



**TOP HONOUR**  
Nicole Kidman won a Golden Globe as Best Actress in a drama for her role in *Being the Ricardos* **LEISURE P2**



**SUU KYI JAILED AGAIN**  
A court in Myanmar sentenced ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four more years in prison **INTERNATIONAL P10**



**INDIA EYE HISTORY**  
Virat Kohli-led India look for historic Test series win in South Africa when the final match gets underway, today **SPORTS P12**

**ODM GLOBAL SCHOOL**  
Unlock your potential  
**ADMISSIONS OPEN**  
I - XI (Day Boarding)  
VI - XI (Residential)  
www.odmglobalschool.org  
1800-120-2316

**Body of young woman found in City**  
**Bhubaneswar:** The body of a young woman was found under mysterious circumstances in her room at Tarini basti under Bharatpur police limits in the city Monday afternoon. The 23-year-old deceased identified as Surekha Palei is a native of Brahmagiri area in Puri district. Palei and her maternal cousin stayed at the slum in Bharatpur over past few years. Her sister returned home and found her lying dead inside the room. She later informed the Bharatpur police who recovered the body and sent it to hospital for post mortem. Police spotted marks on the neck of the deceased indicating murder by forced asphyxiation. Sources said, there was a faint in the room before allegedly murdering the deceased.



**9 kids among 19 killed in US fire**  
**New York:** In one of the worst fire accidents in the recent history of New York City, 19 people, including nine children, were killed in an apartment building where a massive blaze broke out due to a malfunctioning electric space heater. The New York City Fire Department said that approximately 200 of its members were operating on the scene at the 19-storey building in the Bronx where the fire started around 11 AM on Sunday. The incident comes days after an apartment fire in Philadelphia killed 12, with eight children among the dead. New York City Mayor Eric Adams termed it a "tragedy beyond measure".

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

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**  
Believe me, we have won the war against Covid! See, nobody has asked us to beat utensils this time!!

## Announcement of rural poll date soon



A meeting of the State Election Commission is underway, Monday **OP PHOTO**  
**■ BJP and Congress urge SEC to postpone elections by three months in view of the worsening Covid-19 situation**

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Giving a clear indication towards timely conduct of panchayat elections, State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi Monday said detailed guidelines for a free, fair and safe conduct of the polls will be issued very soon. An announcement in this regard will be made in a day or two, sources said. Padhi said this after holding a

meeting with the representatives of all political parties of the state to get their feedback and suggestions for conduct of the three-tier election to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the state. All political parties expressed their views on whether the polls can be held or not under the present Covid-19 situation, he said. "The ECI has already issued guidelines on the conduct of the Assembly elections in several states. We are framing similar guidelines to ensure free, fair and safe polls in the state. The guidelines will be issued soon," said Padhi. Opposition BJP and Congress have urged the SEC to postpone the election by three months in view of the pre-

**SEC MEETS GANESHI LAL**  
Ahead of the announcement of dates for the panchayat polls, State Election Commissioner (SEC) Aditya Prasad Padhi Monday met Governor Ganeshi Lal to apprise him about the preparedness for the election, at the Raj Bhawan. The Commissioner also held a meeting with DGP Sunil Bansal and Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Sanjeev Chopra to ensure a free and fair election.

vailing Covid-19 situation in the state and issue raised quotas for ST and OBC candidates. "The public health experts have predicted that the third wave of Covid-19 will soon reach its peak. So, we have urged the SEC to defer the election by at least two to three months so that the peak period is over," said BJP legislator Mohan Majhi. Senior Congress leader Ganeshwar Behera said, "Apart from the BJD, all other parties believe that polls are not feasible in the present circumstances. We urged the commission to defer the polls by three months."

## State orders 5L OmiSure kits

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** The state's Omicron tally Monday increased to 103 with the detection of 28 more persons infected by the new variant of the coronavirus, a senior health department official said. Odisha director of public health, Niranjan Mishra said of the 28 new cases, 18 have history of international travel, two are from outside the state (Kashmir and Mumbai) and the rest are local people, including contact cases. While one Omicron infected woman patient has died, five others have so far been recovered from the infection. The first case of Omicron was reported in the state December 21, 2021. Health experts said 80 per cent of the new cases in many parts of the country have been detected as Omicron. The situation could be similar in Odisha too as the variant is highly transmittable. Odisha government has ordered five lakh OmiSure kits for early detection of the new variant. Orders were placed with Tata Medical and Diagnostics by Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited, an independent procurement agency for the department of health and family welfare. OmiSure is the first Omicron-specific COVID-19 detection RT-PCR test kit which has been developed indigenously. It is the only one approved by ICMR and Odisha became the first state in the country to place orders for OmiSure kits at point of first line testing, the manufacturing company said in a statement. The state Monday reported 4,829 new COVID-19 cases, 448 of them children, taking its caseload to 10,75,698 with 20,560 active cases.

## Covid relief for govt job seekers

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** The state Cabinet has decided to enhance the maximum age limit for recruitment in government services from 32 to 38 years, for three years starting from 2021. "In a major decision, the Cabinet has decided to enhance the upper age limit for entry into government service from 32 years to 38 years only for the advertisements made to be made during the calendar year 2021, 2022 and 2023 which is relaxable for different reserved categories as prescribed by the government from time to time," said Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra. It has come to the notice of the government that the recruitment process is delayed due to unavoidable reasons thereby delaying subsequent recruitment. As a result, the age of applicants gets over and they do not

get ample chances to participate in the recruitment examination. So, this decision was taken, he said. Accordingly, amendment will be made to the Orissa Civil Service (Fixation of Upper Age Limit) Rules, 1989. Now, the upper age limit for ST, SC, SEBC and women candidates is 43 years while the limit for general PwD candidates has been enhanced from 38 years to 48 years. Moreover, the age limit for PwD candidates of ST/SC/SEBC category (including women candidates) has been increased to 53 years from 38 years. The Cabinet has also approved tenders for five mega rural drinking water supply projects worth ₹1338.69 crore. A drinking water project of ₹190.18 crore has been approved for Mayurbhanj district out of OM-

BADC funding. By execution of the projects, around 1,48,199 people of 222 villages under 25 GPs under 2 blocks i.e Samakhunta and Baripada will be provided with safe drinking water. Similarly, another tender of ₹206.94 crore has been approved to provide drinking water supply to 1,42,176 people of 155 villages under 26 GPs of Kaptipada block of the same district. The other three projects were approved for Cuttack district (Rs 186.68 crore), Sambalpur (Rs 394.76), Mayurbhanj (Rs 360.12 crore). A target has been set to complete all these projects within a period of 24 months. The Chief Secretary further informed construction of these pipe water supply schemes would be completed in two years from the time of the execution agreement. The Cabinet during its meeting today approved a total of 12 proposals.

### CABINET DECISION

## TOUGH-GOING



Students climb a snow-covered hillock as they return from a government tuition centre, after recent snowfall at a village at Tangmarg in Baramulla district, Monday **PTI PHOTO**

## SC panel to probe PM security breach

**■ The panel to be headed by an SC judge (retd) will comprise DGP, Chandigarh, IG, NIA, registrar general (Punjab & Haryana HC) and Addl DGP (security) Punjab**



**New Delhi, Jan 10:** The Supreme Court Monday agreed to set up a panel, headed by a former apex court judge, to probe the Prime Minister Narendra Modi security breach in Punjab last week. After a detailed hearing in the matter, a bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli said the court will set up a committee headed by a retired top court judge to probe the PM's security breach and asked both the Centre and Punjab government to not move ahead with their respective inquiries into the matter. The bench said it will pass a detailed order in the matter. During the hearing, the bench orally proposed that other members of the committee would be Director General of Police (DGP) Chandigarh, Inspector General (IG) National Investigation Agency (NIA), registrar general (Punjab

and Haryana High Court), and Additional DGP (security) Punjab. The bench said: "We are taking the PM's security breach very seriously". The bench added that it will ask the committee to submit its report to it within a short span. Advocate General DS Patwalia, representing the Punjab government, complained against show-cause notices to its chief secretary and DGP. He urged the top court to form an independent committee to probe the matter: "Hang me if I am guilty... but don't condemn me unheard," submitted Patwalia. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, defended the show-cause notices issued by the Centre. However, the SC expressed its displeasure at Centre's stand, questioning what is the point of asking the court to examine the matter if the Centre wanted to go ahead on its own.

## BOOSTER ROLLS OUT IN ODISHA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Amid the relentless rise in COVID-19 cases, the state government Monday rolled out booster doses for its frontline workers and senior citizens with comorbidities, much like other parts of the country. Speaker SN Patro, who is in his 60s, was among those who took the booster shot during the day. The state government has set up 2,276 session sites across districts for administering the "precautionary dose", a senior health department official said. Apart from that, 1,340 session sites in the state are already providing anti-COVID shots to teenagers in the age group of 15-18 years. Odisha, as of now, has a target of jabbing 17,52,838 booster shot beneficiaries divided into three categories - health care workers, other frontline warriors and senior citizens with comorbidities, said Bijay Panigrahi, director of family welfare and state nodal immunisation officer. "The government has sent out messages to all beneficiaries of

### Jabbing can happen till 10pm daily: Centre

**New Delhi:** The Centre Monday made it clear to states and UTs that no time limit has been set for the operationalisation of Covid vaccination centres, and that they can operate till 10 pm daily based on availability of human resources and infrastructure. In a letter to states and UTs, additional secretary in the Union Health Ministry, Manohar Agnani, said there is an impression that Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCS) can operate only from 8 am to 8 pm daily.

**MARKET WATCH**

| INDEX  | VAIATION          |
|--------|-------------------|
| SENSEX | 60395.63 ↑ 650.98 |
| NIFTY  | 18003.30 ↑ 190.60 |
| DOLLAR | 74.69 ↓ ₹0.29     |
| EURO   | 83.70 ↓ ₹0.65     |
| GOLD   | ₹47,409 ↓ ₹43     |
| SILVER | ₹60,484 ↓ ₹123    |

**WEATHER**

|          | BHUB                   | CTK    |
|----------|------------------------|--------|
| MAX      | 28.6°C                 | 28.6°C |
| MIN      | 16.4°C                 | 15.5°C |
| Humidity | 94%                    | 91%    |
| Rainfall | Nil                    | Nil    |
| Forecast | Light to moderate rain |        |

## Novak Djokovic's Australian saga far from over

**■ Govt lawyer Christopher Tran told the judge that the immigration minister would consider whether to exercise a personal power of cancellation**

**Melbourne, Jan10:** Tennis star Novak Djokovic won a court battle Monday to stay in Australia to contest the Australian Open despite not being vaccinated against COVID-19, but the drama might not be finished, with the government threatening to cancel his visa a second time and deport him. Federal Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly reinstated Djokovic's visa, which was revoked after his arrival last week because officials

decided he didn't meet the criteria for an exemption to an entry requirement that all non-citizens be fully vaccinated. The judge ruled the No 1 player had not been given enough time to speak to his lawyers before that decision was made and ordered the government to release him within 30 minutes from a Melbourne quarantine hotel where he has spent the last four nights. But government lawyer Christopher Tran told the judge that the immigration minister "will consider whether to exercise a personal power of cancellation." That would mean that the nine-time Australian Open winner and defending champion could again face deportation and could miss the tournament, which starts



January 17. It could also bar him from the country for three years. The back and forth has gripped the world and caused a furor in Australia, where many initially decried the news that Djokovic, who has been a vocal skeptic of vaccines, had received an exemption to strict rules to compete in Melbourne. Many felt the star was

being given special treatment since Australians who aren't vaccinated face tough travel and quarantine restrictions. Court documents say he is unvaccinated. But when border police then blocked him on arrival, others cried foul, saying he was being scapegoated by an Australian government facing criticism for its recent handling of the pandemic. Speaking with television network Prva in Belgrade, Serbia, the tennis star's brother, Djordje Djokovic, described the judge's ruling as a "great defeat for Australian authorities." But he said the family was still hearing that his brother might be detained, though he gave no details. "This is definitely politics, all this was politics," he added.

The office of Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews confirmed that Novak Djokovic has not been arrested. It was not clear where he was, though hundreds of fans gathered late Monday outside his lawyers' office in Melbourne, many carrying Serbian flags and wearing the banner's red, white and blue colors. They chanted "Free Nole," using the star's nickname. Police later dispersed them when they surrounded a car trying to leave the area. The 34-year-old Djokovic boarded a plane for Australia last week, after receiving an exemption from vaccination rules from Victoria state authorities and Australian Open organizers. But upon arrival, federal border officials refused to let him, saying the exemption was not valid.

booster doses. They would be given the same vaccine that they had taken as the first and the second dose," Panigrahi stated. He also said that the vaccination capacity of each session site has been enhanced by 20 per cent in order to hasten the whole process. The gap between the date of administering the second dose of vaccine and the precautionary dose should be 39 weeks. Panigrahi maintained that all senior citizens with comorbidities will be able to get the "precautionary dose" using their current Co-WIN account. Meanwhile, Director of Health Bijay Mohapatra said the third wave of COVID-19 may reach its peak around January-end.

# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
Think positive today and watch the world around you changing. Regardless of how difficult things may seem, Ganesh advises you to take it without getting upset. If you set your mind to something, you can do it. You have the Midas touch today, so it is a good time to introduce a new strategy.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesh urges you to be prepared for setbacks and disappointments today. Your efforts may end in being a waste of precious time and energy. The results you get are likely to be far below your expectations. Falling short of your target is likely to weigh you down with stress and anxiety.

**GEMINI**  
You will be in a state of heightened sensitivity today. Therefore you need to curb down on your emotions. You will be able to successfully express your feelings to someone, and your feelings will play a vital part in your life, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You are known for your ability to set the ball rolling. Once you set your mind to do something, it is generally considered done by your peers. Today, you are eyeing a few accomplishments on the monetary front.

**LEO**  
The desire and passion for learning is a life-long quest, says Ganesh. It may be that you love to learn, but dissipating the knowledge you have acquired is equally important. So on this day, it is through teaching that you shall learn just how fascinating and frustrating children can be.

**VIRGO**  
All the work done in the past will reap rich rewards today, says Ganesh. You'll direct things your own way, and in no way would you take orders from anyone. But don't go overboard with all the authority and keep a cool, calm head.

**LIBRA**  
Sometimes, you lend a helping hand and people end up taking the entire arm. Well, that's kids for you! So beware, because young ones around you may try to take undue advantage of your sympathetic nature today, hints Ganesh. Minor issues and problems may dampen the high spirits that you are in today. But fret not, just keep a cool head and get back on track to being your charismatic self.

**SCORPIO**  
In all probability, your mood is extremely hawkish today. Your belligerence may even put off Lady Luck for the time being. Ganesh advises you to stay away from confrontations and troubles of any kind. The evening, however, promises to be relaxing.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Remember that actions always speak louder than words. You will, in all probability, finish your work that has been seeking your attention for long now. You shall also successfully bring continuing disputes to the table and resolve them logically.

**CAPRICORN**  
The journey from defeat to success is driven by optimism. You will be very optimistic today - about your work, future and everything that can lead you to success, says Ganesh. You will also be very careful while dealing with day-to-day work, and will capitalise on every opportunity that can get you a step closer to your goals.

**AQUARIUS**  
It's an uphill struggle today! But the heavens are on your side, and you will be saved from being swindled. Otherwise, it's an eventful day at work. You may initiate big business deals and new projects as well. It will take all your energy, and Ganesh suggests you hit the deck early.

**PISCES**  
While you like cooperating with your colleagues, there is nothing like a little competition to spice things up. You will nonchalantly take on the challenges coming your way, and thrive on the sweet smell of success today. Luck is in your favour as well. Make the most of it, says Ganesh.



## LILY JAMES FELT LIBERATED PLAYING PAMELA ANDERSON

Actress Lily James says she felt liberated playing Pamela Anderson in the upcoming mini-series *Pam and Tommy*. The 32-year-old portrays the *Baywatch* star in the series which focuses on the 1995 leak of the then-couple's sex tape.

## MJ RODRIGUEZ FIRST BLACK TRANS WOMAN TO WIN A GOLDEN GLOBE

Mj Rodriguez has become the first black transgender woman in history to win a Golden Globe. The actress was named Best Actress for her role as Blanca Rodriguez-Evangelista in the hit FX show *Pose*, which centres on the drug culture of the 1980s.



The awards body has been embroiled in scandals since the 2021 show, when it was revealed that the HFPA had no Black members in the panel

## The Power of the Dog, Succession big winners

*Ricardos* won best actress in a drama, while Will Smith (*King Richard*) won best actor. Andrew Garfield (*Tick, Tick...Boom!*) won best actor in a musical or comedy.

For TV, *Succession* won best drama series and *Hacks* won best musical or comedy series, both from HBO.

O Yeong-su won his first Golden Globe for his performance in the best supporting actor in a TV drama for popular Netflix series *Squid Game*. O is the first South Korean actor to earn a trophy at the awards gala.

Mj Rodriguez became the first black transgender woman in history to win a Golden Globe. She won the award for best actress in a TV series *Pose*.

Kate Winslet received the honour for best performance by an actress in a limited series for her turn as the titular police detective in HBO's *Mare of Easttown*. Michael Keaton scooped up the Globe for best performance by an actor in a limited series for Hulu's *Dopesick*.

The awards body has been embroiled in scandals since the 2021 show, around



when it was revealed that the HFPA had no Black members and participated in questionable business practices, Variety reports.



## Bob Saget dies aged 65

Comedy actor Bob Saget - who was known to audiences around the world for his role as Danny Tanner on the sitcom *Full House* - was found dead in his hotel room at the Ritz-Carlton in Orlando, Florida on Sunday (09.01.22) while he was on tour with his stand-up show.

In a statement, police told *E! News*: "On 1/9/2022, just after 4 p.m., deputies responded to the 4000 block of Central Florida Parkway (Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes) in response to a man down call. On arrival, they located a man who was unresponsive in a hotel room. The man, identified as Robert Lane Saget, was pronounced deceased on scene. We have no information on cause of death, and detectives have found no signs of foul play or drug use in this case."

The star - who also provided the voice of the narrator on comedy series *How I Met Your Mother* - is survived by his wife Kelly Rizzo and his three children Aubrey, 34, Lara, 32, and Jennifer, 29, who he has with ex-wife Sherri Kramer.

**Los Angeles:** The controversy-racked Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) named the winners of the 2022 Golden Globes via Twitter on Sunday night (US time), with no media in attendance or celebrities walking the red carpet like in the past.

*The Power of the Dog* (Netflix) picked up best drama and Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* (20th Century/Disney) won best musical or comedy, reports *Variety*. Jane Campion scooped the best director trophy for helming *The Power of the Dog*, and Australian actor Kodi Smit-McPhee won best supporting actor for the western set in Montana of the 1920s.

Ryusuke Hamaguchi's Japanese film *Drive My Car*, which is based on a Haruki Murakami short story, continued its winning streak, driving home with the trophy for the best picture in a foreign language.

*West Side Story* star Rachel Zegler won best actress in a musical or comedy; her co-star Ariana DeBose picked up the prize for supporting actress. Nicole Kidman (*Being the*

**Mumbai:** In a new game that has taken over the Internet, real-life couples have to point towards each other or one another depending upon the questions thrown at them. It's called the 'Couple Challenge'. Shruti Haasan recently tried her hand with boyfriend Santanu Hazarika. The actress shared the video with fans on her Instagram account with her. The actor posted

## Shruti takes up the 'Couple Challenge'

where the couple answered multiple questions about themselves.

Shruti confessed she was the first one to say 'I Love You'.

Shruti Haasan doesn't shy away from talking about her relationship or introducing her man to the media. She has already. The man is Santanu Hazarika and the couple is often spotted together. Earlier this year in March, Santanu Hazarika flew into Chennai to spend time



## SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

## Art Vision's Odissi dance fest Jan 12, 13

**Bhubaneswar:** Art Vision, a City-based dance school set up by eminent danseuse Padma Shri Ileana Citaristi, will organise a two-day Odissi dance festival to mark the end of its Silver Jubilee year celebrations. Titled *Explorations Journey of 25 years in Odissi*, the event will be held January 12, 13 here at Rabindra Mandap.

The recitals will be choreographed by Citaristi and presented by Art Vision repertory members.

On the first evening the artistes, accompanied by a live orchestra, will present a series of rhythmic and expressive items. On the second evening they will perform

innovative dance drama productions.

Art Vision was founded in 1996 by Citaristi, a disciple of Odissi maestro Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, along with a group of artistes belonging to different disciplines such as dance, music, painting and literature who wanted to have a common ground for sharing experience and creative ideas.

On the other hand, the Art Vision Dance Academy conducts Odissi and Chhau classes for local as well as visiting students under the guidance of Citaristi. Its performing unit has already presented shows at many prestigious festivals and conferences in India and also in Italy, UK, USA, Japan, Portugal and South Korea.



## Sussanne's adorable b'day wish for Hrithik

**Mumbai:** Hrithik Roshan and Sussanne Khan have always made sure about not letting their divorce come in between the friendship and respect they have for one another. Sussanne's wish for Hrithik on his 48th birthday is proof of the fact.

Taking to Instagram, Sussanne penned a heartfelt note for Hrithik. In the message, she addressed Hrithik as 'best dad'.

"Happy birthday Rye.. You are an amazing Dad.. Ray n Ridz are so s000 lucky to have you as theirs.. May all your dreams and wishes come true today n always - biggg hug! #fathersongsals," she wrote alongside a video clip, in which one can see Hrithik spending quality time with his sons.

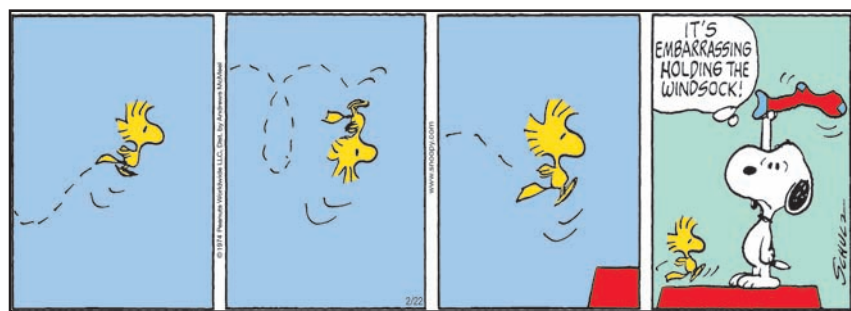
Hrithik and Sussanne, who were childhood sweethearts, got mar-

ried in 2000. They announced their separation in 2013 and got divorced a year later.

In 2021, Sussanne temporarily moved in with Hrithik, so that they could co-parent their children during COVID-19 lockdown.



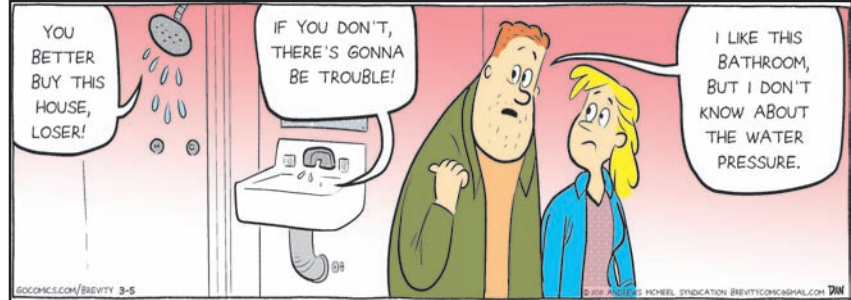
## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

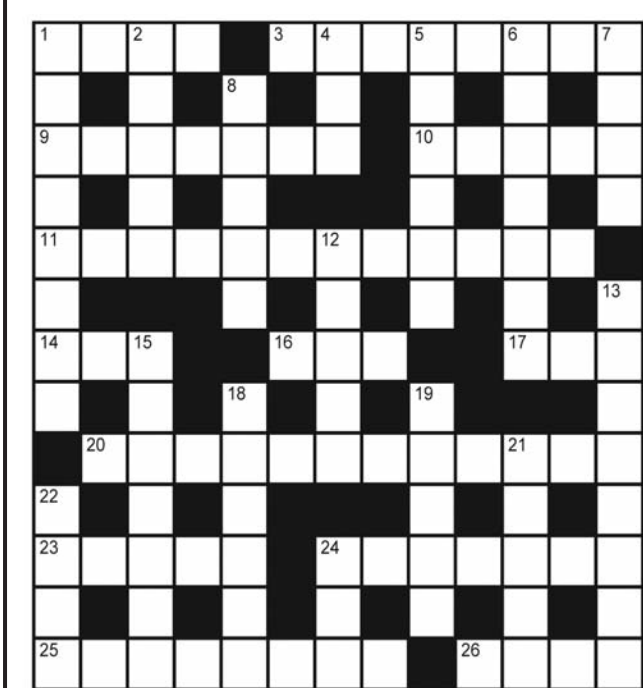


## BREVITY



## FUN post

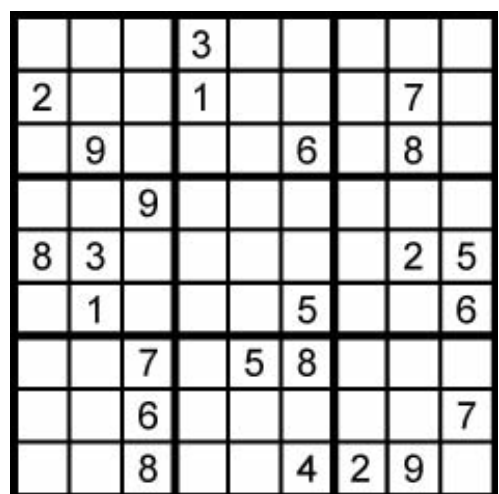
## CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Mongrel
  - 3 Vindictive
  - 9 Equivalent word
  - 10 Type of infection
  - 11 Fine textured wood (5-7)
  - 14 Circle segment
  - 16 Climbing vine
  - 17 Ford Explorer, e.g.
  - 20 The latest possible moment (8,4)
  - 23 Bikini, for one
  - 24 Gin cocktail
  - 25 Wobbly
  - 26 Nasty
  - 8 Peruvian peaks
  - 12 Poe bird
  - 13 Dislike
  - 15 Emotionally hardened
  - 18 Slender
  - 19 Ocean predator
  - 21 Antipasto morsel
  - 22 Diamond Head locale
  - 24 Really bad coffee
- Down**
- 1 Oboist, for one
  - 2 Ballroom dance
  - 4 Shade tree
  - 5 Yield (4,2)
  - 6 Sodbusters
  - 7 Showy flower

## SUDOKU

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



## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

SULTRY HONSHU  
P A T I P V U N  
A R R I V A L E L B O W  
R G U E R Z I  
S T E E L A C T R E S S  
E E S S R E  
I N S T R U C T I O N  
S U R E S  
T E M P U R A A R E N A  
U E N B R M F  
C O R G I L E G I B L E  
C A O G E A P E T  
O O L O N G O S P R E Y

### SUDOKU

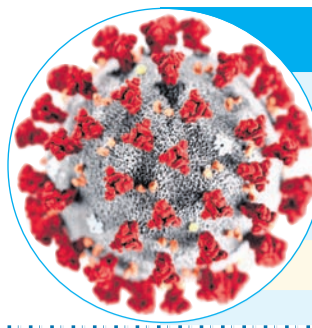
4 7 6 9 5 8 2 3 1  
9 3 1 4 7 2 5 6 8  
8 5 2 6 1 3 7 9 4  
3 1 4 7 2 9 8 5 6  
7 6 8 1 4 5 9 2 3  
5 2 9 3 8 6 1 4 7  
6 8 5 2 3 1 4 7 9  
1 4 3 5 9 7 6 8 2  
2 9 7 8 6 4 3 1 5

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



**BID TO KEEP COVID AT BAY**

RPF personnel sensitise rail passengers on maintenance of Covid appropriate behaviour at Khurda Road station, Monday



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

|        | INFECTED     | RECOVERED    | DEAD      |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World  | 30,81,58,798 | 25,96,96,205 | 55,07,604 |
| India  | 3,57,07,727  | 3,45,00,172  | 4,83,936  |
| Odisha | 10,75,698    | 10,47,031    | 8,468     |

**Construction of Lords' chariots to begin soon**

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**Puri, Jan 10:** The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) here has initiated the process for construction of the three chariots for July 1 annual Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath, His elder brother Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra.



According to temple sources, a three-member team will embark on the mission to collect the required specific species and number of timber logs from the Nayagarh forest range. Tuesday, the team carrying the Holy Mahaprasad, Shripal and other Puja items from Srimandir will go to Badmula village in Nayagarh district. A Puja and Homa will be performed at the Goddess Badaraula temple before beginning the cutting and collection of timber from the forest. According to Sudarshan Mekap, the supervisor of chariot construction, a total 806 timber logs of "Phasi, Asan and Dhaura" are used for the construction of the three chariots.

**CM lays stone for 2 barrages on Ib river**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for the construction of two barrages on Ib river in Sundargarh district through virtual mode Monday.

The barrages will come up on Ib river at Kopsingha and Kudabanga under Sadar block in the tribal-dominated district at an estimated cost of Rs 493 crore in two years now, an official said. Around 47,000 people of Sundargarh Sadar, Lephripara, Balisankara and Tangarpali blocks along with Sundargarh municipality will be benefitted from the duo barrage. Besides, it will also facilitate irrigation of 488-hectare land. "The barrages will provide drinking water facility to houses in the above blocks and fishermen can earn a livelihood by fish farming there. As bridges will be constructed over the two barrages, people of Lephripara and Tangarpali blocks will get direct road communication to Rourkela," added the official. According to the CM, the two barrages in Sundargarh are part of the Instream Storage Structure (ISS) scheme which is being executed from the state's own funds. Under the ISS scheme, at least 30 barrages will be constructed on major rivers at an expenditure of around Rs 11,700 crore. Apart from helping farmers get irrigation facilities, the barrages will go a long



**Around 47,000 people of Sundargarh Sadar, Lephripara, Balisankara and Tangarpali blocks along with Sundargarh municipality will be benefitted from the barrages**

way in maintaining groundwater levels and providing piped water to nearby villages, Patnaik said.

Highlighting that Sundargarh is the lighthouse of Odisha's development, Naveen said, "Rourkela city, Rourkela Steel Plant and NIT-Rourkela have enhanced the pride of Odisha. The memory of leg-

endary Biju Patnaik is associated with these important projects."

Patnaik said Sundargarh has given many things to the country. "It (Sundargarh) provides coal to power the country. Asia's largest hockey stadium is coming up in the district. The hockey players from this district have brought pride to the country. So, the establishment of an AIIMS in Sundargarh is the right of the district's people," he mentioned.

He expressed happiness at the successful implementation of Mission Shakti and 5T governance model in Sundargarh's education sector.

Patnaik exhorted the people to take advantage of the different development and welfare schemes of the state government and put in their contribution to building a new Odisha.

**13 industrial projects worth ₹2,359cr launched**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday launched 13 industrial projects worth Rs 2,359.29 crore, which will create employment opportunities for over 3,200 persons in the state.

Naveen virtually inaugurated two industrial units with investment of Rs 409.03 crore and performed the groundbreaking for 11 projects with a cumulative investment of Rs 1,950.26 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, Patnaik said, "Odisha is fast emerging as the 'Manufacturing Hub of Eastern India'. Our government's progressive policy framework and regulatory environment has enabled the rapid growth of industries in the state."

The implementation of 'Ease of Doing Business' reforms and facilitation provided by various departments have ensured that businesses continue to grow in the state, he said.

"Our industries have been actively partnering with the state government not only in the economic development, but also in discharging social responsibility. Our government has been focusing on skilling the youth of Odisha to make them industry-ready and many industries have come forward to participate in our skill development initiatives," the CM added. The state has always endeavoured to provide a hassle-free and a conducive business environment for the investors. Even in these difficult times of Covid-19, the state has attracted major in-

**NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER**

vestments and continues to enjoy the trust of investors, the CM pointed out.

He said, "The 13 projects for which groundbreaking and inauguration has been undertaken today are spread over nine districts. These projects are also spread across all categories of investments - small, medium as well as large industries."

A cement grinding unit of Rs 400 crore set up by Jajpur Cement at Kalinganagar of Jajpur district was inaugurated Monday. The Chief Minister has also inaugurated a biodegradable tableware manufacturing unit of Rs 9.03 crore.

Similarly, foundation stones were laid for projects, including a logistic park, three ethanol plants, a steel expansion project, a cement manufacturing unit and a 5-star resort. Some of the leading companies promoting these projects include Tata Steel, Swosti Premium, Greentech Bioenergy and Coastal Biotech.

**Markets, haats to be decentralised in City**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Taking cognizance of the rising Covid cases in the capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Monday issued a set of new regulations to decentralise markets and haat areas to discourage crowding at these places.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the state government to check the spread of the virus, it has been observed that people are not maintaining proper social distancing in crowded market places/haats in the capital city, especially in places like the Unit-I wholesale market and markets in Unit-IV etc, the BMC said in a notification.

"The Zonal Deputy Commissioners of BMC shall identify suitable places in consultation with the respective market associations & local ACP/ IIC for conducting the markets/ haats at decentralised places for ease of the public as well as for their safety. The places identified during the 1st and 2nd phases of the pandemic can be utilised this time again," the guidelines in the notification mentioned. "The vendors should sit sufficiently apart so that social distancing norms are adhered by them as well as by the public. The Zonal DCs will undertake demarcations/ barricading etc so that the COVID norms are followed properly. The enforcement teams of BDA/BMC with the help of local police should ensure proper enforcement in a periodic manner to ensure adherence to the guidelines," it added.

Meanwhile, the BMC added 12 new micro containment zones taking total tally of such zones to 72.

**Vaishnav reviews Rlys' Covid-19 preparedness**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Keeping in view the alarming rise in Covid cases and a third wave on hand, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, in a preparedness review meeting Monday, directed the senior officials of various Railway zones including the East Coast Railway (ECoR) and divisions to facilitate the use of Railways hospitals and health infrastructure for general public.

Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of the Railway Board VK Tripathi, board members, senior officials of the Ministry of Railways, General Managers (GMs) and Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) of all Zonal Railways/PUs joined the meeting virtually.

In the meeting, Vaishnav examined the Railway hospital infrastructure, pediatric ward functioning, vaccination of children and Railways staff, provisioning of booster dose to frontline workers of Railways, availability of medicines, oxygen supply and

other necessary medical support, and functioning of ventilators, liquid medical oxygen tanks, and other equipment which are critical in Covid treatment.

Vaishnav enquired about commissioning of oxygen plants as well.

As per a report, out of the total sanctioned oxygen plants, 78 have already been commissioned and 17 are yet to be commissioned.

He also directed the officials to create awareness and increase the frequency of announcements at Railway stations about masking up, hands sanitisation and other precautionary measures.

He instructed to discourage entry of people without mask at Railway stations and running drives to promote adherence with the prescribed precautionary measures.

He also reviewed the running of special stations in case of emergency and/or sudden surge in number of passengers/migrants at Railway stations during the current Covid crisis.

**Rural infrastructure our top priority, says Naveen**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** The state government is committed to converting all kucha houses to pucca houses in a time-bound manner and provide piped water to all rural households by 2024. So the government is giving emphasis on expansion of rural infrastructure, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik here Monday.

Patnaik said this while addressing the orientation programme

for the newly-recruited assistant executive engineers of panchayati raj & drinking water (PR&DW) department.

As many as 210 assistant executive engineers have joined the panchayati raj & drinking water department Monday. This is the first batch of a new engineering cadre created in the department.

Rural housing and drinking water supply are the two flagship programmes of the state government, he said. Therefore, the gov-

**A new engineering cadre of 210 assistant executive engineers joined the Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water department**

ernment is providing more manpower at the gram panchayat level. The state government's emphasis has been on expansion of rural

infrastructure. Thus the creation of a new engineering cadre is indicative of our thrust on it, Naveen stated. He further said that the state government is committed to empowering the panchayati raj system, so that benefits of development reach the poorest of the poor. The Chief Minister advised the newly recruited engineers to put all their energy and knowledge to be part of the transformation that is now happening in Odisha.

He urged fresh recruits to follow

and imbibe 5-T Mantras of the government in their daily assignment. Highlighting the principles of the state's governance, the CM said, "People are at the core of our government. We need to serve them with dignity and professionalism."

Among others, Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water Minister Pratap Jena, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra, Secretary to Chief Minister (5-T) VK Pandian and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

**Fraudster arrested**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** The Commissionerate Police Monday arrested a fraudster for availing loan from various financial institutions by submitting forged documents. The accused, identified as Smruti Ranjan Sahoo alias Ramana, is a resident of Adasapur area in Cuttack.

According to sources, Sahoo was shocked to receive a message saying that he defaulted in paying monthly installments against a loan taken from the Central bank of India's Rasulgurh branch.

Sahoo has no account at the branch and apprised the branch manager of the message.

Following an internal enquiry, bank officials found that the accused had opened an account at the branch in the name of Sahoo.

Smruti managed to forge the Know Your Customer and PAN card details of Sahoo to take the loan in Sahoo's name.

**SHROUDED IN FOG**



Dense fog grips Bhubaneswar, Monday morning

OP PHOTO

**BMC waste management projects hit roadblock**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Various projects launched by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation's (BMC) for efficient solid waste management have hit a roadblock with residents protesting against the civic body's idea of using public spaces as waste management sites without the permission of the local residents.

With about 600 metric tonnes of waste generated in the state capital on a daily basis, the BMC had proposed setting up Micro Composting Centres (MCCs) in different parts of the city in 2020 to reduce pressure on the Daruthenga dumping yard. The civic body

aimed to process up to 350 metric tonnes of waste and proposed to set up 43 MCCs in different wards within a year.

However, till date, only 23 MCCs have come up across the city owing to land disputes and a series of protests by residents of different wards over site selection. Alleging that the processing units will emit foul odour and pollute the surroundings, the local residents have blamed the BMC for diverting public spaces for personal uses.

"As per the original plan developed by the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), the proposed sites have been earmarked for development as parks and for other public utility. The plan also



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

mentions that each residential area must have a recreation area of the local residents. Thus, making a MCC without our permission is a

gross violation and we will move court if required," said Niranjan Sethi, a resident of Kapilaprasad area who had protested and asked for shifting of the MCC in his locality.

Similarly, in a more recent development, residents from Defence Colony of Sailashree Vihar in ward no 7 had sought the intervention of Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena to withdraw the decision to set up a waste disposal unit on space meant for public utility in their locality.

Furthermore, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had in December restrained the BMC from carrying out construction of a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) near

Sikharchandi in Patia area of Bhubaneswar after a petition was filed alleging unauthorised use of forest land.

The petition filed by Sikharchandi residents Biranchi Narayan Mallick and three others stated that the land on which BMC plans to construct the MRF was being used by the local people for cremation and burial purposes since they were rehabilitated by BMC in the area in 1990.

"An MCC and a high school had already come up in the area. If the remaining portion of the land is used for the MRF, then the people of Sikharchandi would face problems for cremation," the petitioners said.

**CHSE extends date for Plus II exam form submission**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** The Odisha Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) Monday extended form fill up deadline for the annual Higher Secondary (Plus II) examination, 2022.

In a notification issued Monday, the CHSE stated that the form fill-up date with fine of Rs 450 has been extended up to January 18, 2022 in order to give a last opportunity to the students. "It is revealed that some students who have been registered under CHSE for the session 2020-21 and those who are eligible as ex-regular candidates have not yet filled-up forms for the annual Higher

Secondary examination-2022. In order to give them a last opportunity, the form fill-up date with fine of Rs 450 is extended up to January 18, 2022," the notification read.

As per the revised date, regular, ex-regular and correspondence course students of Arts, Science, Commerce and Vocational streams can now fill up forms for the annual examination till January 18.

The fees prescribed with a fine of Rs 450 per student can be deposited by January 19 as per the procedure notified earlier by the council, December 22, 2021.

No further request for extension of form fill-up dates will be entertained, the CHSE said.

# Drug smuggling: 3-member CB team to visit WB today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** A three-member team of the Odisha Police Crime Branch is likely to leave for West Bengal Tuesday following the seizure of 13 kg heroin from the possession of six drug manufacturers and traffickers, including two from Odisha.

The team from Odisha would try to know the racket's involvement in illegal drug trade in Odisha and about other members of the gang active in the state.

According to sources, the two accused from Odisha are Irshad Khan and Sk Rashid, both natives of Jaleswar in Balasore. The Special Task Force of West Bengal Police Monday revealed that the STF team arrested six members of an

**The WB police seized 13kg processed heroin worth around ₹65 crore, cash worth ₹20,10,100, crude heroin and other chemical ingredients used for processing of the illegal drug**

of which two are from West Bengal, two are from Odisha and 2 are from Manipur," claimed the release issued by West Bengal police.

"The racketeers used to procure raw material from Manipur, which was processed in a house at Sripally under Bardhaman Sadar police station of Purba Bardhaman district and the processed heroin used to be supplied to various regions of West Bengal and Odisha," added the West Bengal STF

The West Bengal police seized 13 kilograms of processed heroin worth around ₹65 crore, cash worth ₹20,10,100, crude heroin and other chemical ingredients used for processing of heroin. A cash counting machine, weighing machine, and sealing machine were also seized.

inter-state drug racket involved in the illegal production and supply of illegal drugs in Bardhaman area.

The West Bengal Police also told media that of the six arrested traffickers, two each belong to West Bengal, Odisha and Manipur. "A total of 6 persons have been arrested out



**PRECAUTIONARY DOSE**

Odisha Assembly Speaker SN Patro receives a precautionary dose (3rd dose) of vaccine against Covid-19 in Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

# Omicron tally breaches 100-mark in state

**ODISHA MONDAY REPORTED 4,829 NEW COVID-19 CASES, 448 OF THEM CHILDREN**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** The state's Omicron tally Monday increased to 103 with the detection of 28 more persons infected by the new variant of the coronavirus, a senior Health department official said.

Odisha director of Public Health, Niranjan Mishra said of the 28 new cases, 18 have history of international travel, two are from outside the state (Kashmir and Mumbai) and the rest are local people, including contact cases.

While one Omicron infected woman patient has died, five oth-

ers have so far been recovered from the infection. The first case of Omicron was reported in the state December 21, 2021.

Health experts said 80 per cent of the new cases in many parts of the country have been detected as Omicron. The situation could be similar in Odisha too as the variant is highly transmittable.

The state government has ordered five lakh OmiSure kits for early detection of the new variant. Orders were placed with Tata Medical and Diagnostics by Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited, an independent procurement agency for the department of health and family welfare.

OmiSure is the first Omicron-specific COVID-19 detection RT-PCR test kit which has been developed indigenously. It is the only one approved by ICMR and Odisha became



the first state in the country to place orders for OmiSure kits at point of first line testing, the manufacturing company said in a statement.

The state Monday reported 4,829 new COVID-19 cases, 448 of them children, taking its caseload to 10,75,698 with 20,560 active cases.

However, no fatality was recorded for the third consecutive day, a health department bulletin said. The daily positivity rate declined

to 6.5 per cent from 6.72 per cent on the previous day as the number of new cases on Monday was marginally higher than the 4714 reported Sunday and is just shy of the figure of 4,852 infections registered on June 12, 2021, it said.

The new cases jumped by more than 11 fold from 424 infections a week ago. Khurda district, where Bhubaneswar is located, reported 993 cases, followed by 869 in

Sundargarh, 644 in Sambalpur, 401 in Cuttack and 210 in Balasore, it said. The active cases mounted to 20,560 - including 6,496 in Khurda and 3,060 in Sundargarh, which are in the red zone. Sambalpur and Cuttack are in the yellow zone, the bulletin said.

The toll in COVID-19 in the state stood at 8,468, which was confirmed in an audit. Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far, the department said. With 414 patients recovering from the pandemic on Monday the total number of recoveries stood at 10.47 lakh, it said.

The state tested 74,304 samples during the day, the bulletin said.

More than 3.04 crore people have taken the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, while over 2.21 crore have been fully vaccinated till Sunday, it added.

## COVID CLAMPDOWN HE dept postpones first inter-varsity competition

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** In view of the worsening Covid-19 situation, the Higher Education (HE) department Monday postponed the first Odisha Inter-University competition (OIUC) which was scheduled to be held from January 10 to February 6.

HE department Secretary Saswat Mishra, in a letter to all the Vice Chancellors of public universities and principals of all government and government-aided colleges in state, notified that due to the worsening Covid situation in state, the department has postponed the competition.

Earlier, with the rapid increase in Covid-19 cases in Odisha, the

state government had ordered closure of all colleges, universities and hostels from January 10.

The department had decided to start the first Inter-University competition from the 2021-22 academic year. The competition, to be hosted by universities of the state, aimed towards the overall development of students ranging from academics to physical growth.

The athletic events were scheduled to be hosted at Berhampur University, while Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University was to host other sports events from January 21 to 24, while Utkal University in state Capital was scheduled to host literary and cultural event from February 4 to 6.

## Odisha shines at India Skills 2021

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Odisha made its presence felt at the India Skills 2021 competition held Monday at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium in New Delhi, with participants from the state winning 10 gold, 18 silver and 9 bronze medals.

The gold medalists also received cash prize worth ₹1 lakh, silver medalist ₹75,000 and bronze medalist ₹50,000. Seventy-six contestants from the state took part in the competition, including 16 girls. The winners will get an opportunity to represent India at the Shanghai World Skill Competition to be held in China in October 2022.

Odisha's target is to win two gold, three silver and four bronze medals at the World Skill competition. CM Naveen Patnaik also congratulated the winners.

## CHORUS FOR REGULAR EMPLOYMENT



Contractual employees of Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) staging a demonstration in front of OLM office in Unit-VIII area of Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding job regularisation

OP PHOTO

## Pradhan bats for equitable, inclusive edu

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Union Education and Skill Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Monday virtually addressed the 82nd Indian Public Schools' Conference (IPSC) Principals' Conclave organised by the Doon School.

Speaking on the occasion, Pradhan said that the National Education Policy (2020) focuses on equitable and inclusive education with special emphasis given on socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

An inclusive classroom benefits everyone from myriad experiences and viewpoints, and understands the various challenges faced by the country, he added. The minister urged all the

**A knowledgeable individual is the building block of a good and progressive society. He wills to learn, applies and passes knowledge forward and has pushed humanity to discover fire, take up farming, soar past the skies and float amongst the stars**

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

schools attending the conclave to reflect on how inclusive the leading schools are and what more can be done to ensure that every child in the country gets the best education.

Pradhan stated that a knowledgeable individual is the build-

ing block of a good and progressive society. He wills to learn, applies and passes knowledge forward and has pushed humanity to discover fire, take up farming, soar past the skies and float amongst the stars.

He stressed that it is the duty of every citizen to do what is best for our children and ensure that they enjoy the fundamental right to education.

The minister was happy to know that IPSC, which started in 1939 with a few residential schools, now has 81 schools, including Sainik Schools and Military Schools.

The annual meet of the headmasters, headmistresses of more than 80 leading schools of India holds significant weight in terms of the power to influence the next generation.

## Miscreants loot Laxmi Nrusingha temple in Puri

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**Puri, Jan 10:** Unidentified miscreants looted the Laxmi Nrusingha temple situated at Jagannathpur village under the Chandanpur police station limits, police sources said.

Sunday night, the miscreant broke open the doors of the temple and decamped with the idol

of the presiding deity Laxmi Nrusingha and throne made of Ashtadhatu (eight metals), idols of Madanmohan and Radhakrishna besides other valuable assets worth lakhs of rupees. The temple priest reported the matter at Chandanpur police station Monday morning.

The priest came to know about the theft when he arrived Monday morning to render services and found the main door lock broken and the idols missing.

Police have registered a criminal case and started investigating into the theft. Dog squad and scientific teams are working at the temple to find clues and trace the criminals.

# No progress despite National Clean Air Programme

Three years since the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was implemented across India to reduce particulate matter levels in 132 cities by 20-30 per cent, data Monday revealed that there has been little or no progress on ground.

An analysis of the government's air quality data showed that not only have most non-attainment cities reduced PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels marginally, some have also recorded an increase.

The Union government launched the NCAP January 10, 2019 to address air pollution in 102 cities, to which 20 more cities were added later in the year and 10 more subsequently.

These 132 cities are called non-attainment cities as they did not meet the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for the period of 2011-15 under the National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP).

The country's current annual safe limits for PM 2.5 and PM 10 are 40 and 60 micrograms/per cubic metre (ug/m3).

The NCAP has set a target of reducing key air pollutants PM10 and PM2.5 (ultra-fine particulate matter) by 20-30 per cent in 2024 taking the pollution levels in 2017 as the base year to improve upon.

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and Central Pollution Control Board are leading the programme at the national level. At the state level, state pollution control boards are mandated to develop the city action plans and monitor their implementation by identified departments and agencies.

An analysis of air quality monitoring data from the Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring System (CAAQMS) shows that among the cities where PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels for 2019 and 2021 were available and monitors had an up-time of at least 50 per cent, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest reduction. Only 36 out of the 132 cities met the criteria.

Varanasi's annual PM 2.5 levels reduced 52 per cent from 91 ug/m3 in 2019 to 44 ug/m3 in 2021

**An analysis of the government's air quality data showed that not only have most non-attainment cities reduced PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels marginally, some have also recorded an increase**

Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh with annual PM 2.5 levels above 100 remained at the top of the table in the most polluted cities except in 2020

Four of the top 10 polluted cities were from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal had three cities - Howrah, Ansansol and Kolkata

Talcher in Odisha which saw a PM 2.5 reduction of 20 per cent and PM 10 reduction of 53 per cent

and its PM 10 levels reduced 54 per cent from 202 ug/m3 in 2019 to 93 ug/m3 last year.

In 2019, Varanasi had just one CAAQMS monitor which increased to four by 2021. The other cities that have already met its reduction target of at least 20 per cent were Hubli in West Bengal where PM 2.5 and PM 10 reduced by 42 and



40 per cent respectively and Talcher in Odisha which saw a PM 2.5 reduction of 20 per cent and PM 10 reduction of 53 per cent.

Ahmedabad recorded a 26 per cent decrease in PM 10 levels. On the other hand, Navi Mumbai's PM 2.5 levels increased from 39 ug/m3 to 53 ug/m3 and PM 10 levels increased from 96 ug/m3 to 122 ug/m3 from 2019 to 2021.

Three years later, none of the analysed non-attainment cities have met the Central Pollution

Control Board's PM 10 safe standard of 60 ug/m3.

The NCAP Tracker ranked the 10 most and least polluted cities in 2019 and tracked the performance of these based on PM 10 and PM 2.5 data available from CAAQMS.

Considering only those cities where monitors recorded a minimum uptime of 50 per cent, a total of 38, 46 and 58 cities were analysed and ranked in 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Similarly, the tracker also ranked

non-attainment cities (which recorded at least 52 days of data each year) based on NAMP data for the years 2017 to 2020. However, the number of monitored days for 2020 was not available and hence all cities have been considered.

While in the same city, CAAQMS and NAMP monitors are placed at different locations and hence, cities have been ranked separately.

Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh with annual PM 2.5 levels above 100 remained at the top of the table in the most polluted cities except in 2020 when Lucknow ranked first with an annual PM 2.5 level of 116.

Most cities like Noida, Delhi, Moradabad and Jodhpur saw a marginal dip in PM 2.5 levels and remained in top 10 polluted non-attainment cities throughout the year.

Varanasi with its drastic dip in PM 2.5 levels went from the fifth rank in 2019 to the 37th in 2021. While four of the top 10 polluted cities were from Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal had three cities - Howrah, Ansansol and Kolkata - on the list. IANS

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemana-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-977682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

SHORT TAKES

Bhadrak admin closes religious sites for public

Bhadrak: Amid rising cases of Covid-19 and following the detection of new Omicron variant infections in Odisha, the district administration announced the closure of all religious places in Bhadrak from Monday onwards. A source said that the step was taken to contain any probable spread of the virus. District administration clamped the restrictions with effect from 1.00 am of January 10 till 12 noon of January 31, a notification issued Sunday evening by Collector Trilochan Majhi mentioned. Section 144 has been imposed in and around Akhandalamani temple here in compliance with the official notification.

Foundation stone laid for eco-park

G Udayagiri: Siriki under this block in Kandhamal district will soon be a tourists' interest as state forest and environment minister Bikram Keshari Arokh laid the foundation of an eco-park in the area at a function held Monday. The eco-park will be built at a cost of ₹1.25 crore where tourists will have the facilities of stay in cottages and boat ride in the nearby water body, officials said. DFO Lakshmi Narayan Behera presided over the meeting in which G Udayagiri MLA Saluga Pradhan and Zilla Parishad chairperson Akankshya Pradhan joined as guests of honour. Among others, a host of BJD party leaders and office bearers were also present in the meeting.

Youth impregnates 13-yr-old girl, flees

R Udayagiri: A 13-year-old girl was impregnated after she was coerced into a relationship by a youth under Mohana police limits in Gajapati district. The matter came to the fore after the survivor's family members informed the Childline authorities and later lodged a complaint at Mohana police station, Sunday. Police registered a case and sent the survivor for medical examination. The incident occurred when the youth strayed into the girl's house and forced her into a physical relationship when her family members were away for work. He kept visiting the house of the girl and repeatedly raped her in the absence of her kin. He, however, abandoned the girl and fled after he came to know about her pregnancy. The girl narrated her ordeal when her family members came to know about her pregnancy.

Students' stir in Collectorate

Bhadrak: Students under the aegis of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), and Naba Nirman Yuva Chhatra Sangathan (NNYCS) and Youth Congress, Monday staged a demonstration outside the district Collectorate protesting the alleged irregularities in admission to the Bhadrak Autonomous College by producing fake disability certificates.

49 students of private college test Covid +ve

Rayagada, Jan 10: With Covid-19 cases on the rise in Odisha, as many as 49 students at MIT'S Engineering College in Rayagada tested positive for coronavirus, the college authorities informed Monday. A source said, five students of the college had earlier tested positive for the virus January 7. With recently detected cases, the total number of infected students in the educational institution has reached 54. On the other hand, following the detection of fresh infections, the district administration has declared Hostel-1 and 2 of the private engineering college as micro-containment zones and

subsequently sealed its premises. "During a rapid antigen testing for Covid-19 carried out on the hostel inmates, at least 49 of them were found infected. All the infected have been kept under isolation and necessary medical assistance is being provided by the administration," a spokesperson said. "Meanwhile, contact tracing of the Covid-19 infected persons and sanitisation of the college premises are underway. The district administration is taking all possible steps to contain any probable spread of the viral disease," Rayagada Collector Saroj Kumar Mishra stated. It is pertinent to mention here that Rayagada district reported 82 fresh Covid-19 cases Sunday.



People demanding completion of a bridge on Lanth river at Badipada in Saintala block of Bolangir district staging a Jal Satyagraha in the river, Monday. The agitation was spearheaded by Koshal Rajya Yuva Samanwaya Samiti

Child marriages rife in Kendrapara

Kendrapara, Jan 10: The proposed plan by the Centre to increase the minimum legal age of marriage for women in India from 18 to 21 years has become a hot topic of debate. The Centre is also stressing on 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme to create awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India. The Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) has opposed the move and instead advocated to keep the marriageable age 18 for both boys and girls. However, girls continue to be a vulnerable community in this coastal part of the state where child marriage is rampant in remote corners of the district. Factors like poverty and distress, patriarchal norms and practices, lack of opportunity for education and absence of employment opportunities contribute to a large extent to the prevalence of child marriages. The child marriage rate of girls in the state is 20.5 per cent as per the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5. Notably, Kendrapara district alone accounts

for 12 per cent of the cases. Reports said parents in remote corners of the district rush to marry their teenage daughters off before they attain the legal age of 18. Hundreds of teenage girls are married off this way before they reach marriageable age. However, the district administration has failed to curb these illegal marriages. While only four child marriages were stopped in 2017, the administration was able to stop only 12 such cases from August 2020 to December 2021. It was alleged that hundreds of teenage girls are married off every year in this way which hardly come to the notice of the district or local administrations. This has come at a time when the post of district child protection officer (DCPO) has been vacant for last three years. The awareness programme carried out by the district administration has come to naught with the post lying vacant. This has sparked concern among the residents as they claimed that the child marriages could be prevented if the local women self-help groups were empowered to handle such cases. Advocate Bidhu Bhusan Mohapatra said that child mar-

The child marriage rate of girls in the state is 20.5 per cent as per the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5. Notably, Kendrapara district alone accounts for 12 per cent of the cases. Many claimed that the child marriages could be prevented if the local women self-help groups were empowered to handle such cases. The post of district child protection officer (DCPO) has been vacant for last three years. Poverty, lack of awareness, traditional practices and protection to the Bangladeshi immigrants are some of the reasons behind the increasing rate of child marriages.

riage is a social evil for which government has enacted Child Marriage Prevention Act-2006 and Odisha Child Marriage Prevention Act-2009. The cases relating to child marriages are tried under Juvenile Justice Act-2015 and Model Act-2016 in POCSO courts. The Centre and state government have formed a host of departments like women and child



REPRESENTATIONAL PICTURE. Many claimed that the child marriages could be prevented if the local women self-help groups were empowered to handle such cases.

Portable hosp set up in Swabhiman Anchal in 2 weeks

Chittrakonda, Jan 10: Aiming to provide quality healthcare services to the residents, a portable healthcare unit has been launched in the Swabhiman Anchal of Chittrakonda area in Malkangiri district, Monday. Joining as the Chief Guest, Nabarangpur MP Ramesh Chandra Majhi inaugurated the portable hospital at Badapada area in Swabhiman Anchal of the block. This portable hospital facility has been provided by the American Indian Foundation built with the financial support of Chennai based IIT and Master Card. The hospital will provide quality healthcare service to the residents, especially to pregnant women. The hospital is to be managed by three doctors and a pharmacist. The portable hospital built within two weeks has 50 beds with additional facilities of four intensive care unit (ICU) beds with ventilators. Each ward of the hospital consists of 14 beds having air-conditioning facilities. The hospital is equipped with an oxygen concentrator and arrangements to maintain minus temperature inside the unit. Purna Chandra Baka, Chittrakonda MLA and Prafulla Nanda, CDMO joined as the guests of honour which was attended by Birasen Pradhan, Malkangiri ADM, Banabihari Mishra, DPM, Rahul Mandal, BDO, Dr Santosh Sarangi, MO, Kudmuluguma CHC, Haraprasad Tareni, BPM, Dr Khirod Chandra Mohanta MO, Chittrakonda CHC.

riod. A year back, the BeMC authorities signed an agreement with two SHGs to collect parking fee from these parking slots in lieu of 5 per cent commission. However, the SHG members objected to payment of such meager commission and demanded to hike the commission to 25 per cent of the collected fee.

HIRAKUD BIRD CENSUS '22

2.08L birds of 104 species turned up

19 NEW SPECIES OF BIRDS ARRIVED AT THE RESERVOIR THIS YEAR

Sambalpur, Jan 10: A total of 2.08 lakh birds of 104 species visited the reservoir as per the annual migratory bird census 2022 that commenced Friday morning in the Hirakud Dam Reservoir. The officials informed that 19 new species of birds arrived at the reservoir this year. The headcount of the avian species began at 5 am and continued till 5 pm Friday, informed a forest official. The new species are Black Bittern, Peregrine Falcon, Swift, Black-headed Ibis, Ruddy Crake, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Pied Bushchat, Long Tailed Shrike, Striated Heron, Paddyfield Pipit, Black Shoulder Kite, Bear's Pochard, Western Yellow Wagtail, Knob billed Duck, Siberian Rubby throat, Redwinged bush lark, Crested lark and Green Sandpiper. The numbers are promising as



the count is more than that of 2021 bird census which recorded 1.24 lakh birds of 90 species. As per reports, as many as 38 teams comprising forest staff from Sambalpur, Bargarh and Jharsuguda divisions had been engaged in the enumeration of both the domestic and migratory birds at the Hirakud reservoir area and in the power channel. This year's bird census also includes the area of Sukhasoda (38 sq kms) on the Odisha-Chhattisgarh

SHG members to man parking lots in Silk City

Berhampur, Jan 10: The Berhampur civic body will redeploy self-help group (SHG) members to check the burgeoning traffic problems in the parking slots in the Silk City, a report said. This was stated here by Siddeshwar Baliram Bondar, commissioner of Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC). He said that 10 parking slots have been identified in the city. It has been planned to redeploy SHG members to control the traffic problems and will soon be implemented. Sources said that parking of vehicles in crowded market places has become a major problem in the Silk City as these lead to unnecessary crowding and chaotic conditions. Parking of vehicles in busy spots has posed major challenges in traffic management to the civic body authorities. The civic body failed to get any revenue in 2020-21 fiscal as no parking fee was collected during this pe-

riod. A year back, the BeMC authorities signed an agreement with two SHGs to collect parking fee from these parking slots in lieu of 5 per cent commission. However, the SHG members objected to payment of such meager commission and demanded to hike the commission to 25 per cent of the collected fee.

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender No. e-T-M-OBHS-BBS-173-2022 NAME OF WORK : ON BOARD HOUSEKEEPING SERVICE IN BHUBANESWAR (BBS) BASED TRAINS FOR A PERIOD OF 04 YEARS. Advertisment Value : ₹17,64,01,723.19, EMD: ₹10,32,000/-, Tender Document Cost: ₹11,800/-, Period of Completion: 48 Months. Bidding Start Date: 13.01.2022

EAST COAST RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM TO E-Tender No. PCMM/EP/2021-22/53, Dt.: 17.12.2021 The following modification has been made in the Tender Notice which may please be noted. Tender No.: 04205171 Particulars: Date & Time of Closing of Tender:- As Published To be Read As 29.12.2021 at 1500 Hrs. 13.01.2022 at 1500 Hrs.

South Odisha's biggest Tricolour flutters in Jeypore

The special occasion of flag hoisting was followed by the National Anthem as per the protocol. The entire place soon reverberated with the patriotic chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jay'



THE FLAG MEASURING 20 FEET IN LENGTH AND 30 FEET IN WIDTH IS WAVING ATOP A 110-FOOT-HIGH FLAG POLE. The event was attended by many distinguished personalities including Koraput district Collector Abdaal M Akhtar, Jeypore MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati and others. "The biggest National Flag in south Odisha has been unfurled at the traffic square in Jeypore town Sunday.

I am thankful to Jeypore MLA and the Chairman of State Seed Corporation and, of course, the Jeypore residents who supported us whole heartedly," said Collector Abdaal M Akhtar. Reports said that the massive Tricolour and its pole were manufactured at a cost of ₹40 lakh. While ₹25 lakh was sanctioned from MLALAD fund, the rest ₹15 lakh was arranged from different sources. "If anyone who laid down his life for the sake of the motherland while fighting against the British Raj for the first time, he was none other than Koraput district's undisputed tribal leader Sahid Laxman Nayak. Strongly influenced by his principles and thoughts, I had decided to install a National Flag in Jeypore town. Subsequently I discussed with all those concerned and today the flag was unfurled," said Congress leader Bahinipati. Meanwhile, jubilant residents of Jeypore have welcomed the move.

Jeypore, Jan 10: The biggest National Flag of south Odisha has been unfurled at Jeypore in Koraput district. Now, visitors in Jeypore will witness a breathtaking view of a massive Tricolour fluttering atop a tall flag mast at the main traffic square in this town. The flag was installed and hoisted Sunday by the Koraput district administration. The flag, measuring 20

सेन्ट्रल इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोकेमिकल इंजीनियरिंग एण्ड टेक्नोलॉजी (सिपेट) CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PETROCHEMICALS ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (CIPET) CENTRE FOR SKILLING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT (CSTS), BHUBANESWAR (Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India) 5-3/79, Sector -A, Zone-B, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751 001. Email: cipet@cipet.gov.in, Website: www.cipet.gov.in

GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA No.O-1680 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, RAYAGADA Email: rw\_rayagada@yahoo.co.in; Phone No. 06856-222188 E-Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.: EERWRGD - Online - 09/2021-22 No.71 Date: 7.1.2022 1. Name of the work: Road works for the year 2021-22. 2. Total No. of works: 01 No. (Percentage rate tender). 3. Estimated Cost: 38.15 lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor: 'C' and 'B'. 5. Time of Completion: Specified in DTCN. 6. Mode of Submission of Tender: Tender should be submitted only in online https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in. 7. Other details: Detailed tender condition specified in DTCN.

FOCUS HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

# SAVING AFGHANISTAN



Whether viewed through Afghan eyes or from the perspective of Western politicians' self-interest, the current meltdown is a nightmare

It is now more than four months since the dramatic exit of US and other Western forces from Afghanistan. By chartering special flights, loosening asylum rules, and releasing funds, Western countries airlifted a few thousand lucky Afghans to safety as the Taliban retook control of the country. But those left behind have been shut off from the rest of the world - whether or not they are Taliban supporters.

Foreign governments have frozen international banking transactions and trade with Afghanistan, mostly at the behest of the United States, by imposing the vast array of counter-terrorism rules established over the past 20 years. As a result, Afghan public-sector salaries have dried up, and the economy has tanked. Many development-aid projects, no matter how essential, have been paralysed or cancelled.

As a result, the onset of the harsh Afghan winter has brought rising prices, and food has become increasingly scarce. Schools, clinics, and hospitals across the country have stopped functioning. So, just when the Afghan people need more help, they are being denied even the basics. It is a high price to pay for being ruled by the Taliban.

International humanitarian aid workers and Afghan communities themselves are doing their best to keep food aid moving, clinics functioning, and schools open for boys and girls. But the challenges are huge. Afghans now face destitution, and even famine, on a dramatic scale.

If the status quo continues, almost the entire country faces acute poverty this coming year. By the end of this winter, almost the entire country - 97% of the population - could be too poor to survive without aid.

The rest of the world, and developed countries in particular, should not think that they can just shut the door and forget about this mounting tragedy. Basic morality aside, the instability resulting from Afghanistan's collapse will

be felt far beyond the country's borders. Many Afghans may vote with their feet and seek a better future abroad, while farmers' desperation for income will be a boon to the domestic drug economy. It therefore begs belief that the United Nations and international relief agencies are struggling to raise the funds needed to pull Afghanistan back from the brink. Sanctions aimed at the Taliban's leadership have had the unintended counterproductive effect of hampering aid agencies' ability to raise and spend funds - although there are now welcome signs of movement toward removing these perverse restrictions. To be sure, it is right to stand up for Afghan girls' education. But, as the Afghan analyst Orzala Nemat of the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies recently put it, it is not right to withhold aid for the basic services - food, water, and healthcare - that keep those girls alive.

Whether viewed through Afghan eyes or from the perspective of Western politicians' self-interest, the current meltdown is a nightmare. Instead of sticking its head in the sand, the international community needs to act. There are three measures in particular that

can be taken without rewarding the Taliban.

First, money must be made available. The UN will seek to raise \$4.5 billion in 2022 to help the most vulnerable in Afghanistan. This plan is a stopgap measure for more than 21 million people who need food, shelter, medicine, and protection. The international community can surely find such a sum. A pledging conference early in the year will help to focus minds on the issue.

In addition, the UN Security Council recently adopted a resolution exempting humanitarian activities from the sanctions regime imposed on some Taliban members. The measure provides financial institutions and commercial actors with legal assurances that they will not breach existing sanctions when they engage with humanitarian organisations. Governments and financial institutions must make the most of this fresh opportunity: there can be no more excuses.

Second, there needs to be more flexibility in how donor funding can be used. For example, the World Bank holds \$1.5 billion in trust for Afghanistan, and recently announced an agreement to transfer \$280 million - some to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to pro-

vide healthcare, and some to the World Food Programme. The whole fund should now be reprogrammed to help the Afghan people this winter.

It should also be possible to use donor funding to pay public-sector workers' salaries and to help Afghan institutions deliver basic services such as healthcare and education, and still not be seen as rewarding the Taliban. Such support for essential state functions will give Afghans hope for the future and reason to stay in their country. Following out the state, on the other hand, is a recipe for suffering and instability.

Third, the international community needs to become smarter about how it engages with Afghanistan. Currently, the world is waiting for the Taliban to make progress on various international norms without clearly defining what it expects of the regime. The Taliban, meanwhile, are either not inclined to meet these expectations or opaque about their intentions.

This approach virtually ensures failure. The international community needs to be much more decisive and specific in its demands, as well as far more engaged. This could include relaxing or lifting some economic sanctions, or gradually reintroducing longer-term development assistance, in response to progress on issues of international concern - including women's and girls' rights.

These steps should not be regarded merely as acts of generosity in response to horrendous suffering. The world needs to provide the people of Afghanistan the support they need, because the catastrophic consequences of failure will not be theirs to suffer alone.

*Gordon Brown is a former PM of the UK. Martin Griffiths is Emergency Relief Coordinator of the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.*

©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Gordon Brown & Martin Griffiths

**JUST WHEN AFGHAN PEOPLE NEED MORE HELP, THEY ARE BEING DENIED EVEN THE BASICS**

Whatever is the difficulty if we keep truly quiet the solution will come.

THE MOTHER



## Suicide-bomber Army

It is a chilling thought for any country to raise a contingent of suicide bombers as part of its regular armed forces. This is for the simple reason that suicide bombing cannot be a legitimate form of any defence system. It has always been a tool in the hands of terrorist groups to resort to for subversive activities. But history also tells us about the Kamikaze pilots of Japan who emerged towards the end of World War II. One may not go into details of this past.

The task of suicide bombers is very clear cut. They set out to die and kill in the most unsuspecting areas. The idea is not only to instill fear but also to grab international headlines. India was a witness to the acts of such self-destructive people multiple times. The Bombay terror attack is one such event that will not be easily forgotten. All those involved in the Bombay attack or the 9/11 attacks in the US never had a return ticket. They came with the sole purpose of dying in the name of Allah. Globally, and also in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, suicide bomber attacks have very rarely failed.

The first ever squad of suicide bombers comes into being as a regular and legitimate army unit in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan - a country that has been the hotbed of terrorist activities for two decades. Their main target now would be the local offshoot of the Islamic State, which has carried out at least five major attacks as the Taliban looked to consolidate power after the US withdrew from Afghanistan in August last year. Several of those attacks were carried out by suicide bombers. The special forces that include martyrdom seekers will be used for more sophisticated and special operations, said Taliban's deputy spokesman Bilal Karimi. The militant group is ostensibly building a strong and organised army to bolster defence nationwide and at the borders with the suicide bombers becoming an integral part of the strategy. Some 150,000 fighters will be invited to join the military. The recruitment drive comes after the Taliban purged the military ranks to stop those who were conducting house-to-house searches to settle scores with opponents.

The news comes as a shock to the international community as the Taliban have for the past few months been posing to transform themselves from an insurgency group into a government. The rest of the world has great reservations and doubts about the real intent of the Taliban who are viewed with suspicion and distrust for their history of terror and bloodshed. Their emergence as rulers of Afghanistan is yet to get international recognition and their actions are being closely watched. Sanctions are still being applied against them and Afghanistan's financial resources worth billions of dollars continue to be frozen by the US and other countries. The Taliban are desperately trying to earn legitimacy by promising they would honour democratic values and 'respect' their women population. The urgency is understandable as Afghanistan is facing starvation and a severe winter coupled with funds crunch. When the international community is expecting that the Taliban would be more accommodating to other ethnic groups in the country and form an inclusive government, the decision to form a suicide bombers' squad only accentuates fears. That this band of youth would certainly have become a pretty big thorn on the side of the Taliban government is becoming evident. They would have emerged as the most severe headache for the present Establishment. Built on the belief that death would put them straight at the feet of Allah, this group would have turned restless as well as violent. Earlier, they had a clear cut enemy with a particular attire. There was no requirement of using their brains to reason out where extreme violence was required. These religious bigots would now have become a problem for the Taliban administration. The suicide squad could be a way to contain and discipline these jihadists.

The explanation offered by the Taliban that suicide bombers will be used to checkmate terrorist outfits, especially the Afghan offshoot of Islamic State, sounds hollow. Yet, there were tell tale signs that the Taliban would not abandon the path of terror. Soon after they seized control of Kabul in mid-August last year, the Taliban paraded their Istish-haadi ('seeking martyrdom') or suicide bomber squadron on national television. They disturbingly exhibited an arsenal of suicide vests, suicide car bombs, and yellow plastic jerry cans that were used to make improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Worse still was the spectacle of a ballad glorifying the bombs and associated bombers being played over the visuals.

On yet another occasion, the Taliban commemorated suicide bombers at an event at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. This time, the regime's interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is head of the notorious Haqqani Network, delivered an address directed at hundreds of men representing the family members of suicide bombers. Haqqani congratulated the men for their loved ones' 'divine' sacrifice and presented them with gifts of clothes, cash, and the promised allocation of land plots. Last October, the group announced the deployment of 3,000 suicide bombers along the borders of Afghanistan and Tajikistan during heightened tensions with the latter.

What is disconcerting is that Haqqani sent his message across to relatives of suicide bombers knowing well it was bound to alienate parts of the Afghan population struggling so hard to come to terms with the group's return.

### WISDOM CORNER

- Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win. **SUN TZU**
- Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. **STEPHEN HAWKING**
- You only have to do a very few things right in your life so long as you don't do too many things wrong. **WARREN BUFFETT**

### WORDSWORTH

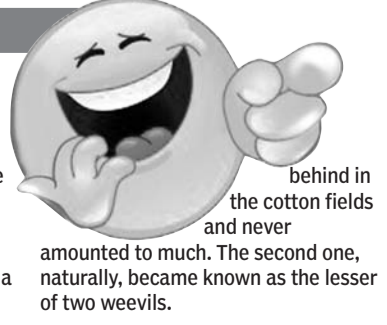
#### Recumbentibus

This is as obscure as any word that has featured here. If you think it looks Latin, you're right. It's the ablative plural of the present participle of the verb recumbere, to recline or rest (it's also the source of English recumbent). In Roman times, recumbentibus meant more than just reclining. It appears twice in St Mark's gospel in the Vulgate, the Latin bible that was compiled in the fourth century. This is from verse 16:14: "novissime recumbentibus illis undecim apparuit". This is translated in the King James Bible as "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat". More recent translations render recumbentibus in the words "as they sat at table" or "as they were eating". Its sense is explained by Romans liking to recline on couches to eat their meals. Educated Englishmen of late medieval times, who all knew Latin, were well acquainted with recumbentibus and generated from it a witty meaning of forcing somebody to adopt a reclining position, in particular by a powerful blow. In his Dialogue of Proverbs of 1549, John Haywood wrote this, "Had you some husband, and snapped at him thus, I wise he would give you a recumbentibus."

### LOL

#### ESKIMOS & WEEVILS

Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, but when they lit a fire in the craft it sank - proving once and for all that you can't have your kayak and heat it, too. Two boil weevils grew up in South Carolina. One went to Hollywood and became a famous actor. The other stayed



behind in the cotton fields and never amounted to much. The second one, naturally, became known as the lesser of two weevils.

### SPECTRUM ECONOMY

## High infra cost, job losses delay \$5trn target

The government has an uphill task ahead to present an extraordinary Budget that should be low on cost, high on growth, have debt sustainability even as it contends with the third wave of the pandemic. It will not be an easy task as the country races to achieve Prime Minister Narendra Modi's avowed GDP target - \$5 trillion economy by 2025, and adjust, if not check, high inflation of 14.2 per cent. More so, as the wholesale inflation rises to 14.2 per cent, the highest in recent memory, accentuating the government's fiscal situation amid high debt, even the mildest disruption could affect the tepid recovery. The International Monetary Fund observes that the Central government deficit has risen to 8.6 per cent and those of the States to 12.8 per cent in 2020-21, much of it due to the covid. The bank credit has also been subdued.

Mending ways is not easy. In the new situation despite large deficits the government has to come out with novel approaches. It must move out of the many hackneyed high-cost infrastructure investments. The not so well-planned highway system has levied additional cost on the rural system as the neighbourhood gets distanced and made to pay high fees and tolls.

The country has also to reconsider whether it needs projects like bullet trains or metro trains. It is convoluting the system, which is being dumped with high running and maintenance costs. The Delhi Metro finding costs high is reducing frequencies. The CAG observes that metro has high overall cost. Similarly, certain small and mid-sized cities and townships are being dumped with flyovers and metros affecting their functionality, aesthetics and capability to sustain high-cost infrastructure. Aping the West does not pay.

The deficit and debt are bound to rise. The Economic Survey 2021-22 does not see high debt as a problem in the Indian situation, but it certainly raises debt service problems. The Economic Survey is of the view that since interest rates are low, the country would be able to sustain it. It is a different issue that low interest rates have other problems and may not be really practical. It has also added to NPA issues of late. A sustained rate rise could threaten the RBI's case for keeping borrowing costs lower for longer to support the economy, given it has a mandate to keep consumer price inflation within its target band of 2 to 6 per cent. The RBI for many months has left key

lending rates unchanged and vowed to keep the accommodative policy stance for as long as needed to support a durable economic recovery. But COVID is not solely responsible. India's GDP, at a high of 7.8 per cent when Modi took office, had fallen to its lowest in a decade - 3.1 per cent by the fourth quarter of 2019-20. During the pandemic it had minus 24.4 per cent contraction in June 2020. Even now its growth figures are projected at 9.7 per cent over those low figures. It may look good but certainly calls for concern for accelerating it. The growth in September 2021 quarter was 8.4 per cent higher than RBI's 7.9 per cent projections. Former NITI Aayog CEO Arvind Subramaniam says growth figures are 2.5 per cent overestimated.

The biggest concern is that private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) has still not reached the pre-pandemic levels in the September quarter. The PFCE is the largest component of India's GDP and its weakness suggests that the recovery is still not broad-based and is being driven by the rich.

In India, COVID-19 has exposed comorbidities and has further opened up the traditional fault lines, with the large unorganised labour sector bearing the brunt of

the costs. At the last count, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) estimated that over 130 million daily wagers in urban centres were rendered jobless and homeless. India's economy has been in distress for most of the last decade - 2011-21.

Exports are stuck at around \$300 billion for nearly a decade. The 68-day world lockdown has prevented India from bouncing back either on manufacturing or exports. The country is losing market share to smaller rivals such as Bangladesh, whose remarkable growth has hinged on exports. That is less than the situation demands. The revenue projections remain moderate. India's Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister expects the country to grow at an actual rate of 7.7 to 7.5 per cent. The revenue collections may be moderately higher. But the country needing higher doses of cash infusion may not find it easy to manage the finances.

The end result once again may be inflationary and the course to 2022-23 would remain a bit bumpy but is expected to stabilise if the pandemic abates and normal functioning is restored.

INFRA



Shivaji Sarkar

**THE BIGGEST CONCERN IS THAT PRIVATE FINAL CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE HAS STILL NOT REACHED THE PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS**

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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



B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Heart-wrenching incident

Sir, This refers to the news report 'Evicted City street vendor ends life', Orissa POST, January 10. The tragic death of the street vendor is heart-wrenching. Unfortunately, a poor man who migrated all the way from Bihar to Bhubaneswar along with his family just to earn a livelihood had to meet such a tragic end. However, 'the friction' between street vendors and traders is profusely prevalent all over the country. Ours is a densely populated country characterised by high poverty. The limited space available to run businesses and to perform the duties is bound to cause certain amount of inconvenience, but this shouldn't take a heavy toll on anyone. We have to learn and adopt the policy of mutual accommodation and comprehend the noble principle of 'live and let live.' In this case, the powerful traders overpowered the poor vendor and succeeded in evicting him from the market place, possibly through the complicit civic authorities. The existing Street Vendors Act, 2014 meant to safeguard the interests of street vendors seems to be inadequate to serve the purpose intended.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Litmus test

Sir, The upcoming elections to five states pose a tough test not just for the two national parties - the BJP and the Congress - but also for parties like the SP, TMC and AAP. The BJP is in power in four of the five states and the elections are the first test for the party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the government revoked the three controversial farm laws to stem growing discontent among a large section of farmers. The elections will have an impact on the Opposition camp too as the AAP, TMC and SP have conducted intensive campaigns. The Congress considered to be the spearhead of the Opposition campaign, now faces question over its place in the Opposition. Political experts are of the opinion that the election results may lead to realignment in the Opposition politics. The BJP is in power in UP, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa. In Punjab, where the farmers' agitation was most intense, the party wants to show its strength. Punjab elections are very important for the Congress too. It will determine the existence of the party in the face of severe challenges from the AAP and the BJP. It needs to return to power in Punjab. It has to prove its strength in other states too to remain relevant.

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)



The Uttarakhand government has made appointments in different departments including excise, education and health showing utter disregard for the model code of conduct which came into force with the announcement of poll dates

MHA SEEKS MORE TIME TO FRAME RULES UNDER CAA

The Union Home Ministry has approached the parliamentary committees seeking more time for framing rules under the CAA through which the Modi government wants to grant Indian nationality to non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, officials said Monday



of the day quote

Yesterday there were 12,000 cases in the State, nearly 9,000 were only in Bangalore. Positivity rate in the state is at 6.8 per cent, in Bengaluru it is 10 per cent. In such a situation there is need to take extra precautions

National Education Policy (2020) focusses on equitable and inclusive education with special emphasis given on socially and economically disadvantaged groups. An inclusive classroom benefits everyone from myriad experiences and viewpoints, and understand the various challenges facing this country

The Centre should permit booster dose for all categories as any person in any age group can have comorbid health issues. Also, the Centre should also start vaccination drive of children in the country

SHORT TAKES

Defence minister tests Covid positive

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Monday said he has tested positive for Covid-19. In a tweet, he said he has "mild symptoms" and is under home quarantine. "I have tested positive for Corona today with mild symptoms. I am under home quarantine. I request everyone who have recently come in my contact to isolate themselves and get tested," Singh said.

4 killed, 10 injured in road accident

Bokaro (Jharkhand): Four picnickers were killed and 10 others injured, six of them seriously in Jharkhand's Bokaro district after a speeding truck rammed into two autorickshaws on Petarwar-Ranchi-Bokaro highway, police said Monday. All of them were returning home from Prasnath in the two autorickshaws Sunday evening, Bermo sub-divisional police officer Satish Chandra Jha said. The truck speeded in from the opposite direction and rammed into the autorickshaws when they were alighting at Petarwar village to go to their homes.

Two men shot dead in Manipur

Imphal: Two men, including an India Reserve Battalion (IRB) personnel, were shot dead in Manipur's Imphal West district, leading to tension in the area, police said Monday. The incident happened around 9 pm Sunday in Samuroi in the Wangoi police station area, they said.

Jawan shoots self dead in Raj

Jaisalmer (Rajasthan): A Territorial Army jawan allegedly shot himself dead using his service rifle here Monday, an official said. The deceased Balram Gurjar was a native of Dausa district. He had resumed duty December 1, SHO Mohangarh, Bhavani Singh said.

Woman gangraped

Budaun (UP): A woman was allegedly abducted by four people and raped in a village in Budaun district of Uttar Pradesh, police said Monday. The incident took place last Saturday when the woman had gone out to purchase medicines from a nearby medicine shop, they said.

PM SECURITY BREACH

SC lawyers get threat calls



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 10: The Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) has written to the Secretary General of the Supreme Court seeking action against anonymous caller, who took responsibility for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security breach in Punjab last week. In a communication, SCAORA Secretary Joseph Aristotle S. said several advocates-on-record of the top court received an anonymous automated pre-recorded call from +447418365564, one at 10.40 a.m. and another call at about 12.36 p.m. on Monday. "Fastening responsibility for Prime Minister Modi's security breach during his visit to Punjab on January 5, on Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) from USA, wherein it was stated that SFJ is responsible for

The caller warned the judges to refrain from hearing the PIL by NGO Lawyer's Voice seeking probe into the security breach on the ground that the Supreme Court has not been able to punish the culprits of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots

blocking PM Modi's cavalcade at Hussainiwala flyover in Punjab," added the communication. "In view thereof, it is requested that immediate action be initiated as this is a violation of privacy of the advocates on record as their mobile numbers are out in public domain and have been compromised as all confidential data and

sensitive information pertaining to cases before the Supreme Court and banking details are stored on their respective mobile phones and the miscreants may misuse the sensitive data, if the mobile phones are hacked," added the communication. Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, in a tweet, said: "The audio sent by the 'Sikhs for Justice USA' to AORs in the SC must be treated with circumspection. The audio could be a hoax motivated by publicity or to blur the trail to the guilty. But since it contains a veiled threat to SC judges/AORs the NIA must investigate it forthwith."

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to set up a committee headed by a former top judge to probe the PM's security breach in Punjab. Senior advocate Maninder Singh, representing the Delhi-based petitioner Lawyer's Voice, had mentioned the plea before the Supreme Court. He emphasised on the importance of protection to the PM of the country and cited previous top court ruling that looked at the SPG Act.

The plea sought an independent probe into the PM's security breach in Punjab. It sought a direction to the District Judge Bathinda to collect, preserve and present all material pertaining to the movement and deployment of Punjab Police in connection with the visit of the Prime Minister, and fix responsibility of the DGP and the Chief Secretary, Punjab.

Extensive disinfection drive planned in Parliament complex

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: An extensive disinfection drive will be undertaken in the parliament complex in the next three days amid a surge in Covid cases across the country and around 400 Parliament staff members testing positive for the infection, sources said Monday. Earlier in the day, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla asked officials to chalk out measures to hold a safe Budget Session.



The presiding officers of the two Houses had directed the secretaries general of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha to examine in detail the prevailing scenario of the Covid pandemic and suggest measures for the safe conduct of the Budget session, sources said. Though the dates have not yet been announced, the Budget Session usually begins at the end of January. After the directive, an extensive disinfection drive will be undertaken in the parliament complex in the next "two-three" days. According to sources, Naidu had called up Birla and the two took stock of the situation and directed both secretaries general accordingly.

Restaurants, bars closed in Delhi



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 10: Restaurants in Delhi have been closed for dine-in options amid surge in the Covid-19 cases and only takeaways are allowed, Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal said here Monday.

Bajjal, after chairing the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) meet this afternoon, tweeted: "In view of the increase in positive cases, it has been decided to close the restaurants and bars and to allow 'take away' facility only." Only one weekly market per day per zone will be allowed to operate, he added. Besides, the health department has been advised to make adequate arrangements for the additional manpower in hospitals and to scale up the vaccination efforts, including those in the population between 15 and 18 years. "After detailed discussion with experts it was advised to adhere to the strategy of Test, Track &

Treat with emphasis on enforcement of Covid Appropriate Behaviour to contain the spread of infection," Bajjal further tweeted. The LG also emphasised the extra vigilance and importance of strict adherence to the Covid-19 guidelines. The DDMA meeting decided that the restrictions will be tightened further in the national capital amidst the spike in Covid-19 cases, but there will be no lockdown for now. According to the Delhi Health Department, the city's positivity rate has climbed to 23.53 per cent. On Sunday, the national capital reported 22,751 fresh Covid-19 cases, highest in the last eight months, after recording 25,219 cases on May 1. With this, the infection tally has now reached 15,49,730, and active Covid cases stand at 60,733, highest since May 16. Meanwhile, a weekend curfew along with a few restrictions under the yellow alert during the weekdays are already in place.

SIDDHARTH-SAINA NEHWAL ROW

NCW asks Twitter India to block actor's account



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: The National Commission for Women has asked Twitter to block the account of actor Siddharth for his "lewd and inappropriate" tweet against badminton player Saina Nehwal and also wrote to the Maharashtra police seeking registration of an FIR against him. A tweet by Siddharth commenting on Nehwal's remark over the alleged lapse in the security of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Punjab visit had netizens fuming. The NCW claimed the comment was misogynist, outrages the modesty of a woman and amounts to disrespect and insults the dignity of women. "The commission condemns such lewd and inappropriate remark made by the actor and has taken suo motu cognizance in the matter." Chairperson Rekha Sharma has written to the Maharashtra DGP to immediately investigate the matter and register an FIR under relevant provisions of the law. The panel has sought prompt and strict action against him for using indecent language against women on social media," the panel said in a statement. Taking serious note of the mat-

ter, Sharma has also written to the Resident Grievance Officer, Twitter India, to immediately block the actor's account and take appropriate action against Siddharth for "offensive remarks" on Nehwal's post "thereby, outraging her modesty and insulting her right to live with dignity". Reacting to the row over his remark, Siddharth said, "Nothing disrespectful was intended, said or insinuated." Nehwal, however, said, "I'm not sure what he meant... I used to like him as an actor but this was not nice. He can express himself with better words but I guess it's Twitter and you remain noticed with such words and comments. If the security of the PM of India is an issue then I'm not sure what is secure in the country." Saina's father Harvir Singh, "It is not appropriate for anybody to make such comments against Saina who has never been in any controversy." Such comments, which are not in good taste, are not acceptable, he told PTI. Her husband badminton player Parupalli Kashyap condemned Siddharth's tweet. "This is upsetting for us... Express your opinion but choose better words man. I guess you thought it was cool to say it this way," Kashyap tweeted.

HOSPITALISATIONS MAY RISE: CENTRE

Lessons have been learned from the second wave, some top officials have pointed out, when a majority of big cities in the country buckled under the pressure of an increase in the demand for hospital beds and medical oxygen

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 10: Five to 10 per cent of the active Covid cases this time so far needed hospitalisation but the situation is dynamic and may change rapidly, the Centre said Monday and asked states to keep a watch on cases under home isolation and in hospitals. During the second surge of Covid infections in the country, the percentage of active cases that needed hospital care were in the range of 20-23 per cent, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter to states and Union territories. The rise in COVID-19 cases in various parts of the country appears to be driven by the Omicron variant as well as by the continued presence of Delta, he said and stressed on augmenting human resources, particularly healthcare workers, for Covid management. "In the present surge, five to 10 per cent of active cases needed



hospitalisation so far. The situation is dynamic and evolving. Therefore, the need for hospitalisation may also change rapidly," Bhushan said.



All states and Union Territories are advised to keep a daily watch on the situation of the total number of active cases, cases under home isolation, the number of hospitalized cases, cases on oxygen beds, ICU beds and on ventilatory support, he wrote. It is also important to strictly follow the ad-

according to a new government advisory. The ICMR Advisory on Purposive Testing Strategy for COVID-19 also said individuals undertaking inter-state domestic travels do not need to get tested either. It said testing can be undertaken either through RT-PCR, TrueNat, CBNAAT, CRISPR, RT-LAMP, Rapid Molecular Testing Systems or through Rapid Antigen Test (RAT). A positive point-of-care test (home or self-test/RAT) and molecular test is to be considered confirmatory without any repeat testing, the advisory said. Symptomatic individuals, testing negative on home/self-test or RAT should undertake RT-PCR test, it stated. It further said that asymptomatic individuals in community setting, people who stand discharged as per home isolation norms and patients "being discharged" from a Covid facility as per revised discharge policy also need not be tested.

Majithia gets anticipatory bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia, facing arrest in an NNDPS case, involving sale, purchase and manufacturing of drugs among other offences, was on Monday granted anticipatory bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. A bench of Justice Lisa Gill, however, asked the SAD leader to join investigation with the police. While granting Majithia the pre-arrest bail, Justice Gill also asked him to not leave the country till the next date of hearing and share his live location with the investigating agency through WhatsApp. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader's counsel,



Damanbir Singh Sobti, said Majithia will join the investigation at 11 am on Wednesday. "In the event of his arrest, petitioner shall be released on interim bail till the next date of hearing to the satisfaction of Investigating / arresting Officer," Justice Gill said in the order. Accordingly, it is directed that the petitioner should appear before the Investigating Officer January 12 at 11 am. He shall fully cooperate in the investigation of this case," he added. The 46-year-old SAD leader was booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act last month.

Michael Lobo, another MLA quit party

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Jan 10: Goa minister Michael Lobo and BJP MLA Pravin Zantye resigned from the party as well as the Legislative Assembly Monday, ahead of the state polls scheduled next month. The Goa BJP unit later said such moves will not affect the party's prospects in the state Assembly elections, to be held February 14. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said "a few defections" cannot deter the agenda of good governance and expressed confidence that people of Goa will vote his

JOLT TO GOA BJP

party to power for another term. Lobo, who represented the Calangute Assembly constituency and held charge of the state port and waste management departments, submitted his resignation to the chief minister's office and the Goa Assembly's Speaker in the morning. He is likely to join the Congress, according to sources. A couple of hours later, Zantye, who represented the Mayem

Assembly segment, also tendered his resignation from the BJP and the state Assembly. Zantye told reporters that he had joined the BJP at the behest of former chief minister Manohar Parrikar, and claimed that after the latter's death, he was sidelined in the party. Meanwhile, CM Sawant in a tweet said, "Bharatiya Janata Party is a big family that continues to serve the motherland with full devotion! A few defections, to fulfill the agenda of greed and personal interests cannot deter our agenda of good governance."

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RWS & S DIVISION, BARGARH. Email: eerwss\_bgh@nic.in, Ph (0)-06646 233220, FAX: 06646 234626. No. 68 / Dt. 05.01.2022. GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE Bid Identification No. 09 of 2021-22. No. O-1697- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites tenders from the valid licensed holder contractors of class 'D' or 'C' registered with any department of State Government or equivalent class of Central Govt. etc. to be eventually drawn up in G2 Contract Form for the work as per terms and condition noted below. 1. Name of the work: Design, Drawing, Construction, testing & commissioning of 50 KL Capacity RCC elevated storage reservoir with 15.00 mtr. Staging height - 2 Nos. 2. Approx. Estimated cost: - Rs. 18.00 lakhs per each 3. Date and time of availability of document in the portal: - Dt. 20.01.2022 to Dt. 21.02.2022 up to 5.00 P.M 4. Last date/ time for receipt of bids in the portal: - Dt. 21.02.22 up to 5.00 P.M 5. Date & time of Opening of Tender: - Dt. 22.02.2022 at 11.00 A.M. 6. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid: - Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh, District - Bargarh Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://tendersorissa.gov.in". The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof. Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh OIPR-25157/11/0015/2122

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, POTTERU CANAL DIVISION, MV-79 No.A-834 e-mail Id : eepcdbhuba65@gmail.com e-Procurement Notice No.- SE-PCD-MV79-03/ 2021-22 1. Type of Works: System Improvement works. 2. Total No. of Works: - Twenty (20) Nos. 3. Estimated Cost: - Varies from Rs 9.11 Lakhs to Rs 34.10 Lakhs. 4. Period of Completion: - 150 (One hundred fifty) days Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Bid Amount (Rs. In Lakhs) Availability & Submission of Bids on line. Superintending Engineer, Potteru Canal Division, MV-79, Malkangiri SE-PCD-MV79-03(1)/2021-22 to SE-PCD-MV79-03(20)/2021-22 Varies from Rs 9.11 Lakhs to Rs 34.10 Lakhs From 15.01.2022 10.00 A.M. to 24.01.2022 5.00 P.M. Date of opening of the Tender / Bid: - 27.01.2022 at 11.00 AM. Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersorissa.gov.in OIPR-32038/11/0001/2122 Superintending Engineer, Potteru Canal Division, MV-79

## PUNJAB POLLS

## ISYF-backed terror module busted by Punjab police

International Sikh Youth Federation is supported by Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 10:** Punjab Police Monday said it has solved a case involving a recent grenade blast outside the gate of the Army cantonment in Pathankot by busting a major terror module backed by the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) group with the arrest of six of its operatives.

The Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar police has also seized six hand grenades, one 9 mm pistol and one .30 bore rifle, along with live bullets and magazines, from the arrested men, Director General of Police (DGP) VK Bhawra said here.

No casualty was reported in the blast that took place in November last year in front of the Triveni gate of the cantonment in Pathankot. The ISYF is supported by Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI. The six men were arrested from different villages in Gurdaspur district. They were identified as Amandeep alias Mantri of Lakhnampal village, Gurwinder Singh alias Gindi of Kharal village, Parminder Kumar alias Rohit alias Rohta of Kharal village, Rajinder Singh alias Malhi alias Nikku of Gunnapur village, Harpreet Singh alias Dholki of Gotpokar village and Raman Kumar of Ghazikot village, according to a statement issued by the DGP's office.

"In two instances, some unidentified persons had hurled hand grenades at Pathankot - one grenade was hurled outside Triveni



Dwar, outside the gate of Army cantonment at Pathankot, on November 21, 2021 at about 9 pm, while another one was hurled near Chakki Pull on November 11, 2021 at about 9:30 pm," the statement said. Separate FIRs in connection with the incidents were registered at the Pathankot Division 2 and Division 1 police stations respectively, it added.

The DGP said "during the preliminary interrogation, accused persons revealed that they were directly in touch with self-proclaimed chief of ISYF (Rode) Lakhbir Singh Rode and his close aides, identified as Sukhmeetpal Singh alias Sukh Bhikhariwal and Sukhpreet alias Sukh, for planning terrorist attacks."

"The entire cache of the recovered hand grenades, arms, ammunition was pushed in from across the international border by Lakhbir Rode and arrested accused persons had been tasked for further attacking pre-identified targets, which were mainly police and defence establishments, religious places," he said.

# Unemployment, sacrilege, drug menace key issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 10:** Unemployment, delivery of justice in desecration cases, illegal sand mining and drug menace are likely to be key issues in the Punjab Assembly elections.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has emerged as a major contender and several farmers bodies too have thrown their hat in the ring as the strife-torn ruling Congress is struggling to put up a united face. The Shiromani Akali Dal this time forged an alliance with the BSP after it parted ways with the BJP over farm laws.

The BJP has stitched an alliance with the Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa-led SAD (Sanyukt) and the Punjab Lok Congress, led by Amarinder Singh, who quit the Congress following his unceremonious exit as the chief minister last year.

Opposition parties in Punjab have been slamming the state government over previous poll promises and repeatedly targeted it over unemployment. The Congress faced criticism for not regularising services of contractual and temporary employees in various departments.

Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi had even threatened to stage a sit-in against Governor Banwarilal Purohit for withholding his assent to a bill for regularising services of 36,000 con-



### MULTI-CORNERED CONTEST

With no discernible wave in favour of any party, all political outfits are making claims of forming the next government in Punjab

**A**AP is expected to declare is CM face in coming days while the Congress is likely not to project anyone

**T**he Shiromani Akali Dal, which ended its 24-year-old ties with the BJP, is looking to revive its political fortunes

The BJP, which used to contest on 23 seats, is hopeful of making its presence felt in the elections, especially after facing the wrath of the farming community over the three farm laws

change the prospects of candidates this time.

With no discernible wave in favour of any party, all political outfits are making claims of forming the next government in Punjab. AAP is expected to declare is CM face in coming days while the Congress is likely not to project anyone.

On the other hand, AAP leader Raghav Chadha claims, "There is a wave for change in the whole of Punjab. I am fully confident that on February 14, on Valentine's day, the whole Punjab will say in one voice, 'I love you Kejriwal', and people will give a chance to AAP to serve them." Similarly, Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir

tractual employees.

Delivery of justice in cases linked to the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib and police firing at those protesting against it is another issue. Drug menace, illegal

sand mining and rising state's debt are other key issues finding resonance in the elections.

With the entry of many players in Punjab's electoral landscape, a very thin margin can

## Sonu Sood's sister Malvika joins Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 10:** Actor-philanthropist Sonu Sood's sister Malvika Sood Monday joined the Congress, with Punjab Chief



Minister Charanjit Singh Channi batting for her candidature from Moga for the February 14 assembly polls, saying the party's sitting legislator Harjot Kamal will be suitably adjusted.

Malvika Sood's joining the party will be a 'game-changer', said Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, who along with Channi, travelled to the Sood residence in Moga district for the joining in of the actor's sister.

"It is very rare that a party (state) chief and the chief minister both have gone to someone's home to grant the honour, and she deserves it," said Sidhu.

Sonu Sood and Malvika Sood met Sidhu and Channi at Moga, but the actor was not present at the press conference when his sister joined the Congress. Kamal, who is learnt to be not happy with the party backing her candidature, was also conspicuous by his absence.

The actor had last year in November said that his sister would join politics. Sonu Sood had grabbed the national spotlight for helping migrants reach their home states during the nationwide lockdown clamped in 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking on the occasion, Malvika Sood said she has taken the political plunge to dedicate herself to serve the people. She also praised Channi, saying he has worked very hard despite getting a short time of just over 100 days.

Referring to Malvika Sood's joining, Sidhu said, "In the cricketing world, it is called a game-changer." "She is a young and educated woman, a noble person, and her education as software engineer will help her in her life ahead," Sidhu said.

He said that he would also like to congratulate and thank Sonu Sood as his sister had decided to choose the Congress.

Channi said Sonu Sood has made Moga, Punjab and the entire country proud with his acting and with his humanitarian works.

## TN permits Jallikattu with strict precautions in place

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 10:** The Tamil Nadu government Monday permitted the conduct of Jallikattu, a popular traditional bull-taming sport in the state, during the Pongal festival with stringent COVID-19 safety norms in place.

The government made it mandatory for both the bull owners and their assistants who register their animals for the sport and the tamers, as well, to produce a fully vaccinated certificate besides RT-PCR test negative report at least 48 hours before the event. They would be provided identity cards to participate in the event, a government order (GO) passed Monday said.

"Only the bull owner and its trainer would be allowed during the registration. Those with valid iden-

tity cards provided by the district administration, alone, will be allowed inside the arena," the GO said. Like last year, for the Jallikattu 2022, too, the government restricted the number of spectators to 150 in open spaces or 50 per cent of the seating capacity (whichever is less).

"Spectators should also produce fully vaccinated against COVID-19 certificate and RT-PCR negative report, two days before the event," the government order said and added that strict social distancing norms will be enforced. It further directed the organisers and the participants to refrain from harming the bulls that take part in Jallikattu.

"Owing to COVID-19, only 300 tamers would be allowed to participate in the Jallikattu, Manjuvirattu and Vadamadu," it said.



## HUDDLING AROUND



Homeless people warm themselves with a bonfire on a cold winter day in Amritsar, Monday.

PTI PHOTO

## Captain's party symbol is 'hockey stick with ball'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 10:** Former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's newly launched political outfit Punjab Lok Congress Monday said it has got a "hockey stick with ball" as the party symbol for the February 14 state assembly polls.

"Happy to inform that Punjab Lok Congress has received its Party Symbol - Hockey Stick with Ball. #Bas Hun Goal Krna Baki (Making



goals only left now," the Punjab Lok Congress said in a tweet.

The PLC has struck a pre-poll alliance with the BJP for fighting the state assembly polls.

Amarinder Singh who was made to resign last year following a bitter power tussle with Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu had left the Congress and then had formed his own political outfit Punjab Lok Congress.

Voting will be held in Punjab February 14 and the counting will take place March 10.

# Sivakasi firecracker industry: Accidents, mishaps & solutions

**70 PER CENT OF MATCHBOXES AND FIRECRACKERS OF THE COUNTRY ARE BEING MANUFACTURED IN THIS SLEEPY TOWN**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Jan 10:** Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district of south Tamil Nadu is located 74 km from Madurai and it is said that most of the flights to Madurai airport are packed with buyers and agents from across India wanting to reach the sleepy town. The reason, it is the hub of the Indian firecracker and matchbox industry with 70 percent of the matchboxes and firecrackers of the country being manufactured in this small town.

The town boasts of one of the most sophisticated printing industries of the country with 30 percent of the diaries being printed

here. However, the first day of 2022 commenced for the firecracker units and the people of Sivakasi with a shock and a tragedy when a blast occurred at R.K.V.M Fireworks killing four persons and injuring eight. The workers had assembled at the factory at 8.30 a.m. for a special puja to welcome the New Year. When the door of the room where chemicals were stored was opened, friction led to the blast killing four people on the spot and injuring eight.

This is not new to Sivakasi as blasts and explosions have taken place earlier also in this sleepy town that employs more than 7,00,000 people in the three major industries of firecrackers, printing, and matchbox manufacturing.

After the January 1 incident, four days later January 5 tragedy struck again. This time it happened in the adjacent town of Satupetti when a firecracker unit exploded killing four people and injuring 6. The Tamil Nadu government has already announced a compensation of Rs 3 lakh to the families of each of those killed in



the explosion and Rs 1 lakh to those who are injured. However, the big question is why these back-to-back tragedies happened and are there flaws in the security aspect leading to grave risks to the lives of the workers including the owners of the units as most of them are small cottage industries.

Industry players are of the opin-

the District Revenue Officers (DROs). In the two recent explosions, the owners had the permission of the DROs.

A study of the licensing pattern revealed that of the 1010 firecracker units in Virudhunagar district alone, 741 were given the license to operate by PESO while 269 received the license from DROs.

K. Kannan, general secretary of The Indian Firecrackers Manufacturing Association (TIFMA), told IANS: "The multiple licensing mechanisms is a major issue that we are facing. Major players are getting licenses from PESO for making all the items, the small players are licensed by the DROs. These small players flout the rules and try to make what they are not entitled to make or rather they indulge in areas where they don't have either the expertise or technical know-how and this is the cause of the accidents that happen in Sivakasi."

Another major drawback is the skeletal structure of both PESO and the DROs where there are only a few officials to manage the more

than 1000 firecracker units in the district. In the last three years, the district of Virudhunagar alone had 70 to 75 accidents in the firecracker industry and more than 55 people lost their lives. In each of these accidents, double and in some cases three to four times of those dead are injured with more than 20 to 30 percent burn injuries. Some are maimed for life, losing limbs, some lose palms and in the worst cases have lost eyes and many have hearing impairment.

Dr John Abraham Thankan, a medical doctor who had worked at Sivakasi town hospital, told IANS: "I had seen innumerable cases of workers losing their limbs, disfigured from face downwards and still surviving. In the earlier days life was miserable for these workers who don't have anything else to do, nowhere to go and the owners of the companies where they had put in their service will also turn their back after meeting the initial medical expenses and a small compensation. You can see many such persons in and around Sivakasi."



## of the day quote

**The 'Ladki Hoon Lad Sakti Hoon'** campaign launched by Priyanka Gandhi has filled the people of every religion and caste with new vigour. The poll results of Uttar Pradesh will be a surprising one

**KAMAL NATH** | FORMER MP CM

**BJP and Congress** have been in power alternately in Uttarakhnd but done nothing for its development which was the main objective behind its creation. All they have done is fill their coffers. Problems like migration, lack of schools and hospitals remain where they were at the time of its creation 21 years ago

**MANISH SISODIA** | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF DELHI

**Kerala University** is one of the oldest universities in the country and the Vice-Chancellor cannot even write five lines correctly. He also cannot even speak properly. I was really ashamed

**ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN** | KERALA GOVERNOR

## SHORT TAKES

### Newly married killed for dowry

**Lucknow:** A newly married woman was allegedly killed for dowry by her husband and in-laws in the Para police circle in Lucknow. Police have registered a case of dowry death and launched a hunt for the accused. The woman, Sarita Prajapati, 28, was married to Vimal Singh Yadav November 21 last year.

### Actor Dileep moves Ker HC

**Kochi:** Beleaguered actor Dileep Monday moved the Kerala High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a new case registered by the police probe team investigating the actress abduction case, in which he is an accused. Last week, the police had registered a non-bailable case against Dileep, his brother Anoop, his brother-in-law Sooraj and other family members.

### Kannada poet 'Champa' dies

**Bangalore:** Noted Kannada literary figure Chandrashekar Patil popularly known as 'Champa' has died at a private hospital here Monday morning, due to age-related ailments. He was 82 and is survived by wife, a son and a daughter, sources close to his family said. He was suffering from age-related ailments and was shifted to hospital last night as his health situation deteriorated, they said.

### Wanted Naxal surrenders

**Raipur:** A Naxal carrying a reward of Rs 3 lakh on his head surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Monday, police said. Pandu Ram Savlam was the self-styled deputy commander of the Vajedu local operation squad (LOS), which functions under the Naxals' Telangana state committee, and was involved in the Tekulagudem encounter last year, an official said.

### Youth stabs self to death

**Bangalore:** In a shocking incident, a 23-year-old youth stabbed himself to death after being reprimanded by his father for watching television in JJ Nagar locality here, officials said Monday. The deceased has been identified as Syed Sahil and the incident happened Sunday morning.



**The upcoming Assembly elections are a right time to defeat hatred**  
**RAHUL GANDHI** | CONGRESS LEADER

## TRAGIC INCIDENT

In a shocking incident, a group of monkeys grabbed a two-month-old infant from the terrace of his house and flung the baby in a water tank. The incident took place Sunday and the baby died



# India looking forward to constructive dialogue: Sources

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** India is looking forward to "constructive" dialogue with China to resolve issues in remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh, sources in the security establishment said Monday ahead of the 14th round of military talks between the two sides on the 20-month row.

The talks will take place January 12 at the Chushul-Moldo meeting point, on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, the sources said.

The 'Senior Highest Military Commander Level (SHMCL)' talks will begin at 9:30 am, they said.

## 14TH ROUND OF SINO-INDIA MILITARY TALKS



"Indian side is looking forward to constructive dialogue to resolve the balance friction areas," a source said. It is learnt that major focus of the talks will be on disengagement in the Hot Springs area. The Indian side is expected to press for disengagement as soon as possible in all the remaining friction points including resolution of is-

sues in Depsang Bulge and Demchok. The 13th round of talks had taken place October 10, 2021 and they ended in a stalemate. Both sides failed to make any headway in the talks with the Indian Army saying after the dialogue that the "constructive suggestions" made by it were neither agreeable to the Chinese side nor it could provide any "forward-looking" proposals. In their virtual diplomatic talks November 18, India and China agreed to hold the 14th round of military talks at an early date to achieve the objective of complete disengagement in remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh.

## Pushback tow tug catches fire at Mumbai airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 10:** An aircraft towing tractor caught fire at the Mumbai airport just prior to the departure of an Air India flight to Jamnagar, delaying its take off by around 15 minutes Monday, a source said.

There was, however, no harm to any person or damage to the aircraft in the incident at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, the source said.



The fire incident took place at 11.38 am when the tractor was getting engaged with the aircraft, bound for the Gujarat city from Mumbai with 85 passengers on board (Flight AI 647), before pushing it back, the source said.

The blaze was extinguished within 10 minutes by the airport's fire fighting staff, the source stated, adding the incident has been reported to aviation safety regulator DGCA, which has already commenced a probe.

# 'Precautionary' dose drive kicks off

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** Lakhs of 60-plus citizens and frontline as well as health workers queued up for their third Covid jab Monday as India began administering a "precautionary" dose against the infection, a critical step that comes as cases spike alarmingly in the country.

Braving snow, plummeting winter temperatures, rain in some places or unrelenting sun in others, many people could be seen waiting their turn outside vaccination centres across the vast expanse that is India.

An estimated 1.05 crore health-care and 1.9 crore frontline workers, and 2.75 crore co-morbid people in the 60-plus category is the estimated targeted population, Health Ministry sources said as the ramped up vaccination drive to increase the Covid protection umbrella kicked off - 17 days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the announcement December 24.

In the national capital, which added 22,751 cases to its tally of infections and a positivity rate of 23.53 per cent Sunday, around three lakh people who took their second dose nine months ago are eligible for their third "booster" dose of the vaccine.

The vulnerable population - also including personnel deployed for



A medic administers a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine to a policeman, in Bhopal

election duty - will get a "precautionary jab" of the same vaccine they took 39 weeks ago, the government has said. Slots are booked using existing CoWin accounts. In Maharashtra, a particular area of concern for its huge numbers, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope said on Twitter just before noon that the state had administered 91,648 doses.

As the "immunity booster drive" got off the ground - in accordance with what several countries are doing to enhance protection for their populations - scenes of the elderly and others getting another layer of protection were replicated in villages, towns and cities.

In Gujarat, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel was present at an urban health centre in the capital Gandhinagar as the drive kicked off. The aim is to cover nine lakh eligible people in about 3,500 vaccination centres where more than 17,000 health workers would be engaged for the purpose, a statement from Chief Minister's Office said. In Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal Collector Avinash Lavania and Inspector General (Bhopal rural) Irshad Wali were among those who took the precaution dose at a special camp at the collector's office in the state capita. Giving details, the official said 22 lakh senior citizens, 10.5 lakh health workers, 7.5

The eastern Ladakh border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas. Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the sensitive sector.

lakh frontline personnel and 5 lakh doctors in the state are scheduled to receive the precautionary dose.

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has opened over 100 urban primary health clinics to administer the booster dose. Other state-run and private establishments are also giving the jabs, officials said. The country had started administering vaccine doses to those in the 15-18 years age group from January 3. The countrywide Covid-19 vaccination drive rolled out January 16 last year with health-care workers getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of frontline workers started from February 2. The next phase of inoculation began from March 1 for people over 60 and those aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions. The country launched vaccination for all 45-plus people from April 1.

The government then decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1, 2021, while the inoculation of teenagers in the age group of 15-18 years started from January 3 this year.

The country recorded 1,79,723 coronavirus infections with active cases increasing to 7,23,619, the highest in around 204 days Monday, while the death toll has climbed to 4,83,936 with 146 fatalities, according to data from the ministry.

## 2 ultras killed in encounter identified

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Jan 10:** The two terrorists killed in an encounter by security forces at Hasanpora area in south Kashmir's Kulgam district have been identified, officials said Monday.

The slain terrorists have been identified as Imad Muzaffar Wani, a resident of Arigam Pulwama, and Abdul Rashid Thoker from Hassanpora.

The police said that based on a specific input about the presence of terrorists in Hasanpora village situated on the border between Kulgam and Anantnag, a joint cordon and search operation was launched Sunday evening by the police and the army.

"During the search operation, as the joint search party proceeded towards the suspected spot, the hiding terrorists started firing indiscriminately, which was retaliated effectively leading to an encounter," the police said.

In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists of proscribed terror outfit Al-Badr were killed. "As per police records, both the killed militants were category terrorists. They were part of groups involved in several terror crime cases, including attacks on security forces and civilian atrocities. Besides, Imad Wani was involved in the attack on police personnel in Pulwama December 19."

"Before joining terrorist ranks, Abdul Rashid Thoker was working as terror associate and was also involved in attack on a civilian at Chitragam in which the said civilian got injured," the police said.

## 'BULLI BAI' APP CASE

### Police remand of 2 students extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 10:** A Mumbai court Monday extended till January 14 the police custody of Shweta Singh and Mayank Rawal, arrested from Uttarakhand in connection with the case pertaining to the 'Bulli Bai' app, which targeted Muslim women by putting up their images online for 'auction'.

Besides, the court remanded another accused, Vishal Kumar Jha, who was the first to be arrested in the case from Bangalore, to judicial custody till January 24 as he had tested positive for coronavirus.

The court was informed by the city police's cyber cell that Jha tested positive for the coronavirus January 9 following which he has been sent to the suburban Kalina quarantine centre of the BMC.

When the court remanded Jha to judicial custody, his advocates Aarti Deshmukh and Shivam Deshmukh filed an application seeking bail.

In the bail plea, Jha said he was falsely implicated in the case and denied committing any offence as alleged by the police.

The police Monday sought further custody of Singh (18) and Rawal (21) and told the Bandra metropolitan magistrate that the probe into the case was at a crucial stage and, hence, the interrogation of the accused was required.

The police also told court Jha should be remanded to police custody once his quarantine period is over.

## KAZAKHSTAN UNREST

### 'Looking forward to early stabilisation of situation'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** Over 160 persons have reportedly died in several days of unrest in Kazakhstan, Central Asia's largest country, which has been rocked by a week of turmoil. The nation is witnessing a massive upheaval since January 2, when violence erupted in all the major cities against the government's decision to hike fuel prices.

Responding to media queries on the recent developments in Kazakhstan, Arindam Bagchi, official spokesperson in Ministry of External Affairs, said, "India is closely following the recent developments in Kazakhstan. We express our deepest condolences to the families of innocent victims who have lost their lives in the violence. As a close and friendly partner of Kazakhstan, we look

forward to an early stabilisation of the situation. Coordination with authorities has helped ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals. They are advised to follow local security instructions and get in touch with the Embassy of India for any assistance."

Without naming anyone, Kazakhstan President Kassym Jomart Tokayev has accused some groups of staging unrest to disturb the democratic government, after giving 'shoot to kill' order to restore peace in the country.

Tokayev's statement was soon seconded by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who said Kazakhstan has been targeted by international terrorism, and assured that Russia will not allow any kind of revolution or uprising in the region.

## MATCHING STEPS



Members of Tripura State Rifles (TSR) take part during Police Week Parade Programme in Agartala

# Global lightning activity fell nearly 8% during lockdowns in '20

According to researchers the cause of the drop appears to be a connection between lightning and air pollution

AGENCIES

**New Delhi/New York, Jan 10:** Global lightning activity dropped almost 8 per cent during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdowns, according to new research.

According to researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the cause of the drop appears to be a connection between lightning and air pollution.



"When Covid-19 led to lockdowns, there was a reduction in pollution everywhere, said Yakun Liu, a meteorological researcher from the Institute. Less pollution means

fewer microscopic particles hazing the sky and serving as points of nucleation for water droplets and ice crystals," Liu explained. Fewer tiny ice crystals in storm

## DEVIL CAME FROM THE SKY

Around 2,500 people die in lightning strikes around India each year, according to government figures, compared to just 45 in the United States. Global warming is driving the increase, says Sanjay Srivastava of the Lightning Resilient India Campaign, one of the few organisations collecting data on thunderstorms. Thunderbolts contain as much as a billion volts of electricity and can cause immense damage to buildings when they hit.

clouds means fewer collisions of crystals, which Liu and other researchers believed to be one of the ways thunderheads generate

electrical charges that lead to lightning.

The three-month lockdown period from March to May in 2020, proved to be a valuable opportunity to test this idea by studying global lightning and aerosol data.

To measure the lightning activity the team used data from the Global Lightning Detection Network (GLD 360) and the World Wide Lightning Location Network (WWLLN).

For the aerosols they looked at satellite data showing the amount of air pollution in the atmosphere, measured as Aerosol Optical Depth, which is based on the way aerosols absorb and reflect light.

Comparing the years 2018 to 2021, season to season, the researchers found a significant drop in lightning and aerosols in most

places during the lockdown, as well as a significant drop in lightning activity worldwide.

They presented their findings at the American Geophysical Union meeting in New Orleans last month, showing that there was a 7.6 per cent decrease in lightning strikes.

One measure studying intra-cloud flashes also measured 19 per cent fewer flashes in March 2020 to May 2020 when compared to the average number of flashes across the same period in 2018, 2019 and 2021.

They also found aerosol pollution and lightning generally followed the same pattern or tracked each other over Africa, Europe, Asia and the maritime countries of Southeast Asia, and smaller increases over much of the Americas.

# international



Singapore can expect an infection wave due to Omicron "several times larger" than the one caused by Delta  
ONG YE KUNG | SINGAPORE HEALTH MINISTER

## STUDY FINDING

People with higher levels of T cells from common cold coronaviruses are less likely to become infected with Covid-19, a UK research team said Monday



## of the day quote

Amid falling lethality rates for COVID-19, Spain wants European officials to consider whether to move away from the detailed tracking that the pandemic has required until now to a flu-like monitoring system  
PEDRO SÁNCHEZ | SPANISH PRIME MINISTER

2 million to 4 million Israelis are predicted to be infected with coronavirus during the current outbreak mainly caused by the highly infectious Omicron variant  
NAFTALI BENNETT | ISRAELI PM

The country must "push through" surging coronavirus infections  
SCOTT MORRISON | AUSTRALIAN PM

# 9 KIDS AMONG 19 KILLED IN US FIRE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Jan 10: In one of the worst fire accidents in the recent history of New York City, 19 people, including nine children, were killed in an apartment building where a massive blaze broke out due to a malfunctioning electric space heater. The New York City Fire Department said that approximately 200 of its members were operating on the scene at the 19-storey building in the Bronx where the fire started around 11 am Sunday. The incident comes days after an apartment fire in Philadelphia killed 12, with eight children among the dead.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams termed it a "tragedy beyond measure". "We've lost 19 of our neighbours today... Join me in praying for those we lost, especially the 9 innocent young lives that were cut short," Adams said in a tweet Sunday.

Over 30 people were seriously injured in the incident. Adams said that the building housed a largely Muslim population, with many immigrants from Africa's Gambia. "This is a horrific, horrific, painful moment for the City of New York. The impact of this fire is going to really bring a level of pain and despair to our city... This is going to be one of the worst fires we have witnessed during modern times," Adams said at a news conference.

Governor of New York State Kathy Hochul said the city is "in shock". "It's impossible to go into that room where scores of families who are in such grief, who are in pain, to see it in a mother's eyes as I held her, who lost her entire family. It's hard to fathom what they're going through," Hochul said as she joined Adams to provide an update on the apartment fire in the Bronx.

The Governor said that she will establish a victims' compensation fund for the individuals affected by the fire and to help them find new housing and for burial costs. Mayor Adams said that over 32 people sustained life-threatening injuries, nine serious injuries and 22 injuries that are non-life-threatening.



The New York City Fire Department said that approximately 200 of its members were operating on the scene at the 19-storey building in the Bronx where the fire started around 11 am Sunday

Mayor Adams said that over 32 people sustained life-threatening injuries, nine serious injuries and 22 injuries that are non-life-threatening

enig. New York City Fire Department Commissioner Daniel Nigro described the incident as "tragic" and said that units arrived within three minutes for a call of a fire in the duplex apartment. "They were met in the hallway with this fire, very heavy smoke, very heavy fire. Units pushed in. The smoke extended the entire height of the building, which is very unusual. Members found victims on every floor and in stairwells and were taking them out in cardiac and respiratory arrest," he said.

The 32 people were transported to hospitals in life-threatening condition. "That is unprecedented in our

city," Nigro said. A "malfunctioning electric space heater" was the source of the fire, he said, adding that the heater was in the bedroom of an apartment and the fire consumed the room and then the entire apartment.

Some of the residents who were trying to leave the building could not "escape because of the volume of smoke," he said. Nigro said that the door to the fire apartment was left open which allowed the fire and smoke to spread. "This fire took its toll on our city."

The Fire Department issued several messages on social media urging citizens to always close the door when escaping a fire. "Closing the door saves lives," the message said. Authorities said the fire appeared to have been caused by a space heater in one of the apartments.

The residential apartment is 50 years old and has 120 units, CNN reported, citing building records. There have not been any major building violations or complaints listed against the building, it said, adding that past minor violations were rectified by the property and there were no structural violations listed.

# US, Russia kick off talks on Ukraine

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and his delegation arrived under Swiss police escort at the US diplomatic mission for face-to-face talks with Wendy Sherman, the US deputy secretary of state and her team

ASSOCIATED PRESS



Geneva, Jan 10: Senior US and Russian officials formally launched special talks on strategic stability on Monday as part of a flurry of diplomatic activity in Europe this week aimed at defusing tensions over a Russian military buildup on the border with Ukraine, though no major breakthrough was immediately in sight.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and his delegation arrived under Swiss police escort at the US diplomatic mission for face-to-face talks with Wendy Sherman, the US deputy secretary of state, and her team. The meeting is part of "Strategic Security Dialogue" talks launched by Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin during a June summit in the Swiss city.

After an informal working dinner on Sunday, Ryabkov predicted "difficult" talks in Geneva that are to be followed by a NATO-Russia meeting in Brussels on Wednesday and a meeting of the multilateral Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna on Thursday.

Moscow has sought to wrest a string of concessions from the US and its Western allies, including guarantees that NATO will no longer expand eastward into former Soviet states like Ukraine, along whose border Russia has amassed an estimated 100,000 troops in steps that have raised concerns about a possible deeper military intervention there.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said that during Sunday's dinner Sherman "stressed the United States' commitment to the international principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the freedom of sovereign nations to choose their own alliances", a reference to Ukraine and its aspirations of joining NATO. Many analysts say any such accession would be years away at best.

ner on Sunday, Ryabkov predicted "difficult" talks in Geneva that are to be followed by a NATO-Russia meeting in Brussels on Wednesday and a meeting of the multilateral Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna on Thursday.

Moscow has sought to wrest a string of concessions from the US and its Western allies, including guarantees that NATO will no longer expand eastward into former Soviet states like Ukraine, along whose border Russia has amassed an estimated 100,000 troops in steps that have raised concerns about a possible deeper military intervention there.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said that during Sunday's dinner Sherman "stressed the United States' commitment to the international principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the freedom of sovereign nations to choose their own alliances", a reference to Ukraine and its aspirations of joining NATO. Many analysts say any such accession would be years away at best.

## SHORT TAKES

### Explosion kills nine children

Kabul: An explosion in eastern Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan Monday killed nine children and wounded four, according to the office of a Taliban-appointed governor. A statement from the governor's office said the blast took place when a cart selling food items struck an old, unexploded mortar shell in the district of Lalopar, in eastern Nangarhar province.

### Three fluona cases in Mexico

Mexico City: Mexico has reported its first three cases of fluona, a double infection of Covid-19 and influenza, in the states of Nayarit and Jalisco, local health authorities. In Nayarit, the fluona case was detected in a 28-year-old woman, according to the state's health secretary Jose Francisco Munguia Perez. In Jalisco, another two cases were reported, said Alejandra Natali Vega Magana, head of the emerging and reemerging diseases diagnostic laboratory at the University of Guadalajara.

### Indonesia okays five vaccines

Jakarta: Indonesian authorities Monday granted emergency authorisation for the use of five different COVID-19 vaccines as booster shots that will prioritise vulnerable groups. Penny Lukito, head of Indonesia's Food and Drug Monitoring Agency, said Sinovac, Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Zifivax vaccines would be distributed as a third vaccine shot in the country.

### Xi appoints Hong Kong PLA chief

Islamabad: China's military says the former head of internal security in the Xinjiang region will lead the People's Liberation Army's garrison in Hong Kong, in the latest of a series of moves aimed at bringing the semiautonomous city under Beijing's tight control. A brief report on the Defence Ministry's website Monday said Maj Gen Peng Jingtang's appointment had been signed by president, Communist Party leader and PLA commander Xi Jinping.

### TTP commander killed in Afghan

Islamabad: Outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) spokesperson and the militant group's most wanted commander Khalid Batli alias Mohammad Khurasani was killed in the eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan along the border with Pakistan, defence sources said Monday. Khurasani, the senior TTP commander, was involved in the killing of civilians and personnel of security forces in Pakistan.

# SL starts luxury train service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Jan 10: Sri Lanka has launched a luxury train service connecting the country's Tamil-dominated Jaffna district to the capital city Colombo with the help of a Line of Credit offered by India, in another significant landmark in bilateral ties.

The intercity rail service with all facilities was launched on Sunday for passengers travelling from Colombo's Mount Lavinia suburb to Jaffna's Kankesanthurai port suburb in the north, covering a distance of approximately 386 kms. India's High Commission here termed it "another significant landmark in India-Sri Lanka ties".

"Powering the railway infrastructure forward!! The train service launched today to the Northern Province highlights 2 key pillars of India's development partnership with Sri Lanka - infrastructure development and country-wide focus," it said on Twitter. India had provided AC Diesel Multiple Units (ACDMUs) under the loan facility.

Sri Lanka's Minister of Transport Pavithra Wanniarachchi, who undertook the inaugural ride, was welcomed by India's Deputy High Commissioner Vinod K Jacob at the Colombo Fort Station during the inaugural ceremony.

"Honble Minister @pavithrawannai1 inaugurated the AC Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) supplied by @RITESLimited under an Indian credit line & launched the train service from Mt.Lavinia to KKS. She undertook the inaugural ride & was welcomed at the #ColomboFort Station by Deputy High Commissioner," the Indian mission said in a tweet.



People ski at the Cedars Ski Resort in the Bsharri of north Lebanon

UNI PHOTO

# 'Third country' must not interfere: Wang

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Jan 10: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who held talks with Sri Lanka's top leadership Sunday, has said that no "third country" should "interfere" in their close ties, in an apparent reference to India's concerns over Beijing's big-ticket strategic projects in the island nation in the Indian Ocean.

Wang, who travelled to Colombo during the weekend from the Maldives on a two-day visit, in his meeting with Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the friendly relationship between

China and Sri Lanka benefits the development of both countries and serves the fundamental interest of both peoples, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

"It does not target any third party and should not be interfered with by any third party," Xinhua quoted Wang as saying, in a thinly veiled reference to India. China is seeking to deepen its ties with Sri Lanka making billions of dollars of investments in ports and infrastructure projects amid criticism that they are debt traps.

China's takeover of the Hambantota port on 99 years' lease



for USD 1.2 billion debt swap drew international concerns over Beijing acquiring strategic assets far away from home by providing heavy loans and investment to smaller nations.

The Hambantota port together with Colombo port city project where China is building a new city with reclaimed land in the sea were viewed with concern, especially in India as Beijing seeks to increase its presence in the Indian Ocean. There have been global concerns over debt traps and regional hegemony by China using its Belt and Road (BRI) infrastructure projects.

# Durand line conflict may burn Pak-Afghan relations

It would not be wrong to state that the Durand line, a rugged untapped border between the two countries may just become a major point of a disagreement that may lead itself to a heated confrontation between the two countries

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, Jan 10: When the Taliban took over control in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of foreign forces and Ashraf Ghani fled Kabul, Pakistan's historical relationship with the Taliban was repeatedly reasoned as one of the prime driving source behind the

Taliban takeover that put global powers in a state of shock.

Many still believe that Pakistan's backdoor support to the Taliban paved the way to Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, terming the Taliban victory as the celebratory success of Islamabad. But with the recent incidents in which Taliban border security fighters stopped the Pakistani authorities from putting fences along the Durand line, a 2,670 km long international border between Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and China, followed by Taliban fighters uprooting the fence along the Pak-Afghan border, have certainly changed the perspective of those, who saw the Taliban success in Afghanistan as the beneficiary success of Pakistan.

It would not be wrong to state that the Durand line, a rugged untapped border between the two countries



IAN'S PHOTO

may just become a major point of a disagreement that may lead itself to a heated confrontation between the two countries.

Pakistan maintains that the fencing of the border is pivotal to the country's border security and national interest as it would help

curb the gateway of terrorists, who enter into the country from Afghanistan and carry out attacks in the country.

On the other hand, the Taliban leadership has been very clear with its position on the Durand line. The Taliban have never agreed

to the very existence of the Durand line as they claim that the demarcation occupies Afghan land.

It was the same reason why the Taliban fighters uprooted the fences along the Pak-Afghan border, arguing that they were being put on Afghanistan's territory. "Pakistan has no right to fence the border and create a divide. Such a move was inappropriate and against the law", said Afghan Defense Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Khwarzmi in a video made after the Taliban fighters uprooted the Pakistani fences.

Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has stated that while there are some complications pertaining to the fencing of Pak-Afghan border, the matter would be handled diplomatically through consultations with the Afghan Taliban government.

This is not the first time that Taliban have stopped and seized the fences from the Pakistani authorities. Last month, a video of Taliban fighters seizing the fences of the Pakistani authorities and warning them from trying to fence the border again, went viral on social media.

Pakistan has given high value to the border fencing and has already fenced most of the 2,600 km border. During the Ashraf Ghani tenure, Pakistan and Afghanistan relationship soured due to disagreements over the Durand line with both sides accusing each other for using the porous border for terrorist infiltration.

It seems that even under the Taliban rule, the Durand line will remain as a contentious issue and fast become the main point of agenda, defining future relations between the two countries.

# business

## of the day quote

Hero Electric has been associated with Turtle Mobility since July 2021 and has delivered 100 NYX scooters. Looking to convert 35 per cent of sales from the B2B segment in the next four years

**KAPIL GUPTA** | FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, TURTLE MOBILITY

The USP is that we are making the most compact flying taxi in the world which has a hybrid design that uses both rotors and wings and a subscale prototype that enables it to fly slower than e-planes with compact wings would normally require

**PRANJAL MEHTA** | CO-FOUNDER, THE EPLANE COMPANY

This year marks the completion of Suzuki Motorcycle India's 15 years in the country. It is indeed heartening to also announce the roll out of our six millionth Suzuki two-wheeler product in India from our Gurugram plant

**SATOSHI UCHIDA** | MD, SUZUKI MOTORCYCLE INDIA



I think our startups can play a very important role to socialise and democratise the availability of healthcare across the world

**PIYUSH GOYAL** | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

## VISTARA FLEET CROSSES 50 AIRCRAFT

Full-service carrier Vistara, which completed seven years of its operations January 9, said Monday its fleet has crossed 50 aircraft with over 12 planes added in the last 21 months alone despite pandemic challenges. In addition to this, Vistara said it has flown 30 million passengers since its launch January 9, 2015 in both domestic and overseas markets, the airline said in a statement



# Outlook for capacity addition in RE strong

The commitment to climate change goals announced at the recent COP26 summit to raise the non-fossil power capacity to 500GW and meeting 50% of energy requirement from RE sources by 2030, further strengthens the investment prospects in the sector



RE capacity addition to rise from 7.4GW reported in FY2021 to 12.5GW in FY2022 and further to 16GW in FY2023

Capacity addition saw a strong recovery in FY2022 (April to Nov 2021) with 8.2GW added against 3.4GW added in the year-ago period

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** The country's renewable energy capacity addition is estimated to touch 16 GW in the next financial year in view of the strong pipeline of 55 GW clean energy projects, according to ICRA.

"The outlook for the capacity addition in the Renewable Energy (RE) sector remains strong with a large project pipeline of over 55 GW and the highly competitive tariffs offered by these projects," rating agency ICRA said in a statement Monday.

Girishkumar Kadam, Senior Vice President & Co-Group Head - Corporate ratings at ICRA, said the backlog of the projects awarded by the central nodal agencies and state distribution utilities remains large with under-development solar, wind and hybrid capacities of more than 55 GW.

"This is also supported by the progress shown by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) in signing of power sale agreements and power purchase agreements in the last six months. Within the RE capacity, the addition would be driven by the solar segment followed by the wind and hybrid segments, he stated.

The downside risks for renewable energy sector in the near term emanate from the execution headwinds and supply chain challenges for procuring modules and wind turbine generators.

ICRA noted that the average price of imported solar PV modules (Mono PERC) has increased by over 35 per cent over the past 12 months, putting upward pressure on capital costs for solar power projects.

## Decarbonisation to see \$395bln capex by '30

**Mumbai:** As the country moves more aggressively towards its decarbonisation goals with the overall energy economy shifting towards greener fuels, a Wall Street brokerage has said this space will see a capex of \$395 billion by 2030. Addressing the media Monday, Amish Shah, a research analyst at Bank of America Securities India, said the country now is aligned with large economies on decarbonisation efforts. And this added focus will see the country incurring \$395 billion in capex towards decarbonisation during the decade ending 2030. The decarbonisation move includes curtailing diesel intake, more aggressive shift to renewable energy, stepping up natural gas supply and intake, fledgling private sector push for becoming net-zero, improving energy efficiency by privatising power distribution across the country, better water treatment facilities.

## Interbrand secures brand strategy mandate for AM/NS



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 10:** Interbrand, a leading brand consulting firm, has secured a brand strategy mandate to support ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), a joint venture between two global steel companies ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel, continue its transformation and growth journey.

Ashish Mishra, Managing Director of Interbrand India, said, "We're excited to be associated with such an ambitious brand. AM/NS India is bringing the best

of two global giants in the industry to our country and is able to see how Interbrand believes in creating tangible value for the business by developing strong brands both internally and externally."

"Understanding the strategic framework that a brand does not just speak to its customers through attractive messaging but needs to make more dynamic and iconic moves by comprehending and building on the drivers of demand of various other stakeholders is an evolved way of creating brands, and AM/NS India has been able to see value in that approach with us," Mishra added.

"We're delighted to collaborate with Interbrand to help prepare our brand for our next phase of growth. In Interbrand, we have seen one of the most innovative and leading experts in brand development, and it will help us build a brand akin to our business ambitions," said Bibek Chattopadhyay - Head of Corporate Communications of AM/NS India.

As a leading steel major, AM/NS India has set high business ambitions to expand its footprint across India as part of its long-term growth plan even as it offers a wide range of steels, conforming to international quality standards.

## TOUGH TIMES

The fund said emerging markets with stronger inflation pressures or weaker institutions should act swiftly to let currencies depreciate and raise benchmark interest rates

REUTERS

**Washington, Jan 10:** Emerging economies should gird for possible rough times as the US Federal Reserve prepares to raise interest rates and world economic growth slows because of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, the IMF warned Monday.

The International Monetary Fund, which is scheduled to release updated economic forecasts January 25, said that for now global economic recovery from the ravages of the pandemic should continue this year and next.

But "risks to growth remain elevated by the stubbornly resurgent pandemic," IMF economists

Stephan Danninger, Kenneth Kang and Helene Poirson wrote in a blog post.

The highly contagious Omicron strain has spread like wildfire around the world since mid-December, causing record numbers of new Covid cases in the latest wave of the global health crisis.

Omicron, which seems to cause less severe disease than previous strains of the coronavirus, is causing countries to reinstitute health measures that hamper economic growth.

"Given the risk that this could coincide with faster Fed tightening, emerging economies should prepare for potential bouts of economic turbulence," the economists said,

## UNDER PLI SCHEME

# 115 companies file applications for auto industry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** As many as 115 companies have filed applications to seek benefits under the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for automobile and auto component sector, the heavy industries ministry said Monday.

The scheme was notified September 23, 2021. The scheme was open for receiving applications till January 9, 2022.

Incentives are applicable under the scheme for determined sales of advanced automotive technology products (vehicles and components) manufactured in India from April 2022 onwards for a period of five consecutive years.

"A total of 115 companies have filed their application under the PLI scheme," the ministry said in a statement.

The scheme for the sector was approved with a budgetary outlay of ₹25,938 crore. It aims at boosting domestic manufacturing of these products. It further said 83 applications have been received under the component champion incentive scheme.

It is a 'sales value linked' scheme, applicable on advanced automotive technology components of vehicles, completely knocked down (CKD)/ semi knocked down (SKD) kits, vehicle aggregates of 2-wheelers, 3-wheelers, passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and tractors.

Commenting on the development, Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) Director General Vinnie Mehta said it was an encouraging response from companies in the Indian automobile and auto component industry to the PLI scheme.

# Inflation accelerated to six-month high in Dec

REUTERS

**Banaglore, Jan 10:** Higher telecommunications charges, along with a comparatively low base one year ago, likely drove Indian retail inflation to a six-month high in December, a Reuters poll found, keeping alive expectations for an interest rate rise by mid-year.

The January 4-7 survey of 41 economists showed Indian retail inflation rose to 5.80% last month from 4.91% in November, spending more than two years above the Reserve Bank of India's medium-term target of 4.0%. If realised, it would be the highest since June 2021. Estimates ranged between 4.70% and 6.30%, including seven respondents who predicted it would be above the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6.0%.

The RBI left its repo rate unchanged at 4.0% for a ninth consecutive policy meeting last month, sticking to its focus on economic growth as India still faces challenges from the coronavirus pandemic.

"Now, the RBI will have to address inflation. The core inflation remains very sticky and elevated and it will have to be cognizant about that," said Upasna Bhardwaj, senior economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank.

A separate Reuters survey forecast the RBI to raise the repo rate to 4.25% during April to June period. The latest poll also showed industrial output expanded 3.0% in November from a year ago, compared with 3.2% in October. Infrastructure output - made up of eight main industries and accounting for about 40% of total factory production - slowed to 3.1% year-on-year in November.

Headline inflation is likely to shoot back up to the upper end of the target range, as rising telecom tariffs and high energy costs set the stage for a potential tightening of monetary policy

**RAHUL BAJORIA** | CHIEF INDIA ECONOMIST, BARCLAYS



## SHORT TAKES

### Curbs on export of Enoxaparin

**New Delhi:** The government Monday imposed curbs on export of Enoxaparin, used to treat or prevent certain types of blood clot, with immediate effect. It has also put restrictions on exports of intravenous immunoglobulin. Immunoglobulin is a component of blood's plasma. Exporters of these products have to obtain permission or licence for its outbound shipments now. "The export of Enoxaparin (formulation and API) and intravenous immunoglobulin (formulation and API) has been put under restricted category with immediate effect," the DGFT said in a notification.

### Edelweiss partners with Indian Bank

**New Delhi:** Diversified financial group Edelweiss Monday said Edelweiss Housing Finance Ltd (EHFL) and ECL Finance Ltd (ECLF) have entered into co-lending partnership with Indian Bank for lending to priority sector areas. Agriculture, micro enterprises and advances to weaker sections of the society are amongst the categories that form the priority sector in lending space.

### Telecoms' gross revenues dip 1.36%

**New Delhi:** Telecom service providers' gross revenue declined by 1.36 per cent on a year-on-year basis to ₹67,300 crore in the July-September 2021 quarter, according to a Trai report released Monday. Telecom service providers (TSPs) had posted gross revenue of ₹68,228 crore in the same quarter a year ago, according to the Trai's performance indicator report. The adjusted gross revenue (AGR) component of the telecom operators, on which the government levies charges, increased by 17.07 per cent to ₹53,510 crore during the reported quarter from ₹45,707 crore in the corresponding period of 2020.

### L&T arm bags order from NHRCL

**New Delhi:** Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Monday said its construction arm has bagged a significant order from National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHRCL). The major scope of work for the project comprises design and construction of civil and building works for a double-line high speed railway of a length of 8.198 km, L&T said in a statement.

## UP 52% YoY

# Domestic air traffic at 11L in Dec

ONE OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS THAT CONTINUES TO BE A DRAG ON THE AVIATION SECTOR IS THE AVIATION TURBINE FUEL (ATF) PRICES, WHICH HAVE SEEN A SHARP INCREASE OF 49% ON A YoY BASIS TILL JANUARY 2022



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 10:** Domestic air passenger traffic remained 44 per cent lower in the April-December 2021 against the corresponding period of FY20, but saw a jump of 52 per cent year-on-year to 111 lakh in December 2021, according to rating agency ICRA.

The total domestic passenger traffic had stood at 73 lakh in December 2020, according to a report by the rating agency. It also said

that the emergence of new coronavirus variant and reactionary restrictions impacting air travel remain near-term challenges for the airline industry. On a sequential basis, the growth in December was recorded at 5-6 per cent over November 2021 during which Indian carriers had flown 105 lakh passengers, ICRA said Monday.

Besides, the average daily departures stood at around 2,800, notably higher compared with around 2,065 in December 2020 and around

2,700 in November 2021, it said. At the same time, the average number of passengers per flight during December 2021 was largely flat at 129 as compared to 130 in November, ICRA said.

"Though sequential recovery continued in December 2021, demand continues to remain subdued from the corporate traveller segment as reflected by the passenger traffic for 9M FY2022 remaining around 44 per cent lower than 9M FY2020," ICRA Vice-President and Sector Head Suprio Banerjee said.

Moreover, with the emergence of the new coronavirus variant and the recent trend of rising infections, few states have already started announcing certain curbs on domestic air travel, posing a serious threat to domestic passenger traffic recovery in the near term, he said. Airlines' capacity deployment for December 2021 stood at around 35 per cent higher than December 2020 (86,465 departures in December 2021 against 64,002 departures in December 2020), it added.

## India Inc's overseas direct investment dips over 8% to \$2.05bln

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 10:** Outward foreign direct investment by Indian companies fell by over 8 per cent to \$2.05 billion in December 2021 in the current fiscal, data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed Monday.

The domestic companies had invested \$2.23 billion in their overseas joint ventures and fully-owned subsidiaries during December 2021 in the previous financial year.

Of the total investment made by the Indian companies overseas during the month, \$1.22 billion was in the form of issuance of guarantees, \$464.39 million was equity participation and \$367.17 million investment was made through loans, as per the RBI data on Outward Foreign Direct Investment (OFDI) for December 2021.

The major investors who infused capital in their overseas ventures included ANI Technologies - the promoter of mobility solutions provider Ola - which invested \$675 million in its wholly-owned subsidiary in Singapore, and Dr Reddy's investment of \$149.99 million in a joint-venture in the US.

## SIP contribution hits all-time high in Dec

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** Monthly SIP (systematic investment plan) contributions hit a record high in December 2021, rising to ₹11,305 crore, the Association of Mutual Funds in India said Monday. In November, contributions through the SIP route were at ₹11,005 crore.

Also, the number of SIP accounts grew to 4.91 crore from 4.78 crore during the period, the statement added. The asset under management (AUM) of the MF industry stood at ₹37.72 lakh crore at the end of December.

"Year 2021 has been a momentous year, with Mutual Funds emerging as the preferred investment destination with continued record equity flows through NFOs and ongoing investment into existing schemes," AMFI Chief Executive NS Venkatesh said.



as these countries are also confronting elevated inflation and substantially higher public debt.

The Fed has signalled that it will raise key interest rates sooner and more aggressively than it had planned, in order to counter rampant inflation in the US that is hitting US households and consumption - the engine of economic growth in America.

Higher interest rates mean financing costs for some emerging economies with dollar-denominated debt will rise.

These countries are already lagging behind in the global economic recovery and thus less able to absorb added expenditure.

"While dollar borrowing costs remain low for many, concerns about domestic inflation and stable foreign funding led several emerging markets last year, including Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, to start raising interest rates," the IMF said.

Quicker Fed rate hikes could rattle financial markets and cause tighter financial conditions on a global scale, the blog says.

The risk is there will be a slowing of demand and trade in the US, as well as capital flight and a depreciation of the dollar in markets of emerging countries.

The IMF recommended that emerging economy nations "tailor their response based on their circumstances and vulnerabilities."

# Skipper Kohli eyes a historic first as India look for maiden Test series win in South Africa when the third and final match of the three-Test series gets underway today

## CAPE OF 'HIGH HOPES'

innings in Johannesburg — but such is nature of the beast that he would be the sacrificial lamb till Team India regain their faith in Pujara and Rahane's abilities.

### Pitch & conditions

The pandemic has kept Test cricket away from Newlands over the last two years, and in that time much has changed about the ground. Braam Mong will prepare his first international pitch, which is likely to be less challenging for batters than the Highveld surfaces the teams come from. The average first-innings total in the eight first-class matches played at this ground since its last Test in January 2020 is a healthy 361. Conversely, wicket-taking is tough. Of the 320 potential wickets which could have fallen since the start of 2020, only 215 have been taken. Seamers have been responsible for 130 of those, at an average of 32.70, while spinners have taken 85 wickets at 34.40. Cape Town had a week of temperatures above 30 degrees to ring in the new year but that cooled off to 22 on the eve of the match. Things will heat up as the Test progresses, with Thursday expected to top 34 degrees.

one of the greatest to have led the country in the traditional format.

And to achieve that, the team's batting, which hasn't exactly been anything more than mediocre, needs to improve by a few notches and perhaps a first innings score in excess of 300 plus will set the tone.

There are players, whose mere presence gives any team an added psychological boost, and the Indian skipper is one such character.

Whether he is batting or is in the field, Kohli's presence can always be unsettling for the opposition, which is bound to plan differently for him even if it means that he hasn't got a hundred for two years.

But if one closely looks at Kohli's batting in these two years, unlike Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane, he has looked way more assured till the time he has got out. It has been either one good ball or a rank bad shot that has got him and not lack of confidence and jittery starts that could put the dressing room in panic mode.

Hanuma Vihari might feel hard done after two fighting knocks — especially the 40 not out in the second

### CURBING COVER DRIVE

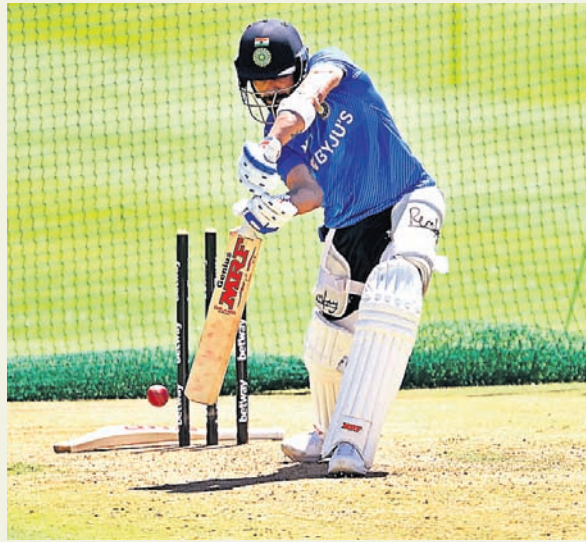
A lot of experts have suggested that Kohli should curb his instincts of playing the off-drive or his favourite cover-drive like Sachin Tendulkar did against Brett Lee at Sydney in 2004 when he didn't play anything on the off-side till he reached his double hundred.

But Kohli has his own methods and the madness associated with it. If Sunday's practice is anything to go by, he would still hit the cover drive if he gets one pitched on the length for the shot.

However, it will also be about the deliveries that he or some of the others would choose for particular kind of shots.

A case in point is Rishabh Pant, whose walking down the track against express pace in recent months, has had a lot of 'intent' but not much of 'content'.

On a Newlands track, which will be juicy with variable bounce, India will need to bat way better against Kagiso Rabada, Duanne Olivier, Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen, all of who bring different skills



to the table.

India have never won a Test in Cape Town and for a change in script, the three middle-order veterans need to do way more than what they did at the Wanderers.

However, Newlands has seen some epic battles, none better than the one in 2010-11 series

when Tendulkar and Dale Steyn were locked in one of the most exhilarating hour that Test cricket would have ever witnessed. There is a certain beauty attached with survival and at the beautiful Newlands, Steyn used his every ounce to test a master batter's repertoire of skills.

### Pre-match reactions...

#### Virat Kohli

**Fitness:** I am absolutely fit. Siraj is obviously recovering from the (hamstring) niggle he had in the last game and at present, I don't think he is match-ready to take the field in the third Test. You cannot obviously risk a guy who is not at 110 per cent as a fast bowler and we know how important that is as the little niggle he had can extend into an injury

**Keeping replacement a secret:** As I said, we are yet to sit down, myself, the head coach and vice-captain to decide what we want to do about replacement. And I say that because of our bench strength and it's difficult for us to figure out. We need to have a healthy discussion on a decision on that and just that everyone feels balanced (okay) about it. But I am happy being in this position sitting here trying to decide who is going to play rather than having other options

**Backing Ashwin:** (Ravindra) Jadeja's value everyone understands and what he has done for the team, but I think Ash has been playing that role pretty well for us. Ash knows that his game has come forward by leaps and bounds especially bowling overseas. He understands that himself from Australia onwards. He has obviously done the job in (Jadeja's) absence and we have full faith that Ash can continue to play that role of spinning all-rounder for us in any condition that we play

**Rahul's leadership:** He (Rahul) has handled it in a balanced way. What I saw from his plans and field placements that he tried his best to get wickets and breakthroughs in the second innings. But the situation was such that South Africa played well to chase the runs. I don't think anything much could have done. Everyone has different styles in captaincy. I would have done a bit differently too but the intent would have been to get the wickets. I think he worked in a balance manner

#### Dean Elgar

**Massive test:** This test is potentially the biggest we've had in 10 years, maybe even 15 years. And I think that speaks for its own respect. Test cricket is always going to have intensity, me as a player harbouring the intensity as well. So I don't think it's going to lack intensity. (As far as Kohli's return to XI is concerned) Virat brings a different dynamic to the game.

#### Kagiso Rabada

**On cusp of 50th Test:** It's quite special. I didn't even know how many games I was on and only found out after the last Test match that this would be my 50th. It kind of really goes by without noticing. But it's something special for me, I've always wanted to represent my country, so this is definitely a personal milestone and one that I'll hold dear to my heart



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cape Town, Jan 10:** Virat Kohli's talismanic presence will be the shot in the arm that India would need in their bid to win the historic first-ever away Test series against South Africa but the hosts will also walk in with a spring in their step in the final Test starting here Tuesday.

Kohli missed the last Test in Johannesburg due to back spasms and if the training session at the Newlands was anything to go by, the skipper is not going to miss the series-finales for anything with the two teams locked at 1-1. The hosts will definitely fancy their chances after a fighting performance drew them level in the second Test.

And playing his 99th Test on what will also be his daughter's first birthday, the batter in Kohli would like to make it a special one for the 'Captain', who has been under tremendous pressure of late.

Nothing succeeds like success and winning the first ever Test series in South Africa in three decades will certainly establish Kohli as

### KAGISO RABADA WILL PLAY HIS 50TH TEST

**INDIA HAVE NEVER WON A TEST AT THE NEWLANDS, WITH 3 DEFEATS AND 2 DRAWS FROM THE 5 MATCHES THEY'VE PLAYED THERE**

**KOHLI NEEDS 146 RUNS TO BECOME THE SIXTH INDIAN BATTER TO REACH 8,000 TEST RUNS WHILE RAHANE NEEDS 79 RUNS TO REACH 5,000.**

**KOHLI IS TWO CATCHES AWAY FROM 100 AND RAHANE IS ONE AWAY**

### ISHANT LIKELY FOR SIRAJ



Ishant Sharma, like Pujara and Rahane, is at the business end of his chequered international career and Mohammed Siraj's hamstring injury is sure to give him some breathing space after the indifferent last six months during which he lost form, had niggles and didn't good enough to be in the mix for long.

Yet, the nature of South African tracks and his over 6 feet frame, with ability to bowl maiden after maiden, makes him a better choice than Umesh Yadav, who is a similar bullish work-horse.

## Hardik set to lead Ahmedabad team



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 10:** The CVC-owned Ahmedabad franchise will be appointing senior India all-rounder Hardik Pandya as captain for its maiden season in the Indian Premier League, for which it has got the all-clear from the BCCI.

One of the world's leading venture capitalists, who bought the Ahmedabad IPL team for INR 5625 crore, the owners had to wait longer for the BCCI to give them the Letter of Intent as legal vetting was required.

The delay in getting the green light was due to CVC's investments in betting firms in Europe and although they have no such operations in India where betting is illegal, the country's cricket board wanted to be sure about the legal ramifications before giving them the go-ahead.

"Yes, Ahmedabad franchise has received their Letter of Intent. However, they have been doing their back-room work for some time as it's a huge process. As far as we know, Hardik has been zeroed in on as the captain of the franchise," a senior IPL source told this news agency on the condition of anonymity.

The two new franchises (Lucknow being the other) have the right to

choose three players (two Indian and one foreigner) from the pool of available players as part of the draft pick before the mega auction.

"Hardik with his local connect and being a proven IPL performer for Mumbai Indians for so long was an obvious choice as captain and premier player.

"The franchise has almost finalised its deal with Afghan spin sensation Rashid Khan and dashing keeper-batter Ishan Kishan as their second and third picks from the draft. As of now, that's what is finalised unless there are changes at the last moment," the source said.

The Ahmedabad franchise has already appointed Ashish Nehra as its head coach along with Vikram Solanki as director of cricket and Gary Kirsten as team mentor.

This year's tournament will be sort of a comeback trail for Hardik, who has been out of favour since the completion of the ICC T20 World Cup, where India were knocked out in the league phase.

The main contention has been his bowling as he hasn't been the same potent, skiddy fourth seamer in the line-up that he used to be before his back surgery and, of late, he hasn't bowled much even in white ball cricket.

## Reds, Spurs through; Arsenal out Cooch Behar Trophy matches postponed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, Jan 10:** Third-round exits in the FA Cup don't come along very often for Arsenal. Unless, that is, Nottingham Forest is the opponent. Failing to transfer its improved Premier League form to the world's oldest knockout competition, Arsenal was beaten 0-1 by second-tier Forest Sunday in the second big shock of the third round — the stage where top-flight clubs enter the draw.

It's only the second time in 26 seasons that Arsenal has fallen at the first hurdle. Forest was responsible for the other occasion, too, in 2018.

Tottenham and Liverpool avoided the same fate as Arsenal, launching comebacks after falling behind at home to third-tier opponents. Tottenham beat Morecambe 3-1 and Liverpool won 4-1 against Shrewsbury

By conceding an 83rd-minute goal to substitute Lewis Grabban at the City Ground, Arsenal became the highest-ranked casualty



**CHEEKY FINISH:** Roberto Firmino backheels for A Liverpool goal, Sunday

of this season's FA Cup.

A little bit of luck — or maybe it was pinpoint precision — proved crucial in Tottenham's turnaround against Morecambe.

With his team trailing 0-1 after 73 minutes, Tottenham midfielder Harry Winks sent in a free kick from near the corner flag on the left wing and the ball flew over everyone and into the top corner.

Substitutes Lucas Moura and Harry Kane added further goals in the final five minutes for Spurs,

who denied Morecambe a place in the fourth round for the first time in their 101-year history.

Liverpool started its comeback against Shrewsbury much earlier, equalising seven minutes after going behind in the 27th. Kaide Gordon became the second-youngest scorer in the club's history — at 17 years and 96 days — with a coolly taken goal for 1-1 before Fabinho scored either side of a cheeky backheel goal from fellow Brazilian Roberto Firmino, who came on as a substitute.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 10:** The BCCI Monday postponed the knockout games of U-19 Cooch Behar Trophy following a massive COVID-19 outbreak among the participating teams.

As many as 38 cases (32 players, 6 support staff) across eight teams were detected ahead of the knockout stage beginning in Pune Tuesday, the news agency has learnt.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Monday announced the postponement of the knockout stage matches of the Cooch Behar Trophy following some positive COVID-19 cases within the team environment.

"Keeping everyone's health and safety in mind, the knockout matches to be held in Pune have

been put on hold until further notice. The BCCI had conducted 93 matches across 20 venues in the league stage.

"The Board will continue to monitor the situation and identify a new window once the situation improves," said the BCCI in a statement.

Last week, the BCCI was forced to postpone all domestic events including the premier Ranji Trophy due to a surge in COVID-19 cases across the country.

"The decision was taken after 38 positive cases were found, the report came last night and a decision to postpone the tournament was taken this morning," said a BCCI source.

The tournament was to be played across four venues in Pune. A total of 1,79,723 new cases were reported in India Monday.

### Afghan colts' U-19 WC participation in jeopardy due to visa issues

**ST KITT'S & NEVIS:** The Afghanistan cricket team's participation in the ICC U-19 World Cup in the West Indies is in a jeopardy as the players from the Taliban-run nation are yet to procure visas for the global event. With the team yet to reach the Caribbean shores, the ICC had to cancel the team's two scheduled warm-up games against England (Warner Park) Monday and the UAE January 12. Afghanistan's first game in tournament proper is January 16 against Zimbabwe. While the ICC is yet to confirm the issue that has led to visa problems, it's head of Events Chris Tetley said that they are trying to resolve the crisis.

### SAI to shut down training centres

**NEW DELHI:** The Sports Authority of India (SAI) Monday said it has decided to close its 67 training centres across the country due to rising COVID-19 cases. "In view of rising cases of COVID-19, the Sports Authority of India has decided to close the 67 SAI Training centres across the country," the SAI said in a statement. "The decision also comes in the wake of

directives issued by various states to suspend sporting activities for the safety of athletes," it added. The centres would be reopened after a review of the situation in due course of time.

### Patel awarded 'Player of the Month'

**DUBAI:** India-born New Zealand cricketer Ajaz Patel Monday won the ICC Player of the Month award for December following his stupendous 10-wicket haul against Virat Kohli and Co. in the second Test in Mumbai. The left-arm spinner was nominated for the award alongside India opener Mayank Agarwal and Australian pacer Mitchell Starc but beat them to it on the back of his incredibly rare feat. Ajaz picked up 14 wickets in the Mumbai Test match in early December against India, including all 10 in the first innings, to become only the third player in Test history, after Jim Laker and Anil Kumble, to achieve the remarkable milestone.

### Kehrer saves PSG's day at Lyon

**PARIS:** French league leader Paris Saint-Germain needed a late equaliser from substitute Thilo Kehrer to grab a 1-1 draw at an inspired Lyon. Brazil mid-

fielder Lucas Paqueta scored in the eighth minute as Lyon took control but, after Kylian Mbappe hit the post for PSG, Kehrer hit a scuffed shot from the edge of the penalty area in the 76th that bounced over goalkeeper Anthony Lopes. PSG are 11 points ahead of second-place Nice and Marseille. But PSG has won just two of its last six games and needed last-gasp equalisers against Lens and lowly Lorient heading into the winter break.

### Ibra joins CR7 to score vs 80 teams

**MILAN:** Zlatan Ibrahimovic matched a mark set by Cristiano Ronaldo, and Theo Hernandez scored twice, as depleted Milan won 3-0 at 10-man Venezia, Sunday. Ibrahimovic opened the scoring with barely two minutes on the clock. It was the 80th team the veteran forward has scored against in the top five European leagues. Ibrahimovic and Ronaldo — who did so against Burnley December 30 — are the only players to reach that milestone since 2000. In other match, Roma squander 3-1 lead to lose 4-3 at home against Juventus. Manuel Locatelli, Dejan Kulusevski and Mattia De Sciglio completed the comeback for Juventus and Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny — who formerly played for Roma — saved a late penalty from Lorenzo Pellegrini.