to the universe. But today, you may want to particularly thank God for all His small mercies. You cherish your loved ones even more today, says Ganesh, and you may spend lavishly on people dear to you.

TAURUS

Anxiety will keep your nerves swollen for most part of the day, feels Ganesh. On the work front, you will face success later in the day. You will be a role model for business efficiency and people will try to follow in your footsteps. Your efforts will be validated with generous profits.

GEMINI

Putting things in order will be your top priority, says Ganesh. You will possibly have a romantic dinner with your sweetheart. Seductive conversations may culminate in sensuous consumption. Your personal feelings will stir up your partner's private thoughts.

CANCER

It is high time you paid attention to your family. You have been so lost in work and in making money that you have almost forgotten the very people you have been slogging for. Your spouse has been trying hard to improve the relationship. Ganesh feels it is time you respond to your partner's needs.

LEO

A mixed bag of fortunes, a bittersweet pill, call it what you will, but today brings with it a lot of things packed within its 24-hour period. Ganesh foresees a hectic morning, and an even more frantic afternoon. So, respite will be a luxury for you today. If this was the bitter end of the pill, then its sweet results will be like a balm on your frayed nerves, says Ganesh. A fabulous time with your loved ones, a scrumptious dinner that is going to delight your appetite, and a sensuous evening are all in the offing.

VIRGO

Give people a word of encouragement and motivate them to achieve bigger things, advises Ganesh. Don the thinker's cap and you may find yourself in contemplation. Criticism will hurt you, but be as unflappable as you can and proceed to your target, says Ganesh.

LIBRA

It is your friends who prove to be lucky and beneficial for you today, especially if they happen to be walking the corridors of power, says Ganesh. Do not hesitate to start that new joint venture today. See your popularity grow by leaps and bounds as you get due recognition for your abilities and efforts.

SCORPIO

It is high time you diverted all your energies towards your object of love, advises Ganesh. Research-oriented work could well be an option too. Ganesh says you are likely to find someone special to talk about those good old times and have a great time.

SAGITTARIUS

You will be your usual self today, frank and precise. You are all ears for what your life partner has to say. This will make them feel special! According to Ganesh, be patient and carry out your work gracefully.

CAPRICORN

After running about helter-skelter for getting your work done, you will sit back and spend the day planning the course of future action. Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards, but you will need to be mindful of how best you utilise it. You can expect a few good opportunities to knock at the door, but open the door before they turn to look for shelter elsewhere.

AQUARIUS

Some days, you crave to know everything. Today is one such day. You will also prove a worthy opponent. You may upset your adversaries' plans, much to your own advantage. You have it in you to be a scholar. You will also prove the strength of your character, especially when the going gets tough.

PISCES

Today is likely to be a day of mixed fortunes, says Ganesh. While a hectic morning and a positively frantic afternoon will see you at your wits' end, a sumptuous dinner with your sweetheart, followed by a sensuous evening, will delight you out of your mind.



Bhumi talks about her dream role

MUMBAI: Amidst discussions on Ketan Mehta considering Bhumi Pednekar for the biopic of freedom fighter Usha Mehta, the actress reveals that playing a revolutionary will be a dream role. In a previous edition, mid-day had reported that filmmaker Ketan Mehta was considering roping in Bhumi Pednekar for a biopic on his aunt, freedom fighter Usha Mehta. Now, in an interview with this writer, the actor says essaying the part of a freedom fighter would be among her most cherished opportunities. "Playing a freedom fighter would be my dream role. I am fascinated by such remarkable personalities. It would be an honour: I hope the universe listens to this," says the actor. With a string of offerings, including *Bheed*, Rajkumar Rao-starrer *Badhaai Do*, Ajay Bahl's *Ladykiller*, Govinda Naam Mera, and Raksha Bandhan with Akshay Kumar, within the span of one calendar year, Pednekar is set to explore a gamut of personalities for the big screen.

"All my films see me attempt to shatter stereotypes. That's what I have done right from my debut film. I am thrilled to be creatively expressing myself." Despite having tackled a variety of genres, Pednekar says there is one that she is still keen to give a go at. "A fantasy project. I would love to experience that, as an actor," she signs off. AGENCIES

Manisha, Bhansali to re-unite after 25 years



MUMBAI: Remember the ethereal Manisha Koirala in Sanjay Leela Bhansali (SLB)'s *Khamoshi: The Musical*? All those who fell in love with Manisha's Annie in *Khamoshi* waited for the filmmaker and the actress to come together again. It is finally happening after 25 years. Manisha Koirala has been signed for a pivotal role in SLB's costume drama *Heeramandi* for Netflix. She joins the cast which already features Huma Qureshi and Sonakshi Sinha. Now that Bhansali has completed the shooting of his directorial *Gangubai Kathiawadi* he's fully invested in the pre-production of *Heeramandi*. Produced exclusively for Netflix *Heeramandi* is the story of a gallery of gorgeous prostitutes whose destinies are intertwined. Some of the top heroines of the industry will be seen together for the first time. Revealing details of the production a source very close to the projects informs, "Heeramandi will have 7 episodes of one hour each in the first season, to be followed by a second season. The first few episodes and the closing episode will be directed by Bhansali. Vibhu Puri, an assistant to Bhansali, will take care of the rest." AGENCIES

I'm duty-bound to entertain: Ranveer

MUMBAI: Ranveer Singh, who was most recently seen in sports drama *83*, considers it his duty to use his craft for entertaining people and telling stories in the most engaging way.

The actor is glad that the profession of acting allows him to explore the human being in him as well. Ranveer says, "I am really just in the process of exploring myself as a person. To do different characters and present different films that we as people can be proud of, I feel duty-bound to entertain people."

Reflecting up on his journey, he says, "It's been an amazing 10 years. I have worked with the finest filmmakers who have shaped me, taught

me what it means to be an artiste. I have learnt so much but I feel hungry. My hunger is insatiable. I want to do more films like *83* that receive this kind of unanimous love." IANS



Soha wants to do more OTT projects

MUMBAI: Making her debut in 2004, Soha Ali Khan is one of those actresses who has only appeared in selected films and despite being the daughter of yesteryear actress Sharmila Tagore and sister of actor Saif Ali Khan, she managed to establish herself as a moderately famous actress.

As she makes her comeback in acting and debuts on OTT with *Kaun Banegi Shikharwati*, she says the OTT space is so very exciting for her to take up more acting projects.

Soha is known for appearing in films like *Rang De Basanti*, *Khoya Khoya Chand*, *Dil Maange More*, *Mumbai Meri Jaan*, and *Midnight's Children*, among others.

Asked about what attracts her towards OTT and Soha says: "I think it is not just about OTT but how the audience is changing. When I started my acting career, back then people would mostly look for aspirational content and wanted to live the life they desire to have, through films. Now people are looking for relatability and they want to see themselves represented on-screen."

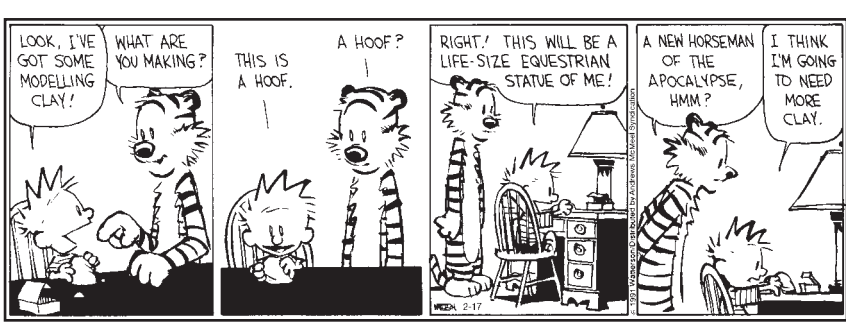
Soha was last seen in the film *Saheb, Biwi Aur Gangster 3* that released in 2018. IANS

FUN post

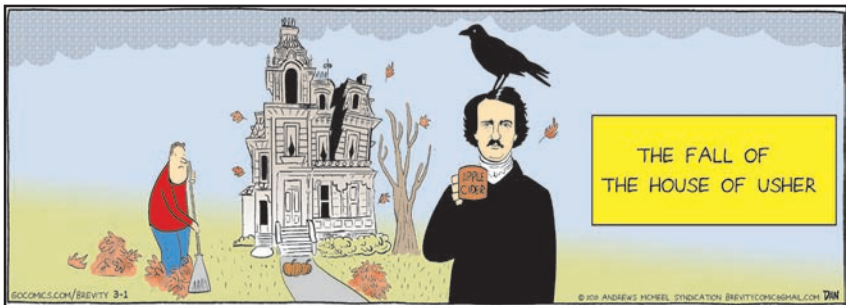
PEANUTS



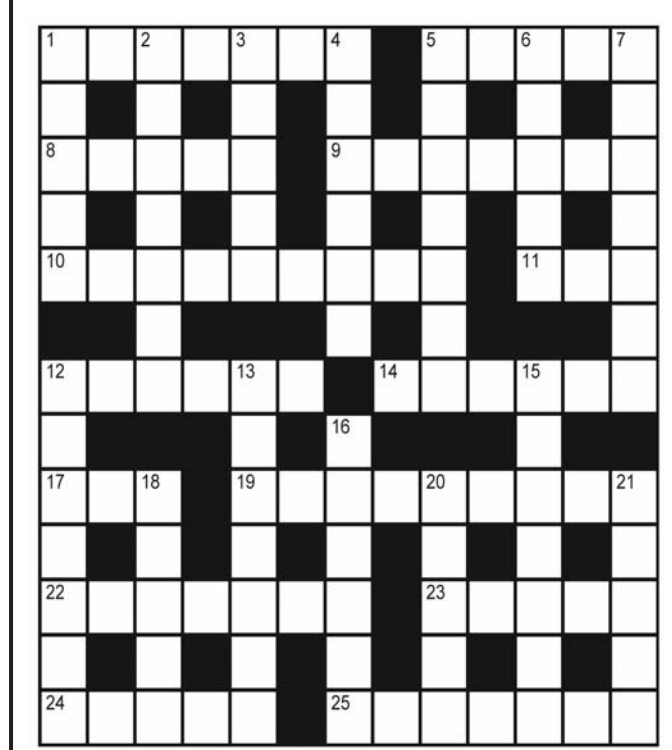
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



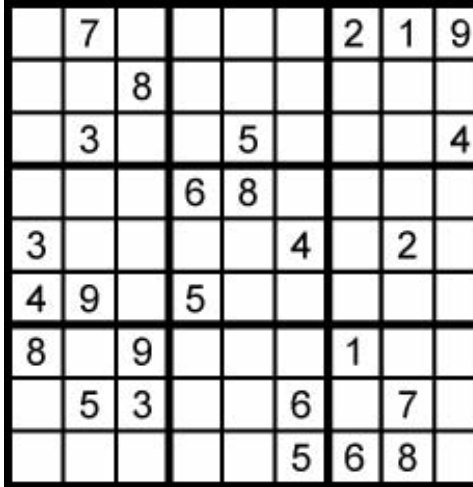
CROSSWORD



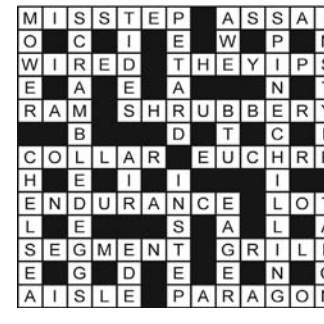
- Across**
- 1 Kind of penguin
 - 5 Gussy up
 - 8 Like some floors
 - 9 Larger
 - 10 Escapade
 - 11 Bonanza find
 - 12 Bays and roans
 - 14 Vacation spot
 - 17 Pasture
 - 19 Farm machine
 - 22 Flowered
 - 23 Merchandise
 - 24 Levels
 - 25 Component
- Down**
- 1 Additional
 - 2 Discussion
 - 3 Noble gas
 - 4 Well-seasoned stew
 - 5 Usher in
 - 6 Foreword, for short
 - 7 Utopian
 - 12 Food fish
 - 13 Digs up
 - 15 Result
 - 16 Plod
 - 18 Dwelling
 - 20 Tidal bore
 - 21 Furnace button

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

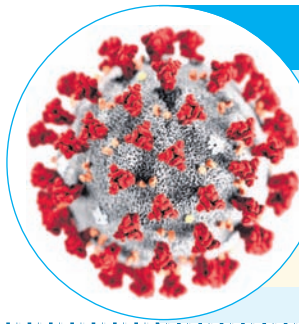


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DANCE FEST

Artistes perform Odissi during the 4th evening of 13th Cuttack Mahotsav at Sarala Bhawan in Silver City, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

Table with 4 columns: Region, Infected, Recovered, Dead. Rows for World, India, Odisha.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



24X7 water supply for 1.40L households in Silver city

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated 'Sujal-Drink From Tap Mission' for 24-hour potable water supply to the residents of Cuttack.

Instead of groundwater, water from River Mahanadi will be treated and supplied to the people of Cuttack, the Chief Minister said.

The facility, built at a cost of ₹790 crore, will benefit around 7 lakh people of 1.4 lakh households.

The 24x7 water supply will now be available to people in two zones (in 59 wards) under Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) area and it will be extended to the entire city by December 2023.

Inaugurating the project via videoconferencing, Patnaik said all families in 60 towns of the state have been provided with pure drinking water. The facility will soon be extended to all 114 towns.

SUJAL-DRINK FROM TAP MISSION

Built at a cost of ₹790 crore, the facility will benefit around 7 lakh people of 1.40 lakh households in 59 wards under the Cuttack Municipal Corporation area and it will be extended to the entire city by December 2023

The CM also inaugurated three water treatment plants, constructed at a cost of ₹430 crore, under the jurisdiction of Cuttack Development Authority

The Chief Minister said the 'Drink From Tap' mission is not only being emulated in India, but several developing countries.

"Our effort to ensure availabil-

ity of pure drinking water is important for the good health of the people," he said.

Patnaik also inaugurated three water treatment plants, constructed at a cost of ₹430 crore, under the jurisdiction of Cuttack Development Authority (CDA), Pratap Nagari, and Jagatpur respectively.

In February last year, the state government's 'Drink From Tap Mission' under the 5T (Teamwork, transparency, technology and timely completion leading to transformation) initiative won the Award of Excellence' in the 18th CSI SIG e-Governance Award 2020 for smart water management in Puri city among 178 nominations received from across the country.

United Kingdom-based WaterAid CEO Tim Wainwright had also lauded the Odisha government for its initiative, launched October 13, 2021, to ensure quality tapped drinking water to over 1.5 million people in more than 15 urban areas.

Prime accused in ₹5cr ZSS fraud arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of the state Crime Branch has arrested the alleged mastermind for embezzlement of government fund to the tune of ₹5 crore from the account of Zilla Swasthya Samiti (ZSS) under National Health Mission (NHM) in Subarnapur last year.

The prime accused, Bikash Kumar Mansingh, a businessman from Rourkela, was arrested from the steel city.

A case (8/21) was registered by EOW on the basis of a complaint lodged by Subarnapur Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) April 7, 2021.

The CDMO while going through the monthly statement of NHM bank account with the SBI's Sonepur branch detected unauthorised withdrawal of ₹5, 01, 50,000 from the ZSS account April 7.

The transaction details revealed that the miscreants forged the signature of the CDMO to withdraw the amount. It also came to the fore that the money was transferred to the account of the agency, M/s Naturals with account number 3123355704 at the Central Bank of India at Rourkela, owned by Mansingh.

EOW sources claimed that Mansingh along with Raj Kishore Nayak Anant Charan Pradhan, Abinash Pradhan and Samir Kumar Pati hatched a plan in March last year to illegally transfer the amount. The EOW had earlier arrested Nayak, Anant, Abinash and Pati.

The EOW managed to freeze ₹3.30 crore out of the ₹5 crore transferred from the NHM account.

Odisha, Andhra babus' meet on Kotia Jan 10

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 6: Odisha Thursday informed the Supreme Court (SC) that a committee of senior bureaucrats of the state will hold a meeting January 10 to deliberate on outstanding issues of mutual interest including the Kotia border dispute with Andhra Pradesh.

During the hearing on Kotia dispute, Odisha's counsel senior advocate Vikas Singh informed the apex court that the committee led by the Chief Secretary will discuss the issue January 10 with its Andhra Pradesh counterpart. It also sought listing of the case after four weeks.

A two-judge bench of the SC comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and CT Ravikumar posted to January 24.

"The meeting has been scheduled for January 10. List the matter January 24," the bench said.

Significantly, following the meeting between Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his Andhra Pradesh counterpart YS Jagan Mohan Reddy November 9, the state government constituted a panel headed by the Chief Secretary to deliberate on various bilateral issues including Kotia boundary dispute.

Earlier, the apex court had asked both Odisha and AP to look for a political resolution of the border dispute.

It is to be mentioned here that Odisha, in the contempt petition filed through advocate Sibashankar Mishra, submitted that Andhra Pradesh wilfully and deliberately violated the SC order dated December 2, 1968 and the judgement dated March 30, 2006 by transgressing into Odisha's territory. The SC, in its order of 1968 and

BONE OF CONTENTION

Following a meeting between Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik and his Andhra Pradesh counterpart YS Jagan Mohan Reddy November 9, the state government constituted a panel headed by the Chief Secretary to deliberate on various bilateral issues including Kotia boundary dispute.

Earlier, the apex court had asked both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh to look for a political resolution of the border dispute

a judgement in 2006, had asked the both states to maintain status quo on the boundary dispute with regard to Kotia group of villages with the consent of both states.

Odisha contended in the petition that Andhra Pradesh had March 5 last year issued notification to conduct local body election in Vizianagaram district.

"Salur is one of the Mandal where the Panchayat election was also notified to be conducted on the scheduled date. In the notification, Andhra Pradesh deliberately roped in three villages from the 'Kotia Group of Villages' falling under the territory of Koraput district of Orissa into Salur Mandal of Vizianagaram District," Odisha stated in the petition.

The state also contended that AP changed the name of the three villages of Kotia Gram Panchayat. The name of Ganjaipadar changed into Ganjaibadra, Phattusenary into Pattuchennum and Phagusenary into Phaguluchennuru.



'Omicron underwent fundamental changes'

Researchers suggest that over time, Omicron-specific vaccines would be required if disease severity is high, either directed at the general population or vulnerable groups



The results, published as a pre-print study and not yet peer-reviewed, from laboratory tests showed that Omicron is largely unaffected by the antibodies provided by two doses of Covid-19 vaccine, but responses are improved by a third-dose booster.

This has been confirmed by analysis of real world infection data; Omicron escapes immunity from two vaccine doses, but three doses restore good level of protection.

The escape from vaccine-induced immune responses means that over time, Omicron-specific vaccines would be required if disease severity was high, ei-

ther directed at the general population or vulnerable groups.

Further, the study also provided evidence that Omicron has switched its route of entry into human cells, from cell surface fusion to cathepsin-dependent fusion within the endosome.

This fundamental biological shift is likely to influence Omicron spread and the types of cells it can hijack. These changes may also affect the pathogenesis and severity of disease, and researchers say they require further evaluation in population-based studies.

First detected from South Africa and Botswana in late November last year, the virus has spread rapidly to more than 100 countries. It has also outpaced the previous Delta strain in many countries to become the dominant variant. The countries include the US, the UK, Italy and Portugal among others.

Gobinda Sahu moves High Court for bail

Cuttack: Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in Kalahandi teacher Mamita Meher murder case, has moved the Orissa High Court seeking bail. Sahu had confessed to have killed Mamita, a teacher of Sunshine Public School at Mahaling, in his car in Kalahandi district October 8 last year. Sahu was arrested in connection with the case October 17. Sahu moved the High Court for bail after the same was denied by some lower courts in Bolangir. The issue created a huge outcry in the state after the alleged involvement of a minister in the case.

MAMITA MURDER

Vaishnav flags off new Tapaswini Exp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off the upgraded Puri-Hatia-Puri Tapaswini Express with LHB Rake from Bhubaneswar railway station, Thursday.

The Railways has decided to run 18452/18451 Puri-Hatia-Puri Tapaswini Express with modern Linke-Hofmann-Busch (LHB) coaches by replacing conventional coaches, in a bid to pro-

vide jerk-free journey to the passengers. This facility will enhance safety with better ride experience with less noise.

Vaishnav said that the Centre had allocated ₹6995.5 crore in 2021 Railway Budget for the development of the railways in Odisha, up from ₹4,373 crore in the previous year. The state had sought around ₹7,200 crore. He said that the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is always ready to provide funds for the development of rail network in

Odisha and there will be no problem of fund. Vaishnav said, "We have succeeded in launching train services in many districts." He also said that the Ministry of Railways had also approved the project for a new railway line connecting Bargarh Road to Nuapada recently, the work for which will start very soon.

The minister is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for development of second entry point at Cuttack railway station Friday.



The water purification complex in Cuttack

Ensuring PM's security duty of every govt: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday said that it was the duty of every state government to provide foolproof security to the Prime Minister during his visits and anything contrary would be unacceptable.

His comments came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy was stranded on a flyover due to a blockade by farm protesters at Ferozepur in Punjab.

"The Prime Minister of India is an institution. It is the duty of every Government to provide foolproof security and safeguard the dignity of this institution," Patnaik tweeted.

"Anything contrary should be unacceptable in our democracy," he added.

Modi had returned from Punjab without attending any event, including a rally.

The Centre has blamed the Congress government in the state and described it as a "major security lapse".

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi claimed that a last-minute change of travel plans by Modi led to the situation and what happened was not a security threat but a "gimmick" aimed at imposing President's Rule in Punjab.

Advertisement for CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) Post Graduate Diploma Courses in ICT March 2022 Batch. Includes admission announcement, course highlights, and contact information.

State investment in power infra huge: CM

60 MANAGEMENT TRAINEES, 175 JUNIOR TECHNICIANS JOIN OPTCL

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday said that Odisha is investing significantly for improvement of power infrastructure that would help provide 24x7 quality power to all.

government has been investing significantly in the power sector to enhance the generation capacity, and strengthen the transmission and distribution infrastructure.

state, the CM said that since 2010, OPTCL has recruited more than 2,000 young men and women.

NBFC ex-employee held for loan fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: The Commissionerate Police Thursday arrested an employee of a private Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) for embezzling ₹8.53 lakh gold loan by depositing forged documents and fake gold ornaments.

CGA lauds state's public finance mgmt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Controller General of Accounts (CGA) of India Deepak Das Thursday said the Union government has introduced Public Finance Management System (PFMS) to bring accountability and transparency in governance.

erate awareness among officials on the functioning and achievements of the PFMS.

PFMS, over the years, has transformed the entire public finances system. It has ensured last-mile delivery of services

DEEPAK DAS | CONTROLLER GENERAL OF ACCOUNTS, INDIA

middlemen system and ensured direct benefit transfer to the beneficiaries and here PFMS worked as the most important tool to deliver the financial services.

Postal services for 4.14L in LWE dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Out of 272 approved branch post offices, 128 are already functional by December 2021 and the remaining 144 will be opened by March 2022.

1,897 new cases mark nCoV boom in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Odisha Thursday recorded its biggest single-day spike in Covid-19 cases in five months as 1,897 more people tested positive for the infection, a Health department bulletin said.



VITAL STATS

- Biggest single-day spike in 5 months
Daily TPR at 2.62 per cent
Six-fold jump in cases from 298 January 1
669 fresh cases among 2,167 active cases in Khurda alone
Omicron already present in all districts

9 more containment zones in City

Bhubaneswar: Following detection of Covid-19 positive cases, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Thursday declared nine more containment zones in the state Capital, taking the zone tally to 19 within a week.

tainment zones were declared at Qtr No 4RF-20 in Unit-9; Plot No 7, Behind Gurudwara in Unit-3; Plot No 1147, Near Apollo Pharmacy on Tankapani Road; Flat No 209 in Annapurna Apartment on Tankapani Road; and Flat No A/94 in Utkal Royal Residency at Goutam Nagar.

School of earth sciences opens at IIT-Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar: The new building of IIT-Bhubaneswar School of Earth, Ocean and Climate Sciences (SEOCS) was inaugurated by M Ravichandran, Secretary of Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, at an event organised on the IIT premises recently.

BOOK ON NOBEL



Governor Ganeshi Lal unveils 'Nobel 2020', an Odia book profiling achievements of 2020 Nobel Prize winners, at Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday. AIIMS Doctor and one of the editors of the book Pravash Ranjan Tripathy, science writer Bikash Kumar Jena and journalist & writer Jitendra Kumar Nayak are also present

RT-PCR tests must at BPIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: All passengers arriving at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here will have to undergo mandatory RT-PCR tests as per the fresh guidelines issued by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) in the wake of the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the state.

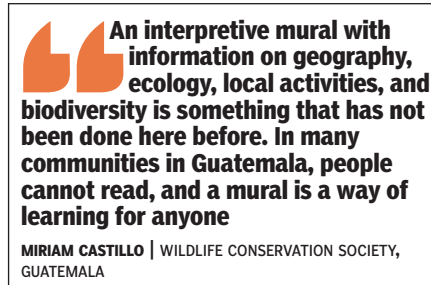
Except those in transit, all air travellers de-boarding at Bhubaneswar shall have to undergo RT-PCR tests

the guidelines, the travellers whose destination is Bhubaneswar shall have to remain in home isolation till the RT-PCR result is communicated to them by the BMC.

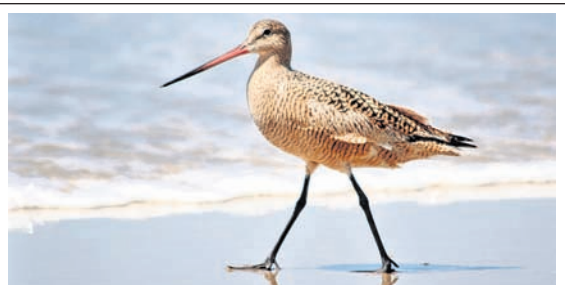
ART, CONSERVATION, SCIENCE

MASSIVE MURALS MADE ON MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and partners from a small community on Guatemala's Pacific Coast recently unveiled an innovative tool to raise awareness about migratory shorebirds.



Picchu, along with cultural scenes such as a giant head of the Olmec civilization.



where and when different areas were used by migratory birds.

now continues under the leadership and expertise of Guatemalans. WCS and the team of partners wanted to make a mural that reflects the importance of coastal wetlands and shorebirds at this site to promote their conservation in the community and its visitors.

diversity in the area." "An interpretive mural with information on geography, ecology, local activities, and biodiversity is something that has not been done here before.

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SHORT TAKES

76 projects placed under MUKTA

Jajpur: The state government has included 76 projects under the Mukhya Mantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (MUKTA) in Jajpur district.

Kusei bridge work reviewed

Anandapur: Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Bisweshwar Tudu has reviewed the ongoing expansion work of the NH-20 and the Kusei bridge at Belabahali in Keonjhar Thursday.

Contraband worth ₹56 lakh seized

Bhogra: A man hailing from West Bengal was arrested and brown sugar worth ₹56 lakh seized from his possession by excise officials on the Chandaneswar-Digha Road under Bhograi police limits, Thursday.

Second Covid centre at VIMSAR to be up, running



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 6: As Covid infection is on an upward trend in the state, the district administration in Sambalpur has stepped up its arrangement to deal with the possible third wave of the pandemic.

VIMSAR Director Lalit Meher has urged the state government for its approval. Meher said the Covid centre will be made functional again after the government approval.

WILDFIRE CONCERN



Students of Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University in Baripada taking out an awareness rally to keep Simlipal wildlife sanctuary free from forest fire, Thursday.

Road to Nagada mired in irregularities

BASED ON THE INVESTIGATION REPORT THREE ENGINEERS BOOKED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 6: The development of Nagada village in Jajpur, infamous for malnutrition death a few years ago, has been marred by irregularities, a report said.



The executive engineer of Jajpur RD division-1, assistant executive engineer of Duburi RD office and the JE of Tamka RD section have been asked to come to the police station January 12 along with documents

A road was laid from Ashokjhar to Lower Nagada by cutting through a hilly terrain. However, the hilly road was always washed away in rains. There was a need for a concrete road to the village, but no step was taken to build the pucca road.

Kaliapani police station against Bijay Kumar Moharana, executive engineer of Jajpur RD division-1, Venkatraman Muduli, assistant executive engineer of the Duburi sub-divisional RD office and Rasananda Barik, junior engineer of the Tamka section.

was started from September 10, 2016 and completed March 3, 2017. After two years, two contractors - Smrutirekha Behera and Pranay Sethi - were awarded the repair work of the road through 10 secret tenders.

Admin gears up in Mayurbhanj

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 6: The district administration has started preparations to provide treatment to Omicron patients in Mayurbhanj district.

Collector Vineet Bhardwaj, ADM Prakash Chandra Behera and sub-collector Anya Das took stock of the arrangements at PRM Medical College and Hospital, Thursday.

Officials talked to medical college officials and reviewed the preparedness of the Covid care system for the patients. The Collector has directed officials of the health department to make all Covid hospitals and sub-divisional Covid hospitals ready within a week.

OMICRON SCORE

The Collector has asked the officials of the health department to engage newly-trained doctors, nurses and paramedical staff at the Covid care centres along with arrangement of ambulances to successfully deal with Omicron cases.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Engineer-In-Chief, Water Resources, Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar. e-Procurement Notice- Bid Identification No. - CEM/MDB-05/2021-22

SCAM IN MGNREGS

Class-X boy shown as job card holder; money embezzled

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 6: Projects being executed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) are marred by irregularities in Malkangiri district.

A Class-X student has been enrolled in the muster roll as a job card holder in Udupa panchayat. Reports said MGNREGS wages to the tune of ₹11,000 have been misappropriated in the name of Siddhant Tuduka.

Besides, the student was shocked to know that his stipend has been embezzled. A few days ago, Siddhant had gone to Utkal Gramya Bank at Padmagiri to withdraw his stipend. However, his account was found void.

When he drew the attention of the bank authorities to his problem, an official told him to submit an application about the complaint and it will be investigated.

STF seizes 2 leopard hides in Mayurbhanj, 2 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 6: Acting on a tip-off, a team of the Special Task Force (STF) of the Odisha Crime Branch and the forest department Wednesday seized two leopard hides and arrested two persons during a raid near SCB Junior College, Ragdha, along National Highway-18 under Betanoti police limits in Mayurbhanj district.



The two also named some other persons involved in the trade during the interrogation

The accused were identified as Prasant Mohanty, 40, of Khirapada village under Khuanta police limits and Gura Bindhani, 65, of Balijoda village under Badasahi police limits in the district. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in court, Thursday.

lakh. The team members pounced on the two and arrested them after they reached their with the hides

During the search, two leopard skins and other incriminating articles were seized from their possession. The accused could not produce any documents in support of the possession of the leopard skins for which they were arrested. The seized leopard skins will be sent to Wild Life Institute of India, Dehradun for chemical examination.

Since 2020, a special drive against wildlife criminals and poachers has been launched by the STF. They have seized as many as 24 leopard skins, 12 elephant tusks, 7 deer hides, 9 live pangolins, and 15 kg

pangolin scales with the arrest of as many as 54 wildlife criminals.

BJP workers storm into Collectorate, ransack office

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Jan 6:irate BJP workers Thursday stormed into the district collectorate here and ransacked its premises. They were protesting against alleged bias in the reservation policy and violation of norms while preparing the reservation lists for the three-tier panchayat elections.

The BJP workers were staging a demonstration on the issue when they barged inside and ransacked the premises. The party workers had a scuffle with the police and damaged valuables inside the office. Some workers even damaged the insignia of the Collector's official car parked near the gate and broke the complaint box

PROTEST TURNS VIOLENT IN BHADRAK



and furniture in the office. They also tore down the flex boards of various state-sponsored welfare schemes carrying the photograph of Chief Minister. Some frontline leaders of the party reached the spot and brought the situation under control. Later, a seven-member delegation of the party met the Collector in his of

office and submitted a memorandum. The show of strength by the saf-ron party might have motivated its workers before the panchayat elections but it drew sharp criticism from the BJD leaders. The ruling party leaders termed the move as undemocratic. When contacted, Collector Trilochan

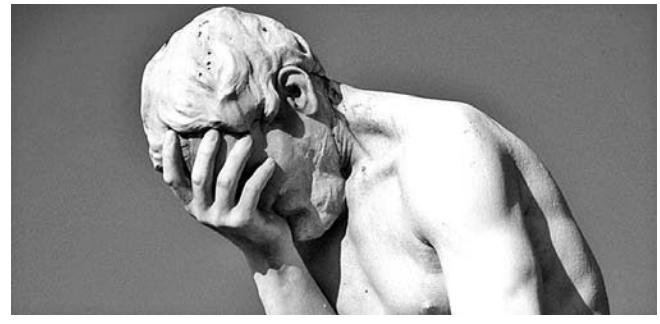
Majhi termed the ransacking of the Collectorate as illegal and warned of action against the guilty as per law. SP Charan Singh Meena took stock of the situation. He said security arrangements at the Collectorate were adequate. However, those who barged into the premises will be booked, he said.

The BJP workers took out a rally from the Gandhi Maidan to the Collectorate. There Badrinarayan Dhal, former district president and party state executive member presided in a meeting which was attended by Bishnu Sethi, deputy leader of opposition, Manmohan Samal, former minister and Surath Samal, president, state BJP's OBC Morcha.

SUNDARAM HOME Regd Office: No. 21, Pattulos Road, Chennai - 600 002. Corporate Office: Sundaram Towers, No. 46, Whites Road, Chennai - 600 014. POSSESSION NOTICE Rule 8(2) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

FOCUS SOCIETY

THE VIRTUE OF SHAME



From myths through literature and history, shame has found its universal linguistic presence and embodies both reactive and positive meanings. Remember how frequently we plant the word 'shame' in our everyday discourses, though in a fallacious way

In fact, we do not tend to see the values and vitality of all these in our civilized world. Not understanding how imprisonment, death sentence, honor killing etc. are insufficient for eradicating modern ailments such as crimes, murders, and corruptions, we often set in whimsical ventures after quick solutions. Prisons, police, bayonets and barbed wires are the spectacular examples of such quickies; yes, civilised society's shortest poetic justice! Similar is the recent means of body shaming, rape, honor killing which are again shameful modern aberrations and most obnoxious display of a shameless society. Confucius criticised the unholy alliance between state-governance and individual shame that modern laws try to solemnize – "Lead the people with administrative injunctions and put them in their place with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence and put them in their place through rules and ritual practices, and in addition to developing a sense of shame, will order them harmoniously."

Is it not ironical that a state builds prison but prescribes sacred scriptures at the same time for the imprisoned to cure crimes? Corporal punishment, punitive measurements, force and fear may make a nation-state, but sound character, flourishing life, moral order and social harmony would always spring from shame, guilt, and honour. Shame is an ennobling tool, much applicable in our world of novel savages! Let us bring back that atmosphere of shame now, where we will be ashamed of ourselves for being fake, corrupt, morally bankrupt, and ashamed of our fellow humans too for being mute spectators to such vices and vulnerabilities.

The writer is Associate Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University. The views expressed are personal.

Such has been the paramount relevance of shame as a curative tool and concept at the turn of modern centuries. One could also explore a world of shame in anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and history to trace shame's positions in all most all societies.

The Mahabharata orchestrated the power and values of shame that Draupadi and her family went through. In the similar fashion, the Greco-Roman tradition perceived shame as the strongest driving force for Menelaus to avenge upon his wife Helen's abduction by Paris. In the Ramayana, it is the shame of breaking promises to Kaiiki which resulted in Rama's four-year banishment. You could bring in plethora of examples from across religions and cultures. Shame, therefore, is ubiquitous as a cultural reality and methodology. It is a deterrent too. Had Macbeth maintained his sense of shame and guilt, irrespective of Lady Macbeth's witchy provocations, a shameful regicide/homicide would have been averted. Therefore, we hold Macbeth not only ambitious, but also shameless. Now consider how we have our modern Macbeths of different race and kinds and how much of 'shame' should, therefore, be there to deter their evil designs!

and history, shame has found its universal linguistic presence and embodies both reactive and positive meanings. Remember how frequently we plant the word 'shame' in our everyday discourses, though in a fallacious way. Why have we then hidden shame from ourselves now? Why have we reduced it to mere emotion, privacy, femininity, even timidity of a nation or society? What happens if an individual is ashamed of some immoralities, but his nation, on the other hand, is proud of the same immoralities? These are the pertinent issues to reflect upon in our times.

Shame is not just an idea, it is an ability to reform, rebuild, and analogous with social values, prestige and functioning too. Traditional societies exploited shame as one of several methods of governance and social harmony. Scornful modernist should learn how some of such traditional patterns of shaming is still in vogue. Read for example how "a southern Indian city's decision to hire musicians to beat drums outside the homes of tax defaulters until they pay up has yielded rich dividends."

On the other hand, the absence of shame in our times proclaims as if we have completely conquered shame, guilt and honour.

With the gradual metamorphosis of the modern sinners enjoying limitless impunity of almost unconceivable kinds of crimes and corruptions, we are now compelled to think of an alternative method of eradicating novel savageries in our novel world. Certainly, our new problem and its nemesis are different from Frost's vision of 'Fire' (Hatred) and 'Ice' (Apathy). "Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice", prophesied Robert Frost. But the Chinese philosopher Confucius, with whom is born Chinese intellectual tradition, viewed the world crisis differently; he zeroed in on "Shame", and opined that social harmony could be achieved through prudent understanding and praxis of 'shame' in our everyday life. Shame, therefore, could be a common sense that could replace many of our rational measures to mitigate ailments of modern societies. It is a different thing however that we modernist are no more 'ashamed' of anything!

I think, we should have a feeling of shame to be an individual, a citizen, an author, a doctor, an artist, name whatever that has a mind and conscience. We definitely need shame when truth has been supplanted with post-truth; rituals are annihilated through prohibitions and conscience through barbarism.

It is also true that our repeated failures to eradicate evils are entrenched in our wishful ignorance of 'shame' as an epistemological weapon for personal and social refinement. What do we do, when our prison, punishment and all other punitive measures have failed? How do we read an accomplished modern man basking in science and reason, yet fettered in crimes, ambitions and corruptions? These are not mere philosophical ruminations but most practical problems of our times. In fact, social scientists like Emile Durkheim, CH Cooley, Talcott Parsons, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, etc. have propounded perspectives on self, society and shame.

From myths through literature

There is a thirst for Love which no human relation can quench. It is only the Divine's love that can satisfy that thirst.



THE MOTHER

Threat to American Democracy

Much remains to be learned about what happened in Washington, DC, January 6, 2021. But almost from the moment that rioters stormed the Capitol, it has been clear that America's constitutional order resisted Donald Trump's effort to subvert it.

The available evidence suggests that Trump supported a cockamamie scheme to have Vice President Mike Pence refuse to certify the results showing that Joe Biden had won the Electoral College vote. The idea was that amid the confusion created by unauthorised self-appointed state electors, congressional Republicans would award Trump a second term.

But the scheme was doomed to fail, because key Republicans refused to play along. Pence eschewed his assigned role in the scheme, as did Attorney General William Barr and other high-ranking executive branch officials. Republican state officials in Georgia, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, as well as federal judges – including some appointed by Trump – also stood their ground.

Moreover, most of the congressional Republicans who challenged the election results believed they were engaging in a mere formality that would protect them from retaliation by far-right voters without changing anything. And those Republicans, in turn, were following precedents set by Democrats who challenged electoral results from states in previous elections in 2001, 2005 and 2017.

Although opposition within Trump's own administration and party sank Trump's seditious plan, many Democrats argue that a similar scheme might succeed in 2024. But any repeat attempt to alter the Electoral College results on behalf of a Republican loser would require an unlikely degree of collaboration among dozens, if not hundreds, of Republican members of Congress, state legislatures, and federal courts. And this time, there would be no element of surprise.

Yes, scaremongers would say that unlike in 2020, Trump-backed officials may hold many key election-administration positions in 2024. But these Trumpist legions would have to be far more loyal and disciplined than previous loyalists like Pence and Barr. And each would need to be willing to risk his or her own political future on the success of a complex conspiracy that would chiefly benefit a notoriously disloyal individual who routinely uses people and then throws them away.

Moreover, Trump's influence over Republican candidates is exaggerated. He tends to endorse those who are likely to win their primary or general elections anyway. More to the point, his hold on his base is unclear, as demonstrated by the many followers who publicly boo him when he endorses COVID-19 vaccines.

For these reasons, a scenario in which Trump (or one of his allies) is designated president by the House of Representatives after the 2024 election probably belongs in the realm of political-thriller fiction.

Now consider the unlikely event that Trump were nominated and won a clear Electoral College or popular-vote majority in 2024. Rather than establish the white-nationalist dictatorship of progressive nightmares, an elderly second-term Trump would most likely be an even more ineffectual figurehead in a party dominated by conventional Republicans than he was in his first four years. If Italian democracy could survive three terms of Silvio Berlusconi as prime minister, American democracy can survive two terms of Trump.

None of this is to suggest that American democracy is not under threat. Populist demagogues like Trump are symptoms of a disease in the body politic. The real threat to American democracy is the disconnect between what the bipartisan US political establishment promises and what it delivers. This problem predates Trump by decades and helps to explain his rise.

Contrary to what was promised, globalization did not produce new and better jobs for most Americans in the high-tech "knowledge economy." Instead, the US has become dependent on China and other countries for basic manufactured goods, including drugs and medical equipment. Most US job creation over the last three decades has been in low-wage positions with few or no benefits.

Similarly, in the 2000s, America's financial elites claimed that the "Great Moderation" in global macroeconomic volatility represented a permanent "new normal." But it turned out to be dependent on asset bubbles that burst, causing the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent Great Recession. And US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya produced only outright failures or continuing quagmires.

Many of the architects of these colossal disasters have gone on to establish lucrative careers as respected experts. Few have suffered financial or reputational losses. When a national establishment fails so often and at such cost, and when mainstream media sources remain complicit in those failures, no one should be surprised if citizens look to alternative media sources, including crazy ones, or turn to outsider politicians, including narcissistic demagogues like Trump.

Americans must be on their guard to prevent corrupt politicians' illegal and immoral attempts to alter electoral results. But the real long-term threat to American democracy is the lack of popular trust in conventional politicians whose policies have repeatedly failed. And for that lack of public trust, American elites have nobody to blame but themselves.

The writer, Professor of Practice at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, is the author of The New Class War: Saving Democracy from the Managerial Elite (Portfolio, 2020).

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- That old law about 'an eye for an eye' leaves everybody blind. The time is always right to do the right thing. **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**
- It is a common experience that a problem difficult at night is resolved in the morning after the committee of sleep has worked on it. **JOHN STEINBECK**
- You have to find out what's right for you, so it's trial and error. You are going to be all right if you accept realistic goals for yourself. **TERI GARR**

LOL WALKING OVER THE RIVER



Two blondes were running from the cops as they had just been caught sneaking over the border into Mexico. They dashed up to a fence and climbed over it, lights and sirens ringing behind them. As they arrived on the other side, they

came face to face with a long river. One blonde said to the other, "Here I'll shine this flashlight over the water and you can walk across the beam of light." The other said, "What do you think I am, stupid!? I'll get halfway across and you'll turn it off!"



Dr P Dalai

WE SHOULD HAVE A FEELING OF SHAME TO BE AN INDIVIDUAL, A CITIZEN, AN AUTHOR, A DOCTOR, AN ARTIST, AND NAME WHATEVER THAT HAS A MIND AND CONSCIENCE. WE DEFINITELY NEED SHAME WHEN TRUTH HAS BEEN SUPPLANTED WITH POST-TRUTH



Michael Lind

By fixating on the January 6 Capitol Hill riot and Donald Trump's attempt to overturn the 2020 election, political and media elites can conveniently ignore the deeper problems afflicting American democracy. Yet only by identifying the system's true vulnerabilities can it be preserved

SPECTRUM NEIGHBOURHOOD

Strained Indo-Maldives relations



Asad Mirza

THE RELATIONS THAT WERE ONCE DESCRIBED AS ONE OF THE MOST VIBRANT AND DYNAMIC HAVE TURNED INTO ONE IN WHICH INDIA HAS BEEN PAINTED AS A VILLAIN

A lot has happened in the bilateral relations between India and Maldives during the last 10 years, especially during the tenure of during the tenure of President Yameen, who was considered to be pro-China rather than pro-India. The relations which were once described as one of the most vibrant and dynamic, have turned into one in which India has been painted as a villain. Though the genesis started 10 years back, yet it gathered further momentum during the last three years particularly, resulting in 'India Out' campaign on the social media.

Yameen was considered to be pro-China rather than pro-India. Yameen's half-brother, former President and currently Maldives Reform Movement party leader (MRM) Mamoona Abdul Ghayum, is among those who have opposed the campaign. Paradoxically though the Yameen government and its predecessor, the Waheed government, were considered "anti-India", and the Yameen government's tilt in favour of China was clear, yet it had also openly discussed an 'India-First' policy for the Maldives.

Other political parties in the Maldives too have opposed the anti-India campaign, saying the former President is irresponsibly inciting hatred among the people to-

wards India. The PPM brushing aside the charges against it, in its defence says that the current Ibrahim Solih government has opted at times to keep the relationship, particularly that under the defence sector under wraps from where the criticism basically stems from. The Adhaalath Party, a coalition partner of President Solih, in a statement condemned efforts to "incite hatred in the people's hearts towards neighbouring and global partners", and expressed concern at the "reckless acts led by former President Yameen to incite hatred towards neighbouring India amongst the civilians".

There are specific issues, which have fuelled the anti-India sentiments and rhetoric on the social media during the last three years. The first is the long-standing controversy over the two Advanced Light Helicopters given by India to the Maldives in 2010 and 2015. These helicopters were meant to be deployed for humanitarian purposes only, but some in the anti-India constituency, particularly the PPM, tried to portray that by gifting these helicopters, India was creating military presence in the country because they were military choppers.

Secondly, the two countries signed bilateral agreements according to

which Indian officers were to train the Maldives National Defence Force, under whose command these helicopters operate.

Thirdly, after the Solih government came to power, in 2019, local Maldivian media speculated that the UTF Harbour Project agreement signed between India and the Maldives in 2016, during the Yameen government, would be turned into an Indian naval base. Under the project India was to develop and maintain a coastguard harbour and dockyard at Uthuru Thilafalhu, a strategically located atoll near the capital Malé, and develop road connectivity to Male and decongest the Male harbour.

Back then, Maldivian Chief of Defence Forces, Major-General Abdulla Shamaal had said that while the Indian government had indicated that it would provide grant assistance for this project, there were no plans of any Indian naval base in the country. Fourthly, in 2016, an Action Plan between India and the Maldives was signed for 'defence cooperation' to enhance "shared strategic and security interests of the two countries in the Indian Ocean region".

In 2016 when anti-India sentiments were at their peak and the bilateral relations were at their worst against the perceived military

presence of Indian forces in Maldives, the Yameen government had asked India to take back these helicopters and refused to extend the term of the agreement that would extend their stay and use in the country.

Observers say that one of the main reasons behind the 'India Out' campaign was rooted in this controversy surrounding the ALF choppers and India's reported refusal to take them back. During the Yameen-era, India had looked on in concern as the Maldives began to develop stronger ties with China and its Belt and Road Initiative.

By 2018 when Ibrahim Mohamed Solih assumed office, he immediately renegotiated these agreements, extending the stay and use of these choppers in the country. The Solih government's visibly warm relations with India have only served to fuel anti-India sentiment in the country.

It is a fact that that much of the criticism levelled by the Maldivian Opposition and the 'India Out' campaign wouldn't have arisen had these bilateral agreements been publicly discussed in the Maldivian Parliament.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi.

Lighten up

Sir, The states have the enormous responsibility of guarding the citizens from threat and intimidation. However, every word written and spoken in jest need not be construed as offensive to the state. Criminal conspiracy, waging a war against the state, criminal intimidation by anonymous communication, among others, may be reserved for "real" enemies of the society. The police have to know their limits; they have to understand whether or not an offence is so grave as to impose such harsh sections of law on a person. A heading or photo caption on a private wall, or a Facebook page will have to be viewed with a pinch of salt. A FB page of a politician on a holiday, which claimed to "practice shooting", should not have merited even a second glance from a right thinking citizen let alone the police. But the jurisdictional police went a little too far: they arrested the politician and sought his police remand that was, fortunately, rejected by the judicial magistrate. When the case reached the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, the judge was amused by the police action and their inability to laugh at trivial things. In the course of the judgement, the judge opined that the "Right to be funny" can be a part of free speech under Article 19(1) of the Constitution. A crime, as beautifully summed up by the judge, involves four basic tenets: intent, preparation, attempt and accomplishment.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Derogatory slang

Sir, In July 2021, a list featuring Muslims women were offered for sale in auction on an app. They were up for sale...their pictures morphed in the most hideous way...crass comments written about them. The girls registered an FIR against app creators but what came out of it? Nothing! Rather another list of over 100 Muslim women was published January 1, 2022 named *Bulli Bai* deals – yet another attempt to auction women on app. This happened again because, earlier the criminals got away without punishment. *Sulli* is a derogatory slang used for Muslim girls and women by right wingers, perhaps because they are women, they are Muslims, free thinkers and successful. This happened repeatedly as the authorities cannot guarantee trial against the criminals and ensure protection of women. No doubt it is a conspiracy and it has been designed cunningly against the minorities. Strong voice should be raised against this deliberate degraded step.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

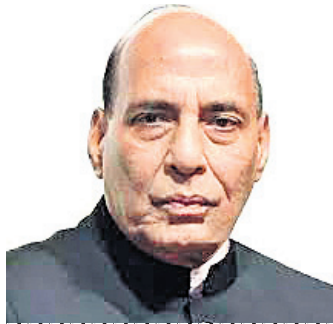
Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
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national



Pakistan will have to desist from its "mischievous activities" in Jammu and Kashmir
RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

INDIA'S FIRST OPEN ROCK MUSEUM COMES UP IN HYD

Union Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Jitendra Singh, inaugurated India's first Open Rock Museum, Thursday. The museum displays around 35 different varieties of rocks from different parts of India with ages ranging from 3.3 billion years to around 55 million years



of the day quote

Condolences to those whose loved ones lost their lives due to the gas leak accident in Surat. I wish the other victims a speedy recovery. Proper investigation should be done to prevent such accidents in future
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

India and other South Asian countries jointly face formidable developmental challenges and impediments which are amplified by the weak socio-economic status and the presence of communities dependent on natural resources
BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

Met corona infected healthcare workers at AIIMS New Delhi and inquired about their health. Our health army is playing an important role in keeping the country safe. The country is safe only when they are healthy
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Ashok Gehlot tests positive for Covid

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot Thursday said he has tested positive for coronavirus, the second time that he contracted the virus. "This evening I got my Covid test done which came positive. I have very mild symptoms and no other problems. All the people who came in contact with me are requested to isolate themselves and get their Covid test done," Gehlot tweeted. This is the second time that the 70-year-old has been infected with the virus.

NBW against Raj Thackeray

Beed: A local court in Parli of Maharashtra's Beed district has issued a non-bailable warrant against Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray for failing to appear before it in a 2008 case registered against him. A case was registered against Thackeray and MNS activists under sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 427 (mischief causing damage) and other relevant provisions of the IPC over an incident of stone pelting at Dharmapuri village in Parli taluka. Thackeray was arrested on October 22, 2008, following which MNS activists had staged a protest and pelted stones on MSRTC buses in Dharmapuri village, damaging one of the vehicles.

Terror module busted, 4 held

Srinagar: Police Thursday claimed to have busted a terrorist module in Srinagar city of Jammu and Kashmir, arresting four people including two active militants. The police came across movement of some suspicious individuals in Barzulla area while investigating killing of a property dealer in Safakadal area of the city last month, a police spokesman said. He said two suspects were nabbed by mobile search parties at Barzulla. The arrested militants were identified as Suhail Qadir Khanday and Suhail Mushtaq Waza, both residents of Pulwama district.

Man beaten to death in UP

Muzaffarnagar: A 50-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death by unknown persons at his home in a village in Shamli district Wednesday, police said. The victim was identified as Mahipal of Harsana village. Mahipal was found dead in a bed inside his house with injury marks on his body, police said.

COVID SURGE

Hospitalisations low in India

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 6: Indian megacities Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata are experiencing a surge in Covid-19 cases, although without a corresponding rise in hospitalisations, but fears are growing about a spread to rural areas in coming days.

India reported 90,928 new daily Covid-19 cases Thursday, up nearly four-fold since the start of the year, mostly from cities where health officials say the Omicron variant has overtaken Delta. The bulk of those infected have shown no or only mild symptoms and have recovered quickly at home, officials said.

The federal health ministry Wednesday identified Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Bangalore as some of the main regions of concern, although state officials worry the disease will soon spread to the countryside where health facilities are weaker.

Kolkata, a city of about 15 million, accounted for half of the new cases in the eastern state of West Bengal until a few days ago, but cases are now rising in neighbouring districts. The state has reported one of the highest rates of infections in India. "We are watching the situation in the districts and rural belts where the numbers are also growing," said Ajay Chakraborty, director of the West



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE | (PTI FILE PHOTO)

Bengal health services who has isolated himself at home after contracting the virus.

Many Covid beds in Kolkata were still empty, Chakraborty said. In the government-run Infectious Diseases and Beliaghata General Hospital, only 75 admissions were recorded on Tuesday despite more than 9,000 new cases, he added.

In the west, Mumbai recorded a new daily infection peak of 15,166 on Wednesday, well up on its previous high of just over 11,000 hit last year. Nearly 90% of new patients had shown no symptoms and only 8% were hospitalised, city officials said in a daily health bulletin.

Covid-19 cases nearly doubled in a day in Delhi to 10,665 Wednesday, but the state said only 7% of its Covid beds were occupied. Federal health officials, however, have warned even a large number of mild cases could put

pressure on the health system.

Daily Covid-19 deaths rose by 325 Thursday, taking the total to 482,876. Total infections are at 35.11 million, only behind the US tally.

Many Indian cities have already imposed night curfews and weekend lockdowns, as well as closed schools. Political rallies, however, have continued in several states where elections are due in the next few weeks and months.

DELHI WITNESSES MASSIVE CORONAVIRUS SURGE: In a massive surge, Delhi Thursday recorded 15,097 fresh Covid cases, the highest single-day rise since May 8, and six deaths while the positivity rate mounted to 15.34 per cent, even as Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the situation does not warrant a lockdown yet. Jain also asserted Delhi is in a comfortable position in terms of hospital bed occupancy.

SIX DEAD, 20 HOSPITALISED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gandhinagar, Jan 6: At least six people have died while 20 others have been hospitalised after inhaling toxic chemical that leaked from a printing mill in the Sachin GIDC area of Surat in the wee hours of Thursday.

The police said that the gas leaked from a tanker. Most of the affected people are daily wagers who were sleeping near the site, the police said.

According to preliminary reports, the police said, most of the workers died of suffocation. The condition of at least 15 others is stated to be critical, they said.

TOXIC GAS LEAK IN SURAT FACTORY



According to sources, the accident happened when the driver of a truck was pouring the chemical in a drain. It is believed that the chemical soon spread through sewers and other drains. However, the official confirmation on the cause of the accident is awaited. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel has expressed grief over the incident. Junior Minister for Law and Justice, Harsh Sanghavi, who hails from Surat, has also expressed grief.

Calling Tuting as 'DouDeng' does not alter facts: MEA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 6: India Thursday again rebuffed the Chinese propaganda of re-naming 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh region in the Indo-Sino area.

"We had seen reports of the Chinese side naming some places in Arunachal Pradesh last week. At that time, we had conveyed our views on such a ridiculous exercise to support untenable territorial claims. Calling Tuting as DouDeng or River Siyom as XiYueMu' or even Kibithu as 'Daba' does not alter the fact that Arunachal Pradesh has always been and will always remain an inalienable part of India. We hope that instead of engaging in such antics China will work constructively with us to resolve the outstanding friction points in areas along the Western Sector of the LAC in India-China border areas," said Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs Thursday.

Just before the new year eve, China, for the second time, re-named 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh region at the Indo-Sino border area, which included eight residential areas: Sangkazong and



Just before the new year eve, China, for the second time, re-named 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh region at the Sino-Indian border area

Daglungzong in Cona County, Mani'gang, Duding and Migpain in Medog County, Goling, Damba in Zayu County, and Majag in Lunzhe County; four mountains Wamo Ri, Dau Ri, Lhnzhub Ri and Kunmingxing Feng; two rivers Xanyogmo He and Dulain He, and a mountain pass Sa La.

In 2017, China issued a list of six places as the first instalment of standardised names. The Chinese land boundary law was passed by the state council in October, 2021, and enacted from January 1, 2022.

Top court to hear matters in virtual mode from today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 6: Amid the sudden spike in the number of Covid-19 cases, the Supreme Court Thursday decided to hear all matters in virtual mode from Friday.

According to a circular issued by the apex court administration, with effect from January 7, the benches will sit at the residential offices.

"Only extremely urgent 'mentioned' matters, fresh matters, bail matters, matters involving stay, detention matters and fixed date matters will be listed before the courts w.E.F (with effect from) January 10, 2022 till further orders," the circular said.

It said transfer petitions will be listed before the regular benches, instead of single judge bench, till further orders. The circular said till further orders, applications for exemption from surrendering will

also be listed before the regular benches, instead of chamber judge.

While hearing a matter Thursday, Chief Justice N V Ramana, who was heading a bench which also comprised Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, said unfortunately, again the problem of Covid-19 has started. On January 2, the apex court had decided to conduct all hearings in virtual mode for two weeks starting from January 3, in view of the rising number of cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19. The Supreme Court administration had issued a circular which stated that an earlier circular prescribing standard operating procedure (SOP) for physical hearing (hybrid hearing) will remain suspended for the time being.

On October 7 last year, it had issued the SOP stating matters that require lengthy hearings will be taken up on Wednesdays and Thursdays for physical hearing.



Women perform Kulvi Naati at Manali Winter Carnival in Manali

PTI PHOTO

Apex court sets aside Calcutta HC order

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 6: The Supreme Court Thursday set aside a Calcutta High Court verdict which stopped the transfer of disciplinary proceedings against former West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay from West Bengal to New Delhi.

Bandyopadhyay came into the limelight when he did not attend a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kolkata in the wake of Cyclone Yaas.

In a 37-page judgment, a bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and CT Ravikumar, while allowing the Centre's appeal against the high court verdict, said: "In the instant case, the High Court at Calcutta has

BENGAL EX-CHIEF SECY CASE



usurped jurisdiction to entertain the writ petition challenging the

order passed by the Central Administrative Tribunal, New Delhi, even after taking note of the fact that the principal bench of the tribunal does not lie within its territorial jurisdiction."

The top court also expunged some "scathing and disparaging remarks" made against the principal bench of the tribunal. "To observe sobriety, we say that the remarks made by the High Court were unwarranted, uncalled for and avoidable being sharp reaction on unfounded assumptions. Ergo, we have no hesitation to hold that they were wholly unnecessary for the purpose of deciding the correctness or otherwise of the order of transfer. Hence, they are liable to be expunged," it said.

70 yrs after extinction, cheetahs to return to Indian jungles

The 'Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India' mentions in detail the government's plan of action for cheetah translocation from Africa to Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, a project that was first conceived in 2009

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

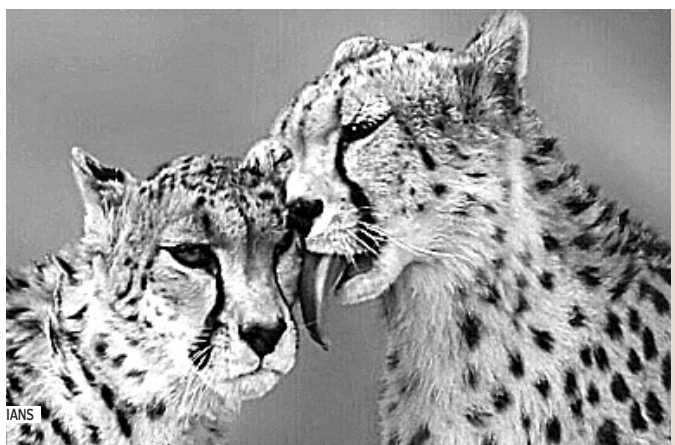
New Delhi, Jan 6: The introduction of cheetahs in India -- which are extinct for at least 70 years now -- will not just manage them as metapopulation, but the Environment Ministry also

plans to use cheetah to ultimately restore open spaces and enhance capacity for carbon sequestration as mitigation tool towards climate change.

"The primary aim is to establish a free-ranging population of cheetahs in and around KNP in Madhya Pradesh. Further, this population in KNP will be managed as a metapopulation with other two to three established populations of cheetah in India with occasional 'immigrants' brought in from Africa, as and when needed," said the Action Plan document released by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

Among the prominent aims, the first is to establish breeding cheetah population in safe habitats across its historical range and manage them as a metapopulation.

The document goes on to add, "To use the cheetah as a charismatic flagship and umbrella species to gar-



ner resources for restoring open forest and savanna systems that will benefit biodiversity and ecosystem services from these ecosystems" and "To enhance India's capacity to sequester carbon through ecosystem restoration activities

in cheetah conservation areas and thereby contribute towards the global climate change mitigation goals" are its two other aims.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change also aims at using the ensuing oppor-

tunity for eco-development and ecotourism to enhance local community livelihoods and to manage any conflict by cheetah or other wildlife with local communities within cheetah conservation areas expeditiously through compensation, awareness, and management actions to win community support.

About 12-14 cheetahs (8-10 males and 4-6 females) from various parks/reserves/areas that are ideal for establishing a new cheetah population would be imported as required from South Africa/Namibia /other African countries, as a founder stock for five years initially and then as may be required by the programme.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) would provide financial and administrative support to the cheetah introduction programme and a stand-alone budget for Project Cheetah has

been earmarked as a part of the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT) of the Government of India.

"A long-term (at least 25 years) Cheetah Programme involving financial, technical and administrative commitments need to be guaranteed by the Central and the state governments to adhere to the Action Plan. Cheetah conservation should become a part of the mandate of the NTCA and under the Project Tiger Scheme of funding by the Forest Ministry. Financial commitments should be flexible to accommodate rational changes to a translocation and population establishment plan during implementation and subsequent monitoring," the document mentioned. The Action Plan document also mentions criterion for success (of the project) and an exit plan.

FOUR EX-J&K CMs LOSE SSG COVER

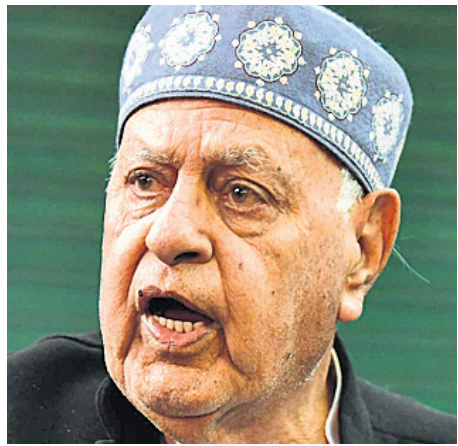
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Jan 6: The Jammu and Kashmir government has decided to withdraw the elite special security group (SSG) cover to four former Chief Ministers of the state and their immediate family members.

These former Chief Ministers are - Dr Farooq Abdullah, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah. The decision was taken after a security review meeting headed by J&K Lt governor Manoj Sinha held recently that the former chief ministers and their immediate family members did not need elite group protection since the normal security wing of the local police, augmented by the close protection team (CPT) drawn from the SSG, would be enough.

The SSG created by an Act of the state legislature in 2000 cannot be wound up as such since that would need legislation by the Parliament because in the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019 it was decided to dispense with SSG cover to former chief ministers, but not the disbanding of the SSG.

The proposal that the downsized SSG should be headed by an officer below the rank of a superintendent of police has administrative complications, as per administrative sources



The proposal that the downsized SSG should be headed by an officer below the rank of a superintendent of police has administrative complications, as per administrative sources



The SSG would administratively remain downsized, but legally intact since it would in future have to protect the Chief Minister when an elected government takes office in J&K



local security wing while their NSG cover remains unchanged.

In case of Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, the other two former Chief Ministers protected by the SSG, the protective responsibility will be shifted from the SSG to the local security wing. One ground impact of the withdrawal of SSG cover to four former chief ministers would be that their immediate family members will lose the elite group protection.

The SSG would administratively remain downsized, but legally intact since it would in future have

to protect the Chief Minister when an elected government takes office in J&K.

One big reason that the organisation is being downsized, but not disbanded is that an elected Chief Minister would be in office most probably this year since the delimitation commission is likely to submit its final recommendations by the end of March 2022. After the delimitation process is complete, constitutionally the Assembly elections will have to be held, which would give J&K its first elected government as a union territory.

tendent of police has administrative complications, as per administrative sources. "To address the administrative hiccup, the decision needs to be reviewed, but the government is firm on withdrawal of the elite cover to former chief ministers." Once implemented, men, bullet proof vehicles and technical equipment would be

shifted from the SSG to the local security wing that would in turn protect the former chief ministers. "Of these, two including Dr Farooq Abdullah and Ghulam Nabi Azad are having National Security Guard (NSG) cover in addition to the SSG protection. In their case, the SSG component would be replaced by the component provided by the

TMC looking to widen alliance

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Jan 6: Is the Trinamool Congress in Goa trying to widen its alliance network for the upcoming Goa polls? According to the party's current and only alliance partner, the Maharashtratrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), the alliance between the two parties may well see another party sewn in together in a matter of days.

MGP MLA and senior party leader Sudin Dhavalikar has claimed that the name of the third alliance partner would be revealed by January 10. "The main thing is, if another party joins us, then we will have to make some adjustments. We want to form a government by keeping the Congress and the BJP aside," Dhavalikar said Wednesday.

"I will not declare the name of the third party. By the 10th (January 10) after the imposition of the code of conduct and when forms are being filled at that time this will be disclosed," he also said. Interestingly, Dhavalikar and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Kejriwal had met in July last year at a hotel in Goa. While the MGP leader had described the



The main thing is, if another party joins us, then we will have to make some adjustments. We want to form a government by keeping the Congress and BJP aside

SUDIN DHAVALIKAR | MGP MLA

meeting as a "courtesy call" to meet a visiting Chief Minister.

The Trinamool and the AAP are going full throttle to make a mark in the electoral politics in Goa ahead of the 2022 Assembly polls. Both parties do not have a single legislator in the outgoing state legislative Assembly.

UAE's LuLu Group to set up food processing hub in Srinagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 6: The Jammu and Kashmir government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Dubai-based Lulu group to set up a food processing and logistics hub in Srinagar, officials said.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha termed it as a "historic agreement" and said the trade between Jammu & Kashmir and Dubai has remained steady reflects the resilience of our deep economic linkages.

The J&K government signed an MoU with the LuLu Group to set up a food processing and logistics hub in Srinagar, in the presence of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and LuLu group Chairman Yusuff Ali M A on Wednesday, an official spokesman said on Thursday.

This historic agreement was signed by J&K Principal Secretary (Industries & Commerce) Ranjan Prakash Thakur and LuLu Group Executive Director Ashraf Ali M A at Dubai, where Sinha also inaugurated J&K promotion week at the LuLu hypermarket.

The Lieutenant Governor said the MoU with the LuLu group will further expand Jammu & Kashmir-Dubai collaboration and Jammu Kashmir-LuLu Group partnership. "Relations between India and the UAE are long-standing and deep-rooted. People-to-people contact and trade have seen momentum in the recent years under the

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MANOJ SINHA TERMED IT AS A "HISTORIC AGREEMENT"

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The world-famous GI-tagged saffron has been launched at LuLu Hypermarket, which is a major step towards boosting the Jammu & Kashmir-Dubai partnership, he said. Sinha added that the LuLu group is already importing apples from Jammu & Kashmir and with saffron, "we are adding Kashmir's finest spice to the basket".

"I am certain this new beginning will take our trade to unprecedented levels," he said. Sinha added that the trade between Jammu & Kashmir and Dubai has remained steady, despite COVID-19 challenges and it reflects the resilience of its deep economic linkages. "The MoU will further expand Jammu Kashmir-Dubai collaboration and Jammu Kashmir-LuLu Group partnership."

Jammu & Kashmir is number one in the production of Saffron, Apple, Walnut and Almond in India. The MoU with the LuLu group will help the UT reach out to shoppers at 190 LuLu Hypermarkets across the GCC and Egypt.



WITH GOVT. OF JAMMU & KASHMIR PROCESSING & LOGISTICS HUB IN SRINAGAR 2022 - LuLu Hypermarket - Dubai, UAE



People push out a vehicle stuck on a snow-covered road after fresh snowfall at Patnitop hill near Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, about 115 km from Jammu

Curbs needed on large political gatherings: Kamat

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Jan 6: Leader of Opposition Digambar Kamat Thursday urged the BJP-led coalition government in Goa to impose restrictions on large events, including politics rallies, even as the state's Covid positivity rate has scaled nearly 27 per cent.

"I feel it is time to take this seriously. Deaths have also started occurring over the last two days. The cases have multiplied and the (positivity) rate has reached 27 per cent from 2-3 per cent. There is a need for restrictions on big events. There should be restrictions on the large election meetings," Kamat, a former Chief Minister, said here.

Wednesday, Goa logged 1,002 new cases, the first time that Covid cases crept above the four-figure mark in months. Kamat also raised questions about the government's seriousness in regulating entry of



persons into the state, adding that checking of vaccination certificates or monitoring travellers into Goa was only being carried out at airports for now.

"Covid cases have crossed 1000. I feel there is a need to put restrictions on gatherings. There is

Kamat said that the decision was up to the Election Commission of India.

"That is with the Election Commission (of India). I cannot

Covid cases have crossed 1,000. I feel there is a need to put restrictions on gatherings. There is no checking on entry points. It is only being carried out at airports. I do not know if the government is taking this seriously

DIGAMBAR KAMAT

comment on it, because elections are not just held in Goa but in five states. So any decision taken will be taken for five states. Only ECI can take such a decision."

Goa confers 'lifelong Cabinet status' on Pratapsingh Rane

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Jan 6: The BJP-led coalition government has decided to grant a 'lifelong Cabinet status' to the state's senior-most lawmaker and sitting Congress MLA Pratapsingh Rane for his "great service" to Goa, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said Thursday.

"Our government has decided to grant lifelong Cabinet status to the senior most legislator, Shri Pratapsingh Rane ji, for his great service to Goa. He has held the topmost positions in the state as the Chief Minister and Speaker of Goa Legislative Assembly," Sawant said.

70 ha of land in Gulmarg, Sonamarg declared 'strategic areas'

THE ARMED FORCES CAN UNDERTAKE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT EVEN IN ECOLOGICALLY FRAGILE AREAS WHICH ARE DECLARED "STRATEGIC AREAS" BY THE GOVERNMENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Jan 6: The Jammu and Kashmir government has declared nearly 70 hectares of land in Gulmarg and Sonamarg tourist resorts of the valley as "strategic areas", paving the way for the armed forces to take control of these land patches.

The armed forces can undertake infrastructure development even in ecologically fragile areas which are declared "strategic areas" by the government. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti criticised the government move, saying the allocation of huge tracts of land to armed forces in tourist areas of Jammu and Kashmir confirmed the in-



Intention of the Centre to "convert J&K into a military garrison". According to an order issued in Jammu December 31, 2021 by the Tourism Department of Jammu and Kashmir, 1,034 kanals (ap-

proximately 52 hectares) of land at the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in Baramulla district and 354 (approximately 18 hectares) kanals in Sonmarg, another popular destination in Ganderbal district, were declared as "strategic areas" for the use of armed forces in the region.

The Corps Commander will look over strict adherence to the environment-related laws to prevent any environmental hazard and ensure that no other law applicable in the union territory of J&K is breached, the order said. "Corp Commander shall ensure that the orders, if any, passed by a hon'ble court/tribunal in this regard, are strictly adhered to," the order reads. This was the first notification is-

sued by the administration of the union territory after the amendment to Jammu and Kashmir Development Act 1970 by the Union Home Ministry in October 2020 through an executive order.

The Administrative Council headed by the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir gave its nod to the amendment to the Control of Building Operations Act 1988 and the J&K Development Act, 1970 to provide for special dispensation for carrying out construction activities in strategic areas. As per the amendments, the armed forces can undertake infrastructure development even in ecologically fragile areas which are declared as "strategic areas" by the government.

national

of the day quote

Exchanged New Year's greetings with FM Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen of Bangladesh. 2021 was a demonstration of our deep solidarity and friendship. Agreed that we must build further on that foundation in 2022. Congratulated him on the cricket victory in New Zealand

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

Till now Amit Shah is avoiding meeting the MPs. The Home Minister refusing to meet the Parliamentarians in a democracy is an affront to the honour of democracy

MK STALIN | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

Just like the manner in which the BJP government here (Assam) had reined in the anti-CAA agitation by killing five people, they wanted our Congress government in Punjab to kill the protestors. But that is not in the Congress culture to use violence on citizens

BHUPEN KUMAR BORAH | ASSAM PRADESH CONGRESS COMMITTEE (APCC) PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

SP leader booked for remarks against PM

Meerut/UP: Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Atul Pradhan was booked after a video in which he can be heard calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'liar', went viral on the social media. The Meerut police took suo motu cognisance of the same and lodged an FIR. Pradhan said that he had not said or done anything wrong and the BJP government was "misusing its powers by booking all those who are raising their voice against the ruling party."

Ker CM to fly to US for treatment

Thiruvananthapuram: Time and again especially when the Left rules Kerala, there is always a talk on the excellent health system that the state has, but when it comes to taking treatment, their leaders make a beeline to the West and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is all set to leave for the US for expert medical treatment January 15. Vijayan is being accompanied by his wife and his personal assistant and would return January 29.

Nityanand Rai tests Covid +ve

New Delhi: Union Minister Nityanand Rai tested positive for Covid-19 Thursday, a day after he attended an event where chiefs of Central Armed Police Forces were present. Rai, 56, a Lok Sabha member from Bihar, is Union Minister of State for Home Affairs. "I have tested positive for Covid. I have completely isolated myself. People who came in contact with me are requested to take necessary steps," Rai tweeted in Hindi. On Wednesday, the minister attended an event where Ayushman health cards were distributed among CAPF personnel.

Man gets lifer for raping, killing minor

Muzaffarnagar: A Special POCSCO Court here Thursday sentenced a 27-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping and killing a minor girl last July. The accused Sunil Kumar was also imposed with a fine of Rs 45,000 in addition to the sentence awarded by Judge Sanjiv Kumar Tiwari. Kumar was convicted under sections 376, 302, and 201 of the Indian Penal Code, and 5 and 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.



Barely 700 people turned up for the BJP rally and that forced the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to retrace his steps and later the blame was pinned on the state government citing security threats

CHARANJIT CHANNI | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

CABINET NOD TO BRIDGE OVER RIVER MAHAKALI

There soon will be a bridge over river Mahakali at Indo-Nepal border, as the Union Cabinet Thursday approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Nepal for construction of the bridge at Dharchula at Indian side and Nepal side



Indians careless despite Omicron

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 6: As the third wave of Covid grips India, the IANS-C Voter Omicron Snap Poll reveals shocking levels of carelessness and nonchalance by Indians.

The snap poll had a sample size of 1,942. To a question if people were generally wearing masks and taking precautions, only 21.8 per cent of the respondents agreed that people were indeed wearing masks and taking precautions.

In sharp contrast, 41.5 per cent said wearing of masks and other precautions were being followed "only sometimes" while another 33.8 per cent said they were mostly not being followed.

In effect, 3 out of every four Indian are still not taking the basic preventive steps against Corona despite repeated warnings, exhortations and threats by the government, scientists and doctors.

This is happening at a time when there is virtual unanimity that the third wave of Covid led this time by the super spreading Omicron variant has already arrived in India and is heading rapidly towards a peak.

A recent study by IIT Kanpur suggests that the peak of the third wave would be reached anytime between the first and second week of February this year. It has also been established unequivocally that the Omicron variant breaches through the defences of people who have al-



NO LESSONS LEARNT FROM 2ND WAVE

New Delhi: In a display of somewhat depressing respondents, Indians seem to feel that most of them don't seem to have learnt proper lessons from the deadly and devastating second wave of the pandemic, as per IANS - C Voter Omicron Snap Poll. The snap poll had a sample size of 1,942. When asked if Indians were repeating exactly the same mistakes made before the second wave 52.2 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that Indians were indeed making the same mistakes by holidaying, attending and throwing parties, going to weddings and other functions and participating in political rallies. Another 24.1 per cent felt that at least some of the mistakes were being repeated. Only 13.4 per cent felt that Indians were not repeating the same mistakes. In effect, more than three in four Indians are admitting that they are repeating the pre second wave mistakes. This could have serious repercussions as a massive third wave could once again overwhelm the precarious health infrastructure of the country.

ready taken two doses of the vaccine.

There has been a massive increase in the number of infections in major metro cities, particularly Mumbai and Delhi. In Delhi, the positivity rate shot up to an alarming 11.6 per cent by January, 2022 and more than 150 patients are on oxygen support

with about 22 on ventilator support.

Authorities, hospitals and doctors will find it difficult to manage yet another surge unless ordinary Indian citizens realise the true gravity of the situation and come out of the comfort zone of thinking that the Omicron variant is very mild.

EC reviews Covid, law & order situation in poll-bound states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 6: The Election Commission Thursday reviewed the Covid situation with the Union health secretary and health experts, collecting inputs on necessary safety measures to be ensured during the democratic exercise and emphasising the need for vaccination of all eligible people in five poll-bound states, sources said.

In a separate meeting, the poll panel discussed the law and order situation in the five states - Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur - with Union Home

Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

Elections are due in the five states and the Commission is expected to announce poll dates in the next few days.

Besides Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, the meeting to assess the Covid situation was also attended by AIIMS director Randeep Guleria and ICMR's Balram Bhargava, sources aware of the interactions said.

The poll panel carried out a "complete review" of the Covid status and took inputs from medical experts on "safety measures to be ensured" during campaigning

and polling. It stressed to the health secretary the need to ensure complete vaccination for all eligible persons, the sources said.

Elections are due in the five states and the Commission is expected to announce poll dates in the next few days.

Meanwhile, the election expenditure limit for candidates has been hiked to Rs 95 lakh from Rs 70 lakh for Lok Sabha elections and to Rs 40 lakh from Rs 28 lakh for assembly elections, the Election Commission said on Thursday citing a Law Ministry notification.

125 air passengers from Italy test Covid+ve in Amritsar



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Jan 6: High drama was witnessed Thursday after 125 of 179 international passengers, who arrived at Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport Rajasansi, near here, from Italy, in an Air India flight tested positive on arrival.

The Covid passengers were asked to quarantine in local hospital as per the guidelines of the government.

Confirming the development, airport Director VK Seth told the media: "A total of 125 passengers of Air India's Italy-Amritsar flight have tested positive for Covid-19 on arrival."

"It took two hours to conduct the RT-PCR test. We have asked the passengers to follow government guidelines. The state authorities was informed in this regard." Angered over the health protocol, passengers raised slogans against the government and demanded it to allow them to go to their homes.

Relatives of the passengers too staged a protest.

GEARING UP

Delhi Police personnel during rehearsals for the Republic Day parade on a cold winter morning in New Delhi, Thursday

PTI PHOTO



RPF saved 601 lives in '21 on railway premises

RPF PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN AWARDED WITH NINE JEEWAN RAKSHA MEDALS AND ONE GALLANTRY MEDAL BY THE PRESIDENT IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR EFFORTS IN SAVING LIVES IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 6: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) saved the lives of 601 people and rescued 630 others from human traffickers during 2021, according to an official statement issued Thursday.

It retrieved luggage worth over Rs 23 crore and escorted 522 oxygen special trains last year.

The RPF also ensured implementation of Covid-appropriate

behaviour at trains and stations. Twenty-six RPF personnel died after contracting Covid while on duty, the statement said.

During 2021, RPF personnel saved the lives of 601 people. Head Constable Gyan Chand laid down his life while saving a woman attempting to commit suicide in March 2021 at Bharwari Railway Station, NCR (UP).

Under "Mission Jeewan Raksha", the RPF has saved the lives of 1,650

people in the last four years. The Railway Protection Force also deployed 244 "Meri Saheli" teams at major railway stations across India for the safety of women.

Other preventive measures to ensure security of passengers, especially women, include train escorting, CCTV system at 840 stations and about 4,000 coaches, women escorts in women special suburban trains, regular drives against unauthorised passengers in women coaches, etc. are also being implemented.

The RPF, which is an immediate responder in cases of human trafficking through rail transport and plays a key role in curbing this menace, rescued 630 people, in-



cluding 54 women, 94 girls, 81 men and 401 boys. It also rescued more than 11,900 children in need of care and protection. A total of 132 child help desks are functional

across the country. Last year, the RPF arrested more than 3,000 criminals involved in offences against passengers and handed them over to the

Good news for heart patients

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur (UP), Jan 6: Have a heart - there is good news for those with a weak one. The School of Medical Research and Technology (SMRT) of IIT Kanpur has announced the launch of Hridayantra, a challenge-based programme to develop an advanced artificial heart, also called Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD), for patients with end-stage heart failure.

According to an official statement, a LVAD or artificial heart is a pump used in patients with end-stage heart failure as a bridge while awaiting a heart transplant or as a destination therapy for those unable to go in for a transplant.

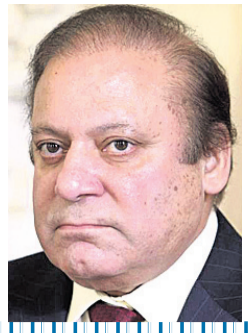
It is an implantable battery-operated, mechanical pump, which helps the left ventricle (main pumping chamber of the heart) pump blood to the rest of the body. The programme has been launched in collaboration with India's leading hospitals and will be steered by a team of innovators with relevant experience selected under the mentorship of a task force comprising industry experts, the institute said.



The School of Medical Research and Technology of IIT Kanpur has announced the launch of Hridayantra, a challenge-based programme to develop an advanced artificial heart

IIT-K director Prof Abhay Karandikar said: "The programme that provides an innovative platform for enterprising problem solvers will not only enrich the health ecosystem of the country, but will also lead the way in interdisciplinary biomedical research and innovation. This is also a step towards realising the vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) by supporting indigenous talent with critical research and development support."

international



Finally, 'Mr Clean' has been exposed as a corrupt and dishonest political con-man. Divine justice is done, only the legal one remains to be seen & done
NAWAZ SHARIF | FORMER PM, PAKISTAN

IRAN: MASS FUNERAL FOR '80S WAR DEAD

Thousands of mourners poured into the streets of Iranian cities Thursday for the mass funeral of 250 victims of the war whose remains were recently recovered from former battlefields, a testament to the brutal conflict's widespread scale and enduring legacy 35 years later



of the day quote

Both Germany and the US see Russia's actions toward Ukraine as an immediate and urgent challenge to peace and stability in Europe. We condemn Russia's military buildup on Ukraine's borders
ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

We see that all ingredients for civil war are now on the table in Myanmar. There are two governments, several armed forces, people undergoing the civil disobedience movement, and guerrilla warfare
PRAK SOKHONN | FOREIGN MIN, CAMBODIA

I must say I am disappointed. We have been mounting an all-out effort in fighting the epidemic. As top government officials, there is all the more reason for us to set a good example and avoid attending private gatherings that may pose a major hazard
CARRIE LAM | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HONG KONG

SHORT TAKES

Firefighters leave SA Parl

Cape Town: Firefighters have left South Africa's Parliament complex and handed over responsibility for it to police four days after a major blaze destroyed the main chamber of the country's national legislature, authorities said Thursday. A man suspected of starting Sunday's fire was arrested and has appeared in court on charges of housebreaking, theft, arson and contravention of a South African security law that restricts access to government buildings.

Sudanese take to streets again

Cairo: Thousands of Sudanese took to the streets in the capital of Khartoum and other cities once again Thursday to protest the October military coup, while security forces fired tear gas to disperse the crowd. Activists have posted live videos on the social media showing protesters waving the Sudanese flag in several cities and chanting: "Power to the people!" and "The military belongs in the barracks!"

China to appoint spl envoy to HoA

Nairobi: China's foreign minister says his country will appoint a special envoy to the Horn of Africa region, where Ethiopia and Eritrea have been fighting forces from Ethiopia's Tigray region and Somalia is in the grip of a political crisis caused by a long-delayed election. Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in comments to reporters during his Thursday visit to Kenya, didn't say when the appointment would be made. He urged countries in the Horn of Africa, a strategic but at times turbulent region, to hold a peace conference and said China's envoy could provide "necessary support" for that process.

'Space station will be ready this year'

Beijing: China has said that its space station, stated to be a major strategic asset in space, will be ready for operations this year, providing a bird's-eye view of the world. Once ready, China will be the only country to own a space station of its own as the International Space Station (ISS) of Russia is a collaborative project of several countries. In an announcement Wednesday, the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASTC) said that the country will complete the building of the space station in 2022.

In S Korea, hair loss emerges as new election issue

Seoul, Jan 6: South Korean presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung isn't bald. But he is enjoying the support of many bald voters over his push for government payments for hair loss treatments. Since his proposal was disclosed earlier this week, hair loss has emerged as a hot-button topic ahead of March's presidential vote in South Korea, where previous elections have focused on

North Korea's nuclear program, relations with the US, scandals and economic problems. Online communities for bald people are flooded with messages supporting his proposal. There is also strong criticism that it's just a populism-driven campaign pledge by Lee, the governing party candidate, to win votes. Messages on social media include, "Jae-myung bro. I love you. I'll plant you in the Blue House" and "Your Excellency, Mr



President! You're giving new hope to bald people for the first time in Korea." Lee told reporters

Please, let us know what has been inconvenient for you over hair-loss treatments and what must be reflected in policies. I'll present a perfect policy on hair-loss treatment
LEE JAE-MYUNG | PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF RULING DEMOCRATIC PARTY

program. "Please, let us know what has been inconvenient for you over hair-loss treatments and what must be reflected in policies," Lee wrote on Facebook. "I'll present a perfect policy on hair-loss treatment." Lee, an outspoken liberal, is leading public opinion surveys. Some critics have called him a dangerous populist. "Lee's idea may appear to be a necessary step for many people worrying about their hair loss but it's nothing but serious populism, given

that it would worsen the financial stability of the state insurance program," the conservative Munhwa Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial Thursday. Currently, the government-run insurance program does not cover hair loss related to aging and hereditary factors. Hair loss treatments are only supported if the loss is caused by certain diseases. Reports say one in every five South Koreans suffers from hair loss.

Russia sends troops to Kazakhstan

THE SWIFT ARRIVAL OF RUSSIAN TROOPS DEMONSTRATED THE KREMLIN'S STRATEGY OF RAPIDLY DEPLOYING FORCE TO SAFEGUARD ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IN THE EX-SOVIET UNION

Almaty, Jan 6: Russia sent paratroopers into Kazakhstan Thursday to help put down a countrywide uprising after deadly violence spread across the tightly controlled former Soviet state. Police said they had killed dozens of rioters in the Central Asian country's main city Almaty. State television said 13 members of the security forces had died, including two found decapitated. A presidential residence and the mayor's office in the city were both ablaze, Reuters journalists said. By Thursday afternoon, the city's airport, seized earlier by protesters, was under firm control of military personnel. Burnt out cars littered the streets.



POLICE SAY THEY HAVE KILLED DOZENS OF RIOTERS IN ALMATY
2,000 PROTESTERS ARRESTED, GOVERNMENT SAYS
13 MEMBERS OF SECURITY FORCES KILLED, ASTATE TV REPORTED
PRESIDENT CALLS IN RUSSIAN TROOPS AS PART OF MOSCOW-LED ALLIANCE

PRESIDENT KASSYM-JOMART TOKAYEV BLAMED THE UNREST ON FOREIGN-TRAINED TERRORISTS WHO HE SAID HAD SEIZED BUILDINGS AND WEAPONS

police, marched through billowing tear gas along a tree-lined avenue, to the sound of detonations. The internet had been shut down across the country and the full extent of the violence was impossible to confirm. But the unrest was unprecedented for Kazakhstan, ruled firmly since Soviet times

by leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, 81, who had held on to the reins despite stepping down three years ago as president. "ATTACK ON OUR CITIZENS" Nazarbayev's hand-picked successor, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, called in forces from ally

Russia overnight as part of a Moscow-led military alliance of ex-Soviet states. He blamed the unrest on foreign-trained terrorists who he said had seized buildings and weapons. "It is an undermining of the integrity of the state and most importantly it is an attack on our citizens who are asking me... to help them urgently," he said. Moscow said it would consult with Kazakhstan and allies on further measures to support the Kazakh authorities' counter-terrorist operation and called the uprising a foreign-inspired attempt to undermine the country's security by force. Neither Kazakhstan nor Russia provided evidence to support the claim of foreign involvement. The secretariat of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation said advanced units of Russian paratroopers were in the country and had already begun to fulfil their assigned tasks. Troops being sent included units from Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as Russia, the secretariat said. It did not disclose the overall size of the force. Western countries have called for calm. Neighbour China called the events an internal matter for Kazakhstan.

Trump's web of lies poses threat to US democracy: Biden

Washington, Jan 6: President Joe Biden Thursday accused his predecessor Donald Trump of posing a continuing threat to American democracy in a speech on the anniversary of the deadly US Capitol attack by Trump supporters who tried to overturn his 2020 election defeat. Speaking at the white-domed building that was the scene of the Jan 6, 2021, riot, Biden warned that Trump's false claims that the election was stolen from him through widespread voting fraud could unravel the rule of law and undermine future elections. We must be absolutely clear about what is true and what is a lie. Here's the truth, "A former President of the United States of America has created and spread a web of lies about the 2020 election. He's done so because he values power over principle." Biden added. Launching such a direct attack on Trump - though Biden never actually said his predecessor's name during the speech - was a departure for the president, who has spent most of his first year in office fo-



A former President of the United States of America has created and spread a web of lies about the 2020 election. He's done so because he values power over principle
JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

cused on pursuing his own agenda rather than looking backward. But Democrats, a handful of Republicans and many independent observers have warned that the damage done by Trump's efforts to undermine faith in the election he lost to Biden lingers on. The former president and his supporters have decided the only way for them to win is to suppress your vote and subvert our elections, Biden said.

Af, Pak trade barbs over border fencing

Kabul/New Delhi, Jan 6: Kabul and Islamabad have again traded barbs over the fencing of the Durand Line that forms the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, with both sides sticking to their guns, Pajhwok News reported. Taliban border force commander Maulvi Sanaullah Sangin vowed Wednesday that the Islamic Emirate would not allow fencing on the disputed British-era frontier. Speaking to a private TV channel, Sangin said, "We will never allow border fencing to continue... We will not allow it anymore." Sangin's remarks came in reaction to Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's statement that the Durand Line spat would be resolved through diplomatic channels. Also Wednesday, Major General Babar Iftikhar, the Director-General of Pakistan Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), insisted that the fencing project would continue as planned. The blood of martyred soldiers had gone into erecting the fence, Iftikhar said.

Aus, Japan ink defence pact amid China worry



Sydney, Jan 6: The leaders of Japan and Australia signed a "landmark" defence agreement Thursday that allows closer co-operation between their militaries and stands as a rebuke to China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met in a virtual summit to sign the Reciprocal Access Agreement, the first such defense pact signed by Japan with any country other than the United States. The agreement follows more than

a year of talks between Japan and Australia aimed at breaking down legal barriers to allow the troops of one country to enter the other for training and other purposes. "Japan is our closest partner in Asia as demonstrated by our special strategic partnership - Australia's only such partnership," Morrison said. "An equal partnership, shared trust between two great democracies committed to the rule of law, human rights, free trade and a free and open Indo-Pacific." Kishida hailed the agreement as "a landmark instrument which will elevate security cooperation between the nations to new heights." While China wasn't mentioned, its significance at the signing was implicit. Japan's ambassador to Australia, Shingo Yamagami, said "in light of the deteriorating security environment, what Japan and Australia can do together is first of all to increase deterrence."

CALL FOR BOYCOTT



Activists take part in a protest against China's treatment of the ethnic Uyghur people and call for a boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, at a park Jakarta, Indonesia

Scientists explore Thwaites, Antarctica's 'doomsday' glacier

Antarctica: A team of scientists are sailing to "the place in the world that's the hardest to get to" so they can better figure out how much and how fast seas will rise because of global warming eating away at Antarctica's ice. Thirty-two scientists Thursday are starting a more than two-month mission aboard an American research ship to investigate the crucial area where the massive but melting Thwaites glacier faces the Amundsen Sea and may eventually lose large amounts of ice because of warm water. The Florida-sized glacier has gotten the nickname the "doomsday glacier" because of how much ice it has and how much seas could rise if it all melts - more

than two feet over hundreds of years. Because of its importance, the United States and the United Kingdom are in the midst of a joint \$50 million mission to study Thwaites, the widest glacier in the world by land and sea. Not near any of the continent's research stations, Thwaites is on Antarctica's western half, east of the jutting Antarctic Peninsula, which used to be the area scientists worried most about. "Thwaites is the main reason I would say that we have so large an uncertainty in the projections of future sea level rise and that is because it's a very remote area, difficult to reach," Anna Wahlin, an oceanographer from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, said Wednesday in an interview from



the Research Vessel Nathaniel B. Palmer, which was scheduled to leave its port in Chile hours later. "It is configured in a way so that it's potentially unstable. And that

is why we are worried about this." Thwaites is putting about 50 billion tons of ice into the water a year. The British Antarctic Survey says the glacier is responsible for 4% of global sea rise, and the conditions leading to it to lose more ice are accelerating, University of Colorado ice scientist Ted Scambos said from

the McMurdo land station last month. No one has stepped foot before on the key ice-water interface at Thwaites before. In 2019, Wahlin was on a team that explored the area from a ship using a robotic ship but never went ashore. Wahlin's team will use two robot ships - her own large one called Ran, which she used in 2019 and the more agile Boaty McBoatface, the crowdsourced named drone that could go further under the area of Thwaites that protrudes over the ocean - to get under Thwaites. The ship-bound scientists will be measuring water temperature, the sea floor and ice thickness. They'll look at cracks in the ice, how the ice is structured and tag seals on islands off the glacier.

3-WAY MELTING
■ MELTING FROM BELOW BY OCEAN WATER
■ THE LAND PART OF THE GLACIER "IS LOSING ITS GRIP" TO THE PLACE IT ATTACHES TO THE SEABED, SO A LARGE CHUNK CAN COME OFF INTO THE OCEAN AND LATER MELT
■ THE GLACIER'S ICE SHELF IS BREAKING INTO HUNDREDS OF FRACTURES LIKE A DAMAGED CAR WINDSHIELD. THIS IS WHAT SCIENTISTS FEAR WILL BE THE MOST TROUBLESOME WITH 10-KM LONG CRACKS FORMING IN JUST A YEAR

business

of the day quote

Folks. Chill! It's a FAKE audio by some scamster trying to extort funds (US\$ 240K in Bitcoins). I refused to buckle. I've got more character. And the Internet has got enough scamsters

The government would now prioritise the fight against high inflation; we have abandoned orthodox policies. We have put aside orthodox policies, now it is heterodox policies

We have maintained a 15-17 per cent growth till third quarter, and unless the fresh restrictions aggravate the business scenario, we expect revenue of ₹625-650 crore

SHORT TAKES

Bitcoin nears multi-month low

Hong Kong: Bitcoin fell below \$43,000 Thursday, testing multi-month lows after minutes from the Federal Reserve's last meeting showed it leaning toward more aggressive policy action, which sapped investor appetite for riskier assets. The world's largest cryptocurrency was last at \$42,700, down 1.7%, having lost 5.2% Wednesday. A break below last month's trough of \$42,000 would make it the weakest since September. The token hit a record high of \$69,000 in November.

Vibrant Gujarat Summit postponed

Ahmedabad: The 10th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was scheduled to be held between January 10 and 12 in Gandhinagar. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit has been postponed considering the sudden increase in COVID-19 cases in the state. One of the organisers, asking not to be named, has said the physical event stands cancelled. Earlier, Gujarat Health Minister Rushikesh Patel had said that the state government was "determined" to organise the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit on the scheduled date.

Tata Starbucks opens 6 stores

New Delhi: Tata Starbucks Thursday announced entry into six new markets as part of its expansion into smaller cities in India. With these new additions, the company now operates 252 stores in 26 cities. It is entering into - Siliguri, Nashik, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram, Goa and Bhubaneswar - a company statement said. With a growing base of coffee enthusiasts across the country, the brand makes its first appearance in the states of Assam, Goa and Odisha, it said.

ECLGS saved 1.5 crore jobs

New Delhi: The Centre's Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) has saved almost 13.5 lakh MSMEs worth ₹1.8 lakh crore from slipping into non-performing assets (NPA), SBI Research said in a report Thursday. "In absolute terms, MSME loan accounts worth ₹1.8 lakh crore were saved from slipping into NPA during the period," the report said. "This is equivalent to 14 per cent of the outstanding MSME credit being saved from becoming NPA."

RIL launches India Inc's biggest bond sale abroad

New Delhi, Jan 6: Reliance Industries Ltd, the nation's most valuable company, on Thursday said it has raised \$4 billion (around ₹30,000 crore) in debt through the largest ever foreign currency bond issuance by an Indian entity.

The oil-to-telecom conglomerate plans to use the proceeds of the three tranche issues to retire existing borrowings. The issue was "nearly 3 times oversubscribed with a peak order book aggregating around USD 11.5 billion," the company said in a statement.

This is the largest ever foreign currency bond transaction in India, eclipsing ONGC Videsh Ltd's \$2.2 billion bonds issue of 2014.

Reliance raised \$1.5 billion in a 10-year issue at a coupon or interest rate of 2.875 per cent, \$1.75 billion in a 30-year deal at a 3.625 per cent rate and \$750 million in a 40-year issue at a 3.75 per cent coupon rate.

This is the first time any BBB-rated Asian company outside of Japan has issued a 40-year dollar bond.

The bonds in 10-year, 30-year and 40-year maturities are due to

The issue was "nearly 3 times oversubscribed with a peak order book aggregating around USD 11.5 billion," the company said in a statement

The oil-to-telecom conglomerate plans to use the proceeds of the three tranche issues to retire existing borrowings



Reliance is a net-zero debt firm with its cash balance of ₹2.59 lakh crore, exceeding its gross debt of ₹2.55 lakh crore as of September 30, 2021

repayment between 2032 and 2062. Reliance plans to use the proceeds to retire some of the existing debt, including a \$1.5 billion loan that is due to mature in February.

The company said the bonds carry coupons (interest rate) linked to US treasuries. The 10-year notes will carry a coupon rate that is 1.2 percentage points above the 10-year US Treasury note, the 30-year bond will offer 160 basis points over the corre-

sponding US government bond and the 40-year note will give 170 basis points over the respective US Treasury note.

This, it said, represents the "tightest ever implied credit spread" over US Treasury notes by an Indian company.

The Notes are rated BBB+ by S&P and Baa2 by Moody's.

Stating that with this, it has joined a select group of issuers from Asia to have made jumbo bond issuances, Reliance said 53 per

Research indicates that 72% of Indian consumers in the age group of 25-35 prefer buying sustainably produced products, and 77% of millennials prefer to work in companies with a sustainability focus

VARUN BERRY | BRITANNIA MD

GOOGLE, FACEBOOK FACE \$235MN FINE IN FRANCE

Google and Facebook are facing a combined \$235 million fine for cookie tracking in France, the media reported



Equities settle in red

Market participants are already concerned about the rapid global spread of the highly infectious Omicron Covid variant

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Jan 6: Global markets, including India, turned lower Thursday as persistent inflationary pressure and fears of a faster-than-expected rise in US interest rates weighed on riskier assets.

Shares in Asia-Pacific fell sharply Thursday, following in the footsteps of the US overnight where the tech-heavy Nasdaq dropped more than 3 per cent to notch its biggest one-day loss since February, 2021.

In Japan, the Nikkei 225 dipped roughly 2.9 per cent, South Korea's Kospi slipped 1.2 per cent, and Australia's S&P/ASX200 declined 2.7 per cent. In Europe, the pan-European Stoxx 600 dropped around 1.2 per cent. Back home, the front-line S&P BSE Sensex shed 621 points, or 1.03 per cent, to close at 59,602.

This was, however, higher than the day's low level of 59,251, courtesy fag-end buying in PSU Bank and auto stocks. Both these indices ended half a per

Table of market top losers including Tech Mahi, UltraTech Cem, Reliance, HCL Tech, HDFC, etc.

cent higher each on the NSE today. The broader Nifty50, meanwhile, shut shop at 17,746, down 179 points or 1 per cent. It had touched a low of 17,655 earlier Thursday.

The losses came after minutes from the Federal Reserve's key December meeting showed the central bank discussed reducing its balance sheet in another move to aggressively dial back its pandemic-era easy monetary policy.

It comes at a time when market participants are already deeply concerned about the rapid global spread of the highly infectious Omicron Covid variant, with several countries reporting record daily infections in the last 24 hours.

OMICRON SPREAD

India likely to trim fiscal deficit target



REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 6: India is aiming for a fiscal deficit of 6.3% to 6.5% of gross domestic product for the next financial year, a less ambitious target than previously planned as COVID-19 infections threaten the economic recovery, three government officials said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is due to unveil the 2022/2023 federal budget February 1 and officials said the thinking was that sharp cuts in government expenditure could hurt growth prospects. India's case load of coronavirus infections is surging, fuelled by the Omicron variant and the worry is that consumer and business spending will be hit, leaving the government with little choice but to step in.

The plan now is to target a 30-50 basis point cut in the fiscal deficit for the next financial year; the officials involved in the discussions said. They declined to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media.

Policymakers were hoping to bring down the fiscal deficit by a wider margin, after cutting the deficit by 240 basis points to 6.8% in the current fiscal year ending in March. Some private economists

and brokerages said the fiscal deficit could be brought down to around 5% of GDP from 9.4% in 2020/21, after the winding down of pandemic stimulus and surge in revenue receipts. Rising coronavirus cases have forced many states to impose restrictions, raising concerns among policymakers that falling consumer sentiment could affect the pace of the economic recovery and all budget calculations.

Asia's third-largest economy could miss the 10% growth target for the current 2021/22 fiscal year as the new Omicron variant is seen disrupting economic activity through January-March and may also dampen sentiment in the next financial year, officials said.

And, the economic growth target would not be more than 7% for the next financial year beginning April, two officials said.

The Finance Minister is set to unveil new targets for government spending, tax receipts and economic growth while presenting her third annual budget in parliament. "The (budget) discussions are on," one of the officials said, adding the government aimed to bring down the deficit and increase capital spending while keeping revenue spending flat.

Focus on people, planet and passion: Guv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 6: Odisha Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal Thursday urged corporate houses to focus on the triple bottom-line approach of people, planet and passion for the welfare of human beings and protection of the environment.

During the 20th edition of the Nalco Lecture Series, the governor lauded efforts of National Aluminium Company Ltd for prosperity of people and conservation of nature, which help the Navratna company earn goodwill and occupy a prestigious position across the globe.

"Follow the triple bottom-line approach of people, planet and passion," Lal said.

Nalco CMD Sridhar Patra thanked the governor for attending the programme at NALCO Research & Technology Centre here.

He also mentioned various initiatives of the company to observe the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which is a 75-week grand celebration launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to mark 75 years of Independence.

FDI policy soon to facilitate LIC disinvestment: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 6: The Commerce and Industry Ministry is making changes in the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy to facilitate disinvestment of the country's largest insurer LIC, after taking views from the finance ministry, a top government official said Thursday.

Anurag Jain, secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), said the current policy related to the sector will not facilitate the disinvestment process of LIC and, hence, needs to be revised.

"We are working on further simplification of the FDI policy. A very important point for further simplification is required urgently as we have to do the LIC disinvestment. So, we would be coming out with a revised FDI policy which will facilitate LIC disinvestment," he told reporters here.

The matter is being discussed

with the Department of Financial Services and Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).

"We had two rounds of discussions at my level and now, we have (DPIIT, DFS and DIPAM) come on the same page. So, we are in the process of drafting those changes in the FDI policy. We will go to the Cabinet (for approval)," he said.

According to the current FDI policy, 74 per cent foreign investment is permitted under the automatic route in the insurance sector. However, these rules do not apply to the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), which is administered through a separate LIC Act.

As per Sebi rules, both FPI and FDI are permitted under public offer. However, sources said that since the LIC Act has no provision for foreign investments, there is a need to align the proposed LIC IPO with Sebi norms regarding foreign investor participation.

Omicron forcing RBI to delay policy normalisation

GIVEN THE SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES AND WIDENING OF RESTRICTIONS, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE RBI WILL COMMENCE THE POLICY NORMALISATION NEXT MONTH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 6: As COVID-19 infections spike in the country resulting in restrictions in various states and impacting the fragile recovery, many economists are expecting RBI to delay the policy normalisation move, which is expected

in the February review. HDFC Bank chief economist Abheek Barua does not see the RBI-monetary policy committee (MPC) going ahead with the policy normalisation drive anytime soon, at least not in the next review in February as he expects the rising Omicron cases to shave 30 basis points off the March quarter GDP.

"Rate hike expectations will moderate as the growth gets impacted and the reverse repo hike expected in February is also uncertain now," Barua said in a note, adding the central bank will continue with its focus on liquidity normalisation and capping yields.

Similarly, Tanvee Gupta-Jain, the chief economist at UBS Securities India, also expects the central bank to remain in "wait-and-see mode" for some more time.

"If the risks surrounding the new Omicron variant remain, adding to near-term uncertainty, we think the MPC could remain in



"wait-and-see" mode at the February policy meeting and can delay policy normalization to the April policy meeting," she said.

Echoing similar views, Ica Ratings chief economist Aditi Nayar said the Reserve Bank will

remain in a hold mode for an extended time given the rising risks to fragile growth.

"Given the surge in COVID-19 cases and the widening of restrictions leading to heightened uncertainty, it is increasingly un-

likely that the RBI will commence the much-delayed policy normalisation next month itself, unless inflation provides an acutely negative surprise, which looks all the more unlikely," Nayar told PTI.

Nayar also revised down the Q4 growth forecast by 40 basis points to 4.5 per cent due to the third wave but has retained full year GDP forecast at 9 per cent, with moderate downside risks, saying anyways Ica's forecast was the lowest among the consensus numbers which vary from 8.5-10 per cent, with the RBI pegging it at 9.5 per cent.

These economists also think the rupee will be under increased pressure this year given the fluid situation that the global economy is in and the US Fed's already announced tapering.

While Gupta-Jain sees the rupee at 74-78 to the dollar, Barua sees it at 74-76 this year. The evolving pandemic situation and the US Fed move to raise rates this year will

leave the rupee vulnerable and it may trade in the 74-78 range in 2022, Gupta-Jain said.

Tightening global financial conditions amid the Fed's tapering and the resultant 100 basis points rise in the US 10-year real yields in 2022 is set to make the road bumper for the rupee, which will continue to face depreciation pressure against the dollar as the current account deficit widens and the equity flow outlook dims.

"We expect the rupee to trade in the 74-78 range against the dollar this year. That said, unlike 2013 and 2018, we believe India is managing external vulnerability risks reasonably well and we do not foresee massive sell-off pressure," Gupta-Jain said in a note.

Barua also said the Omicron threat will have the rupee staying range bound between 74 and 76 to the greenback, but hopes the RBI to intervene to support the unit.

No wonder at Wanderers

Elgar denies India their first ever series win in South Africa taking the series to the third and final Test in Cape Town as Proteas comfortably win the second Test by 7 wickets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

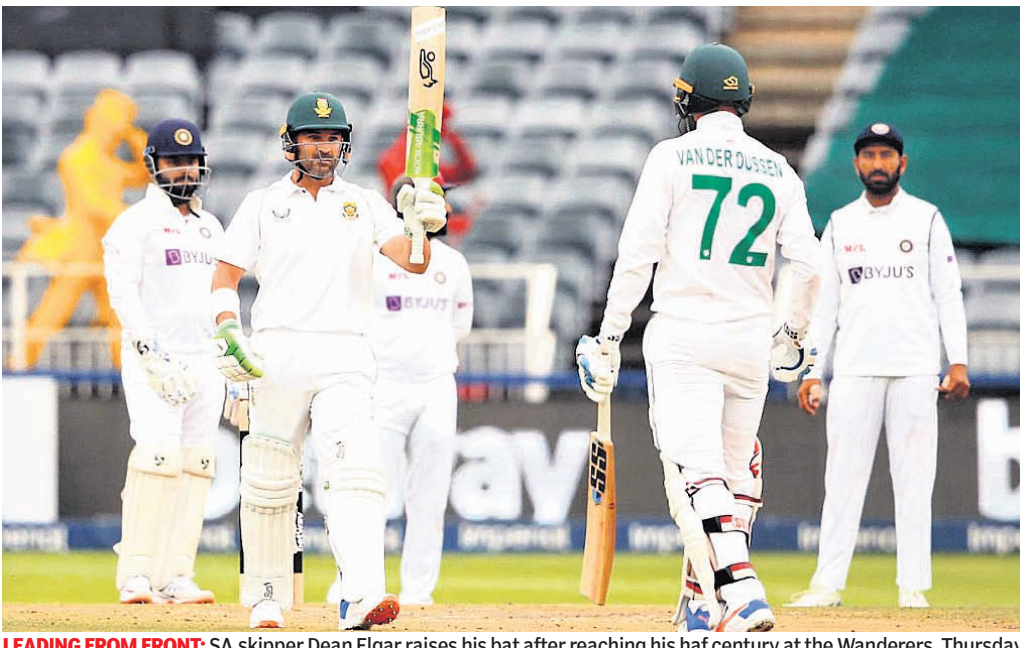
Johannesburg, Jan 6: A gutsy Dean Elgar (96 n o, 188b, 10x4) was happy to shun elegance for efficacy as he steered South Africa to a creditable seven-wicket series-levelling victory in the second Test against India here Thursday. The defeat was India's first at the Bull Ring in 30 years.

Chasing a target of 240, skipper Elgar, who was prepared to look ugly and forgettable in terms of aesthetics that one generally associates with southpaws, carried his bat through with an unbeaten 96 to set up an exciting final Test at the Newlands in Cape Town starting January 11.

If Aiden Markram and Keegan Petersen gave him good support on the third day, Rassie Van der Dussen (40), with an 82-run stand, ensured victory on a rain-soaked fourth day marking an inauspicious start to India captaincy for KL Rahul.

Elgar had taken a couple of blows on the head, a few on the chest, another few on the knuckle, one on the shoulder, all of which were like badges of honour for a batter who conforms more with 'Shivnarine Chanderpaul School of Batmanship' rather than Brian Lara's.

In hindsight, 50 more runs would have helped India immensely and



LEADING FROM FRONT: SA skipper Dean Elgar raises his bat after reaching his half century at the Wanderers, Thursday

while the bowlers had one rare bad innings in office, the blame should be squarely on the batters. In fact, it has been more about good starts over the past season. In the final context, the lowly first innings total of 202 became India's undoing.

There were too many boundary balls, length all wrong in that first

hour in the fourth afternoon which was like playing into South Africa's hands.

India's strategy at the start was baffling as R Ashwin (1/20) was handed the ball along with Jasprit Bumrah (0/70). Rahul could be cut some slack as it is his first game as an India captain but starting the day

with Ashwin under overcast conditions and wet outfield certainly deserves some kind of explanation from the team think-tank.

BRIEF SCORES: India 202 & 266 lost to South Africa 229 & 243/3 (Dean Elgar 96 n o, Rassie van der Dussen 40, Temba Bavuma 23 n o) by 7 wickets.

Khawaja ton props Australia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sydney, Jan 6: Usman Khawaja's (137, 260b, 13x4) ninth Test century lifted Australia to an imposing 416/8 declared before England's openers survived a nervous five overs to be 13 without loss at the end of the second day of the fourth Ashes Test.

Playing his first Test since 2019 and only in the team because of Travis Head's positive test for COVID-19, Khawaja made the most of the opportunity as he first shared a century partnership with Steve Smith and then anchored Australia's innings after England's bowlers fought back with the second new ball, Thursday.

Stuart Broad (5/101) took a five-wicket haul and went a long way to vindicating his return to the team after being omitted from the third Test at Melbourne that saw Australia humiliate England and retain the Ashes.

At stumps, Haseeb Hameed and Zak Crawley were both on 2 not out, with the latter surviving being caught off a no-ball from Mitchell Starc as the tourists ended the day 403 runs behind Australia in the first innings.

Earlier, Khawaja completed his century in the final over before tea in front of his former home state crowd. He celebrated by holding both arms aloft, raising and pointing his bat toward his team and family members in the historic Members Stand at the Sydney Cricket Ground before embracing



his skipper mid-pitch. Khawaja, who also passed 3,000 Test runs in this innings, was eventually bowled by Broad after close to seven hours at the crease and left to a standing ovation from the near 25,000 crowd at the venue he made his debut 11 years ago.

He had one reprieve, on 30, when he was dropped by Root off Jack Leach's bowling but it was a rare blemish in what was a masterful second century against England at the SCG.

England will rue that missed opportunity as the tourists pace bowlers performed well, especially with the second new ball and picked up wickets quickly in the afternoon to pull back into the contest.

Earlier, Smith (67, 141b, 5x4) compiled his 33rd half century and on the way passed Justin Langer's career record of 7,696 runs to be

come Australia's sixth-highest run scorer in Tests. Smith, playing his 81st match, needed 24 tests fewer than Langer, the current Australia team coach, to reach the mark.

Of concern for England, Ben Stokes left the field after the fifth ball of his 14th over just before lunch. The allrounder, who was clutching at his left side as he left the ground, later returned but did not bowl again.

Australia has an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series and has retained the Ashes. But England is still aiming to take something from the tour by winning a Test in Australia for the first time in almost a decade.

Brief scores: Australia 416/8d (Usman Khawaja 137, Steve Smith 67, Mitchell Starc 34 n o; Stuart Broad 5/101); England 13 for no loss. Match to continue.

Spurs gift Chelsea lead in League Cup semifinal



ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 6: With Tottenham's defenders giving away easy goals, Chelsea could restore tranquility while easing Romelu Lukaku back into the team. For Antonio Conte, though, it was a night of frustration on his return to Stamford Bridge four years after being fired by Chelsea as Tottenham lost 0-2 in the first leg of their League Cup semifinal Wednesday.

Kai Havertz's shot after five minutes was inadvertently diverted into his own net by Davinson Sanchez. More absurd was the own goal in the 34th minute after Hakim Ziyech's swung a free kick into the penalty area.

There were no Chelsea players

around Tottenham duo Japhet Tanganga and Ben Davies as they combined comically to gift the hosts a second goal. Tanganga's attempt at a headed clearance came off the shoulder of Davies and past their own goalkeeper, Hugo Lloris.

There's still a second leg to turn it around next Wednesday back on Tottenham's home field. But the trip to west London Wednesday, two months into Conte's reign, reinforced the need to rebuild a team that is without a title since the 2008 League Cup.

Collecting trophies — as Conte did in the Premier League and FA Cup — is familiar territory for reigning European champion Chelsea. So is the occasional off-field distraction.

JEMIMAH, SHIKHA DROPPED OWING TO POOR RUN OF FORM

Team announced for women's WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 6: Top-order batter Jemimah Rodrigues and seasoned pacer Shikha Pandey were Thursday dropped from India's 15-member squad for the Women's ODI World Cup scheduled to be held in New Zealand from March 4 to April 3.

The selectors have rewarded performers of the Australia tour earlier this year with left-handed batter Yastika Bhatia making the cut alongside the pace duo of Meghna Singh and Renuka Singh.

Rodrigues, who impressed in T20 leagues in England and Australia this year, was not consistent enough in international cricket. Shikha too has been ignored due to her inconsistent form.

Another top-order batter Punam Raut, who was a part of the team in England and Australia, has also been dropped with the selectors including more power-hitters in the side.

Same squad has been named for the preceding five ODIs against hosts New Zealand beginning February 11 before the World Cup.

Veteran batter Mithali Raj will lead the team which will aim to



go all the way after finishing runners-up in the last edition in 2017. Mithali is expected to retire after the World Cup.

The likes of Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Jhulan Goswami and the young Shafali Verma are automatic selections in the squad.

Richa Ghosh and Taniya Bhatia are the wicketkeeper in the squad with the latter being the back up. The highest-scorer in the recent



Challenger Trophy Sabhineni Meghana, Ekta Bisht and Simran Dil Bahadur have been named as three stand-by players.

India will open their World Cup campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan March 6 at the Bay Oval, Tauranga before facing hosts New Zealand March 10 at Hamilton, followed by the West Indies (March 12, Hamilton), defending champions England (March 16, Tauranga),

Australia (March 19, Auckland), Bangladesh (March 22, Hamilton) and South Africa (March 27, Christchurch).

The All India Women's Selection Committee also named a 16-member squad to be led by Harmanpreet Kaur for the lone T20I against New Zealand to be played February 9 before the ODIs.

THE SQUADS:

World Cup & NZ ODIs: Mithali Raj (C), Harmanpreet Kaur (VC), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), Sneha Rana, Jhulan Goswami, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Renuka Singh Thakur, Taniya Bhatia (WK), Rajeshwari Gayakwad & Poonam Yadav; Standby Players: Sabhineni Meghana, Ekta Bisht & Simran Dil Bahadur.

One-off T20I v NZ: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), Sneha Rana, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Renuka Singh Thakur, Taniya Bhatia (WK), Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Sabhineni Meghana & Simran Dil Bahadur.

Barcelona, Real begin Copa runs with tough wins

AGENCIES

Barcelona, Jan 6: Barcelona and Real Madrid started their Copa del Rey campaigns with surprisingly hard-fought wins over lower-tier teams Wednesday, while third-division Atlético Baleares eliminated a second top-flight side by beating Celta Vigo 2-1.

Madrid needed two late goals to beat Alcoyano 3-1, which one year before had eliminated the powerhouse in the same round of 32. Earlier, Barcelona had to come from behind to beat third-tier Linares Deportivo 2-1.

Defender Éder Militão put Madrid ahead in front of 4,800 fans at El Collao Stadium. But the hosts created scoring chances throughout and pulled level in the 66th minute when Dani Vega cut back to avoid both Casemiro and Militão before curling home.

Marco Asensio put Madrid back in charge in the 76th when his shot hit a defender, leaving Alcoyano goalkeeper José Figueras no chance to save. An own goal by Figueras ensured the win two minutes later.

Barcelona forwards Ousmane Dembélé and Ferran Jutglá scored to complete the team's comeback against Linares.

Dembélé went on at halftime and canceled out Hugo Díaz's 19th-minute goal for Linares with a strike from outside the area to level in the 63rd.

Jutglá netted the winner six minutes later to save Barcelona from an embarrassing exit from the cup in southern Spain.

Dani Alves played his first match since returning to Barcelona. The 38-year-old Brazil right back played for Barcelona from 2008 to 2016, helping it win 23 titles including three Champions League trophies.

SANIA, NADIYA ENTER SEMIS AT ADELAIDE INT'L

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Jan 6: India's Sania Mirza and her Ukrainian partner Nadiia Kichenok entered the women's doubles semifinals of the Adelaide International 1 WTA event after beating American Shelby Rogers and Heather Watson of Great Britain in a hard-fought contest here Thursday.

Sania and Nadiia got the better of their rivals 6-0, 1-6, 10-5 in a quarterfinal tie that lasted 55 minutes. The Indo-Ukrainian duo will now face Australia combination of Ashleigh Barty and Storm Sanders in the last-four round of the WTA 500 event.

Sania and Nadiia had earlier knocked out second seeds Gabriela Dabrowski and Giuliana Olmos 6-3, 6-3, 10-8 in the first round.

The Adelaide event is a tune up tournament for the Australian Open, starting January 17 in Melbourne.

DJOKOVIC DENIED AUSTRALIAN VISA

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brisbane, Jan 6: Novak Djokovic's chance to play for a 10th Australian Open title was thrown into limbo Thursday when the country denied him entry and canceled his visa because he failed to meet the requirements for an exemption to COVID-19 vaccination rules.

The top-ranked Djokovic announced on social media Tuesday that he had "exemption permission" and he landed in Australia late Wednesday with a medical exemption from the Victoria state government that was expected to shield him from the strict vaccination regulations in place for this year's first major tennis tournament. But national border authorities didn't accept the exemption, with the Australian Border Force issuing a statement saying Djokovic failed to meet entry requirements.

"The rule is very clear," Prime Minister Scott Morrison told a news conference. "You need to have a medical exemption. He didn't have a valid medical exemption. We make the call at the border, and that's where it's enforced."

Health Minister Greg Hunt said the visa cancellation followed a review of Djokovic's medical exemption by border officials who looked "at the integrity and the evidence behind it."

He said Djokovic was free to appeal the decision, "but if a visa is cancelled, somebody will have to leave the country." The president of Djokovic's native Serbia blasted the "harassment" of the star, who was detained overnight at Melbourne Tullamarine Airport.

Melbourne which is controlled by immigration officials.

The Australian Broadcasting Corp. and other local media reported that action had been launched in the Federal Court against the cancellation of Djokovic's visa.

Quarantine-free access wouldn't have been an issue if Djokovic had been able to prove he was fully vaccinated for the coronavirus.

Instead he applied for a medical exemption, a route that only became an option in recent months after Victoria state backed away from a full no-vaccination, no-play policy. Questions have been raised about the approval of the exemption.

The medical exemptions, vetted by two independent panels of experts and based on information supplied anonymously by players and taken on face value, had been designed to allow Djokovic to play in the Australian Open, regardless of his vaccination status.

He has spoken out against vaccines in the past and has steadfastly refused to acknowledge whether he received any shots against the coronavirus. His father, Srđjan Djokovic, told the B92 internet portal that his son was held at the airport "in a room which no one can enter" and guarded by two police officers.

Serbian authorities were taking measures "so the harassment of the best tennis player in the world be stopped in the shortest possible time."

Djokovic's revelation on social media that he was heading to Australia to seeking a record 21st major title instantly became a hot political topic.

Many Australians who have struggled to obtain sparsely available and often expensive rapid antigen tests, or who have been forced into isolation, perceived a double standard in the exemption allowance for Djokovic. Critics questioned what grounds he could have for the exemption, and backers argued that he has a right to privacy and freedom of choice.



Reacting to Novak's visa cancellation

RAFA NADAL: The world has been suffering enough to not follow the rules.

DANIL MEDVEDEV: If he had a fair exemption from the rule, well, he should be here; if he didn't, he shouldn't be here.

ALEKSANDAR VUCIC (Serbian President): I told our Novak that the whole of Serbia is with him and that our bodies are doing everything to see that the harassment of the world's best tennis player is brought to an end immediately.

PAUL MCNAMEE (Former Australian Open tournament director): He played by the rules, he got his exemption, he's a nine-time champion, whether people like it or not he's entitled to fair play. He doesn't make the rules. He deserves his day on court, not in court in my opinion.

TENNY S ANDGREN: Just to be crystal clear here, 2 separate medical boards approved his exemption. And politicians are stopping it. Australia doesn't deserve to host a grand slam.

ROD LAVER: I think it might get ugly. If he's got a reason for (the exemption) then, we should know it.

SCOTT MORRISON (Australian PM): Mr. Djokovic's visa has been cancelled. Rules are rules, especially when it comes to our borders. No one is above these rules. Our strong border policies have been critical to Australia having one of the lowest death rates in the world from COVID, we are continuing to be vigilant.