



CHALLENGING ROLE

Deepika Padukone says she turned inwards for inspiration to play a vulnerable character in noir drama 'Gehraiyaan'

LEISURE P2



HEARTBREAKING TRAGEDY

A family of four Indians has died from exposure to cold weather near the Canada-US border

INTERNATIONAL P10



SINDHU IN SEMIFINALS

PV Sindhu battles past Thailand's Supanida Katething for a semifinal berth in the Syed Modi Int'l badminton event

SPORTS P12

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2 officials hurt in attack by Union minister Tudu

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 21: Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti and Tribal Affairs, Bishweswar Tudu allegedly thrashed two officials after calling them to the party office. The two were critically injured in the attack and admitted to

PRM Medical College and Hospital here. One of them has got his hand broken in the attack. The two officials lodged a complaint with the District Collector in this regard Friday.

District Planning Board Deputy Director Ashwini Mallik and Assistant Director Debashis Mohapatra reached

the office for a review meeting in Baripada. It was alleged that during discussion, the minister flew into a rage and attacked Debashis with a chair. As Ashwini opposed, the minister also attacked him. Debashis has got his left hand fractured in the attack.

It was alleged that the minister first

reprimanded the officials for violation of protocols. Meanwhile, Tudu has denied attacking the officials.

Earlier, OAS officers in Mayurbhanj district had accused Tudu of making disrespectful remarks about them. The officers had then even worn black badges and organised silent protests.

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11 OAS officers promoted to IAS

Bhubaneswar: Eleven officers of the Odisha Administrative Service have been promoted to IAS cadre. The Department of Personnel and Training under Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has issued a notification in this regard, Friday. The promoted officers are—Susamarani Devi, Dilip Routrai, Sudhakar Burgi, Dr Uddhaba Chandra Majhi, Jyoti Kumar Lakra, Indramani Tripathy, Subrata Satapathy, Trilochan Pradhan, Alok Kumar Kar, Susanta Kumar Dash and Kamal Lochan Mishra. "In exercise of the powers conferred by....., the President is pleased to appoint these members of the state civil service of Odisha to IAS against the vacancies determined by the government of India," read the notification.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Of course, there should be only one flame! In fact, Raj Ghat's flame should also be merged with this!

FLAME WITH FLAME



Air Marshal BR Krishna, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, places a wreath at India Gate, during a ceremony to merge Amar Jawan Jyoti flame with the flame at National War Memorial in New Delhi, Friday. The Amar Jawan Jyoti flame at India Gate was put out after burning for 50 years

Naveen most popular CM: India Today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Once again Naveen Patnaik has emerged as the most popular Chief Minister of India. This was revealed from a Mood of the Nation (MOTN) survey conducted by India Today.

As per the survey, Patnaik has been voted as the most popular CM in home state with 71 per cent votes, while his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee secured the second position with 69.9 per cent votes. Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin is at third place with 67.5 per cent votes. Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray was ranked the 4th best CM in home state with 61.8 per cent votes followed by Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan (61.1 per cent) and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal with 57.9 per cent votes. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma has been placed at 7th position with 56.6 per cent votes



and Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel is at 8th place with 51.4 per cent votes, says the survey.

According to the survey, 58 per cent respondents said they were satisfied with Narendra Modi's performance as PM while 52.5 per cent wanted to see him as the next PM.

Earlier, Patnaik was ranked as the best performing Chief Minister at the state level in India Today Group-Karvy Insights Mood of the Nation survey conducted in January 2021.

COVID DATA LEAKED

Cyber-criminals have allegedly stolen data of thousands of people in India, including health workers, from a government server, that has even been indexed in Google search

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 21: Personal data of thousands of people in India has been leaked from a government server which includes their name, mobile number, address and Covid-19 test result, and this information can be accessed through online search.

The leaked data has been put on sale on the Raid Forums website where a cyber criminal claims to have personal data of over 20,000 people. The data put on the Raid Forums shows the name, age, gender, mobile phone number, address, date and result of the Covid-19 test report of these people.

Cyber Security researcher Rajshekhar Rajaharia also tweeted that personally identifiable information (PII) including name and Covid-19 results are made public through a content delivery network (CDN).

The same documents are also available freely on Google search as "List of Beneficiaries Enrolled for Covid Vaccine" with keywords like RT-PCR results.



FLIP SIDE OF DIGITISATION

The government has heavily relied on digital technologies in terms of controlling and creating awareness about the Covid-19 pandemic as also its ambitious vaccination programme

Several government departments mandate people to use the Aarogya Setu app for Covid-19 related services, info

The sample document shared on the Raid Forums website shows that the leaked data was meant for upload on Co-WIN portal

The health ministry and security researchers had denied the breach of Covid-19 vaccination data of 150 million Indians, after news of the hack spread online

Data sold in the dark web is often exploited by cyber criminals and fraudsters for various kinds of frauds

No breach, says ministry

The Union health ministry Friday asserted that no data has leaked from Co-WIN portal and the information of people is safe and secure as this digital platform does not collect either address of a person or RT-PCR results.

his tweet. Rajaharia in a follow-up tweet January 20 said that he is not reporting any vulnerability in this incidence but cautioning the people to remain alert from fraud calls, offers related to Covid-19 and other things that they may get as their data is being sold in the dark web.

Priyanka names herself CM face for UP

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 21: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Friday virtually pitched herself as the party's face in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections but did not confirm whether she would

contest the polls or not.

"Do you see any other face from the Congress party," she said when asked who would be the party's chief ministerial face in UP polls. "You are seeing my face everywhere," the Congress leader added while addressing a press conference

to release the party's 'youth manifesto' along with her brother and former president Rahul Gandhi. Asked whether she would herself contest the polls, Priyanka said, "We have not yet decided." She said it would be known once that is decided.

MORE P7

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	59037.18	↓ 427.44
NIFTY	17617.20	↓ 139.80
DOLLAR	74.67	↓ ₹0.10
EURO	84.42	↓ ₹0.14
GOLD	₹48,389	↑ ₹9
SILVER	₹65,044	↓ ₹335

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	29.0°C	28.2°C
TEMP MIN	16.8°C	16.4°C
Humidity	71%	73%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

Crashed WW II aircraft found in India

Hundreds of US military planes went missing around the theatre of operations in India, China and Myanmar during the war

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New Delhi, Jan 21: A missing World War II plane has been identified in India's remote Himalayas nearly 80 years after it crashed with no survivors, following a treacherous search that led to the deaths of three guides.

The C-46 transport aircraft was carrying 13 people from Kunming in southern China when it disappeared in stormy weather over a mountainous stretch of Arunachal Pradesh in the first week of 1945.

"This aircraft was never heard from again. It simply disappeared," said Clayton Kuhles, a US adventurer who led the mission after a request from the



son of one of those on board the doomed flight. The expedition took months and saw Kuhles and a team of guides from the local Lisu ethnic group ford chest-deep rivers and camp in freezing temperatures at high altitudes.

Three guides died of hypothermia

at an initial stage of the project while camped out during a September snowstorm. But the team finally stumbled upon the plane on a snow-clad mountain top last month, where they were able to identify the wreckage by the tail number.

There were no human remains in what was left of the craft.

Kuhles was tasked with conducting the search by Bill Scherer, whose officer father was aboard the plane when it crashed.

"All I can say is that I am overjoyed, just knowing where he is. It is sad but joyous," Scherer told AFP by email from New York.

"I grew up without a father. All I can think of is my poor mother, getting a telegram and finding out her husband is missing and she is left with me, a 13-month-old baby boy."

Hundreds of US military planes went missing around the theatre of operations in India, China and Myanmar during the World War II.

While hostile fire from Japanese forces did account for some aircraft losses, Kuhles said the majority are believed to have been brought down by ice damage, hurricane-force winds and other severe weather conditions.

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NEXT 007: IDRIS ELBA STILL IN CONTENTION

Hollywood star Idris Elba is still in contention to be the next James Bond. Having long been touted to be the first black 007, the Luther actor is confirmed to be part of the conversation for the new iteration of the famous British spy.

NICOLE KIDMAN'S DAUGHTER DOESN'T WANT TO CAST HER

Nicole Kidman's daughter loves making her own movies - but she doesn't want her mom to appear in them. The Oscar-winning star revealed her teenage child has been making her own amateur movies since she was eight years old, but the youngster doesn't want to involve her in her projects.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you have a sportsman spirit, today will be a very bright day for you. You should make the best of it as something unexpected may turn out to be in your favour. Ganesh says you are sensible and know exactly how to balance work and leisure.

TAURUS
This day, you're liable to act very harsh and assertive towards your subordinates. You will insist that they follow your orders and do exactly as you say. Your rough handling will not go down well with your workers, or colleagues. Be sure that you are going to suffer and pay for that in the long run. Ganesh urges you to be more open and amicable.

GEMINI
You will be caught up in your daily routine so much that you will begin to think of ways to break free and do something new for a change. You need to spend more time with your family members and children to unwind. The evening will see you attending a party or a dinner with your friends, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, there is likely to be a twist in your tale. Something is going to happen that is likely to make your life turn a corner. It may be a major breakthrough or a seemingly innocuous accident, but your life is likely to change significantly.

LEO
Falling into a routine can be dangerous if it traps you in a rut. So, bear this in mind and take a break from the usual, says Ganesh. A little change will go a long way in helping you recharge your batteries. Your children's achievements will make you proud, even as afternoon will bring glad tidings on the financial front.

VIRGO
Ganesh predicts that family matters will occupy most of your attention today. Your power of persuasion and your towering persona may help you get pending work done. Emotional issues may demand your attention as well, and you will handle them with practised ease.

LIBRA
You will spin out a plan on a daily basis and prefer to go with the flow, predicts Ganesh. The afternoon may see your peers giving you some bit of unnecessary tension due to approaching deadlines. In the evening, you may consider spending some time meditating to attain peace of mind.

SCORPIO
You will tackle work and commitments with a renewed zeal today, says Ganesh. Your enthusiasm will catch on at the workplace, contagious and inspiring as it is. On the career front, things will look up later in the day and opportunities will shower a plenty. Take a break when the stress begins to pile and indulge in some leisure activity of your liking.

SAGITTARIUS
Your colleagues will enjoy your flexible and positive attitude at work today, feels Ganesh. Polish your social skills and your smile, because today afternoon might turn out to be a carnival of people. Your evening may be more laid-back as you will find breathing space to relax with your loved ones.

CAPRICORN
You may wobble under the burgeoning work pressure and may have to endure tremendous stress to meet deadlines and achieve set targets. But the hellish situation will fail to affect your state of mind as well as your ability to make sensible decisions, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You take inspiration from Hercules today! Your endurance will see you through adversities, asserts Ganesh. Despite this, your playful bantering will cheer your colleagues. You even manage to please your beloved, and that speaks volumes about you!

PISCES
Beating deadlines, with whatever is handy, is what you will be focusing on today. No post-lunch siesta for you. The later part of the day, relaxing with your sweetheart, ought to make up for all the running around you had to do earlier, says Ganesh.

Rock icon Meat Loaf dies at 74

Los Angeles: Rock icon Meat Loaf, the singer whose *Bat Out Of Hell* album is one of the best-selling of all time, has died at the age of 74. The news was confirmed on the star's Facebook page by his family, reports *bbc.com*.

"Our hearts are broken to announce that the incomparable Meat Loaf passed away tonight with his wife Deborah by his side," a message read.

The star sold 100 million albums worldwide and also appeared in movies like *Fight Club*, the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Wayne's World*. "Daughters Pearl and Amanda and close friends have been with him throughout the last 24 hours," his family continued.

The Dallas-born singer, born Marvin Lee Aday but also known as Michael, was best known for his *Bat Out Of Hell* trilogy, which sold millions of albums worldwide.

He released a string of other albums in the late 1970s and 1980s, most notably *Dead Ringer* and *Midnight at the Lost and Found*.



Rhea shares SSR's gym video on his birth anniv

Mumbai: On late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's 36th birth anniversary Friday, actress and his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty shared a throwback video saying that she misses him.

Rhea posted a boomerang video on Instagram, where the two are seen having fun in the gym. The unseen video featured the track *Wish You Were Here* by Pink Floyd.

She wrote alongside the clip: "Miss you so much". It currently has 94.7k likes on the platform. It was in 2020, when Rhea made headlines after she was accused by Sushant Singh Rajput's family of abetment to suicide and also siphoning off funds from

the late actor. She was also named in a Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) charge sheet along with her brother Shweta in a drug-related probe into Sushant's death.

The 29-year-old actress was arrested and spent a month in Mumbai's Byculla jail in September 2020.

On the work front, Rhea was last seen in the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Chehre*, which released last year.



New web series to binge watch this weekend

For cinephiles, nothing can be more entertaining than the idea of watching a binge-worthy series on a lazy day. As the winter is yet to remain for some time now and also amid the looming threat of a pandemic, the best bet for a fun-filled weekend is being a couch potato. Here is a compilation of a few web series, slated to release this week that would be absolute dose of entertainment for the viewers.

Dhanwanthary and Priyanshu Painyuli, among others.

Ozark Season 4
The much-anticipated fourth edition of Netflix

original *Ozark* is also included in the list of releases for the week. The new season will reportedly consist of 14 new episodes. As the last season of the thriller drama left the audience with a lot of questions, it would be interesting to see how the new season unfolds. The series stars Jason Bateman, Laura Linney, Sofia Hublitz and Skylar Gaertner. The series started streaming January 21.

Munich - The edge of war
Adolf Hitler is preparing to invade Neville Chamberlain's government des-

perately seeks a peaceful solution. With the pressure building, Hugh Legat, British civil servant, and

Paul von Hartmann, German diplomat, travel to Munich for the emergency Conference. As negotiations begin, the two old friends find themselves at the centre of a web of political subterfuge and very real danger. With the whole world watching, can war be averted and, if so, at what cost?

Bhaukaal 2
Mohit Raina donned the cap of a fearless cop who was out to dismantle the nexus of crime and conspiracies. The second season of the show, which is based on real-life events, has started streaming January 20 and the trailer has already been loved by the audience. The show also stars Bidita Beg, Siddhant Kapoor, Pradeep Nagar and Rashmi Rajput, among others.

Unpaused Naya Safar
The new Amazon Prime series *Unpaused Naya Safar* is a collection of different stories around positivity, fresh beginnings and optimism. The four stories weaved together are - Teen Tigada, War Room, Gond Ke Laddu, The Couple and Vaikunth. The series released January 21 stars Saqib Saleem, Neena Kulkarni, Shreya

When Deepika turned inwards for inspiration



Mumbai: Actress Deepika Padukone says she dug deep to play a vulnerable character in *Gehraiyaan*, a noir relationship drama. She admits that finding her footing initially wasn't easy as the role required her to be "emotionally naked".

"To be able to portray that on screen, the emotions had to come from a deep place. I had to dig deep and revisit places that weren't pleasant," says Padukone, who turned inwards for inspiration. "I had to revisit experiences from my own life, as well as my experience of dealing with mental health issues. All of that helped me play this character that needed to be raw, naked and vulnerable."

The Amazon Prime Video offering, also starring Siddhant Chaturvedi, Ananya Panday and Dhairya Karwa, marks Shakun Batra's first collaboration with Padukone. The director notes that her emotional transparency enhanced her act. "The hunger she had for this role surprised me. We spoke about her anxiety, her experiences in different relationships and how we can make that a part of the story. I was trying to draw her real self into the character," said Batra.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

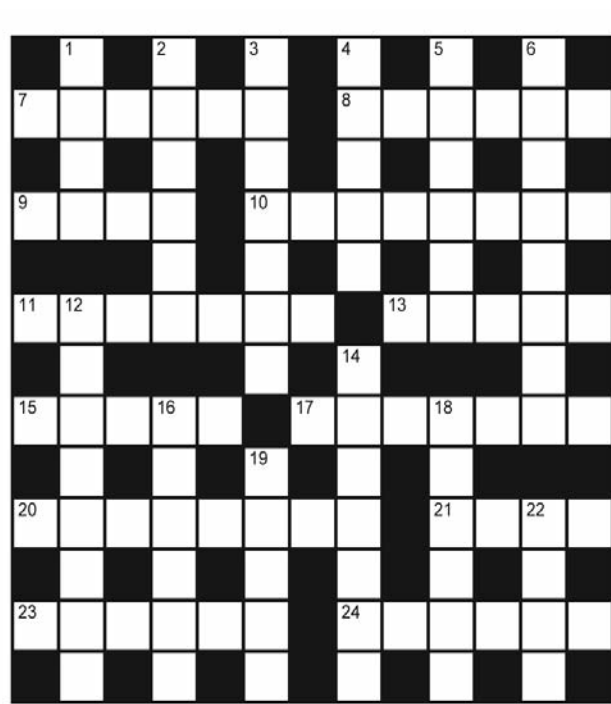


BREVITY



FUN post

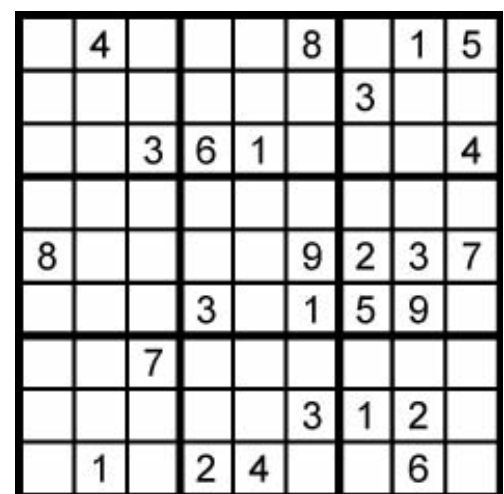
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Electrician on a movie set
 - 8 Swampy
 - 9 Genuine
 - 10 A single distinct event
 - 11 Pasta order (2,5)
 - 13 Not on deck
 - 15 Picture
 - 17 Wave on the beach
 - 20 Cruel
 - 21 Strong current of air
 - 23 Truffle, e.g.
 - 24 Communal Native American village
 - 3 Entertainer
 - 4 Impact sound
 - 5 Headgear for a horse
 - 6 Tibia
 - 12 Aglow
 - 14 Bump from the schedule (3-4)
 - 16 Grievance
 - 18 Fisherman
 - 19 Cowboy rope
 - 22 Shopper stopper
- Down
- 1 Carnival
 - 2 Lacking vitality

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



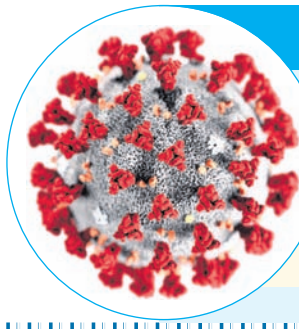
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



BIRTH ANNIV PREP

Netaji Birthplace Museum in Cuttack decorated with colourful lights ahead of his birth anniversary, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	34,38,83,914	27,52,08,608	55,95,610
India	3,85,66,027	3,60,58,806	4,88,396
Odisha	11,87,295	10,99,423	8,507

Cyber fraud: Cop's wife duped of ₹50K

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Cyber fraudsters have reportedly siphoned off around Rs 50,000 from the bank account of a police official's wife in Bhadrak on the pretext of credit card activation.

The official who works as the Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of police (computer) was identified as Bijay Kumar Bahali who is deployed at the State Crime Records Bureau here. Bahali lodged a complaint in this regard with the cyber cell at the DCP's office here Friday.

According to sources, Bahali's wife recently received a phone call from a bank staffer who persuaded her to avail a credit card offered by the bank. Though she refused initially later she agreed as the banker convinced her about the benefits of carrying a credit card. They include benefits health insurance coverage for the card holder apart from the credit facility.

After a few days, she again received a call allegedly from a bank staff who told her that if she did not activate her card immediately it would become invalid. Later, unknown people again called her and asked her to share the OTP sent to her mobile number to complete the activation. She shared the OTP thinking that the commen were actually staffers of the nationalized bank as they revealed all of her confidential details like name, date of birth, among others.

Subsequently, she received a message regarding the withdrawal of Rs 49,266 from her credit card account.

Panchayat polls: Over 2.29L nominations filed

CANDIDATES CAN WITHDRAW NOMINATIONS TILL JANUARY 25; THE FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE SAME DAY



BJP candidates on their way to file nominations in Cuttack

OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: At least 2.29 lakh nomination papers have been filed by candidates for elections to various posts in the upcoming three-tier panchayat election in Odisha.

The nomination filing process which began January 17 ended January 21. Scrutiny of the nomination papers will be done January 22. According to the officials in the State Election Commission

(SEC) office, as many as 1,62,297 nominations have been filed for the posts of ward member while 34,613 nominations have been filed for sarpanch posts.

Similarly, candidates have submitted 28,153 nomination papers for elections to panchayat samiti member and 3,999 for Zilla Parishad member posts.

The highest number of nomination papers has been filed for the rural poll on the last day of the nomination filing. 65,828 papers

NOMINATIONS SUBMITTED

Posts	Number
Ward members	1,62,297
Sarpanchs	34,613
Panchayat samiti members	28,153
Zilla Parishads	3,999

Friday were filed for ward member posts, 14,074 for sarpanch posts, 12,512 for panchayat samiti member posts and 2,191 for Zilla Parishad member posts, the officials said.

The election was announced for the posts of 91,913 ward members, 6,794 sarpanchs, 6,793 panchayat samiti members and 853 Zilla Parishad members.

As per schedule, candidates can withdraw their nominations till January 25 and the final list of candidates will be published January 25.

The voting will be held in five phases February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24 with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols. Counting of votes and declaration of results will be done at the block level February 26, 27 and 28.



BUSY SCHEDULE



BJD and Congress candidates filing nominations for the panchayat elections in the office of Bhubaneswar Sub-Collector, Friday

OP PHOTOS

Dense fog cripples flight ops in City



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Flight operations at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here were affected Friday due to dense fog bringing down visibility level below 100 metres, a senior Airports Authority of India (AAI) official said.

A New Delhi-Bhubaneswar IndiGo flight was diverted to Raipur because of low visibility, BPIA Director P R Beuria said, adding that this was the first instance of a flight being diverted to another destination due to fog in this winter.

The flight, scheduled to arrive here at 6.30 am, reached BPIA at 9.30 am. Normalcy returned to

flight operations after the fog cleared, he said.

Thick fog had covered several parts of the state capital since early morning. The Regional Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar, said the visibility had dropped to below 100 metres in several places due to very dense fog.

It tweeted photographs of dense fog on Jaydev Vihar flyover, Niladri Vihar and Patia, among several places where motorists were seen driving with headlights of their vehicles on. Apart from flight operations, vehicular traffic was also affected due to fog.

The weatherman forecast moderate rainfall, under the influence of western disturbance, from Friday till January 25.

Upper age bar for ASO posts up

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 21: The Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) Friday issued an amended notification for the recruitment of 796 Assistant Section Officers (ASOs), days after the state government raised the upper age limit of candidates for various posts under its jurisdiction to 38 years.

As per the amended notification, candidates within the age group of 21-38 can apply for the ASO posts under the home department. Earlier, the upper age limit for the candidates was 32 years.

"The upper age limit for the ASO posts has been raised as per the decision of the state government. An amended notification to this effect was issued by the commission. However, all other aspects of the earlier notification remain valid," said OPSC secretary Ashok Kumar Das.

The OPSC had issued a notification for the recruitment of 796 ASOs January 1. Eligible candidates were advised to apply for the posts with in January 20 and February 19. The recruitment test would be conducted in 33 zones across the state.

Of the total 796 ASO posts, 62 have been reserved for SEBC candidates, 109 for SC candidates and 178 for ST candidates. A total



AS PER THE AMENDED NOTIFICATION, CANDIDATES WITHIN THE AGE GROUP OF 21-38 CAN NOW APPLY FOR THE ASO POSTS. EARLIER, THE UPPER AGE LIMIT WAS 32 YEARS

THE STATE GOVERNMENT RAISED THE UPPER AGE LIMIT FOR VARIOUS POSTS AS SEVERAL CANDIDATES MISSED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOVT JOBS DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

of 447 posts have been left unreserved while women candidates would be recruited for 265 posts, sources said.

It is worth mentioning here that the state government has raised the upper age limit for recruitments as several candidates missed the opportunity for competitive examinations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The relaxation of the upper age limits will be initially applicable for three years starting 2021.

R-Day guest list out

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: The state government Friday released the list of guests who will hoist the Tricolour at different designated places in the state on the occasion of the Republic Day.

While the state-level celebration will be held in Bhubaneswar with the unfurling of the National Flag, the occasion will be observed in all district headquarters and Rourkela.

Minister Niranjan Pujari will hoist the flag in Sambalpur while Bikram Keshari Arukha will attend the celebration in Cuttack. Minister Prafulla Kumar Malik would be the guest in Nayagarh, Ranendra Pratap Swain in Mayurbhanj, Padmanabh Behera in Bargarh and Pratap Jena in Angul.

Similarly, minister Arun Kumar Sahoo will attend the Republic Day celebration in Subarnapur; Sudam Marndi in Keonjhar; Susanta Singh in Sundargarh, Naba Kishore Das in Nuapada, Tukuni Sahu in Ganjam, Jagannath Saraka in Malkangiri, Dibya Shankar Mishra in Rayagada, Ashok Chandra Panda in Balasore, Samir Ranjan Dash in Kendrapara, Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi in Jagatsinghpur, Premananda Nayak in Kandhamal, Raghunandan Das in Puri, Padmini Dian in Nabarangpur and Tusharkanti Behera in Koraput.

While the state-level Republic Day celebration will be held in Bhubaneswar with the unfurling of the National Flag, the occasion will be observed in all district headquarters and Rourkela city

Besides, the RDCs of Southern, Northern and Central divisions will attend the Republic Day flag-hoisting programme in Berhampur, Rourkela and Khurda respectively.

The Tricolour will be unfurled in Bolangir, Bhadrak, Boudh, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, and Kalahandi districts by the respective Collectors.

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Republic Day ceremony will be celebrated without the participation of school and college students.

As Model Code of Conduct is in force for the panchayat polls, the SEC has asked ministers not to attend the programme in his/her home district.

They cannot use the platform for political campaigning or for highlighting the achievements of the state government.



NEW LOOK

Beautification work of a stretch of road between AG Square and Capital Hospital for the Republic Day is in full swing at Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

BHU study on alternative therapy for thoracic patients

Doctors at the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU), have conducted a study on the surgical outcome of thoracic empyema patients.

The team, led by Siddharth Lakhotia, have claimed that their study is the first of its kind and could help in suggesting alternative treatment strategies to avoid surgery.

Lakhotia said, "The study is about the surgical outcomes of empyema (pus in the thoracic cavity) patients and its relation to the pre-operative clinical and radiological (CECT thorax) findings. It was carried out to predict the outcome of the surgery, based on pre-operative parameters so that in cases where surgery may not be useful, they can be subjected to an alternate treatment strategy from the beginning."

He said, "The study found that in cases where the remaining vol-

The study was carried out to predict the outcome of the surgery, based on pre-operative parameters, so that in cases where surgery may not be useful, they can be subjected to an alternate treatment strategy from the beginning

SIDDHARTH LAKHOTIA | LEAD RESEARCHER, INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

ume of the affected or diseased lung in CECT thorax is more or equal to 59 per cent of the normal lung, the chance of complete expansion of that lung after surgery is good. "

The study assumes significance as till now, all such cases were being put to surgery, but the research indicates alternate ways of treatment in particular cases.

He added, "It has been observed that the pre-operative remaining volume of the affected lung (residual lung) can determine the surgical outcome along with other parameters; like completeness of decortication (surgery done to remove the pus in the thoracic cavity and a thickened membrane that compresses the lung and prevents it from complete expansion), presence or absence of air leak from lung pre-operatively."

According to him, pre-operative residual lung volume can be determined by the CECT thorax (CT morphometry - measurements of empyema, lung, and thickness of pyemic membrane).

In the study, it was discovered that the residual volume of the involved lung, expressed as a percentage of the normal opposite lung volume, predicted the complete expansion of the lung with sensitivity of 71 per cent and specificity of 70 per cent. IANS

SHORT TAKES

1 dies, 3 injured in factory blast

Kutra: One person died and three others were injured after a massive explosion took place in Scan Steels factory at Gangajal under Kutra block in Sundargarh district, Friday. According to the administration and police, over 300 workers were working when the explosion took place. The workers sustained severe burns after coming in contact with fire and molten metal following the explosion at a furnace of the steel plant. The injured have been rushed to Ispat General Hospital (IGH) at Rourkela for treatment. One of the workers had sustained critical burns. The worker died while undergoing treatment at the IGH. On being informed, firefighters rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control.

Mamata consensus candidate for Kotia

Koraput: Mamata Jani has been chosen as the consensus candidate of all the three major political parties for zilla parishad seat (Pottangi zone-1) in Kotia panchayat Friday. Jani filed her nomination at Koraput sub-collector's office Friday. Koraput BJD president Ishwar Chandra Panigrahi, Congress district unit president Minakshi Bahinipati, BJP leader Jayaram Pangri, Pottangi MLA Pritam Padhi,



Koraput MLA Raghuram Padal, former MP Jhinna Hikaka, former MLA Ramchandra Kadam and Prafulla Pangri were present. Jani is a graduate and a resident of Thuria. Two other persons - Tikai Gemel and Sabina Budia - have filed their nominations for the same zone as independents. The last date of withdrawal of nominations is January 25. However, it is not yet known whether the independents would withdraw their papers.

HEALTH & HYGIENE FIRST



A training programme on health and hygiene of pregnant women, lactating mothers and newborn care underway at Kusumguda in Koraput, Friday. The programme was part of a campaign on 'Nutrition Garden Movement for Abolishing Hunger'

Sand mafia rake in moolah through fake transit permits

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 21: The local mafia here are making quick bucks by creating forged transit permits (TPs) under Sukinda tehsil of Jajpur. Sand mining activities are going on for over months as huge quantities of sand are required to fill mining voids in Kaliapani area, a report said.



Some unscrupulous tehsil officials have also joined hands with the local mafia in the illegal activity through forged TPs. According to sources, equivalent quantity of sand is being filled in the voids created by chromite mining in Kaliapani. The mafia managed to transport sand either by using fabricated TPs or without a valid document. As per allegations, Hyvas are also being used to transport sand from Brahmani river under Bhuban tehsil of Dhenkanal district. The sand mafia pay royalty once in a day and manage the subsequent trips without making any payment.

Even though there are guidelines that heavy vehicles should take the route from Bhuban main road to the mines through Mangalpur, the sand smugglers conveniently use the rural roads for illegal transport of sand. Heaps of sand are seen in Kaliapani mines area on several patches of lands owned by the Forest department and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), locals alleged. On being contacted, Sukinda tehsildar Kaberi Muduli said, "I have no information about any such illegal sand depot. I will certainly take immediate steps, if any complaint is made in this regard."

AGE-OLD RITUAL



Devotees readying the embers to walk on as part of rituals during Thakurani Osha at Kainsi village under sadar block of Keonjhar, Friday

Sand mafia kill youth

Dhenkanal: In a shocking incident, a youth, who used to oppose illegal sand smuggling, had to pay price for it in Dhenkanal. The youth was run over with a tractor by sand mafia in front of his father and brother. The incident took place at Genugia ghat of Brahmani river under Sadar police limits late Thursday night. The deceased was identified as Ajay Kumar Rout (32). The family members of the deceased have filed a complaint with place in this regard. The police registered a case and seized two tractors. Police also detained three people in this connection.

Techie joins politics

Nabarangpur: Ratikant Panda, a resident of Digisalapa under Tentulikhunti block of Nabarangpur district, has left his high paid job as a software engineer in Canada to foray into politics. Panda has filed his nomination as zilla parishad candidate from ZP zone-2 Friday. During his profession as a software engineer, Panda saw how advanced technology has helped in quality improvement of people's lives there.

₹10.02cr fine for excess stone mining in Jajpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 21: The lease holder of Aruha Hill under Dharmasala tehsil in Jajpur district has been served a notice to pay ₹10.02-crore penalty for forging documents relating to mining and resorting to excess mining of black stones from the lease area, a report said. However, locals alleged that the Revenue department had sat on the penalty notice issued to the lease holder for months, but had to issue it under pressure. The lessee, Trinath Jena, has been served two notices seven days ago to pay the penalty of ₹10.02 crore for alleged forgery of documents and illegal mining of black stones from Aruha Hill. However, the notices were actually issued by the tehsil office September 29, 2021. "The notices were issued on the back date, or were suppressed for around last three-and-half months to protect the lease holder," the

PRESSURE BUILDS UP



locals alleged. Earlier, the Lokayukta had ordered a probe following which Director of Inquiry submitted a report. Now, as many as 10 staffers of

Dharmasala tehsil have been entangled in the misappropriation case. "The notice demanding a penalty of ₹10.02 crore is an eye-wash attempted by the tehsil officials.

The Director of Inquiry had con-

ducted a probe into the illegal mining in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 20(2) of the Odisha Lokayukta Act, 2014. The Lokayukta order had further stated that the state government has lost revenue in crores owing to the unholy nexus between the district administration, especially erstwhile Dharmasala tehsildar and the lessee. The enquiry report had then mentioned about involvement of erstwhile Jajpur district Collector, four former tehsildars, two geologists and three revenue inspectors (RIs) in the massive misappropriation. Recently, the officials and staffers had submitted their replies January 12 in response to the show-cause notices issued by the Lokayukta. According to Behura's report lodged before Lokayukta, lessee Jena extracted black stone from Aruha hill beyond the permissible limits of leasehold area.

This way, they have been trying to escape administrative and legal action," the locals added. The case had come up for hearing before Lokayukta after a report was filed by plaintiff named Sarbeswar Behura. The Lokayukta had passed an order during hearing of the case (No-1355/2020) on illegal quarrying of black stones from the Aruha hill, December 10, 2020. The Director of Inquiry had con-

THE LESSEE HAS BEEN SERVED TWO NOTICES SEVEN DAYS AGO TO PAY THE PENALTY OF ₹10.02 CRORE FOR ALLEGED FORGERY OF DOCUMENTS AND ILLEGAL MINING OF BLACK STONES
HOWEVER, THE NOTICES WERE ISSUED BY THE TEHSIL OFFICE SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

Admin to probe scam in school uniforms



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 21: The district education department has decided to look into the alleged irregularities in distribution of free uniforms and shoes among schoolchildren and Anganwadi kids belonging to SC & ST categories in seven blocks of Malkangiri district. According to sources, the Union and the state governments have provided ₹6.50 crore and ₹9.77 lakh respectively towards distribution of uniforms and shoes to 1,30,000 kids in seven blocks of the district. The district coordinator of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), following a directive from the Collector, had directed all the block education officers (BEOs) to distribute uniforms and shoes. The district administration had entrusted the responsibility of distribution of uniforms, toys and shoes to 15 self-help groups (SHGs) in Mathili block. However, teachers and guardians of these blocks have alleged that many schools are yet to get the free uniforms and shoes. Also, in some schools uniforms fall short of their requirements. For instance, an SHG of Podaguda area was asked to distribute 596 pairs of uniforms in the schools under Pangam panchayat but only 113 pairs have been distributed so far. Similarly, another SHG, which

Office of VIMSAR principal sealed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 21: In deference to a court order, the office of the principal at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla was sealed in the presence of a magistrate, Friday.

The court order pertained to a case filed by Grade IV employees who have been laid off in 2010. Hearing the case, Sonepur senior civil court has also ordered for seizure of all the office articles by January 24. The office was vacated of the staffers before it was sealed. The sealing of principal's office will create problems in Covid management at VIMSAR as the administrative department of VIMSAR is inside the principal's office, it was learnt. Notably, 22 people working at VIMSAR on a contractual basis were laid off in 2010 for some unspecified reasons and new staffers were engaged. The retrenched employees had moved the labour court in Sambalpur against the action. Later, the case also reached the High Court which had directed the Sambalpur senior civil court to settle the case in three months. Legal cell officer of VIMSAR Ashok Panigrahi said, "The court order is welcome, but sealing the office at this juncture will affect Covid management. Our case is sub-judice in the High Court and it will be heard soon."

Unguarded border sparks fear of Covid surge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 21: In the wake of alarming rise in Covid-19 cases in neighbouring Chhattisgarh, the unguarded entry points in Malkangiri has emerged as a cause of concern. Sukma district administration of Chhattisgarh, however, is not allowing anyone from Malkangiri side without conducting Covid tests. Meanwhile, the Sukma administration has deployed police forces at border points in fringe areas. They are checking masks, status of Covid and vaccination of every person entering the neighbouring state from Malkangiri side.

entry point does not have any checking now. It is alleged that the administration has not engaged any police or health worker to ensure Covid safety norms in the bordering areas. Locals observed that keeping border points unguarded during election time will trigger Covid surge in the district. They have demanded immediate steps to check people coming from the other side.

However, entry points of Malkangiri have been left unguarded. For instance, Chalanguda They have demanded immediate steps to check people coming from the other side.

Virus spike among kids raises concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Jan 21: The district has been witnessing a surge in Covid-19 infections while infection among kids is also rising. The number of infections has touched 877 in the last 13 days while 99 cases have been reported in last 24 hours. Out of 877 cases, 45 are children aged below 15 years. This has become a cause of concern for people and health officials, a report said. Some citizens expressed concern over the rising trend of infection while campaign for panchayat elections is underway. They observed that the rate of infection will be alarming, if social distancing and safety norms are not followed during electioneering. They apprehended that post-poll Covid situation may go out of control, if the administration doesn't enforce Covid-19 protocols strictly. Social activists Sunil Kumar Gantayat, Pratap Kumar Tripathy, Pratap Kumar Padhi and Amarbar

Man gets 10-year RI for raping minor girl

PNN/ AGENCIES

Phulbani, Jan 21: A court in Kandhamal district Friday sentenced a 30-year-old tribal man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping a 12-year-old girl in 2016. Fast-Track Court Judge-cum-ADJ, Phulbani, Bhaskar Chandra Sahu, also slapped a penalty of ₹50,000 on Mukund Mallick. On default, the convict will have to undergo additional imprisonment of six months. The penalty amount will be given to the girl as compensation. The incident took place November 16, 2016 when the Class VII student was returning home. The convict had dragged her to a secluded place and raped her. The convict was arrested based on a complaint lodged by the girl's father. A total of 14 witnesses were examined in the case. Special Public Prosecutor Banamali Behera said.

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1 Resident Doctor Contract 01 Rs. 80,000/- P.M.
2 Assistant Engineer (Civil) Contract/Outsource 01 Rs. 50,000/- P.M.
3 Private Secretary Contract/Outsource 01 Rs. 40,000/- P.M.
4 Media & Public Relation Executive Contract/Outsource 01 Rs. 40,000/- P.M.
5 Junior Engineer (Civil) Contract/Outsource 02 Rs. 40,000/- P.M.
6 Office Executive Contract/Outsource 04 Rs. 20,000/- P.M. to Rs. 40,000/- P.M.
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Do not belong to the past
downs, but to the noons
of future



SRI AUROBINDO

Sarma's street cred

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is a man of the people and is vehemently opposed to 'VIP culture'. He wants us all to believe that he has street cred. So, when the Deputy Commissioner of Nagaon district, Nisarg Havare, going strictly by the book, halted traffic to allow the Chief Minister to pass on his way to lay the foundation stone of a nearby road, Sarma stopped his vehicle and rather sanctimoniously scolded a quivering Havare for inconveniencing the travelling public.

Rarely does news emanate of granular everyday anxieties that young officers face, but Sarma seems to have hit a speed breaker with his reprimanding the quivering DC. Caught on candid camera, or rigged to trigger popular acceptance, we are not sure. Whatever it may have been, the incident got more airtime because the NCP decided to take up cudgels for the poor hapless officer caught in the episode.

Naturally, questions have flowed. For instance, what was Sarma inaugurating and why it wasn't planned at a time when traffic is less dense? And why should the CM publicly humiliate the IAS officer who was merely following the protocol laid out for VIP travel? So, if Sarma felt he had effectively made his point, he may be mistaken. The aam aadmi these days is less prone to be impressed with pious sermons on doing away with VIP culture from high dignitaries, especially after another traffic "escapade" of a VVIP in poll-bound Punjab recently. Changing the "babu mindset", as Sarma later tweeted, calls for more than mere grand gestures such as this.

Sadly, this crossfire may harm him more. But DKB is watching, and we hope that our faithful ground sources will keep us informed on the aftermath.

Amendment of deputation rules to bypass states

The Centre's move to amend the rules of deputation and post IAS officers on central deputation bypassing the views of the state government will set up a confrontation with non-BJP-ruled states, which are often accused by the Centre of refusing to send officers on Central deputation, ostensibly on political grounds.

Clearly, the proposal was necessitated by the stand-off with the West Bengal government of Mamata Banerjee. It was precipitated by the state then Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay for his alleged "misconduct" during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state last year. Sources have informed DKB that the Centre has already sent letters to chief secretaries seeking their views on the deputation rules.

Very likely that the proposal will widen the rift between North Block and Nabanna, the seat of the WB government, and also meet with resistance from other Opposition-ruled states. They are likely to oppose the move as another step towards weakening the states at the cost of the Centre. The proposal, if passed, will allow the Centre to decide how many officers a state can retain. Also, the fear is that the Centre can unilaterally pick any officer from any state without seeking the views of the concerned state government, which would harm the state's interests.

ONGC gets another stand-in CMD

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's director of Human Resources, Alka Mittal, has been entrusted with the additional charge of chairperson and managing director (CMD), making her the first woman to head the government-owned company in its history. The government in a statement said that Mittal will remain in her new role for the next six months until a full-time CMD is appointed or "until further orders".

Delays in appointments to top posts in PSUs is by now no surprise, but ONGC is the most profitable of the government-owned companies and such inordinate holding patterns are puzzling, to say the least. The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) had interviewed nine candidates, including two serving IAS officers, for the CMD post but failed to select anyone. Instead, it announced the setting up of a search committee, which further delayed matters.

Despite all this groundwork, Mittal's appointment has been announced two days after Subhash Kumar, the Director of Finance, who was holding additional charge of CMD superannuated in December. ONGC has not had a full-time CMD since the retirement of Shashi Shankar in March last year.

Hopefully, the petroleum babus and the Public Enterprises Selection Board will not take as much time in appointing Kumar's successor or in finding a full-time CMD for ONGC.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

The quality, not the longevity, of one's life is what is important.
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

The pay is good and I can walk to work.
JOHN F. KENNEDY

WORDSWORTH

A flea in one's ear

This expression goes back a long way. It appeared in English for the first time about 1430 in a devotional work with the title (in modernised spelling) The Pilgrimage of the Life of the Manhood, in which the last word meant the state or condition of being human. It was a translation of a work in French of about a century earlier by the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Deguileville. Intriguingly, the French expression then had a different sense, of provoking or having amorous desire, though de Deguileville used it figuratively for a spiritual emotion that was evoked by the contemplation of great wonders. In modern French, to have a flea put in your ear is that somebody is putting a suspicion into your head. The same expression occurs, with much the same sense, in other European languages, including German, Italian and Greek. In Dutch, it's a way to say that you're fidgety or restless. In English it principally refers – as you say – to a stinging reproof, though to send a person away with a flea in their ear can mean to snub them or angrily refuse a request. It's curious how so many different implications have been drawn from one simple circumstance. A flea moves fast, so it may have suggested something desirable but unattainable, or a thing that's excitable and uncontrollable like a sudden passion. A flea may have been thought to be an external influence that whispered messages of distrust or ardour into the ear. English speakers may have judged that the physical and emotional discomfort aroused by a flea in the ear resembled severe criticism or rebuke. It may be that several of these ideas fused in various language versions of the expression.

LOL

Two fools flying

Two morons stand on a cliff with their arms outstretched. One has some budgies lined up on each arm; the other has parrots lined up on his arms. After a couple of minutes, they both leap off the cliff and fall to the ground. Laying next to each other in



intensive care at the hospital, one moron says to the other, "I don't think much of this budgie jumping." The other moron replies, "Yeah, I'm not too keen on this paragliding either."

OPIUM OF THE MASSES

FOCUS FACEBOOK

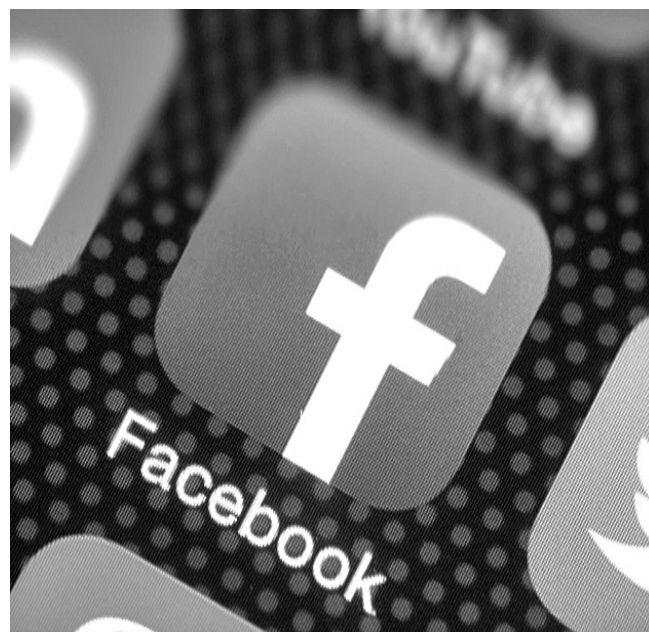
In the war on disinformation, the enemy can be hard to determine. Journalists, politicians, governments, and even grandparents have been accused of enabling the spread of online falsehoods.

While none of these groups is entirely innocent, the real adversary is more mundane. As Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen testified late last year, social media's own algorithms are what makes disinformation accessible.

Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has grown from a students' social networking site into a surveillance monster that destroys social cohesion and democracy worldwide. Facebook collects troves of user data – including intimate facts like body weight and pregnancy status – to map the social DNA of its users. The company then sells this information to anyone – from shampoo manufacturers to Russian and Chinese intelligence services – who wants to "micro-target" its 2.9 billion users. In this way, Facebook allows third parties to manipulate minds and trade in "human futures."

Around the world, Facebook has been used to sow distrust in democratic institutions. Its algorithms have facilitated real-world violence, from genocide in Myanmar to the recruitment of terrorists in South America, West Africa, and the Middle East. Lies about election fraud in the United States, promoted by former President Donald Trump, inundated Facebook in the lead-up to the January 6 riots. Meanwhile in Europe, Facebook enabled Belarusian strongman Aleksandr Lukashenko's perverse efforts to use migrants as weapons against the European Union.

In the Czech Republic, disinformation originating from Russia and shared on the site has swamped Czech cyberspace, thanks to Facebook's malicious code. One analysis done by my company found that the average Czech citizen is exposed to 25 times more COVID-19 vaccine disinformation than the average American. The situation is so dire, and government action so inept, that Czechs rely on civil society – including volunteers known as



Around the world, Facebook has been used to sow distrust in democratic institutions. Its algorithms have facilitated real-world violence, from genocide in Myanmar to the recruitment of terrorists in South America, West Africa, and the Middle East

the Czech Elves – to monitor and counter this influence.

Efforts to mitigate Facebook's threat to democracy so far have failed miserably. In the Czech Republic, Facebook entered into a partnership with Agence France Presse (AFP) to identify harmful content. But with just one part-time employee and a monthly quota of only ten dubious posts, these efforts are a drop in the disinformation ocean. The "Facebook files," published by The Wall Street Journal confirm that Facebook takes action on "as little as 3-5% of hate speech."

Facebook has given users the ability to opt out of custom and political ads, but this is a token gesture. Some organizations, like Ranking Digital Rights, have called for the platform to disable ad targeting by default. That is not enough. The micro-targeting at the root of Facebook's business model relies on artificial intelligence to attract users' attention, maximize engagement, and dis-

able critical thinking.

In many ways, micro-targeting is the digital equivalent of the opioid crisis. But the US Congress has moved aggressively to protect people from opioids through legislation designed to increase access to treatment, education, and alternative medications. To stop the world's addiction to fake news and lies, lawmakers must recognize the disinformation crisis for what it is and take similar action, starting with appropriate regulation of micro-targeting.

The problem is that no one outside Facebook knows how the company's complex algorithms work – and it could take months, if not years, to decode them. This means that regulators will have no choice but to depend on Facebook's own people to guide them through the factory. To encourage this cooperation, Congress must offer blanket civil and criminal immunity and financial indemnification.

Regulating social media algorithms seems complicated, but it

is low hanging fruit compared to even greater digital hazards on the horizon. "Deepfakes" – the AI-based large-scale manipulation of videos and images to sway opinion – is barely a topic of conversation in

Congress. While lawmakers fret over the threats posed by traditional content, "Deepfakes" pose an even greater challenge to individual privacy, democracy, and national security.

Meanwhile, Facebook is becoming more dangerous. A recent investigation by MIT Technology Review found that Facebook funds misinformation by "paying millions of ad dollars to bankroll clickbait actors" through its advertising platform. And CEO Mark Zuckerberg's plans to build a metaverse, "a convergence of physical, augmented, and virtual reality," should frighten regulators everywhere. Just imagine the potential damage those unregulated AI algorithms could cause if they are permitted to create a new immersive reality for billions of people.

In a statement after recent hearings in Washington, DC, Zuckerberg repeated an offer he has made before: regulate us. "I don't believe private companies should make all of the decisions on their own," he wrote on Facebook. "We're committed to doing the best work we can, but at some level the right body to assess trade-offs between social equities is our democratically elected Congress."

Zuckerberg is correct: Congress does have a responsibility to act. But Facebook has a responsibility to act as well. It can show Congress what social in equities it continues to create and how it creates them.

Until Facebook opens its algorithms to scrutiny – guided by the know-how of its own experts – the war on disinformation will remain unwinnable, and democracies around the world will continue to be at the mercy of an unscrupulous, renegade industry.

The author is CEO and Founder of Semantic Visions, a Prague-based analytics firm that collects and analyzes 90% of the world's online news content.
@PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Government consumption fueling inflation



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

WHEN THE COUNTRY WAS FACING A DROUGHT, PRIME MINISTER LAL BHADUR SHASTRI HAD GIVEN A CALL THAT EVERY CITIZEN SHOULD OBSERVE FAST FOR ONE DAY. THE ENTIRE COUNTRY STOOD BEHIND SHASTRI

There are two reasons for this price increase. Government officials are being provided with SUVs and grandiose construction and projects like the Central Vista are being made. Government servants are being paid increased salaries and DA. Therefore, the reduction in demand from the people is more than cancelled by the increase in the demand from government consumption. The total demand in the market is increasing and this is leading to price rise.

The second factor leading to increase in prices is that of environment. We have seen a large number of natural calamities in the recent past such as floods and droughts occurring in different parts of the country at the same time. The reason is global warming which, though a global phenomenon, is yet accentuated by our local contribution to environmental destruction. For example we are cutting forests to make highways through them. This leads to lesser capture of carbon dioxide and also loss of wildlife. We are making dams on rivers to abstract water for

irrigation or for making hydropower. This leads to prevention of migration of fishes. The fishes begin to die. This leads to deterioration of water quality. The water that could be easily cleaned by the fishes is now cleaned through sewage treatment plants. We are seeing localized environmental problems due to these local policies of environmental destruction. For example, floods are reported to have led to lower production of tomatoes and consequent increase in the price in the market.

The government should reduce its own consumption in order to prevent the price rise. Presently a reduction of demand from the people of Rs 100 is coming along with increase in Government consumption of Rs 120. This needs to be reversed. The reduction of demand from the Government of Rs 100 should be secured along with an increase in people's consumption of Rs 100. The total demand will remain unchanged and the prices will become stable. At the same time welfare of the people will be secured – which is the objective of the

Government. The increase in Government consumption hits the welfare of the people in yet another way. The Government demand is mostly fulfilled by large companies. For example, the making of highways requires purchase of goods from large equipment manufacturers and steel mills. Part of this demand actually goes to the foreign countries, for example, in the imports of large-construction equipment. This leads to lesser production in the country, lesser economic growth and lesser jobs for the people. Therefore, the Government should reduce its expenditures and transfer more money to the people. The same money, if spent by the street hawker will be used to buy items like paper and cloth and this will lead to increase of local production. Welfare of the people will be secured without inviting price rise. The second impact of reduction of Government consumption is that it will create confidence in the people that the economy will be on the growth path and they will be willing to spend their incomes. Let us recall that in 1960s, when the

country was facing a drought, Prime Minister Lal bahadur Shastri had given a call that every citizen of the country should observe fast for one day. He followed this himself. The entire country stood behind Shastri. This led to reduced consumption of food grains. Similarly, if the Government wants the people to start consuming instead of savings, then the Government will have to instill a sense of confidence among them that the economy will look up. This cannot happen while the government is taking loans to provide SUVs to its officers. Secondly, the Government should give more attention to conservation of environment such as by discouraging the use of private cars and encouraging the use of public transport; and by protecting our rivers and forests. This will lead to less localized environmental damage and help contain the price rise.

The author is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore. Views expressed are personal.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Bureaucracy on rent

Sir, The recent move of the Central government to amend Rule 6 of IAS cadre rule book by which the state would lose the right to have direct intervention in the appointment of an IAS/IPS officer is an attack on the federal structure. This sly plan is a calibrated move to use civil service officers as weapons against rivals and political opponents. For a progressive nation, the local administration plays a key role in appointing the appropriate office bearers. If that right gets usurped by the Central authority it will be harmful for the federal system of the nation.

Debadurlav Harichandan, BHUBANESWAR

Cheer Women in Blue

Sir, The 20th edition of the women's AFC Asian cup kicked off Thursday in Mumbai. This is the second time India got the chance to host the biggest women's football tournament of the continent after 1979. People of our country are sports enthusiasts but they only restrict themselves to men. When it comes to women's sports they don't prefer following the games as they do in the men's section. Now our girls will be seen in action against top Asian football nations like Japan, China, and Australia. We can only make a sport improve by supporting the team. They too give their best in the field. Let's gear up to cheer our Women In Blue. They equally need our support.

Deba Prasad Nayak CUTTACK

A step in right direction

Sir, The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of reservation for OBC candidates and it is a right step in the right direction. While upholding the constitutional validity of reservation for OBCs in AIQ seats, the court elaborated on the concept of merit and observed that it is not of one's own making. The court said privileges of the forward classes include not just having access to quality schooling and good coaching centres but also social networks and cultural communication, including good speaking skills, accent and academic accomplishments. All these ensure that children from forward classes take up jobs commensurate with the family's standing whereas first-generation learners from Other Backward Classes, who lack these, are placed at a disadvantage.

MR Jayanthi MUMBAI

national



Installation of freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's statue at India Gate will inspire patriotism, self-respect and valour in the minds of Indians
RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

KARNATAKA LIFTS WEEKEND CURFEW

The Karnataka government Friday announced that it has lifted the weekend curfew in the state, but restrictions on night movement will remain



of the day quote

My wishes to friends in Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura on their respective Statehood day. These jewels from the North Eastern part of our country are a source of much pride for all of us. I hope the beautiful people from these states thrive and prosper

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

There was a time when the Northeast was known for corruption but now the funds sent from Delhi are fully utilized for the development in the region

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The natural resource-dependent community is an important aspect of tiger conservation and the "people agenda" ranks prominently in India's conservation efforts

BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

Terror attack foiled in Punjab



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Jan 21: Thwarting a possible terror attack ahead of the Republic Day, Punjab Police have recovered a 40mm under-barrel grenade launcher (UBGL) with two 40mm compatible grenades, 3.79 kg RDX, nine electrical detonators and two sets of timer devices for IEDs from Gurdaspur, said Inspector General of Police (Border Range) Mohinish Chawla Friday.

The UBGL is a short-range grenade launching area weapon with an effective range of 150 metres and it could be detrimental to the VVIP security as well. The recovery was made on the disclosure of Malkeet Singh, a resident of Gazikot village in Gurdaspur district, who was arrested by the police Thursday.

The police have also booked co-conspirators Sukhpreet Singh, Tharanjot Singh and Sukhmeetpal Singh, all residents of Gurdaspur, besides, Pakistan-based International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) chief Lakhbir Singh Rode and fugitive gangster Arshdeep Singh, alias Arsh Dalla.

IG Chawla said investigations revealed that the arrested accused Malkeet was in contact with Sukh Ghuman, who had further conspired with ISYF chief Rode and Dalla, a resident of Moga now based in Canada. The consignment of explosives was sent by Rode from Pakistan.

Senior Superintendent of Police Nanak Singh said the role of Malkeet Singh in retrieval and de-

THE UBGL IS A SHORT-RANGE GRENADE LAUNCHING AREA WEAPON WITH AN EFFECTIVE RANGE OF 150 METRES AND IT COULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE VVIP SECURITY AS WELL

THE RECOVERY WAS MADE ON THE DISCLOSURE OF MALKEET SINGH, A RESIDENT OF GAZIKOT VILLAGE IN GURDASPUR DISTRICT, WHO WAS ARRESTED BY THE POLICE THURSDAY

livery of fire arms and explosive intended for recently busted ISYF terror module busted by SBS Nagar Police and was revealed during investigation therein.

"Investigations are on to identify remaining members of the busted terrorist modules, recover the remaining terrorist hardware received by them and unravel the entire conspiracy, hatched by ISI of Pakistan and Lakhbir Rode," he added.

The role of Rode was also found in killing of comrade Balwinder Singh at Bhikhiwind on October 16, 2020, besides in the recovery of tiffin IED, RDX, arms and ammunition from his relative Gurmukh Singh Rode from Jalandhar in August 2021.

In November-December 2021, Gurdaspur Police had busted two terrorist modules controlled by the Pakistan-based ISI and arrested four members of the modules, besides recovered around one kg RDX, six hand grenades, one tiffin box IED, three electrical detonators and two pistols.

I&B ministry blocks 35 Pakistan-based YouTube channels

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 21: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has ordered the blocking of 35 YouTube news channels operated from Pakistan along with two websites for their involvement in spreading anti-India fake news in a coordinated manner on digital media platforms.

In a statement, the ministry said that the YouTube accounts blocked by the Ministry had a total subscriber base of over 1.20 crore and their videos had garnered over 130 crore views.

Additionally, two Twitter accounts, two Instagram accounts and one Facebook account have also been blocked by the government for being involved in spreading coordinated anti-India disinformation over the internet.

The ministry vide five separate orders issued under Rule 16 of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 has ordered to block these Pakistan-based social media accounts and websites.

"Indian intelligence agencies were closely monitoring these social media accounts and websites, and flagged them to the ministry for immediate action," it said.

The 35 YouTube accounts blocked by the ministry were all being operated from Pakistan, and were identified to be part of four coordinated disinformation networks. These include the Apni Duniya Network operating 14 YouTube channels, and Talha Films Network operating 13 YouTube channels.

A set of four channels, and a set of two other channels, were also found to be acting in synchronisation with each other.

According to the ministry, all these networks appeared to be operated with a single goal of spreading fake news oriented towards the Indian audience. The channels which were part of a network used common hashtags and editing styles, and were being operated by common persons who cross promoted each other's content.

The YouTube channels, websites, and other social media accounts blocked by the ministry were used by Pakistan for spreading anti-India fake news about sensitive subjects related to India.

UTPAL PARRIKAR QUILTS BJP

He will contest the Assembly elections in the state from Panaji as an independent candidate. The ruling party has fielded incumbent MLA Atanasio Monserrate from the Panaji seat which Manohar Parrikar had represented for a long time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Jan 21: Utpal Parrikar, the son of former Goa chief minister late Manohar Parrikar, Friday quit the BJP.

He would contest the coming Assembly elections in the state from Panaji as an independent candidate, he announced. The ruling party has fielded incumbent MLA Atanasio Monserrate from the Panaji seat which Manohar Parrikar had represented for a long time.

"I was left with no other choice.



I have resigned from the party and I would be contesting as an independent from Panaji," Utpal Parrikar told reporters.

He also said that resignation was a formality but the BJP will "always remain in my heart." "It is a difficult choice for me, I am doing it for the people of Goa. No one should be worried about my political future, people of Goa will do it," he said.

The BJP had offered him "other

options" (constituencies other than Panaji), Parrikar said. "I am fighting for the values which I believe in. Let people of Panaji decide. I cannot negotiate with my party," he added.

Asked whether he would seek support of other political parties, he said the only platform for him was the BJP. "If not BJP, then I would go for (contesting as) independent. I will not go for any other political party," Parrikar said.

SHORT TAKES

PM to interact with DMs today

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with district magistrates (DMs) Saturday via video-conferencing to take direct feedback about the progress and status of implementation of various government schemes and programmes, his office said. The interaction will help review the performance and ascertain the challenges that are being faced, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement. Prime Minister Modi will interact with DMs on January 22 at around 11 AM via video-conferencing, it said.

Drunk man kills two brothers

Kolkata: A 45-year-old man allegedly in an inebriated condition stabbed to death two brothers who were his neighbours at Singur in West Bengal's Hooghly district on Friday morning. Police arrested the man and are investigating the matter.

Goa PWD minister resigns

Panaji: Goa Public Works Department Minister Deepak Prabhu Pauskar Friday resigned as an MLA, as a Minister and from the BJP's primary membership, a day after he was denied a ticket to contest from the Sanvordem assembly constituency. Pauskar, who joined the BJP from the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party in 2019, said that he would be contesting as an Independent from his constituency.

Girl 'raped'

Ballia (UP): A 15-year-old girl from a village in Muniyar Police Station area was allegedly kidnapped and raped by man, police said Friday. The girl was allegedly kidnapped by a 22-year-old man on December 26, who took her to Nashik in Maharashtra and allegedly raped her there on pretext of marriage, police said.

Arms dealer held

New Delhi: The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested a wanted arms dealer who supplied weapons to the conspirators who plotted to kill a Delhi-based Kashmiri Pandit social activist, an official said here Friday. According to the Special Cell, the accused, identified as Hazi Shamim alias Shamim Pistol, is a notorious illegal arms supplier and has been supplying arms for more than 15 years.

PERFECT CLICK



People take pictures of artists participating in the rehearsals for the Republic Day Parade 2022 at the India Gate, in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Battle for UP: Yogi's Hindu Vahini is back in action

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Jan 21: The Hindu Yuva Vahini (HYV), founded by Yogi Adityanath in 2002, is back in action.

The Vahini that had become dormant after Yogi Adityanath became chief minister, is springing back to activity. Its members have already launched an intensive campaign to ensure Yogi Adityanath's victory in Gorakhpur.

PK, Mall general secretary, HYV, said that the Vahini members have decided to organise door-to-door meetings, digital meetings, and

strengthen its organisation at the booth level across the assembly segment. The office-bearers will hold a meeting with the chief minister over the election strategy and campaign when he arrives in Gorakhpur, Mall added.

A senior office-bearer of the Vahini said, "Political activities of the HYV were dormant for around five years, but the organisation has been reactivated with the announcement of Yogi Adityanath's candidature from the city seat. The outfit will hold meetings in all the wards and also campaign for the BJP candidates in other Assembly



segments on the direction of the chief minister."

The Hindu Yuva Vahini had played an important role in Yogi

Adityanath's election campaigns in 2004, 2009 and 2014 and also propagated the message of Hindutva in the rural areas of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

In the 2017 Assembly elections, Vahini leader Raghvendra Pratap Singh successfully contested from Dumariaganj seat in Siddhartha Nagar. After Yogi Adityanath became the chief minister in March 2017, units of the Vahini in various districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh were disbanded at the request of the BJP leadership over fears that it would function as a parallel political outfit.

Its office-bearers and members who protested this move were expelled from it. This included then state president Sunil Singh. Yogi Adityanath had raised the Hindu Yuva Vahini in 2002 after his relationship with the BJP soured due to differences over ticket distribution in the Assembly election.

He challenged the BJP leadership by fielding Dr Radha Mohan Das Agarwal on a Hindu Mahasabha ticket against BJP candidate Shiv Pratap Shukla. Agarwal defeated Shukla, establishing Adityanath as the unchallenged leader of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Soon, Vahini volunteers were also entrusted with the task of propagating the Hindutva agenda promoted by the Gorakhnath mutt headed by Yogi Adityanath. From 300 members in 2002, the strength of the outfit increased to 1.5 million in 2017.

In the past five years, the Vahini withdrew from political activities to focus on social issues, including ration distribution, building awareness about Covid and Japanese Encephalitis, assisting migrant workers, and assisting local authorities in the implementation of development and welfare schemes.



Delhi to lift weekend curfew



PTI FILE PHOTO

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 21: The Delhi government has proposed lifting the weekend curfew, end odd-even system for opening of shops, an official source said Friday.

The proposal approved by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been sent to Lt Governor Anil Bajjal for approval, they said. The decision to ease the restrictions was taken in view of declining number of Covid cases in the city, they said.

Traders in many parts of the city have demanded lifting of the curbs including those imposed on shops selling non-essential

Experts had warned that Delhi can record one lakh cases daily during this wave but that danger has been averted. We will take a call on lifting of more restrictions within three-four days

SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

items on alternate days based on odd-even system. The weekend curfew will be in place from 10 pm Friday and continue till Monday 5 am.

It will be done away with if the LG grants permission to the Delhi government's proposal. The decision to impose weekend curfew was taken by Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)

January 1 due to rise in Covid cases in the city.

Weekend curfew kicks in from Friday night curbing non-essential activities. A night curfew during weekdays is already in place from 10 pm to 5 am. The DDMA had also imposed other restrictions including closure of all private offices dealing with non-essential services. The daily number

Pvt firms to run with 50% staff

New Delhi: Lt Governor Anil Bajjal on Friday approved the Delhi government's proposal to allow private offices to function with 50 per cent staff but suggested maintaining the status quo on lifting weekend curfew and removing odd-even rule for the opening of shops in the markets, LG office sources said. Any decision on lifting the weekend curfew could be taken once the Covid-19 situation in Delhi improves further, they said.

of Covid cases and positivity rate has witnessed a decline in the past few days.

Delhi Thursday reported 12,306 fresh Covid-19 cases and 43 fatalities, with the positivity rate dipping to 21.48 per cent, according to data shared by the city health department.

The city had recorded 28,867 Covid cases with 29.21 positivity rate January 13, the sharpest single-day spike since the beginning of the pandemic. The number then declined to 24,383 Friday, 20,718 Saturday, 18,286 Sunday, 12,527 Monday, and 11,684 Tuesday last week.

NETAJI'S STATUE TO BE INSTALLED AT INDIA GATE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 21: Ahead of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Friday that a grand statue of the iconic freedom fighter will be installed at India Gate as a symbol of India's "indebtedness" to him.

Till the statue, made of granite, is completed, a hologram statue of his would be present at the same place, he said, adding that he will unveil the hologram statue on January 23, the birth anniversary of the Azad Hind Fauj founder.

"At a time when the entire nation is marking the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, I am glad to share that his grand statue, made of granite, will be installed at India Gate. This would be a symbol of India's indebtedness to him," Modi tweeted.

Official sources said the dimension of the granite statue will be 28 feet long and six feet wide and added that its installation will be a case of India "reclaiming" its history.

The statue will be installed under a canopy, which used to have a statue of King George V that was



removed in 1968, they added. The announcement came on a day opposition parties criticised the government for the decision to put out the flame at Amar Jawan

Centre trying to divert attention: TMC

Kolkata: Trinamool Congress Friday welcomed Centre's decision to install statue of Netaji's at India Gate, but asserted nonetheless that it was aimed at countering criticism after the rejection of West Bengal's tableau themed on the nationalist leader for the Republic Day parade snowballed into a major row. The TMC said that "real tribute" would have been paid to Netaji had the Centre taken steps to unearth the mystery shrouding his disappearance. "As the rejection of West Bengal's tableau on Netaji has created a major controversy, the Centre is trying to divert attention. The decision to install the statue of Netaji is only aimed in that direction. But we welcome the decision. At the same time, we feel that the real tribute would have been paid had the government taken steps to unearth the mystery shrouding his disappearance," TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh said.

Jyoti at India Gate here and merge it with the immortal flame at the National War Memorial.

GPS tags for second batch of endangered turtles in WB this yr



AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 21: The West Bengal forest department is planning to release another batch of batagur baska, a critically endangered freshwater turtle species, tagged with GPS transmitters in Sundarbans this year to understand its survival and dispersal patterns, an official said Friday.

Ten batagur baskas - seven females and three males - were fitted with GPS device and released in a river in Sundarbans mangrove forest January 19 after being reared in a pond in Sajnekhali area in South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal Chief Wildlife Warden Debal Roy told PTI.

"The ten critically endangered turtles were reared over nine years. We aim at releasing the second batch of 20 subadult batagur baskas this year," he said.

Batagur baska, also known as northern river terrapin, is widely regarded as one of the most endangered freshwater turtles in the world, Roy said.

"Only a handful of the turtle species may be surviving in the wild across the vast expanse of mangrove swamps and tidal rivers

of Sundarbans spanning south-east India and southwest Bangladesh," he explained.

The baska population "declined sharply due to unsustainable harvesting", the official said, adding that the species now teeters on the brink of functional extinction.

A joint exploration by a team of Turtle Survival Alliance India Programme and Sundarban Tiger Reserve in 2008 found a cohort of eight males, three females, and one juvenile batagur baska in a pond in Sajnekhali, Roy said.

"In the Sajnekhali pond, we had started with 12 turtles and now the number has gone up to 370. We aim at reaching 1,000 in captivity by next year. The GPS tagging will enable real-time monitoring of the turtles and help get information about their reproduction and the way they adapt to the environment," he said.

This will also help "understand survival and dispersal patterns of the freshwater turtles" and plan large scale release programmes in the future, the forest official said.

The exercise will provide basic ecological data on the conservation requirements for them, he added.

WEST BENGAL TO CONSTRUCT SECOND AIRPORT FOR KOLKATA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 21: With an aim to decongest Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport (NSCBIA) in Dum Dum, the West Bengal government has decided to construct a second airport in the vicinity of Kolkata, a senior official said Friday.

The state government has started looking for land in neighbouring South 24 Parganas district, he said, adding that Bhangan is among the possible locations.

In a recent communication, Chief Secretary H K Dwivedi has directed South 24 Parganas District Magistrate P Ulganathan to earmark land for the proposed airport, which will have facilities of an international airport, the official said. "There is a lot of pressure on Dum Dum airport in North 24 Parganas district. We have felt the need to construct a new airport in the vicinity of Kolkata. The best possible place will be in South 24 Parganas. This will probably be



the second biggest airport in the state," the IAS officer told PTI.

Ulganathan has been asked to find land where an airport with a "three-km-long runway" could be built, he said.

"We need to build another airport of international standards with facilities akin to NSCBIA. Bhangan has open spaces. The possibility of building the proposed airport will be better there. We need to construct a hangar and runway that can accommodate bigger airplanes such as Boeing 777. The search for land is on," the official said.

PROTEST TURNS UGLY



Police detain Youth Congress leaders during a protest against extinguishing the Amar Jyoti at India Gate in New Delhi

WAR AGAINST VIRUS

Delhi: Hospitalisation much lower in 3rd wave

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 21: The hospital bed occupancy in Delhi during the third wave of Covid-19 has been significantly lower than the second wave last year, which had stretched the healthcare infrastructure to its limits, the Union government said Thursday.

Presenting an analysis of the positivity rate and hospitalisation trends during the second and third wave in the national capital, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the hospital bed occupancy remained significantly high from



April 1 to almost May 20, 2021.

"However, despite an increase in the positivity rate in the current wave, those requiring (hospital) beds and hospitalisation during the third wave is significantly lower," Bhushan said. The number

of active cases in Delhi is in the range of 75,000 to 78,000. Of these, only 2,500 to 2,600 patients are hospitalised, he added.

Giving information on the clinical parameters, Bhushan said around 99 per cent of the adult patients have common symptoms of fever (with or without rigors), cough, irritation in the throat and they are usually settling down after the fifth day. Also, there is muscular weakness and tiredness along with that. In pediatric patients in the 11 to 18 age group, fever is the common symptom along with upper respiratory tract infection, he said.

MUNICIPAL POLLS

ECI TO SUPPLY EVMs TO WEST BENGAL SEC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Jan 21: Considering the shortage of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) for the upcoming Municipal polls in West Bengal, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has decided to supply EVMs to the State Election Commission (SEC).

According to sources in the SEC, the poll body had asked for an additional 15,000 M2 model EVMs to conduct the upcoming 108 municipalities elections in the last week of February and the ECI has finally agreed to meet the shortage of the voting machines. The ECI has asked the state poll panel to confirm the requirement by January.

The SEC had recently conducted the polls in five municipal corporations and for that the SEC has used 10,620 EVMs and presently the poll panel has only 5,067 EVMs in their hand.

"It is not possible for us to conduct the polls of 108 municipalities with these machines. We need at least 20,000 EVMs to conduct the polls and so we have asked the ECI to provide the additional EVMs and they have agreed for that. If the ECI gives us the voting machines then we will not have problems in conducting the polls," a senior official of SEC said.

"In addition to this we have also asked for EVMs from different states and there is a possibility that we might get another 12,000 EVMs from Bihar. We are exploring other options too. Hope the shortage of the machines will be sorted out," the official added.

Alarming rise in air pollution in 6 WB cities during Dec '21: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 21: Air pollution in Kolkata and five other cities of West Bengal witnessed an alarming rise during December 2021 as compared to the corresponding period last year, a study by the Centre for Science and Environment showed.

Real-time monitoring data from six cities across the state was computed for the research.

"This is part of the air quality tracker initiative of the Urban Data Analytics Lab of CSE. The objective of this new analysis is to understand the quantum and nature of the winter pollution in major cities of West Bengal, which have real-time air quality monitoring..." said Avikal Somvanshi, programme manager, Sustainable Cities



Programme-CSE. Durgapur, a major industrial hub of the state, recorded the most polluted air in the region in 2021 with an average annual PM 2.5 concentration of 80 ug/m3, he told PTI.

The weekly air quality index (AQI) average during December end-early January in Durgapur was 171, Howrah 148 and Kolkata 118

Haldia had the lowest 2021 average value of 39 ug/m3. PM2.5 are tiny particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter, and can enter deep into the lungs and even the bloodstream, experts said.

"We have noticed that air pollution turns poor in synchronised form in Bengal from early December due to the onset of winter, and continues till January. Even the COVID-19 pandemic re-

strictions could not improve it," Somvanshi said.

The weekly air quality index (AQI) average during December end-early January in Durgapur was 171, Howrah 148 and Kolkata 118.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

"Considering it was an average of the daily AQI, the air quality was very poor, and an action plan needs to be implemented at the earliest."

"This analysis shows that air pollution during winter is a problem in all the cities with Durgapur and Howrah experiencing poor and very poor days comparable to places in NCR and Uttar Pradesh," Somvanshi said.

international

of the day quote

I think it's vitally important that we show that democracies can deliver; that the United States and India can be a driver of global growth, growth and a model for prosperity and development in the 21st century

ATUL KESHAP | PRESIDENT OF THE US INDIA BUSINESS COUNCIL (USIBC)

China urges the United States to immediately correct its mistakes, revoke the relevant sanctions and stop suppressing Chinese enterprises and smearing China

ZHAO LUJIAN | CHINA'S FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

As freedom-loving democracies we must rise up to face down these threats. As well as NATO we are working with partners like Australia, India, Japan, Indonesia and Israel to build a global network of liberty

LIZ TRUSS | UK FOREIGN SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

Japan widens virus curbs

Tokyo: Restaurants and bars will close early in Tokyo and a dozen other areas across Japan beginning Friday as the country widens Covid-19 restrictions due to the omicron variant causing cases to surge to new highs in metropolitan areas. The restraint, which is something of a pre-state of emergency, is the first since September and is scheduled to last through February 13.

Seoul: Thousands of monks rally

Seoul: Thousands of Buddhist monks held a rally in Seoul Friday, demanding President Moon Jae-in to apologise for what they called the government's "anti-Buddhist bias" after a ruling party lawmaker accused temples of collecting admission fees from visitors to national parks. The lawmaker, Jung Chung-rai of the ruling Democratic Party, has been under a firestorm of criticism from South Korea's largest Buddhist sect, the Jojye Order, since he compared temples collecting "cultural asset viewing fees" to a legendary swindler known for selling river water for money, reports said.

Over 90% pupils in Pak weak in maths

New Delhi: More than 90 per cent of primary and lower-secondary students in Pakistan have only a weak or basic understanding of the mathematics and science they are required to learn, according to a nationwide study conducted by faculty at the Aga Khan Universities Institute for Educational Development.

Pak gets its 1st woman SC judge

Islamabad: Pakistan President Arif Alvi Friday gave his approval to the elevation of Lahore High Court Justice Ayesha Malik as the country's first-ever woman judge of the Supreme Court, a watershed moment in the judicial history of the conservative Muslim country. According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Law, Malik's appointment has been approved by President Alvi and will come into effect as soon as she takes the oath of office. The historic development came just two days after the bipartisan Parliamentary Committee on the Appointment of Superior Judiciary approved the 55-year-old justice's nomination as the Supreme Court judge.



The church, with God's help, is carrying out the commitment with firm determination to do justice to the victims of abuse by its members, applying with particular attention and rigor to the canonical legislation envisaged

POPE FRANCIS

MATTER OF CONCERN

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has announced that half a million people in Afghanistan have lost their jobs since the Taliban took over the country last August, adding that women have suffered the most, as per the report



Indian family found frozen to death near US-Canada border



PIC CREDIT: ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Toronto/New York, Jan 21: All four persons found dead on the Canada side of the US-Canada border by the RCMP Thursday were a Gujarati family.

They were part of a group of people being smuggled into the US from Canada as part of a wider human smuggling operation.

The deceased were a man, a woman, an infant and a teen boy. All four died from frostbites. Their bodies were located about 12 metres inside Canada from the US-Canada border, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The RCMP said its officers launched search operations after they were told by the US Customs and Border Protection about the arrest of a group of people who had crossed into the US from Canada.

The US agents told the RCMP that they have stopped a 15-passenger van about 1 km from the international border and found two undocumented Indian nationals (Gujaratis) in it. The van's 47-year-old driver, Steve Shand of Florida,

was arrested and charged with human smuggling. At the same time, five more Indians - all Gujarati speaking - were arrested not far from where the van was stopped by the US border agents.

The five told the investigators that they walked across the border from Canada to the US as they were to be picked up by someone. One of them revealed that he fraudulently got a student visa from India to come to Canada and then enter the US. Among the five, a man and a woman suffered frostbites and were both taken to hospital. Because of her severe frostbite, the woman was airlifted to another hospital where she may

have her hand amputated.

All the seven Indians (two found in the smuggler's van and five arrested) were found wearing same kind of clothes - black winter coats with fur-trimmed hoods, black gloves, black balaclavas and insulated rubber boots - provided by the human smuggler, Steve Shand, according to documents filed against him in the US District Court in Minnesota. US authorities believe Shand is part of a wider human smuggling network as three such incidents - on December 12, December 22, 2021 and January 12 - were reported from the same area from where he was arrested.

In a statement, the Canada Border Services Agency said it is also working with law enforcement partners, as well as its American counterparts, on the investigation.

The office of the Minister of Public Safety said in a statement: "We are shocked and saddened by the tragic deaths of four people attempting to cross the Canada-US border, near Emerson, Manitoba. We extend our most heartfelt condolences to their loved ones, and our thoughts are with them at this difficult time."

Officials in both countries said it is more common to see crossings north from the US into Canada.

Jaishankar dials envoys in US & Canada

New York: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday instructed Indian envoys to Canada and the US, Ajay Bisaria and Taranjit Singh Sandhu, "to urgently respond to the situation" where four Indian nationals including an infant have lost their lives of the US-Canada border. The minister said this in a public tweet. Neither of the two missions have responded on the microblogging site till the time of filing of this report. In a statement Thursday without identifying the victims, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) stated that "on the morning of January 19, 2022, RCMP officers with the Integrated Border Enforcement Team received concerning information from their counterparts in the United States".

ISRAEL'S ATTORNEY GENERAL ORDERS PROBE OF NSO CLAIMS

Jerusalem, Jan 21: Israeli spyware company NSO Group has again landed into a controversy with the Attorney General announcing to set up a team to probe into alleged misuse of its snooping Pegasus technology by police against its own citizens, including those not suspected of crime.

The NSO Group hit headlines last year when the alleged use of its Pegasus software to spy on jour-

nalists, human rights defenders, politicians and others in a number of countries, including India, triggered concerns over issues relating to privacy. The police have acknowledged the use of the spyware after the publication of the investigative report on the snooping, but said that a warrant was given by a court before each instance, it said. The probe panel will be headed by Deputy Attorney General Amit Harari and will include two other people, the report said.

COVID BOOSTERS SHOULD START WITH MOST VULNERABLE: WHO

Geneva, Jan 21: The World Health Organisation says that coronavirus vaccine boosters should now now be offered to people, starting with the most vulnerable, in a move away from its previous insistence that boosters were unnecessary for healthy adults and an acknowledgment that the vaccine supply is improving globally.

At a press briefing on Friday, the UN health agency said it was now recommending booster doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, beginning in the highest-priority groups, about four to six months



TOUGH RIDE



A cyclist rides across a snowy road under a heavy snowfall in Munich, Germany

PTI PHOTO

70 killed in airstrike on Yemen prison



AGENCIES

Sanaa, Jan 21: A Saudi-led airstrike targeting a prison run by Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 70 detainees and wounded dozens Friday, a rebel minister said. The strike was part of a pounding aerial offensive that hours earlier saw another airstrike take the Arab world's poorest country off the internet.

The intense campaign comes after the Iran-backed Houthis claimed a drone and missile attack that struck inside the capital of the United Arab Emirates earlier in the week. It marked a major escalation in the conflict, a brutal civil war in Yemen where the Saudi-led coalition, which is backed by the UAE, has battled the rebels since 2015.

Taha al-Motawakel, health minister in the Houthi government, which controls the country's north, told The Associated Press in the capital, Sanaa, that 70 detainees were killed at the prison but that he expects the number to rise since many of the wounded were seriously hurt. He said there would be updates on the death toll in the coming hours. Earlier Friday, a Saudi-led airstrike in the port city of Hodeida - later confirmed by

11 Iraqi soldiers killed in IS attack

Baghdad: At least 11 Iraqi soldiers were killed in an overnight attack by the Islamic State (IS) terror group in the eastern province of Diyala, police said Friday. The attack took place after midnight when IS militants attacked an army outpost in the Udheim area, some 60 km north of Diyala's provincial capital Baquba, a senior police official told Xinhua news agency.

satellite photos analysed by the AP - hit a telecommunication center there that's key to Yemen's connection to the internet. Airstrikes also hit near Sanaa, Yemen's capital held by the Houthis since late 2014.

Basheer Omar, an International Committee of the Red Cross spokesperson in Yemen, said rescuers continued to go through the rebel-run prison site in the northern city of Saada. "The toll is likely to increase, unfortunately," Omar said.

Iran, China & Russia hold joint naval drill in Indian Ocean

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 21: Iran, China and Russia have launched a joint naval exercise in the Indian Ocean, with the aim of boosting marine security, the Daily Mail reported.

Iran's state TV said that 11 of its vessels have been joined by three Russian ships, including a destroyer, and two Chinese vessels. Iran's Revolutionary Guard will also participate with smaller ships and helicopters.

The military exercise comes at a time of heightened tension between Russia and the West over Moscow's build-up of some 100,000 troops on its border with Ukraine.

Russia is also being joined by China and Iran - two nations which are at loggerheads with the West, with Beijing recently accused of sending a spy to the heart of the UK Parliament - the report said.



The joint naval exercise will cover some 6,560 square miles (17,000 square kilometres) in the Indian Ocean's north, and include night fighting, rescue operations and firefighting drills.

"The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen security and its foundations in the region, and to expand multilateral cooperation between the three countries to jointly support world peace, maritime security and create a maritime community with a common future," Iran's Rear Admiral Mostafa Tajoldini, spokesman for the drills, told Iranian state TV.

This is the third joint naval drill between the countries since 2019. It coincided with a recent visit by Iran's hardline President Ebrahim Raisi to Russia.

"Improving bilateral relations between Tehran and Moscow will enhance security for the region and the international arena," Raisi said upon returning from Russia on Friday, the official IRNA news agency reported.

US, Russia try to lower temperature in Ukraine crisis

AGENCIES

Geneva, Jan 21: The United States and Russia sought to lower the temperature in a heated standoff over Ukraine, even as they reported no breakthroughs in high-level, high-stakes talks Friday aimed at preventing a feared Russian invasion.

Armed with seemingly intractable and diametrically opposed demands, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met in Geneva for roughly 90 minutes at what the American said was a "critical moment". But there was no apparent movement on either side, and Blinken said the US and its allies remain resolute in

rejecting Russia's most important demands. Nonetheless, Blinken told Lavrov that the US would present Russia with written responses to its proposals next week and suggested the two men would likely meet again shortly after that.

With an estimated 100,000 Russian troops massed near Ukraine, many fear Moscow is preparing an invasion although Russia denies that. The US and its allies are scrambling to present a united front to prevent that or coordinate a tough response if they can't. "We didn't expect any major breakthroughs to happen today, but I believe we are now on a clearer path to understanding each other's positions," Blinken told reporters



US Secy of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov after the meeting. Blinken said Lavrov repeated Russia's insistence

its allies were not convinced of that. "We're looking at what is visible to all, and it is deeds and actions and not words that make all the difference," he said, adding that Russia should remove its troops from the Ukrainian border if it wanted to prove its point.

Lavrov, meanwhile, called the talks "constructive and useful" and said the US agreed to provide written responses to Russian demands on Ukraine and NATO next week. That could at least delay any imminent aggression for a few days. But Lavrov declined to characterise the US pledge. "I can't say whether we are on the right track or not," he told reporters. "We will understand that when

we receive the US written response to all of our proposals."

Moscow has demanded that the NATO alliance promise that Ukraine - a former Soviet republic - never be allowed to join. It also wants the allies to remove troops and military equipment from parts of eastern Europe. The two leaders have met once in person, in Geneva, and have had several virtual conversations on Ukraine that have proven largely inconclusive.

Washington and its allies have repeatedly promised "severe" consequences such as biting economic sanctions - though not military action - against Russia if an invasion goes ahead.

