

Maha: 7 med students killed in mishap

Wardha: Seven MBBS students, including the son of an MLA, were killed in Wardha district of Maharashtra in the wee hours of Tuesday when the car they were travelling in fell off a bridge, police said. The incident occurred around 1.30 am near Selsura village in Wardha district, 70 km from Nagpur in east Maharashtra. An official said that all seven students died on the spot. One of the seven students, Avishkar Rahangdale, was the son of Tirora BJP MLA Vijay Rahangdale. He was a first-year MBBS student of the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College at Sawangi (Meghe) in Wardha. Police said the SUV was being driven by one of the students who all were returning from Yavatmal district after celebrating the birthday of a student. **MORE P7**



Court's clean chit to Shilpa for Gere's act

Mumbai: Almost 15 years after Shilpa Shetty landed in an obscenity case when Hollywood star Richard Gere kissed her on her cheeks at a public event, the actress was discharged from the case by a Mumbai court which observed that she seems to be the victim of the act of Gere. A court of metropolitan magistrate Ketki Chavan discharged Shetty on January 18. A detailed order was made available Monday. In 2007, Gere and Shetty had come together for an AIDS awareness programme in Rajasthan. On the stage, Gere kissed the actress on her cheeks, causing a stir in the country. "It seems that the accused Shilpa Shetty is the victim of the alleged act of accused no. 1 (Richard Gere). Not a single element of any of the alleged offence is being satisfied in the complaint," the court said in the order. The kissing incident had evoked strong protests in several cities in India. Cases were registered against both Gere and Shetty.

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HOLIDAY NOTICE
The offices of **OrissaPOST** will remain closed on the occasion of Republic Day. Hence, there will be no edition of the paper January 27, 2022 (Thursday).
-EDITOR

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

He was certainly planning to create disturbance on the R Day. He was reading the Constitution

Gemel queers all parties' Kotia pitch

■ The independent candidate (photo alongside) decides to stay put in the polls; efforts by three major parties to field a consensus candidate for Pottangi ZP seat defeated. Now, two independents will contest for the ZP seat



Koraput, Jan 25: Desperate bids by three mainstream political parties to field a consensus candidate for Pottangi Zilla Parishad Zone-1 in Kotia panchayat in the district received a jolt after the nomination of an independent candidate was declared valid after she refused to withdraw her nomination, Tuesday.

As a result, elections will be held in Kotia panchayat for the upcoming panchayat polls. Earlier, three candidates Sabina Budia, Tikai Gemel and all-party candidate Mamata Jani had filed nominations for Pottanagi Zilla Parishad Zone-1 (Kotia panchayat).

The three mainstream parties BJD, BJP and Congress had pitched for fielding an all-party candidate to avoid elections in Kotia panchayat to give it a semblance of

unity among the people of the panchayat against the repeated incursions by Andhra Pradesh.

Among them, Sabina Budia withdrew her nomination, Tuesday while the leaders representing the three mainstream parties were speculating that Tikai Gemel, the remaining candidate, will withdraw nomination in support of the all-party candidate. However, much to their astonishment, Gemel refused to withdraw her nomination at the last moment. Sub-collector Lalit Kumar Kanhar assigned her the 'bottle' symbol to contest the elections. Similarly, the sub-collector also assigned the symbol of 'Jodi Nagara' to the all-party candidate Mamata Jani.

Later, Gemel announced she will win the elections and work for all round development of Kotia panchayat for which she has the backing of 'Dora' and 'Kamar' communities. On the other hand, Mamata Jani said she is committed to the goal of protecting her panchayat and the motherland. She said she will work for its all round development, as per the decision of all three major political parties.

When asked, Ishwar Chandra Panigrahi, district BJD president and chairman of the all-party committee said the three parties had decided to field an all-party candidate for the ZP polls in Kotia panchayat. However, everyone has a right to contest polls in a democracy, he added.

According to reports, there are seven candidates in the fray for the post of sarpanch in Kotia. Two candidates have withdrawn their nominations, Tuesday.

State joins chorus against IAS cadre rule tweaking

■ Maha, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Raj have also raised their voices against the amendments proposed by the Centre that would enable it to post IAS officers on central deputation, bypassing quotas of state governments.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: The Biju Janata Dal government has joined several other non-BJP ruled states in the country in opposing the Centre's move to amend the IAS (Cadre) Rules and demanded an increase in strength of IAS officers, a top official said Tuesday.

The BJD has earlier lent support to the BJP-led government at the Centre on various issues, especially those that are not related to Odisha. Now, Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra has written to the central government opposing the proposed amendments to the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954, Monday.

"Odisha has opposed the Centre's proposal of amending the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954. We have also suggested that the Centre increase the cadre strength so that Centre and state will have sufficient IAS officers," a top official told PTI Tuesday. The letter, however, was not shared with the media.

Governments of non-BJP ruled states such as Maharashtra,

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan have also raised their voices against the amendments proposed by the Centre that would enable it to post IAS officers on central deputation, bypassing quotas of state governments.

In its letter, the state government said the proposals, if implemented, will affect the administration of states and have an impact on the implementation of various developmental projects, according to the official. It has also urged the Centre to fill up vacancies in the administrative services.

The state government had informed the Assembly in December last year that there were 248 IAS posts and 195 IPS posts in the state. Of them, 54 IAS officers are entitled to central deputation and 28 have joined it. Similarly, out of 41 approved IPS posts, 24 officers have been posted on central deputation.

Leaders of the BJD, Congress and the BJP also spoke on the issue. Taking to Twitter, BJD Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik said, "The latest proposal by GoI to amend All India Service Rules, besides upsetting the existing balance of control that Centre & states exercised over these cadres, is also contrary to the current definition of deputation. It requires willingness of the officer too; can't be forced."

Puri: Rape bid on another five-year old

Puri, Jan 25: Just 48 hours after a five-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 33-year-old man under Town police limits here Sunday, another minor girl had a narrow escape when her neighbour reportedly tried to sexually abuse her under Baliapanda police limits here Tuesday.

The incident came to light after the victim's mother lodged the complaint with the police stating that the neighbour had lured her daughter into his house on the pretext of offering her food (chicken). Sources said, the victim, also a five-year-old girl, was alone at her home under Baliapanda police limits here when the accused, a neighbour, allured her into his house and tried to force himself on her. However, he could not succeed as the victim's mother reached the place, it was learnt. The victim's mother approached the Baliapanda police that registered a case (9/22) and detained the accused.

When asked about the rising number of crimes against minor girls in the Holy Town, additional superintendent of police (ASP) Mihir Kumar Panda said the accused will be dealt with iron hands. "We'll file the chargesheets of all cases (including the Sunday case) within 20 days and ensure that the victims get justice," Panda added.

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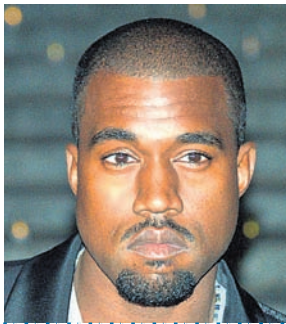


CARDI B AWARDED \$1.25M IN LAWSUIT AGAINST VLOGGER

Rapper Cardi B has been awarded \$1.25 million in her federal libel lawsuit against Latasha Kebe, after a jury found the vlogger liable for defamation, invasion of privacy, and causing emotional distress.

KANYE WEST VOWS TO BE 'BEST' DAD

Kanye West has vowed to be the 'best' dad to his children and doesn't want them brought into any games following his split from their mother, Kim Kardashian West. The 'Stronger' rapper has North, eight, Saint, six, Chicago, four, and Psalm, two, with estranged wife Kim.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Someone new in your life is going to make you smile; remember, however, that it doesn't always have to be fun and diamonds. A song sung straight from the heart makes a greater impact, says Ganesh. Today's the right time to go out and do things which will make you proud later.

TAURUS
This day you will be inclined to act tough and pick up a fight with everyone whom you are likely to encounter, warns Ganesh. Those who know you well will be at a loss to make anything out of your belligerent attitude and may not be able to keep up with you for too long. You'll simply be making a lot of enemies, alienating a lot of good friends.

GEMINI
If you have children, they will be a pampered lot today, says Ganesh. Your affection, however, may not have its desired impact. Children are known to be unpredictable, but keep an eye on their activities, especially today.

CANCER
Today, you will be trying new things in your style of work. You may come across as mad, but there will be a method in your madness. Your new strategy and innovative ideas will give a new lease of life to the projects you are working on.

LEO
Friendships are supposed to last forever. But it all depends on whether or not the friend is around when most needed. Today, your pals may turn to you for help, and sure enough, you will be there to extend all the support you can, says Ganesh. Get ready to make new acquaintances today, some of whom may go on to become life-long friends.

VIRGO
You are the banner carrier for those around you today, giving hope and inspiring. Clad yourself in robes of the perfect family man. This should spread warmth and love, and will work wonders in improving relationships.

LIBRA
The theatrical you comes to the fore. Ganesh expects you to put up a show in all that you do today, be it a display of devotion to your work, or dedication to your family. You may give the best in the business a run for their money as you prove to be the perfect choice for all tasks assigned to you.

SCORPIO
Signs indicate you may face unexpected expenses today. But this spending is likely to be on family and friends - especially in entertaining them. But keep track of every penny. To be on the safer side, Ganesh advises you not to have any pockets at all today.

SAGITTARIUS
A tiring day is in store for you today. Find yourself labouring worse than Hercules. The positive outcome would be that you would lose a few extra calories. But late in the day, a nice quiet time with family and friends would relieve you of all the stress.

CAPRICORN
Everything you do today will be driven by the desire to meet the expectations of your family members, says Ganesh. For those of you pursuing studies, pending projects will finally get completed, and you will look forward to taking up new assignments. Giving free rein to your imagination will help you excel in areas of your interest, but don't go overboard or else you may lose touch with reality.

AQUARIUS
You may be sorely disappointed today. With no support from family, and the kids driving you up the wall, you need to keep your cool. Family feuds are highly likely, and neighbours may attempt to interfere. For now, all you need is to remain unruffled, says Ganesh.

PISCES
Your expenses are likely to soar and you will need to draw a line between your needs and your desires if you are to keep them in check. There is a strong possibility that you will undergo a spiritual experience today. You may also pursue meditative techniques for your peace of mind, says Ganesh.

Aquino first trans character in a DC film

Los Angeles: Actress Ivory Aquino has been cast in the feature film *Batgirl* as Alysia Yeoh, the best friend of the titular superhero, Barbara Gordon played by Leslie Grace.

Both Aquino and Yeoh are transgender, marking the first time a live-action feature film adaptation of a DC Comics title will feature an openly trans character.

Yeoh first appeared in a 2011 issue of *Batgirl* written by Gail Simone and penciled by Ardian Syaf.

News of Aquino's casting first leaked online in mid-January after Grace posted a photo seemingly from the set of the film to her Instagram story, tagging Aquino and captioning the shot (of two women crossing the street) with Barbara and Alysia, reports *variety.com*. There have been several strides in broadening LGBTQ+ representation in superhero adaptations over the past few years, especially on television.



Ranveer opens up on his ambitions

Mumbai: Livewire star Ranveer Singh, who will next be seen in films such as *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* and *Cirkus*, reveals that he wants to be the first at trying something path-breaking and be the best actor of the country.

Ranveer said: "Right now I am becoming obsessed with this craft. I want to play more with it and want to explore more, so yes right now it's burning like a blazing inferno wanting to do more and see what the possibilities are. Do things that haven't been done before."

"There was a very dear, very respected and admired colleague of mine who after 83 pointed out that if you are analysed - there is no reference for you actually. A mainstream leading man of Hindi cinema doesn't really go this distinctively into different characters and then you have this off-screen persona that also has no reference." Ranveer shared: "So, I think I am doing something that I may not have done before and therefore I am achieving what I want to achieve which is doing things which haven't been done before."

Amul's tribute to SRK over his gesture for Egyptian fan

IN A NOTE TO THE OVERSEAS FAN, THE ACTOR WROTE, "THANK YOU FOR BEING KIND TO MY FELLOW INDIAN, VERY GRACIOUS AND GENEROUS OF YOU."

Mumbai: Days after Shah Rukh Khan sent signed pictures and a note for an Egyptian travel agent who helped an Indian professor only because she belonged to SRK's country, Amul Monday acknowledged the actor's star power in its latest topical titled *Pardes mein Swades*.

December 31, Ashwini Deshpande, a professor of Economics at Ashoka University took to Twitter and shared how, when she faced problems transferring money to a travel agent in Egypt, the man agreed to make the booking himself because she was from the country of SRK and he trusted her.

The tweet, which has so far clocked in more than 15,000 likes and 3,000 retweets was followed by an update when



the professor and her husband finally met the agent and shared pictures with him.

Deshpande tagged Khan's production house, Red Chillies Entertainment, and requested if the Egyptian fan can be sent a signed photograph for his daughter. January 22, Deshpande revealed that the 56-year-old actor had taken note of the fan's gesture and not only sent him signed pictures but also

a handwritten note. "Thank you for being kind to my fellow Indian, very gracious and generous of you. May your kind of good souls multiply, love Shah Rukh Khan," the note read.

A very happy ending to this story, she wrote as Twitter users showered the actor with love for his gesture.

Soon after the viral tweet, Amul paid a filmy tribute to the actor by invoking a reference to his films, *Pardes* and *Swades*.

The topical features Khan standing in the balcony of his bungalow Mannat with a signed photograph facing the fan, who is in Egypt, in the backdrop of pyramids. *Pardes mein Swades ka effect*, the topical tweeted by Amul read, hinting at the sweet story that unfolded as two Shah Rukh Khan fans connected.

On embracing flawed characters in *Gehraiyaan*

We are not endorsing infidelity: Ananya

Mumbai: After working in some light-hearted movies, Ananya Panday has been roped in to play one of the most challenging roles in her career in *Gehraiyaan*.

Starring Deepika Padukone, Chaturvedi, Panday and Dhairya Karwa, the Amazon Prime Video offering tells the story of two couples who may not be as happy as they seem on the outside.

"This is probably one of the most emotionally fleshed-out characters I have played. It was cathartic to play a role like this because I had to draw a lot from myself. I had to tap into my emotions, and explore them in depth. Once you go past the barrier where you wonder what people are thinking, and explore your most vulnerable side, only the best in you comes out," said the actress.

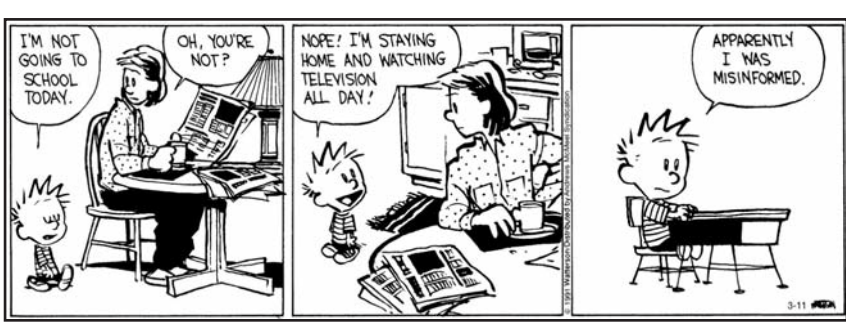
Director Shakun Batra trades love — an oft-explored emotion in Hindi films — to focus squarely on infidelity. As the actors embraced the flawed characters, Panday says there was no question of propagating infidelity. "The choice we all made was to observe this relationship rather than judge it. Just because the film has the concept of infidelity, it doesn't mean we are endorsing or glorifying it. We are merely observing four characters, their reactions and complexities. It was important for us not to judge the relationship. We are leaving it to the audience, and are keen to know their perspective on it."



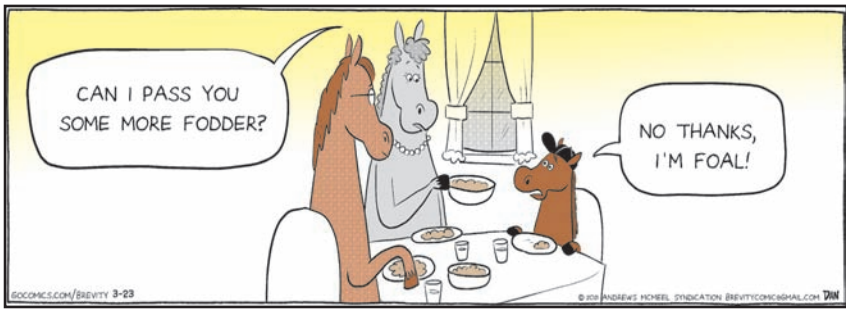
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

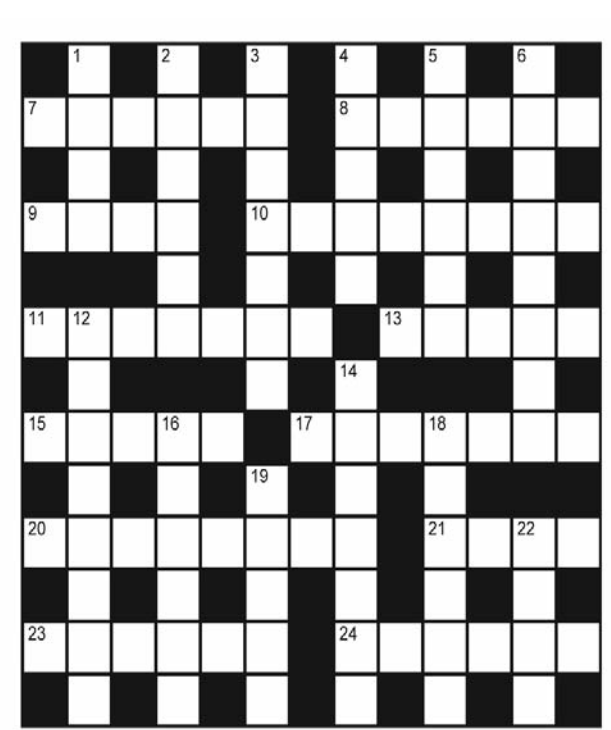


BREVITY



FUN post

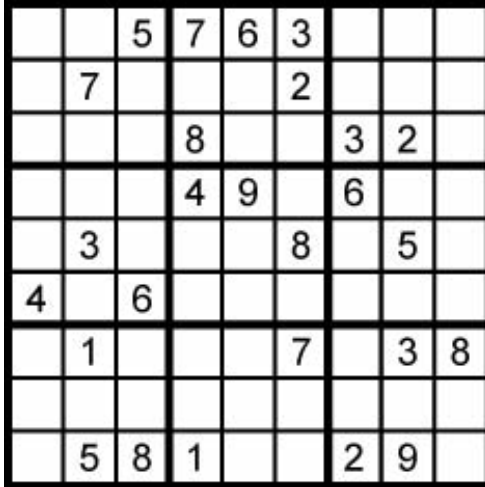
CROSSWORD



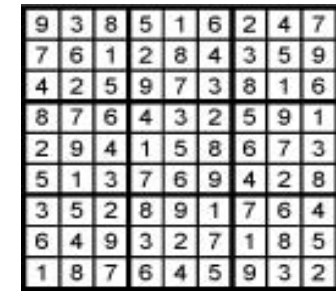
- Across
- 7 Japanese robe
 - 8 World-wide
 - 9 Quaint outburst
 - 10 They're nuts
 - 11 Pupil
 - 13 Spiral shell
 - 15 Crosswise, on deck
 - 17 Way to walk
 - 20 Stirs up
 - 21 High point
 - 23 Special skill
 - 24 Wilts
- Down
- 1 Picture card
 - 2 Sleazy
 - 3 Bumming around
 - 4 Light-footed
 - 5 Ravel classic
 - 6 Kind of maneuver
 - 12 Long narrow sled
 - 14 Expedition, of sorts
 - 16 National hymn
 - 18 Neptune, e.g. (3,3)
 - 19 Goa, for one
 - 22 Tourist guides

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



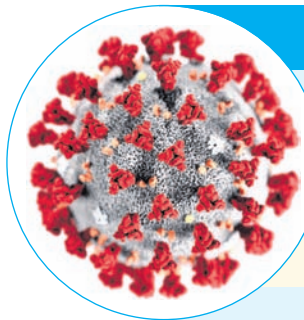
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



R-DAY FERVOUR

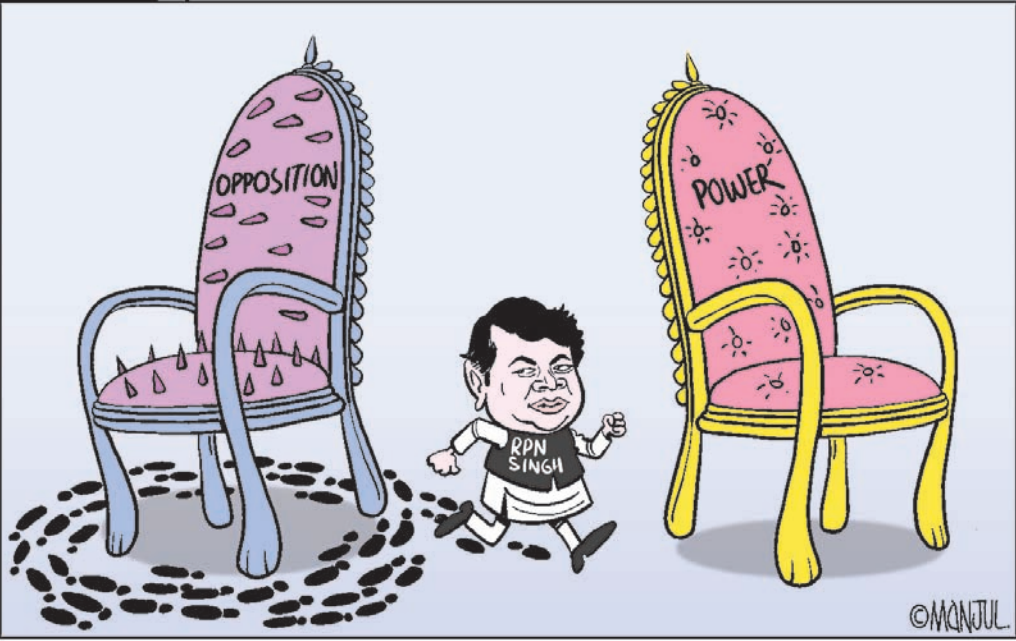
Kharavel Bhawan in Bhubaneswar decorated with lights on the eve of the Republic Day, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	35,62,89,206	28,25,68,928	56,25,137
India	3,97,99,202	3,70,71,898	4,90,462
Odisha	12,17,842	11,42,161	8,532

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



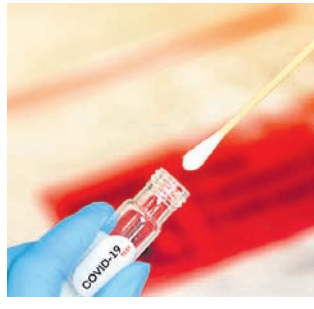
Sharp drop in daily cases as testing dips

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Odisha recorded 5,891 new coronavirus cases Tuesday, 19 per cent less than the previous day, as the number of clinical tests registered a significant drop over the past two days, the Health department said.

The tally in the coastal state climbed to 12,17,842, the department stated. The toll mounted to 8,532 with seven more deaths, including three in Khurda. Fifty-three Covid-19 patients have died due to co-morbidities in the past, it said.

The infections are the lowest in a fortnight. The state had reported



Odisha Tuesday reported 5,891 fresh Covid cases with a TPR of 9.85% as 59,807 samples were examined in the past 24 hours, down from 61,969 Sunday and 72,524 Saturday

1,500 infections, followed by 501 in Sundargarh and 482 in Cuttack, the department said.

As many as 10,309 patients recuperated from the disease the previous day, taking the total number of recoveries to 11,31,917. At least 852 children are among those newly infected.

The active cases declined to 77,340, including 28,055 in Khurda. Sundargarh and Cuttack, along with Khurda, are in the red zone, where the number of infections at present is over 2,500.

Balasure, Jajpur and Sambalpur are among the 15 districts that are in the yellow zone with over 1,000 such patients.

11,086 cases exactly a week ago. It logged 7,291 new cases and five deaths Monday.

The test positivity rate stood at 9.85 per cent as 59,807 samples were

examined in the past 24 hours, down from 61,969 Sunday and 72,524 Saturday.

Khurda district, where Bhubaneswar is situated, reported

6 from state picked for Padma awards

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 25: Six eminent persons from Odisha, including novelist Pratibha Ray, will receive the Padma awards for their contribution to various fields.

President Ram Nath Kovind has approved conferment of 128 Padma awards for this year.

Ray will be conferred with Padma Bhushan for her contributions to the field of literature and education.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Paralympics gold medalist Pramod Bhagat will get Padma Shri in sports category. Similarly, Aditya Prasad Dash (science and engineering), Narasingha Prasad Guru (literature and education), Shyamamani Devi (Art) and Srimad Baba Balia (social work) will get the Padma Shri award.

Padma awards, the highest civilian awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

The awards are given in various disciplines/fields of activities including art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service.

Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field. The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.

9 Odisha cops feted with Gallantry award

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 25: As many as nine personnel from the Odisha Police have been conferred with the prestigious President's Medal for Gallantry on the eve of Republic Day, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Including them, a total of 22 personnel have been conferred with various medals from the Union government.

The Union government Tuesday announced the President's Medal for Gallantry, President's Medal for Distinguished Services, and Meritorious Services Medals to the personnel of Fire Services, Civil Defence and Home Guards on the eve of Republic Day.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, nine police officials from Odisha have been awarded Police Medal for Gallantry. OAPP personnel Late Jayaram Kabadi

The Centre Tuesday announced the President's Medal for Gallantry, President's Medal for Distinguished Services & Meritorious Services Medals to the personnel of Fire Services, Civil Defence and Home Guards on R-Day eve

Distinguished Service while 11 officials awarded with the Police Medal for Meritorious Service.

Superintendent Satya Prakash Swain of Odisha has been awarded with the President's Correctional Service Medal for Distinguished Service while Jailor Dilip Kumar Kerketta has been awarded Correctional Service Medal for Meritorious Service. Similarly, three Home Guards and two Civil Defence personnel of Odisha have been awarded with Home Guard and Civil Defence Medal for Meritorious Service.

Meanwhile, the State government Tuesday announced the names of 20 police officials who have been selected to receive the Governor's Medal for the year 2021 under different categories.

The governor's medal will be conferred upon senior police officers IGP (L/O) S Praveen Kumar and IGP-Vigilance Asheet Kumar Panigrahi in the ranks of ADG, IG and DIG of police.

The Superintendents of Police of Bhadrak and Berhampur; Charan Singh Meena and Pinak Mishra will receive the Governor's award.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	57858.15 ↑ 366.64
NIFTY	17278.00 ↑ 128.90
DOLLAR	75.02 ↑ ₹0.18
EURO	84.46 ↑ ₹0.06
GOLD	₹48,675 ↑ ₹111
SILVER	₹63,843 ↓ ₹115

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	26.3°C	26.2°C
TEMP MIN	18.1°C	18.0°C
Humidity	91%	92%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

Cold wave likely for four days

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Cold wave conditions are likely to make a comeback as mercury may dip by 3-5 degree Celsius during the next four days in the state, as per the Regional Meteorological Centre forecast Tuesday.

Minimum temperature (night temperature) is very likely to fall gradually by 3 to 5°C during next 4 days over the districts of Odisha, the Meteorological Centre predicted.

It has also issued dense fog and cold wave warning for several districts of the state. Dense fog very is likely to occur at one or two places over Kandhamal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Khurda, Puri, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur from 8:30am January 26 to 8:30am of January 27, it said.

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#Better Everyday

Only 10 allowed for R-Day events: SRC

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Keeping in view the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic, the Odisha government Tuesday allowed a maximum of 10 persons to participate in Republic Day events in public places while advising people to unfurl the National Flag at their house premises.

The Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) issued the Covid-related guidelines for the celebration of Republic Day in the state January 26.

Citizens have been advised to unfurl National Flag on the premises of their houses with congregation of not more than five persons amid adherence to Covid-19 protocols, the order said.

For public and private institutions, clubs and similar places, the government has advised to celebrate the Republic Day with not more than 10 persons, it said.

"All Covid appropriate behaviour such as social and physical



distancing, use of face masks and hand hygiene shall be followed by one and all during the celebration," it added.

It said the state, district, block and gram panchayat level celebrations for hoisting of the National Flag will be organised as per the circular issued by the government January 10, Hwbwsh

Notably security arrangements have been beefed up in the Capital city of Bhubaneswar for smooth

This year, only police contingents shall participate in the State Parade and there will be no participation by the general public in the celebration

running of the Republic Day Parade Wednesday at Mahatma Gandhi Marg. As many as 62 CCTV cameras have been installed at strategic points and one control room has also been set up. A five-tier security arrangement has been made for the Republic Day celebrations, informed Twin City Police Commissioner Soumendra Priyadarshi.

This year, only Police contingents shall participate in the State Parade and there will be no participation by the general public in the celebration.

ETERNAL SOURCE



The Sun temple at Konark illuminated with solar lights, Tuesday. A special solar plant has been set up at the coastal town to supply power to the 13th century marvel

Fresh dates for nominations

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: The State Election Commissioner (SEC), Odisha Tuesday issued a fresh notification giving a second chance to aspirants to file nominations for the three-tier Panchayat polls in the state.

Noting that no nomination papers have been filed or all rejected in about 4,000 wards and seven sarpanch, six panchayat samiti posts, SEC AP Padi said: "The commission will give a second chance to the aspirants to file nomination paper on January 27. If none file nomination papers this time, there will be no elections in those places. The government will nominate people to fill up the posts."

"A fresh notification will be issued January 27 and the candidates can file nominations for these constituencies from January 29-31," he said, adding that the final list will be published February 4.

STF seizes 3kg brown sugar, ₹65L cash, 3 guns

STF ALSO SEIZED SEVEN MAGAZINES, 43 ROUNDS OF 7MM BULLETS, ONE NOTE COUNTING MACHINE, FOUR MOBILE PHONES AND ONE TABLET SET

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: In a major drive against narcotic drugs, Odisha police seized over 3.1 kg of brown sugar, cash over Rs 65 lakh and three guns from Nayagarh district and arrested one person.

A team of the Special Task

Force (STF) of Odisha police conducted a raid near Sindura under Nayagarh town police station of Nayagarh district late Monday night and seized 3 kg 100 grams of brown sugar, Rs 65.32 lakh in cash and three 7mm pistols, said Crime Branch Additional Director General (ADG) Sanjeeb Panda Tuesday.

During the raid, the STF also seized seven magazines, 43 rounds of 7mm bullets, one note counting machine, four mobile phones and one tablet set, he said.

One accused person, identified as K Vickey Rao of Rajabazar in Khurda district, has been arrested. Two other persons involved in the case have also been identified and the hunt is on to nab them, Panda said.

In this connection, the police have registered a case under rel-



evant sections of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act 1985 and Arms Act, 1959. The accused Vickey will be forwarded to the court, the ADG informed.

Since 2020, in its special drive against narcotic drugs, STF alone has seized more than 47 kg of brown sugar and arrested 122 drug dealers and peddlers. Similarly, in the drive against illegal arms,

the task force has seized 67 firearms since 2020, Panda added.

Peddler held in Khurda

On the other hand, the Odisha excise officials also seized about 270 grams of brown sugar worth over Rs 27 lakh by conducting a raid at a vegetable shop near the Veterinary office at Khurda Town Tuesday. The sleuths also seized Rs 1,13,000 in cash from the possession of the vendor.

The accused vendor was identified as Rajendra Prusti, 42, of Samantarapur in Khurda. The excise sleuths arrested Prusti by registering a case in this regard. Further investigation is on in the matter, said an excise official.

The accused used to purchase the contraband items from dealers in Jaleswar of Balasore district and later sell them in small pouches to local peddlers in Khurda and adjoining areas.

SC adjourns hearing in Vamsadhara row



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 25: The Supreme Court Tuesday adjourned the hearing of a batch of petitions filed by the state of Odisha against the order of Vamsadhara Water Dispute Tribunal wherein the tribunal had allowed Andhra Pradesh to construct Neradi barrage.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and Sanjiv Khanna posted the matter for hearing February 22. The bench also asked the apex court registry to list the case on top of the board for hearing February 22.

Earlier, the state of Andhra Pradesh had filed an affidavit in response to Odisha's petition against the order of the tribunal. Andhra Pradesh contended that Odisha's petition is conceived and no case is made out for the interference of the apex court.

The apex court had September 24, 2021 observed that such inter-state disputes should be disposed of earliest and posted the matter for final disposal after Diwali vacations.

Significantly, Odisha had earlier filed two petitions in the Supreme Court challenging the order of Vamsadhara Water Dispute Tribunal and had also opposed the joint survey of the Neradi barrage as directed by the tribunal.

The Vamsadhara Water Dispute Tribunal had ruled that when there is shortage of water in a particular year, the sharing of water should be proportionately reduced

When there is an increase in water availability, it is to be increased proportionately

The distress sharing formula for the river basin is to be applicable for total utilisation by each state

In June 2021, the Vamsadhara Water Dispute Tribunal had permitted Andhra Pradesh to construct the Neradi barrage across the river with ancillary structures. The tribunal had said that the barrage can have a Right Head Sluice (RHS) of 8,000 cusecs of design capacity for meeting the requirements of AP and a Left Head Sluice (LHS) to cater to the requirements of Odisha below the Neradi barrage. The cost of the LHS was said to be borne by Odisha.

The tribunal had ruled that when there is shortage of water in a particular year, the sharing of water should be proportionately reduced. When there is an increase in water availability, it is to be increased proportionately. The distress sharing formula for the river basin is to be applicable for total utilisation by each state. Aggrieved by this, the state of Odisha filed another special leave petition in the apex court against the order of the tribunal.

ECoR tops in freight loading, says GM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) is the first zone in Indian railways to cross 150 million tonnes of freight loading in 244 days by loading 170.78 million tonnes between April and December 2021, an increase of 18.37 per cent over the corresponding period of the previous year.

This was revealed by ECoR General Manager (GM) Archana Joshi in her message to the railway employees on Republic Day eve, Tuesday. "The ECoR is the highest freight loading zone of Indian Railways in the current financial year. I am quite sure our team will achieve the target of 229.90 MT by the closing of this fiscal," Joshi said.

According to Joshi, the ECoR ran 2,765 special trains (in trips) during 2021-22 financial year (up to December) for clearing extra rush of passengers in comparison to 888 special trains during 2020-21 fiscal. The Bhubaneswar-Nayagarh Town-Bhubaneswar

'SEVA' express service has been converted to MEMU service and five pairs of express trains involving 10 rakes have been converted to LHB stock during this fiscal. The track doubling work has been completed for 50km while the electrification work has been done for 36km during the fiscal, Joshi said.

The ECoR has constructed seven foot overbridges and five lifts at stations, she added. All the three divisional hospitals and the Central Hospital at Mancheswar in Bhubaneswar have been equipped with oxygen plants to meet any emergency. A new OPD block has been constructed at the Central Hospital, Joshi said.

Joshi highlighted the dedication of ECoR employees including doctors, nurses, RPF personnel and train operation staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. "We ran freight trains to carry medicines, food grains and essential commodities, in addition to our core business of moving bulk commodities like ores, coal and steel," said the ECoR GM.

PATRIOTISM IN THE AIR



Artistes from Puri Dance Academy during a rehearsal for the Republic Day celebration in Puri, Tuesday

LOW-KEY LONG-HAULERS

Underlying heart damage likely in 90% Covid victims: Experts

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Jharsuguda, I, Jyotiranjana Sahoo, S/o. Narayan Sahoo, R/o.-Vill.-P.O.- Barihapur, Dist.-Dhenkanal declare that my Mother's actual name is Sumila Sahoo. But 10th Class Certificate, my Mother's name has been wrongly mentioned as Sunita Sahoo. That the names Sumila Sahoo and Sunita Sahoo relates to one and same person.

While Covid-19 has primarily been a respiratory disease, about 90 per cent of people with moderate to severe infections have lasting effects on the heart, believe experts.

Covid affects lungs the most, but studies have shown there is increasing evidence of cardiovascular complications due to Covid-19.

The virus can cause acute myocardial injury and chronic damage to the cardiovascular system.

During the pandemic, it has been observed that heart attacks and heart failures have been high, and deaths due to heart

Among all the patients who have suffered from moderate to severe Covid, 80 to 90 per cent of them have underlying heart damage

MOHIT GUPTA | CARDIOLOGY PROFESSOR, GB PANT HOSPITAL, NEW DELHI

disease have also increased significantly. Research also shows that there is still a lot to learn about lasting heart effects on people who have had Covid-19.

In some cases, patients are left with signs of heart damage that may call for continued monitoring.



"Among all the patients who have suffered from moderate to severe Covid, 80 to 90 per cent of them have underlying heart dam-

age," said Mohit Gupta, Professor Cardiology, GB Pant Hospital, New Delhi.

"Heart and lungs are affected

To stay heart-healthy, it is imperative to maintain an ideal weight, burn calories, do exercise, and avoid smoking. And do yoga to relieve stress

PURSHOTAM LAL | INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGIST, CHAIRMAN, METRO GROUP OF HOSPITALS, NEW DELHI

in Covid recovered patients as part of post Covid syndrome and 15-30 per cent of patients are affected by it," Gupta added.

Some of the symptoms common in coronavirus "long-haulers," such as palpitations, dizziness,

chest pain and shortness of breath, may be due to heart problems. Gupta suggested maintaining a good diet, exercise and rest for increasing heart health.

"To stay heart-healthy, it is imperative to maintain an ideal weight, burn calories, do exercise, and avoid smoking. And do yoga to relieve stress," said Purshotam Lal, Interventional Cardiologist, Chairman, Metro Group of Hospitals.

He also stressed on the need for timely and regular heart check-ups because the cases of cardiac arrest have increased significantly during the pandemic. IANS

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SHORT TAKES

Two injured in group clash

Chandbali: Amidst a heated political atmosphere ahead of panchayat polls, a group clash erupted at Bahadia village of Bhuinbri panchayat under this block of Bhadrak. BJD supporters have allegedly attacked two BJP workers – Ganesh Das and his brother-Monday night. A complaint was lodged with Chandbali police in this regard. According to sources, Ganesh and his brother were on their way back home from Chandbali Bazaar when seven BJD workers attacked them. Both were injured and admitted to Chandbali hospital. Ganesh was later shifted to the district headquarters hospital after his condition deteriorated. A posse of police force has been deployed in the village. Police have started an investigation into the matter.

Registration of girls in Nayagarh

Nayagarh: The district administration here has decided to undertake registration of adolescent girls to prevent child marriage and malnutrition problems. The matter came to the fore during the unveiling of register 'Aliva' by district Collector Poma Tudu at a function organised here by the district administration to mark National Girl Child Day, Monday. The Collector presided over the meeting held in virtual mode. Unveiling the register, Tudu said that this register will help in preventing child marriage and also in combating malnutrition problems. She directed all the child development project officers and supervisors to complete the registration of all 45,000 adolescent girls in 10 to 19 age groups within two months.

Ex-DEO gets 2-yr jail in DA case

Jeypore: A Special Vigilance Court here Tuesday sentenced a former district education officer (DEO) of Rayagada district to two years of imprisonment after convicting him in a disproportionate assets (DA) case. Special Vigilance Judge Rajesh Ekka passed the order on former DEO Jagabandhu Das. The judge also slapped a penalty of ₹50,000 on Das. In default, Das has to undergo an additional six-month imprisonment, the judge observed while adjudicating the case. According to case diary, the sleuths from Jeypore Vigilance department had raided his residence and office April 4, 2012. They had seized gold and silver ornaments and cash worth ₹6,43,280 from his possession.

Giant Tricolour at Sambalpur Univ

Sambalpur: The Sambalpur University here will unfurl a giant Tricolour at a height of 100 ft on its premises to mark the 73rd Republic Day Wednesday. A permanent flagpole of 100 ft in height has been installed at the university campus for hoisting the National Flag of 30 ft in length and 20 ft in width, Vice Chancellor Professor Sanjeev Mittal said. A concrete platform has also been built to support the flagpole.

VOTERS' DAY PLEDGE



Newly-enrolled voters take a pledge on National Voters' Day at the conference hall of Angul Zilla Parishad, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

No school, no vote: Bolangir villagers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Loisingha, Jan 25: Ahead of panchayat elections, the closure and merger of a school has become a major issue for people of Amaramunda village in Nuniapalli panchayat under Agalpur block of Bolangir district. They hung a banner with the message "No school, no votes," at the entry of the village Tuesday.

According to sources, Amaramunda primary school has been closed and merged with Laxmanpalli primary school. The villagers have moved the High Court against the decision of the School and Mass Education department.

The village comprising two wards has 350 voters. The villagers said that the school was set up in 1954 with Classes I to V. There were 35 students in the school with two teachers.

After the school closure, the villagers had approached the district education officer and the Collector against the decision. Their wards would be deprived of education at doorstep, they pleaded.

Hydrographic survey on Mahanadi begins

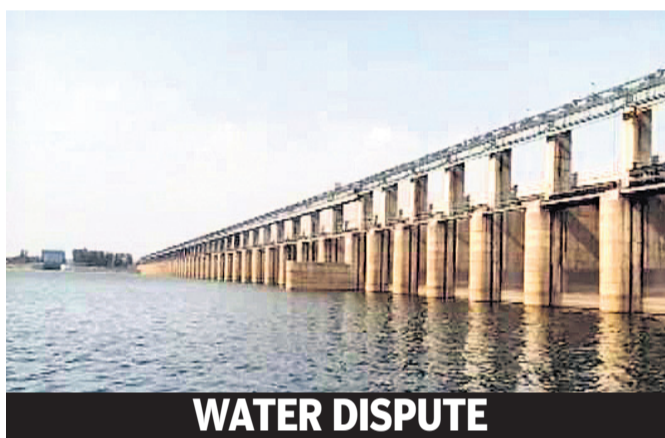
SURVEY REPORT WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE MWDT IN ONE AND HALF MONTHS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 25: In deference to an order issued by the Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal (MWDT) over sharing of the river water between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, a hydrographic survey on the status of Mahanadi riverbed has commenced recently. A Mumbai-based agency is carrying out the survey.

According to sources, the survey report will be submitted to the MWDT by March 2022. The agency is collecting detailed data regarding the depth, width, length and water retention capacity of Mahanadi.

Chief engineer of Hirakud dam Ananda Sahu said following the order of the tribunal, the present status of the river and change in its course is being surveyed. "Two teams of the agency are at work. A report is being prepared on the above-said aspects of the area within 1-km radius in Mahanadi upstream and about 50-km radius in the downstream.



A Mumbai-based agency is carrying out the survey. The agency is collecting detailed data regarding the depth, width, length and water retention capacity of Mahanadi

A detailed report will be submitted to the Union Water Resources department and the state government. Water management of the river will be easy in future," he added. Notably, water flow in

the downstream was affected after Chhattisgarh government built barrages in the upstream of Mahanadi. This has become a bone of contention between the two states. The issue is now sub

Another bridge likely in Swabhiman Anchal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 25: Chief Engineer of the Rural Development department (Planning) Sanjeeb Kumar Mohanty Tuesday visited Malkangiri and took stock of various developmental projects being executed in the district.

Significantly, he has suggested for construction of a bridge like Gurupriya Setu from Orapadar to Muduliguda. He said that he would put forth a proposal in this regard before the state government.

Besides, he suggested another bridge at Dudhapalli to facilitate communication in the remote areas.

Mohanty took stock of road projects under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) from Hantalguda to Luchhapani, Luchhapani to Rangiringuda,

Chief Engineer of the RD department (Planning) visited the Swabhiman Anchal and took stock of the situation

Hantalguda and Gajalmamudi of Swabhiman Anchal under Chittrakonda block.

During the visit, the chief engineer had a word with the local people regarding their problems.

He expressed happiness over functioning of a crusher unit set up by the district administration at Hantalguda.

He added that the state government has been carrying out developmental activities in Swabhiman Anchal. He also visited Bondaghati area.



Voter list mess decried

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kalinganagar/Bhadrak, Jan 25: Anomalies in voters' lists have left 170 people fuming in Ranagudi panchayat under Danagadi block of Jajpur. Similarly, 54 people have found their names missing in voters' lists in Bhadrak district. They will be deprived of exercising their franchise during the upcoming panchayat polls. They have taken up the issue with administration.



According to reports, names of 170 people in Barakhal under Danagadi block have been deleted from the voter list. They have demanded halt to voting. They have apprised the Collector and the BDO about the anomalies and demanded that the mess in the list needs to be rectified well before the elections.

Likewise, 54 people of Kedarpur panchayat in Bhadrak district complained before the Collector that their names have been struck off from the voter list and an official has committed the mischief.

Godman held for raping differently-abled minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 25: A self-proclaimed godman has allegedly raped a differently-abled minor girl in Gudialbandh panchayat under Badasahi block in Mayurbhanj district. Acting on a complaint, police have arrested the accused.

The girl is currently undergoing treatment at Pandit Raghunath Murmu (PRM) Medical College and Hospital here.

According to sources, the incident happened January 22. The girl's parents had gone out to attend a meeting on Magha Puja in the village. Finding her alone, Jatharam Baba of the village had entered the house and outraged her modesty. Reports also suggest that there

Man gets 20-yr jail for rape, murder bid on minor girl

Berhampur: A Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) court Tuesday sentenced a 36-year-old man to 20 years of imprisonment and slapped a penalty of ₹50,000 on him after convicting him of abduction and rape of a minor girl and subsequent murder bid on the survivor. In default, the convict, Muna Badatya of Bhismagiri village under Digapahandi police limits in Ganjam district, has to undergo an additional 15-month imprisonment.

was an attempt by the villagers to suppress the incident. The villagers held a meeting where it was decided that ₹90,000 would be paid

to the victim's family for treatment and ₹5,000 was paid in advance. However, the victim's condition worsened following which her

family members admitted her to PRM Medical College and Hospital. Baripada town police started a probe and arrested the godman.

BJD REBELS BID TO SPOIL SHOW

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, Jan 25: Several rebel candidates of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) throwing their hats into the ring have become a major headache for the party in Jaleswar block of Balasore as attempts to placate them is underway.

The block BJD vice president Bhupati Mirdha himself has filed his nomination against the party candidate. The rift within BJD is likely to affect the party's performance in some panchayats like Khuluda, Nachhimpur, Kotasahi, Shyamnagar and Raibania.

In Khuluda panchayat, the BJD has backed Jyotirmaya Acharya as sarpanch nominee against the party's block vice president.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
No. G.274/KUR DIV/NI/Cycle/2/Wheeler Stand/JKR/E-tender/22 Dt.: 20.01.2022
Description: CONTRACT FOR CYCLE/TWO WHEELERS PARKING STAND AT JAJPUR-KEONJHAR ROAD RAILWAY STATION FOR A PERIOD OF 03 (THREE) YEARS FROM THE DATE OF COMMENCEMENT OF WORK.
Reserve price for 03 years: ₹ 9,83,997/-
EMD: ₹ 98,400/-, Cost of tender form with GST@18%: ₹ 2,360/-, Completion period: 03 years.
Tender opening date & time: at 1600 hrs. of 03.03.2022.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <http://www.irops.gov.in>
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website ten days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), PR-747/M/21-22 Khurda Road

Admin mute as sand mafia on the prowl in Mahanadi

LOCALS BLAMED CALLOUS ATTITUDE OF THE TEHSIL AUTHORITIES FOR RAMPANT SMUGGLING OF SAND FROM THE RIVERBED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 25: Rampant sand mining from Mahanadi riverbed here has not only bled the state government of crores of revenue but also affected the construction activities in the district, said sources.

The sand mafia use heavy equipment like JCB, Poclain and Hyva to illegally extract and transport the sand from the riverbed. The sand smugglers are active mostly during night, said sources. They also transport the smuggled sand to places outside the district by using Hyva trucks.

This apart, huge craters formed due to sand mining through machines have affected the water flow of the river and caused erosion of the embankments.

Sources said over 50 Hyvas could be seen standing in queue at



PLUNDER OF MINOR MINERAL

The sand mafia use heavy Huge craters formed due to sand equipment like JCB, Poclain and mining through machines have Hyva to illegally extract and affected the water flow of the river and transport the sand from the riverbed caused erosion of the embankments

Kamagaon sand ghat under Maneswar tehsil every day. The sand is smuggled via Bheden tehsil in Bargarh district which is on the other side of the river.

Locals alleged that callous attitude of the tehsil authorities has led to this situation which in turn has resulted in loss of revenue worth crores to the state exchequer.

Smuggling of sand to other districts has led to shortage of the minor mineral while its price has also skyrocketed in recent times. Locals alleged that some political leaders are hand in glove with the sand smugglers due to which the latter are carrying out the illegal act with impunity.

It is learnt that thousands of people residing in riparian villages are largely depended on the river ecosystem. However, their livelihood has been severely affected by the ac-

tivities of sand mafia over the years.

Locals said sand traders have encroached upon the riverbed of Mahanadi where huge stockpile of sand is seen. They are hoarding the sand to sell it at a premium during monsoon, when extraction of sand is very difficult.

Lifting of sand begins in October after the end of monsoon. Most of the sand smugglers are from nearby areas while a few are from other parts of the district. Residents claimed sand smuggling could be checked to a great extent if both Maneswar and Bheden tehsil authorities could conduct regular raids and collect royalty from the sand trucks.

When contacted, Bheden tehsildar Anil Hota said steps are being taken to check sand smuggling from the riverbed.

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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.

FOCUS OBITUARY

THE MONK & HIS MESSAGE

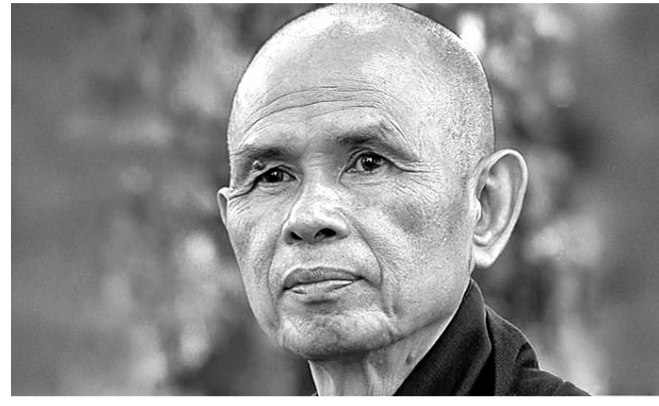
Care not for time and success. Act out thy part, whether it be to fail or to prosper.

SRI AUROBINDO



Jagdish Rattanan

THE PATH THAT INDIA HAS TRADITIONALLY OWNED AND BUILT IS THE PATH THAT MASTERS LIKE THEY HAVE PREACHED AND THE WORLD HAS LISTENED TO



Engaged Buddhism arose as a Buddhist response to the widespread trauma—including colonialism, war, social and economic injustice, environmental degradation, genocide, totalitarian government, and the suppression of religion— that has accompanied the advent of modernity in some Asian Buddhist countries

majority look on flummoxed. The abortive attempt at pushing the controversial farm laws (that now stand withdrawn) told us how policies are pushed without the buy-in of people.

What is the way out? How does Thich inspire India? As a report pointed out, "Engaged Buddhism arose as a Buddhist response to the widespread trauma—including colonialism, war, social and economic injustice, environmental degradation, genocide, totalitarian government, and the suppression of religion—that has accompanied the advent of modernity in some Asian Buddhist countries." These are the very ills that have invaded India, as we moved away from our roots—non-violence, welfare of others and an inner quest, which is no different from the ideals of Engaged Buddhism or of Gandhi's song (authored by Narsinh Mehta) "Vashinava jana to."

We must note that while he has spoken often of India and has travelled across the land and visited India thrice, Thich's influence and reach in popular perception has been limited here. The Ethics Committee of Parliament was set up in 1997 following talks between the then Vice President KR Narayanan, India's first Dalit Vice President and later President, and Thich Nhat Hanh, to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to the ethical and other misconduct by members.

We can see from the tributes, the respect and the outpourings of love that the path that the world respects and wants to follow is the path that India has traditionally owned and built, that masters like Thich have preached and the world has listened to. This is the 'superpowerdom' of Thich Nhat Hanh. The ideas at their core are also Indian wealth that we seem willing to trade for pebbles and other castaways. This is the fate of India in the current times—from a leader for all ages to a nation that thinks it got powerful when all it did was barter its glory at the altar of a figurine of Superman.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

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The world bowed over the weekend to remember and thank Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay) for his life of service, for his teachings that have transformed the lives of millions of people and for his messages that will continue to inspire and guide humanity long after his passing January 22 at age 95. The tributes and ceremonies from Plum Village in France, where his movement centred around 'Engaged Buddhism' is headquartered, to distant global corners, tell us not only of the deep respect for the Vietnamese monk of mindfulness but also the hunger in the world for a new leadership that can guide us to a new path of peace, interconnectedness and compassion. As Rahul Gandhi said in his tribute: "His gentle words on peace, gratitude and non-violence will ring true forever."

These qualities that will ring 'forever' mark the currency that India has traditionally minted and offered to the world. These are India's true gold reserves, accumulated over a long tradition in a land that is special because it has inspired, critiqued and built models and ways of living and interacting that are unique and have proved to be timeless. They come from teachers, philosophers and mystics who have dwelt on the truth and have given us spiritual knowledge and practical advice, then and now. From the ancient Indian texts, the wanderings and insights of Gautama Buddha, the poetry of Kabir, the traditions of the Sikh gurus and more recently to the collection of ages of wisdom presented in the struggles and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, this is India at its best. Thich Nhat Hanh said it in these words: "Those who killed Mahatma Gandhi...they had a lot of anger, violence, ignorance and the wrong perception. Mahatma Gandhi is still alive and he is stronger than before."

There is a story told by the master about the time he was speaking to journalists in India in 2008. It merits recounting given the uncertain times we live in, times when force and violence appear to speak louder than peace and non-violence. This was a day news came in of a terrorist attack somewhere in India. How does a jour-

nalist report the bad news, the violence, the destruction that must find space on the front pages but constitute material that can only feed into more anger and despair?

Writing in his book 'The Art of Communicating', Thich explains: "We should reflect and discuss events in a way that will not increase the despair and the anger in people. Instead, we can help them understand why things happen, so their insight and compassion increase. We can make a big difference with the practice of looking deeply. The solution isn't to hide the truth." He captured these and other thoughts in a message that can become the hallmark of all good journalism, and will help call out the hatred that is being spewed these days from many media outlets: "You have to report in such a way that we don't water the seeds of fear, anger and vengeance in people."

In essence, these are Indian messages that we need to rediscover and re-engage with because they have been lost in the land of their birth. The India of today is an India sliding down from the high standards that had made the nation stand out and become known for its many gifts. We cannot deny the blemishes. But we cannot be proud of the richness. Today, we can see the direction

that the nation has been set on isn't the one where moral standing is enhanced. This is certainly seen in the way the narrative of India has been changed in a lightning-fast time frame but this slide to rancorous divisions, a readiness to tear down the neighbour, didn't begin today or in recent times. We have been on the downhill journey for a while; recent events and narratives have only hastened the trajectory.

India's fall is mirrored across many facets today: the growing inequality, the violence against the downtrodden and the minorities, the rise of the hate speech, the ugly spats force-created on television, the demonisation of dissent and a manner and way of speaking that has violence woven into it. It is not just the politics that is bad. Our television shows promote insult as comedy, making fun of others has become a ticket to stardom, running down others is equated with celebrating entrepreneurship. In general, space must be wrested, fisticuffs must be shown and shouting down others is a part of the game. The broad direction that began with ideas of liberalisation to deliver growth in service of all sections has been twisted, misinterpreted and reinvented, to make this a nation of the few by the few, while the ma-

IN JEST THIS

How many COVID shots are too many?



Melvin Durai

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF BRAHMEO MANDAL, HE'S THE 84-YEAR-OLD BIHAR MAN WHO SET AN UNOFFICIAL GUINNESS WORLD RECORD FOR MOST COVID VACCINATIONS

I've had three COVID vaccinations so far, including a booster shot, and I hope I don't need to have anymore. But I'm preparing myself for several more doses because they seem inevitable.

Just look at the results of a new study in Israel. The study found that giving a fourth dose of COVID vaccine to people over 60 makes them three times more resistant to serious illness than people in the same age group who've been vaccinated just three times.

While I'm not quite 60, I'm concerned that a fourth dose will soon be recommended for everyone. And after that, scientists will perform a study that shows that people who get a fifth dose are four times more resistant to serious illness than people who've been vaccinated just four times.

And before you know it, we'll all be catching up with Brahmeo Mandal. In case you haven't heard of Mandal, he's the 84-year-old Bihar man who set an unofficial Guinness World Record for most COVID vaccinations. The retired postman from Madhepura district has been vaccinated 11 times

since last February.

I'm calling it an 'unofficial' Guinness World Record because the Guinness people have not yet visited India to verify and recognise Mandal's achievement. As far as I know, they do not currently recognise any records pertaining to COVID vaccinations, not even for "Loudest Scream While Getting a COVID Shot." (Other potential records that they might want to consider: "Longest Queue at a COVID Vaccination Clinic" and "Most Jabs Given by a Single Health Worker in 24 Hours.")

The Guinness people would probably be reluctant to recognise Mandal, as it might encourage him to get more shots. They may also wonder whether getting 11 vaccinations qualifies as an 'achievement.'

But it certainly is an achievement in my view, because not everyone is capable of the necessary deception to get 11 shots. Mandal apparently evaded detection by going to different vaccination camps and telling health workers that he hadn't received a single shot yet. He recorded the date and location of

each shot in a notebook.

For his first nine shots, he apparently used his Aadhaar card and a mobile number, then switched to other forms of identification, including his wife's mobile number.

Why did he go to all this trouble? "I felt that it was helping my general health," he told the New York Times in a recent phone interview. "My backache has improved, my general weakness improved, and my appetite improved."

So Mandal is suggesting that the COVID vaccine, in addition to helping us fight the COVID virus, is also good for our health in other ways? Don't be surprised if the COVID vaccine makers are already conducting Mandal-related research. In a few years, we may see advertisements that say, "Do you have back pain, loss of appetite, general weakness? Ask your doctor about the COVID vaccine. COVID: Curing Our Very Intense Disorders."

Thanks to Mandal, we may be getting annual COVID vaccinations as soon as we turn 60—or perhaps even earlier.

In case you're wondering, Mandal did not escape legal trouble completely. Perhaps because he bragged to his friends about his many vaccinations, it came to the attention of the media and health authorities. Soon, Dr. Amarendra Narayan Shahi, the chief medical officer in Madhepura district, was putting together a three-member investigating team to uncover the truth.

According to reports, police have registered a first information report (FIR) against Mandal.

Officer: "How many jabs did you get?"

Mandal: "Eleven jabs."

Officer: "And do you want more jabs?"

Mandal: "Yes, but not at the police station."

Indeed, Mandal is eager to get more vaccinations. "I will take the booster dose as well to see its efficacy," he told reporters. "If it is beneficial, then I will take not 12 but even 24 doses."

Twenty-four doses? Perhaps it's time to distribute Mandal's photo to every vaccination site in Bihar. And mail one copy to the Guinness people.

WISDOM CORNER

There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self. ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference. ROBERT FROST

Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation. OSCAR WILDE

WORDSWORTH

Robinsonade

It may sound like a brand name for a fizzy soft drink, but it appeared as a serious creation around the middle of the nineteenth century as a literary term. It describes a story with a theme like that of Daniel Defoe's famous 1719 work, Robinson Crusoe, about a castaway on a tropical island. In the early days, it seems to have been a favourite of writers for Blackwood's Magazine. The Oxford English Dictionary's first example from that journal is dated 1847: "These outcasts from civilisation, the adventures of most of whom would furnish abundant materials for a Robinsonade." But the term was coined in German, by the writer Johann Gottfried Schnabel, in 1731, and it was also known earlier in French, for example in Frédéric Schoell's 1824 Histoire de la littérature Grecque Profane. In modern times, it is moderately common in literary criticism as a description of works in which a hero is snatched without warning from the comforts of civilisation and must attempt to survive in difficult circumstances through his wits and personal qualities. The Swiss Family Robinson, Coral Island, Lord of the Flies, and Umberto Eco's The Island of the Day Before are all in their own ways examples of the type.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Disgraceful distortion

Sir, The nature of fascists to distort history goes back to the days of dictators like Adolf Hitler, much of what is visible in today's times. The dropping out of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn 'Abide with me' which is displayed every year at the 'Beating the Retreat' ceremony of the Republic Day parade is disgraceful to the glorious history to which the brave hearts and martyrs of the country had immense contribution. If tuneful and symphonic music such as RD Burman's songs should be parameter for the Republic Day parade, then the government must learn to entertain itself privately and not sacrifice the history of this country. In the frenzy run-up to prove the nationalistic superiority of their party, the ruling party's leaders must not forget that this nation attained Independence because of the sweat and blood of its people.

Debadurllav Harichandan, BHUBANESWAR

Mayawati's absence

Sir, Mayawati is conspicuous by her absence in the Uttar Pradesh election rigmarole. In state politics, one can ignore Mayawati only at their peril. Her deafening silence has, however, stunned her supporters and detractors alike. All big players, regional and national, have come out guns blazing but the redoubtable Mayawati has addressed a couple of rallies of little consequence. Elections are about perception, and people are here to judge their leaders by the latter's approach and attitude more than anything else. Admittedly, Mayawati has not been her usual self in electoral politics over the last half a decade. But who has not experienced the political topsy-turvy at a point in their careers? Despite allegations of massive corruption during her chief ministerial tenures, the BSP chief has always been admired for her efficient administration and social engineering. The Dalits of Uttar Pradesh have generally never let their 'Behenji' down for a long time. Among the 21 per cent Dalit population in the state, the sub-caste Jatavs, who form more than half of the Dalit population, have been solidly behind Mayawati. However, the BJP has been able to wean many other sub-castes away from the BSP. Mayawati probably would know that her votebank requires a strong assurance from their unquestionable leader about her intentions. Mayawati cannot keep her supporters in suspense. There are reports that she is certain to hit the ground soon after completing a few formalities. So much, so good.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

of the day quote

Elections must be fought on issues of development -- employment, job creation, health services, education -- these should be central to our discussion and debate

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

I have spoken to everyone (Ministers) before appointing them as district in-charge Ministers and after that as well. It is our party's national policy that Ministers should be made in-charge of other districts, not their own

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

I will quit politics if the Charanjit Singh Channi government brings any proof against my brother-in-law and Akali leader Bikram Singh Majithia who has been booked in an NDPS case

SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL | SAD CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

TN to conduct bird census Jan 28, 29

Chennai: Tamil Nadu forest department will conduct a bird census January 28 and 29 in coordination with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and technical support from Universal Eco Foundation and Indigenous Biodiversity Foundation (IBF), a non-profit organisation. The census will be carried out by a 50 member team of volunteers from Myladuthurai and Tiruchi districts. Students of Pondicherry University will also be part of the survey that will be done between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. January 28 and 29.

2 held with fake currency, pistol

Ferozpur: Two people were arrested by sleuths of the Crime Investigation Agency with fake Indian currency and a pistol Tuesday, police said. A Chinese-made pistol (.30 bore) along with 25 live rounds besides fake Indian currency with a face value of ₹80,000, five mobiles, one internet dongle, a car and three bikes were recovered from them.

Man dies in road accident

New Delhi: 40-year-old man was killed allegedly after an unidentified vehicle hit his motorcycle in southwest Delhi's Safdarjung Enclave area, police said Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Anup Bhatt, a resident of Dayalpur who worked with a private firm here, they said.

Eight-yr-old raped in Delhi's Shastri Park

New Delhi: An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped by two minors in northeast Delhi's Shastri Park area, police said Tuesday. A senior police officer said the condition of the survivor is stable and she has been shifted to the general ward of the hospital where she is undergoing treatment. Earlier in the day, Delhi Commission for Women Chairperson Swati Malwal had said the victim was battling for life due to critical injuries.

Teen detained

Latur: A 17-year-old boy was Tuesday detained for allegedly stabbing his friend to death over a dispute in Maharashtra's Latur city, police said. The Class 11 student had fled the city after attacking his friend with a sickle Sunday and was nabbed after he arrived from Pune in the early hours of the day, additional superintendent of police Anurag Jain said.



All Delhi government offices will carry photos of B R Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh, and no pictures of any political leader

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

SMART SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

Along with fencing along the India-Bangladesh border, the Border Security Force (BSF) has also installed a smart surveillance system to further enhance vigil, especially in smuggling, crime and infiltration-prone areas, BSF's Inspector General, Tripura Frontier, Susanta Kumar Nath said Tuesday



SL court orders release of 56 Indian fishermen



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Jan 25: A Sri Lankan court ordered the release of 56 Indian fishermen who were detained for allegedly fishing in the island nation's territorial waters on Tuesday, a verdict that sets free all the remaining Indian fisherfolk languishing in the country's jails.

The court in the northern Jaffna peninsula ordered the release of the fishermen who were detained by the Sri Lankan Navy in mid-December in the seas south of Mannar.

"Happy to learn that a Court has ordered the release of 56 #Indian fishermen," Indian High Commission in Colombo said in a tweet. "Commend the work of High Commissioner Gopal Baglay and his team in securing the release," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in a tweet. Both Sri Lankan officials and the Indian diplomatic sources confirmed the release and noted that with Tuesday's release there are no more Indian fishermen in the island nation's custody.

The court order for the release of fishermen came as the Indian authorities urged Sri Lanka to release them on humanitarian grounds in the backdrop of economic assistance talks that were going on at the time.

India this month announced an economic relief package to Sri Lanka to help its southern neighbour tackle its worst foreign exchange crisis.

The issue of fishermen had figured in the talks between Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar early this month. Last month, India had expressed concern over the detention of 68 of its fishermen from Tamil Nadu by Sri Lankan authorities and said the issue of their 'early release' has been taken up with the island nation. The issue of fishermen remains one of the irritants in India and Sri Lanka ties.

PADMA AWARDS 2022

India honours 128 personalities with highest civilian fame

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 25: The government Tuesday announced 128 Padma awards, including four Padma Vibhushan, 17 Padma Bhushan and 107 Padma Shri awards, on the eve of the country's 73rd Republic Day.

Out of the 128 Padma awardees, 13 are posthumous, 34 are women, while 10 persons are from the category of foreigners, NRIs, PIOs and OCIs.

The four Padma Vibhushan recipients are -- CDS General Bipin

Rawat (Civil Service, Posthumous), Prabha Atre (Art), Kalyan Singh (Public Affairs, Posthumous) and Radhyashyam Khemka (Literature & Education, Posthumous).

A total of 17 Padma Bhushan awards have been awarded. The names include Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad for Public Affairs, actor Victor Banerjee for Art, Gurmeet Bawa (Posthumous) for Art, former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee for Public Affairs, Natarajan Chandrasekaran for Trade and Industry, Krishna Ella



and Suchitra (Duo) for Trade and Industry, Madhur Jaffery for Culinary Skills, Devendra Jhajharia for Sports, vocalist Rashid Khan for Art, former CAG Rajiv Mehrishi for Civil Service, Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai for Trade and Industry, Cyrus

Poonawala for Trade and Industry, Sanjay Rajaram (Posthumous) for Science and Technology, and Pratibha Ray, Swami Sachidananda and Vashista Tripathi for Literature and Education.

Apart from these, a total of 107 Padma Shri awards have also been announced for eminent persons in the fields of Art, Trade and Industry, Literature and Education, Sports, Civil Services and others.

The Padma awards, the highest civilian awards of the country, are conferred in three categories,

namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. The Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, while the Padma Bhushan is for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.

The awards are announced on the eve of Republic Day every year.

The awards are conferred by the President of India at a ceremonial function held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March-April every year.

7 MBBS students killed as car falls off bridge

AGENCIES

Wardha, Jan 25: Seven MBBS students, including the son of an MLA, were killed in Wardha district of Maharashtra in the wee hours of Tuesday when the car they were travelling in fell off a bridge, police said.

The incident occurred around 1.30 AM near Selsura village in Wardha district, 77 km away from Nagpur, in east Maharashtra. An official said that all seven students died on the spot.

One of the seven students, Avishkar Rahangdale, was the son of Tirora BJP MLA Vijay Rahangdale. He was a first-year MBBS student of the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College at Sawangi (Meghe) in Wardha. Police said the SUV was being driven by one of the students who all were returning from neighbouring Yavatmal district after celebrating the birthday of a student. Other six deceased are identified as Niraj Chauhan, who hailed from Daudpur in Gorakhpur, Pratyush Singh, Shubham Jaiswal from Chandauli (Uttar Pradesh), Vivek Nandan and Pawan Shakti (both from Gaya in Bihar), and Nitesh Kumar Singh from Belapur in Odisha.

Due to the impact of the crash, the SUV was reduced to pulp. All the deceased were students of the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College,



PM Modi expressed pain at the loss of lives in the accident. He also announced ₹2 lakh each from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the families of those who died and ₹50,000 for the injured

OSD of the Datta Meghe Institute of Medical Sciences Dr Abhyuday Meghe told PTI.

"One of the deceased students was a medical intern. Of the rest six, two each were studying in the final year, third year and first year," he said. Villagers informed that the students were passing through Selsura in a SUV when a wild animal suddenly appeared in front of their car. According to a preliminary probe, the person driving the car, in order to avoid the animal, swerved hard on the wheel, resulting in the vehicle falling into a ditch under a culvert.

The lifeguard rushed to the spot to rescue the students and tried to save them but, unfortunately, the rescue operation couldn't be successful. They found all the students dead.

Senior officials of the district and the peoples' representatives of the area, including Lok Sabha member Ramdas Tadas and MLA Pankaj Bhojar rushed to the spot. All the bodies were later sent to the Wardha civil hospital for post mortem. "The college authorities have informed the parents of the students about the tragedy," informed Ravi Meghe, the registrar of the college.

SNOW FUN



Tourists walk on a snow-covered road during snowfall at Ridge in Shimla

PTI PHOTO

'POLL FREEBIES A SERIOUS ISSUE'

SC ISSUES NOTICES TO CENTRE, ELECTION PANEL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: The Supreme Court Tuesday sought replies from the Centre and the Election Commission on a PIL seeking direction to seize the symbol or deregister a political party that promises or distributes "irrational freebies" before polls, saying it is a "serious issue" as sometimes "freebie budget is going beyond regular budget".

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and Justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli sought the response in four weeks on the PIL filed by BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay.

The plea, filed ahead of assembly polls in five states, said there



should be a total ban on such populist measures to gain undue political favour from voters as they violate the Constitution and the EC should take suitable deterrent measures. The bench took note of submissions of senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for Upadhyay, that a law need to be framed on the issue and steps like seizure of party symbols or taking back the registration of parties or

both may be thought of as ultimately it is the citizens who have to pay up. "Let us see. For the time being, we will issue notice and let the Government of India and the Election Commission come back with some response," the bench said after hearing brief arguments.

The bench said that political parties may be included as parties to the plea later.

"Legally, I am asking some legal questions in the debate. We want to know how to control all this. It is a serious issue, no doubt. Freebie budget is going beyond regular budget and sometimes, as observed by the Supreme Court in this paragraph (of an earlier judgment), it is not the level playing field.

Omicron can survive 8 days on plastic, 21 hrs on skin: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 25: The highly contagious Omicron variant of Covid-19 can survive upto eight days on plastic and 21 hours on skin -- a much longer period of time than other variants of concern like Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta, as well as the original strain, according to a study

New Delhi/Tokyo, Jan 25: The highly contagious Omicron variant of Covid-19 can survive upto eight days on plastic and 21 hours on skin -- a much longer period of time than other variants of concern like Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta, as well as the original strain, according to a study.

The study posted on pre-print, and not peer-reviewed yet, analysed the differences in viral environmental stability between the SARS-CoV-2 Wuhan strain and all variants of concern (VOCs).

The findings showed that on plastic and skin surfaces, Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Omicron variants exhibited more than two-fold longer survival times than those of the Wuhan strain and maintained infectivity for more than 16 hours on the skin surfaces.

Omicron survived 21.1 hours on skin model from cadavers, followed by the Wuhan virus (8.6 hours), the Gamma (11 hours) and Delta (16.8 hours) variant.

The survival of Alpha (19.6 hours)



and Beta (19.1 hours) was found to be similar.

"The Omicron variant has the highest environmental stability among VOCs," said researchers

from the Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine in Japan.

"This high stability might also be one of the factors that have allowed the Omicron variant to re-

place the Delta variant and spread rapidly," they said.

Further, the team found that Omicron can survive 193.5 hours (about 8 days) on a plastic (polystyrene) surface, plus three times that of the original strain (56 hours) and of the Gamma variant (59.3 hours), and significantly more than Delta (114 hours) and Beta (156.6 hours). Only the Alpha variant, with 191.3 hours, showed similar resistance.

The researchers said that the high environmental stability of these VOCs could increase the risk of contact transmission and contribute to the spread of VOCs.

The study also showed that although Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Omicron variants showed a slight

increase in ethanol resistance, all VOCs on the skin surface were completely inactivated in 15 seconds exposure to alcohol-based hand sanitiser. The researchers highly recommended hand hygiene practices, and use of disinfectants with appropriate alcohol concentrations, as proposed by the World Health Organisation.

This study also acknowledged limitations such as the relationship between the amount of virus remaining on the surface and the risk of transmission is still unclear at this stage. Therefore, it might be reasonable to interpret the value of survival time in this study as a reference value, the researchers said.

Don't participate in 'Surya Namaskar': JIH to students

The centre has issued instructions on the R-Day celebrations that special programmes to perform 'Surya Namaskar' should be held across the country to mark 75 years of independence. The plan is to achieve a target of 75 crore 'Surya Namaskar' across 30 states, 30,000 institutes by involving three lakh students

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Jan 25: The Karnataka unit of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) has asked Muslim students and parents not to participate in 'Surya Namaskar' on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day as the ritual is against Islam.

Dr Muhammad Saad Belgami, JIH President told IANS Tuesday that, 'Surya Namaskar' is against Islam. "We don't prostrate before our prophet and we believe in oneness of the God. 'Surya Namaskar' is not allowed for Muslim students," he said.

"We also strongly advise Muslim parents and children not to participate in this idolatrous practice. This should also be an occasion to make children understand

the concept of oneness of God and its demands. We urge the management of schools and institutions to respect this diversity and freedom of choice," he explained.

The central government has issued instructions on the Republic Day celebrations that special programmes to perform 'Surya Namaskar' with musical instruments should be held across the country to mark 75 years of independence. The plan is to achieve a target of 75 crore 'Surya Namaskar' across 30 states, 30,000 institutes by involving three lakh students. "We wish to say that 'Surya Namaskar' is devotional Yoga practice involving prostration to the Sun and chanting of hymns. Islam strongly prohibits any act of worship or devotion to any of the creation," he

said.

"Islam strictly recommends that is permissible only to the creator of the entire universe - Allah. Muslims are not allowed to prostrate even to the beloved personality of Prophet Muhammad. We have been asked not to perform Namaz, including prostration at the exact time of dawn or dusk to avoid any doubt of resemblance to sun worship," he explained.

Hence, it will be an infringement on the fundamental and constitutional right of Muslim children to expect or ask them to participate in this respect. The government should not enforce religious practices of one community on others since it is a violation of the secular principles and against the spirit of equality, justice, and liberty, he said.

The hijab row in Udipi College has resulted in resentment and a standoff between the Muslim girls and the management. The girls continued to be excluded from the classes till date. The right choice of dress, practice of one's religious belief is a fundamental and constitutionally guaranteed right,



“ We wish to say that 'Surya Namaskar' is devotional Yoga practice involving prostration to the Sun and chanting of hymns. Islam strongly prohibits any act of worship or devotion to any of the creation

DR MUHAMMAD SAAD BELGAMI | JIH PRESIDENT

which cannot be denied to any individual, he said.

Hijab has never been an obstacle to identity and progress. To deny the same to the girl students at Udipi and as a result deny them

dignity and right to education is highly deplorable. The issue should not be politicised and the matter should not lead to polarisation and hatred between the communities, he demanded.

Humiliated at showroom, farmer returns with ₹10L in half-hour to buy vehicle!

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 25: Allegedly humiliated by a sales executive at a showroom for his looks, a farmer in Tumakuru district, who had gone to buy a new pick-up truck, threw up a challenge and returned with the cash in quick time, but claimed that the promise to deliver the vehicle immediately was not honoured.

The incident is said to have taken place Friday, when the farmer named Kempegowda from Ramanapalya in Chikkasandra hobli, along with seven of his associates, had gone to buy the Bolero pick-up truck at a showroom.

"Looking at my clothes and my condition, they felt that I'm not in a position to pay the money. One of their field officers told me you probably don't even have Rs 10, will you buy this vehicle? He even said that those who come to buy a vehicle don't come in the way we

had," Kempegowda said.

He said, "Humiliated, one of my uncles challenged the salesman that they were ready to pay Rs 10 lakh and would he deliver the vehicle immediately to which he replied if they get full cash in half-an-hour, he would deliver the vehicle immediately."

Kempegowda said when he got Rs 10 lakh and placed it before the sales persons within 30 minutes, they changed the plate, and said they won't be able to deliver the vehicle immediately for various reasons.

Angered by this, Kempegowda and his associates informed the police and refused to leave the place, demanding that the vehicle be delivered to them immediately or a written apology for the humiliation.

After police persuaded them, they left the spot stating that they don't want a vehicle from the showroom anymore, but want them to apologise.

TWEAKING OF LOKAYUKTA

Caught on wrong foot, Kerala govt says want parity with other states

According to critics, with Vijayan and state HE Minister R Bindhu facing serious charges in separate cases before the Kerala Lokayukta, the CM's easy way to get out of the trouble was an Ordinance diluting its powers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS-SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 25: With Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's move to send an ordinance to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan diluting the powers of the Lokayukta coming under criticism, state Law Minister P Rajeev said Tuesday that the act is aimed at bringing the anti-corruption body at par with those in other states.

The first Pinarayi Vijayan government had taken up the issue, but now the advocate general has said that the present powers of the Lokayukta stand in the way of natural justice and are also not in tune with the Constitution. Besides, there are also two judgments to this effect from the Kerala High Court. Based on all this, the amendment to Kerala Lokayukta Ordinance was sent to the Governor, said Rajeev.

Meanwhile, the media is abuzz with earlier statements of various CPI-M leaders, including that of the party's General Secretary Sitaram Yechuri, battling for the need of a strong Lokpal and Lokayukta.

According to critics, with Vijayan and state Higher Education Minister R Bindhu facing serious charges in separate cases before the Kerala Lokayukta, the Chief Minister's easy way to get out of the trouble was an Ordinance diluting its powers.

Apparently, the amendment to the Ordinance was cleared by the Vijayan Cabinet last Wednesday, when he appeared online from his hospital bed in the US, taking away all its powers and leaving it a mere

recommendatory body.

Former Kerala Upa Lokayukta, KP Balachandran, has strongly criticised the tweaking of the powers of the Lokayukta.

"To kill is easy, but to give life is difficult. If the powers are tweaked, the best thing is to dissolve this institution as it costs a huge sum of money to the exchequer. And to keep it going without powers is of no use, hence it is better to wind it up," he said.

Leader of Opposition, VD Satheesan, wrote to Khan saying, "It is reliably learnt that the proposed ordinance which is before your goodself has provisions to cut down the powers of the Lokayukta, to relax the qualification of the Lokayukta inter alia and I am afraid that these changes will only destroy the very existence of the anti-corruption establishment."

"This is against the very essence of Lokayukta. Kindly note that the Lokayukta was formed as an establishment for curbing cor-

ruption and mismanagement. Its role in preventing corruption and resolving common man's grievances is unfathomable. Therefore, taking into consideration the public interest, your goodself is requested to abstain from giving your assent to the Lokayukta Ordinance which is intended to destroy Lokayukta," added Satheesan.

Terming the move the biggest hypocrisy, former Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala told the media that once the Left was in favour of a Lokpal Bill to tackle corruption, besides issues of the government and others holding public office.

The central committee of the CPI-M for long has been battling for more powers in the Lokpal Bill.

After every Cabinet meeting, there comes a list of the decisions taken. Last Wednesday, the list contained this important decision. This is how Vijayan works. He says one thing and does just the opposite, said Chennithala.



Many ministers ready to join Cong: BJP MLA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICES

Bangalore, Jan 25: The ruling BJP in Karnataka is rattled after senior leader Basavana Gouda Patil Yatnal's statement on present cabinet ministers ready to join the Congress after the announcement of elections in the state.

With Congress President DK Shivakumar and opposition leader Siddaramaiah endorsing the statements of Yatnal and stating that indeed BJP legislators, including present ministers are in touch with them, has increased the woes of BJP. The party is treading cautiously with the matter.

BJP legislators and senior leaders are demanding immediate cabinet expansion for the four vacant posts in the state. Sources in the party say that though the high command is busy with elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur and also with preparations for the upcoming Budget session, it is watching developments unfolding in Karnataka.

MLA Yatnal has stated that the BJP ministers, who have come from the Congress and JD(S) will quit the BJP at the time of elections



and will join the Congress. Yatnal has stated that the leaders from the state will follow the footsteps of Uttar Pradesh leader Swami Prasad Maurya, who had quit the BJP cabinet and joined the Samajwadi party.

The leaders have already spoken to Congress President Shivakumar. We have information on it. Once the elections are announced, they will resign from the BJP. The party won't be able to do anything then. They have to act now and expand the cabinet, he stated.

Shivakumar stated that maintaining secrecy is part of politics. It is not possible to reveal the de-

tails of those who are approaching. The matter can't be discussed with the media. The BJP leaders know what is happening within their party, he added. Siddaramaiah stated that BJP legislators are in touch with him and he won't reveal their names now.

Party sources said that, as per the directions of high command, the ruling BJP is treading cautiously with the issue of demand of the BJP legislators for expansion of cabinet. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai defended their demands by stating that they have all the right to ask for cabinet berths and the high command also knows

Ministers united, says Bommai

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai Tuesday rubbished the reports of discontent within the party and said that no leader from BJP was jumping ship. The appointment of district in-charge ministers has been done after discussion with all the ministers. They are all united and there is no discontent. We are all committed to work for the welfare of the people and run the government in the most appropriate way, Bommai told media here Tuesday. Replying to a question about appointment of district in-charge minister for Bengaluru Rural district, Bommai said, it is the national policy of our party to assign the districts which are not the native district of the ministers. There is no discontent about this decision. The speculations regarding the issue are far from truth.

about it. Senior cabinet ministers KS Eshwarappa and Bhyrathi Basavaraju have stated that they are ready to step down if the party asks them.

Ker HC's midnight sitting to hear an admiralty suit

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kochi, Jan 25: In a rare instance, a bench of the Kerala High Court had a sitting close to Monday midnight to hear an admiralty petition when Justice Devan Ramachandran heard a petitioner who wanted the court to prevent a ship from leaving the Cochin Port.

All the parties appeared on-line and the sitting began at 11.30pm.

The hearing was done as there were invoices amounting to \$27,297 and \$72,000 and the vessel, MV Ocean Rose, was due to leave the Cochin Port at 5am Wednesday and the petitioners wanted to stop the vessel.

Justice Ramachandran in his interim order stated that he is of the



prima facie view that a case of arrest has been made out.

"I hereby direct the registrar to issue an order of arrest for MV Ocean Rose along with her hull, en-

gines tacks, machinery, boats, bunkers, equipment, peripherals, and others lying at the Port of Cochin within the territorial waters of this court and that said

warrant be executed at any time of day or night. It is resultantly ordered that the executive of Port Trust effect this warrant and arrest," ordered Ramachandran.

The Court also pointed out that if the principal sum of Rs 2.43 crore owed along with interests and legal fees is recovered then the warrant of arrest shall stand withdrawn on furnishing security to the satisfaction of the Court.

Meanwhile, the interim order also states that if the payment is not made within 15 days, steps can be taken to auction the vessel and the money recovered.

The petitioner had supplied water to the vessel which came with sulphur to the FACT unit, near here.

K'taka infant among 14 in world with rare genetic disorder BENTA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 25: A seven-month-old baby from Bangalore has been diagnosed with 'BENTA' disease, an extremely rare primary immunodeficiency disorder that is said to have affected only 13 others in the world.

This case of genetic mutation has affected only 14 people in the world, including Vijayendra and his only hope for survival is a blood stem cell transplant, according to DKMS BMST Foundation India, a Bangalore-based blood stem cell registry, that is coordinating the search for a matching donor for him. Currently, he is being treated under Dr Stalin Ramprakash, consultant - paediatric hematology, oncology and BMT, Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore.

Dr Ramprakash said BENTA disease has affected 14 people in the world, and Vijayendra appears to be the world's first BENTA case, which

was diagnosed at an early stage considering the age and severity.

"Based on his reaction to the previous treatments, we suggest a stem cell transplant is his best chance at survival. For a successful stem cell transplant, Vijayendra urgently needs to find his matching blood stem cell donor," he said.

According to the statement, children of a parent who carries a 'CARD11 mutation' have a 50 per cent chance of inheriting the mutation. The main symptoms include spleen enlargement (splenomegaly) and frequent ear, sinus, and lung infections early in life.

"In India, only 0.04 per cent of the population is registered as potential donors especially due to unawareness and apprehensions people have around blood stem cell donation. Many patients are in dire need of unrelated donors as 70 per cent of the patients are dependent on them. We encourage people to come forward and register online as a potential lifesaver," said Patrick Paul, CEO, DKMS-BMST.

'NEVER TAKE FREEDOM FOR GRANTED'

Top Kerala bureaucrat recalls his days in prison

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 25: Till the infamous gold smuggling case surfaced, M Sivasankar, the then principal secretary and top Kerala bureaucrat was one of the most powerful officials. But after that, things went for a toss and on his 59th birthday, Tuesday, Sivasankar recalls what life actually is, through his social media account.

The smuggling case came to light July 5, 2020, when the Customs arrested Sarith, a former employee of the UAE Consulate here, for allegedly smuggling gold in a diplomatic baggage destined for the Consulate.

Swapna Suresh, who previously worked in the UAE Consulate, and her associate Sandip Nair were arrested in the case by the NIA from Bengaluru a few days later. Trouble started for Sivasankar

after Swapna's arrest and then came out juicy tales of the relation with Sivasankar.

Vijayan, unable to stand the massive onslaught, first suspended Sivasankar from service and in October 2020, Sivasankar was arrested and for 98 days he was cooling his heels in a jail, after which he got bail.

Sivasankar's suspension was revoked January 5 and has been posted as principal secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs.

"Today is my birthday. I turned 59; I was born in the sixties. Like many who are from that generation, (perhaps even those who were born in the 70s and early 80s) in Kerala, birthdays were not really occasions of joyous celebration. It was just another day which indicated a new number in your template."

"While this year too, there is no celebration, today is extremely



special to me. It is with profound gratitude that I remember the last year: This date last year, I had spent on the cold floor of a prison cell, surrounded by people whom I hardly knew. Since there is no Facebook alert to remind people around me, nobody even knew

that it was my birthday. The very fact that I have the freedom now, to at least acknowledge birthday greetings, I realize, it means a lot. That is the one lesson which I had learnt- never ever take your freedom, which is invaluable, for granted. And always be on the

lookout for people who could snatch it away." Looking ahead, however, he says he is excited.

"I now have another 372 days more to complete my tenure in government service. This year, I feel relieved that the days are countable. Also I feel excited that after around this time next year, I can take on more challenging and meaningful work without the burden of expectations and the possibility of getting misunderstood. To that extent, it has been a very good makeover, personally."

"I also realise that even with FB reminders, the number of people who wished me well today are practically 1/10th of the usual well wishers. I am extremely happy to have been provided with this eye opening realisation that the people who really care for you are now clearly identifiable from the multitudes who extend meaningless pleasantries at an FB prompt."

of the day quote

India has shared details of a missing Arunachal Pradesh teenager with the Chinese People's Liberation Army to corroborate the identity of the youth in their custody

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the independence, the Delhi government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, has decided to hoist 115-ft high tricolours at Delhi's 75 locations

The Bengal Speaker thinks he has the licence to speak anything about the Governor. Has he become a law unto himself? I will not tolerate such indiscretion. The Speaker should not henceforth blackout the address of the Governor. If he does it, he will face the music

SHORT TAKES

Fraudsters hack bank server in Hyd

Hyderabad: Cyber crooks, who hacked the server of Andhra Pradesh Mahesh Co-Operative Urban Bank here Sunday, transferred Rs 12.90 crore to three accounts in the same bank and from there, to 128 accounts in different banks in various parts of the country, a bank official said Tuesday.

3 civilians, police officer injured

Srinagar: Three civilians and a police officer were injured in a grenade attack by militants in Srinagar city Tuesday, police said. Police said militants hurled a grenade at a party of the security forces in the Hari Singh High Street market of Srinagar in the afternoon.

Police rescues 6 trapped in snowfall

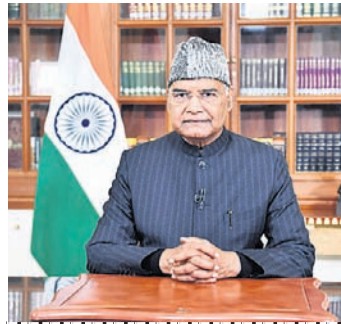
Jammu: A police team rescued six people who were trapped in heavy snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said Tuesday. A distress call was received by station house officer (SHO) of Basantgarh police station Inspector Sohan Singh Monday night that some of the family members of the caller were stuck at higher reaches of Chochru Galla Top and Khaned Top, they said.

Rape survivor kills self in Ker

Kannur (Ker): A 19-year-old woman, a rape survivor, was found dead at her residence in Taliparamba in this north Kerala district, police said here Tuesday She was found hanging in her house Monday night, they said. The woman was allegedly a victim of sexual abuse by a man who had come in contact with her through social media two years ago when she was a minor, police said.

FB friend rapes girl

Bangalore: A 25-year-old student has accused Bangalore police of inaction over her complaint of rape. She has alleged that police are not arresting her Facebook friend who raped her as he is a man of influence, even six days after lodging a complaint.



The diversity and vibrancy of our democracy is appreciated world-wide. It is this spirit of unity and of being one nation which is celebrated every year as Republic Day

SATELLITE TO TRACK OLIVE RIDLEY SEA TURTLE

For the first time on the west coast of India, a female Olive Ridley Sea Turtle was successfully satellite tagged at Velas Beach, officials said Tuesday. The turtle has been named 'Prathama', and was released in the Arabian Sea, signifying the start of a new era in sea turtle conservation in Maharashtra and the west coast



INDIA'S JOBS CRISIS EXASPERATES ITS YOUTH

India's unemployment is estimated to have exceeded the global rate in five of the last six years, data from Mumbai-based the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) and International Labour Organisation show, due to an economic slowdown that was exacerbated by the pandemic

REUTERS

Rajpura, Jan 25: Srijan Upadhyay supplied fried snacks to small eateries and roadside stalls in the poor eastern Indian state of Bihar before COVID-19 lockdowns forced most of his customers to close down, many without paying what they owed him.

With his business crippled, the 31-year-old IT undergraduate this month travelled to Rajpura town in Punjab state to meet with consultants who promised him a work visa for Canada. He brought along his neighbour who also wants a Canadian visa because his commerce degree has not helped him get a job.

"There are not enough jobs for us here, and whenever government vacancies come up, we hear of cheating, leaking of test papers," Upadhyay said, waiting in the lounge of Blue Line consultants. "I am sure we will get a job in Canada, whatever it is initially."

India's unemployment is estimated to have exceeded the global rate in five of the last six years, data from Mumbai-based the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) and International Labour Organization show, due to an economic slowdown that was exacerbated by the pandemic.



India's job participation rate is low and falling GDP growth providing fewer jobs than in the 1970s and 80s

Lack of employment opportunities a risk to PM Modi as elections loom

Having peaked at 23.5% in April 2020, India's joblessness rate dropped to 7.9% last month, according to CMIE. The rate in Canada fell to a multi-month-low of 5.9% in December, while the OECD group of mostly rich countries reported a sixth straight month of decline in October, with countries including the United States suffering labour shortages as economic activity picks up.

What's worse for India, its economic growth is producing fewer jobs than it used to, and as disheartened jobseekers instead take menial roles or look to move overseas, the country's already low rate

of workforce participation - those aged 15 and above in work or looking for it - is falling.

"The situation is worse than what the unemployment rate shows," CMIE Managing Director Mahesh Vyas told Reuters.

VOCAL FOR LOCAL

Critics say such hopelessness among India's youth is one of the biggest failures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who first came to power in 2014 with his as yet unfulfilled promise of creating millions of jobs. It also risks India wasting its demographic advantage of having more than two-thirds of its 1.35 billion people of working age. The ministries of

labour and finance did not respond to requests for comment. The labour ministry's career website had more than 13 million active jobseekers as of last month, with only 2,20,000 vacancies.

The ministry told parliament in December that "employment generation coupled with improving employability is the priority of the government", highlighting its focus on small businesses.

Modi's rivals are now trying to tap into the crisis ahead of elections in five states, including Punjab and most populous Uttar Pradesh, in February and March.

"Because of a lack of employment opportunities here, every kid looks at Canada. Parents hope to somehow send their kids to Canada," Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose Aam Admi Party is a front-runner in Punjab elections, told a recent public function there. He did not explain, but party workers said their policies would attract job-creating businesses.

Punjab's neighbour Haryana, home to local offices of many global IT companies and an automobiles hub, has already ordered that most jobs there be reserved for locals. A political party in Punjab has promised something similar if voted to power.

Khalistani terrorists may strike national capital



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 25: The security agencies have warned Delhi Police that on the occasion of Republic Day Khalistani terrorists may strike in the national capital. The police have released posters of eight Khalistani terrorists.

The Delhi Police have also reportedly got a few calls in this connection and they are taking the input seriously. Recently a case of Unlawful Activities Prevention Act was lodged by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) against Jasvinder Singh Multani, a German-based Sikh for Justice (SFJ) member. Delhi Police have released posters of the Khalistani terrorists from different organisations, and have urged the people to inform them immediately if

Big crackdown

New Delhi: In a crackdown, Delhi Police have busted several illegal arms supply syndicates that may have emerged as a security threat in the national capital ahead of Republic Day celebrations. In just past five days, police have arrested 6 notorious arms dealers who used to supply illegal arms and ammunition to the gangsters of Delhi, out of which the last was found to have illegal financial links with subversive modules based abroad.

they come across anything suspicious. The posters have been pasted across the national capital. Recently a number of Supreme Court advocates also got international phone calls from the Khalistani terrorists who threatened them of dire consequences if they assisted in the court hearing related to the Prime Minister security breach matter.

Delhi Police had received a number of such complaints and all were forwarded to the Special Cell. The police have strengthened security measures to avoid any untoward incident. The junior police officials have been briefed by the seniors regarding a possible attack by the Khalistani terrorists.

RPN Singh quits Cong, joins BJP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Soon after its leader and former union minister RPN Singh quit the party and joined the BJP, the Congress Tuesday said it is fighting an ideological battle in which only those with courage can carry on and not cowards.

Congress spokesperson Gourav Vallabh said Singh was "not fully committed" towards the party's ideology and that is why he left this fight midway to join the saffron party.

Another Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said the Congress is fighting against the arrogance of the current government and its agencies.

"To fight this battle for truth and ideals, one needs strength and courage and cowards cannot fight this battle," Shrinete said.

Former union minister RPN Singh resigned from the party and joined the BJP, saying he wants to contribute to the nation's development while reposing faith in PM Narendra Modi. He announced on Twitter that he was starting his new political journey. Singh is also the party in-charge of Jharkhand affairs where the

Congress is in power along with the JMM. Amba Prasad, a Congress MLA in Jharkhand also accused Singh of destabilising the Congress-JMM government in the state. "For more than a year, RPN Singh ji was trying to overthrow the Congress-JMM government of Jharkhand by colluding with the BJP. The party leadership was also constantly warned about this. Every true Congressman of Jharkhand is happy with his going to the BJP," Prasad said in a tweet in Hindi.

Singh was only yesterday included in the list of the party's 30 star campaigners for the first phase of the assembly election in Uttar Pradesh. He is yet another high-profile leader to desert the Congress after Jyotiradiya Scindia and Jitin Prasad quit and joined the BJP earlier. Shrinete said the battle of ideology that the Congress is putting up across the country, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, requires fighting the government's resources and agencies.

Congress leaders felt that his quitting would not make a difference to the party in the upcoming assembly polls and its battle of ideology against the BJP.

Govt imposes curbs on export of human hair

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: The government Tuesday imposed restrictions on the export of human hair, a move, according to the hair industry, would help in checking alleged smuggling of the product from India.

Hair exports were earlier allowed without any restriction. But now an exporter would have to seek permission or licence from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) under the Commerce Ministry. "The export policy of human hair, unworked, whether or not washed or scoured; waste of human hair or any other form of raw human hair...Has been put under restricted category, with immediate effect," Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh



Kumar Sarangi said in a notification. Welcoming the move, member of Human Hair and Hair Products Manufacturers and Exporters Association of India Sunil Eamani said that it was their long-pending demand.

Time and again, he has alleged that this labour intensive industry was facing a peculiar challenge of smuggling of raw human hair to countries like Myanmar and China, which is hurting local industries and exports.

PATRIOTIC FERVOUR



A volunteer awares people on National Voters Day in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

Naidu calls for 75% voter turnout

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 25: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu Tuesday urged the Election Commission and the citizens to ensure a voter turnout of 75 per cent in the next general elections to make electoral democracy more inclusive and also sought consensus on simultaneous polls to sustain the tempo of development.

In a message on the occasion of the 12th National Voters Day, he stressed that no voter should be left behind and urged the citizens

to judge the contestants on merit. As he has been in home isolation in Hyderabad after testing corona positive, his address was read out at the event in New Delhi.

Referring to the increase in voter turnout from 44.87 per cent in the first general elections during 1951-52 to the highest ever 67.40 per cent in the 2019 elections, marking an increase of 50 per cent in voting, Naidu complimented all stakeholders for the same. Alluding to the sustained efforts of the Election Commission in this regard striving

for excellence during the 70 years of the country's electoral journey, he also hailed the Commission as a credible, responsive and forward looking institution every votary of democracy can legitimately be proud of.

The Vice President also noted that the challenge before the Election Commission is to ensure a steady increase in voting in every election to make our electoral democracy more inclusive by addressing the barriers to voter participation.

939 police medals announced on eve of R-Day

The Jammu & Kashmir Police has bagged the highest number of medals. Out of 189, 115 Police Medals for Gallantry have been awarded to the Jammu & Kashmir Police for their courage and valour

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 25: The Centre Tuesday announced 939 police medals on the eve of the Republic Day 2022.

According to the Union Home Ministry's announcement, out of 939 medals, 189 have been granted for gallantry that is Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG), 88 for Distinguished Service (PPM) and 662 for Meritorious Services (PM).

Among the paramilitary forces, the Central Reserve Police Force has got the highest number of gallantry medals at 30 while Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and

Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) to be given three each.

The CRPF received 30 Police Medal for Gallantry, five President Police Medal for Distinguished Service and 57 Police Medal for Meritorious Service while ITBP has received a total of 18 medals including three Police Medals for Gallantry, three President's Police Medals for Distinguished Service and 12 Police Medal for Meritorious Service. The Border Security Force (BSF) has got two Police Medal for Gallantry, five President Police Medal for Distinguished Service and 46 Police Medal for Meritorious Service and the National Security



Guard (NSG) got one PPM and four PM. This year, no President's Police Medal for Gallantry (PPMG),

the highest of police gallantry medals, has been awarded to anyone. Last year, two policemen from

Jharkhand were given PPMG (Posthumously).

Under the Police Medal for Gallantry for state police, Chhattisgarh has got a total of 10 medals for their gallantry in controlling the left wing extremism in the state.

Police personnel from Jharkhand got two medals, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh got three each and Maharashtra got seven while Manipur got one medal. The celebrations this year are special as the Republic Day falls in the 75th year of Independence, being celebrated as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' across the country.

To mark the occasion, the Ministry of Defence has conceptualised a series of new events during the main parade on Rajpath Wednesday and for the 'Beating the Retreat' ceremony at Vijay Chowk on January 29.

It has been decided that the Republic Day celebrations will now be a week-long affair from January 23-30 every year. The celebrations will commence January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and culminate January 30, which is observed as Martyrs' Day to mark the anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948.

international



If the current funding model continues, WHO is being set up to fail. The paradigm shift in world health that is needed now must be matched by a paradigm shift in funding the World Health Organisation

900 EVACUATED

Almost 900 people were evacuated from the tourist town serving Machu Picchu, the Inca jewel of Peru's travel industry, amid rains and floods that left one person missing and several homes destroyed, the tourism ministry said Monday



of the day quote

We have started faith tourism. Every month a flight will go from here (Pakistan) to there (India) and vice versa

RAMESH KUMAR YANKWANI | PATRON-IN-CHIEF, PAKISTAN HINDU COUNCIL

Deliberate denial during deliberate depression is creating long-lasting scars on the economy and society. Over two years into the financial crisis, Lebanon has yet to identify, least of all embark upon, a credible path toward economic and financial recovery

SAROJ KUMAR JHA | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WORLD BANK

Tubas and the Jordan Valley areas witness gradual annihilation of the West Bank. Israeli authorities are expelling the Palestinians from their living places under the pretext of military training and prevent them from returning to their homes

MOHAMMED ISHTAYE | PRIME MINISTER, PALESTINE

Tubas and the Jordan Valley areas witness gradual annihilation of the West Bank. Israeli authorities are expelling the Palestinians from their living places under the pretext of military training and prevent them from returning to their homes

MOHAMMED ISHTAYE | PRIME MINISTER, PALESTINE

SHORT TAKES

Major blackout in Central Asia

Almaty: Millions of people were left without power after a huge blackout hit three Central Asian countries Tuesday following an unspecified accident, officials in the ex-Soviet region said. The capitals of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as well as Kazakhstan's economic hub Almaty suffered power cuts at around lunchtime local time, with media and officials reporting that the blackouts had extended far into the provinces of the three countries.

3 firefighters killed in blaze

Baltimore: Three Baltimore firefighters were killed and a fourth was injured when part of a vacant home collapsed while they were battling a blaze early Monday, the city's fire chief said. The Baltimore City Fire Department said in a tweet that firefighters were responding to a blaze at the three-story rowhome when the four were trapped inside. Crews removed piles of debris to locate the firefighters, the department said.

8500 US troops put on high alert

Port au Prince: Two moderate earthquakes shook southwest Haiti Monday, killing two people and damaging homes as it created panic and prompted schools and businesses to close. A magnitude 5.3 quake at 8:16 am was followed by a magnitude 5.1 quake nearly an hour later. Both were centered on Haiti's southern peninsula, west of the capital, Port-au-Prince, according to the US Geological Survey. It said both were centered about 10 kilometers below the surface.

19 dead in clash, fire at night club

Sorong: At least 19 people were killed in a clash at a nightclub in the town of Sorong in Indonesia's West Papua province, police said Tuesday, with most dying after the venue caught fire. One victim was stabbed and 18 more died in the blaze at the Double O nightclub, officials said. "The clash broke out last night (Monday) at 11 pm. It was a prolonged conflict from a clash Saturday," Sorong police chief Ary Nyoto Setiawan said in a statement. The fight that erupted between the two different ethnic groups involved machetes, arrows and Molotov cocktails.

Biden caught on hot mic mocking reporter

As journalists were leaving the room after the event, a reporter from Fox News, the favorite channel of conservatives, asked whether inflation is a political liability

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Jan 25: US President Joe Biden was caught on a live microphone Monday calling a Fox News journalist a stupid son of a bitch on the sidelines of a White House photo op.

As journalists were leaving the



room after the event, a reporter from Fox News, the favorite channel of conservatives, asked whether inflation is a political liability. The Democratic leader, possi-

bly unaware that his microphone was still on, began by deadpanning, "It's a great asset. More inflation." And then muttered, "What a stupid son of a bitch," before

The reporter later said that Biden called him within the hour and said, "It's nothing personal, pal"

glancing briefly down. A pool reporter who was in the room at the time admitted to not being able to hear what Biden actually said over the noise. But he added that he would direct your attention to video of the event if you are curious how the President really feels about being asked about inflation from Fox's Peter Doocy. Doocy shrugged the insult off in a later interview on Fox.

"Yeah nobody has fact-checked him yet and said it's not true," he said, nonchalantly. Doocy later said that Biden called him within the hour and said, "It's nothing personal, pal." When Biden has gaffed before the White House has rushed to explain or roll back his comments. But this time, the White House appeared to have no qualms about owning it, putting out a transcript of the event that included the comment - thereby ensuring it passes into the official historical record. Just adds a certain something, tweeted Katie Rogers, White House correspondent for the New York Times, with a screen grab of the transcript.

Russia adds Navalny, allies to terrorists' list



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Moscow, Jan 25: Russia Tuesday added jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny to a list of terrorists and extremists, as authorities continue a clampdown on the opposition. Navalny and several of his allies, including key aide Lyubov Sobol, appeared Tuesday on a database of banned individuals compiled by the Federal Service for Financial Monitoring (Rosfinmonitoring). According to Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation - which was declared extremist and shut down last year - nine other Navalny allies were added to the list Tuesday. The decision puts them on a par with right-wing nationalist groups and foreign terrorist organisations, including the Taliban and the so-called Islamic State group. Earlier this month, two other key aides of the opposition politician were added to the list.

The past year has seen an unprecedented crackdown on dissent in Russia, including the jailing of President Vladimir Putin's top critic Navalny last January and the outlawing of his political organisations. Almost all of his top allies have since fled the country. Navalny - Putin's most vocal domestic opponent - has been behind bars since returning to Moscow in January 2021 from Germany, where he was recovering from a poisoning attack with a nerve agent that he blames on the Kremlin.

Boris hit with new row as Scotland Yard opens partygate investigation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 25: Britain's embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson is Tuesday facing fresh allegations in the ongoing "partygate" scandal as details emerged of a surprise 56th birthday cake "party", organised for him at the peak of the first COVID lockdown in June 2020.

The scandal continues to spiral out ahead of an internal Cabinet Office inquiry report, which has now been delayed to an unspecified later date as Scotland Yard confirmed that the Metropolitan Police will investigate potential lockdown breaches related to alleged parties at Boris Johnson's office-residence at 10 Downing Street, as well as other government offices in London. This criminal investigation, which could result in fines being issued on Downing Street and government officials, means that the internal Cabinet Office inquiry being led by top civil servant Sue Gray will deliver its report only after the police probe.

UK Paymaster General Michael Ellis told the House of Commons that there is ongoing contact between the Met Police and Gray, who will meanwhile continue with her separate investigation.

He said the government cannot comment on what is an ongoing police investigation and asked MPs not to preempt its conclusions. Earlier, Downing Street said Johnson, who turned 56 June 19, 2020, was present at an event for less than 10 minutes as his staff gathered briefly to wish him a happy birthday.

The strict lockdown rules imposed at the time to contain the spread of coronavirus banned most

As a result firstly of the information provided by the Cabinet Office inquiry team and secondly by the officers own assessment, I can confirm that the Met is now investigating a number of events that took place at Downing Street and Whitehall in the last two years

DAME CRESSIDA DICK | MET POLICE COMMISSIONER

indoor gatherings involving more than two people. But ITV News reported Monday night that up to 30 people attended the event, sang Happy Birthday and were served cake.

The event reportedly took place in the Cabinet Room of Downing Street just after 2pm local time that day and had been arranged as a surprise for Johnson by his then fiancée and now wife, Carrie Symonds, after he returned from an official trip to a school in Hertfordshire. A group of staff working in Number 10 that day gathered briefly in the Cabinet Room after a meeting to wish the Prime Minister a happy birthday. He was there for less than 10 minutes, a Number 10 Downing Street spokesperson said.

The ITV report also claimed that the same evening, family friends were hosted upstairs in the Prime Minister's official residence in apparent breach of the rules.

However, Number 10 denied that claim. "This is totally untrue. In line with the rules at the time the Prime Minister hosted a small number of family members outside that evening."

NK fires two cruise missiles

The launch was North Korea's fifth of the year, following tests of a tactical guided missile, two hypersonic missiles capable of high speed and manoeuvring after lift-off, and a railway-borne missile system

REUTERS

Seoul, Jan 25: North Korea fired two cruise missiles into the sea off its east coast Tuesday, South Korea's military said, amid rising tension over a recent series of weapons tests.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff did not specify the missiles' range or trajectory, but said it was conducting an analysis together with US authorities.



Tension has been growing, with leader Kim Jong Un vowing last week to bolster the military and warning he could lift a self-imposed moratorium on testing atomic bombs and long-range missiles. North Korea has not launched intercontinental ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons since 2017, but began testing a slew of shorter-range missiles after denuclearisation talks stalled following a failed summit with the United States in 2019. The flurry of recent tests sparked a US push for fresh UN sanctions,

followed by heated reaction from Pyongyang. The UN Security Council bans North Korea from any launches using ballistic technology, but not cruise missiles. China and Russia have recently called for removing a ban on Pyongyang's exports of statues, seafood and textiles, and raising a refined oil imports cap. South Korea's Unification Minister Lee In-young, in charge of cross-border ties, urged the North to return to talks, not escalate further. While thoroughly preparing for additional tests, we'd like to emphasise again that dialogue and cooperation is the only way to peace, he told a meeting with foreign diplomats based in Seoul. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno did not confirm the latest test but said Tokyo would work with neighbours to gather and analyse necessary information.

Snow storm shuts down Europe's busiest airport

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Istanbul, Jan 25: Europe's busiest airport shut down in Istanbul Monday while schools and vaccination centres closed in Athens as a rare snowstorm blanketed swathes of the eastern Mediterranean, causing blackouts and traffic havoc.

The closure of Istanbul Airport - where the roof of one of the cargo terminals collapsed under heavy snow, causing no injuries - grounded flights stretching from the Middle East and Africa to Europe and Asia.

Travel officials told AFP it marked the glass-and-steel structure's first shutdown since it replaced Istanbul's old Ataturk Airport as the new hub for Turkish Airlines in 2019.

The winter's first snow created a fun atmosphere across the squares of Istanbul's ancient mosques, where children built snowmen and tourists posed for selfies.

But it proved a major headache for the 16 million residents of Turkey's largest city, where cars ploughed into each other skidding down steep, sleet-covered streets and highways turned into parking lots.

The Istanbul governor's office warned drivers they would not be able to enter the city from Thrace - a region stretching across the European part of Turkey to its western border with Bulgaria and Greece.

TEMPLE IN SNOW



The Parthenon temple is seen atop the Acropolis hill, during heavy snowfall in Athens, Greece, where a snowstorm of rare severity disrupted road and air traffic Monday

REUTERS

Burkina Faso: Crowd celebrates coup

REUTERS

Ouagadougou, Jan 25: More than 1,000 people gathered in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou Tuesday in support of a coup that a day earlier ousted President Roch Kabore, dissolved government, suspended the constitution and closed borders.

The latest in a long history of coups in West Africa comes amid an increasingly bloody Islamist insurgency that has killed thou-



sands and displaced millions across the Sahel region. Soldiers announced they had overthrown Kabore on Monday, a move condemned internationally but welcomed by some at home tired of widespread insecurity, alleged corruption and deep poverty

The crowd gathered in Ouagadougou's national square to play live music, blow horns and dance. A Reuters reporter saw a group burning a French flag, a sign of growing frustration about the military role the former colonial power still plays in the region. "ECOWAS doesn't care about us, and the international community only wants to condemn," said demonstrator Armel Ouedraogo, referring to West Africa's regional political bloc. "This is what we want," he said.

Thailand first in Asia to move to decriminalise marijuana

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, Jan 25: Thailand Tuesday became the first country in Asia to approve the de facto decriminalisation of marijuana, though authorities have left a grey area around its recreational use.

Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul announced that the Narcotics Control Board had approved the dropping cannabis from the ministry's list of controlled drugs.

The delisting by the ministry's Food and Drug Administration will now need to be formally signed by the health minister and enters into effect 120 days after its publication in the government gazette. It follows the removal of cannabis

- a plant species to which both marijuana and hemp belong - last month from the list of illegal drugs under Thailand's Narcotics Law.

Police and lawyers contacted by The Associated Press said it was unclear if possession of marijuana would no longer be an offense subject to arrest. A tangle of related laws means that production and possession of marijuana remains regulated for the time being, leaving the legal status of recreational marijuana use in a grey area.

The Health Ministry measure retains on its list of controlled drugs parts from the cannabis plant that contain more than 0.2% by weight of tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the psychoactive ingredient that gives users a high.



Thailand in 2020 became the first Asian nation to decriminalise the production and use of mari-

juana for medicinal purposes. Under changes made in 2020, most parts of the cannabis plant

were dropped from the 'Category 5' list of controlled drugs, but seeds and buds, which are associated with recreational use, were retained. The proposal now being implemented by the FDA removes all parts of the plant from the list. Health Minister Anutin has been the driving force behind decriminalising marijuana. He is the leader

of the Bhumjai Thai Party, a major partner in the country's coalition government, and campaigned in the 2019 general election for legalisation of marijuana production to aid farmers. The latest measure is also seen as helping to promote cannabis products as a major industry in Thailand.

Anutin said last week that the FDA's delisting "responds to the government's urgent policy in developing marijuana and hemp for medical and health care benefits, developing technology and creating income for the public". His party announced that Wednesday it will propose in Parliament a draft Cannabis Act to clarify the legal status of marijuana.

business

of the day quote

The Core Purpose of @Mahindra
Rise is to enable our communities & all stakeholders to Rise. And a key Core Value is to uphold the Dignity of the Individual. Any aberration from this philosophy will be addressed with great urgency

ANAND MAHINDRA | M&M CHAIRMAN

Ever since its global debut, Creta has been a runaway success in domestic and international markets alike. It has been successful in evoking aspirations and has stood the test of time by retaining customer appreciation, thereby playing a strategic role in Hyundai's Global SUV portfolio

UN SOO KIM | HMIL MD & CEO

We are witnessing more and more businesses opting for cleaner solutions to reach their consumers. At Hero, we strive to provide 360-degree solutions to our B2B customers through our strong network presence across India

SOHINDER GILL | HERO ELECTRIC CEO

SHORT TAKES

Maruti Q3 profit skids 47.82%

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Tuesday reported a 47.82 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹1,041.8 crore in the third quarter ended December 2021, on account of lower sales due to the ongoing semiconductor shortage and increase in commodity prices. The auto major had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,996.7 crore in the October-December period of last fiscal, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. The fall in net profit during the period under review was due to lower sales volume, high commodity prices and lower non-operating income on account of mark-to-market impact, it noted. Consolidated revenue from operations declined marginally to ₹23,253.3 crore in the third quarter as compared to ₹23,471.3 crore in the year-ago period, it added. Total vehicle sales were down 13.1 per cent to 4,30,668 units in the third quarter as against 4,95,897 units in the corresponding period last fiscal.

Pushp K Joshi new HPCL chairman

New Delhi: Pushp Kumar Joshi has been picked by government headhunter PESB to be the new chairman and managing director of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), the nation's third largest oil refining and fuel marketing company. Joshi, who is currently Director - Human Resources at HPCL - was picked after PESB interviewed 10 candidates January 24, the headhunter said in a notice. "PESB recommended the following name for the post of Chairman and Managing Director, HPCL: Pushp Kumar Joshi," it said.

Raymond's profit jumps multifold

New Delhi: Raymond Ltd Tuesday reported a multifold jump in its net profit of ₹101.07 crore for the third quarter ended December 2021, helped by improved performance across the segment. The company had posted a net profit of ₹22.18 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Raymond said in a regulatory filing. Its revenue from operations during October-December 2021 jumped 48.25 per cent to ₹1,843.39 crore, compared with ₹1,243.44 crore in the year-ago period.



Businesses can no longer afford to take a wait-and-see approach to climate change. The time to act and safeguard our tomorrow is now.

DIPALI GOENKA | WELSPUN INDIA CEO

IMF cuts India's FY22 growth forecast to 9%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 25: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cut India's economic growth forecast to 9 per cent for the current fiscal year ending March 31, joining a host of agencies which have downgraded their projections on concerns over the impact of a spread of new variant of coronavirus on business activity and mobility.

In its latest update of World Economic Outlook Tuesday, the Washington-based international financial institution, which had in October last year projected a 9.5 per cent GDP growth for India, put the forecast for the next fiscal FY23 (April 2022 to March 2023) at 7.1 per cent.

The Indian economy had contracted by 7.3 per cent in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

The IMF's forecast for the current financial year is less than 9.2 per cent that the government's Central Statistics Office has predicted and 9.5 per cent that the Reserve Bank of India has estimated. Its forecast is lower than the 9.5 per cent projection by S&P and 9.3 per cent by Moody's but more than the 8.3 per cent projection by the World Bank and 8.4 per cent by Fitch.

According to the IMF, India's prospects for 2023 are marked up on expected improvements to credit growth and, subsequently, investment and consumption, building on better-than-anticipated performance of the financial sector.

The IMF said that global growth



is expected to moderate from 5.9 in 2021 to 4.4 per cent in 2022, half a percentage point lower for 2022 than in the October WEO, largely reflecting forecast markdowns in the two largest economies - the US and China.

A revised assumption removing the Build Back Better fiscal policy package from the baseline, earlier withdrawal of monetary accommodation, and continued supply shortages produced a downward 1.2 percentage-point revision for the United States, it said.

In China, pandemic-induced disruptions related to the zero-tolerance COVID-19 policy and protracted financial stress among property developers have induced a 0.8 percentage-point downgrade.

The global growth is expected to slow to 3.8 per cent in 2023.

"Although this is 0.2 percentage point higher than in the previous forecast, the upgrade largely re-

lects a mechanical pickup after current drags on growth dissipate in the second half of 2022. The forecast is conditional on adverse health outcomes declining to low levels in most countries by end-2022, assuming vaccination rates improve worldwide and therapies become more effective," said the report.

In a blog post, IMF's chief economist Gita Gopinath wrote that the continuing global recovery faces multiple challenges as the pandemic enters its third year.

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant has led to renewed mobility restrictions in many countries and increased labour shortages, she said.

Supply disruptions still weigh on activity and are contributing to higher inflation, adding to pressures from strong demand and elevated food and energy prices, Gopinath wrote.

GEMS & JEWELLERY EXPORTS UP

Gems and jewellery exports rose by 71 per cent during April-December 2021 to USD 28.9 billion as compared to USD 16.9 billion in the same period of the previous year, the commerce ministry said Tuesday. In December 2021, these exports grew by 16.38 per cent to USD 2.99 billion, it said. The sector accounted for 9.6 per cent share of India's entire exports basket during the period under review



Akasa Air take off likely in late May

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Seeking to further democratise air travel with dependable and affordable services, airline Akasa Air is aiming to start flights in late May or early June after getting its first Boeing 737 MAX aircraft in April.

Bullish on the long term growth potential of the country's civil aviation sector, ace investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed carrier is looking to have 18 planes in its fleet by the end of March 2023.

Despite COVID clouds continuing to cast a shadow on the airlines, Akasa Air CEO Vinay Dube is more than optimistic as he asserted that "if you look at the long term future of commercial aviation in India, it is as exciting as anywhere in the world."

Interacting with PTI on a video call, Dube said the Indian aviation pie is growing and the idea of Akasa Air is to look through what we are currently facing. "This is temporary. This too shall pass." The civil aviation space, especially the airlines, has been significantly impacted by the pandemic and as the emergence of the Omicron variant has dealt another blow to the recovery path of the sector. Akasa Air, which will take off as a low-cost carrier, has placed an order for 72 Boeing 737 MAX planes, which are fuel efficient. To begin with, Akasa Air will have services from metros to Tier II and III cities. There will also be flights from metros to metros so that the aircraft is moved around the system, Dube noted. Being professionally managed, competitive cost structure, customer satisfaction, employees being happy and airline being financially healthy will be among the key elements for Akasa Air.

Future Retail in SC to avert defaulter tag



India's second-largest retailer failed to pay ₹3,494.56 crore to lenders by the due date of December-end and sought a 30-day grace period to resolve the situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Embattled retailer Future Retail Ltd (FRL) Tuesday moved the Supreme Court to avert insolvency proceedings over missing a loan repayment deadline, even as its independent directors rejected an Amazon-supported offer to sell the company businesses at less than a third of what Mukesh Ambani's Reliance is offering.

India's second-largest retailer, which operates multi-brand retail chains such as Big Bazaar, Easyday and Heritage, failed to pay ₹3,494.56 crore to lenders by the due date of December-end and sought a 30-day grace period to resolve the situation. Unable to find money, it moved the apex court seeking to restrain its lenders from declaring

the company a defaulter, which can invite initiation of insolvency proceedings.

In the petition, Future cited its dispute with partner Amazon, which has stalled its ₹24,713 crore retail asset sale to Reliance, to seek a restraint on lenders from declaring it as a non-performing asset (NPA), court filings showed.

In the petition, which also contained a January 15 letter from the State Bank of India (SBI) warning it of the possibility of initiating insolvency proceedings if it did pay its dues, Future asked for more time for loan payment and requested the Supreme Court to "extend the timeline stipulated under the Framework Agreement for monetization of the Small Format Stores."

Future "finds itself in a peculiar position where it wishes to comply" with its obligations to lenders, but "the litigation with Amazon is effectively preventing it from doing so," the filing said as it sought quashing of default notices from its lenders. Amazon has opposed the Future-Reliance deal saying it violates a 2019 pact it had signed with the retailer when it invested USD 200 million in a Future unit.

Indian-origin executives in 'lean' Unilever shakeup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 25: UK-headquartered consumer goods giant Unilever Tuesday announced a major organisational shakeup to make the company leaner, which involves some of its Indian-origin executives, and plans to lay off 1,500 staff as part of the wider restructuring of its global operations.

Sanjiv Mehta retains executive leadership of Mumbai-headquartered subsidiary Hindustan Unilever, while Unilever Chief Operating Officer (COO) Nitin Paranjpe will take on a new role as Chief Transformation Officer & Chief People Officer, leading the business transformation and heading the HR function for the transformed organisation.

The company said Sunny Jain, President of Beauty & Personal Care, has decided to leave Unilever to set up an "investment fund in technology megatrends".

"A lean Unilever Corporate Centre will continue to set Unilever's overall strategy," the company said. The worldwide changes are part of the company's move away from its current "matrix structure" to be organised around five distinct business groups: Beauty & Wellbeing, Personal Care, Home Care, Nutrition, and Ice Cream. Each Business Group will be fully responsible and accountable for their strategy, growth, and profit delivery globally, the company said.

"Our new organisational model has been developed over the last year and is designed to continue the step-up we are seeing in the performance of our business," said Unilever CEO Alan Jope.

"Moving to five category-focused Business Groups will enable us to be more responsive to consumer and channel trends, with crystal-clear accountability for delivery. Growth remains our top priority and these changes will underpin our pursuit of this," he said.

The maker of Dove soap and Pond's in India has also confirmed plans to cut 1,500 jobs under the wider shakeup of its global operations.

LIC posts PAT of ₹1,437 cr



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 25: IPO-bound Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Tuesday reported a profit after tax of ₹1,437 crore for the first half of the financial year 2021-22 as compared with ₹6.14 crore in the year-ago period. Its new business premium growth rate stood at 554.1 per cent in H1FY22, compared with 394.76 per cent during the corresponding period of the preceding financial year, LIC said Tuesday. Its overall total net premiums increased ₹1,679 crore to ₹1.86 lakh crore during April-September 2021, from ₹1.84 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

The state-owned insurer reported a jump of ₹17,404 crore in overall premiums and income from investments grew to ₹3.35 lakh crore in the April-September 2021 period. The overall income from investments grew ₹15,726 crore to ₹1.49 lakh crore in H1FY22, the insurer said.

Benchmarks halt 5-day rout as bargain hunters move in

MARUTI, AXIS BANK HELP SHARES BREAK LOSING STREAK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 25: Market benchmarks managed to close in the green Tuesday after five sessions of steep losses as investors accumulated recently-battered banking, auto and FMCG counters amid a supportive trend in European equities.

However, traders said the overall sentiment remains cautious ahead of a crucial two-day meeting of the US Federal Reserve where it will take a call on its rate hike trajectory.

Russia-Ukraine tensions, stubborn inflation and unabated selling by foreign funds are the other risk factors in the near-term, they added. After plunging below the 57,000-level in opening trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained momentum as the session progressed to finish 366.64 points or 0.64 per cent higher at 57,858.15.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 128.85 points or 0.75 per cent to close at 17,277.95.

Maruti topped the Sensex gainers' chart with a jump of 6.88 per cent after the country's largest carmaker posted a consolidated net profit at ₹1,041.8 crore for the December quarter - down 48 per



cent y-o-y but well above analyst estimates.

Axis Bank, SBI, IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel, PowerGrid and NTPC were among the other prominent gainers, spurring as much as 6.76 per cent.

In contrast, Wipro, Bajaj Finserv, Titan, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and UltraTech Cement led the laggards list, shedding up to 1.75 per cent.

"After a week-long consolidation, domestic indices took a breather supported by low-level buying. Western markets also supported, staging recovery following correction in oil markets, and as un-

certainties over Fed policy and geopolitical tensions eased. However, volatility is expected to linger as investors await the Fed's final policy statement, providing clarity on the timeline of rate hikes," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Barring IT and consumer durables, all BSE sectoral indices mustered gains. Telecom climbed 2.46 per cent, followed by utilities, power, auto, bankex and realty.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and small cap indices advanced up to 1.03 per cent.

India's households wrestle with inflation as incomes dip

TEA, EDIBLE OIL, PULSES, MEAT, COOKING GAS AND SERVICES HAVE GONE UP BY 20-40% SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN - HURTING CONSUMERS WHILE THEIR INCOMES HAVE FALLEN BELOW LEVELS SEEN BEFORE THE CRISIS

REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 25: India's households are grappling with rising living costs at a time when jobs and incomes have taken a hit amid the pandemic, but economists are not hopeful the government's annual budget due next week will provide much relief.

Tea, edible oil, pulses, meat, cooking gas and services have gone up by 20 per cent-40 per cent since the Covid-19 pandemic began in early 2020 - hurting consumers while their incomes have fallen below levels seen before the health crisis. Retail prices have risen nearly 10 per cent in the last two years compared with 8 per cent in the previous five-and-half years

after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, an analysis of inflation data compiled by the Ministry of Statistics showed. Modi, who remains popular among voters, plans to raise import tax on more items to support local manufacturing and increase spending on long-term projects.

Economists blame higher taxes, a widening fiscal deficit, Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) easy monetary policy and supply constraints during the pandemic for a sharp rise in prices. The government has offered little aid to households except free foodgrains for the poor. According to official estimates, average per capita income stands at ₹93,973 (\$1,258) for the current fiscal year ending March, lower than



₹94,566 before the pandemic. The unemployment rate was at 7.9 per cent in December, with nearly 35 million people looking for work, a report by Mumbai-based think tank Centre for Monitoring Indian

Economy (CMIE) said. Meanwhile, the economy is projected to grow 9.2 per cent in 2021/22 after a 7.3 per cent contraction the previous year. The increase in import tariffs on hundreds of goods in the last two

years, climbing global crude oil and commodity prices have added to the burden on households. Cooking gas prices rose 43.36 per cent in two years ending December 2021, compared with a 30.68 per cent rise in the previous five-and-half years, data showed. However, domestic electricity and education costs rose at a slower pace reflecting a fall in economic activity and the closure of educational institutions during the pandemic. Inflation is expected to push even higher as manufacturers pass on rising input costs while the central bank delays monetary tightening in efforts to support the economic recovery. Retail inflation accelerated to a five-month high of 5.59 per cent in December from a year ear-

lier, while wholesale price-based inflation, a proxy for producer prices, marginally eased to 13.56 per cent, but remained in double-digits for nine straight months.

"The Covid period has been a nightmare for Indian workers," said KR Shyam Sundar, a labour economist at XLRI, Jamshedpur, and the author of "Impact of Covid-19, reforms and governance on labour rights".

He added that households suffered job losses, fall in incomes and a sharp rise in prices during the pandemic. "RBI and the government, which have excessively focused on supporting industry and boosting growth, should now take steps to rein in inflation and provide a relief to households."

NADAL SEALS SEMIFINAL BERTH

Barty beats Pegula to storm into last 4



MELBOURNE: Top-ranked Ash Barty moved into the Australian Open semifinals with a 6-2, 6-0 win over No.21 Jessica Pegula. The 2021 Wimbledon champion is aiming to become the first Australian woman to win the Australian Open since 1978. She will next face 2017 US Open runner-up Madison Keys for a place in the final. It's Barty's second trip to the semifinals at Melbourne Park — she lost to eventual champion Sofia Kenin in 2020. Keys is back in the last four for the second time after losing to Serena Williams in the semifinals in 2015. Keys beat French Open champion Barbora Krejickova 6-3, 6-2 in the opening match on Rod Laver Arena on Day 9.

SANIA BIDS ADIEU TO AUSTRALIA OPEN

MELBOURNE: Trailblazing India tennis star Sania Mirza's swansong appearance at the Australian Open ended with a quarterfinal loss to local pair Jaimee Fourlis and Jason Kubler in the mixed doubles event here Tuesday. Mirza, partnering American Rajeev Ram, lost the match 4-6, 6-7 to wild-card entries Fourlis and Kubler in one hour 30 minutes. The 35-year-old Mirza is India's most accomplished woman tennis player, having won six Grand Slam titles, including three mixed doubles trophies. The Melbourne Park has been a happy hunting ground for Mirza, who recently announced that she will retire at the end of this season. Two of her six Grand Slam titles have come at the Australian Open. With Mirza's defeat, the Indian challenge also came to an end in the first Slam of the year.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 25: Rafael Nadal held off Denis Shapovalov 6-3, 6-4, 4-6, 3-6, 6-3 in four hours to reach the Australian Open semifinals for the seventh time and keep his bid on track for a men's-record 21st Grand Slam singles title.

Nadal shares the record of 20 with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic for most singles titles in men's tennis majors. Neither of those two are in Melbourne.

Nadal was dominant for the first 2 1/2 sets against No.14 Shapovalov, but appeared to be hampered at times by a stomach problem in the third and fourth sets.

At a tournament where he's clinched the title only once (2009) and lost seven of his previous 13 quarterfinals — by far his worst conversion rate at any of the four major tournaments — Nadal suddenly looked vulnerable.

But following a seven-minute break between the last point of the fourth set and his first serve in the fifth, he recovered sufficiently to hold and then break Shapovalov's serve for a 2-0 lead in the decider.

He held onto the break and when he clinched the match, Nadal went to the corner and nodded his head a few times and did a subdued fist-pumping celebration. Then he went back on court and properly celebrated. Shapovalov left a shattered racket on the court.

The men's semifinals are both scheduled for Friday, giving Nadal two days off. Nadal will play either seventh-seeded Matteo Berrettini or No.17 Gael Monfils. Berrettini was a Wimbledon runner-up last year; Monfils is 35 and contesting his second quarterfinal in 17 trips to Australia.

Madison Keys continued her resurgent 2022 season by reaching the semifinals in Australia for the first time since 2015 with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over French Open champion Barbora Krejickova. And resurgent might be a major understatement.

The 1-hour, 25-minute win over Krejickova contained 11 aces, 27 winners and just one dropped service game and was her 10th win in a row and 11th of the year.

That includes five wins so far at Melbourne Park, starting with a straight-sets victory over



I WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED. TOUGH DAY. VERY WARM. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MATCH I WAS PLAYING GREAT (BUT) DENIS IS VERY TALENTED, VERY AGGRESSIVE. HE WAS SERVING HUGE — ESPECIALLY THE SECOND SERVE. I THINK I HAD MY CHANCES AT BEGINNING OF THE THIRD. I DIDN'T GET IT. I STARTED TO FEEL A LITTLE BIT MORE TIRED

I'M NOT 21 ANYMORE! AFTER THIS... GREAT TO HAVE TWO DAYS OFF. I FELT QUITE GOOD PHYSICALLY IN TERMS OF MOVEMENT. AT LEAST IT WAS A GREAT TEST. I REALLY BELIEVE I'M GOING TO BE READY FOR THE SEMIFINALS

RAFAEL NADAL

2020 Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin, plus five in winning the Adelaide International — her first title since 2019 — and one at an earlier Melbourne tournament.

She only won 11 matches in 2021, saying she was focusing too heavily on results, and her year-end ranking slumped to 56th. It was the first time since 2014 she'd finished outside the Top 20.

She lost an Australian Open semifinal to Serena Williams in 2015, her first trip to the final

four at a major. She reached the final at the 2017 US Open and semis at Roland Garros and the US Open in 2018, but hadn't made it back to the last four in a Grand Slam since then.

Krejickova took a medical timeout while trailing 5-2 in the first set from what might have been heat stress, and appeared to be lethargic at times during the 35-minute second set. Temperature was peaking toward 32 degrees Celsius (90 Fahrenheit) under almost cloudless skies.

'WHERE IS PENG SHUAI?' T-SHIRTS GET DIRECTOR'S NOD

Melbourne: Restrictions which resulted in the removal of a spectator for wearing a T-shirt supporting Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai at the Australian Open have been overhauled after international backlash. With reports of activists planning to distribute hundreds of shirts branded with the question "Where is Peng Shuai?" in time for Saturday's Australian Open women's final, the message shouldn't be hard to find.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley told The Associated Press it would be OK for people to wear the shirts at Melbourne Park, as long as they didn't congregate in large groups or cause problems for other spectators. "If they want to do that, that's fine," Tiley said in a telephone interview. But "if anyone's coming on site with the express intent of disrupting the comfort and safety of our fans, they're not welcome. We can't sell tickets in advance and have people come in and feel unsafe because there's a large group of people that are using (the tournament) as a platform to espouse their views on whatever topic it is." Footage screened last weekend of security and police requesting a fan remove a shirt which featured an image of Peng on the front and "Where is Peng Shuai?" on the back sparked widespread condemnation, with some critics describing it as cowardly.



Rohit fit to lead India versus WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: India's white-ball captain Rohit Sharma is 'fit' and ready to lead the side against the West Indies in a six-match white-ball series starting February 6 with the three ODIs in Ahmedabad.

However, the team selection meeting, which is set to happen this week, will be an interesting one as some senior players like Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Ravichandran Ashwin, after their indifferent performance against South Africa in their 0-3 ODI series defeat, will come under the scanner.

But Rohit is ready to lead the side after a left hamstring injury ruled him out of the South Africa tour.

The T20 matches against the Caribbean team are set to be held from February 16 to 20 in Kolkata.

ROHIT SET TO BE TEST CAPTAIN

It is almost certain that for the time being, Rohit will be named the Test captain although BCCI will be looking at other options considering his workload and the responsibility that comes with leading India in two back-to-back World Cups in 2022 and 2023.

It is understood that KL Rahul's first stint as captain hasn't gone as per expectations and for now, he will have to remain an apprentice under Rohit till he is seen to be ready to lead the national team in near future.

Under Rahul, India lost all four international games in South

Africa and for men who matter in Indian cricket, he hasn't exactly come across as a proactive captain. It is understood that Rahul's performance as Lucknow Super Giants captain will be keenly monitored during this edition of the IPL.

HARDIK'S COMEBACK

Hardik Pandya has been bowling in the nets and even though it is not clear whether he can bowl full tilt but Venkatesh Iyer's relative inexperience at No.6 and Rahul Dravid's admission that the colourful Baroda man was missed, can pave the way for his comeback against the West Indies.

Ravindra Jadeja also seems to be close to attaining full fitness and will play either against West Indies or in the next assignment against

Sri Lanka.

BUMRAH MIGHT BE RESTED

Jasprit Bumrah's workload management is paramount for this current Indian team and there is a possibility that he might be rested for the six matches.

This is after Bumrah played all six games in South Africa which, which included three Tests and three 50-over games, and sent down the highest number of overs (104.5 overs in Tests and 30 in ODIs).

However, Bhuvneshwar, whose form has tapered off, might be dropped while Ashwin might get one more series as the South Africa white-ball leg was his comeback in ODIs. The likes of Avesh Khan and Harshal Patel could once again make it to the T20 team.

PADMA HONOURS FOR PRAMOD, NEERAJ, JHAJHARIA

NEW DELHI: Odisha's star para shooter Pramod Bhagat and Neeraj Chopra, Tuesday, were among eight sportspersons to be named for the prestigious Padma Shri award, the fourth highest civilian honour in the country. Star para athlete Devendra Jhajharia was named for the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian honour. Neeraj made history in the Tokyo Olympics by becoming the first Indian to win a gold in a track and field event in Games' history. He also became only the second Indian to win an individual Olympic gold after shooter Abhinav Bindra. Pramod, on the other hand, had bagged gold medal in the Tokyo Para Games. The other Padma Shri awardees include para shooter Avani Lekhara, para javelin thrower Sumit Antil, Kalaripayattu (indigenous martial art form) legend Sankaranarayanan Menon Chundayil, former international martial arts champion Faisal Ali Dar, former Indian football team captain Brahmanand Sankhwalkar and women's hockey player Vandana Kataria.

BWF ODISHA OPEN HIT BY MASS-SCALE WITHDRAWALS

AGENCIES

Cuttack, Jan 25: The long-awaited BWF Odisha Open Super 100 badminton tournament, which commenced Tuesday at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Hall here, witnessed mass-scale withdrawals, including the former women's singles World No.1 Saina Nehwal, due to Covid-19.

The event, which is scheduled to be concluded January 30, lost all the illustrious names due to several reasons, including Covid-19 positive cases, fear of contracting the dreaded virus or, injury or fitness concerns of the players.

A fair number of no-shows played havoc with the schedule. As a result, a non-descript player Vishal Vasudevan, not in the main draw, now found himself in the pre-quarterfinal after two walkovers.

In the men's singles, only three seeds remain after five seeds including Parupalli Kashyap, Sourabh Verma and Ajay Jayaram withdrew. Third seed Subhankar Dey, sixth seed Xiaodong Sheng (Canada) and seventh

seed Cheam June Wei (Malaysia) are the new favourites for the title.

In the women's singles, Thailand's Supanida Katethong joined Saina in the list of absentees. Fifth seed Ashmita Chahila and eighth seeded Disha Gupta (USA) and Syed Modi International runner-up Malvika Bansod are now considered as title favourites.

Similarly, in the men's doubles, six seeded pairs withdrew. Men's top seeded Russian pair Vladimir Ivanov and Ivan Sozonov pulled out of the event, while the favourite for women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and N. Sikki Reddy topped the list of withdrawals.

In mixed doubles, seven seeded pairs pulled out, leaving sixth seed Raju Mohammad Rejan and Jamaludeen Anees Kowzar as the only surviving seed.

There were also six participants from Odisha, including Rutaparna Panda. However, all of them opted out of the USD 75,000 tournament. Panda pulled out of the meet after being tested positive for the virus.

Eight die, 38 injured in Cameroon stadium crush

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Yaounde, Jan 25: The death toll has risen to eight who died in a stampede outside a game at the African Cup of Nations football tournament in Cameroon, while another seven people are in serious condition in the hospital, authorities said Tuesday.

The death toll increased after two more fans were pronounced dead outside the Messasi hospital, police said. Injured people had initially been rushed to that hospital by police and civilians trying to help. The hospital quickly became overwhelmed and said it couldn't handle all the injured people.

A total of 38 people were hurt in the stampede, which happened Monday night at the Olembe Stadium in the Cameroon capital of Yaounde. The remaining 31 people had light to moderate injuries. The injured are now being treated at four different hospi-

tals, Communication Minister René Sadi said.

The crush came when football fans struggled to get into the stadium to watch Cameroon's team play Comoros in a highly-anticipated knockout game at Africa's top football tournament.

A witness said the stampede at the south entrance of the stadium happened because supporters were directed by security officials toward an entrance gate that was locked, adding that he saw a child less than 10 years old, lifeless and guys were trying to revive him. The gate was eventually opened, the witness said, causing a surge and people were trampled. Children were caught up in the stampede, the witness said.

Cameroon President Paul Biya ordered an investigation into the tragedy, which came a day after at least 17 people died after a fire set off a series of explosions at a nightclub in Yaounde.

Happy Republic Day

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