



## ROLE MODEL

Mrunal Thakur says she is turning to Tabu for inspiration before playing a cop in an upcoming movie

LEISURE P2



## JOHNSON APOLOGISES

British PM Boris Johnson has apologised for his involvement in the 'bring your own booze' gathering

INTERNATIONAL P10



## BUMRAH LIFTS INDIA

Jasprit Bumrah bags a 5-wicket haul to help India gain a 13-run 1st innings lead against Proteas

SPORTS P12

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## Orissa High Court closed for 5 days

**Cuttack:** The Orissa High Court will be closed for five days from Thursday due to the 'unprecedented surge' in Covid-19 cases in the state and infection among its staff. The registrar of the high court said Wednesday in a notification said the court and its offices would be closed from January 13 to 17 and the benches notified will stand cancelled. It will resume functioning from January 18. The cases adjourned during the period will be listed from February 7. Two division benches and seven single benches will take up only exceptional and urgent cases till February 4, the order stated. The court had decided to function in virtual mode from January 10 with 50 per cent staff on a rotation basis.



## Deep named vice-captain for Asia Cup

**New Delhi:** Olympian and experienced defender Deep Grace Ekka of Odisha has been appointed the vice-captain of the 18-member Indian team for the women's Asia Cup to be played in Muscat, Oman January 21-28. Hockey India announced Wednesday the names of the 18-member squad to be led by goalkeeper Savita. India have been placed in Pool A along with Malaysia, Japan and Singapore. The Indian eves will open their campaign January 21 against Malaysia. Ekka incidentally was part of the Indian squad who finished fourth in the Tokyo Olympics last year. The 27-year-old has so far played 210 games for India.

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## Unseasonal rains cause immense woes to farmers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Unseasonal rains, triggered by a cyclonic circulation, lashed Odisha Wednesday with the weather office predicting more showers over the next 24 to 48 hours. The rains at the peak of the harvest season affected the farmers amid fears of price rise among the people. The rainfall, caused by western disturbances, was reported from 26 of the state's 30 districts. Only Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Malkangiri did not receive any rainfall, the met office said.

As per the forecast, thunderstorms with lightning is very likely to occur Thursday in the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Khurda, Puri, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Dhenkanal, Rayagada, Koraput and Malkangiri. This can continue also January 14, the met office predicted. SRC PK Jena has directed the district collectors to closely monitor the situation.

In the latest bulletin, the MeT said, "Under the influence of mid and upper tropospheric westerlies and interaction with low level easterlies and also moisture incursion from Bay of Bengal, light to moderate rainfall activity is very likely to occur at many places over the districts of Odisha till January 14."

The highest, 154mm of rainfall was recorded at Kalinga in Kandhamal district. G Udaygiri, also in Kandhamal, recorded 72.4 mm rainfall, followed by Salebhata (70.4mm) in Bolangir and Jharigaon (65mm) in Nabarangpur. Bhubaneswar and Cuttack received 6.6 mm and 2.00mm rainfall, respectively.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Nothing can be worse than this. Work from home has returned as soon as we bought new wardrobes!

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	61150.04	533.15
NIFTY	18212.30	156.50
DOLLAR	74.27	₹0.01
EURO	84.21	₹0.21
GOLD	₹47,754	₹65
SILVER	₹61,330	₹227

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	21.7°C	20.5°C
MIN	17.4°C	17.0°C
Humidity	92%	96%
Rainfall	1mm	4.2mm
Forecast: Light to moderate rain		

# THE LAST JOURNEY



A cavalcade of motorcycles leads Wednesday the procession carrying the last remains of Mihir Das to the Satichaura crematorium in Cuttack (left); People gather on the route to pay their last respects to the legendary actor who breathed his last Tuesday (REPORT P3)

## SEC clamps down on poll code violators

A detailed guideline has been issued for the upcoming panchayat polls which says that public rallies and processions are strictly banned

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** A day after the announcement of Panchayat poll dates, the State Election Commission (SEC) asked Wednesday all collectors to remove hoardings and banners on government schemes put up at various places.

In a letter to all collectors, SEC secretary RN Sahu said the Commission has noticed hoardings highlighting the achievements of government with or without photographs of politicians/ministers are being displayed in different offices and public places. Also stickers highlighting government schemes are being used in the vehicles used by officers. Many of these stickers also carry photographs of politicians and ministers, Sahu pointed out.

The above actions violate the Model Code of Conduct which is in force throughout Odisha including urban areas from January 11. So these have to be removed immediately and the collectors must submit a compliance report.

The SEC had announced that the panchayat polls will be held in five phases on February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24 with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols.

Special Relief Commissioner

## LADY MAYORS FOR BMC, BeMC

**Bhubaneswar:** Ahead of the urban local body (ULB) polls in the state, the Odisha government, Wednesday, reserved the post of Mayor of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) for women. In a gazette notification, the Odisha government said that assignment for different categories of the office of mayor is to be reserved for women in BMC and BeMC. However, the post of mayor of the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) will be for an unreserved corporator. The Housing and Urban Development Department in its notification has invited objections and suggestions from the general public on the subject within a period of 15 days from the date of the publication of the notification.

(SRC) PK Jena has issued guidelines to ensure Covid-19 protocols are maintained during the panchayat polls. Public rallies have been banned as per the guidelines. The candidates can undertake door to door campaigns with a maximum four supporters, maintaining social distancing and they have to wear face masks without fail.

"No Road show, padayatra, cycle/bike/vehicle rally and procession shall be allowed. No physical rally of political parties or probable candidates or any other groups related to election shall be allowed," the guidelines said. **MORE P4**

## Slight increase in Vig cases

A total of 175 government officials were arrested in the state for their involvement in various malpractices in 2021

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** There has been an overall increase in registration of corruption cases by the state Vigilance Directorate against government officials and others. In 2021 a total of 267 criminal cases were registered against 475 persons while 175 government officials were arrested in Odisha. Among those arrested were 23 Class-I, 28 Class-II and 104 Class-III officials. In 2020, a total of 245 such cases were registered.

However, there was a slight decrease in registration of cases against public servants for amassing disproportionate assets (DA) and ac-

cepting bribes from people in 2021. The data released by the Vigilance Directorate revealed that DA and trap cases declined last year in comparison to the case in 2020.

A total of 109 persons including 107 public servants were trapped by the anti-corruption wing of the Odisha government in 2021. Among them were 98 cases when officials were caught red-handed while accepting bribes in 2021. In 2020 the figure stood at 113.

Even though the number of vigilance cases has reduced in 2021, the amount of bribe money has increased in comparison to the previous year. A total of ₹20.13 lakh bribe money was seized in 2021 in comparison to ₹16.62 lakh seized the year before.

Similarly, 92 DA cases were registered against 111 public servants

and 44 private persons for possessing ill-gotten wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income. Out of this, 12 and 17 cases have been registered against Class-I and Class-II officers respectively. Anti-corruption officials unearthed ill-gotten wealth worth over ₹107 crore amassed by the corrupt officials in 2021. The year before the amount of was assets were worth ₹123.91 crore.

A total of 15 persons, including eight Class-I officials were intercepted while travelling with unaccounted money in 2021. The sleuths registered 77 misappropriation cases against 213 persons including 163 government officials.

The Odisha government dismissed six Class-III officers from service while 10 senior officials were given compulsory retirement in 2021.

# OMICRON COUNT RISES IN STATE

Due to the steep rise in daily cases, eight districts have come under Red Zone while six have been placed in the Yellow Zone category

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Odisha registered Wednesday 67 new cases of Omicron, the highest so far in the state. The new cases took the state's tally in the new variant to 170, a health department official said. The genome sequencing of the samples was done by the Institute of Life



Science (ILS) in Bhubaneswar: It said that the new infections did not have any foreign travel history,

which means the variant has started spreading locally. Meanwhile, Odisha registered

8,778 new Covid-19 cases Wednesday which was about 24 per cent more than the previous day. The state's test positivity rate (TPR) also jumped to 11.77 per cent from 10.25 per cent Tuesday.

With a steep rise in the number of new cases on a daily basis, eight districts have come under 'Red Zone' while six other have been classified as 'Yellow Zone'.

Khurda, Cuttack, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Puri, Jharsuguda, Koraput and Bolangir districts have been classified as 'Red Zone' while, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Jajpur, Angul, Bargarh, Nabarangpur have been classified as 'Yellow Zone'.

# 'Wordle' takes online gaming world by storm

The founder of the game, Josh Wardle says that it brings a sense of accomplishment once the participant manages to find the right word

AGENCIES

**New York, Jan 12:** Josh Wardle never thought that the game he created to present as a gift to partner Palak Shah would become so popular in a matter of weeks. Wardle created 'Wordle' because Shah loves crosswords. The game which went online November last year has grown from 90 players daily to a whopping two million by mid-January. And the numbers are still growing Wardle has in-

formed 'The New York Times'.

It is a simple game involving words, but at the same time it brings enjoyment to the participants. "I think people kind of appreciate that there's this thing online that's just fun. It's not trying to do anything shady with your data or your eyeballs. It's just a game that's fun," Wardle has revealed to NYT.

Wardle informs it is simple to play 'Wordle', but that doesn't mean the game is easy. One has six tries to guess the daily 'Wordle'. Each guess needs to be a correct five-letter word. There will be a change in colours on the tiles depending how close or correct the guess is. When the colour of the tiles becomes green, it means the partic-



Josh Wardle and Palak Shah

ipant has got the correct guesses. However, if the colour turns yellow, it means the player has the right letters, but inside the wrong tiles.

Wardle said that he is very happy that 'Wordle' has become so popular during the Covid-19 crisis. "I get emails from people who say things like 'Hey, we can't see our parents due to Covid at the moment but we share our 'Wordle' results each day'. During this weird situation, it's a way for people to connect in a low effort, low friction way," Wardle has been quoted as saying by 'The Guardian'.

So how does one play the game 'Wordle'. One has to go to <https://www.powerlanguage.co.uk/wordle/> and follow instructions accordingly. There will be only one

puzzle to solve each day. A 'Wordle' puzzle is simply a five-letter word that one has to guess within six tries.

Even though there is no app available for 'Wordle' at present, its creator informed that one can easily play the game on the mobile browser and it is totally free. Wardle feels that it is immensely satisfying to play the game and gives a sense of accomplishment on every successful try.

"Even though I play it every day, I still feel a sense of accomplishment when I do it. It makes me feel smart, and people like to feel smart," Wardle is quoted as saying by 'The Guardian'.

So if are feeling bored or down, you know where to look to for that déjà vu feeling. Best of luck!



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Now at last you have realised that you have been preoccupied with work at the cost of your family life. Making up to them now is going to take a lot more effort. Ganesha says be ready to open your purse strings for either eating out, going out for a movie or shopping at the best places.

TAURUS

This day has been earmarked for beautification, a makeover, says Ganesha. You are likely to remain preoccupied with ways to enhance your looks and appearance. A new, stylish hair do, face packs and massages, trendy outfits and accessories could be in store. You will, subconsciously, be doing all that you can do, to get noticed by others.

GEMINI

You will feel lonely and unwanted today. You will feel the need for someone who can calm your troubled mind. Meditation and yoga will help you calm yourself. It is a good day to receive love from that someone special, says Ganesha.

CANCER

You will succeed in a new venture and will brim with radiance and energy. Ganesha says this is the best time for get-together and kindle contact with friends and relatives.

LEO

You will look to give your house a new appearance by decorating it or undertaking some renovation projects. You will make the best out of waste and produce some truly marvellous pieces of art for improving the ambience of your nest. You will be able to save up on some money. Laudable, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

You will excel remarkably in whatever work you prefer to engage yourself in today. Ganesha says your aspiration to start a business endeavour in a foreign country will bear fruit. To considerably enhance your self-image, it is necessary to make required improvements in your personal appearance.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that on the work front you may be in the midst of meetings or negotiations, which will work out favorably for you. This will help ease your tension and you will feel mentally free. Today you will feel more vibrant and active too and hence will be able to get more done.

SCORPIO

According to Ganesha, your new business venture is likely to keep you on toes today. You may even neglect your personal life to meet expectations at work. A feeling of disappointment may surround you as things do not go according to planning and your efforts may go in vain. No pains, no gains reminds Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

You are in a dilemma today. You may find yourself standing at crossroads, and your decision power does not seem to help you much, says Ganesha. You are likely to become controversy's favourite child; this may add fuel to the fire. Be wise, and take guidance of experienced people.

CAPRICORN

God helps those who help themselves, likewise, your sincere efforts will be paid off well, today. If you're dealing with shares and stocks, it may be your day, today. Your life partner will prove to be lucky for your success, so give him/her the credit he/she deserves, suggests Ganesha.

AQUARIUS

You always see the larger picture, and desire to channelise all your energies towards making things better. Such positive approach makes you an excellent team player, and enables you to bring novel ideas and effective solutions to the table, says Ganesha. You will be the life of every party you will go to today.

PISCES

This day promises to be filled with much romance, laughter, and fine dining, says Ganesha. You will seem irresistible to the opposite sex. You might also find yourself falling for someone. A breathe of fresh air could wait into old relationships, or new ones could be formed.



BRITNEY SPEARS HINTS AT WRITING HER MEMOIR

Pop star Britney Spears - whose 13-year conservatorship was terminated in November - took to Instagram to suggest she could be putting pen to paper to tell her story. The 40-year-old has hinted she could be writing a memoir, just as sister Jamie-Lynn is set to release her tell-all book.

REBEL WILSON SAYS WALKING HELPED HER LOSE 77 POUNDS

Pitch Perfect star Rebel Wilson says going on walks helped her lose 77 pounds after getting the tip from a doctor. She got the tip for her daily strolls - instead of sweaty, high-intensity workouts - from a doctor at a health retreat, who advised it was the best way to drop the weight.



Mrunal turning to Tabu for inspiration

Mumbai: After a couple of acts as the protagonist's love interest behind her, Mrunal Thakur is set to play a cop in the Hindi remake of the Tamil film, *Thadam*.

To play the part in the Aditya Roy Kapur-starrer, Thakur didn't have to look too far for inspiration. "I loved the way Tabu performed in *Drishyam*. The first thing that came to my mind was how fierce and feisty the character in the uniform was. Her character is the one I inspire to be like. Donning a uniform comes with a responsibility. I can't wait to take it up," says the actor.

Magizh Thirumeni's 2019 original movie is inspired by true events, and follows the murder of a young man. It featured Arun Vijay in a double role, alongside Tanya Hope, Smruthi Venkat and Vidya Pradeep. Vardhan Ketkar takes charge as director for this version.

While prep work for the film is expected to

commence this month, Thakur will not be seen pulling off action sequences. "To play this character, I need to focus on the performance. I need to nab the body language," said the *Dhamaka* actress.

AGENCIES



Siddharth tenders apology to Saina

Chennai: Actor Siddharth, whose response to a tweet by badminton player Saina Nehwal has stirred up a controversy, tendered an apology to the badminton star for what he called a 'rude joke'.

In a letter posted on his Twitter timeline, Siddharth said: "Dear Saina, I want to apologise to you for my rude joke that I wrote as a response to a tweet of yours a few days ago.

"I may disagree with you on many things, but even my disappointment or anger when I read your tweet cannot

justify my tone and words. I know I have more grace in me than that.

"As for the joke ... If a joke needs to be explained, then it wasn't a very good joke to begin with. Sorry about a joke that didn't land."

"I hope we can put this behind us and that you will accept my letter. You will always be my champion. Honestly, Siddharth."

The letter of apology comes in the wake of the National Commission of Women taking suo motu cognisance of the actor's tweet in response to the badminton star.

IANS

Art Vision's 2-day Odissi dance festival kicks off

Bhubaneswar: *Explorations Journey of 25 years in Odissi*, a two-day dance festival organised by City-based dance school Art Vision, began here at Rabindra Mandap, Wednesday.

On the first day, several artists accompanied by a live orchestra presented a series of rhythmic and expressive items. The recitals were choreographed by eminent danseuse Ileana Citaristi, one of the founders of Art Vision and presented by the school's repertory members.

Mousumi Mohapatra, Upasana Mohanty, Dibyasupakar, Kashish Bharati, Subhashree Mahapatra, Anwesha Padhy, Russali Rosadba, Rosalin Sahoo, Swetapadma Paltasingh were among the artists who performed on stage while Satchidananda Das, Surendra

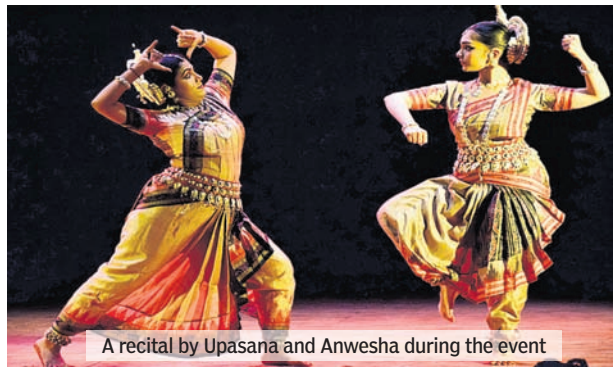
Maharana, Sangita Panda, Ramesh Chandra Das and Parsurama Das accompanied them in instruments.

The first performance was *Kapalika Shiva*, a Mangalacharan, in honour of Lord Shiva. Later, the artists performed *Bhangi*, a bouquet of basic poses visualised through narration and dance.

After that, the performers presented *Sparsh*, a rhythmic interplay between dance and percussion instruments. The last performance of the evening was *Dasa Mahavidya*, an ode to 10 wisdom goddesses in Hinduism.

Famous author and linguist Debi Prasanna Pattanayak and former Member of Parliament Prasanna Kumar Patasani were among the dignitaries who were present on the occasion.

PNN



A recital by Upasana and Anwesha during the event

After 3 years, Oscars to have a host

Jimmy Kimmel served as the last host of the Academy Awards, having emceed the ceremony in 2017 and 2018

Los Angeles: Three years after late-night TV talk show host Jimmy Kimmel emceed the Oscars, the world's greatest movie awards show will finally have a face when the event airs March 27 on the American TV network, ABC.

Craig Erwich, President, Hulu Originals & ABC Entertainment, according to Variety, made this announcement during ABC's segment of the Television Critics Association virtual press tour. But he

didn't elaborate on who it might be. "It might be me," Erwich quipped, before touting his confidence in Oscars executive producer Will Packer.

"Will really has his pulse on popular culture and entertainment," Erwich said, adding, "I know he has a lot in store and we'll have more details to share soon."



Jimmy Kimmel

Jimmy Kimmel served as the last host of the Academy Awards, having emceed the ceremony in 2017 and 2018. Other hosts over the past decade included Chris Rock (2016), Neil Patrick Harris (2015), Ellen DeGeneres (2014), Seth MacFarlane (2013), Billy Crystal (2012) and James Franco/Anne Hathaway (2011).

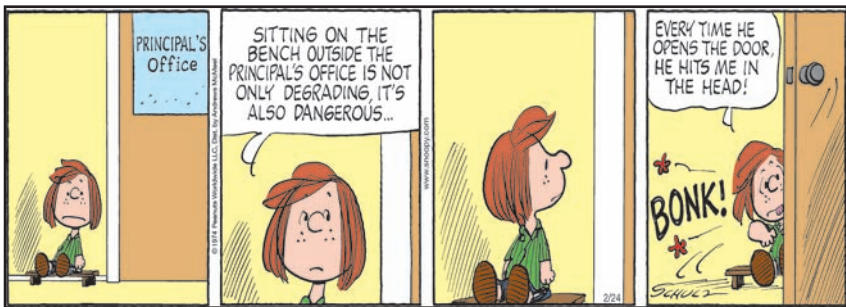
The MacFarlane and Franco/Hathaway stints were seen as a bid by ABC and the Academy to attract a younger audience, but critics were not impressed.

Being the Oscars host was at one time considered one of the most coveted gigs in Hollywood (particularly in the age of Bob Hope and Johnny Carson), according to Variety, but the job became regarded as more thankless in the age of social media and the non-stop critiques of whomever is on stage.

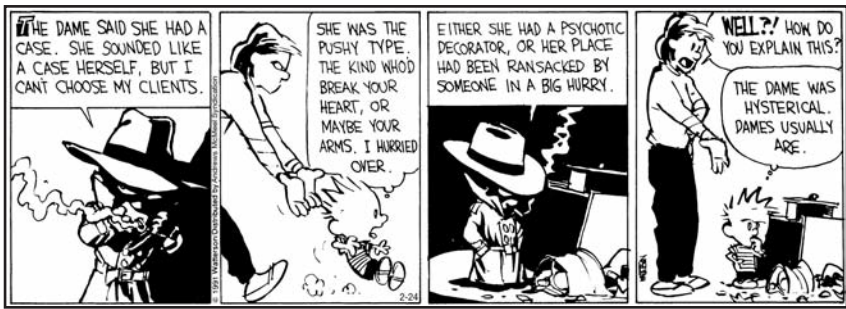
IANS



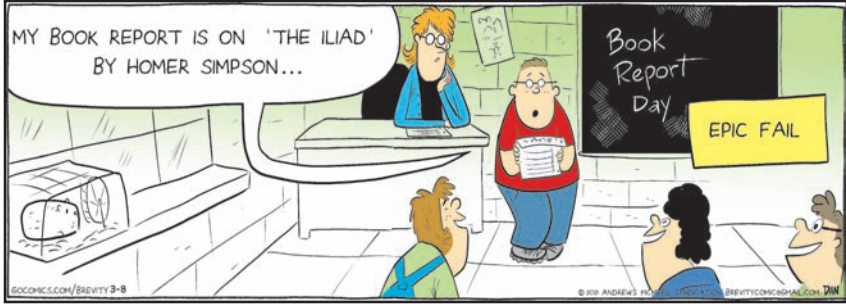
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

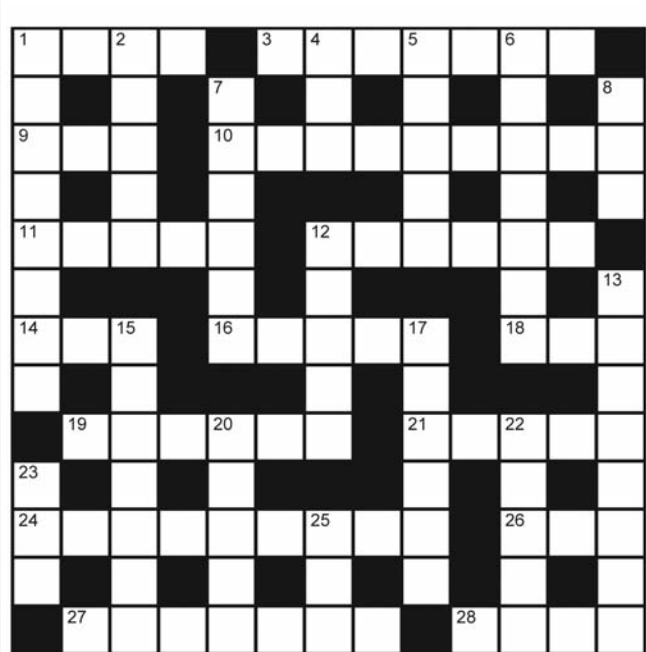


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 1 Sloughs
- 3 Not clear
- 9 Salon job
- 10 Deserted
- 11 Argus-eyed
- 12 Game fish
- 14 Recipe word
- 16 Pompous walk
- 18 Jog
- 19 Groom-to-be
- 21 Batman's sidekick

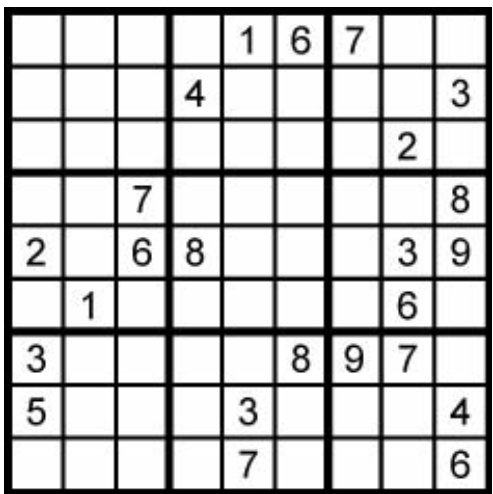
- 24 Shabby (4-5)
- 26 Egg cells
- 27 Swiss cheese
- 28 \_\_\_ of Wight

Down

- 1 Disappear slowly (4,4)
- 2 Family girl
- 4 Constrictor
- 5 Apple drink
- 6 Deep resentment
- 7 Devil rays
- 8 Psyches
- 12 German dessert
- 13 Flood
- 15 Vagabond
- 17 Autocrat
- 20 Poverty-stricken
- 22 Shelf items
- 23 German resort
- 25 Feather's partner

SUDOKU

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

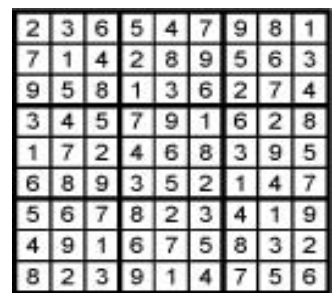


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# downtown

## Testing up in City amid Cov surge

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** In the wake of the rapid surge in Covid cases in the capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to enhance testing in the areas under its jurisdiction to detect infected people and contain the spread of the virus.

As per the information provided by the BMC, the capital city has registered 916 per cent rise in positive cases in last 10 days. While new cases stood at 79 January 2 it went up to 803 January 12. Taking stock of the situation, testing has been ramped up by 41 per cent in the past one week, said the BMC.

"Altogether 7,478 tests were conducted January 6, which was raised to 10,533 January 11," BMC sources said. Moreover, the civic authorities have also deployed 12 mobile test-



Swab samples being collected at a temporary testing centre at Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

### BMC DATA

● The capital city has registered a nine time rise in positive cases in last 10 days

● While new cases stood at 79 on January 2, it went up to 803 January 12

● Testing has been ramped up by 41 per cent in the past one week, said the BMC

● Altogether 7,478 tests were conducted January 6, which was raised to 10,533 January 11

ing vans across the city to reduce the load on local hospitals and testing centres. About 30 public hospitals are also conducting testing. This apart, the BMC has also set up facilities at the Biju Patanai International Airport (BPIA) for RT-PCR tests of the passengers.

It can be mentioned here that

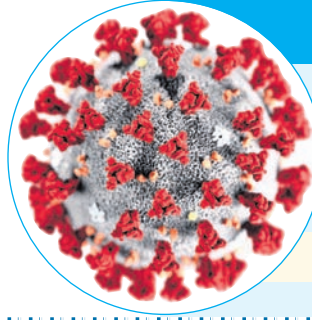
the state capital, for the first time, has seen more than 100 micro containment zones to check the spread of the virus. However, Bhubaneswar is the only city in the state to achieve 100 per cent vaccination.

"Micro containment zones will help containing the spread of the virus without limiting the move-

ment of those who are not affected by it. Even though Bhubaneswar has a floating population, the residents of the state capital are largely the ones who are infected by it. We have enhanced our testing for efficient detection and containment of the virus," a BMC official said.

### PAYING HOMAGE

People from various walks of life paying tributes to freedom fighter Chakhi Khuntia on his birth anniv in Puri, Wednesday



### COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	31,44,53,135	26,19,04,170	55,23,841
India	3,60,70,510	3,46,30,536	4,84,655
Odisha	10,91,547	10,48,732	8,469

### HAILING SUN GOD



Devotees worship the Sun god at Konark temple on the occasion of Shambadasami, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

## Govt aid for persons with physical disabilities

ANY PERSON WITH DISABILITY (PWD) CAN AVAIL FITMENT OF PROSTHESIS AND ORTHOSIS AT GOVT FACILITIES FREE OF COST

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Now, any persons with locomotor (orthopedically) disabilities can be rehabilitated through fitment of orthosis, prosthesis & special appliances at government facilities free of cost.

Until now, these services were provided free of cost to beneficiaries having family income less than Rs 2.40 lakh per annum thus debarring a section of PwDs.

The state government has decided to allow fabrication and fitment of orthosis, prosthesis and special appliances to all eligible locomotor

disability beneficiaries irrespective of their family income. They can avail the benefit at District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRCs) and Advanced Rehabilitation Centre (ARCs) in the state.

Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department secretary Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma has informed this decision of the state government to all Collectors, Wednesday. The SSEPD secretary has asked the Collectors to undertake this on a mission mode to cover all beneficiaries.

PwDs not having Aadhar; PwD ID cards or disability certificates should be registered and should simulta-



neously be facilitated for getting the above services along with fitment of appliances, Sarma said.

The Collectors were urged to create awareness on this score and encourage fitment of prosthesis and orthosis to deserving PwDs

on a priority basis.

Funds for the above purpose are to be met out of schemes - Bhima Bhoi Bhinnakshama Samarthya Abhiyan (BBSA) and ARC.

At present, Rs 20 crore is available in the districts under BBSA and Rs 4.86 crore with GM of the State Institute for Disability Rehabilitation (SIDR) which can be promptly utilised for the purpose, he said.

The infrastructure for fabrication of custom-based traditional orthosis (calliper) and prosthesis (artificial limbs) is available with 10 District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRCs) and robotic and smart appliances are available with

four Advanced Rehabilitation Centres (ARCs) in Odisha. All the 30 districts are tagged to these DDRCs and ARCs for fabrication and fitment of such appliances.

Any person with benchmark (locomotor) disability i.e. with disability not less than 40 per cent will be provided with callipers, artificial limbs or other appliances such as wheelchair, smart sticks, among others.

Primary bread earners of the family, meritorious students with promising careers and young mothers with locomotor disability will be provided with robotic limbs and smart appliances.

## Sundarpada murder: 2 more accused held

*Deepak Kumar Routray, 55, had been brutally murdered by the accused on the sidelines of a New Year eve feast*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The Commissionerate Police Wednesday arrested two accused involved in the brutal murder of 55-year-old Deepak Kumar Routray alias Dipu at Sundarpada in the wee hours of January 1. The accused identified as Prabhuprasad Mallia alias Raja, 28, and Abhishek Mallia, 21, are the residents of Kapileswar under Shree Lingaraj police limits.

Earlier, Debi Prasad Mallia alias Vicky and Sujit Panda had earlier surrendered before the SDJM court January 5 while Durgaprasad Mallia alias Gunu surrendered the next day.

The three accused, who had been brought on a five-day remand Saturday for interrogation, were Wednesday produced before the

court after the end of the remand period. On the basis of the information revealed by the three, Airfield police Wednesday arrested Raja and Abhishek. The weapons, used to kill Routray, were also recovered from the possession of the duo. The SDJM sent all the five accused to judicial custody.

Police claimed efforts are on to arrest other absconding accused involved in the case.

On the eve of New Year, various groups were busy organising feasts near a temple at Sundarpada when two of the accused, Gunu and Riki, got into a verbal duel with some residents of Sundarpada over misbehavior. The heated argument soon turned violent and the accused attacked Routray and other villagers with sharp-edged weapons and iron rods. The deceased who sustained severe injuries later succumbed at the Capital hospital.

Police later started investigation into the case registering a case (1/22) on the basis of the complaint lodged by the family members of Routray.

## TEARFUL ADIEU TO MIHIR DAS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Jan 12:** The people of Odisha Wednesday bade a tearful adieu to veteran actor Mihir Das, whose mortal remains were consigned to flames with full state honours at the Satichaura crematorium here.

His son and actor Amlan Das lit the funeral pyre in the presence of family members and film personalities.

The versatile actor was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour before the cremation.

"Mihir Das Amar Rahe!" (Long live Mihir Das!) slogan rented the air as hundreds of people braved the rain and stood on both sides of the road to catch a last glimpse of their favourite actor while the funeral procession moved from Das's residence at CDA area to Satichaura crematorium.

The actor, who was suffering from renal ailments, died at a hospital here Tuesday at the age of 63. He was hospitalised for more than a month.



Servitors performing Dugdha Melan ritual near Shree Jagannath Ballav mutt in Puri, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

## KORAPUT AMONG NITI'S TOP PICKS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Koraput district in the state has been ranked number one in the Champions of Change ranking prepared by the NITI Aayog for the month of November 2021.

The other districts across the country which were in the list are Yadgir in Karnataka, Barpeta in Assam, Jaisalmer in Rajasthan and Baksa in Assam. In agricultural and water resources sector, Nuapada district was ranked fourth. However, the district did not perform well in health and nutrition and was placed among the bottom five districts. It was ranked 110 for the month of November 2021. Significantly, the Champions of Change dashboard was launched by the NITI Aayog to monitor the district wise progress and aid in decision-making.

The dashboard helps Collectors of all aspirational districts to input the latest available data of their respective districts. The dashboard was created for the monitoring of real time progress of the districts.

### SAFETY OF STUDENTS COMES FIRST

## Scared of Covid, candidates want OCS Mains deferred

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) will conduct the Odisha Civil Service (Mains) examination from January 20 to February 6, 2022. However, the decision has not gone down well with the candidates amid the current surge in Covid 19.

As per the official notification, the examination will be conducted in two sessions. The first session will be from 9 am to 12 noon and the second session will be from 2 pm to 5 pm. As many as 4,754 candidates will appear for the exams at five cities of the state to be stretched over 20 days. Many candidates have used their social media handles showing their dissatisfaction with the government's decision and have demanded postponement of the exam.

Anil Kumar using his Twitter handle said, 'Absolutely Irrational Unscientific & Illogical step from OPSC jeopardizing thousands of bright lives on National Youth Day'.

Haraprasad Behera, another candidate, said aspirants want postponement of OPSC Mains

exam. Today the cases are almost 9,000 (tested only). Till January 20, it would reach 14,000-15,000. Why does the government want to put the lives of candidates in danger?, he asked.

Some candidates have written to special relief commissioner (SRC) demanding postponement of the examination. They said many students are already Covid positive or hospitalized or in home isolation and the figure is increasing day by day. It seriously hampers studies.

"If any candidate gets infected during the exam, he or she may be mentally and physically unfit to attain the other papers which will upset his or her life," a candidate said. They said all hostels are ordered to be vacant in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. Many of the candidates now reside in their native places in interior Odisha like Koraput, Malkanagiri, Nuapada. It is impossible for them to travel and attend their exams.

During the peak of the pandemic in the last week of January and the first week of February, it is a serious issue for candidates to stay in ho-



tels and attend the examination with so much anxiety and nervousness. Almost all candidates are facing a number of difficulties. It is our most cherished dream in our lives. We have spent many sleepless nights over years to achieve this. Our heartfelt request to the authorities is to consider our problems and postpone the examination for some time. Once the critical time passes, we can face the examination with a proper mindset.

Some candidates spoke to **Orissa POST** on the condition that their names are not published so that they are not harassed.

**Nilambar Rath** (name changed), a candidate, said rising Covid cases in Khurda district and in the capital city is a cause of concern. With cases rising that may reach a lakh

as experts claim, the situation is creating confusion in students' minds. The commission had fixed the dates as early as December. They could have changed the dates based on the current situation.

He said he is living in Sundargarh where cases are on the rise and it is difficult for him to travel to capital.

He added that the government's decision of relaxation of the upper age limit for candidates applying for government jobs is a good decision and the OPSC can think about cancelling this exam on the same line.

**Praliptha Dash** (name changed), another candidate, said the Covid situation is too bad in her area and she is not in a right mental state to prepare for the exam.

**Saroj Sagar** (name changed) said the OPSC must clarify on the situation which can help candidates. At the end of the day, the exam is important for the selection of best people. But the pandemic has made the situation very tricky. At this juncture, there should be clarity between the candidates and the commission.

**Kanha Das** (name changed) said for the students outside the city it is difficult to come for the exam and it is difficult to adhere to guidelines at the exams as there will be hundreds of students at one centre. However, there are some who are in favour of holding the exams on time.

**Pooja Baral**, a candidate, said postponement will add mental pressure on students. Many students had prepared for this exam for years and they will definitely want to give the exam. Postponement will add more pressure.

**Shakti Prasad Nath**, an educationist, said at this juncture health and safety of students is more important and the government must consider this.

## This air sampler assesses personal exposure to Cov

AGENCIES

**New York, Jan 12:** Face masks, social distancing, proper hygiene and ventilation can help reduce the transmission of Covid-19 in public places, but even with these measures, scientists have detected airborne SARS-CoV-2 in indoor settings.

Now, researchers from Yale University have developed a passive air sampler clip that can help assess personal exposure to SARS-CoV-2, which could be especially helpful for workers in high-risk settings, such as restaurants or healthcare facilities.

The researchers developed a wearable passive air sampler, known as the Fresh Air Clip that continuously adsorbs virus-laden aerosols on a polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) surface. Described in ACS' Environmental Science & Technology Letters, the clip is a small, lightweight, inexpensive and wearable device that doesn't require a power source.

Covid-19 is primarily trans-

mitted through the inhalation of virus-laden aerosols and respiratory droplets that infected individuals expel by coughing, sneezing, speaking or breathing.

Previously active air sampling devices helped detect airborne SARS-CoV-2 in indoor settings; however, these monitors are typically large, expensive, non-portable and require electricity.

The team tested the air sampler in a rotating drum in which they generated aerosols containing a surrogate virus, a bacteriophage with similar properties to SARS-CoV-2. They detected the virus on the PDMS sampler using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), showing that the device could be used to reliably estimate airborne virus concentrations.

Then, the researchers distributed Fresh Air Clips to 62 volunteers, who wore the monitors for five days. PCR analysis of the clips detected SARS-CoV-2 RNA in five of the clips.





BJD appoints Majhi as senior gen secy

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday appointed Pradeep Majhi as party's senior general secretary. Majhi, a former Congress MP, had recently joined the BJD.



Another former Congress leader Prafulla Majhi, who also joined the BJD camp, has been appointed in the same position. Besides, the party has appointed MP Mahesh Sahoo as senior general secretary.

Arindam Ray, Dhanurjaya Sidu, Chandrasekhar Majhi and Kailash Chandra Kulesika have been appointed as general secretaries of the ruling party.

Similarly, Biswaranjan Mallick, Ramesh Chandra Parida, Pradip Sahoo, Dillip Kumar Sahoo, Sunil Kumar Das, Mahesh Hembram and Priyabrata Samantray have been given secretary rank in the party.

PRE-BUDGET MUSINGS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state government should take judicious decisions to address the Covid-19 crisis while focusing on the social security issues.

The expenditure on social sector should be raised to 50 per cent of the total Budget allocation, opined panelists and people's representatives at a webinar on Pre-Budget Consultation-People's Priorities in Odisha State Budget 2022-23 jointly organised by the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) and the Odisha Budget and Accountability Centre Wednesday.

The outcome of this consultation will be submitted to the government, said CYSD co-founder Jagadananda, who moderated the webinar: "We are hopeful that the Budget will include our proposals for the inclusive development of the state," he added.

Even though there has been a rise in budgetary allocation for health sector due to the pandemic, primary healthcare needs are yet

Plea to up social sector spending in Budget



THE WISH LIST

- Expenditure on social sector be raised to 50 pc of Budget
- Grievance mechanism to address cases of healthcare rights
- Provisions be made for ensuring water security in hilly regions
- Water quality monitoring labs and mobile water testing labs in villages
- Budget should also have provisions to address issues faced by the women
- Rise in budgetary provision for enhancing the minimum wage
- Budgetary provisions to bring children back to schools
- Provisions be made to strengthen digital infrastructure
- Establishment of post-harvest infra and processing units
- Raised allocation for differently-abled people
- Public health expenditure should go up to 7-8 per cent

EVEN THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR HEALTH SECTOR DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE NEEDS ARE YET TO BE ADDRESSED, POINTED OUT THE PANELISTS

to be addressed. The public health expenditure should go up to 7-8 per cent in the state Budget with increased emphasis on primary healthcare, pointed out the panelists.

They pitched for an umbrella scheme for diagnosis and treatment of the patients. All the schemes designed for diagnosis and treatment at the public health

facilities free of cost need to be subsumed into a single window for better transparency and accountability. A grievance mechanism needs to be in place to address the cases of healthcare rights violations and poor health infrastructure, they said.

While budgetary allocation should be there to implement schemes like Jal Jeevan Mission

and Basudha to provide piped-water supply to households, provisions should be made for ensuring water security in hilly regions, where piped-water supply is difficult. The panelists also emphasized on increased budget allocation for establishment of water quality monitoring labs at block headquarters and mobile water testing laboratories in village and

panchayat levels. .

The state Budget must have enhanced allocation for the differently-abled people in view of the fact that there was a significant drop for the sector in the last Union Budget, they opined.

As the modern agricultural practices negatively impact the environment, the budgetary provisions must give priority to en-

sure that traditional, natural and organic farming practices are encouraged and adopted in a mission mode, pointed out the panelists.

The budget should also have adequate provision for establishment of post-harvest infrastructure and processing units especially for dairy, poultry, fishery and perishable horticultural produce. Besides, there should be strategic intervention through agriculture production clusters in a mission mode to boost floriculture.

The panelists pointed out the Budget should have necessary provisions to bring children back to schools. Budget provisions need to be made to strengthen the digital infrastructure, availability of digital devices and improving digital education in backward areas.

The upcoming Budget should also have provisions to address issues faced by the women.

An increase in budgetary provision for enhancing the minimum wage will encourage people to work under MGNREGA, opined the speakers.

Ordinance amending Srimandir Act issued

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state government has promulgated an ordinance to give effect to amendments to the Shri Jagannath Temple Act 1954 as the Assembly is not in session.

Governor Ganeshi Lal promulgated the ordinance in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 213 of the Constitution.

The Shri Jagannath Temple (Amendment) Ordinance 2022 shall come into force at once, said the gazette notification.

The state Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik recently decided to amend the Shri Jagannath Temple Act, 1954 for immediate settlement of issues related to Srimandir land.

The Cabinet had decided to bring an ordinance to amend certain provisions in the Act, Law Minister Pratap Jena had informed. The Cabinet delegated powers to the temple administration, management committee and concerned officials for sale and lease of land in name of Lord Jagannath.



Governor Ganeshi Lal promulgated the ordinance in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 213 of the Constitution

"The people who have occupied Jagannath temple land and want to get the rights, have not been able to do so due to existing provisions in the Act. All such proposals went to the law department. To simplify the system, the Cabinet has decided to amend the Act," Jena informed.

People who had occupied or were in possession of temple land for substantial periods had earlier approached the Odisha government for sale, transfer and mortgage of the land, Jena said.

Now, there is no need to get approval from the government for the same. They can submit directly their application to the temple managing committee, administration and concerned officials,

informed Jena.

Jena said that thousands of families across Odisha had applied for the settlement of these lands, and would benefit from this decision of the Cabinet.

This decision will solve problems of people across the state who have been living on the temple land for over four to 50 years. The temple administration will also enhance its income with the sale of such lands, said Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra.

The Jagannath temple has about 60,426 acres of land in 24 districts of Odisha and another 395,252 acres of land in other states like West Bengal, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Bihar.

NOBLE GESTURE



Biju Yuva Janata Dal activists distribute tricycles and blankets among the differently-abled persons at the party office in Bhubaneswar on the occasion of the National Youth Day, Wednesday



CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I Lona Roy changed my surname to Lona Nayak vide affidavit dated 03.08.2021 sworn before Notary Public at Bhubaneswar:

LOST

By virtue of an affidavit, I Prodosh Dash, S/o Nabin Chandra Dash, resident of Rayagada, state that I lost my B.Tech. certificate from BPUT, Odisha bearing Regd. No.-0801220146 & Sl. No.-EVHZ08014382 somewhere and could not trace it. I swear this affidavit before concerned authorities in order to obtain duplicate certificate.

SC adjourns Panigrahi case

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The Supreme Court Wednesday adjourned the hearing on a special leave petition (SLP) filed by Odisha Lokayukta challenging the order of the Orissa High Court in the corruption case against Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi and Abhay S Oka said it will hear the case after two weeks.

"In view of the letter circulated by counsel for the petitioner seeking adjournment as Advocate-on-Record is under isolation for one of the family members has been tested Covid positive and he is also required to be tested, list after two weeks," the bench said.

Sources said Odisha Lokayukta had filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court challenging the order of the Orissa High Court which ruled that the Lokayukta cannot order the Vigilance de-

partment to initiate a preliminary enquiry against Panigrahi as the anti-corruption wing is the complainant in the matter.

The Supreme Court had April 23 last year stayed the Orissa HC order restraining the Vigilance department from conducting enquiry against Panigrahi in a corruption case and had issued a notice in April.

It is to be mentioned here that Lokayukta in December 2020 had directed the state Vigilance to probe the corruption charges against Panigrahi. The Lokayukta had also asked the Vigilance Directorate to conduct a preliminary inquiry against Panigrahi and submit a report within two months.

The anti-corruption ombudsman issued the direction after accepting the recommendation of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik who had referred the case of corruption charges levelled against the lawmaker December 7, 2020.

Central University shut for 7 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Koraput, Jan 12:** In view of the surge in Covid-19 cases in Koraput and in the Central University campus, the authorities have decided to close down the university office, library and laboratories for a period of seven days including Saturday and Sunday with effect from 13.01.2022.

All teaching and non-teaching staff are directed to carry out their official work from their homes. Online classes will be continued. Vice Chancellor in-charge Prof SK Palita requested all employees and faculty members not to panic and strictly follow Covid-19 appropriate behavior. Further, he advised all employees even with minimum symptoms to test themselves at nearest hospitals. The situation will be reviewed in seven days before further course of action is taken.

Prolonged exposure to air pollution may up nCoV risk

Every 1 microgram/cubic metre increase in long term exposure to PM2.5 was associated with a 5 per cent increase in the number of new cases of Covid-19 infection

AGENCIES

**London, Jan 12:** Long term exposure to ambient air pollution may heighten the risk of Covid-19 infection, suggests a research.

The study, published online in the journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine, showed that both particulate matter (PM) 2.5 and 10 were significantly associated with an increased Covid-19 infection rate.

Every 1 microgram/cubic metre increase in long term exposure to PM2.5 was associated with a 5 per cent increase in the number of new cases of Covid-19 infection, equivalent to 294 extra cases per 100,000 of the population/year.

"Our findings provide the first solid empirical evidence for the hypothesised pathway linking long-term exposure to air pollution with



the incidence of Covid-19, and deserve future generalisation in different contexts," said Giovanni Veronesi from Department of Medicine and Surgery at University of Insubria, Italy.

"Meanwhile, government efforts to further reduce air pollution levels can help to mitigate the public health burden of Covid-19," Veronesi added.

While population density wasn't associated with a heightened risk of infection, living in a residential care home was associated with a more than 10-fold heightened

risk of the infection.

The associations were even more noticeable among older age groups, indicating a stronger effect of pollutants on the Covid-19 infection rate among 55-64 and 65-74 year olds. However, as this is an observational study, and as such, can't establish the cause, they said.

But long term exposure to air pollution also heightens the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases through persistent inflammation and compromised immunity.

These same pathways may therefore be involved in the link between air pollution and higher Covid-19 infection rates, the researchers noted.

Further, drug treatment for diabetes, high blood pressure, and obstructive airway diseases, as well as a history of stroke were also associated with, respectively, a 17 per cent, 12 per cent, 17 per cent, and 29 per cent, heightened risk.

For the study, the team looked at long term exposure to airborne pollutants and patterns of Covid-19 infection from the start of the pandemic to March 2021 among the residents of Varese, the eighth largest city in Lombardy - worst affected region in terms of both cases and deaths due to Covid.

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SHORT TAKES

Minor raped on way back from school

**Bhadrak:** A minor girl was allegedly raped by a youth while the former was on her way back home from school on Khadipada road under Dhamnagar police limits in Bhadrak. The incident happened Monday, and a complaint was filed Tuesday. Police registered a case and started an investigation. According to the complaint, the girl is a student of Class VII. Sagar Parida (20) of Korkoda village gave her lift on his bike when she was returning from school Monday, saying he would drop her at her house. However, he took the girl to a nearby forest and committed the crime. As the girl raised an alarm, people rushed to her rescue and the accused fled with his bike. The victim was medically examined while the accused is absconding.

Woman trampled to death by tusker

**Parjang:** In a tragic incident, a marauding tusker barged into a house and trampled a woman to death at Mohanpasi village under Parjang police limits in Dhenkanal district in the wee hours of Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Sukanti Hembram, a native of Kendumunda Sahi of the village. Sources said, Sukanti and her husband were sleeping when a tusker strayed into the village. The animal while roaming barged into their house. She was trying to run out of the house when the animal picked her up on its tusks and trampled her to death. However, other family members managed to escape. Informed, forest officials reached the spot and drove away the animal inside the jungle and promised of compensation to the deceased's family members as per government norms. The body was handed over to the family members after post-mortem.

JSW distributes blankets to poor

**Koira (Sundargarh):** In a bid to offer relief this winter to the poor, leading steel maker JSW Steel distributed blankets to over hundred underprivileged people in the villages of Dalita and Gidei under Malda Panchayat in Koira Block, Sundargarh district. This CSR intervention is by JSW under its CSR arm JSW Foundation, to improve the lives of people in the periphery villages of its mines at Joda-Koira sector. This timely move was well received by villagers suffering from severe winter conditions at Koira, and in addition, offered protection to the poor during the Covid third wave. This initiative was undertaken as a part of Company's CSR initiative in conjunction with the Block development Office, Koira. R Kumudial, Block Chairman, Koira, donated the blankets in the presence of JSW CSR team.

Bhitarkanika reopens

**Kendrapara:** The Bhitarkanika National Park reopened for visitors Wednesday after being closed for ten days to carry out the annual census of estuarine crocodiles. The basic objective behind the closure of the national park in Kendrapara district was to avoid human interference during the exercise, Rajnagar Mangrove (Wildlife) Divisional Forest Officer JD Pati said.

Former MLA dead

**Paralakhemundi:** Former Paralakhemundi MLA and farmer leader Bijay Kumar Jena (81) passed away at his residence at Gurandi in Gajapati district, late Tuesday night. He was suffering from cardiac problems for last few days and breathed his last late Tuesday night, family sources said. Jena was elected to the state Assembly twice in 1977 and 1980 from the Paralakhemundi Assembly segment as an independent candidate. He is survived by his five sons and four daughters. A pall of gloom descended in the area after reports of his death spread. Several political leaders and people from various walks of life expressed their grief over the demise of Jena.

Kotia: Admin takes up strawberry cultivation to keep Andhra at bay

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput, Jan 12:** Amid frequent bids of incursion in Kotia panchayat of Koraput district by Andhra Pradesh, the district administration here has started involving the women self-help groups (SHGs) in strawberry cultivation for their financial empowerment and self-reliance. This move is also aimed at isolating them from the neighbouring state's influence and woo them back into Odisha fold, sources said.

The integrated tribal development agency (ITDA) has launched the programme by involving the women of Doliamba village in Kotia panchayat under Pottangi block of Koraput district in strawberry cultivation. This will make them financially independent and help them earn a living to meet the expenses of their family.

On being directed by Collector Abdaal M Akhtar, the strawberry cultivation has been started in the village under the direct supervision of Karu Soren, project administrator of ITDA. The cultivation has been taken up on five acres of village land by involving three women self-help groups in the village.



**ITDA has launched the programme by involving three women SHGs of Doliamba village in Kotia panchayat under Pottangi block. Over 45,000 strawberry saplings have been planted on five acre**

Reports said that over 45,000 strawberry saplings have been planted on this five acre land. The saplings have been planted in rows and covered with polythene sheets to ensure their proper growth. The cultivation is being carried out by ITDA with joint assistance of a farmer Bhargav Lakel in the village. The strawberries will be harvested in next 45 to 60 days and over 2,000 to 5,000 kilograms of the fruit is expected to be harvested from each acre of land.

The target set for harvest will be achieved if the climate remains favourable for the cultivation, Kashi Prasad Nayak, programme officer of ITDA said.

Death threat to students: 5 booked

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, Jan 12:** The row over admission of scores of students on the basis of fake disability certificates in Bhadrak Autonomous College has taken a new turn Wednesday. Bhadrak Town police have registered a case against five people who had issued death threats to some students who had exposed the illegalities in admission.

IIC Umashankar Nayak said that a case was registered against five persons under sections 506 and 34 of IPC on the complaint of death threats to students.

According to reports, a complaint was lodged at the Town police station over murder threat to the students seeking reply in an RTI application on admission of students with fake disability certificates in Bhadrak



(Autonomous) College Tuesday. It was alleged that over 200 students have taken admission in the college by furnishing fake disability certificates.

The matter came to the fore after some students identified as Diptiman Jena, Gyanaranjan Parida, Satyajit Rout and Abinash Ram filed an application in the college under Right to Information Act (RTI) seeking reply on the issue. The complainants have alleged that they were threatened

with dire consequences as some ruling party leaders are involved in the fraud.

January 10, the issue caught public attention when students under the aegis of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Naba Nirman Yuva Chhatra Sangathan (NNYCS) and Youth Congress had staged a demonstration outside the district Collectorate protesting the alleged irregularities in admission.

The students gathered outside the Collectorate and had submitted a memorandum to the District Collector demanding an investigation into the racket that allegedly makes fake disability certificates to facilitate illegal admission in the college.

The students alleged that over 200 students have taken admission by producing fake disability certificates during last four years in the college.

5 NABBED HOURS AFTER ROBBERY AT RASOL OGB

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rasol (Dhenkanal), Jan 12:** In a broad daylight heist, four armed miscreants robbed cash and gold jewellery worth ₹1 crore from Odisha Gramya Bank at Rasol in Dhenkanal district Wednesday afternoon.

However, hours after the robbery, a team of police officials led by Sadar police station IIC Abhinab Dalua and Gobindpur OIC Babita Dehuri managed to nab the five accused in the evening when they were fleeing by National Highway-55. Two bikes, a hired car and the stolen gold jewellery and cash were seized from their possession.

The actual amount of cash and gold jewellery stolen from the bank would be ascertained only after conducting verification. The accused persons were taken to Gobindpur police outpost where SP L Divya V, Sadar SDPO Bikash Behura and Hindol SDPO Malaya Nayak interrogated them in this connection. The bank officials reached the police station and verified the seized cash and jewellery in the presence of police.

Even though the Odisha Gramya Bank is located at a distance of just 200 metres from Rasol police station, no one got a whiff of the robbery inside the bank. Only after the bank's officials informed the police, the incident came to the fore. A senior police official said four youths with masks on their faces reached the Odisha Gramya Bank, Rasol branch a few hours before its closure. They entered the bank and terrorised the bank staff with sharp weapons. The miscreants locked up the branch manager and two other staffs in the strong room. They also attacked two other employees and injured them. The masked miscreants then damped with cash and gold jewellery estimated to be around ₹1 crore that was kept in the bank locker; the police official added.

FESTIVE FERVOUR



On the eve of Makar festival, tribals throng a local market in Bangiriposi of Mayurbhanj district to buy earthen pots, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

Irate locals demand Vigilance probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Jan 12:** Hundreds of residents Wednesday demanded Vigilance enquiry into the Mantei Bridge collapse Tuesday noon that was being built at an estimated cost of ₹3 crore under Biju Setu Yojana (BSY) at a place on Asrunkhala nullah of Antei panchayat under Marshaghai block in Kendrapara district.

"The ambitious project being built at an estimated cost of ₹3 crore could not sustain for even a few days due to low-quality of work," angry locals alleged while ventilating their resentments.

The roof of the first span in the four-spanned under-construction bridge was casted recently Centering made on Spanner No-2 of the bridge went

BIJU SETU COLLAPSE IN KENDRAPARA



The RD executive engineer said that all possible precautions had been taken during the bridge construction

down and caved in to the nullah leading to the collapse. Luckily, the workers engaged in the construction had a close shave. The incident has exposed the inefficiency of the department officials, locals further added.

Besides, the mishap has triggered public outrage. Locals had earlier brought the issue to the knowledge of departmental officials in writing alleging that low quality of

cements and iron rods were being used in the construction and not being supervised properly.

However, no improvement was brought in the work, they added.

Villagers, namely Rabinendra Kumar Mohapatra, Ashok Kumar Rout, Kamalakanta Sutar including many others, said, "Foundation stone for the bridge was laid December 12, 2016. Due to neglect

of the department officials, the construction work could hardly proceed. After local residents demanded for an early execution of the work, it was taken up later. After completion, Mantei bridge would have directly connected Balighai, Nuapada, Manikapur and Batira villages in the region, thereby facilitating better road communication."

Contacted, RD executive engineer Ajit Kumar Sahu said, "We had taken all possible precautions in the construction. However, we are probing into the collapse incident to find out the fault, if any." The Mantei bridge construction work will resume soon, Sahu stated. Worth mentioning, Mantei Bridge was targeted to benefit over 30,000 people in the area.

VANDALISM OF TRIBAL, DALITS' HOUSES

NHRC seeks fresh ATR from Collector

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, Jan 12:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought a fresh report from the Kalahandi Collector about alleged vandalism on the houses of some tribal and Dalit families living at Bhatapani and in a forest under Koksara block in the district.

It was alleged that members of Gotomunda Vana Surakhiya Samiti and some forest officials had damaged the houses, crops and even

misbehaved with women members of the tribal and Dalit families at Bhatapani June 30, 2021.

Local police allegedly failed to take action against those involved in such activities and favoured them. The rights body has again ordered the district administration to file fresh action taken report (ATR) on the issue within six weeks.

It is worth mentioning here that the NHRC had earlier sought the report twice from the Collector and the SP about the

incident. However, the SP had submitted the police investigation report in this regard and stated that five people involved in the matter had been booked. However, no person was arrested in this connection.

In case of atrocities on tribals and Dalits, the accused are immediately arrested as per legal provision. In the complaint at the NHRC, it was stated that the police had tried to settle such a sensitive issue through a peace committee.

**OFFICE OF THE NABARANGPUR MUNICIPALITY**  
NABARANGPUR (ODISHA), PIN - 764059  
E-mail: municipaltyngpr@gmail.com, Tel./Fax No. 06858-222031  
No. 53/NM-2022 Dated the 10th Jan, 2022  
**TENDER CALL / EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**  
Sealed quotations are invited from intending firms/dealers/ consultants/reputed agency having adequate previous experience in preparation of Details Project Report & quoted rate for Installation, Testing and Commissioning of CCTV surveillance system at vital points of Nabarangpur town as per the Detail Tender Call Notice.  
The consultants/firm/agency should file their rates including preparation of DPR, Supervision charges etc with term & condition. The quotationer should enclose the copy of documents in support of experience, registration, reorganization from Govt., VAT/PAN Clearance Certificate with the quotations. The quotations will be received upto date 17.01.2022 by 5.00 P.M. through Registered/Speed Post and the same will be opened at 5.00 P.M. on Dt.18.01.2022 in presence of the quotationers or their authorized agents. The rate should be quoted inclusive of all TAX/GST/Transportation charges and loading, unloading charges.  
Blank Bid documents for the works will be available from the Office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours (10.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.) from Dt.10.01.2022 to Dt. 17.01.2022 on payment of Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) only towards cost of bid documents in shape of Demand Draft/Bankers Cheques only from any Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of Executive Officer, Nabarangpur payable at Nabarangpur & the bidder in a position to complete the said project within 2 to 3 months of receipt of work order.  
The bidders have to submit the bid documents duly filled up along with attested photocopies of qualifying documents as indicated in eligibility criteria and the bidders shall have to produce original documents as per eligibility criteria if required for verification and the same will be verified by the tender committee constituted for the purpose on the date of the opening of the tender.  
1. More procurement of tender documents does not guarantee fulfillment of the eligibility criteria.  
2. Cost of bid document is not refundable.  
3. Name of the purchaser at the time of procurement of Bid document shall not be disclosed, only money receipt against the Bank Draft/Pay Order shall be issued.  
4. Only Ink/dot pen signed copy of DTCN issued by this office shall be entertained.  
5. The all details in this regard is available at Municipal office. The undersigned reserves all the right to reject or cancel all the tender call notice without assigning any reason thereof.  
**Sd./- Executive Officer Nabarangpur Municipality**

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/21-22/E-Tender/92 Dt. 07.01.2022  
(1) Tender No. e-tender-CEN-KUR-249-2021, Dtd. 07.01.2022  
**DESCRIPTION:** SUPPLY OF 60 KG & 52 KG 90 UTS WELDING PORTION BY AT/SKV PROCESS (SINGLE SHOT CRIBULE TECHNIQUE) AT TALCHER COALFIELDS OF MCL.  
**Approx. Cost of the Work :** ₹ 65.35 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 1,30,700/-  
(2) Tender No. e-tender-CEN-KUR-252-2021, Dtd. 04.01.2022  
**DESCRIPTION:** RESTORATION OF TRAFFIC IN CONNECTION WITH DERAILMENT OF GOODS TRAIN NO. E/KUR/BCN AT APPROACH OF MINOR BRIDGE NO. 393A ON DATE 14.09.2021 BETWEEN TALCHER ROAD-ANGUL SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
**Approx. Cost of the Work :** ₹ 19.87 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 39,800/-  
(3) Tender No. e-tender-CEN-KUR-253-2021, Dtd. 04.01.2022  
**DESCRIPTION:** RESTORATION OF TRAFFIC IN CONNECTION WITH DERAILMENT OF GOODS TRAIN NO. E/KUR/BCN AT APPROACH OF MINOR BRIDGE NO. 393A ON DATE 14.09.2021 BETWEEN TALCHER ROAD-ANGUL SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
**Approx. Cost of the Work :** ₹ 19.49 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 39,000/-  
(4) Tender No. e-tender-CEN-KUR-254-2021, Dtd. 04.01.2022  
**DESCRIPTION:** PROPOSED MISC. REPAIRS OF STAFF QUARTERS AT BHUBANESWAR STATION.  
**Approx. Cost of the Work :** ₹ 177.17 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 2,38,600/-  
**Completion Period :** 12 (Twelve) Months (for SI. No. 1 & 4) and 30 (Thirty) Days (for SI. No. 2 & 3).  
**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1500 Hrs. of 28.01.2022 (for all Tenders).  
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.  
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in e-tender website : <https://www.ireps.gov.in>  
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.  
**Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-715M/21-22 Khurda Road**





# The Great Coverup

As the pandemic enters its third year, questions about COVID-19's origins appear increasingly distant. But if we are to forestall another coronavirus pandemic in the twenty-first century, understanding the causes of the current one is imperative.

Already, COVID-19 has caused more than 5.4 million deaths. But that is just the beginning: the toll of the pandemic includes increased rates of obesity, unemployment, poverty, depression, alcoholism, homicide, domestic violence, divorce, and suicide. And, as the Omicron variant fuels record infection rates and disrupts economies in many parts of the world, pandemic fatigue is morphing into pandemic burnout.

Our chances of eliminating COVID-19 now appear increasingly remote. But, as we attempt to figure out how to live with the virus, we must also identify the missteps – accidental and otherwise – that led us here. And that means, first and foremost, turning a critical eye toward China.

It is well known that Chinese President Xi Jinping's regime censored early reports that a new, deadly coronavirus had emerged in Wuhan and hid evidence of human-to-human transmission, thereby enabling a local outbreak to become a global calamity. What remains to be determined is whether COVID-19 emerged naturally in wildlife or was leaked from a lab – namely, the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).

Here, too, China has embraced obfuscation rather than transparency. Xi's regime has blocked an independent forensic inquiry into COVID-19's origins, arguing that any such investigation amounts to 'origin-tracing terrorism.' After Australia called for a probe into China's handling of the outbreak, Xi's government punished it with a raft of informal sanctions. China had help covering up its bad behaviour: Early in the pandemic, World Health Organisation Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus parroted the Chinese government's talking points and praised its handling of the outbreak. Instead of verifying China's claims, the WHO broadcast them to the world.

Yet far from condemning this failure of global health leadership, France and Germany took the lead in nominating Tedros for a second term at the WHO's helm, and the United States decided not to field a candidate to challenge him. Having run unopposed, Tedros will now lead this critical institution for another five years.

The West also helped China to divert attention from the lab-leak hypothesis. Not only are several labs in the West engaged in research to engineer super-viruses; Western governments have ties to the WIV – a French-designed institute where US-funded research has been carried out. Both the National Institutes of Health and USAID have issued grants to EcoHealth Alliance, a group studying bat coronaviruses in collaboration with WIV researchers.

The US government has not disclosed the full extent of its funding to WIV projects, let alone explained why its agencies would fund research at an institution linked to the Chinese military. A January 2021 State Department fact sheet proclaimed that the US has "a right and obligation to determine whether any of our research funding was diverted to secret Chinese military projects at the WIV." But why was that risk deemed acceptable in the first place?

The conflicts of interest surrounding the lab-leak hypothesis distorted early discussions about the origins of COVID-19. A letter published in the Lancet in February 2020, signed by a group of virologists, is a case in point. The letter 'strongly condemned' those "suggesting that COVID-19 did not have a natural origin." The message was clear: to lend any credence to the possibility of a lab leak would be unscientific.

The letter turned out to be organised and drafted by the president of EcoHealth Alliance. But by the time the conflicts of interest came to light, it was too late. Major US news organisations and social-media giants were treating the lab-leak hypothesis as a baseless conspiracy theory, with Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter censoring references to a lab accident.

It should always have been clear that the lab-leak hypothesis had merit: the 2004 outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in Beijing resulted from such a leak. Instead, frank discussion of the possibility was suppressed until May 2021, when US President Joe Biden announced that a lab accident was one of "two likely scenarios" on which US intelligence agencies would focus, as they carried out a 90-day inquiry into the pandemic's origins. By then, however, Chinese authorities had had plenty of time to cover whatever tracks there may have been. Add to that its unwillingness to cooperate in a probe, and it should not be surprising that the inquiry's results were inconclusive.

But the exercise was apparently enough to convince Biden to take the pressure off China. Despite pledging to "do everything [possible] to trace the roots of this outbreak that has caused so much pain and death around the world," he did not extend the intelligence inquiry, and he has since avoided any reference to the pandemic's origins.

Xi announced last September that Chinese labs handling deadly pathogens would face closer scrutiny, but he continues to denounce any insinuation that the coronavirus could have been leaked. Meanwhile, China is profiting from the pandemic; exports are surging. The country has capitalised on the crisis to advance its geopolitical interests, including by stepping up its territorial aggression, from East Asia to the Himalayas.

But a reckoning may yet come. Nearly three-quarters of Americans now believe that it is 'likely' that COVID-19 was leaked from the WIV. Moreover, as China's neo-imperialist ambitions have become clear, unfavorable views of China have reached record highs in many advanced economies. If world leaders wanted a mandate to pursue further inquiries into the pandemic's origins, it is safe to say they have it.

This is not the first made-in-China pandemic – the country also produced SARS in 2003, the Asian flu in 1957, the Hong Kong flu in 1968, and the Russian flu in 1977. If the world keeps letting China off the hook, it will not be the last.

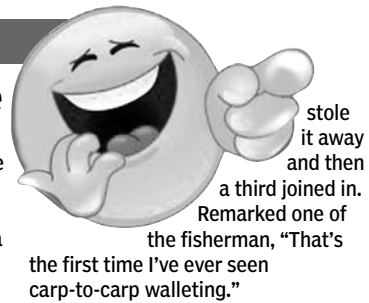
*The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.* @PROJECT SYNDICATE

## WISDOM CORNER

- Quality means doing it right when no one is looking. HENRY FORD
- Price is what you pay. Value is what you get. WARREN BUFFETT
- Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. STEVE JOBS

## LOL Fishermen on the lake

Two fishermen were out on the lake when one of them dropped his wallet. As they watched the wallet float down to the depths of the lake, a carp came along and snatched up the wallet. Soon came another carp who



## FOCUS ASSEMBLY POLLS

# DO OR DIE FOR CONGRESS



Anita Saluja

THE TMC AND THE AAP ARE TRYING TO BECOME NATIONAL PLAYERS IN THE FIGHT TO FILL THE VACUUM BEING CREATED BY THE WANING POPULARITY OF CONGRESS

With the countdown having started for the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, the political future of all national leaders, particularly the Congress siblings, is at stake. For the Congress, this is the toughest of all elections. At least in three states – Punjab, Uttarakhand and Goa – the party cannot afford to lose. In UP, Priyanka Gandhi has been hyper-active for a long time and if she is unable to raise the tally of seats in the Hindi-heartland from seven to at least 25, the Congress will be disillusioned like never before. More than Sonia and Rahul, the Congress leaders and workers have pinned their hopes on Priyanka to steer them out of their difficult times.

As far as Punjab and Uttarakhand are concerned, the people in these states always elect an alternate government, never giving a chance to the incumbent government. In Uttarakhand, as far as the opinion polls go, the BJP is expected to retain power. Though the BJP has replaced two CMs in five years, people are still disenchanted with the Congress due to its infighting. Recently Congress CM candidate Harish Rawat in Uttarakhand hung up his boots in the campaign for the party after he was ignored by the high command. With the party totally in a mess, it will be no surprise if again people reject it.

In Punjab, the Congress has become a laughing stock with PCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu always at loggerheads with CM Charanjit Singh Channi. The latter, who has just taken over the reins from Amarinder Singh, is unsure whether the high command will allow him to continue as CM if at all the party succeeds in coming back to power. Unlike in the past when the Congress was on one side and the SAD-BJP combine on the other, this time round it is a multi-cornered contest. In addition to Congress, there will be BJP-PLC (Punjab Lok Congress headed by Amarinder Singh), SAD-



Senior leaders in the party have been unhappy with the functioning of the Gandhi siblings. While some leaders have been candid to disown them, others are being patient so far

BSP, SSM (Sanyukt Samaj Morcha) and AAP.

A hung assembly is expected this time, though AAP has a bright chance to take the lead. AAP has been campaigning in Punjab for a long time and has made several inroads, the latest being its spectacular performance in Chandigarh civic polls. The desertion of Amarinder has left the party with non-serious players who are busy confronting each other rather than concentrating on the functioning of the government and the party's poll prospects. The faux-pas committed by the Channi government on the breach in security of PM Narendra Modi has tarnished the image of the Congress government. However, since the BJP is a non-player in Punjab and Amarinder is a spent force, it is unlikely that Punjabis would be carried away by him. They would instead go for the SSM (the conglomeration of 22 farmers' groups) who have struggled for the last one year protesting on the Delhi borders against the three 'draconian' farm laws.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and his party AAP have bright prospects not only in Punjab, but also in Goa. Besides AAP, Mamata Banerjee's TMC has also set its

sights on Goa. Though both the leaders are considered to be good friends, they are competing with one another for more seats. The contest is primarily between Congress and BJP, but AAP and TMC may play spoilsport by splitting the secular votes and thus benefiting the BJP. The political wizard Prashant Kishor has been camping in Goa for several months, strategising to garner a sizable number of votes for Mamata. The TMC and the AAP are trying to become national players in the fight to fill the vacuum being created by the waning popularity of Congress.

With the Election Commission banning political rallies, the elections will be fought for the first time on social media and virtual conferences. Though the BJP has an edge over other parties due to its wider outreach, eventually it is the performance and the ideology of the parties that really counts. The issues that will weigh over the minds of the people are inflation, communal harmony, pandemic response, national security, law and order, empowerment of women, and employment. These Assembly elections will decide whether the charisma of PM Modi is still intact or is he losing his

popularity and whether the performance of UP CM Yogi Adityanath is up to the mark or has he failed to perform. The popularity of Kejriwal and Mamata will also be tested. However, for the Gandhi siblings, Rahul and Priyanka, their future trajectory depends on these election results. If they fail to dislodge the BJP from Uttarakhand and if they perform miserably in Punjab, Goa and Manipur, they themselves may be kicked out from their own party.

The Congress rebels, the G23, are waiting anxiously to strike and if the Congress fails in Assembly polls, their task of replacing Rahul with a person outside the Gandhi dynasty will become easier. The Congress presidential elections are due in September and by fielding a dynamic leader in front of Rahul, they may get rid of the Gandhis forever. The Gandhis have been a guiding force and have acted as a glue to keep the party united. However, if the Gandhis cannot win them elections, the party workers will be left with no option but to look beyond the First Family. Senior leaders in the party have been unhappy with the functioning of the Gandhi siblings. While some leaders have been candid to disown them, others are being patient so far. However, their patience is running out. For the Congress, the post-election scenario will be interesting to watch. In the face of a debacle in the polls, either the party will split, with Rahul on one side and the rebels on the other, or the party leaders will all fall in line if Rahul finally accepts the post of Congress president. He has been dilly-dallying to take up the responsibility for over 2 years now.

There is also a third option where Rahul refuses to take up the mantle and the family baton is passed to Priyanka. It is a do-or-die battle for the Congress and the Gandhis.

*The writer is a Delhi-based senior journalist and political commentator. Views are personal.*

## SPECTRUM CONSERVATION

# Fighting deforestation on the ground



Pedro Frizo

TO EMBRACE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY, RESIDENTS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES MUST VIEW IT AS A RELIABLE SOURCE OF STABLE INCOME

The protection and conservation of biomes, especially tropical rainforests, is critical to achieve climate goals, especially in countries with abundant forest cover. Nevertheless, the latest monitoring data show significant deforestation in many of these areas, including the world's most extensive.

In October 2021, Brazil's National Institute for Space Research reported the highest level of forest loss in the Amazon recorded in that month since monitoring began five years ago. And the problem is not limited to the Amazon. The world's second-largest tropical forest, the Congo River Basin, lost more than 15 million hectares, or 8% of its original covering, between 2001 and 2020.

Global goals to promote biodiversity, such as those agreed on at the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), are critical to raise awareness about ecosystem loss and ensure accountability at the international level. But much of the actual conservation work necessarily must be carried out locally.

Enabling people in these biodiverse regions to coexist with their environment is essential to ensuring the survival of forest biomes. But earning a livelihood from forests is not a simple task. Activities like mining and logging are more lu-

crative – at least in the short term – than, say, forest management, sustainable farming, and ecotourism.

A recent survey of land-use dynamics in the Brazilian Amazon conducted over the course of two years offers some insights into how governments and non-governmental actors can promote forest conservation at the local level. For starters, understanding the needs and concerns of residents is critical. Civil-society organisations working in the Amazon, for example, learned that economic stability is a top concern for rural farmers. With this knowledge, NGOs introduced new agricultural practices based on the latest science. Doing so enabled activities such as cattle ranching and coffee production to coexist with recovering forests.

Other programmes implemented during this period taught small rural farmers forest-management techniques and how to replant native species. Extension agents working with the NGOs provided technical assistance to the farmers and set up demonstration units to help residents understand the benefits of the new methods. Enthusiastic promotion of the techniques and evidence that they improved production were decisive factors in encouraging local farmers to adopt them and engage in sustainable forestry activities.

In addition to introducing forest-friendly farming practices, civil-society organisations in the Amazon work with small producer cooperatives to integrate remote communities into bigger markets. These networks allow farmers to earn money from the forests without harming them. But this infrastructure is fragile. According to data collected by Conexsus, the annual income sustainable cooperatives in the Brazilian Amazon generated for their members in 2019 was under half of Brazil's minimum wage for that year. Such low returns make it difficult to attract farmers away from more profitable, but less sustainable activities.

To embrace sustainable forestry, residents of rural communities must view it as a reliable source of stable income. Government institutions could reduce economic uncertainty through legislation and incentives.

Unfortunately, recent policy changes actually limit the viability of sustainable forestry in Brazil. The gradual weakening of the national bodies responsible for controlling and monitoring land use is one of the main causes of the recent increase in deforestation in the Amazon Basin, and Brazil's rural credit policy also does little to support environmentally sustainable economic initiatives. In 2019 and 2020, only

3% of disbursements made by financial institutions in the Amazon region were directed toward sustainable activities; most of the rest went to industries known to be damaging the local ecosystem, such as soybean production and large-scale cattle ranching.

Community-led organisations are key to promoting sustainable forestry, but their ability to effect change is limited, owing to a lack of capital. Activities like teaching rural farmers more sustainable techniques, creating markets that encourage investment in forest products, and developing ways to integrate Amazon communities into value chains are time-consuming and expensive.

Forest preservation depends on several interconnected factors. Legislation to support conservation efforts and more funding for initiatives like those mentioned here will help promote work that is positive for the environment. But without structural changes at both the national and local level to enable rural residents to earn a living from sustainable forest activities, the destruction of Earth's most important forest biomes will continue.

*The writer, an editorial member of Ceiri News, is an economist.* @PROJECT SYNDICATE

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Lessons to learn

Sir, The Novak Djokovic issue will leave a bitter taste in the average tennis fan's mouth. Djokovic has not received a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine. He is staunch opponent of vaccine for COVID-19. This is a clear case of confusion in policies that dictate whether an overseas man can be allowed entry into a nation. While Australia has an extraordinary record in inoculating its people, Serbia has an abysmal number to show. The people of Australia are justifiably proud about their vaccination status. Tennis fans are dead against Djokovic being accorded special permission to play without fulfilling the mandatory COVID-19 obligations. Nonetheless, Djokovic has not made public his vaccination status. Coming from a 'vaccine hesitant' nation, it's understandable. But he is not merely a cult figure; his fame and popularity cut across borders. Before participating in a tournament as important as a Grand Slam, he should have been conversant with the rules and regulations of the country hosting the event.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Lifestyle disorder

Sir, Having dinner early is a good habit. Indian culture is no stranger to this, but now this habit can be seen only in some small pockets of the country like the northeastern states and in some hilly terrains of northern India. It is evident that the people from northeastern states and the people of the high altitudes of northern India are less affected by the pandemic owing to their good immune system. In megacities and metropolises it is seen that only a handful of people have dinner in their homes and the majority dines out and that too very late at night. This pandemic is like an alarm for us to mend our ways before it is too late.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR

### Trouble for BJP

Sir, Senior OBC leader and labour minister in the Uttar Pradesh government Swami Prasad Maurya jumping ship ahead of the Assembly polls could rock the BJP's boat. The turnout cited ideological differences and the negligence of the Yogi Adityanath government towards the backward classes, farmers, youths and small traders as the reasons behind quitting his post. Later, three MLAs supporting him – Brajesh Prajapati, Roshan Lal Varma and Bhagwati Sagar – also put in their papers and joined the Samajwadi Party. Meanwhile, in another dramatic development, Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar indicated that his party would join forces with the SP in the Assembly elections.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE



of the day quote

The number of Corona patients has increased, but most of them have mild symptoms. Only 1 to 2 per cent of the patients need to be admitted to the hospital. There is no need to panic, but people should take all necessary precautions

**YASH GARG** | GURUGRAM DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

Many of you may not have voting right in Tamil Nadu, but you have the right to call this government your own government.

This was why I had made several announcements in September last year for the welfare of the Tamil diaspora

**MK STALIN** | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

There is a concern that whichever medicines we give it should be rationally used, there should not be any overuse. Last time, we saw a very scary situation when the contribution of medicine was to a very large extent responsible for mucormycosis

**DR V K PAUL** | NITI AAYOG MEMBER (HEALTH)

SHORT TAKES

Majithia questioned for over two hours

**Chandigarh:** SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia was Wednesday questioned for more than two hours by a special investigation team probing a drugs case registered against him. Majithia, who was granted anticipatory bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court two days ago, appeared before the SIT at the state crime branch at 11 am. Talking to reporters after appearing before the SIT, he said he assured the investigating officers of his full cooperation in the case.

Top officials of India, US meet

**New Delhi:** India and the US Wednesday reviewed the ongoing cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber security and a host of other issues at a Homeland Security Dialogue attended by top officials of both the countries. During the meeting, held in virtual mode, the officials from the two countries also identified further steps that can be taken to explore opportunities and synergies in advancing security cooperation, an official statement said.

JeM terrorist, cop killed in encounter

**Srinagar:** A Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist and a policeman were killed and five people, including three soldiers, injured in an encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district Wednesday. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Pariwan area of the district following information about the presence of militants there, officials said. They said the search operation turned into an encounter after militants opened fire towards the position of security forces. Inspector General of Police (Kashmir zone) Vijay Kumar said one policeman and one Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist were killed in the encounter.

Schools in B'lore closed till Jan 31

**Bangalore:** The Karnataka government has decided to close schools from Class 1 to 9 in Bangalore till the end of January following the recent surge in the Covid cases in the city. Minister for Education BC Nagesh confirmed this Wednesday. He said that since the number of infections have crossed the 10,000 mark in Bangalore, the decision has been made in the interest of children.



**Vivekananda's imagination about life after death is wonderful**  
**BASAVARAJ BOMMAI** | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

STRICT VIGIL

The Uttar Pradesh Police have formed a 'digital monitoring cell' that would remain functional round-the-clock. Additional director general (ADG) police, law and order, Prashant Kumar, said, "Whenever an objectionable post would be detected by the cell, it will immediately alert range and zonal police social media in charges, which will further revert to the specific district where action will be taken".



India, China hold 14th round of military talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** India Wednesday pressed for an early disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh at the 14th round of military talks with China, sources in the security establishment said.

The fresh round of Corps Commander-level talks took place at the Chushul-Moldo border point on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, they said. The main focus of the talks was to carry forward the disengagement process at Hot Springs (Patrolling Point 15), the sources said. "The 14th round of the Corps Commander level talks is underway, and I am hopeful that you shall see further developments in the days ahead. But while there has been partial disengagement, the threat has by no means reduced," Army Chief Gen MM Naravane said in the afternoon.

He made the remarks while addressing a press conference ahead of the Army Day. The talks that began at 9:30 am are learnt to have continued till evening.

The Indian delegation at the talks was led by Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta, the newly-appointed Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps. The Chinese team was to be headed by South Xinjiang Military District



Chief Maj Gen Yang Lin.

The Indian side also insisted on disengagement as soon as possible in all the remaining friction points including resolution of issues in Depsang Bulge and Demchok. The 13th round of talks had taken place on October 10 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. The fresh talks are taking place days after India hit out at China for building a bridge across Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh and said it is in an area that has been under illegal occupation of that country for around

60 years. Last week, India also described China's renaming of some places in Arunachal Pradesh as a "ridiculous exercise" to support "untenable territorial" claims, asserting that the state has always been and will always remain an "inalienable" part of India.

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. 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

Threat has by no means reduced: Army chief

**New Delhi:** The threat in eastern Ladakh has "by no means reduced" and the Indian Army will continue to deal with the Chinese military in a "firm" and "resolute" manner, Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane said Wednesday. Gen Naravane also said that war or conflict is always an "instrument of last resort" but if it is thrust upon India, then the country will come out victorious. Addressing a press conference ahead of Army Day January 15, Gen Naravane said his forces have been maintaining the highest level of operational preparedness in eastern Ladakh and the threat assessment and internal deliberations have resulted in re-organisation and re-alignment of the troops. The Army chief asserted that China's new land boundary law was not binding on India and that the Indian Army is more than adequately prepared to deal with any military ramifications of the legislation.

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.

'Around 400 ultras at launchpads in PoK'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** As many as 350-400 terrorists are present at the launchpads and training camps in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Manoj Mukund Naravane, said Wednesday.

Addressing Indian Army's annual press conference, the COAS said that the threat at the Line of Control (LoC) from Pakistan has not receded by any means. "The threat cannot be ignored," said the army chief.

Along the LoC with Pakistan, after a heightened situation for a prolonged period, the DGMOs' understanding in February last year was aimed at achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace, he said. "Resultantly, the situation has witnessed marked improvement," said the officer, but with a caution.

"However, increase in concentration of terrorists in launch pads across the LC and repeated infiltration attempts have once again exposed their (Pakistan's) nefarious intents," the Indian Army chief said. "We, on our part, have resolved to show 'Zero Tolerance' to terror, and commit ourselves to extract dire costs, should that be



**We, on our part, have resolved to show 'Zero Tolerance' to terror, and commit ourselves to extract dire costs, should that be forced upon us**

**GENERAL MANOJ MUKUND NARAVANE** | CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF (COAS)

forced upon us," he said. In Jammu and Kashmir, the 'Whole of Government' approach has led to progressive improvement in the security situation, he said.

Efforts to give an indigenous hue to terrorism, by setting up a facade of proxy terror 'Tanzeems', have failed miserably, he said, adding that inimical elements have re-energised their attempts at disrupting peace in the Valley by targeting minorities and non-locals. "However, we have been able to counter these challenges," he said.

PM to discuss Covid situation with CMs today

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Amid a rise in the Covid cases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to discuss the situation with the Chief Ministers Thursday evening, sources said Wednesday.

During the interaction with the Chief Ministers, Modi will review the Covid situation in the country and steps implemented to control the spread of the virus.

"In the meeting, the Prime Minister will discuss state-specific scenarios, best-practices and the public health response," sources said.

On Sunday, Modi had chaired a high-level meeting to assess the Covid situation in the country, ongoing preparedness of health infrastructure and logistics, status of the vaccination campaign in the country and the emergence of new Covid-19 variant Omicron and its public health implications for the country.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister had said that a meeting with the chief ministers would be convened to discuss state-specific scenarios, best-practices and the public health response. The Prime Minister had directed the officials to ensure adequate health infrastructure at the district level.

RAJ HORROR

DEAF, MUTE MINOR GIRL GANGRAPED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Jan 12:** A minor deaf and mute girl was gangraped in Rajasthan's Alwar and thrown on road near culvert in a profusely bleeding condition.

The incident happened Tuesday night and the condition of the girl is critical. The girl was lying there in pain for around an hour when she was spotted by the public who informed the police.

The police then rushed the girl to a local hospital where she was admitted to the ICU. As her condition was serious, she was shifted to Jaipur hospital late at night. The gang-rape accused are yet to be identified. Meanwhile, Superintendent of Police Tejaswini Gautam told IANS, "The kid is presently at JKL Lon in Jaipur. Our primary concern is her health and hence she was shifted there and our deputy SP Anjali is there with her. We have formed an SIT team, including six SHO's who are searching for technical and scientific evidence to arrest the accused," she said. The minor was thrown near the culvert, Gautam informed and said, "We came to know that the minor was missing from nearby village Malakheda at around 4 p.m. Tuesday."

Return money or face jail, SC warns Supertech

Supreme Court directed Supertech to return money to homebuyers by January

17 for flats facing demolition in its Emerald Court project or face jail

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The Supreme Court Wednesday warned real estate company Supertech of "consequences" over the non-payment of refund to home buyers, who had paid for flats in two 40-storey towers which are being demolished on the court's order.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and AS Bopanna told counsel appearing for Supertech to keep their house in order and not make deductions, which have not been ordered by the top court.

The bench emphasised it will send the directors of the real estate firm to jail, as interest cannot be charged on return of investment. "You are looking for all sorts of reasons to not comply with the order of the court. Ensure payments are made by Monday," it said. Senior advocate Ravindra Kumar, representing the Noida, informed the top court that the authority has almost finalised the agency, which would conduct the demolition of twin towers of the Supertech Emerald Court hous-

ing project.

A contempt plea was filed by home buyers, who had paid for the flats in two 40-storey towers. Home buyers have alleged that Supertech called them to collect the refund, however, they were later told that payment would be made in instalments, including certain deductions. Counsel, representing the home buyers, said the home buyers are aggrieved with the delay in the refund and also added that the court order did not mention about any deduction.

In its August 31 judgment, the Supreme Court, besides ordering demolition of Supertech twin towers in Noida and refund for the flat purchasers, ordered prosecution of errant NOIDA and real estate company officials under Section 49 of Uttar Pradesh Urban Development (UPUD) Act for their "nefarious complicity", which resulted in the construction of towers. The bench made it clear that Supertech cannot make any deduction, which has not been ordered by the court, and scheduled the matter for further hearing January 17. The top court also asked the Noida to finalise the name of the agency to conduct demolition and directed to respond on this aspect January 17.

On October 4, last year, the Supreme Court on Monday junked an application by Supertech Ltd seeking modification in the court's direction to demolish its twin 40-storey towers in Noida.



'Hate speech' bigger pandemic than Covid: Report

AGENCIES

**Kolkata, Jan 12:** Hate speeches have become a burning and controversial issue in India with all political parties being accused of it. However, an analysis by NDTV has found that hate speeches have gone up by an astounding 1,130 per cent since 2014, the year the government led by Narendra Modi came to power.

"NDTV" has been tracking hate speeches and chronicling the statements since 2009. It's report says that during UPA-2 (2009-14) there were 19 hate speech occasions, an average of 0.3 per month. However, since the Modi government came to power there have been 348 instances of hate speeches at an average of 3.7 occasions per month – an astounding rise of 1,130 per cent.

The report also states that since Assembly polls to the five states were announced, the percentage of hate speeches has gone up by 160 per cent in comparison to the national average.

The BJP accounts for over 80 per cent of this hate pandemic. Since October this year, there have been 34 instances of hate speeches with BJP lawmakers and leaders being the major contributors.

This is approximately 10 cases a month, well above the national average for the last seven years.

Among those who have delivered such hate speeches are Union Home Minister Amit Shah, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma and UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. For example during a recent cam-



paign Shah came down heavily on the Samajwadi party. While speaking at an event in in November in UP Shah said that while the BJP government has brought in a 'JAM' scheme – Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar Card, and Mobiles, the Samajwadi Party also has a 'JAM' which stands for Jinnah, Azam Khan and Mukhtar. Adityanath has repeatedly used the term 'abba

FIR lodged over threat calls to SC lawyers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Delhi Police have registered an FIR in connection with the threat calls received by the lawyers of the Supreme Court, warning the judges to refrain from hearing the case related to the recent security breach of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Punjab.

The FIR has been registered by the Special Cell of Delhi Police under Sections 153, 153-A, and 506 of the Indian Penal Code read with Sections 13, 16, 18 and 20 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The complaint in this regard was lodged by Supreme Court lawyer Vishnu Jain. "Today

PM'S SECURITY BREACH

I received two threatening calls on the same pattern as was received by other advocates a day ago," Jain said.

Sharing the contents of the calls, Jain said the caller challenged the sovereignty and integrity of India. Earlier on Monday, the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record (SCAORA) Association wrote to the Secretary General of the apex court seeking action against anonymous callers, who took responsibility for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security breach in Punjab last week. In a communication, Joseph Aristotle S, Secretary,

SCAORA, said that several advocates-on-record of the top court received anonymous automated pre-recorded calls from +447418365564, one at 10:40 am and another call at about 12:36 pm on Monday.

The caller warned the top court judges to refrain from hearing the PIL 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. On Wednesday, the Supreme Court directed that retired top court judge, Justice Indu Malhotra, will head a committee to investigate the security breach matter.

Top court seeks reply

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court asked Wednesday the Centre, Delhi Police and Uttarakhnad Police to respond to a plea seeking direction to ensure investigation and action against those who allegedly made hate speeches allegedly against the Muslim community during two events held recently in Haridwar and the national capital. A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana, which agreed to hear the plea and issued notice on it, permitted the petitioners to make representation to the concerned local authorities against holding of future 'Dharam Sansad' events there. The bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, posted the matter for hearing after 10 days.

jaan', in his speeches to insinuate that only Muslims reaped the benefits of government schemes under the Samajwadi Party. In December, Maurya, spoke of 'lungi chaap' goons and 'jaalidar topis' (goons wearing lungis and skullcaps) in an apparent dog whistle targeting the Muslim minority.

Under Indian law, hate speech is a punishable offence, with imprisonment up to three years or a fine or both.

However, rarely have these high profile and hate-spewing politicians been pulled up by courts. Also they have not been reprimanded by their own parties.



# AAP declares 10-point 'Punjab Model'

**DELHI CM ARVIND KEJRIWAL'S PARTY PROMISES JOBS TO YOUTHS, ENDING DRUG MENACE AND BRINGING JUSTICE IN SACRILEGE CASES**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 12:** The AAP Wednesday announced a 10-point 'Punjab Model' that promises jobs to youths, ending drug menace and bringing justice in sacrilege cases, as Arvind Kejriwal asserted people will vote his party to power to break the 'partnership' between the Congress and the Badals.

The Aam Aadmi Party's national convener and Delhi chief minister also said the party's chief ministerial face for Punjab will be announced next week.

He rejected the charge that his party is taking money for allotting tickets to assembly aspirants, rubbishing an audio tape in which the allegation was recently made.

"If anybody proves that somebody sold tickets and somebody else bought them, I will throw them out of the party within 24 hours," he said. "I can tolerate anything, but not corruption."

Kejriwal said the farmers' body Sanyukt Samaj Morcha fighting the February 14 Punjab polls on its own would cost his party some votes. He said an alliance with the SSM did not happen because of differences over seat-sharing.

"Rajewal saheb came to me at my house and a discussion took place. The day he came, we had already announced 90 tickets and he said he wanted 60 tickets," Kejriwal



**If anybody proves that somebody sold tickets and somebody else bought them, I will throw them out of the party within 24 hours...I can tolerate anything, but not corruption**

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

## Kejriwal a political tourist, says Sidhu

**Chandigarh:** Hours after AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal unveiled his party's 'Punjab Model' of governance after the February 14 polls, state Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu attacked him dubbing him a 'political tourist' and his model a 'Copy-Cat Model'. "Political Tourist @Arvind Kejriwal who was absent in Punjab for the last 4.5 years claims to have a Punjab Model. AAP's campaign & agenda is a joke on the people of Punjab. A list of 10 pointers written by people sitting in Delhi with zero knowledge of Punjab can never be Punjab Model!," Sidhu tweeted. Besides dubbing Kejriwal's post-poll governance template for Punjab as a "Copy-Cat Model", Sidhu went on to describe it also as "I am very insecure Model", "Liquor Mafia Model", "Ticket for Money Model", "I am very sorry Majithia Ji: the Cowardice Model", "Writing free cheques model", "Electricity to Ambanis Model" and "450 jobs in five years Model".

The AAP had contested the 2017 polls without declaring its chief ministerial candidate.

Punjab is going to witness a multi-cornered contest in the February 14 assembly polls.

told reporters.

The AAP leader said he told Rajewal that just 27 party tickets were now left to be distributed and the SSM could take 10-15 out of them. "I completely agree that if the Sanyukt Samaj Morcha fights separately some AAP votes could definitely be lost."

Kejriwal said the AAP's "Punjab Model" envisages to create employment avenues in the state so that the youths who have left for greener pastures, including to Canada, will contemplate coming back.

He said it will be the AAP's priority to control drug menace which "continues as before as drug mafia enjoys patronage from powers that be".

Establishing peace, harmony and brotherhood in the state and giving justice in the sacrilege case is also on the party's agenda. He said there have been several sacrilege incidents, but nobody has been punished.

"It is because very big people

were involved in the conspiracy. The sentiments of people are hurt by the sacrilege incidents. We will ensure strict punishment in each sacrilege case no matter how big a person is," he said.

He also promised to eradicate corruption. "The common man who has to give bribe to get his work done, will no longer have to do that."

Under the 'Punjab Model', Kejriwal also promised to improve the state of education and health in the state. As many as 16,000 Mohalla Clinics will also be opened, he said. Kejriwal said women above 18 years will be given Rs 1,000 per month. All issues of farmers will be resolved and the 'raid raj' eliminated, he said, adding a congenial atmosphere will be created for trade and industry to flourish.

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal said his party's chief ministerial face will be announced next week. AAP Punjab unit chief Bhagwant Mann is the frontrunner.

# KCR urges people to root out BJP govt at Centre

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Jan 12:** Registering his strong protest against the Central government as decision to increase the price of fertilisers, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao Wednesday called up on people across the country to root out BJP government saying it was weakening the rural economy and playing havoc with the farm sector.

He said the increase in the prices of fertilisers will put the agriculture sector into a crisis and break the backbone of farming in the country. KCR, as the chief minister is popularly known, said he will write a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi registering his protest against the increase of fertiliser prices. He alleged that the BJP government is weakening the rural economy, hereditary trades and playing havoc with the farm sector only to hand over the sector to the corporates. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) chief expressed anguish that the BJP government at the Centre removed subsidies on fertilisers, which were in vogue for several decades, and the situation came to such a pass that the farmers had no option but to take up their ploughs and revolt against the Central government.

The CM expressed his anger that the Central government which made tall promises that it would double the farmers' income by 2022, has now increased the prices of fertilisers at an all time high to break the farming community's back. "It is highly reprehensible that the Central government which promised to double the income of farmers took a U-



**It is highly reprehensible that the Central government which promised to double the income of farmers took a U-turn and increased the agriculture expenses. This shows that the BJP government is totally against the farmers and it is proved right beyond any doubt**

K CHANDRASEKHAR RAO | TELANGANA CM

turn and increased the agriculture expenses. This shows that the BJP government is totally against the farmers and it is proved right beyond any doubt," he said.

KCR said there was a deep rooted conspiracy behind the Central government's policies and actions to make the lives of farmers miserable. Decisions like installing metres to motors to collect the power charges, not linking NREGP with the farm sector, increasing the fertilisers prices to all time high, not purchasing the paddy cultivated by the farmers, all these draconian decisions of the BJP government at the Centre have made farmers' life

miserable. He said everyone should oppose the actions that would make a farmer a labourer in his own land. The CM urged the people to confront the BJP on the matter at every opportunity. He made it clear that if the central government fails to withdraw the increased prices of fertilisers, there will be statewide and countrywide agitations against the Central government. He also urged the farming community in the state to expose the BJP's conspiracy and join the struggle to make the Centre withdraw the fertiliser price hike.

"Due to the faulty policies of the government of India in both the cases of petrol/diesel pricing and fertiliser pricing, the farmers are bearing the brunt. It is pertinent to highlight that these steps are causing great deal of anxiety to the farmers as the seven-decade-old fertiliser subsidy regime under the purview of the government of India is being modified against the interest of the farming community," he added.

He recalled that the Telangana state legislature had passed a unanimous resolution to integrate MN-REGA with agricultural activity so that cost of labour is partially borne by the government along with farmers, but the government of India choose not to respond.

The Chief Minister said that while accepting the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission to peg MSP for farm produce at 50 percent more than the weighted average cost of production, essential costs of farm rentals and cost of fixed capital assets were deliberately excluded while calculating cost of crop to farmers.

# Sanyukt Samaj Morcha's first candidates' list out

*The party's leader Balbir Singh Rajewal has ruled out any alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ludhiana, Jan 12:** The Sanyukt Samaj Morcha (SSM), a political front launched by various farmer bodies for fighting the February 14 Punjab assembly polls, Wednesday released its first list of 10 candidates.

The list included the names of farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal as the outfit's candidate for the

Samrala assembly seat. Rajewal is leading the SSM. The list revealed that farmer leader Prem Singh Bhangu will fight from Ghanaur, Harjinder Singh Tanda from Khadoor Sahib, Ravneet Singh Brar from Mohali and Dr Sukhmandeep Singh from Tarn Taran.

Additionally, Rajesh Kumar will fight from Kartarpur, Ajay Kumar from Phillaur, Ramandeep Singh from Jaiton, Balraj Singh from Qadian and Dr Navdeep Singh from Moga, it said.

While ruling out any alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party a few days back, Rajewal had said they would announce their first list of candidates. Various Punjab farmer bodies which had taken part in the stir against the Centre's now-repealed farm laws had launched their political front last month and announced to contest the state assembly polls.

Voting for Punjab Assembly polls will be held February 14 and votes will be counted March 10.



People buy kites on the eve of Lohri, a winter folk festival, at a shop in Amritsar, Punjab, Wednesday.

# 'Punjab needs serious people': Tewari attacks Channi, Sidhu



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Congress MP from Punjab's Anandpur Sahib has once again attacked Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and state party president Navjot Singh Sidhu on reports that both are pushing to be named as the Chief Ministerial candidates.

Tewari Wednesday said, "Punjab needs serious people," and took potshots at both Channi and Sidhu and dubbed them as non serious persons who are entertaining people.

Tewari tweeted, "Punjab requires a CM who has solutions to Punjab's challenges, capacity to take tough decisions. Punjab Needs serious people whose politics is Not Social Engineering, Entertainment, Freebies and NOT regime favourites rejected by people in successive elections."

The Congress, so far, has not named anyone as the party's Chief Ministerial face for the upcoming Assembly elections as the party considers that this leads to infighting and internal rift.

But state unit chief Navjot Singh Sidhu Tuesday said it is the people who will choose the next Chief Minister of the state and not the high command.

Unveiling the first set of plans in his Punjab Model with focus on resurrection of Punjab, Sidhu, in the absence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and his Cabinet colleagues, told the media here: "Punjab Model is people's model, an effort to give a roadmap to return power to people."

To counter the powerful 'mafia model', which has power to even stop the notification of Cabinet passed resolution, he said a model is needed to redistribute state resources and give power back to the rightful beneficiaries.

# AAP gets ECI notice for 'breaching' model code

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 12:** The Election Commission of India Wednesday issued a notice to the AAP for allegedly violating the model code of conduct as its leaders and workers approached people in groups of more than five for door-to-door campaigning.

The poll panel issued the notice shortly after the Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal launched the door-to-door campaigning from the Kharar assembly segment.

Kejriwal met residents, urging them to vote for his party on the February 14 state assembly polls. In the notice, the Kharar returning officer said the model code was violated as the AAP volunteers approached people in groups of more than five.

Seeking the reply of the notice within 24 hours, the returning officer-cum-sub-divisional magistrate said the failure to reply to the notice within the stipulated time would



trigger action by the poll panel. The ECI January 8 had banned public rallies, roadshows and corner meetings till January 15 in the five poll-bound states, citing the fresh surge in COVID-19 cases, and issued stringent safety guidelines.

Punjab minister Raj Kumar Verka had also sought action against the AAP for the alleged MCC violation.

During his party's door-to-door campaigning, Kejriwal met peo-

ple in the Kharar sub-division of Mohali and listened to their problems and apprised them of the party's plans for Punjab.

Accompanied by AAP's state unit chief Bhagwant Mann, Kejriwal himself distributed pamphlets about his party's plans and promises to the people, urging them to vote for his party to 'restore Punjab's peace and prosperity, and to establish harmony and brotherhood in the state.'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Jan 12:** Exhibiting his extraordinary weaving skills, a young handloom weaver in Telangana has woven a saree which can be kept in a matchbox.

Nalla Vijay, a resident of Rajanna Sircilla district, has woven the silk saree. It takes two weeks for him to weave the saree with hands and it costs Rs 12,000. If weaved on machines, it takes three days and costs Rs 8,000. The talented weaver is continuing the family tradition, drawing inspiration from his father Nalla Parandhamulu. He has been weaving sarees on handloom.

Vijay displayed his hand woven saree before state ministers K. Taraka Rama Rao, P. Sabitha Indrareddy, V. Srinivas Goud and Errabelli Dayakar Rao. The ministers were all praise for the talented young weaver and enquired about the material used and the process of weaving.

The ministers said while they heard about the saree which can fit into a matchbox but were person-



ally seeing it for the first time. They assured all help to the weaver for his innovations. Vijay gifted a saree to Sabitha Indrareddy.

The weaver told the ministers that the handloom sector in Sircilla has seen many changes in recent times thanks to the support provided by the state government. He said the weavers from Sircilla were

adopting the latest techniques and modern tools.

The saree woven by Vijay was earlier displayed at World Telugu Conference in 2017. He had also gifted a saree made with super fine silk to then US president Barack Obama's wife Michelle Obama, when the couple had come to India in 2015.



of the day quote

The once in a lifetime Covid-19 pandemic has reaffirmed the importance of the health sector. The future will belong to societies which invest in health care. The government of India has brought many reforms in the health sector

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

All evidence makes it clear that Congress high command and Punjab CM conspired to kill Prime Minister Narendra Modi

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

I completely agree that if the Sanyukt Samaj Morcha fights separately for Punjab Assembly polls, some AAP votes could definitely be lost

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

SHORT TAKES

3 close aides of PLFI chief held

**Ranchi:** The Jharkhand Police Wednesday dealt a body blow to the PLFI with the arrest of three close aides of the outfit's supremo Dinesh Gope from Buxar in Bihar, an official release here said. A huge quantity of ammunition, Rs 12.21 lakh in cash, ATM cards and pictures of sophisticated weapons were seized from their possession, indicating that they have connections with arms' supplier gangs, the release said.

Bank official shot dead

**Rae Bareilly:** A manager of the Bank of Baroda was gunned down in Shyam Nagar in the Mill area in Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly district. The incident came to light Wednesday morning when his body was found. Jai Prakash Pal, resident of Bhavani Nagar in Kanpur, was posted as manager in the Bank of Baroda. Around 8.30 p.m. Tuesday he returned in his car to Shyam Nagar where he was staying on rent. As he got out of his car, he was fired upon.

Kishore Upadhyay sacked from all posts

**New Delhi/Dehradun:** The Congress Wednesday removed its former Uttarakhand unit chief Kishore Upadhyay from all positions for anti-party activities, pending further action in the matter. Upadhyay is the chairman of the Uttarakhand Congress Coordination Committee and is a member of the state Congress Core Committee and the Uttarakhand Congress Pradesh Election Committee.

Naxals kill villager

**Raipur:** Naxals thrashed a 50-year-old villager to death in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said Wednesday. This is the fifth killing by rebels in the district in one week. The latest incident took place on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday in Ketulnar village under Kutru police station limits, Inspector General, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said.

28 held in fraud case

**New Delhi:** As many as 28 people, including 25 women, were arrested for cheating over 1,000 people on the pretext of providing loans under the Pradhan Mantri Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). According to the official, a complaint was lodged by a woman, stating she received a phone call from a person named Satish who introduced himself as a bank employee. He offered her a loan of Rs 6 lakh under the PMEGP. As per the scheme, Rs 5 lakh were to be returned as main loan and Rs 1 lakh would be subsidy.

Don't treat Omicron as common cold: Govt



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** As many as 300 districts in India are reporting weekly Covid case positivity of more than 5 per cent, the Union government said Wednesday as it urged people not to treat infection due to Omicron variant as common cold and get vaccinated. It said Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Gujarat are emerging as states of concern due to the rise in Covid cases there. Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary in Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said a sharp rise in Covid-19 infections has been noted in India with the case positivity climbing to 11.05 per cent Wednesday from 1.1 per cent December 30.

Concurrently, Covid cases have been rising globally with January 10 recording the highest ever single-day rise of 31.59 lakh cases worldwide, he said. The official said that currently, 300 districts in India are reporting weekly case positivity of more than 5 per cent.

Informing the press conference that 19 states have over 10,000 active Covid cases, Agarwal said Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Gujarat are emerging as states of concern due to the rise in Covid cases there.

Stressing on the importance of getting inoculated, he quoted the World Health Organisation to say that vaccine effectiveness against hospitalization appears to be substantially higher than against symptomatic Covid-19 disease. NITI

Covaxin booster effective, says BB

**New Delhi:** Covaxin's booster dose is able to neutralise the vaccine evading Omicron variant of Covid-19, according to a study conducted at US' Emory University, Bharat Biotech announced Wednesday. Earlier studies have demonstrated the neutralising potential of Covaxin against other SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern such as Alpha, Beta, Delta, Zeta, and Kappa, it said. The new study demonstrated "sera from subjects who received a booster dose of Covaxin (BBV152) six months after getting a primary two-dose series of Covaxin (BBV152), neutralised the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron and Delta variants", the Hyderabad-based drug maker said in a statement.

Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul said, "Omicron is not the common cold, cannot take it lightly. We need to be vigilant, get vaccinated and follow Covid-appropriate behaviour."

"Vaccination is an important pillar in our Covid response programme," he added. India added 1,94,720 new infections to its tally of Covid-19 cases pushing it to 3,60,70,510, according to the Union Health Ministry data Wednesday. Active cases have increased to 9,55,319, the highest in 211 days, while the death toll has climbed to 4,84,655 with 442 fresh fatalities. Of the total 4,868 cases of the Omicron variant, 1,805 people have recovered or migrated so far.

Another UP minister quits Yogi Cabinet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 12:** In another jolt to the ruling BJP in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, OBC leader Dara Singh Chauhan resigned Wednesday from the Yogi Adityanath cabinet and appeared to be headed towards the Samajwadi Party.

A day earlier, as BJP leaders brainstormed in Delhi on the UP assembly polls, Swami Prasad Maurya, also a prominent Other Backward Class leader, had quit the state cabinet. Three other BJP MLAs announced their resignation from the party, seemingly in Maurya's support.

Yet another BJP MLA, Avtar Singh Bhadana, quit the party on Wednesday and is joining the Rashtriya Lok Dal, an SP ally. But two Uttar Pradesh MLAs - Nareish

Saini from the Congress and Hari Om Yadav from the SP - joined the BJP on Wednesday, a welcome development for the ruling party as it deals with the sudden defections from its ranks.

A Sultanpur court, meanwhile, issued an arrest warrant against Maurya after he failed to turn up for a scheduled hearing on Wednesday in a case that goes back over seven years. Though Dara Singh Chauhan has not made it clear that he is joining the Samajwadi Party, the SP twitted a welcome message.

The recent developments are set to strengthen the SP's influence among the non-Yadav OBCs in the state, less than a month before the crucial elections that will also have an impact on the 2024 parliamentary polls.

A majority of the festivals celebrated in our country depict our integral relationship with nature and agriculture  
RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

I&B MINISTRY TWITTER ACCOUNT HACKED, RESTORED LATER

The Twitter account of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was compromised Wednesday. The account, however, was restored later on. The hacker renamed the account as Elon Musk and tweeted a great job



MAGNIFICENT VIEW: A man walks near a patch of melting snow, in Shimla, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Seeking money for construction of house is 'dowry demand': SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Seeking money for construction of a house is a 'dowry demand' which attracts offence under Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code, the Supreme Court said Tuesday while restoring conviction and sentence of a man and his father in a dowry death case.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana said Section 304-B was inserted in the IPC to combat the social evil of dowry demand that has reached alarming proportions.

It cannot be argued that in case of an ambiguity in the language used in the provision, the same ought to be construed strictly as that would amount to defeating the very object of the provision, it said.

"In this context the word 'Dowry' ought to be ascribed an expansive meaning so as to encompass any demand made on a woman, whether in respect of a property or a valuable security of any nature." "When dealing with cases under Section 304-B IPC, a provision isolated to act as a deterrent in the



bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli, said.

The apex court said interpretation of a provision of law that will defeat the very intention of the legislature must be shunned in favour of an interpretation that will promote the object sought to be achieved through the legislation meant to uproot a social evil like dowry demand.

"In this context the word 'Dowry' ought to be ascribed an expansive meaning so as to encompass any demand made on a woman, whether in respect of a property or a valuable security of any nature."

"When dealing with cases under Section 304-B IPC, a provision isolated to act as a deterrent in the

Govt asks BARC to release news ratings with immediate effect

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) Wednesday asked Indian broadcasters' body BARC to release news ratings with immediate effect after the council said it has taken initiatives to revise its protocols and mechanisms.

This comes after over a year of suspension of television news ratings following the controversy surrounding the alleged TRP (television rating points) scam which came to the fore in October 2020.

The ministry asked the Broadcasters Audience and Research Council (BARC) to release the news ratings with immediate effect and also to release the last three months data for the genre in a monthly format for fair and equitable representation of true trends.

S Somanath appointed as new ISRO chairman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan12:** Eminent rocket scientist S Somanath has been appointed as the chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as well as the Space Secretary, a Personnel Ministry order issued on Wednesday said. Somanath, who is at present Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), will succeed K Sivan who completes his extended tenure Friday.

Sivan was in January 2018 appointed as the ISRO chief, Secretary of the Department of Space and Chairman Space Commission. Somanath's appointment as the Space Secretary and the Space Commission Chairman is for a combined tenure of three years from the date of joining of the post, inclusive of an extension in tenure beyond the age of superannuation in public interest, the order said.



The post of the ISRO chairman, the Space Secretary and the Space Commission chief is usually held by one person only Somanath, who will be the 10th chairman of the premier space organisation, took charge as the VSSC's head January 22, 2018, after a two and a half years stint as the Director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram. Previously, he served as the Associate Director (Projects) of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre and also as the Project Director of GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle, according to his official biodata.

HC confirms death sentence to man for sexual assault, murder of minor

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Jan 12:** The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court Wednesday confirmed the death sentence awarded to a youth for sexually assaulting and murdering a seven-year-old girl at Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu.

The division bench comprising of Justices S Vaidyanathan and G Jayachandran said that there was



The division bench of the Madras High Court observed that no one should be judged by their external appearance and cited the example of Adolph Hitler

no infirmity in the sentence awarded by the Pudukottai Mahila court to M Samivel alias Raja. The Mahila court in Pudukottai had ordered that Raja be hanged for what he had done to the seven-year-old girl.

The Court said that the prosecution charge that Raja was seen with the girl June 20, 2020, and his clothes were stained with the blood of the girl, and his failure to prove his innocence was all clear evidence against him. Referring to the postmortem report of the girl, the judges observed, "The external injuries on the child included three deep wounds on the head and similar wounds on several parts of the face, neck, chest, multiple abrasions on the abdomen, thighs and private parts of the child."

The judges underlined the pain undergone by the child and said, "After fulfilling his carnal desires he had brutally attacked the child with a stick and dashed her head on a tree thereby piercing her face and neck."

FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS

Why Covid deaths are increasing despite vaccination?

INDIA IS EXPERIENCING THE OMICRON-LED THIRD WAVE WHICH MAY SEE THE PEAK AROUND FEBRUARY FIRST WEEK

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Amid a massive surge in the Covid-19 cases since the outbreak of the new Omicron variant, the coronavirus related fatalities have also started rising in India. However, the rate of increase in deaths remains much lower than what was reported during the second wave last year.

As per the Health Ministry report January 5, India has administered a total of 148.18 crore Covid vaccine doses which includes 90.8 per cent first dose, and 65.9 per cent second dose.

Since the first day of the year,



India has recorded a total of 3,131 deaths till January 11, an average of 284 deaths per day across the na-

tion. The Health Ministry has also underlined that the active cases that needed hospitalisation

care was 20-23 per cent during the second Covid surge. However, only 5 to 10 per cent of active cases require hospital administration currently even as the overall situation is evolving, and the need for hospitalisation care could change.

Experts say that lower hospitalisations and deaths could also be attributed to a wider vaccination coverage. Talking to IANS, Dr Sunila Garg, Covid-19 Task Force member, said that the rising numbers of deaths could be attributed to the comorbidities and also the delay in reporting the infection.

"Our vaccines have 93 per cent efficacy which prevents the serious illness, hospitalisations and deaths

but against the original strain of the coronavirus. Now, we don't know whether the deaths are happening due to Omicron or Delta variant," said Garg.

However, she added that "vaccination still prevents us against the severe infection and can be attributed to lower deaths comparing to the last wave".

Speaking on the Delhi health department data which said that out of total 46 deaths recorded in January 5 to 9 in Delhi, 11 people were vaccinated with both doses of vaccines, Garg said "Delhi is a big state with a huge population and the virus affects everyone differently. Chances are there that they

would have been administered the vaccines at later stages".

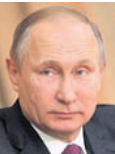
The point is that vaccine prevents the serious illness and hospitalisation, she added. "Vaccines are working efficiently that is the reason why hospitalisation rates are much lower despite rising cases of Omicron. The government has allowed the booster dose for the 60 plus population with comorbidities because as time advances, their immunity wanes and therefore, there is a need to boost their immunity against the virus. The vaccine still protects us from severe infection," said Dr Neeraj Nischal, Additional Professor, Medicine, AIIMS.



# international

## of the day quote

It's obvious that we are in a very difficult situation today, in a situation on the verge of possible new surges (of the virus)



**VLADIMIR PUTIN** | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

The exceptional situation of a pandemic increases the pressure for the state to act, but it doesn't replace the requirement to weigh up arguments and balance interests. A vaccine mandate means a debate mandate



**FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER** | PRESIDENT, GERMANY

Consequently, when we talk about India's plans for the next year in the Council, I believe that this will be a period of consolidation and reinforcement of our priorities. We will continue to play the role of a bridge between diverse interests within the Council



**TS TIRMURTI** | INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN

## SHORT TAKES

### UN gives \$1.9bln help for Sudan

**United Nations:** The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Tuesday released a \$1.9 billion Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan for 2022. More than \$800 million will go to life-saving activities for some of the 10.9 million vulnerable people targeted out of the 14.3 million people across Sudan in need of humanitarian assistance, it said. It is estimated that half of the highly vulnerable are in the western Darfur, with others in need living in the capital of Khartoum and South Kordofan, Xinhua news agency reported.

### Swarm of quakes hit Alaska islands

**Anchorage:** A swarm of earthquakes was recorded Tuesday off Alaska's Aleutian Islands, including the largest with a magnitude of 6.8 followed by aftershocks. There were few reports of the underwater quakes in the North Pacific being felt in nearby communities in a sparsely populated region of Alaska and no reports of damage, officials said. Natalia Ruppert, a seismologist at the Alaska Earthquake Center, said it was a "very unusual, very energetic swarm of earthquakes."

### Record Covid-19 deaths in Oz city

**Sydney:** Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, made the reporting of rapid antigen test results mandatory Wednesday as it experienced its deadliest day of the pandemic with 21 deaths. State Premier Dominic Perrottet said residents who failed to register a positive rapid antigen test would face a fine of up to 1,000 Australian dollars (\$721) starting next week. Perrottet said the registration process was simple and would help health officials provide more support to people with underlying health conditions.

### Heavy rains in Brazil kill 10

**Rio de Janeiro:** At least 10 people were killed in the past 24 hours after heavy rains lashed the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, and more than 13,000 people were forced to leave their homes, the regional civil defense authorities said. Among the victims, five were from the same family travelling by car in the capital Belo Horizonte metropolitan region Tuesday.

## New nasal spray effective against all Covid-19 variants

Cell cultures and animal studies have shown that TriSb92 - the new molecule - protects against coronavirus infection for at least eight hours even in cases of high exposure risk

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**London, Jan 12:** Finnish researchers have developed a novel

nasal spray that is effective against all variants of Covid-19 and can prevent infection upto 8 hours.

The nasal spray consists of a molecule, TriSb92, developed by researchers at the University of Helsinki, Finland, that can inactivate the coronavirus spike protein. "In animal models, nasally administered TriSb92 offered protection against infection in an exposure situation where all unprotected mice were infected," said Anna Makela, postdoctoral researcher at the varsity. The findings have not been peer reviewed yet.



The TriSb92 molecule is based on an entirely new technical so-

Will we choose democracy over autocracy, light over shadow, justice over injustice? I know where I stand. I will not yield. I will not flinch

**JOE BIDEN** | PRESIDENT, US

## TWIN PANDA CUBS AT TOKYO ZOO

Twin panda cubs made their first public appearance Wednesday before devoted fans in Tokyo but only briefly for now — just for three days — due to a spike in Covid-19 cases driven by the Omicron variant. The twins, male cub Xiao Xiao and its sister Lei Lei, were born at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo in June



## SAARC AGREEMENT

### Lanka to return Indian prisoners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo, Jan 12:** Sri Lanka will hand over two Indian prisoners, who have been serving life imprisonment in the island nation, to India Wednesday and Thursday under the SAARC prisoners exchange agreement, a senior prison official said here.

Prison Spokesman Chandana Ekanayake told PTI that the additional Secretary to the ministry of justice has informed the commissioner general of prisons to release the two Indian nationals. "They will be handed over to the Indian police officials at the Colombo international airport today (Wednesday) and tomorrow (Thursday)," he said without identifying the two Indians to protect their privacy.

One of the convicts serving life imprisonment has been in jail for over 12 years for possession and Import of narcotics and charged under the Poisons, Opium And Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Act, Ekanayake said. The second, charged under the Dangerous Drugs Act, is serving in a jail here over the last 6 years. The India-Sri Lanka bilateral agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons was signed in June 2010, paving the way for the transfer of prisoners to jails in their home country.

Sri Lanka is also negotiating a USD one billion loan from India to import goods from the country, the governor of the Central Bank Ajith Nivard Cabraal said Wednesday, amidst a shortage of almost all essential commodities.

### Argentina roasts in historic heat wave



REUTERS

**Buenos Aires, Jan 12:** Argentina is facing a historic heat wave with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees Celsius (104°F), making the country for a while the hottest place on the planet, straining power grids and forcing residents to seeking sanctuary in the shade.

With temperatures up around 45°C (113°F) in parts of the South American nation, hundreds of thousands of people were left without electricity when power grids failed in and around populous capital city Buenos Aires.

The temperatures in Argentina, where dry hot weather driven by the La Nina weather pattern is already hitting crops, meant that for several hours it was the hottest place on earth, taking over from parts of Australia that cooled during its night.

"We have to be very careful these days," said Buenos Aires city mayor Horacio Rodriguez Larreta. Meteorologist Lucas Berengua said that the heat wave was off the charts and could set records in the country.

"This is a heat wave of extraordinary characteristics, with extreme temperature values that will even be analysed after its completion, and it may generate some historical records for Argentina temperatures and persistence of heat," he said.

losing life or limb," said the group. African giant pouched rats are believed to be especially well-suited for land mine clearance because their small size lets them walk across mine fields without triggering the explosives.

In retirement in Cambodia's northwestern province of Siem Reap, Magawa was housed in his usual cage, and fed the same food — mostly fresh fruit and vegetables — that sustained him during his active career. To keep him trim, he was released for 20-30 minutes a day into a larger cage with facilities such as a sandbox and a running wheel. His death at 8 years of age was not unusual for the species.

## WORST EAST-WEST TENSIONS

# Russia sets out security demands at NATO meet

Russia has forced the West to the negotiating table by massing some 100,000 troops near the border with Ukraine, a former Soviet republic that aspires to join NATO



REUTERS

**Brussels, Jan 12:** Russia laid out its demands for security guarantees in Europe to NATO's 30 allies Wednesday but insisted they were not ultimatums following intense talks with the United States in Geneva that failed to break the deadlock.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg received Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko at allied headquarters to try to defuse the worst East-West tensions since the Cold War over Russia massing troops near its border with Ukraine.

Moscow has dismissed concerns expressed by the United States that it may be planning to invade its neighbour and Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said live-fire exercises on the Ukraine border on Tuesday were not linked to the

UKRAINE MUST NEVER BE ALLOWED TO JOIN NATO: RUSSIA

RUSSIA CANNOT DICTATE ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHER SOVEREIGN STATES: NATO

TALKS TO CONTINUE IN VIENNA THURSDAY AT OSCE

NATO talks. "We are not negotiating from a position of strength; there is not, and nor can there be, any place for ultimatums here," he said in Moscow as the talks were getting underway in Brussels.

But he said pan-European security was at a critical point and the West needed to respond to Russia's concerns about NATO activities in former communist countries it sees as its backyard.

NATO allies say the talks, the

highest-profile attempt at the alliance to turn a potential conflict over Ukraine into a political process, are taking place because of Russian aggression, not the other way around. "Let's be clear Russian actions have precipitated this crisis. We are committed to using diplomacy to de-escalate the situation," US envoy to NATO Julianne Smith told reporters Tuesday evening.

### 'DIALOGUE, NOT NEGOTIATION'

NATO diplomats say the Western alliance would consider it a success if Russia agreed to hold further talks. Allies are ready to negotiate with Moscow on increasing openness around military drills and to avoid accidental clashes that could spark conflict, as well as arms control regarding missiles in Europe.

But the NATO allies say that many of Russia's demands, laid out in two draft treaties in December, are unacceptable, including calls to scale back the alliance's activities to 1990's era levels and promising not to take in new members.

Bridling at NATO's expansion eastward into its old Soviet sphere of influence, the Kremlin sees the US-led alliance's deterrents and military modernisation as a threat.

Talks will continue this week in Vienna at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a broader body where Russia, the United States and Europeans are represented.

## MISSILE LAUNCHES

### US sanctions N Koreans, Russian

REUTERS

**Washington, Jan 12:** The United States Wednesday imposed sanctions on six North Koreans, one Russian and a Russian firm it said were responsible for procuring goods from Russia and China for North Korea's weapons programs, an action that follows a series of North Korean missile launches, including two since last week.

The US Treasury Department said the steps aimed to prevent the advancement of North Korea's weapons programs and impede its attempts to proliferate weapons technologies.

It said they followed six North

Korean ballistic missile launches since September 2021, each of which it said violated multiple UN Security Council Resolutions.

US Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson said the moves targeted North Korea's "continued use of overseas representatives to illegally procure goods for weapons."

North Korea's latest missile launches were "further evidence that it continues to advance prohibited programs despite the international community's calls for diplomacy and denuclearisation," Nelson said in a statement.

REUTERS

**London, Jan 12:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson offered his "heartfelt apologies" Wednesday for attending a "bring your own booze" gathering at his official residence during the country's first coronavirus lockdown as opponents said he must resign.

Johnson admitted for the first time that he had attended the party at 10 Downing Street May 20, 2020, when Covid-19 rules limited social gatherings to a bare minimum, and said he understood the anger the revelations had caused.

"I know the rage they feel with me over the government I lead when they think that in Downing



Street itself the rules are not being properly followed by the people who make the rules," an ashen-faced Johnson told parliament. "I went into that garden just after six on the 20th of May 2020 to thank groups of staff before going back into my office 25 minutes later to continue working," he said. "With hindsight, I should have sent everyone back inside."



APOPO's office in Cambodia posted condolences for the three dead and one wounded from the Cambodia Self Help Demining group. According to APOPO, Magawa detected more than

Bhutan has been negotiating with Beijing for almost four decades to settle their 477-km border

A issue for Bhutan is not just territorial integrity, but also concerns over the potential security implications for India, which is the Himalayan kingdom's main ally and economic partner

the locations of the new construction and recent satellite images taken by Capella Space said all six settlements appear to be in territory disputed by China and Bhutan - including a contested tract of roughly 110 square kilometres - with little in the way of resources or native population.

The construction suggests that China is bent on resolving its border claims by giving its ambitions concrete form, said the experts and one Indian defence source. China's foreign ministry said the construction is entirely for the improvement of the working and living conditions of the local people.

The villages also offer Beijing some strategic value, two of the experts say. The new construction is 9 to 27 km from the Doklam area at the junction of the borders of India, Bhutan and China, where Indian and Chinese troops were locked in standoff for more than two months in 2017.

## UK PM apologises for lockdown party

The party's over, prime minister. After months of deceit and deception, the pathetic spectacle of a man who has run out of road. His defence that he didn't realise he was at a party is so ridiculous that is actually offensive to the British public

KEIR STARMER | OPPOSITION LEADER

Anger has grown since ITV News reported Johnson and partner Carrie mingled with about 40 staff in the Downing Street garden after his Principal Private Secretary Martin Reynolds sent an email invitation asking attendees to "bring your own booze".

In 2020, the rat also won a gold medal from the Britain-based People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, considered the highest award for gallantry an animal can receive

100 land mines and other explosives during his five-year career before retiring last year.

"His contribution allows communities in Cambodia to live, work, and play without fear of

MAGAWA WAS BORN IN NOVEMBER 2013 IN TANZANIA, WHERE APOPO MAINTAINS ITS OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND TRAINING AND BREEDING CENTER. HE WAS SENT TO CAMBODIA IN 2016

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Phnom Penh, Jan 12:** A land mine-detecting rat in Cambodia who received a prestigious award for his life-saving duty has died in retirement, the charity for which he had worked has announced.

Magawa, an African giant pouched rat, passed away last weekend, said an announcement on the website of APOPO, a Belgium-headquartered non-profit group. The organisation trains rats and dogs to sniff out land mines and tuberculosis.

"All of us at APOPO are feeling the loss of Magawa and we are grateful for the incredible work

he's done," the announcement said.

The death of Magawa was announced a day after three mine removal experts working for another group were killed by an accidental explosion of an anti-tank mine in Cambodia's northern province of Preah Vihear. Almost three decades of civil war that ended in 1998 left Cambodia littered with land mines and other unexploded ordnance that continues to kill and maim.



of the day quote

We are excited to collaborate with Tech Mahindra to bring our global private wireless expertise to upgrade their offering and customer experience worldwide

**CHRIS JOHNSON** | HEAD OF GLOBAL ENTERPRISE BUSINESS, NOKIA

The cooperation with ABFRL has great potential to help improve the sustainability of the Indian textile industry. In our opinion, combining the strength of both public and private partners is a win-win scenario

**ASHISH CHATURVEDI** | DIRECTOR, GIZ INDIA

Despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic, EaseMyTrip has consistently recorded profitable results due to a sustainable and resilient business model

**NISHANT PITTI** | CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, EASEMYTRIP

SHORT TAKES

Govt holds CEL privatisation

**New Delhi:** The government has put on hold the privatisation of Central Electronics Ltd (CEL) after the employees union approached the court against the sale of the company to a little-known firm, a top official said Wednesday. Allegations of under-valuation in the Rs 210 crore highest bid made by the city-based Nandal Finance & Leasing are being examined, said Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), which is running the privatisation process.

Foxconn's plant restarts production

**Chennai:** Apple Inc supplier, Foxconn, restarted production at its plant in southern India Wednesday, a company official said, about three weeks after it was closed because of protests over workers falling sick. The company official, speaking to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said the factory reopened with one shift and 120 workers. The plant, in the town of Sriperumbudur near the Tamil Nadu state capital of Chennai, employs about 17,000 people but was closed Dec 18 after 250 workers fell sick with food poisoning, igniting protests.

IEPFA signs MoU with IGNOU

**New Delhi:** To propagate the message of Investor Education and Awareness among a large group of present and prospective stakeholders, the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the aegis of Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) through a virtual event here. The objective for signing the MoU is to achieve the mandate of Investor Education, Awareness and Protection by utilising the tele-lecturing facility of Gyan Darshan Channel.

IBM acquires Envizi

**San Francisco:** Tech major IBM has acquired Envizi, a leading data and analytics software provider for environmental performance management, for an undisclosed sum. Envizi's software automates the collection and consolidation of more than 500 data types and supports major sustainability reporting frameworks.



Startups will help India transition from an assembly economy, particularly in the digital world, to a knowledge-based economy. In this digital age, technology has removed boundaries and barriers

**PIYUSH GOYAL** | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

HIGHEST INFLATION IN US SINCE 1982

Prices paid by US consumer jumped 7% in December from a year earlier, the highest inflation rate since 1982 and the latest evidence that rising costs for food, gas, rent and other necessities are heightening the financial pressures on America's households



3RD MONTH IN A ROW

IIP growth remains subdued at 1.4% in Nov

In November 2021, the IIP stood at 128.5 points compared to 126.7 points in the same month in 2020. The index stood at 128.8 points in November 2019, as per the NSO data

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** India's industrial production growth remained subdued for the third straight month and expanded by 1.4 per cent in November, mainly due to the waning low base effect, while the mining sector showed good performance.

The manufacturing sector, which constitutes 77.63 per cent of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), grew 0.9 per cent in November, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) Wednesday.

The factory output recorded double-digit growth in the four months from May to August this fiscal. Then it slipped to 3.3 per cent in September this fiscal and recorded a growth of four per cent, mainly due to waning low base effect.

The IIP had contracted by 1.6 per cent in November 2020. During



April-November this year, the IIP grew 17.4 per cent against a 15.3 per cent contraction in the same period last year.

The data showed that industrial production recovered in September 2020 and surpassed the pre-pandemic level of September 2019. The IIP had grown by one per cent in September 2020.

Industrial production plunged 18.7 per cent in March last year following the Covid outbreak and remained in the negative zone till August 2020.

With the resumption of economic activities, factory output rose 1 per cent in September 2020 and 4.5 per cent in October 2020. In November 2020, it fell 1.6 per cent and then entered the positive territory with a 2.2 per cent growth in

MINING SECTOR OUTPUT ROSE 5% IN NOVEMBER

POWER GENERATION INCREASED 2.1%

PRODUCTION FROM MANUFACTURING SECTOR ROSE 0.9%

December 2020.

The IIP had recorded a contraction of 0.6 per cent and 3.2 per cent in January 2021 and February 2021, respectively. In March 2021, it grew 24.2 per cent.

For April 2021, the NSO held back the release of complete IIP data. In May 2021, the IIP rose 27.6 per cent, and in June, it grew 13.8 per cent. The factory output grew 11.5 per cent in July 2021 and 13 per cent in August.

WB retains growth at 8.3% in FY22

Growth forecast has been upgraded for 2022-23 and 2023-24 to 8.7 per cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The World Bank has retained India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal at 8.3 per cent as the recovery is yet to become broad-based.

As per the first advanced estimates of the national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) last week, the economy is projected to grow at 9.2 per cent in 2021-22, surpassing pre-COVID



level in actual terms, mainly on account of improved performance, especially in farm, mining and manufacturing sectors.

India's economy is expected to expand by 8.3 per cent in fiscal year 2021-22 (ending March 2022), unchanged from last June's forecast as the recovery is yet to become broad-based.

"The economy should benefit

Nod to imports of US pork, products

REUTERS

**Washington, Jan 12:** India has agreed to allow imports of US pork and pork products into India, removing a longstanding barrier to US agricultural trade, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said Monday.



India's agreement to allow US pork imports for the first time is great news for US producers and for Indian consumers, Tai said in a statement.

Vilsack said Washington was working to ensure the US pork industry could start shipping products to India as soon as possible. He said the deal marked the culmi-

nation of two decades of seeking market access for US pork to India.

In 2020, the United States was the world's third-largest pork producer and second-largest exporter, with global sales of pork and pork products valued at \$7.7 billion. In fiscal year 2021, the United States exported more than \$1.6 billion of agricultural products to India.

At a revived US-India Trade Policy Forum in New Delhi last November, India and the United States agreed to expand trade of some agricultural products, including US cherries, alfalfa and distiller dried grains as well as Indian mangoes, grapes, shrimp and water buffalo meat.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Joe Biden in Washington in September and both leaders agreed to expand trade ties to strengthen relations between the world's largest and richest democracies.

Govt will remain investor in telcos



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The present and future debt liabilities will continue to remain with telecom companies which have proposed to convert their interest dues into equity stake for the government, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said Wednesday.

"Government will remain an investor only. The companies will be run by the professionals. All the debt liabilities will remain responsibility of the companies. The companies have given us commitment," Vaishnaw told PTI in an interview.

VIL has proposed to allocate preferential shares to the government at Rs 10 per share, which according to analysts is at 58 per cent premium based on the share price at the relevant date of August 14, 2021.

If the plan goes through, the government will become the biggest shareholder in the company which is reeling under a debt burden of about Rs 1.95 lakh crore.

Asked if the liability of payment for upcoming spectrum auction will shift to the government, Vaishnaw said the companies will have the entire responsibility for the payment of radiowaves and there will be no burden on the Centre.

He said the government has just extended an helping hand as part of the telecom sector reform package to lower the burden on companies, save and create jobs as well as ensure healthy competition

Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (VIL), Tata Teleservices and Tata Teleservices Maharashtra have proposed to convert interest liabilities payable to the government into equity

in the industry.

"We will exit from the companies at an appropriate time. Government will not interfere in day-to-day operations of the company. They will continue to be professionally managed," Vaishnaw said.

The telecom ministry, in a statement, has also clarified that the three companies will not become public sector firms after the interest dues are converted into equity stake for the government.

Vaishnaw further said state-owned BSNL slipped into stress due to bad decisions taken by the previous government and it is now in a better shape.

"BSNL and MTNL are in very good shape now. They are in much better shape after we offered them relief package of about Rs 70,000 crore. We are working on providing further support to them," Vaishnaw said.

BSNL has sought Rs 40,000 crore from the government for setting up a 4G network and pay back short-term debt. The minister declined to comment on financial details of the support package for the PSUs.

Q3 RESULTS

Infosys Q3 profit surges 12%

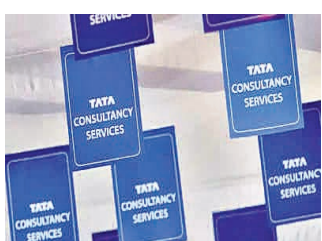
**New Delhi:** Infosys Ltd Wednesday reported nearly 12 per cent rise in December-quarter profit, on strong demand for its software services from global businesses



transforming their digital infrastructure. The Bengaluru-based company's consolidated net profit for the third quarter (Q3) climbed to Rs 5,809 crore (\$786.06 million), from Rs 5,197 crore a year earlier. Revenue from operations at the country's second biggest software services firm by revenue rose to Rs 31,867 crore. Further, Infosys raised the FY22 (2021-22) revenue growth outlook to 19.5-20 per cent from the previous guidance of 16.5-17.5 per cent.

TCS Q3 net profit rises 12.2%

**New Delhi:** Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Wednesday reported a 12.2 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 9,769 crore for the December 2021 quarter, and announced an Rs 18,000-crore buyback offer for its shareholders at Rs 4,500 per scrip. The country's largest software services firm had logged a net profit of Rs 8,701 crore in the year-to-date period. Revenue of the Mumbai-based firm grew 16.3 per cent in the quarter under review to Rs 48,885 crore from Rs 42,015 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal, TCS said in a regulatory filing.



Wipro Q3 net profit almost flat

**New Delhi:** IT services major Wipro Wednesday posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 2,969 crore for the December 2021 quarter, and said it has logged strong performance in revenues and order bookings. The net profit attributable to shareholders in the year-to-date period had stood at Rs 2,968 crore, according to a regulatory filing by Wipro. On a sequential basis, its net profit was up 1.3 per cent, it added. Its revenue from operations grew 29.6 per cent to Rs 20,313.6 crore, from Rs 15,670 crore in the quarter ended December 2020.



High NPAs, joblessness, inflation a worry in rural India

DELINQUENCY BY VALUE DETERIORATED BY 0.5 PER CENT FOR RURAL RETAIL CREDIT, 2.8 PER CENT FOR MICROFINANCE AND 0.2 PER CENT FOR RURAL COMMERCIAL BETWEEN JUNE 2019 AND JUNE 2021, THE REPORT SAID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 12:** Delinquency rates on rural loans have deteriorated in the two years to June 2021, with the microfinance books showing the maximum stress despite a reduction in loans outstanding, a credit information company said Wednesday.

The inaugural Rural Business Confidence Index (RBCI) prepared by Crif High Mark in association with industry lobby CII came at 63.9 per cent for October, and the positives included credit expansion, higher budget allocations for rural areas and survey partici-

pants having positive or neutral outlooks.

The concerns on higher Non Performing Assets (NPAs) emanated even as the overall MFI (Microfinance Industry) loans segment experienced a de-growth by 9 per cent to Rs 1.12 lakh crore at the end of FY21.

Rural areas, which support nearly 60 per cent of the population by some estimates, saw an increase in the average unemployment rate to 7.3 per cent in 2021 from 6.8 per cent in 2019, the report said.

Inflation measured by the consumer price index also surged to 5.9 per cent in the rural areas in



FY21 from 4.3 per cent in the year-to-date period, the report said.

"In India, two-thirds of the workforce live in rural areas, and the rural economy contributes to almost 46 per cent of our national income. Undoubtedly, it is the backbone of India's economic progress.

The Covid-19 epidemic has brought about a significant structural shift in the country and rural India displayed exemplary resilience during this phase," the credit information company's managing director and chief executive Navin Chandani said.

He said the index was developed

as a mechanism that can capture the performance of the rural economy and to help support strategic decision making.

The index also involves a survey of the industry lobby's members including both Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), and large businesses which operate in rural areas.

In the latest survey done in September and October, 59 per cent of the respondents said they expect an improvement in order books, 48 per cent were hopeful of an uptick in profits while 54 per cent were hopeful of a pick-up in credit delivery.



# Bumrah fifer sinks SA

**PACER’S IMPRESSIVE SPELL HELPS INDIA BOWL SOUTH AFRICA OUT FOR 210 GAINING A 13-RUN FIRST INNINGS LEAD BEFORE VIRAT, PUJARA NEGATE LATE OVERS ON DAY 2 EXTENDING THE VISITORS’ LEAD TO 70 RUNS IN THE SERIES-DECIDER**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

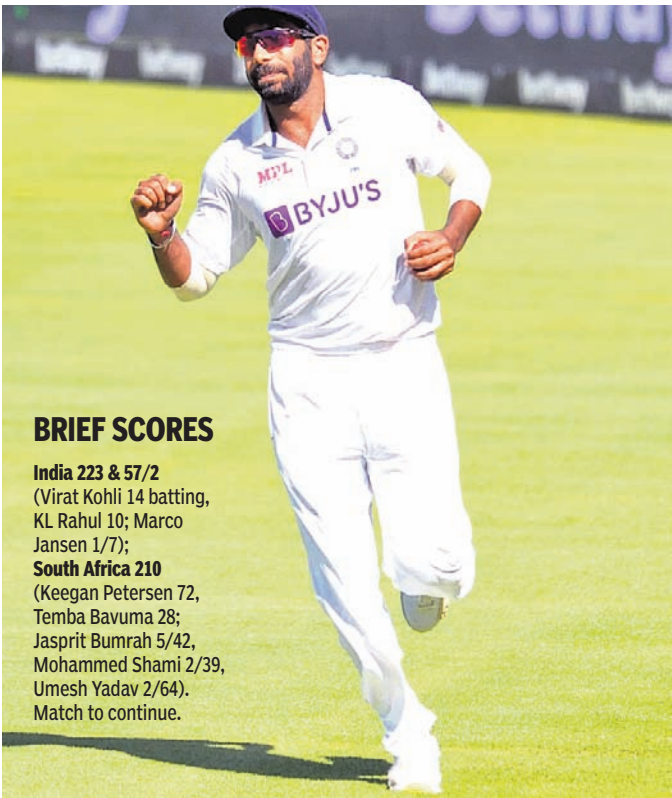
**Cape Town, Jan 12:** Jasprit Bumrah (5/42) shut his critics with one of his best five-wicket hauls in the traditional format as the Indian fast bowling unit gave the team slight edge over South Africa on an exhilarating second day of the third and final Test here Wednesday. Bumrah was at the heart of India’s swift and brutal counter-attack as he got his seventh five-wicket haul with fine complementary acts from Mohammed Shami (2/39) and Umesh Yadav (2/64) that helped them bundle out the Proteas for 210.

The lead of 13 that India managed was less about the quantum and more about the psychological advantage that they gained and despite losing Mayank Agarwal (7) and KL Rahul (10) cheaply, the visitors scored runs at a fair clip to reach 57/2 at stumps.

Skipper Virat Kohli (14 batting) and Cheteshwar Pujara (9 batting), with a cumulative experience of 194 Tests, have the responsibility of taking the team to a winning total.

And while statistics at times are of little or no relevance but Kohli wouldn’t be too unhappy to know that India have never lost a Test match in which his premier strike bowler has taken a five-wicket haul.

It was a day when Kohli’s captaincy acumen was worth praising as he made relevant bowling changes at the right time, juggled



## BRIEF SCORES

**India 223 & 57/2**  
(Virat Kohli 14 batting, KL Rahul 10; Marco Jansen 1/7);  
**South Africa 210**  
(Keegan Petersen 72, Temba Bavuma 28; Jasprit Bumrah 5/42, Mohammed Shami 2/39, Umesh Yadav 2/64).  
Match to continue.

with subtle field placing and also took his 100th catch in Test cricket.

But someone who would be really smiling at the end of the day is Bumrah, who had a forgettable game at the Wanderers and copped a fair amount of flak for bowling too short and not depending on his strengths.

There were analytics showing

how his strike-rate (wickets per deliveries) had doubled since a back injury but Wednesday, he showed that he is skipper Kohli’s real X-factor, the man who makes the difference between a good and a world-class side.

The delivery that got Aiden Markram was pitched just a shade outside off-stump and it seemed

to be going straight but suddenly jagged back embarrassing the South African opener, who had shouldered arms.

On the day, Bumrah slightly altered the length making it slightly fuller on the off-stump and the off-stump channel line. The length and bounce was such that batters seemed confused about whether it would bounce above stumps or come at the stumps.

One such delivery got South Africa’s best performer Keegan Petersen (72, 166b, 9x4) as it kicked up awkwardly from length but enough for the batter to have a jab at it and Pujara accepted the offering at second slip.

But credit should also go to Shami, who in the post lunch session, got two wickets in three balls to unsettle the Proteas after Petersen and Rassie van der Dussen (21) had added 67 for the fourth wicket.

If Umesh set up the session with a conventional outswinger that saw Van Der Dussen edging one to Kohli at second slip, Shami removed the dogged Temba Bavuma (28) and Kyle Verreynne (0) with two ideal Test match deliveries in the 56th over.

At stroke of tea, Bumrah settled his scores with Marco Jansen sending his off-stump for a walk. The best part of the session was skipper Kohli’s adjustment when he, at second slip, decided to stand a few steps ahead of the first slip after realising that the ball was not carrying in full.

# Saina, Prannoy, Sen cruise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Former champion Saina Nehwal, World Championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen and comeback man HS Prannoy registered contrasting wins to progress to the second round of the India Open here Wednesday.

Commonwealth Games silver medallists Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also made winning starts to their men’s doubles campaign.

Former World No.1 Saina moved to the second round after her opponent Czech Republic’s Tereza Svabikova suffered a back injury and retired mid-way while lagging 20-22, 0-1 in the opening round match.

Saina, who is seeded fourth, will meet compatriot Malvika Bansod, who defeated fellow Indian Samiya Imad Farooqui 21-18, 21-9 in another match.

On a comeback trail, Prannoy, a former world top 10 player, who had made it to the quarterfinals at the world championships, got the better of Spain’s Pablo Abian 21-14, 21-7. He will next face Mithun Manjunath, who eked out a hard-fought 21-16, 15-21, 21-10 victory over France’s Arnaud Merkle.

Third seed Sen, who claimed the world championships bronze on debut last month, thrashed Egypt’s Adham Hatem Elgamal 21-15, 21-7 to set up a face-off with Sweden’s Felix Burestedt.

World No.10 men’s pairing of Satwik and Chirag, seeded second, trounced fellow Indian combination of Chirag Arora and Ravi 21-14, 21-10 to also advance to the second round of the BWF



Super 500 tournament at the KD Jadhav Indoor hall.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy, seeded second, also entered the second round after prevailing 21-7, 19-21, 21-13 over compatriots Janani Ananthakumar and Divya R.Balasubramanian in women’s doubles.

Kashyap will square off against Keyura Mopati, who has been promoted from reserve. Mopati beat fellow Indian Smit Toshniwal 15-21, 21-19, 21-8. Rahul will be pitted against Ireland’s Nhat Nguyen, who knocked out Ajay Jayaram 19-21, 21-7, 21-14 in another men’s singles contest.

## Tasnim 1st Indian to be U-19 girls’ No.1

**New Delhi:** Young shuttler Tasnim Mir on Wednesday became the first Indian to grab the World No.1 ranking in the U-19 girls singles in the latest BWF junior rankings. The 16-year-old from Gujarat was rewarded for last year’s stellar run when she had secured titles in three junior international tournaments to jump three places to grab the top position in the junior world rankings. Tasnim is currently ranked a lowly 602 in the women’s singles. Tasnim’s feat has never been achieved by any Indian girl, including two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and London bronze winner Saina Nehwal.

# NOT ISOLATING POST COVID AN ERROR: DJOKO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Jan 12:** Novak Djokovic knew he’d tested positive for COVID-19 when he attended a newspaper interview and photo shoot in Serbia last month, saying Wednesday he made an “error of judgment” and should have immediately gone into isolation.

In a statement posted to his social media accounts, the tennis star also blamed “human error” by his support team for failing to declare that he had traveled in the two-week period before entering Australia.

Upon arrival, his visa was revoked and then later reinstated in an ongoing saga over whether he should be allowed into the country despite not being vaccinated against COVID-19. The back and forth has provoked outrage in Australia and overshadowed the lead-up to the Australian Open.

Djokovic acknowledged the lapses when he sought to clarify what he called “continuing misinformation” about his movements after he became infected last month — though he did not say spell out what inaccuracies he was referring to.

The statement was posted while the men’s tennis No.1 was in Rod Laver Arena holding a practice session, his third on the tournament’s main court since being released from four nights in immigration detention.

The nine-time and defending Australian Open champion remains in limbo before the year’s first tennis major starts next Monday. The stakes are particularly high

since he is seeking a men’s record 21st Grand Slam singles title.

He won a legal battle on procedural grounds Monday that allowed him to stay in the country, but he still faces the prospect of deportation because his exemption from COVID-19 vaccination rules has been questioned. That decision is entirely at the discretion of Australia’s immigration minister if deemed to be in the public interest for health and safety reasons.

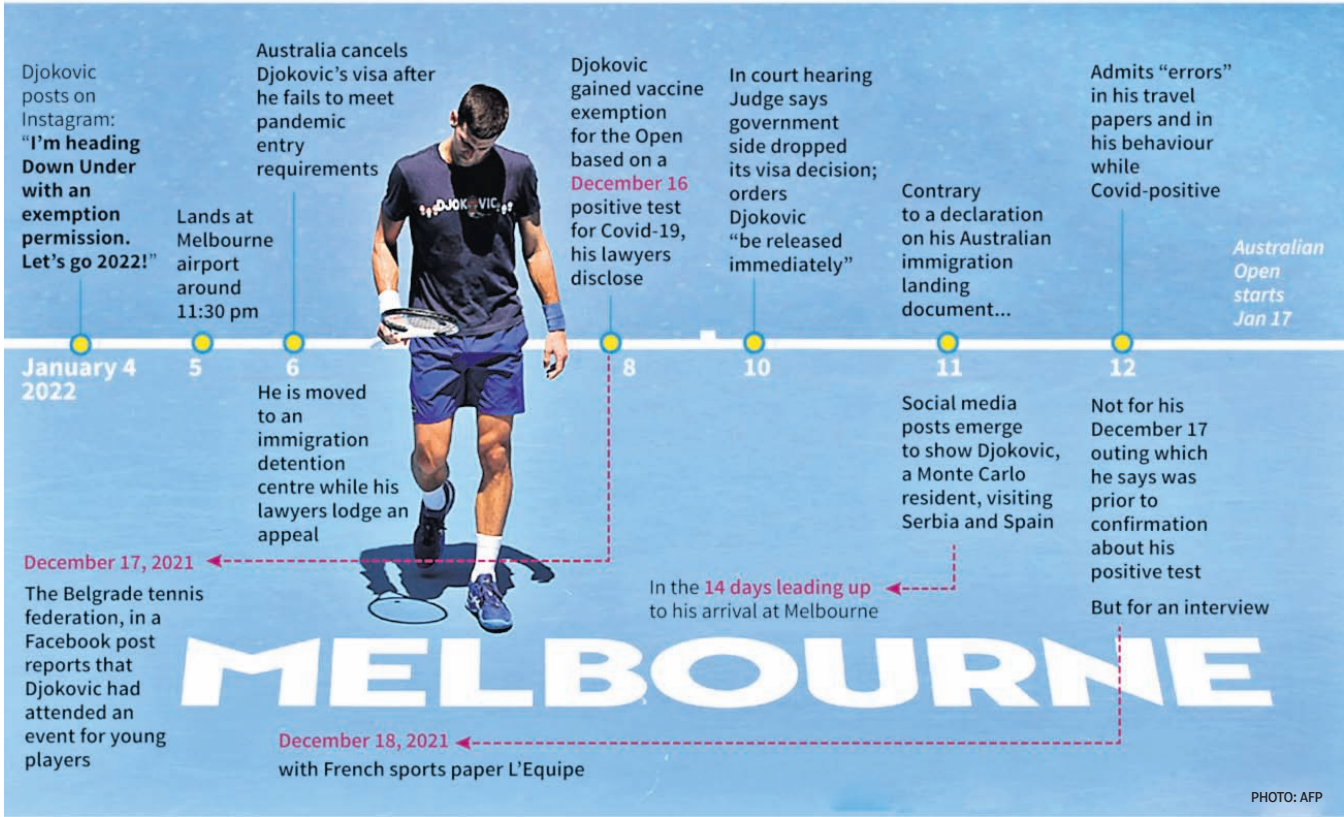
Deportation could result in sanctions ranging up to a three-year ban from entering Australia, a daunting prospect for a player who has won almost half of his 20 Grand Slam singles titles here.

Court documents detailing Djokovic’s positive test sparked speculation over the star player’s attendance at events in his native Serbia last month. Further questions also were raised about errors on his immigration form that could potentially result in the cancellation of his visa.

On the form, Djokovic said he had not traveled in the 14 days before his flight to Australia, despite being seen in Spain and Serbia in that period. In his statement, Djokovic described recent commentary as “hurtful” and said he wanted to address it in the interest of “alleviating broader concern in the community about my presence in Australia.”

The 34-year-old Serb said he’d taken rapid tests that were negative and he was asymptomatic before he received his positive result from a PCR test he undertook out of an “abundance of caution” after attending a basketball game

## DJOKOVIC’S AUSTRALIA ROW TIMELINE



in Belgrade December 14. He received the result late December 17, he said, and scrapped all his commitments except a long-standing interview with L'Equipe newspaper.

"I felt obliged to go ahead. But did ensure I socially distanced and wore a mask except when my

photograph was being taken," Djokovic said. "While I went home after the interview to isolate for the required period, on reflection, this was an error of judgment."

Serbia requires those who are infected with COVID-19 to isolate for eight days, but they can get out early if they test negative dur-

ing that period.

Djokovic addressed the Australian travel declaration by saying it was submitted by his support team and "my agent sincerely apologizes for the administrative mistake in ticking the incorrect box."

"This was a human error and

certainly not deliberate," he wrote. "My team has provided additional information to the Australian Government to clarify this matter."

The decision could take a while — but there is time pressure since the draw to determine brackets for the Australian Open is set to take place Thursday.



## QBR KICKED OFF IN INDIA



British High Commissioner to India, Alex Elis hands over the Queens Baton for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games to Olympic Silver medallist wrestler Ravi Dahiya at the Dhyani Chand National Stadium in New Delhi, Wednesday. The QBR (Queen's Baton Relay) will next be held in Bangalore (Jan 14) and Bhubaneswar (Jan 15). The baton carries a message from Queen Elizabeth II of the UK.

# OFC lose to table toppers KBFC

POST NEWS NETWORK & ISL

**Goa, Jan 12:** It was a case of yet another night ending with a new leader atop the Indian Super League (ISL) standings. Kerala Blasters FC (KBFC) romped home to a comfortable 2-0 victory over Odisha FC (OFC) at the Tilak Maidan Stadium in Vasco Wednesday.

Nishu Kumar (28th) and Harmanjot Khabra (40th) netted first-half goals to keep the Kerala juggernaut rolling. Kerala now have 20 points from 11 games while Odisha, who remain in eighth place, have 13 in their kitty from 10 matches.

Kerala looked the far better side from the off, stringing together a series of passes in the sixth minute to show early intent. Odisha got a chance to take the lead in the 26th minute when against the run of play Javi Hernandez forced Prabhukhan Gill into a good save from a snapshot.

Two minutes later, Kerala nosed



Kerala Blasters players rejoice after a goal against Odisha FC, Wednesday

ahead. It was a piece of individual brilliance from Nishu who sent a curling effort into the top right corner from just outside the box after Adrian

Luna set him up beautifully.

Kerala doubled their lead five minutes from halftime break, Luna involved again as he swung

## KAMALJIT TESTS COVID POSITIVE

**Vasco:** Odisha FC's first-choice goalkeeper Kamaljit Singh tested positive for COVID-19 moments before the team's match against Kerala Blasters on Wednesday in another setback to the ISL's bio-secure bubble here. "Kamaljit has tested positive but the match is on as per schedule as the rest of the players have tested negative in the team. We have our reserve goalkeeper (Arshdeep Singh) ready," sources close to the development told PTI here. He further said Kamaljit had developed symptoms and was immediately isolated.

in a delectable corner for Khabra to head in.

Odisha tried to up the ante in the second half but Gill was in top form as he pulled off a brilliant save to deny Jonathas Cristian after the hour-mark.