CHALLENGING ROLE

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

LEISURE



#### 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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**VOLUME 11, ISSUE 292 | www.orissapost.com** 

**BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY, JANUARY 22 | 2022** 

#### ADMISSIONS OPEN I - XI (Day Boarding) VI - XI (Residential)

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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!

#### MARKET WATCH **VARIATION INDEX** SENSEX **59037.18** 🖊 427.44 17617.20 139.80 DOLLAR **74.67** ₹0.10 ₹0.14 EURO **1** ₹9 GOLD ₹48,389 ₹335 SILVER

WEATHER					
	BHUB	СТК			
<b>≜</b> MAX	29.0°€	28.2°			
≝ MIN	16.8°⊂	16.4°	─ ———— — Forecast		
Humidity	71%	73%	10100000		
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Mainly clear sky		

# 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.



The Leaders' Choice

1800 266 266 1 (toll free)



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

# **COVID DATA LEAKED**

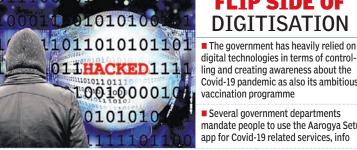
■ Cyber-criminals have allegedly stolen data of thousands of people in India, including health workers, from a government server, that has even been indexed in Google search

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 these 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.



■ The sample document shared on the Raid Forums website shows that the

■ The health ministry and security researchers had denied the breach of Covid-19 vaccination leaked data was meant for data of 150 million Indians, after upload on Co-WIN portal news of the hack spread online

The most pressing concern is that the data of thousands of health workers (available in PDF files) have been exposed online in Google search that contains PAN, Aadhaar and other details like mobile numbers, address, age, gender.

Rajaharia said that Google has indexed lakhs of data from the affected system. "PII including Name, MOB, PAN, Address etc of #Covid19#RTPCR results & #Cowin data getting public through a Govt CDN. #Google indexed almost 9 Lac public/private #GovtDocuments in search engines. Patient's data is now listed on #DarkWeb. Need fast deindex," Rajaharia said in

#### **DIGITISATION**

01 LHACKED 1111 ling and creating awareness about the Covid-19 pandemic as also its ambitious digital technologies in terms of controlvaccination programme

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

■ 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

www.ipsonline.in

10,000+

**Public Awareness Initiative** 

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 **MORE P7** decided

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# 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 over-

joyed, 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 13month-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.



# leisure



#### **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.



GaneshaSpeaks.com accuracy • reliability • trust

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. Ganesha says you are sensible and know exactly how to balance work

#### **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. Ganesha 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 Ganesha

#### 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 Ganesha. A little change will go a long way in helping you recharge your batter ies. Your children's achievements will make you proud, even as afternoon will bring glad tidings on the financial front

#### **VIRGO** Ganesha predicts that fami-

ly 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

#### You will spin out a plan on a

daily basis and prefer to go Ganesha. 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 Ganesha. 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 Ganesha. 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 vour 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 Ganesha.

#### AQUARIUS

You take inspiration from Hercules today! Your endurance will see you through adversities, asserts Ganesha. 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 Ganesha

## 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 bestselling 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.

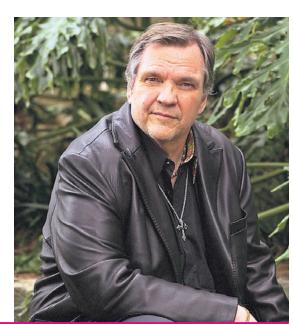
'Our hearts are broken to announce that the incomparable Meat Loaf passed away tonight with his wife Deborah by his side." a message

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.



New web series to binge watch this weekend or cinephiles, nothing can be more entertaining than the idea of watching a binary tha

ing 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.

#### Bhaukaal 2 Mohit

Raina donned the cap of a fearless cop who was out to dismantle the and conspira-

nexus of crime cies. 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, Siddhanth Kapoor, Pradeep Nagar

#### **Unpaused Naya Safar**

and Rashmi Rajput, among others.

The new Amazon Prime series Unpaused Naya Safar is



a collection of different stories around positivity, fresh beginnings and optimism. The four stories weaved to-

gether are - Teen Tigada, War Room, Gond Ke Laddu. The Couple and Vaikunth. The series released January 21 stars Saqib Saleem, Neena Kulkarni, Shreya



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 desperately seeks



peaceful soution. With he 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?

#### Rhea shares SSR's gym video on his birth anniv

Mumba: 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 When Deepika turned inwards funds from

the late actor. She was also named in a Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) charge sheet along with her brother Showik in a drug-related probe into Sushant's death. The 29-vear-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 Bachchanstarrer *Chehre*, which released last year

> 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.

Mumbai:

'To be able to

portray that on

screen, the

had to come

from a deep

place. I had

SUDOKU

4

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

8

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a

manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains

6 3

3

1

8

1

3 1

3

2 9

> 5 9

3

2 6

the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

to

emotions

Deepika

deep to play a vulnerable char-

acter in Gehraiyaan, a noir re-

She admits that finding her

footing initially wasn't easy as the

role required her to be "emotionally

lationship drama.

Padukone says she dug

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**



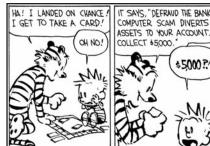




LAND ON



#### CALVIN AND HOBBES





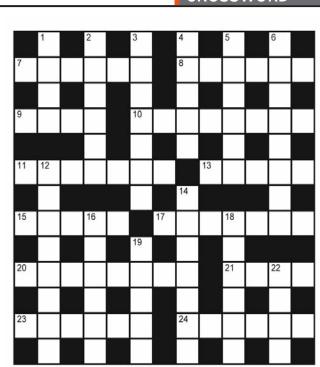


#### BREVITY



#### FUN

#### **CROSSWORD**



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21 Strong current

of air

23 Truffle, e.g.

24 Communal

Native

village

American

20 Cruel

Across				
7	Electrician or			
	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
- Down

- - Carnival
  - 2 Lacking vitality
- schedule (3-4) 16 Grievance

3 Entertainer

horse

6 Tibia

12 Aglow

4 Impact sound

5 Headgear for a

18 Fisherman 19 Cowboy rope

14 Bump from the

- 22 Shopper stopper
- SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# downtown



#### **BIRTH ANNIV PREP**

BIRTH ANNIV PREP	24 23	COVID-19 TRACKER			
DIKTH ANNIV PREP			INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
Netaji Birthplace Museum in Cuttack decorated with		World	34,38,83,914	27,52,08,608	55,95,610
colourful lights ahead of his birth anniversary, Friday		India	3,85,66,027	3,60,58,806	4,88,396
		Odisha	11,87,295	10,99,423	8,507
		11111111	: 	: 	: 

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 conmen 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.

# Cyber fraud: Cop's wife duped of ₹50K 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

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.

ОР РНОТО

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 of-

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





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

## Dense fog cripples flight ops in City



Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Flight op erations 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

cleared, he said. Thick fog had covered several

parts of the state capital since early Regional morning. The Meteorological 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 R-Day guest list out 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

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 within 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



UPPER AGE LIMIT FOR VARIOUS POSTS AS SEVERAL CANDIDATES MISSED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOVT JOBS DUE TO **UPPER AGE LIMIT 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.

The upper age limit for candidates of general category candidates was raised to 38 years while the same for candidates of SC, ST and SEBC categories has been increased to 43 years. Similarly, the upper age limit would be 43 years for women candidates.

In 2020, the state government had announced that there would be no jobs in the government sector except for health and family welfare department for next two years.

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 Mallik would be the guest in Navagarh. Ranendra Pratap Swain in Mayurbhanj, Padmanabh Behera in Bargarh and Pratap Jena in

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 flaghoisting 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

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

# BHU study on alternative therapy for thoracic patients

octors 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 preoperative 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 volThe 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

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 71per cent and specificity of 70 per cent. IANS





Covid protocols go for a toss as candidates rush in to file nominations for the panchayat elections at Cuttack Sadar Sub-Collector office, Friday

# Below 10k daily cases after 9 days in state

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Odisha, after a gap of nine days, recorded below 10,000 daily Covid cases Friday, with the new 9,833 detections taking the state's active caseload to 89,702. The state reported 10,368 Covid cases Thursday.

The state had reported 8,778 cases January 12. Since then, the daily cases were harbouring in between 10,000 to 12,000.

According to the State Information and Public Relations (I&PR) department, out of the 9,833 fresh cases, 972 infections were detected from 0 to 18 years of population. Similarly, 5,699 were detected in quarantine while 4,134 are local contact cases, said the

The highest 2,946 cases were re ported from Khurda district followed by Sundargarh (1,134), Cuttack (774), Mayurbhanj (295), Nayagarh (292), Balasore (286) and Bolangir (288) district.

Meanwhile, the state reported six Covid deaths taking the toll to 8,507. Two death cases were reported from Cuttack, while Angul,



People queuing up at a testing centre in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Dhenkanal, Jagatsinghpur and Puri districts reported one Covid death each. Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have died due to comorbidities so far, the bulletin said.

The coastal state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) also slightly came down to 13.2 per cent from 13.97 per cent recorded Thursday. The daily TPR is at 25.9 per cent in Khurda, 25.1 in Sundargarh and 18.4 in Rayagada. Seventeen more districts have reported the ratio of over 7.5 per cent, according to a bulletin shared by the state Health department

Khurda, of which state Capital Bhubaneswar is a part, has a weekly TPR of 33.5 per cent between January 14 and 20, followed by 28.1 in Balasore and 25.5 in Sundargarh.

At least 8,471 patients recuperated from the highly infectious disease Thursday, taking the state's total number of recoveries to

Odisha now has 89,702 active cases, including 32,487 in Khurda and 10,796 in Sundargarh. The two districts along with Rayagada,

The daily TPR is Seventeen more Sundargarh and

in Khurda, 25.1 in reported the ratio of over 7.5 18.4 in Rayagada | per cent

Khurda has a weekly TPR of 33.5 per cent between January 14 and 20, followed by 28.1 in Balasore and 25.5 in Sundargarh

are in the red zone. A district with over 2,500 active cases is included in the red category. Puri, Mayurbhanj and Jajpur are among the 12 districts which are in the yellow zone with over 1,000 patients each.

State Health Services Director Bijay Mohapatra said that the apparent declining curve of the contagion is to be monitored for a few more days. The health department appealed to Covid patients, who have mild symptoms or are asymptomatic in home isolation, to avoid self-medication. They have also been asked not to

#### Prison SOP on custodial deaths

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: The Directorate of Prisons has asked senior superintendents and superintendents of jails across the state to approach jurisdictional District Judges or Chief Judicial Magistrates of their respective areas in case of death of an inmate under custody.

The CJM will be requested by superintendents to order an inquiry by a judicial magistrate to unearth the reasons and circumstances behind the death of a prison inmate. The superintendents should intimate the IIC of the local police station and the inquiring magistrate about the death and request them to initiate followup actions as per the CrPC Act.

The prison authorities have been directed to follow the guidelines issued by the NHRC and rules enumerated in the Odisha Model Jail manual with regard to the postmortem and disposal of bodies.

The jail manual also narrates the procedure to be followed by medical officers in case of death of a prisoner. The medical officer has to mention his observation on the death of the prisoner in jail as per Section 15 of the Prisons Act 1894. In such cases, the authorities should immediately enter details like history ticket and health records of the prisoner in a register to be kept at least for ten years.

Medical officers have been advised to conduct the health screening of all prisoners during admission as per the format issued by the NHRC. The superintendents have been instructed to report to the concerned authorities in case of the death of a military prisoner/foreigner prisoner.

#### 14-yr RI to youth for raping teen

CUTTACK,: A POCSO court here imprisonment (RI) to Alok Dehury, 24, convicting him of kidnapping and outraging the modesty of a 16year-old girl of Badamba area here in February 2016. The court also slapped a penalty of ₹10,000 on Alok, failing which would entail an additional six-moth RI, the court ruled while convicting Dehury under Section

#### **PANGS OF PANDEMIC**

# Staff crunch impedes work in govt offices



Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Owing to the apparent third wave peak, government offices in the capital city are witnessing a sharp rise in Covid cases, with many of these either sealed or forced to run with reduced manpower.

As per sources, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) reported a massive 1,502 new cases Friday, the highest this month. The city witnessed a 101 per cent increase in cases during the last 10 days with only 710 cases logged until Jan 10.

On one hand, the BMC is running its containment strategy full throttle with deployment of micro zones all over the city. On the other hand, the contagion has invaded quite a few public offices by pinned down a large number of staffers.

As per sources, the Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) saw 20 of its 87 staffers testing positive. The BMC too is said to have identified more than 50 Covid cases, with many senior officials in home isolation. Similarly, the Civil Courts, Khurda, was sealed January 18 while CRPF campus in City logged more than 20 cases in the past 10 days.

"Most of the staff members have recovered and resumed work. We are also monitoring health of quarantine cases. All precautions are being followed in the office and we are working with only half of our total strength to control the spread of the virus. Only the works needing mandatory public interaction are being almanpower. Presently we **Patient Department (OPD)** services as we have only one doctor to manage it. services are still operational and Covid testing is also on with RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) available until evening

LAXMIDHAR SAHOO DIRECTOR, CAPITAL HOSPITAL

lowed at the moment," said a senior BMC official.

Several public hospitals have also been hit by the Covid surge, putting a halt on different healthcare services. As per sources, about 150 staff members of the Capital Hospital here have tested positive with about 8-10 new cases being reported on a daily basis.

Furthermore, about 30 people have been reported positive in different public hospitals and Urban Primary Healthcare Centres (UPHCs) run by the BMC. "We have been facing acute short-

age of manpower. Presently we have stopped the Outdoor Patient Department (OPD) services as we have only one doctor to manage it. However, emergency services are still operational and Covid testing is also on with RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) available until evening," informed Laxmidhar Sahoo, Director of Capital Hospital.

# NGT rap for Ganjam DM for order non-compliance

Green Tribunal (NGT) has served a notice on the District Magistrate (DM) of Ganjam over non-compliance of an order passed by the environment watchdog for closure of a Take Home Ration (THR) chhatua plant allegedly operating without proper pollution control measures in the district, an official said Friday

A bench of judicial member B Amit Sthalekar and expert member Saibal Dasgupta sought response from the Ganjam DM within two weeks. The green body also warned of action against the DM under National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for not complying with the order of the bench, it was learnt.

had directed the Odisha State DM was yet to revert, it was learnt. to ensure that a suit for recovering environmental compensation of Rs 1.87 crore is filed against THR chhatua plant of M/s Bajarangbali Women's Self-Help Group at Indrakhi village under Rengeilunda block of Ganjam for causing damage to environment.

Apart from OSPCB, the tribunal had directed the Ganjam DM to initiate measures for closure of the unit. The environment watchdog had also asked the OSPCB and Ganjam DM to file an affidavit of compliance in the registry by December 10.

Although OSPCB filed the same stating that a case has been filed against the unit for recovery of en-

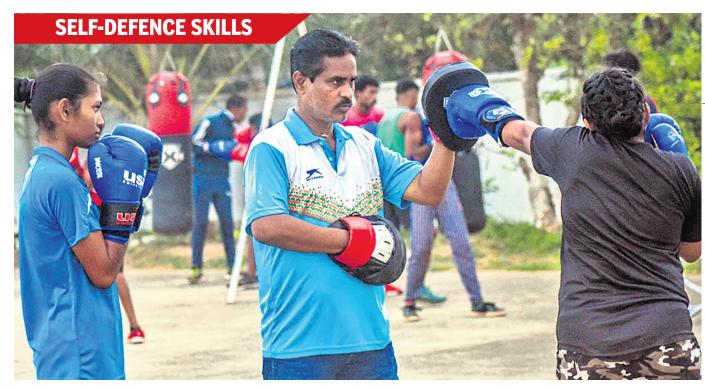
Netaji statue at India Gate to

be 25-ft tall: NMAG director

In October 2021, the tribunal vironment compensation, Ganjam

had approached the NGT alleging that the chhatua unit which produced around 43 tonnes of chhatua along with other products every month for 233 anganwadi centres of Rangeilunda block and Gopalpur NAC, operated without proper pollution control measures

The tribunal ordered inspection of the plant by OSPCB. The OPCB claimed that the unit was running without consent to operate since 2011. Soon after, the NGT directed the OSPCB to estimate the damage caused to the environment due to operation of the plant and also calculate the penalty to be charged



Girls undergo training at Puri Boxing Academy, Friday

# Don't ignore if your baby cries too much

excessively is not

a case of colic,

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: The proposed grand statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to be installed at India Gate in the National Capital will be 25 feet high and made of granite stone, Director General of the National Modern Art Gallery, New Delhi, Adwaita Gadanayak said. Gadanayak expressed his hap-

piness for getting an opportunity for carving the statue of Netaji, who was born in Odisha. Prime Minister Narendra Modi

announced Friday that a grand

statue of iconic freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose 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 125th birth anniversary of the Azad Hind Fauj founder: "I am delighted. It is a matter of honour for me as a sculptor that Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose to give this responsibility to me," he told a private news channel.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: If your baby is crying non-stop for hours, you should not ignore this. Most of us take baby's crying lightly and think it is the impact of colic or

something else.

However, arrhythmia can prove be dangerous for babies and may be the reason behind excessive

The baby should be put under stethoscope and its heart rate be checked, said Pankaj Mohanty, Neonatology Department Associate Professor at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar. According to Mohanty, a 25-



otitis or sepsis. It can be due to can be fatal, if not diagnosed on time PANKAJ MOHANTY |

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, AIIMS-BHUBANESWAR

baby girl was crying consistently for more than 12 hours and was not taking food. Prior to her admission to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, the case was treated as abdominal colic, otitis or sepsis.

A team of doctors lead by Mohanty checked vitals of the baby. The heart rate (HR) was found at 300bpm (normal HR should be within 140). Then the baby underwent ECG.

The test revealed absent p wave and HR 288, s/ O PSVT. Soon, she was taken to NICU. After 24 hours of intensive care, the heart rhythm of the baby was found normal. She started taking breastfeeding, Mohanty informed.

Cardiology department Additional Professor Ramachandra Barik, DM Resident Purbasha and junior Resident Hemant were in the team that treated the baby

sources said. "This type of cases is happening quite often. But, parents as well as doctors should be aware about this. Every child crying excessively is not a case of colic, otitis or sepsis. It can be arrhythmia, which can be fatal if not diagnosed on time,'

Mohanty said. "The baby girl is now doing well and it has been planned to do electrophysiology study on her and if required, radio frequency ablation will be done,'

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days-old baby was admitted to

AIIMS-Bhubaneswar Tuesday

night with excessive crying. The

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

#### 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 Pangi,



Padal, former MP Jhinna Hikaka, former MLA Ramchandra Kadam and Prafulla Pangi 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

## 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 VIM-SAR 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



The court order pertained to a case filed by Grade IV employees. who were laid off in 2010

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 iudice in the High Court and it will be

# 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 guide lines 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

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."

#### **Unguarded border sparks fear of Covid surge** It is alleged that the district administration has not Malkangiri, Jan 21: In the wake of alarming rise in Covid-19 cases engaged any police or in neighbouring Chhattisgarh, the

of concern. Sukma district administration of Chhattisgarh, however, is not allowing anyone from Malkangiri side without conducting

unguarded entry points in

Malkangiri has emerged as a cause

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



However, entry points of Malkangiri have been left unguarded. For instance, Chalanguda health workers to ensure **Covid safety norms** in bordering areas

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



steps to check people coming from

## Virus spike among kids raises concern

Kendrapara, Jan 21: The district has been witnessing a surge in Covid-19 infections while infection among kids is also rising.

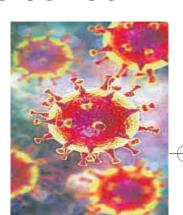
The number of infections has touched 877 in the last 13 days while 99 cases have been reported in last 24 hours.

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



Biswal alleged that vaccination has not yet been completed.

"Infection among kids has been a major concern for us. All have to take precautions against transmission. Holding elections without adhering to Covid protocols will be disastrous," they noted.

Niranjan Behera said that Covid guidelines are a priority at this

Man gets 10-year RI

As for the issue, sub-collector

#### **AGE-OLD RITUAL**



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

locals alleged.

Earlier, the Lokayukta had or-

dered a probe following which

Director of Inquiry submitted a re-

port. Now, as many as 10 staffers of

#### 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 Gengutia 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 registred 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

## Admin to probe scam in school uniforms



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 21: The dis-

trict 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 Siksha 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 536 pairs of uniforms in the schools under Pangam panchayat but only 113 pairs have been distributed so far.

Similarly, another SHG, which

#### for raping minor girl was supposed to supply 3,284 pairs of uniforms to schools under Udulibeda panchayat, has supplied only 298 pairs.

An official letter from the SSA

was issued for return of funds.

But, it was found that funds have

been deposited in the accounts of

the school managing committees

concerned. More surprisingly, the

funds have already been utilised.

Following the allegations, SSA

project director Balmukunda

Bhuyan had held a meeting of dis-

trict education officer (DEO), BEO,

additional district education officer

and CDPOs on the issue. It was

stated that as per the OPEPA direc-

tive, if uniforms are not distributed,

funds will be recovered from the

DEO Chittaranjan Pandey said,

"Allegations about irregularities

in uniform distribution have been

received and action will be taken

school managing committees.

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.

# ₹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



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

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

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-

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.

#### after an investigation.' भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान भुवनेश्वर INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BHUBANESWAR

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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.

The aspiring candidates satisfying the eligibility criteria may apply

through online starting from date 21/01/2022. The last date of submission of online application is 04.02.2022.

For details, please visit http://www.iitbbs.ac.in. Sd/- Registrar



Do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons

**SRI AUROBINDO** 



#### Sarma's street cred

ssam 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 governmentowned 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@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

#### WISDOM CORNER

The quality, not the longevity, of one's life is what is important.

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the

The pay is good and I can walk to work.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

#### WORDS**WORTH**

#### ■ A flea in one's ear

his expression goes back a long way. It appeared in English for the first I 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.

#### Two fools flying

wo 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



replies, "Yeah, I'm not too keen on this

paragliding either."

FOCUS FACEBOOK

# **OPIUM OF THE MASSES**



František Vrabel

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** 

n 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 ac-

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 parttime 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 disable critical thinking. In many ways, micro-targeting

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

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. Toencourage 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 AIbased 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 theknow-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 Ihunjhunwala

WHEN THE COUNTRY

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

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

here are two reasons for this 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 re-

duce 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 largeconstruction 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.

# etters

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

rissaPOST B-15, Rasulgarh 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.

> Debadurllav 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 commensurating 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



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 resourcesdependent community is an important aspect of tiger conservation

and the "people agenda" ranks prominently in India's conservation efforts

BHUPENDER YADAV UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

#### SHORT **TAKES**

#### PM to interact with DMs today

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with district magistrates (DMs) Saturday via videoconferencing 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 videoconferencing, 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

Panaii: 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**

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New Delhi: The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested a wanted arms dealer who supplied weapons to the conspirators who plotted to kil 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.

# **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 coconspirators Sukhpreet Singh, Tharanjot Singh and Sukhmeetpal Singh, all residents of Gurdaspur. 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-

PERFECT CLICK

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

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 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 QUITS 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 auit 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

"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

Priyanka drops biggest

hint on CM face in UP

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and party General Secretary Priyanka

Gandhi Vadra launch the party's youth manifesto for the UP Assembly polls,

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

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.

#### MHA issues fresh rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: Arms manufacturers will henceforth be allowed to enhance annual production of firearms and ammunition according to fresh rules issued by the Union home ministry.

Under the Arms (Amendment) Rules, 2022, the arms manufacturers, however, will have to submit online every month details of the firearms manufactured, sold or transferred or consumed for the month.

The home ministry issued the new rules through a gazette notification on Thursday.

"The manufacturer who has been issued licence in Form VII under these rules shall be permitted to have enhanced annual production of firearms or ammunition or caliber wise revision of his licensed capacity by giving intimation to the licensing authority and also to the state government concerned within ninety days from the end of the financial year and for which no further endorsement on the licence as to capacity shall be required," the notification said.

While applying, the manufacturer has to submit detailed proposal for enhancement of manufacturing capacity or caliber wise revision of licenced capacity, project outlays, means of finance and justification for economic viability and market demand projections, duly certified by the authorised signatory of the company.

Monthly online returns, detailing the production, sold, transfer and consumed shall be submitted by the manufacturer by close of business hours of the last day of the month, the notification said.

Prior approval of the licensing authority will be mandatory for any change in control, either directly or indirectly, of the company or in case of any change in shareholding or beneficial interest in the shareholding, resulting into dilution of promot-

be required if there is increase in shareholding of a shareholder, who held less than 10 per cent in the share capital of the company, to 10 per cent or more provided that for transfer of share holding between the two promoters which is already approved by the licensing authority.

#### To a question on whether she would herself contest. Priyanka said, "We

as Uttar Pradesh heads towards elections, Privanka Gandhi Vadra Friday pitched herself as the party's chief ministerial face as she released a 'vouth manifesto' for the state along with Rahul Gandhi. The Congress general secre-

New Delhi, Jan 21: Signalling

the way forward for the Congress

in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

tary, however, evaded queries on whether she would contest the assembly polls beginning next month. She also said the party would be open to a post-poll alliance if the need arose.

"Do you see any other face from the Congress party," Priyanka Gandhi said when asked who would be the party's chief ministerial candidate in the Uttar Pradesh as sembly polls."You are seeing my face everywhere," the Congress leader added while addressing a joint press conference with her brother and former party president Rahul Gandhi to release the 'Bharti Vidhan' (recruitment document) manifesto that promises a new vision for youth in the state and the creation of 20 lakh jobs, including eight lakh for women.

To a question on whether she would herself contest the assembly polls, Priyanka Gandhi said, 'We have not yet decided." She said it would be known once that is decided.

The Congress general secretary

have not yet decided" in-charge of Uttar Pradesh said

the party would certainly look at supporting other parties for government formation and was open to backing them if the situation were to arise after the elections. She, however, said the Congress

would keep implementing its vision for youth, especially women, as a priority while extending any such support for government formation in UP. "We would be open to considering that. If such a situation arises, then we would certainly want our agenda for the youth and women to be fulfilled if we were going to be part of any such dispensation," she said to a question on whether the Congress would support other parties in government formation.

The party has resolved to fill the "massive backlog" of jobs in the public sector and promised 20 lakh jobs, including eight lakh for women, in their manifesto for the

The campaign in Uttar Pradesh is very negative and is centred around caste and religion. Privanka Gandhi said.

ers shareholding below 10 per cent. However, prior approval will not

# 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. P.K. 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.

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

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

2004, 2009 and 2014 and also propagated the message of Hindutva in the rural areas of eastern Uttar In the 2017 Assembly elections,

Adityanath's election campaigns in

Vahini leader Raghvendra Pratap Singh successfully contested from Dumariagani 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.



# TWO STATES



**OrissaPOST** 

SATURDAY | JANUARY 22 | 2022 | BHUBANESWAR

# Delhi to lift weekend curfew



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 Baijal 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

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)

east India and southwest

The baska population "declined

sharply due to unsustainable har-

vesting", the official said, adding

that the species now teeters on the

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

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 environ-

survival and dispersal patterns of

the freshwater turtles" and plan

large scale release programmes in

the future, the forest official said.

ecological data on the conserva-

tion requirements for them, he

major industrial hub of the state,

The exercise will provide basic

This will also help "understand

ment," he said.

pond in Sajnekhali, Roy said. "In the Sajnekhali pond, we had

brink of functional extinction. A joint exploration by a team of

Bangladesh," he explained.

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 Baijal 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

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"

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

**PROTEST TURNS UGLY** 

#### **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



Kolkata, Jan 21: The West Bengal forest department is planning to rebaska, 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

#### **CONSTRUCT SECOND AIRPORT FOR KOLKATA**

**WEST BENGAL TO** 

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 21: With an aim to decongest Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport (NSCBIA) in Dumdum, 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 Bhangar is among the possible locations.

In a recent communication, Chief Secretary HKD wivedi 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 Dumdum airport in North 24 Parganas district. We have felt the need to construct a new airport in the vicinity of Kolkata. The best pos sible 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. Bhangar 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.

#### **WAR AGAINST VIRUS**

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

## Delhi: Hospitalisation much lower in 3rd wave

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 num-

index (AQI) average

during December

end-early January in

ber 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

UNI PHOTO

#### **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 uncoming 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 atleast 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 of-

ficial 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 The weekly air quality strictions could not improve it,"

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



recorded the most polluted air in the region in 2021 with an aver-

age annual PM 2.5 concentration of 80 ug/m3, he told PTI.

Haldia had the lowest 2021 average value of 39 ug/m3.

PM 2.5 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-

Durgapur was 171, Howrah An AQI between 0 and 50 is con-148 and Kolkata 118 sidered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very

Somvanshi said.

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

The weekly air quality index

(AQI) average during December

end-early January in Durgapur was

171, Howrah 148 and Kolkata 118.

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.

# national



There is a need to strengthen peace, harmony and brotherhood in the country because it is being seen that there is an atmosphere of tension and violence, and it is the desire of all to get rid of it ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

#### **WELCOME MOVE**

The Rajasthan government has revised its Covid-19 guidelines making pasting of vaccination details of staff mandatory in all offices and shops from February 1



repetitive closures of schools during the been a loss of education for the students. The health of students is very important for us but it is also important that the children's

MANISH SISODIA DELHI DEPUTY CM

The TMC's main role is to fracture non-BJP votes in Goa. The TMC, using money power, has bought a few leaders. In a tacit understanding with the BJP, it is trying to hurt the prospects of the Congress and that is a proven fact. The party is venturing into states where the Congress is the main opposition of the BJP. It is giving states such as Uttar Pradesh a miss as there are other regional forces

VURID DVNIVN CHUMUHIIDA LEADER OF THE CONGRESS IN LS

On coming to power, the Samajwad Party will restore the old pension scheme, which will benefit the teachers, employees and officers of the state government. I have already held discussions with the employees and economic experts and have found out that we will be able to arrange funds for it by creating a corpus

AKHILESH YADAV SP PRESIDENT

#### SHORT TAKES

#### Two held

New Delhi: Delhi Police has arrested two people for allegedly fleecing people on the pretext of providing jobs in Airlines at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, an official said here Friday. The accused have been identified as Naveen Pathak and Kamal Sharma. Notably, the police had earlier arrested three other accused in the same case. According to the official, on June 17, 2021 a complaint was received from one Surender Singh Fartyal alleging that he had been cheated on pretext of providing a job at IGI Airport in Spicejet Airlines, New Delhi.

#### Three dead

Satna: Three persons. including two elderly brothers, were killed and another one was injured after the car they were travelling in crashed into a road divider in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh while they were on their way to Mumbai from Bihar, police said Friday. Jamal Khan (68), his brother Rafi Ullah Khan (62) and Murad Khan (23) died on the spot in the incident that took place on Thursday night near Khamaria village, some 65 km from the district headquarters, Amdara police station inspector Rajendra Pathak said.

.....

#### Two arrested

Mumbai: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Friday said that in joint operation by it's Mumbai and Goa units two women have been arrested for their alleged involvement in drug peddling and one of them is a foreign national. The accused women were held from Apors area of North Goa. A senior NCB official said that the joint operation was conducted following a specific tip off. Teams of Mumbai and Goa NCB were formed and raids were conducted after developing the information.

#### Three killed

Hyderabad: Even in this modern age of technological advancements, sorcery and superstitions are not only rampant in parts of Telangana but continue to claim lives. In another shocking incident highlighting the deep-rooted menace, a man and his two sons were brutally hacked to death by a group of people who suspected them to be practising black magic.

# Terrorists may sneak into J&K via PoK: Intel agencies

New Delhi, Jan 21: Amid the heavy snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir, the intelligence agencies have warned that terrorists from Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Al Badr are planning to sneak into the Union Territory through Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), sources in the security set up said.

The sources, quoting intelligence inputs, said that at least seven militants of LeT and five of Al Badra are trying to cross over to Jammu and Kashmir from two different areas located in PoK.

The intelligence alert has specifically said that from one place in PoK, the LeT ultras will be trying to infiltrate with the help of a launch pad commander, while the five Al Badr terrorists are located near a launch pad in Balakot, who are being escorted by a local guide to infiltrate from the Bhimber Gali side in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir.

The intel alerts have been shared with the J&K Police, Central security forces and the Army who have been asked to intensify patrolling along the international border adjoining the Bhimber Gali.

"The alert is a matter of major concern for the security forces

THE SOURCES, QUOTING INTELLIGENCE INPUTS, SAID THAT AT LEAST SEVEN MILITANTS OF LET AND FIVE OF AL BADRA ARE TRYING TO CROSS OVER TO JAMMU AND KASHMIR FROM TWO DIFFERENT AREAS LOCATED IN PoK THE INTEL ALERTS HAVE BEEN SHARED WITH THE J&K POLICE, CENTRAL SECURITY FORCES AND THE ARMY WHO HAVE BEEN ASKED TO INTENSIFY PATROLLING ALONG THE

ahead of the Republic Day, and if they (militants) are trying to cross the international border amid the heavy snowfall, it indicates that they must be equipped with winter clothing and navigational devices." an official in the security

INTERNATIONAL BORDER

ADJOINING THE

**BHIMBER GALI** 

forces deployed in J&K said. He also said that in recent operations launched by the Central security forces and the state police, the terrorists who were neutralised had army grade winter clothing and other staff like dry-fruits and dry meals. This also indicates that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is providing logistic supports to these terrorists.

Recent intelligence inputs have also revealed that ISI has been searching for new routes to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir besides establishing new control rooms in PoK. The security forces, after intercepting messages, revealed that eight new routes have been identified which are covered with snow and have less patrolling by Indian forces during peak winters. The intelligence intercepts have further revealed that Pakistan has activated new terror launch pads along the Line of Control (LoC) with increased efforts to aid infiltration bids into Jammu and Kashmir before the Republic Day on January 26.

#### Five die in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 22: At least five people have died in Bihar's Saran district in what appears to be yet another case of suspected hooch tragedy in the dry state, officials said Friday.

According to District Magistrate, Saran, Rajesh Meena, the deaths were reported from different villages of Amnour and Maker

"We have received information about five deaths. Bodies of two of the deceased have been sent for post mortem. Some of the bereaved family members have blamed the deaths on liquor consumption," stated the DM in Chhaora, the district headquar-

He said raids conducted jointly by police and excise department in the two blocks have unearthed illicit liquor trade, and vowed stern action against all accused.

The incident comes less than a week after 11 people died in Nalanda, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's home district, after con-

suming spurious liquor. Earlier, around Deepawali, hooch had claimed more than 40 lives in West Champaran, Gopalganj, Muzaffarpur and Samastipur districts. Sale and consumption of alcohol was completely banned in Bihar in April, 2016, a year after Kumar promised the same to the state's women.

Implementation of the same by his government has, however, been an object of criticism by the opposition and, sometimes, by the judiciary.

## States not sending sufficient officers for deputation: Govt

The DoPT has recently proposed changes in the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954, that will take away the power of states to override New Delhi's request for seeking officers on central deputation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: States are not sparing sufficient number of IAS officers for deputation which is affecting the functioning of the central government, the Centre said Friday, defending its proposed changes in the service rules which gives it power to overrule states on such matters.

Sources in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said a trend of decreasing representation of IAS officers, up to the Joint Secretary-level at the Centre, has been noticed as most of the states are not meeting their Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) obligations and the number of officers, sponsored by them to serve at the Centre are much lesser.

The DoPT has recently proposed changes in the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954, that will take away the power of states to override New Delhi's request for seeking officers on central deputation.

The move has evoked sharp criticism from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to roll back the proposal claiming it will affect the states' administration. According to DoPT sources, the

number of IAS officers on CDR has gone down from 309 in 2011 to 223 as on date. The percentage of CDR utilisation has gone down from 25 per cent in 2011 to 18 per cent as on date, they said.

In spite of increase of IAS officers at deputy secretary/director level in IAS from 621 in 2014 to

1,130 in 2021, the number of such officers on central deputation has gone down from 117 to 114 during the period, sources said.

Hence, the number of officers available under the central deputation is not sufficient to meet the requirement of the Centre, they said. The non-availability of sufficient number of officers at the Centre is affecting the functioning of the central government since the Centre needs the services of these officers to obtain fresh inputs in policy formulation and programme implementation, sources said.

The Centre also needs them to utilise their vast field experience by way of providing vital inputs for policy planning and formulation. Further, the movement of officers from state to Centre and vice versa is mutually beneficial to both as it enables the professional growth of officers besides contributing towards better coordination with the states for effective programme implementation, they said.

The sources further said the reason quoted by most of the state cadres for not sponsoring the number of officers as per prescribed CDR is the shortage of officers in the cadre. Considering the same and the fact that shortage of officers in the cadres, if any, has to be shared mutually between the Centre and the states, they said.

According to DoPT's proposal, sent to chief secretaries of all state governments on January 12, "in specific situations where services of cadre officer(s) are required by the central government in public interest, the central government may seek the services of such officer(s) for posting under the central government...and the state government concerned shall give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time".

It further states that "wherever the state government concerned does not give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time, the officer(s) shall stand relieved from cadre from the date as may be specified by the central government".

#### **Harak Singh Rawat** joins Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Jan 21: Five days after he was expelled from the BJP, Harak Singh Rawat on Friday joined the Congress in Delhi along with his daughter-in-law Anukriti Gusain.

The former Uttarakhand minister and his daughter-in-law joined the Congress in the presence of party campaign head for Uttarakhand Harish Rawat, PCC president Ganesh Godiyal, Leader of Opposition in Uttarakhand Assembly Pritam Singh, state party incharge Devender Yadav and other Harak Singh Rawat, who rep-

resented the Kotdwar seat in the Uttarakhand Assembly, was among the 10 MLAs who had rebelled against the then chief minister Harish Rawat-led state government in 2016 and joined the BJP, reducing the Congress dispensation to a minority.

Harish Rawat, who always insisted Harak Singh Rawat should apologise for what he did to his government, is said to have been averse to the latter's reinduction into the party. However, there were many in the party who wanted Harak Singh Rawat to be taken in.

Soon after returning to the Congress, Harak Singh Rawat said he has joined the party uncondi-

Speculation is rife that the Congress could field the former minister from Kedarnath and Gusain from Lansdowne in the upcoming Uttarakhand Assembly polls. The party is likely to announce its first list of candidates for the February 14 state elec-



People participate in the Jallikattu event as part of Pongal celebrations in Coimbatore

# NE states emerging as lands of opportunities: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala/Shillong/New Delhi, Jan 21: Congratulating the three Northeastern states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya on their 50th statehood day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said improvements in connectivity and infrastructure had pivoted the states into connectivity hubs, well placed for fast-paced development.

In separate video messages to the three states, Modi described them as lands of opportunities and a hub for trade connectivity, stressing on the common theme of connectivity and development.

He also said the "double engine government" (where the same party

was ruling at the centre and the state) had ensured "journey towards fast-paced development. Obstacles that existed have been removed." All three states have either a BJP government or a BJPbacked government.

While the two principalities of Manipur and Tripura merged with India soon after independence and became Union Territories, Meghalaya was carved out of two districts of Assam into an 'autonomous state within the State of Assam' in 1969.

All three states were given full statehood through North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 on this day, 50 years back in 1972.

In his message to Tripura, Modi



said, despite difficulties in connectivity in earlier decades, it was turning into "a land of opportunities and a hub for trade connectivity."

"The double engine government at the center and state have fulfilled the long pending demand of Tripura by gaining access to the Chittagong sea port in Bangladesh". the prime minister said adding the state received the first cargo from Bangladesh through Akhaura

Integrated Check Post in 2020. Union Home Minister Amit Shah

who also spoke on the occasion through a video conferencing link, said the plan for Tripura's development over the next 25 years has been laid out in a vision document

Lakshya Tripura'. Shah also said 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

Shah said, the state, which has the potential to be the gateway of the North East, is now being connected with the rest of the country by Agartala-Akhaura railways. The 15-km long Agartala-Akhaura rail would connect the north eastern railway tracks with Bangladesh railways to reach to Kolkata.

# Simmering dissent puts Goa BJP on sticky wicket

THE PANAJI SEAT HAS BEEN ALLOTTED TO SITTING BJP MLA ATANASIO MONSERRATE, WHO HAS BEEN BOOKED FOR RAPING A MINOR GIRL IN 2016

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Jan 21: Soon after the BJP released its first list of 34 candidates for the February 14 state Assembly polls, the next challenge for the ruling party may well be to address the simmering dissent in various constituencies, where party leaders including former Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar and former CM late Manohar Parrikar's son Utpal, are threatening to raise

a banner of revolt against the party. After his claim for a ticket to contest from the Mandrem Assembly seat was nixed by the party in favour of sitting BJP MLA Dayanand Sopte, Parsekar addressed his party workers late on Thursday and hinted at contesting the elections as an independ-

ent candidate. "We will take a decision in three

days," Parsekar said at a meeting of party workers in the beach village of Mandrem. Parsekar also said that he was getting feelers from other political parties.

Utpal Parrikar, whose claim for a ticket to the Panaji seat, once represented by his father from 1994, was denied also, addressed his workers from the Panaji Assembly constituency

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Dattaprasad Naik said that the BJP workers treated the Panaji seat with a sense of reverence because it was represented by Parrikar and offered an analogy involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah while making his point.

'Amit Shah contested from Gandhinagar. He could have contested from any seat and ensured that the rival's deposit would be lost. He chose Gandhinagar, be-



spected L.K. Advani. Panaji seat also has importance because it is Manohar bhai's seat. People of Panaji will not accept the fact that

it was given to anyone else merely

for the sake of winnability," Naik

The Panaji seat has been allotted to sitting BJP MLA Atanasio Monserrate, who has been booked for raping a minor girl in 2016.

Monserrate has also been charged with leading a mob attack on the Panaji police station in 2008. Naik also accused the BJP leadership of systematically sidelining him from the party's political affairs.

"Utpal has never lagged behind in party work. Utpal should have been made booth president. Has he said no? What responsibility has been given to him? He was sidelined to make someone else happy," Naik said.

Savitri Kavlekar, the wife of deputy Chief Minister Chandrakant Kaylekar late on Thursday also resigned from the BJP against the party's decision to deny her a ticket to contest from the Sanguem assembly constituency, which is adioining her husband's constituency of Quepem in South Goa.

"I am going to contest as an independent. I have resigned from the BJP. I have taken this decision on the backing of my workers,' Kavlekar said, even as Public Works Department Minister Deepak Prabhu Pauskar who has also been denied a ticket from the Sanvordem assembly constituency has announced that he would be contesting as an independent.

According to a senior BJP official, the party leadership had expected dissent from some ticket aspirants after the official declaration of candidates. "The BJP has grown as a party over the last few years and it was expected that we would have more claimants for tickets. We will start an outreach programme with those who have reasons to be unhappy with the list of candidates. We are confident of convincing them to workwith the party for the elections," a BJP official said.

# international



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

#### **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

**TOUGH RIDE** 





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

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

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

enterprises and smearing China ZHAO LIJIAN CHINA'S FOREIGN MINISTRY

As freedomloving 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 Jogye 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 Universitys 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 firstever 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-yearold justice's nomination as the Supreme Court judge.

# Indian family found frozen to death near US-Canada border



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

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-yearold driver, Steve Shand of Florida,

TALIBAN TO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**HOLD MEETING IN** 

**NORWAY NEXT WEEK** 

Copenhagen, Jan 21: A Taliban

Italy and the European Union

Earlier they travelled to Russia,

Iran, Qatar, Pakistan, China and

Turkmenistan. The acting foreign

minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, will

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Afghan

deputy culture and information

minister, said Muttagi also ex-

pects to hold separate meetings

with the US delegation as well

as bilateral meetings with

European representatives. The

rights of women and girls is ex-

pected to top most agendas, as

well as a reoccurring demand of

the west for the Taliban admin-

istration to share power with

Afghanistan's minority ethnic

and religious groups.

head the Taliban delegation.

would take part.

PIC CREDIT: ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE was arrested and charged with human smuggling. At the same time, five more Indians - all Guiarati 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".

#### **PEGASUS SPYWARE**

#### Israel's Attorney General orders probe of NSO claims

AGENCIES

delegation will travel to Norway for Jerusalem, Jan 21: Israeli spyware talks with the Norwegian government, meeting with representaties and several allied countries but also with civil society activists and human rights defenders from Afghanistan. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry

said Friday that it has invited representatives of the Taliban to Oslo from Jan. 23 to Jan. 25. Norwegian newspaper VG said that special representatives from the United States, Germany, Britain, France,

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.

#### 11 Iragi soldiers Sanaa, Jan 21: A Saudi-led airstrike targeting a prison run by Yemen's killed in IS attack

Houthi rebels killed at least 70 detainees and wounded dozens Friday Baghdad: At least 11 Iragi a rebel minister said. The strike was soldiers were killed in an 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 militants attacked an army after the Iran-backed Houthis claimed a drone and missile attack that some 60 km north of Divala's struck inside the capital of the provincial capital Baguba, a United Arab Emirates earlier in the

news agency.

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

70 killed in airstrike

on Yemen prison

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.

senior police official told Xinhua

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

#### 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

a time of heightened tension between Russia and the West over Moscow's build-up of some 100,000 overnight attack by the Islamic troops on its border with Ukraine. Russia is also being joined by State (IS) terror group in the eastern province of Diyala, police China and Iran -- two nations said Friday. The attack took which are at loggerheads with the place after midnight when IS West, with Beijing recently accused of sending a spy to the heart outpost in the Udheim area. of the UK Parliament -- the report said.



Iran, China & Russia

drill in Indian Ocean

New Delhi, Jan 21: Iran, China

and Russia have launched a joint

naval exercise in the Indian Ocean

with the aim of boosting marine

also participate with smaller ships

The military exercise comes at

and helicopters.

hold joint naval

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

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.

#### of Hodeida — later confirmed by Covid boosters should start with most vulnerable: WHO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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



after receiving the first two doses, in line with guidance from dozens of countries that embarked upon booster programs months ago. Last year, WHO pleaded with rich countries to declare a moratorium on offering booster doses until the end of 2021, an appeal that went almost entirely ignored.

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

Taha al-Motawakel, health min-

ister in the Houthi government,

which controls the country's north,

told The Associated Press in the cap-

ital, Sanaa, that 70 detainees were

killed at the prison but that he ex-

pects the number to rise since

many of the wounded were seri-

ously 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

battled the rebels since 2015.

cine group assessed the increasing data about booster doses and noted the waning of immune protection over time. Numerous studies have shown in recent months that booster doses restore antibody levels and offer strong protection against severe disease,

The agency said its expert vac-

including against COVID-19 variants like delta and omicron.

'Boosters are part of the vaccination program, but it doesn't mean unfettered use to all ages,' said WHO's Dr Kate O'Brien, director of immunisation, vaccines and biologicals. "We continue to have highest focus on vaccination of highest priority groups," she said.

WHO also endorsed the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children as young as 5, at a reduced dose. Countries including the US and Canada gave the green light to Pfizer's shot for young children last fall.

# 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, highstakes talks Friday aimed at pre-

venting 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 that it has no plans to invade after the meeting. Blinken said Lavrov repeated Russia's insistence Ukraine but stressed that the US and

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.



# business



We are bang on target to touch \$400 billion for the current fiscal. So far in the first nine months, the country's exports were to the tune of \$301.38 billion AMIYA CHANDRA | ADDITIONAL DGFT

**Along with global** 

disturbances,

the uncertainties regarding

market highly volatile in the

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT

mestic market to continue sur-

rendering its gains, with all major

sectors trading under pressure.

Weak sentiments from global mar-

kets due to persistent inflationary

worries and weaker-than-expected

earnings also added to the selling

pressure" said Vinod Nair Head

of Research at Geojit Financial

S Ranganathan, Head of

Research at LKP Securities, said,

"Indices witnessed a 4 per cent

cut this week as FPIs booked prof-

its across large-caps and select

high quality mid-caps. Rising oil and

input prices coupled with a mod-

erating rural economy kept in-

vestors watchful as markets turned

Global markets extended their

losses amid weaker-than-expected

corporate results and concerns

over the pace of rate hikes by cen-

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in

Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai and

Tokyo closed in the negative zone.

Stock exchanges in Europe too

were trading with deep losses in

mid-session deals.

tral banks to combat inflation.

volatile.

the upcoming Budget will

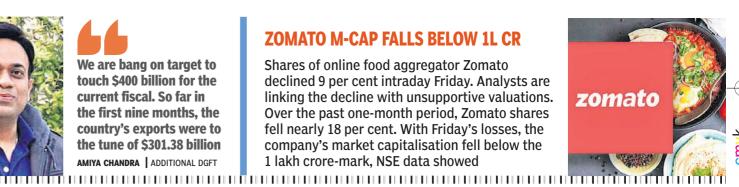
likely keep the domestic

coming days

FINANCIAL SERVICES

#### **ZOMATO M-CAP FALLS BELOW 1L CR**

Shares of online food aggregator Zomato declined 9 per cent intraday Friday. Analysts are linking the decline with unsupportive valuations. Over the past one-month period, Zomato shares fell nearly 18 per cent. With Friday's losses, the company's market capitalisation fell below the 1 lakh crore-mark, NSE data showed





significant steps to boost the startup ecosystem. We have the Budget coming up soon and all of us are anxiously waiting to see and hear what is done with some of the asks

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

India saw the highest B2B spending growth compared to expectations of six other major economies. This year. the total B2B spend for India is expected to rise by 10.3 per cent compared to 2021

MANOJ ADLAKHA SVP AND CEO, AMERICAN EXPRESS BANKING CORF

We are happy to sign an agreement to manufacture the oral Covid-19 antirviral medication, which is an urgent need of the hour, this is one of the most critical step towards fighting the pandemic

and we are happy to contribute to the mission SATYANARAYANA CHAVA FOUNDER AND

CEO, LAURUS LABS

#### SHORT **TAKES**

#### **Dutt takes charge** as Air India CMD

New Delhi: Vikram Dev Dutt Friday took charge as the chairman and managing director (CMD) of Air India, which will be handed over to the Tata group this year. The government had October 8 last year announced that the Tata Group has won the bid to acquire Air India for ₹18,000 crore. In a press release, Air India said Dutt took over the charge of the airline Friday from Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal, who was at the helm of Air India till now.

#### HMSI crosses 15L sales in Odisha

New Delhi: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) Friday said its cumulative sales have crossed 15 lakh unit mark in Odisha. While it took 15 years for the company to add the first five lakh customers in the state, it just took it six years to achieve the next set of 10 lakh customers. With 32 per cent market share, the twowheeler maker is now the fastest growing two wheeler brand in the state, HMSI said in a statement, "We remain committed towards providing our customers with quality products and after-sales services closer to their place in the state," HMSI Director (Sales & Marketing) Yadvinder Singh Guleria noted.

#### Intel to invest \$20bn for chips

San Francisco: Chip-maker Intel Friday said it will invest more than \$20 billion to build two new factories int US for advanced chipmaking, as the world grapples with semiconductor shortage. The initial phase of the project in New Albany near Columbus, Ohio, is expected to create 3,000 Intel jobs and 7,000 construction jobs over the course of the build, and to support tens of thousands of additional local long-term jobs across a broad ecosystem of suppliers and partners.

#### **Govt extends HLL** bid deadline

New Delhi: The government has extended the deadline by about a month till February 28 for prospective buyers to submit the expression of interest (EoI) for strategic sale-bound HLL Lifecare. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) had December 14 invited preliminary bids for selling the government's 100 per cent stake in the health sector CPSE

#### **GLOBAL SELLOFF**

# Sensex tanks over 2K points in 4 days

Relentless foreign fund outflows further weighed on sentiment, though fag-end buying in select blue-chip counters helped the bourses limit the losses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 21: The Sensex and Nifty nursed losses for the fourth session on the trot Friday, in lockstep with a selloff in global equities as concerns over inflation and monetary policy tightening sapped

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 427.44 points or 0.72 per cent lower at 59,037.18. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 139.85 points or 0.79 per cent to 17,617.15.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex lost 2,185.85 points or 3.57 per cent, while the Nifty slumped 638.60 points or 3.49 per cent.

Bajaj Finserv was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, tumbling 5.37 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, L&T, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance.

In contrast, HUL was the biggest gainer, climbing 2.68 per cent, a day after the FMCG major reported an 18.68 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to ₹2,300 crore for the December quarter.

Maruti, HDFC twins, Nestle India and TCS were among the

profit up 69%

New Delhi: JSW Steel Friday

posted a 69 per cent jump in

crore for the quarter ended

consolidated net profit to ₹4,516

December 31, mainly on account

of higher income. The firm had

crore in the year-ago period, it

said in a regulatory filing. Total

clocked a net profit of ₹2,669

income during the October-

fiscal soared to ₹38,225 crore

ago. Expenses were also higher

from ₹22,006 crore a year

at ₹31,986 crore as against

TOP GAINERS TOP LOSERS TOP GAINERS TOP LOSERS HUL 2.68 Bajaj Finsery 5.37 Bajaj Auto 3.57 Bajaj Finsery 5.05 Maruti Suz 1.89 Tech Mahi -4.44 3.02 Tech Mahi 4.61 HDFC 1.02 Tata Steel -3.18 Maruti Suz 1.79 Shree Cem -4.50 0.95 Rharti Airtel-2.83 Hero Motor 1.57 Coal India -3.70 HDFC Bank 0.73 IndusInd B -2.77 HDFC Bank 1.24 Divis Lab -3.25

Barring FMCG, all BSE sectoral indices closed in the red

Rupee advanced by 8 paise to close at 74.43 against the US dollar

International oil benchmark Brent crude tumbled 1.92% to \$86.68 per barrel

FIIs remained net sellers. offloading shares worth ₹4,679.84 crore Thursday

other winners, spurting as much as 1.89 per cent.

"The ongoing selling by FIIs and weak Indian rupee forced the do-

#### Investors lose ₹10.36 lakh crore

Investors have become poorer by over ₹10.36 lakh crore in the last four trading sessions as the domestic equity benchmarks extended their losses amid weak global trends. In line with the weak trend, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies plunged by a massive ₹10,36,636.17 crore in the last four trading sessions to stand at ₹ 2,69,65,801.54 crore. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms had reached a lifetime high of ₹2,80,02,437.71 crore Monday.

#### Gems, jewellery exports up 5.76% in Apr-Dec 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: Gems and jewellery exports in the April-December 2021 period grew by 5.76 per cent to \$29.08 billion on account of healthy demand in major countries including the US. Hong Kong and Thailand, the GJEPC said Friday.

The Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said that exports in December 2021 rose by 29.49 per cent to \$3.04 billion.

"Holiday and festive demand was robust in important trading centres such as the USA, Hong Kong, Thailand and Israel. And we have every reason to believe that this momentum will carry through the end of FY2022, bringing us closer to the set target of \$41.67 billion in exports," GJEPC chairman Colin Shah said in a statement.

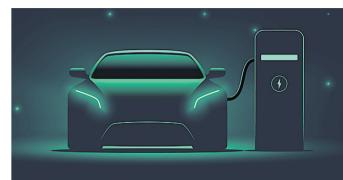


Cut and polished diamond exports during April-December 2021 grew by 23 per cent to \$18 billion. Similarly, gold jewellery exports during the period too rose by 25.41 per cent to \$6.91 billion, the council said.

Exports of plain and studded gold jewellery increased by 57.47 per cent to \$2.83 billion and \$4 billion during the nine-month period respectively.

Silver jewellery exports for the period April to December 2021 grew by 94 per cent to \$1.96 billion, it added.

# Include EVs in RBI's PSL guidelines: Niti



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: NITI Aayog has proposed government to include electric vehicles in the Reserve Bank of India's priority-sector lending (PSL) guidelines, the move it says will give a significant push to retail lending for EVs.

Government think-tank Niti Aayog and the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) India in a joint report, titled 'Banking on Electric Vehicles in India', outlined the importance of priority sector recognition for retail lending in the electric mobility ecosystem.

"Banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in India have the potential to achieve an electric vehicle (EV) financing market size of ₹40,000 crore (\$5 billion) by 2025 and ₹3.7 lakh crore (\$50 billion) by 2030.

"However, retail finance for EVs has been slow to pick up," it said.

To meet these goals, the report suggested that the RBI might consider various EV segments and use cases based on five parameters -socio-economic potential, livelihood generation potential, scalability, techno-economic viability, and stakeholder acceptability.

It indicated that electric twowheelers, three-wheelers and commercial four-wheelers can be early segments to prioritise under PSL.

PSL aims to expand financial access and support employment opportunities in India

Moving forward, the engagement of other ministries and industry stakeholders will be important to ensure that the guidelines designed can effectively enhance EV investment in India, the report added.

To maximise the impact of the inclusion of EVs, the report also recommended a clear sub-target and a penalty mechanism for the priority sector lending to renewable energy and EVs. Furthermore, it suggested recog-

nition of EVs as an infrastructure sub-sector by the Ministry of Finance and the incorporation of EVs as a separate reporting category under the RBI. Multipronged solutions such as

these are needed not only for EV penetration and businesses but also for the financial sector and India's 2070 net-zero target.

Commenting on the report, Niti Aavog CEO Amitabh Kant said financial institutions have an important role to play in accelerating the adoption of EVs in India and supporting the decarbonisation of

#### **Q3 RESULTS**

#### **Reliance posts best quarterly performance JSW Steel net**

New Delhi: Reliance Retail Friday said it has delivered a "landmark quarter" by posting an all-time high gross revenue ₹57,714 crore with pre-tax profit of ₹ 3,822 crore for the three months to December 2021. This is the first quarter when the retail arm of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has crossed the ₹50,000 crore revenue mark. Reliance Retail had clocked a pre-tax profit or EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) of ₹2,312 crore in the October-December quarter a year ago. Its net profit for the quarter was at



₹2,259 crore. Consolidated revenue rrom operations during the quarter ended December 2021 was at ₹50,654 crore, up 53.41 per cent from ₹33,018 crore in the year-ago period. Its gross revenue, which includes the value of sales and services, climbed 52.5 per cent to ₹57,714 crore as against ₹

#### Vi loss widens to ₹7,231cr

New Delhi: Debt-ridden telecom operator Vodafone Idea Friday reported widening of its consolidated loss to ₹7,230.9 crore for the third quarter ended December 2021. The company had posted a loss of ₹4,532.1 crore in the same period a year ago. Consolidated revenue from operations declined by 10.8 per cent to ₹9,717.3 crore from ₹10,894.1 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2020-21. Its subscriber base declined to 24.72 crore from 26.98 crore in the year-ago period because of increase in services rate by the company. Despite the tariff hike, its average revenue per user (ARPU) declined by about 5 per cent to ₹115,



compared to ₹121 in the same quarter of 2020-21.

#### **IDBI Bank profit** plunges 53%



Mumbai: IDBI Bank Friday reported a rise of 53 per cent in its net profit for Q3FY22 on a year-on-year basis, at ₹578 crore as against ₹378 crore reported for O3FY21. Besides. the bank's net interest income improved by 31 per cent for Q3FY22 to ₹2,383 crore as against ₹1,817 crore for 032021, "Net Interest Margin improved by 101 bps to 3.88 per cent for O3-2022 as compared to 2.87 per cent for Q3-2021," the bank said in its results statement.

#### **ALL-TIME HIGH**

## Smartphone market rise 11% YoY in 2021 -

New Delhi, Jan 21: India's smartest-ever shipments at 169 million units in 2021, according to a report by Counterpoint Research.

Preliminary data from Counterpoint Research's Market Monitor service said India's smartphone shipments crossed 169 million units in 2021 to register 11 per cent vear-on-vear growth from about 152 million units in 2020.

The market showed high resilience in a year that witnessed a second and more virulent Covid-19 wave as well as supply disruptions and price increases due to the ongoing component shortages, it added. The report said increased adoption and demand for 5G smartphones was one of the key factors for high shipments in 2021.

5G smartphones contributed to about 17 per cent of the overall shipments in 2021, registering 6x growth compared to 2020, it added.



OEMs, availability of cheaper 5G chipsets and declining prices of 5G devices will enable brands to push more 5G devices into the market. The price of entry-level 5G devices has come down by 40 per cent in the last six months. The increase in affordability of 5G devices has been a key reason for high 5G smartphone adoption," it noted.

The under-₹10,000 category -which accounted for 30 per cent market share -- declined 5 per cent, while ₹10,000-20,000 segment grew 8 per cent. The ₹20,000-30,000 tier grew 95 per cent. The retail ASP also showed high growth, increasing by over 13 per cent y-o-y.

#### FinMin eases spending norms for Q4

The relaxation is applicable with immediate effect for the current financial year or until further order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: In a bid to spur capital expenditure, the Finance Ministry has relaxed spending norms for the fourth quarter with a view to boost economic activities slowed down due to the impact of Covid-19.

As per the existing guidelines, more than 33 per cent and 15 per cent of the budget estimates (BE) shall be permissible to be spent by ministries and departments in the last quarter and last month of the financial year, respectively.

It has now been decided to relax the upper limit of 33 per cent of the BE as applicable for the last quarter of the current financial year as a one-time measure, the Department of Economic Affairs under the



Finance Ministry said in an office memorandum

This is subject to the condition that the ceiling of revised estimate (RE) for 2021-22 is not exceeded, the memorandum dated January 19, 2021 said.

"For the items of capital expenditure, the ceiling of 15 per cent of the BE in the last month for this fiscal is also relaxed, provided the capital or overall expenditure is within the RE 2021-22 ceiling," it said.

In view of relaxation, ministries and departments have been asked to carry out consequential modifications in their quarterly expenditure plan (QEP)/monthly expenditure plan (MEP).

#### INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Jan 21: The Senate Judiciary Committee in the US has approved a key antitrust reform that would ban Big Tech from favouring their own services and products over those of their rivals.

The American Innovation and Choice Online Act is a bipartisan bill spearheaded by Senators Amy Klobuchar, Josh Hawley and Chuck Grassley

"I want to stress that this bill is not meant to break up Big Tech or destroy the products and services they offer. Rather, the goal of the bill is to prevent conduct that stifles competition, while ensuring that pro-consumer innovations and offerings are still available," said

The House Judiciary Committee had passed a similar bill last year but that bill has yet to receive a

# THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HAD PASSED A SIMILAR BILL LAST YEAR BUT THAT BILL HAS YET TO RECEIVE A VOTE ON THE HOUSE FLOOR GÉFIA

#### ANTITRUST REFORM

US lawmakers okay bill to tame Big Tech

The legislation applies only to the biggest tech companies -- Apple, Amazon, Facebook-owner

These platforms would be barred from behaviour like biasing search results in their favour, limiting rivals' access to platform data, and using non-public data from Meta and Alphabet's Google is customers to compete against them

vote on the House floor and must The Verge. However, the White be approved by both chambers of House officials met leaders of com-Congress before it heads to US panies that have criticised Big Tech President Joe Biden's desk, reports in the past.

"Several participants described issues with large platforms both operating a marketplace and selling products on the marketplace, including concerns that the dominant platforms rank their own products and services above those of the independent sellers that rely on them to reach customers," the White House said in a statement late Thursday

"One company elaborated that this deprives consumers of the ability to find the products and services that best match their needs," it added.

Earlier media reports this week claimed that tech giants are worried about the new antitrust legislation as Apple CEO Tim Cook and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai have been personally "calling and meeting with Senators," urgingthem to oppose the mooted







SOUTH AFRICA HAND 'OUT OF SYNC' MEN IN BLUE AN EMBARRASSING SERIES DEFEAT WITH A SEVEN-WICKET WIN IN THE SECOND ODI

# PROTEAS PUNISH JADED INDIA

Paarl, Jan 21: A young South Africa punished a jaded Indian team for its outdated approach, handing it one of the most comprehensive series defeats in recent times with an easy seven-wicket victory in the second ODI here Friday.

A target of 288 was below-par on a flat track and the seasoned Quinton de Kock (78, 66b, 7x4, 3x6) in the company of rising sensation Janneman Malan (91, 108b, 8x4, 1x6) added 132 for a match-deciding opening stand.

The home team eventually reached the target in 48.1 overs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-game series.

KL Rahul's captaincy ambitions and head coach Rahul Dravid's wish to see him being anointed in the long run, however, suffered a rude jolt following back-to-back defeats in 50-over games on a track, which was more Indian than South African in nature.

India's archaic approach, a very



Janneman Malan (L) and Quinton de Kock run between the wickets during their splendid opening stand, Friday

90s safety first mind-set, hurt the teamas has been the case for a while now in the white-ball format.

A tour that started with a great Test win at the Centurion is now in tatters and the Indian contingent would be looking to board the charter flight back home on Monday after the inconsequential third ODI at the Newlands, which would be a spicier track compared to the one at Boland Park.

The batting, save Rishabh Pant's cavalier style, was too defensive starting with skipper Rahul, whose 55 off 79 balls was an innings of bygone era, which cannot align with the fearless cricket that teams want to associate with now.

The match slipped away from India's grip during their innings once Pant (85, 71b, 10x4, 2x6) was

gone as the others simply failed to get going when the ball didn't come on to the bat and it was not a track that offered firm and even bounce.

It's not a new malaise to plague Indian cricket but what should be worrying is that nothing has been done to address the issues.

A veteran like Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0/67) was swept as well as pulled for sixes by De Kock while

Malan would come down the track to hit him through the covers signalling that his early 130 kmph

simply not working. For Shardul Thakur (40 n o & 1/35), the quality batting show won't save him if he doesn't curtail the number of bad balls that he is bowling per spell.

speed, with lack of variations, was

And R Ashwin's (0/68) second coming in white ball cricket might end in a whimper even before it gathers enough wind to sail through. Yuzvendra Chahal (1/47) tried his best but his confidence, after being unceremoniously dumped from the T20 World Cup final squad, has been in tatters.

Venkatesh Iyer (22 & 0/28) is still a work in progress and his fasttracking in the limited overs set-up is less of pragmatism and more desperation to find a fresh version of injury-plagued Hardik Pandya.

Iyer might develop into a good cricketer but he is a far from finished product and may be some time away from being a success at the international level in all conditions. As of now, he is not a natural No.6, who can be a finisher like Pandya was in his best days before injury.

Had Pant not played the role of an enforcer to perfection, even a target of 288 wouldn't have been possible. And this was after it seemed India would score close to 315 when he was having a steady stand of 115 with his skipper.

Brief scores: India 287/6 (Rishabh Pant 85, KL Rahul 55, Shardul Thakur 40 n o; Tabraiz Shamsi 2/57) lost to South Africa 288/3 (Janneman Malan 91, Quinton de Kock 78. Rassie van der Dussen 37 n o, Aiden Markram 37 n o, Temba Bavuma 35) by 7 wickets.

#### **ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP**

# India face Pakistan in campaign-opener

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Jan 21:** In a blockbuster T20 World Cup opener for India, the team was Friday drawn to clash with arch-rivals Pakistan October 23 at the iconic MCG as the International Cricket Council (ICC) released the fixtures.

India had lost to Pakistan for the first time in an ICC tournament when the teams clashed in last year's T20 World Cup in Dubai.

India's second Super 12 match in Group 2 will be October 27 in Sydney against a qualifier (runner up of Group A) and will be followed by matches against South Africa (October 30 in Perth) and Bangladesh (Adelaide Oval November 2).

The Men in Blue's last Super 12 match is scheduled for November 6 against the winners of Group B at the MCG. The Super 12s - round two of the tournament, with two groups - will begin October 22 with hosts and defending champions Australia playing New Zealand at the SCG October 22 in a re-match of last year's men's T20 World Cup final. The Black Caps will also face

England at The Gabba November 1 in a re-match of their epic semifinal encounter at the 2021 event.

In Super 12s, Australia are in Group 1 with world number one England, New Zealand, Afghanistan plus the winner of Group A and the runner-up in Group B from the first round

The semifinals will be played at the SCG and Adelaide Oval November 9 and 10, respectively. It will be the first time the Adelaide Oval will host a World Cup semifinal. The MCG will host the final, which will be contested under lights November 13.

In the first round, 2014 champions Sri Lanka and Namibia will play the opening match at Kardinia Park, Geelong October 16. They'll be joined by two qualifiers in Group A.

Two-time champions West Indies will also start in the first round, joined in Group B by Scotland and two qualifiers in Hobart. The top two teams from each group will qualify for the Super 12 stage.



#### **SHORT TAKES KP slams IPL critics**

**MUSCAT:** Former captain and batting star Kevin Pietersen has said that it's "stupid" to blame the Indian Premier League for England's embarrassing 0-4 loss to Australia in the recently-concluded Ashes series, England great David

Gower was "annoved" after their Ashes defeat and said current skipper Joe Root had players who were "unavailable" because of the IPL. "It is stupid. You can't blame the IPL for the demise of Test cricket in England. It's crazy. I've commented on it quite a lot. It's the system, it's the county cricket system, which is poor. So there's no blame," Pietersen said during an interaction here Thursday. "It's crazy to blame the Indian Premier League because if you have a look at the Test team, there's only maybe (Ben) Stokes (Jonny) Bairstow and (Jos) Buttler who play the IPL. Hardly any of the Test team players play the IPL. So how can you blame the IPL? You can't blame the IPL. It's crazy," he added.

#### Vidit in joint lead

**WIJK AAN ZEE (The Netherlands):** Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi settled for a draw against Dutchman Anish Giri in the fifth round to stay in joint lead with 3.5 points at the Tata Steel Masters here. Azerbaijan's Shakhrivar Mamedyarov and Richard Rapport posted victories in round five late Thursday and joined Vidit Guirathi at the top of the standings in the 13-round tournament. The other five games, hard fought, were drawn, World No.1 Magnus Carlsen and Andrey Esipenko trail the leaders by half a point. The other Indian GM in the fray - R Praggnanandhaa - went down to Rapport and remained in the bottom half of the standings with two points. In the Challengers event being played simultaneously. Indian GM Arjun Erigaisi is in sole lead with 4.5 points after five rounds.

#### Aussies win 18-0

MUMBAI: Captain Sam Kerr struck five goals for the tournament's first hat-trick in Australia's 18-0 mauling of lowly Indonesia in their women's Asian Cup opening match here Friday. The star Chelsea striker, who was named the FIFA Best Player Award runner-up recently, began the match one goal behind Tim Cahill in Australia's all-time (male-or-female), top scorers' list and ended it four ahead for a total of 54 in her 105th match. Kerr was one of eight Matildas to get their name on the score-sheet in the win, Australia's biggest ever in the AFC Women's Asian Cup. Kerr, in the process, first levelled and then broke Tim Cahill's record (50 goals) as Australia's highest goal scorer in international football.

## Jota guides Liverpool into League Cup final

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 21: Diogo Jota stepped up in Mohamed Salah's absence with two goals to lead Liverpool to a 2-0 victory at Arsenal and into a League Cup final against Chelsea. While Liverpool coped with

Salah's continued stay at the African Cup of Nations with Egypt and Sadio Mané's with Senegal, the rapid return of Thomas Partey after Ghana's early exit backfired for Arsenal. Partev came on in the 74th

minute — just before Jota's second goal — but was then booked in the 86th for a late challenge on Neco Williams and again in the 90th for a lunge on Fabinho.

The semifinal was locked at 0-0 following the first leg at Anfield last week until Jota scored in the 19th with a low finish through two defenders and past goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale. When Jota dinked the ball over Ramsdale in the second half, the goal was initially ruled out until VAR overturned the offside.

Liverpool, which won the Champions League in 2019 and the Premier League in 2020, is now



into its first domestic final February 27 since being denied the League Cup by Manchester City in 2016.

Liverpool, like Chelsea, is still in the Champions League and FA Cup. It's just the Premier League title that's increasingly out of sight with second-place Liverpool 11 points behind Manchester City and Chelsea a further point behind.

But it will be a second successive season without a trophy for 2020 FA Cup winner Arsenal, which is already out of the FA Cup, is sixth in the Premier League and isn't playing in Europe this season.

# Anisimova ends Osaka's title defence

Melbourne, Jan 21: Defending champion Naomi Osaka didn't make it to a much-anticipated fourth-round contest against topranked Ash Barty at the Australian

Amanda Anisimova, a 20-yearold American ranked 60th in the world, ensured that so-called finalbefore-the-final won't happen when she beat the four-time major champion 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(7-5) Friday.

After losing the first set, Anisimova knew she needed to get more aggressive or she would be out of the tournament. It worked. Anisimova saved two match points in the third set, serving to stay in the match, and ended it with an ace. She hit 46 winners to Osaka's 21.

It's the fourth time Osaka has been unable to defend a major title, and the 11th time in a Grand Slam she has been knocked out in the third round, including last year's US Open.

After winning the title last year - her second at Melbourne Park in three years—Osaka withdrew from the French Open in the second round and skipped Wimbledon as she took a break for her mental health.

After an early loss at the US Open, she took an extended layoff to reset and arrived at the year's first major with a seeding of No.13.



BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME: Amanda Anisimova (R) Shakes hand with Naomi Osaka after the match, Friday

Barty advanced with a 6-2, 6-3 win over 30th-seeded Camila Giorgi on Rod Laver Arena, the match starting later and finishing earlier than the Osaka-Anisimova contest on the

adjoining Margaret Court Arena. Barty has only conceded eight games and spent less than three hours on court in the first three

rounds at Melbourne Park. The

Wimbledon champion and 2019 French Open winner is aiming to be the first Australian woman to win her home championship since 1978.

Two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka's overpowered 15th-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-0, 6-2 to reach the fourth round at Melbourne Park for the first time since 2016.

She will next play French Open champion Barbora Krejcikova, who rallied from a set and a break down against 26th-seeded Jelena Ostapenko to win 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Since a quarterfinal run in Australia in 2016, Azarenka lost first-round matches last year and in 2019, and missed the hard-court tournament in 2017, 2018 and 2020.

Fourth-round pairings that were set up Friday include fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari against 21st-seeded Jessica Pegula and No.8 Paula Badosa against Madison Keys, who held off Wang Qiang 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(7-

On the men's side, Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev had a 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 win over Radu Albot, a 124th-ranked qualifier from Moldova, to set up a fourth-round match against Denis Shapovalov. The 14th-seeded Shapovalov beat No. 23 Reilly Opelka 7-6(7-4), 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini fended off 18-year-old Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz

6-2, 7-6(7-3), 4-6, 2-6, 7-6(7-5). Miomir Kecmanovic continued to make the most of the absence of fellow Serbian Novak Djokovic, reaching the fourth round at a major for the first time with a 6-4, 6-7(8-10), 6-2, 7-5 win over 25thseeded Lorenzo Sonego. He will next play 17th-seeded Gael Monfils, who beat No.16 Cristian Garin 7-6(7-4), 6-1, 6-3.

### COPA SETBACK FOR BARCELONA



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Jan 21: Barcelona's list of disappointments this season got longer with a loss to Athletic Bilbao in the round of 16 of the Copa

Barcelona lost 3-2 in extra time to add to recent failures in the Spanish Super Cup and the Champions League. The Catalan club also trails Real Madrid by 17 points in the Spanish league, and the Europa League is the only title it can realistically play for in its first season since the departure of Lionel

Messi, the Argentina star who moved to Paris Saint-Germain.

Madrid also needed extra time at Elche but avoided an upset thanks to Eden Hazard's late goal after the team went a man down and needed to come from behind to win 2-1.

Defending Copa champion Barcelona couldn't get past Athletic despite equalising twice in a rematch of last year's final, losing after Iker Munain converted a penalty kick late in the first half of extra-

Munain put Athletic ahead two

minutes into the match at San Mamés Stadium before Ferran Torres equalized in the 20th with his first goal since joining Barcelona - a beautiful curling shot into the top corner.

Iñigo Martínez restored the host's lead from close range in the 86th but Pedri González sent the match into extra time with a goal in stoppage

Barcelona didn't make it past the group stage in the Champions League and last week lost to Madrid in the semifinals of the Spanish Super Cup.

American defender Sergiño Dest, returning from a back injury and a positive COVID-19 test, entered in the 96th minute in his first appearance since December 8.

The other teams to reach the Copa quarterfinals are Mallorca, Cádiz, Rayo Vallecano, Valencia, Real Betis and Real Sociedad, which eliminated defending Spanish champion Atlético Madrid Wednesday.

Isco Alarcón and Hazard — who has played sparingly this season scored in the second half of extratime to send Madrid into the Copa quarterfinals.

# Sindhu cruises into semis



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Jan 21: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu rallied from a game down to eke out a hard-fought win over Thailand's Supanida Katething to enter the semifinals of the Syed Modi

International Super 300 tourna-

ment here Friday. The top-seeded Indian beat her Thai rival, seeded sixth in the tournament, 11-21, 21-12, 21-17 in a quarterfinal match that lasted one hour and five minutes. Sindhu will face

fifth-seeded Russian Evgeniya

Kosetskaya in the semifinals. In the men's singles, however,

HS Prannoy crashed out of the tournament with a straight-game defeat to Arnaud Merkle of France in the quarterfinals. The fifthseeded Indian, a former top 10 player, lost 19-21, 16-21 to his French opponent in a 59-minute quarterfinal match.

Mithun Manjunath, however, advanced to the semifinals after beating Sergey Sirant of Russia 11-21, 21-12, 21-18 in a quarterfinal match that lasted one hour and one minute. Manjunath will face Merkle in the semifinals.

In the mixed doubles event, the Indian pair of MR Arjun and Treesa Jolly beat the eight seeded French duo of William Villeger and Anne Tran 24-22, 21-17 in the quarterfinal match that lasted 42 minutes. Arjun and Jolly will face compatriots and seventh seeded pair of Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto in the semifinals

In the women's doubles quarterfinals, India's Ramya Venkatesh Chickmenahalli and Apeksha Nayak conceded a walkover to eight seeded — Malaysian pair of Anna Ching Yik Cheong and Teoh Mei Xing.

Printed and published by Tathagata Satpathy on behalf of Navajat Printers and Media Pvt. Ltd. and printed at Navajat Printers, B-15 Industrial Estate, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar -751010, Odisha; Phone: 7894447142 (Marketing). Editor: Tathagata Satpathy. RNI No. ORIENG/2011/37159