



HRITHIK'S NEW LOVE

Hrithik Roshan has reportedly found new love in actress and musician Saba Azad, the niece of Safdar Hashmi

LEISURE P2



KIM'S MISSILE MANIA

North Korea conducts Sunday its most powerful test since 2017 by launching a ballistic missile

INTERNATIONAL P10



HISTORIC FEAT

Rafa Nadal roars back from a two-set deficit to win his 21st Grand Slam singles title in Melbourne

SPORTS P12

1 DEAD, 1 INJURED IN RSP ACCIDENT

ROURKELA: One contractual worker was killed and another critically injured Sunday in a freak accident at the Rourkela Steel Plant. The deceased has been identified as Amar Kumar Panda, a resident of this city. The injured Sushil Kumar Deogram is currently undergoing treatment at the Ispat General Hospital (IGH) here. Both belonged to the Captive Power Plant section. The accident occurred when the two were cleaning the pipeline. An explosion took place following which a portion of the pipe fell on them injuring the two grievously. Both were rushed to the IGH where Amar succumbed to his injuries.



5 ULTRAS SHOT DEAD IN J&K

SRINAGAR: In a major success for the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, a top self-styled commander of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) was among five terrorists killed in two separate overnight encounters in Pulwama and Budgam districts of the valley, officials said Sunday. JeM chief Zahid Wani was active since 2017 and was involved in several killings and recruitment of youths into terrorist ranks. While four JeM terrorists were killed in Pulwama, one Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) ultra was shot dead in Char-i-Sharief area of Budgam district. "Zahid Wani was a top commander of the Jaish and involved in several killings, IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar informed. P7

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Model adds glam to Bolangir dist panchayat polls

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Jan 30: A tinge of glam and glitz is set to hit the panchayat polls in Bolangir district with a professional model taking the political plunge. Meet Priyanka Nanda, who is a model and former 'Miss Photogenic' at a national beauty pageant in 2015.

Priyanka is hoping that she can make a seamless transition into the world of politics from the glam domain which has been a part of her life till now. She will fight for the position of sarpanch in Chudapali gram panchayat of Bolangir district in the forthcoming three-tier panchayat elections.

The sassy lass knows her job is difficult in comparison to what she has been doing so far. But she is determined to work for the development of her native place and is leaving no stone unturned to achieve her goals.

"I know politics is a different field completely in comparison to the job of a model. I have entered a new domain from the professional world of modelling. But I believe in hard work," Priyanka said.

One of the areas Priyanka wants to work on is education in rural areas. "I completed my education from outside Odisha. I have discovered that facilities available outside the state are missing in Odisha, more so in rural areas. My target is give kids in my native place a chance to avail of those facilities. I was working with an agency in Bhopal, but decided to give it up so that I can do something for my own people. I am determined to do something for the people of my village," she added.

Now that she has taken the plunge Priyanka is hoping that she will achieve success.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I am a nationalist but I want my kids to be settled abroad. See, NRIs are better nationalists!

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	28.4°C	27.9°C
TEMP. MIN	11.6°C	11.2°C
Humidity	73%	80%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

YOGA FOR HEALTHY MIND AND BODY



Participants of all ages performing 'Surya Namaskar' at a yoga camp organised Sunday in Balasore town

OP PHOTO

Tax relief on cards

Analysts are expecting some relief in income tax and corporate taxes as well as reduction of prices of essential commodities like food grains, fuel

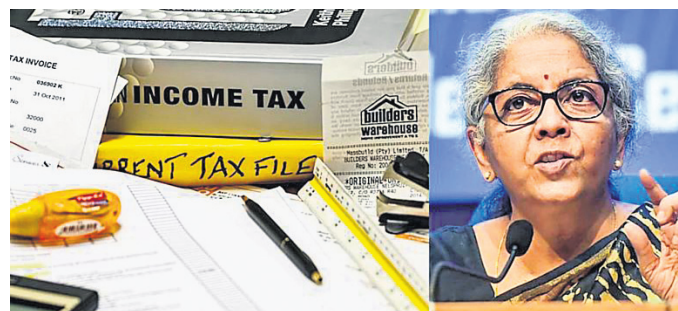
AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 30: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is all set to present Tuesday the Union Budget (2022-23). Meanwhile sources close to the Finance Ministry said Sunday that the upcoming Budget may increase the standard deduction to ₹1,00,000 from the current ₹50,000.

Budget 2022 might also introduce tax-free work-from-home allowances for salaried employees. Higher deductions for such expenses would increase the take-home salary.

In last fiscal's budget, Sitharaman had introduced a new tax regime. However, this regime offered no major benefits. According to consensus, most taxpayers are continuing with the old regime and were unwilling to move to the new one as they cannot avail of any investment benefits under the new policy. In Budget 2021, the income tax slabs remained untouched. However, it is expected that there may be some relief this time, sources said.

As per a note released by 'William O'Neil India', a company that provides financial services and information, this time there are possibilities the tax-free slab could be increased from the current ₹0-2.5



Govt braces for stormy session

NEW DELHI: The stage is set for a stormy Budget Session of Parliament which begins Monday with the Opposition set to target the Modi government on issues such as the Pegasus snooping row, farm distress and Chinese 'incursions' in eastern Ladakh. The main opposition, Congress has declared that it will reach out to like-minded parties to raise these issues during the session. It is expected to be a heated session as the Congress will also demand clarity on the sale of Air India and relief package for Covid-19 victims.

With an eye on elections, the rural economy could receive higher allocations. Around 25 per cent of India's rural population is in the five states going to polls in February-March. So, it is expected that the government would maintain elevated rural and agriculture welfare spending. The government could focus on welfare spending such as food subsidies, MGNREGA, PM-Kisan, and fertilizer subsidies, the note informed.

Sources said there could be reductions in prices of food, clothing, medicines, education, housing and health, and above all, in taxes and fuel rates. This is the basic list of just about any family in the country. Especially because of the Covid-19 surge, the per capita personal expenditure on healthcare has increased manifold. Almost every family has seen a rise in medical expenses, from minor medical consultations to major hospitalisations. Covid-19 has altered the economic picture of households, especially in middle-income set-

tings, so they are wanting some form of relief or the other.

Meanwhile industry body CII pitched Sunday for additional incentive rates to be included in the Production Linked Incentive Schemes based on the number of jobs created. It has suggested that employment-intensive sectors such as leather and food processing could be provided an incentive scheme to attract investments and create employment. (More P7)

5 arrested for selling newborn

In 2021 there were more than 5 instances in Odisha where parents had sold their babies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 30: Police arrested Sunday five persons including an Anganwadi worker for allegedly selling a newborn girl for just ₹12,000 in this district. Among those nabbed under the Dharmasala police limits are the father of the girl and the two buyers.

The accused have been identified as Natabar Behera, father of the newborn, Kailash Barik and Sasmita Barik, the two buyers, Prabhasini Das, an Anganwadi worker, and her brother

Police informed Sunday that Kanchan, wife of Natabar, who is a resident of Sanarajpara village, had delivered January 27 a baby girl at Dharmasala Community Health Centre (CHC). It has been alleged that Natabar allegedly sold the newborn the very next day to 'childless' couple Kailash and Sasmita who are

SQUADS TO ENSURE ALCOHOL-FREE POLLS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: In a bid to ensure alcohol-free panchayat elections in Odisha, the Excise Department has formed special squads in different districts. These teams will conduct raids on a regular basis to curb the free flow of alcohol leading up to the panchayat polls, sources said.

"Check-posts will be set up in border areas to curb illegal activities such as liquor smuggling from other states. Liquor shops will be closed 48 hours ahead of voting," Deputy Commissioner of Excise Department, Ram Chandra Palta, informed here Sunday.

The official also said that 33 mo-

bile squads have been formed to conduct surprise raids on illicit breweries and monitor the activities of previous offenders and criminals.

"Any complaint on illegal liquor activities can be filed at toll free number 18003456713. We have set up control rooms in all the districts of Odisha. The department will take prompt action after investigating each and every complaint to ensure a free and fair election," said Palta.

It should be stated here that 27,107 excise cases were registered in Odisha last year (till December) and 22,355 persons were arrested. The Excise Department also seized 17,32,000 litres of illicit country-made liquor from their possession.

Spike in Covid-19 fatalities continues

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: Odisha recorded the highest daily coronavirus deaths in more than five months as 19 people, including two babies, succumbed to the infection Sunday. However, the state logged the lowest number of new cases in 20 days, the Health Department of the Odisha government said.

A three-day-old boy in Bhadrak district and a one-year-old girl in Ganjam died from the virus while the state capital reported four new fatalities. The toll in Odisha due to the pandemic has now increased to 8,594, the department said.

Odisha reported 4,843 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours and the positivity rate was 7.7 per cent, the Health Department stated. The infection is down by 43 per cent from 8,520 a week ago.

Khurda district, where the state capital is located, reported the highest number of 1,023 infections, followed by 735 in Sundargarh district and 379 in Cuttack district. Among those newly infected, 663 are children.

The active cases declined to 53,090, including 16,932 in Khurda, which is in the 'Red Zone' along with the districts of Sundargarh and Cuttack, where the number of current infections is over 2,500. Balasore, Nuapada and Jajpur are among the nine districts that are in the 'Yellow Zone' with over 1,000 cases.

A total of 2,75,70,488 swab samples have been cumulatively tested so far. The number of recoveries in the last 24 hours stands at 10,267, the health department said in a tweet.

WHEN TRIPURA NEARLY BECAME A PAK STATE

Some ministers, during the reign of the last Tripura king, in association with the Muslim League tried to make the state a part of erstwhile East Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, Jan 30: The princely state of Tripura, which celebrated its 50th statehood day earlier this month, nearly became a part of Pakistan some 75 years ago. A palace coup supported by the Muslim League was almost on the verge of overturning the last Tripura Maharaja Bir Bikram

Kishore's decision to join the Indian Union. However, they could not do so due to the timely action of a few loyal ministers and warnings by politicians of that period.

Panna Lal Roy, a historian and author of a book on the merger of princely Tripura with Indian Union said Sunday, "The Maharaja announced April 28, 1947 that Tripura would be a part of Indian Union and on the same day sent a telegram to the secretary of the Constituent Assembly about his decision."

Roy added, "Unfortunately, the prince died May 17, 1947. After his death, a group of highly placed employees, ministers and the step-brother of the king in cahoots with the Muslim League hatched a conspiracy for inclusion of the state



Tripura's last king Bir Bikram Kishore

with Pakistan. They tried to place a member of the royal family on the throne and sign a fresh agreement transferring the state to Pakistan

Luckily, they failed to do so." Roy also said the Muslim League leaders had organised many meetings in Comilla and Noakhali dis-

tricts currently in Bangladesh, for inclusion of Tripura with East Pakistan (then), and the communal riots sparked off in those areas resulted in large numbers of people fleeing to Tripura as refugees.

The Maharajas of the tribal state not only ruled over the present-day Tripura but also by virtue of having zamindari estates (in British Indian dominion), controlled large chunks of neighbouring districts of Comilla, Noakhali and Sylhet. These areas were awarded by the Radcliffe Commission to Pakistan.

Roy said the then president of Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Surendra Mohan Ghosh wrote a letter October 29 to Home Minister Sardar Patel tipping him of the conspiracy. This was fol-

lowed by a letter from Hindu Mahasabha leader Shyama Prasad Mukherji regarding the Tripura situation to Patel.

All these warnings led to Patel writing to the Governor of Assam, December 31, 1947 and subsequently the federal government rushing Air Force personnel to Tripura as a contingent measure.

Roy said several ministers were subsequently asked to resign, and one of them was asked by the Maharani to desist from entering the state. Finally, after one more year, the 'Instrument of Merger' for making Tripura a part of the Indian Union was signed October 15, 1949 by Maharani Kanchanprava Devi and the advisor of the Ministry of States, VP Menon.

leisure



JANET'S HEARTFELT REVELATIONS FROM A CROWDED 'LIFETIME'

Actress and singer Janet Jackson has made some startling revelations in her recently released documentary Janet, which aired on the Lifetime and A&E networks in the United States. The documentary speaks about the many controversies that clouded the singer's life, reports *Variety*.

ADELE NOT TO PERFORM LIVE AT BRIT AWARDS

English singer Adele has pulled out of performing live at next month's Brit Awards, following her shock decision to indefinitely postpone her Las Vegas residency. "The *Easy on Me* hitmaker was confirmed to perform on the night, but has now pulled out – which has been a massive blow for the organisers," a source said.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Ganesh predicts that there may be some disappointments today. The reason could well be your own carelessness. Ganesh advises you to draw some motivation from your superiors sometimes. It will only be for your own good.

TAURUS
This day will be filled with a lot of emotional intensity. So says Ganesh. Most of the day you will be driven by your feelings and sentiments and remain absorbed in family issues concerns. You will, nevertheless, not lose out on your professional and business affairs.

GEMINI
There are strong indications that you will find it easy to assume a leadership role and set the agenda at work today, says Ganesh. In the afternoon, you will be busy looking for an expensive gift for someone very important to you.

CANCER
You are likely to be in good spirits throughout the day. With you brimming with confidence and positive energy, others around you will also feel upbeat. The entire day, you will be looking forward to the evening, so that you could spend some quality time with your loved ones.

LEO
With Lady Luck smiling down on you, today promises to be rather special, forecasts Ganesh. Expect to find favourable conditions and come out with flying colours in whatever task you undertake, especially if it happens to be something like an interview. Bask in the kudos and appreciation at work, as your performance far exceeds the expectations of the management.

VIRGO
There is an indication that you may assume a leadership role and dictate the agenda at work today, predicts Ganesh. You may spend your afternoon window-shopping, looking for a gift that you feel like giving to a loved one. You will spend the evening planning your long-term goals with a close friend or family.

LIBRA
Ganesh predicts that today you will receive that much-awaited good news from abroad. At the workplace, you will remain completely focused. You may devise and come up with some innovative method to speed up work, much to your relief.

SCORPIO
It is quite likely that you will have an outstanding field day today, predicts Ganesh. At the workplace, you will possibly feel that you are stuck in the rut doing regular activities day after day. In relationship matters, evening will be full of surprises and excitement for you, expects Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Work while you work and play while you play, says Ganesh. On the professional front, you will outclass your rivals with sheer brilliance, leaving them flabbergasted and intimidated. On the personal front, you may spend quality time with loved ones or spend your evening being chased by the spotlight of a party.

CAPRICORN
You will settle for nothing less than excellence in whatever work you choose to take up, says Ganesh. In fact, working extra hours may leave you a little exhausted in the afternoon. Here's the remedy: delegate work to those around you and see that they meet your high standards.

AQUARIUS
The explorer that you are, today your restlessness will get the better of you! Your plans will finally take off, whether it is a new entrepreneurial or educational course or a trip to your home town. It's a promising day, says Ganesh, and you never know what you may find!

PISCES
There is a lot of brain-racking in store for you today, as you try to conjure up ways to convert your extraordinary brilliance into exceptional performance. Keeping in mind that your family is the foundation of your success could provide some vital insights, says Ganesh.

Hrithik finds love again!

Mumbai: Hrithik Roshan has always kept a low profile about his personal life, but he is too big a star to keep everything a secret. After deciding to part ways with Sussanne Khan, the actor has been co-parenting to raise their kids. But now, it seems that Hrithik has finally found a new love. "Duggu prefers to keep his personal life under wraps. He has been silently seeing budding actress Saba Azad for a while now and is finally in the state of making public appearances with her. The two make for a great couple, however, are taking things slow by living in the moment," a close friend of Roshan, on the condition of anonymity, revealed. Interestingly, the ex-couple of Sussanne and Hrithik both seem to have finally moved on to find a new partner in their lives. While Sussanne is in a happy place with Arslan, Hrithik seems to be moving into the state of love again with Saba. "That's what maturity is all about right? They respect each other, and will continue to co-parent, while moving on with their personal lives," the source concluded. For the unversed, Saba, a musician, theatre director and most importantly the niece of theatre great Safdar Hashmi, made her Hindi film debut as one of the leads in the indie film *Dil Kabaddi* in 2008.



Amala turns philosophical, quotes Laozi

Chennai: Actress Amala Paul, who has made her mark in southern film industries, seems to have taken a shine to the ancient Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu, whose aphorism, "Stop leaving and you will arrive", she has shared on Instagram. The actress, who is known to often share her thoughts on life with her fans and followers on Instagram, carried her pictures with a set of thoughts that have left a mark on her. One such quote was that of Lao Tzu. It reads: "Stop leaving and you will arrive. Stop searching and you will see. Stop running away and you will be found." The actress also quoted the American life coach and healer Jordan Flesher in another post. Flesher says, "The more spiritual you are, the more sexy you are. The more conscious you are, the more attractive you become. The more peaceful you are, the hotter you are. Because the most sexy thing in the universe is spiritual enlightenment. There's nothing sexier than consciousness." IANS



Guests attend the unveiling ceremony

WBF launches e-bookmobile store for City bibliophiles

Bhubaneswar: Traveling library Walking BookFairs (WBF) Saturday launched an e-bookmobile store, first of its kind, here on the occasion of its eighth anniversary. The campaign was launched by Mo School Chairperson Susmita Bagchi. The e-bookmobile will travel in the Capital City with hundreds of books of different genres, said WBF's co-founder Satabdi Mishra. She went on to add, "After running our bookstore and library through solar power for years, we thought of offering our service to the booklovers across the city. This new electric bookmobile facility has been developed by Zero 21 Renewable Energy Solutions, a Hyderabad-based startup. It can run upto 60 kms on a single charge." Akshaya Routray, another founder of WBF said, "Books have to reach the remote corners if we are to progress as a society. Our journey is a tiny effort to bring in that change. We are trying to make books available to as many people as possible and this e-bookmobile facility is another step in this direction." The e-book mobile carries more than 1,000 books and they have plans in place to offer the service in Cuttack in future, informed Mishra. WBF, launched in January 2014 by Routray and Mishra, has so far traveled more than 35,000 kms in the last eight years reaching out to thousands who have no access to books in the country. PWN

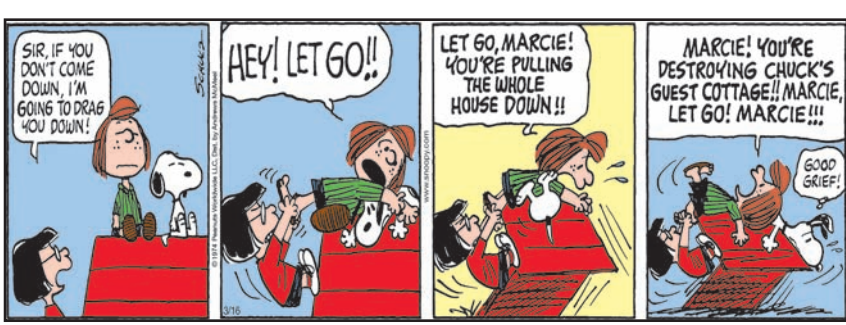
Salman meets Travolta in Riyadh

"I work in the Indian film industry. My name is Salman Khan," the 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' star is heard saying to the Oscar-winning Hollywood actor in the clip.

Actor Salman Khan met Hollywood star John Travolta when the two attended an event in Riyadh recently. The priceless moment was captured by the camera as the two stars sat next to each other at the event. They exchanged pleasantries when their paths crossed at an award function organised by Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority. The annual event awards artists from music, film, television, and social media. In a video shared by Salman's fan club, the Indian actor is seen walking up to the Oscar-winning actor and praising him for his amazing performances. Salman also happily introduced himself to Travolta. "I work in the Indian film industry. My name is Salman Khan," he is heard saying. Meanwhile, at the function, Travolta received a Lifetime Achievement Award and Salman was honoured with the Personality of the Year award. AGENCIES



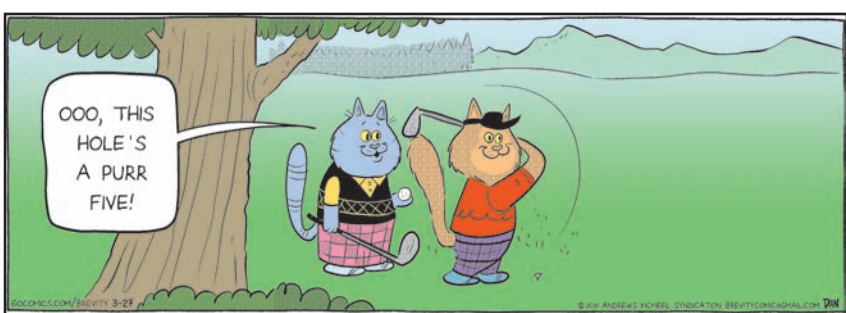
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

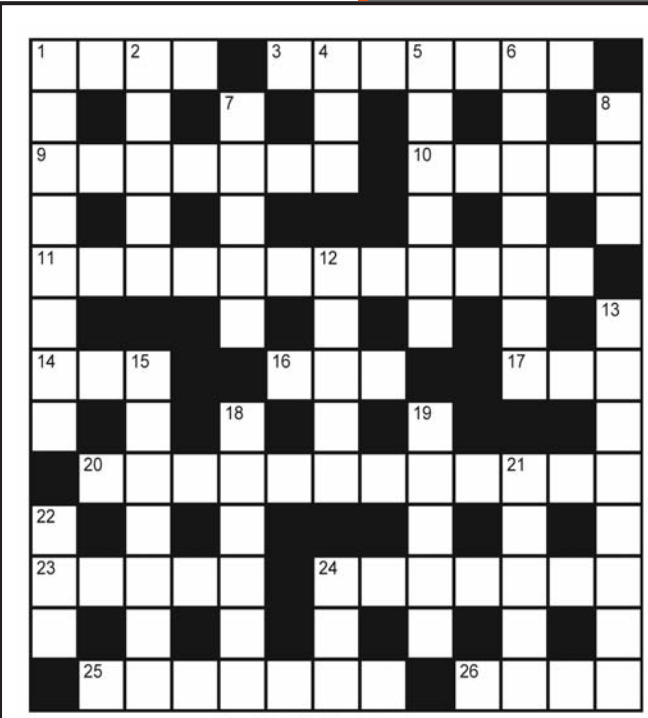


BREVITY



FUN post

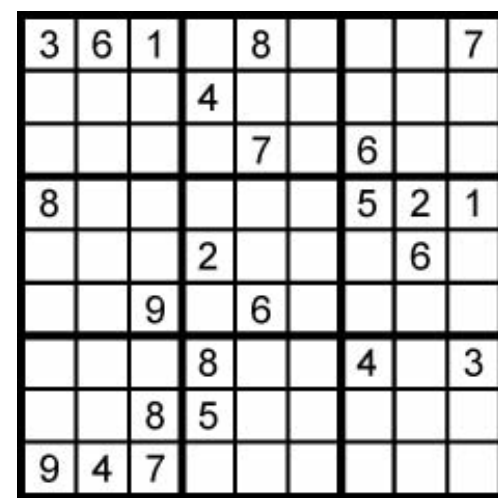
CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Fill to excess
3 Utopian
9 Passionate
10 Public persona
11 Bakery buy (6,6)
14 Grimm character
16 Have a tab
17 Silent assent
20 Desk item (6,6)
23 Neutral shade
- Down**
24 Beer can feature (4,3)
25 Rabble-rouse
26 Advantage
1 Defrauds
2 Cronus or Oceanus
4 Hot time in Haiti
5 Fragile
6 Mortification
- 7 Uneasy feeling
8 Obtain
12 Kind of cord or surge
13 Really cute
15 Bond writer?
18 Bear witness
19 Milky gems
21 Famous
22 Flow's partner
24 Treat like a dog?

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



MEGA PROJECT
 Structures near Srimandir in Puri being demolished to facilitate the heritage corridor work, Sunday

COVID-19 TRACKER			
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	37,37,54,516	29,50,66,426	56,77,697
India	4,10,92,522	3,87,13,494	4,94,091
Odisha	12,45,911	11,93,365	8,594

HE dept brushes off rumours over reopening of colleges



Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: The state Higher Education (HE) Department Sunday issued a clarification regarding a fake letter circulating on social media platforms claiming that the department would reopen educational institutions across the state February 10.

Amid closure of such institutions in Odisha due to the Covid-19 situation, a fake letter was found doing rounds on various social media platforms regarding reopening of colleges and universities in the state from February 10.

"A fake letter is circulating in social media purportedly conveying decision of Higher Education Department to reopen colleges and universities from February 10, 2022. It is hereby clarified that no such decision has been taken by the state government," the department tweeted.

Many students reacted to the clarification by the department. Some students supported the department's decision by acknowledging the prevailing threat of the third wave of Covid-19 in state. They also suggested that the institutions should reopen after February at least, taking into account the situation at that time.

Amid closure of such institutions and hostels in state due to the critical Covid-19 situation, a fake letter was found doing rounds on various social media platforms regarding reopening of colleges and universities

The fake letter said that the state govt has decided to reopen all colleges & universities from February 10, 2022 and hostels shall reopen February 8, 2022

The Higher Education department, through its Twitter handle Sunday, clarified that no such decision has been taken yet and the later is a fake

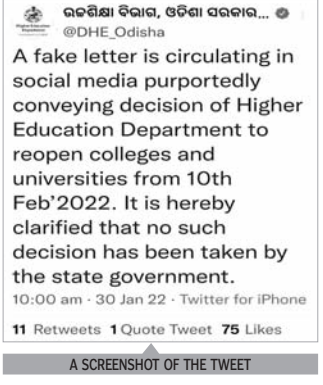
shall remain closed with effect from January 10, 2022," an official order had said.

"The authorities of colleges/universities/technical educational institutions shall take all appropriate measures for conducting classes through online/virtual/video/other alternative methods of learning mode," it had said.

"All hostels in such academic institutions shall also remain closed with effect from January 10, 2022. Students shall be advised to avoid staying in the hostel in the interest of their personal health. However, scholars, researchers and students who desire to stay in hostel for research/project works or other academic activities may be permitted to do so subject to student(s) giving undertaking to that effect to the appropriate authorities of the concerned institutions," the order had said.

The fake letter said that the state government has decided to reopen all colleges and universities from February 10, 2022 and hostels shall reopen February 8, 2022.

On the other hand, some final year students pointed out that delay in reopening of their institution could potentially jeopardize their chances of pursuing their higher education in their desired national level universities outside Odisha.



Due to sharp rise in the Covid-19 cases, the Odisha Government had announced closure of colleges, universities, and technical educational institutions in the state from January 10. "All colleges/universities/technical educational institutions (other than medical colleges/nursing colleges & institutions under control of Health & Family Welfare Department) under the superintendence of Government of Odisha

REMEMBERING BAPU



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary at Naveen Niwas, Sunday, while dignitaries including Governor Ganeshi Lal and Speaker SN Patro pay homage to the Father of the Nation on Assembly premises in Bhubaneswar as the country observes Martyrs' Day



Gandhi gallery inaugurated at State Museum

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: Odia Language Literature and Culture department Sunday observed Shaheed Diwas (Martyrs' Day) and centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's first visit to Odisha.

On the occasion, a gallery on Gandhiji was inaugurated at Odisha State Museum here and a painting exhibition was also organised by the Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi.

A coffee table book published by the Odisha State Museum and a special book on Gandhiji published by the Odisha Sahitya Akademi were released on the occasion. A story telling CD was also released by the guests.

Odia Language Literature and Culture department Additional Chief Secretary Madhu Sudan Padhi, Odia Language Literature and Culture department director Ranjan Kumar Das and Odisha

SHAHEED DIWAS



A girl at the newly-inaugurated Gandhi gallery at Odisha State Museum

State Museum director Bhagyaliipi Malla among others graced the occasion. Several school students also participated in the event virtually.

Martyrs' Day or Shaheed Diwas is celebrated across the country

January 30 to mark the death anniversary of Gandhiji and to remember the freedom fighters who laid down their lives in the struggle for independence.

Gandhiji had visited Odisha eight times between 1921 and 1946.

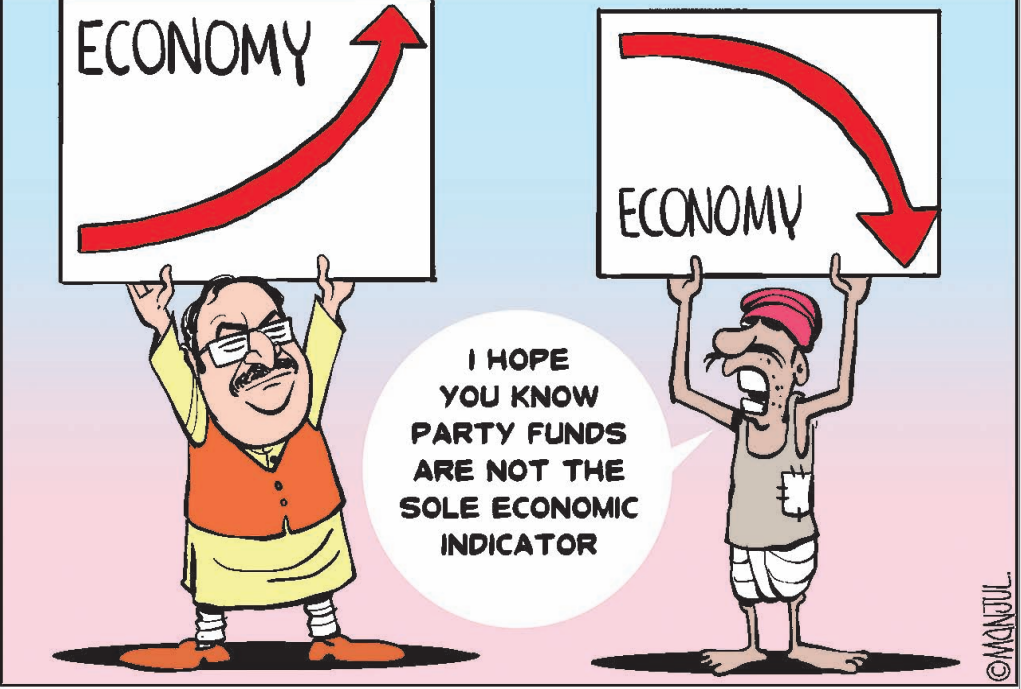
His first visited the state in March 1921. He arrived in Cuttack March 23, 1921 and addressed a public meeting in the city to propagate the ideas behind the Noncooperation Movement. He also addressed women at Binod Bihari in the Silver City.

Gandhiji addressed a meeting at Bhadrak March 25. He visited the Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya of Pandit Gopabandhu Das before leaving for Puri, where he addressed a public meeting on freedom struggle March 27.

The father of the nation along with Pandit Gopabandhu Das also visited Berhampur and addressed a huge gathering March 29, 1921.

During his eighth and last visit to Odisha in January 1946, Gandhiji met his supporters at Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack and Berhampur while travelling to Chennai by train January 20, 1946. Hundreds of people gathered at various railway stations to greet Gandhiji.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



10 officers to monitor BSKY in 37 hosps

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: In a bid to efficiently implement the state government's Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojna (BSKY), the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) will appoint 10 officers across 37 hospitals in the state Capital, who will see to the smooth functioning of the policy.

The BSKY scheme, which was launched in August last year by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, aims to provide annual health coverage of ₹5 lakh (Rs 10 lakh for women) per family across Odisha. With a target of reaching out to about 70 lakh economically-vulnerable families, the Odisha government has roped in about 183 private hospitals within the state and 17 hospitals outside.

As per BMC sources, the state Capital will see 37 hospitals roll out the scheme. These include Aditya Aswini Hospital, Anvi Ent & Head Neck Hospital, Baidyanath



The BSKY scheme aims at providing annual health coverage of ₹5 lakh (₹10 lakh for women) per family across Odisha

With a target of reaching out to about 70 lakh economically-vulnerable families, the Odisha government has roped in about 183 private hospitals within the state and 17 hospitals outside

Memorial Hospital, Apollo, Care, Hemalata Hospitals Limited, Kalinga Hospital, Kalinga Institute of Medical Science, L V Prasad Eye Institute, Utkal Hospital, Women and Child Hospital, Kar Vision Eye Hospital, Neelachal Hospital, Panda Nursing Home, Sum Ultimate, AIIMS, Kanungo Institute of Diabetics, AMRI Hospital, Rotary Eye Hospital, Advance Eyecare Hospital, IMS and SUM Hospital, Swasti Clinic

and Nursing Home, Vivekananda Hospital, Bhoomika Eye Hospital, Saswat Hospital, Shusruta Hospital, Modern Health Care Hospital, Vision Care Eye Hospital, ASG Eye Hospital, Maa Shakti Hospital, Sanjeebani Medicare Hospital, Sri Sri Baroda Hospital, Vikash Hospital, Hi-Tech Medical Hospital, Sunshine Hospital and Sparsh Multi Speciality Hospital.

"At least 10 senior officials have been designated different hospi-

tals. The officers will visit different hospitals under their jurisdictions at least once a month. The officers will submit a detailed report in respect to different aspects such as number of beneficiaries reported for their treatment, those who have availed treatment along with types of treatment availed, whether fully or partially cashless by collecting feedbacks from different stake holders such as beneficiaries, medical staff, swasthya mitras and others," a notification in this regard read.

It can be mentioned that as per existing system, no document is required for cashless healthcare service in government facilities. The beneficiaries will have to produce the smart card or food security card at the empanelled private hospitals for availing cashless care up to annual financial limit, which will apply for one-year period from September 1 and after which it will be auto-renewed.

Mishra: Efforts on to eliminate NTDs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: Public Health director Niranjana Mishra Sunday claimed that the state government is taking various steps for containment and elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) like lymphatic filariasis, leprosy, dengue, chikungunya and rabies.

The state government is trying to eliminate these diseases through active surveillance and focused interventions, said Mishra on the occasion of World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day.

The World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day is observed to galvanise the global health community and engage the public for elimination of these diseases.

This year, the focus was to secure political and financial commitments in support of the Kigali Declaration on NTDs.

How did Omicron evolve?

The highly transmissible Omicron variant, which emerged with a host of unusual mutations in late November last year, has been detected in more than 120 countries. Now, scientists are trying to find out how it evolved.

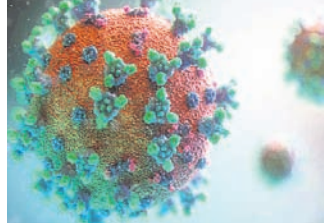
The spread of the Omicron variant around the world has been the fastest than any previous versions.

While on one hand, there's no transparent path of transmission linking Omicron to its predecessors, on the other, the variant has an unusual array of mutations, which evolved entirely outside the view of researchers, Nature reported.

In fact the variant is so different from earlier strains, such as Alpha and Delta, that evolutionary virologists estimate its closest-known genetic ancestor probably dates back to more than a year ago, sometime after mid-2020.

"It just came out of nowhere," Darren Martin, a computational biologist at the University of Cape Town, South Africa was quoted as saying.

Understanding the origins of Omicron might help scientists to understand the risk of new variants emerging, and suggest steps to minimize it, said Angela



Rasmussen, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization in Saskatoon, Canada.

"It's very difficult to try to mitigate a risk that you can't even remotely wrap your head around," she was quoted as saying.

Scientists have explored three theories relating to the origins of Omicron.

Although researchers have sequenced millions of SARS-CoV-2 genomes, they might simply have missed a series of mutations that eventually led to Omicron. Alternatively, the variant might have evolved mutations in one person, as part of a long-term infection. Or it could have emerged unseen in other animal hosts, such as mice or rats, the report said.

But as of now, whichever idea a

researcher favours "often comes down to gut feeling rather than any sort of principled argument", Richard Neher, a computational biologist at the University of Basel in Switzerland, was quoted as saying.

Researchers agree that Omicron is a recent arrival. It was first detected in South Africa and Botswana in early November 2021; retrospective testing has since found earlier samples from individuals in England on November 1 and 3, and in South Africa, Nigeria and the United States November 2.

An analysis of the mutation rate in hundreds of sequenced genomes, and of how quickly the virus had spread through populations by December, dates its emergence to not long before that - around the end of September or early October last year.

A study published in the journal Nature, suggested that the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 diverged from previous SARS-CoV-2 variants as a result of adaptive evolution, in which beneficial mutations are passed onto future generations through natural selection, rather than through recombination between previous variants.

NEW VARIETIES



A vendor displays colourful cauliflowers in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

IMD issues alerts against rain, dense fog from Feb 3

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday predicted that light to moderate rainfall under the influence of western disturbance is likely to lash several parts of Odisha from February 3.
According to a bulletin issued by the weather office, light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of north interior Odisha and Sonepur. Also, dry weather is very likely to prevail over the rest of the districts of Odisha, the weather office said in its bulletin.
Moreover, the Met office has issued yellow warning for some parts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Bargarh, Nuapada, Bolangir, Sonepur, and Kalahandi districts, which are likely to experience chilly weather in the next 24 hours.

The weather office said in its bulletin that light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of north interior Odisha and Sonepur

Yellow warning for dense fog has also been issued for one or two places in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Gajapati, Ganjam, Khurda, Puri and Nayagarh between 8.30am February 2 and 8.30am February 3.
Shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at one or two places in coastal Odisha, Dhenkanal, Angul, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Koraput and Malkangiri during this period.

CROC IN MAHANADI



People gather on Madhusudan bridge in Cuttack to watch a Gharial that was spotted in Mahanadi river, Sunday

OP PHOTOS

Teeth-chattering cold to blanket state another day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: Odisha continued to reel under chilly weather Sunday as a cold wave gripped some districts and the mercury dropped below normal at many places.
At least 16 weather stations logged a minimum temperature below 10°C as the northwesterly dry and cold winds prevailed over the region, a bulletin stated.
Similuguda in Koraput district was the coldest place in the state with 5.3°C, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said.
Kandhamal district shivered in teeth-chattering cold as the



district headquarter town of Phulbani recorded 6°C and it was 7°C at the Daringbadi hill station, it said.

The minimum temperature dropped by 6.1 notches in Keonjhar and by 5.7 in Jharsuguda. Cold wave conditions also prevailed

THE MET DECLARES A COLD WAVE WHEN THE MINIMUM TEMPERATURE DIPS TO AT LEAST 4°C IN THE PLAINS, OR 10°C AND AT LEAST 4.5 NOTCHES BELOW NORMAL

FOR COASTAL STATIONS, IT SHOULD BE 15°C OR LESS, OR THE TEMPERATURE IS AT LEAST 4.5 NOTCHES FROM NORMAL

in Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi. The Met declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature dips to at least 4°C in the plains, or 10°C and at least 4.5 notches below

normal. For coastal stations, it should be 15°C or less, or the departure is at least 4.5 notches from normal.
Bhubaneswar recorded 11.2°C, 4.9 notches below normal, while it was down by 3.6 to settle at 11.6°C in Cuttack, the Met office said.
The weatherman also warned that the cold wave would prevail in Kalahandi, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Bargarh, Nuapada, Bolangir and Subarnapur districts till Monday.
There will be no large change in the minimum temperature in the next 24 hours and it will rise gradually by 3-5°C subsequently, the Met added.

SAI International hosts global debate contest



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: A global debate competition was recently held at SAI International School, Bhubaneswar.
The debate competition was organised to instill modern communication skills and critical thinking in students, school sources said.
Students of 49 schools from 10 countries across the globe participated in the online debate competition. Students of 38 schools from across India, two each from Japan and Pakistan and one each from China, South Africa, UAE, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Morocco participated in the mega event, sources added.
British High Commissioner to India Alex Ellis graced the closing ceremony as chief guest while Hemanth Bharatha Chakravarthy was the keynote speaker. SAI International Education Group chairperson Shilpi Sahoo was also present on the occasion.
"Global problems need global solutions and these can be addressed by deliberations and discussions. The solutions cannot be forced upon countries," said the British High Commissioner.
He spoke about the relevance of inculcating topics on climate change, cyber security and artificial intelligence in students. The British High Commissioner emphasised upon the ability to debate on various issues for a better future.
Keynote speaker Hemanth Bharatha Chakravarthy thanked SAI International School for organising the global debate competition and appreciated its sprawling sports infrastructure. Chakravarthy put emphasis on speaking and writing skills for the development of ability to debate on various issues.
SAI International Education Group chairperson Shilpi Sahoo congratulated all the participants of the competition. She emphasised upon learning from intercultural relationships and working towards attaining the sustainable development goal (SDG).
The topics of the debate varied from artificial intelligence to climate change and many other burning issues, school sources said.

Woman in poll fray to fulfill hubby's dream

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Bhubaneswar/Berhampur, Jan 30: A 25-year-old woman has entered the rural poll battle in Odisha to fulfill her husband's dreams of becoming a sarpanch.
The sarpanch's seat at Aitipur panchayat in Ganjam district had been declared reserved for women dashing her husband Prashant Poloi's hopes of stepping into his father's shoes and assuming that office.
No wonder in this, except that Prabhathi Sahu got married to Poloi only Thursday and the newlyweds started their campaign for the February poll soon after solemnising their marriage.
The couple had registered their marriage at Khallikote in August last year, said Polai, who has turned into a businessman after quitting his job as an engineer at Thane in Maharashtra three years ago.
After returning to the village, the 28-year-old began to nurse the ambition to become a sarpanch of the panchayat and became involved in social service.
His father Jogendra Polai was elected as a sarpanch of the panchayat from 2002-2007. The seat has over 4,300 voters.
"As our marriage was registered in the court, I urged my wife to file her nomination as a sarpanch candidate following the suggestions of our supporters," he said.
Sahu, though a greenhorn in politics, exuded confidence.
"I am the daughter-in-law of the panchayat," the bride said as she went door to door with her husband to seek the blessings of the people.
Polling is scheduled to be held in five phases from February 16. Only zilla parishad members contest the rural election with party symbols in Odisha.
The votes will be counted February 26, 27 and 28.

The sarpanch seat at Aitipur panchayat in Ganjam has been declared reserved for women

CULTURAL FETE



Artistes of Soor Mandir perform Odissi during an event at Kala Vikash Kendra in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Infant deaths from RSV much higher than thought: Study

RSV IS A COMMON VIRUS THAT PRODUCES COLD-LIKE SYMPTOMS AND IS MERELY A NUISANCE FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WHO CONTRACT IT. BUT FOR BABIES - ESPECIALLY INFANTS IN LOW-AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES WHO LACK ADEQUATE ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE - THE VIRUS CAN BE FATAL

Nearly one in 10 of all deceased infants under six months were infected with Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), according to a study.
RSV is a common virus that produces cold-like symptoms and is merely a nuisance for the vast majority of people who contract it. But for babies - especially infants in low- and middle-income countries who lack adequate access to medical care - the virus can be fatal.
Prior researches have estimated that about 1,20,000 infants die of RSV each year, but this figure is based on modelling conducted in hospital-based settings and does not account for RSV deaths that occur in the community, which are not captured in hospital-based surveillance.
In the new study led by Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH), researchers have found that the true burden of RSV infant mortality is substantially higher than what was previously believed.



The team used systematic surveillance to measure the presence of RSV among infants who died in medical facilities or in the community.
The findings, published in the journal The Lancet Global Health, showed that the virus was present in 7 to 9 per cent of infants under 6 months old and was primarily

concentrated in infants under 3 months old.
Notably, two-thirds of these deaths occurred in the community - that is, among infants who never received medical care in a hospital and were overlooked in previous facility-based surveillance.
"The concentration of deaths in young infants less than 3 months

- The researchers enrolled 2,286 deceased infants, representing almost 80 percent of infant deaths in Lusaka from August 2017 to August 2020
- The study showed that RSV directly caused at least 2.8 per cent of all infant deaths, and 4.7 per cent of all infant deaths outside of hospitals
- The majority of these deaths were seasonal, occurring in the first half of the year, and were concentrated in the most impoverished areas

old is important for two main reasons," said the study's principal investigator Christopher Gill, associate professor of global health at BUSPH.
"First, it is a reminder that these very young infants with very small airways are at particular risk of RSV infections anatomically. Second, both of the

proposed new tools to prevent RSV infections - maternal vaccinations and infant monoclonal antibodies - will be most effective immediately after birth and could wane after," Gill added.
The researchers enrolled 2,286 deceased infants, representing almost 80 percent of infant deaths in Lusaka from August 2017 to August 2020.
The study showed that RSV directly caused at least 2.8 per cent of all infant deaths, and 4.7 per cent of all infant deaths outside of hospitals. The majority of these were seasonal, occurring in the first half of the year, and were concentrated in impoverished areas.
Preventative measure like RSV vaccination of mothers who could pass on antibodies to babies would also be the most effective strategy to reduce infant mortality from the virus, the researchers said. There is no approved vaccine for RSV yet, but trials are underway. IANS

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SHORT TAKES

Pangolin rescued, two held in Koraput

Koraput: The Special Task Force(STF) of Odisha police Sunday has rescued a pangolin and arrested two persons on charge of smuggling wildlife from the state forests, an officer said. Based on reliable information, the STF team with the help of forest officials raided a house in Koraput district and apprehended two persons Sunday, the officer said. During the search, a pangolin and other incriminating articles were recovered from their possession. The accused persons were handed over to Koraput forest officials for legal action at their end. The pangolin was handed over to the Divisional Forest Officer, Koraput for safe custody. An investigation into the matter is on, police said. Since 2020, in special drive against wildlife criminals/poachers, the STF has seized 25 leopard



skins, 13 elephant tusks, 7 deer skins, 11 live pangolins and more than 16 kg pangolin scales and arrested 57 wildlife criminals, police said.

Maoists bat for boycotting polls

Malkangiri: Maoists have urged people in Malkangiri district to boycott the upcoming panchayat elections. In a press statement, secretary of Andhra-Odisha Border Zonal Committee, Ganesh stated that for the last 25 years the state government has been spending crores of rupees for development works, but basic facilities are still a dream for tribals. The tribals in many pockets in the district are still deprived of basic facilities like road connectivity, drinking water, education and healthcare. "Unemployment has been alarming while hunger is till claiming lives in tribal-dominated pockets. Both the state and central governments are favouring private companies by privatising mines and industries. Adverse impacts of capitalism are growing. Corruption has acquired cancerous proportions amid political anarchy," the statement reads. Ganesh appealed to people to not be misled by false promises.

NO MOBILE NETWORK IN RAYAGADA HILLY POCKETS

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN HIT HARD



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Jan 30: In the absence of mobile network, digital campaign amid Covid curbs has indeed become arduous for candidates contesting panchayat polls in the remote hilly areas of Rayagada district. A case in point is here: Candidates hitting the electioneering trail are seen climbing atop a hill at Sandubadi bordering Andhra Pradesh to connect digitally with voters in the remote panchayats which receive signal from a mobile tower set up in a village in Andhra Pradesh, a report said. Accompanied by their limited number of supporters, the candidates are travelling for five to 10 km daily and climbing the hill to access mobile signals received from a mobile tower at Kandukupa village under Gumma-Lakshmiipur block in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh. There, they connect with the voters through social media. As many as 13 panchayats bordering the neighbouring state are under Rayagada-B zone. People of Sandubadi, Kereda and Jemadepenta panchayats bordering neighbouring state only get



An official of Border Security Force (151-Battalion) hands over a blanket to a villager during a public outreach camp at Oringi village under Khairput block in Malkangiri district, Sunday

PUBLIC OUTREACH

'Cash-for-vote' video goes viral

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Jan 30: A video of two candidates belonging to a political party distributing cash to woo voters ahead of the upcoming panchayat elections went viral on social media in Chandbali block of Bhadrak district. A source said the two contestants were seen distributing cash in the purported video. One of them is a Zilla Parishad candidate. In the viral video, he was seen giving cash to an elderly person during campaign. The source added that a sarpanch candidate was also present during the poll campaign while the cash was

being distributed. On the other hand, the Zilla Parishad candidate has refuted the charge, saying, he is not involved in any kind of unfair act like distributing cash to the voters. The charge framed against him is entirely untrue and designed to tarnish his image and popularity he added. In another case, a woman sarpanch candidate in Patri panchayat under Papadahandi block of Nabarangpur district was seen trying to persuade voters by holding a big fish during her door-to-door campaign. This Independent candidate was allotted fish as her election symbol by the State Election Commission.

Kapilash Shivaratri, Joranda Mela to be held sans devotees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Jan 30: Mahashivaratri will be held at the Kapilash shrine this year in this district without devotees. The famous Magha Mela at the Mahima shrine at Joranda in the district will also be held amid Covid restrictions. The Mela scheduled to be held from February 15 to 17 will be held sans devotees or visitors. A limited number of Mahima saints will perform the rituals during the three-day Magha festival owing to the surge of Covid cases across the state. The matter came to the fore after

the district administration here issued a notification in this regard, Saturday. According to the notification, no devotees will be allowed for darshan of the deity during the Mahashivaratri this year due to a spike in Covid cases across the state. Moreover, the rituals of the Shiva Bibaha will be performed by the servitors, adhering to the Covid-19 norms imposed by the state government. The district Collector has sought cooperation from the public and urged them to not crowd in and around the famous Shiva shrine which attracts thousands of devotees every year during the festival.

Rly tracks turn deathtrap in south Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 30: Railway tracks in south Odisha have turned into deathtraps as over 170 persons have lost their lives on railway tracks during the last four years, a report said. The Government Railway Police Station (GRP) in Berhampur has registered 269 cases on unnatural death in the last four years. Among the deceased, many died after slipping down from the trains while some others committed suicide or were mowed down by trains while crossing the railway tracks. As a result, the railway tracks have turned out to be biggest claimants of precious human lives in the past four years. The deaths are mainly caused due to negligence of people. Reports said Berhampur Railway Station is the largest railway station in south Odisha with over 70 trains playing daily through the station. The Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railways Protection Force (RPF) have been engaged to look after the security of the passengers and other persons visiting the railway station.

170 LIVES LOST IN 4 YEARS



GRP has registered 269 cases of unnatural deaths during last four years from 2018 to 2021. Over 73 unnatural death cases were recorded in 2018

The jurisdiction of the GRP spreads up to a distance of 120 km, starting from Chilika in Khurda district, via Ganjam and Gajapati districts to Gunupur in Rayagada dis-

MLA accused of violating model code, Covid norms

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh/Nuagaon, Jan 30: Dasapalla MLA Ramesh Chandra Behera has allegedly violated model code of conduct and Covid norms by organising a meeting of party workers seeking votes for a party candidate in Nuagaon block of Nayagarh. For free and fair elections, the State Election Commission(SEC) has prohibited party meetings/gatherings amid enforcement of Covid norms in view of a spike in infection cases. As per the SEC directive, a candidate can't accompany more than five people with him/her during the campaign. The MLA had allegedly organised a meeting of party workers from 11 panchayats at Ramchandi Mandap near Mahipur, seeking their support to ensure win of the party's Zilla Parishad candidate (Zone-17). It was alleged that hun-



The MLA allegedly held a meeting of party workers from 11 panchayats at Ramchandi Mandap near Mahipur

dreds of party workers attended the meeting. A GRS was also present there. Block electoral officer (Nuagaon BDO) Pramod Kumar Nayak said he would look into the matter and assured that action will be taken against those who attended the meeting.

237 booths identified as hyper-sensitive

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 30: While candidates have started door-to-door campaign for the upcoming panchayat polls, the administration has stepped up poll preparedness in Keonjhar district. To ensure free and fair, peaceful conduct of elections, police have identified 237 booths as very sensitive in the district. Accordingly, elaborate security arrangements are being made at the sensitive and very sensitive booths.

According to reports, there are 3,754 booths in the district. Of them, 237 booths were identified as very sensitive and 355 as sensitive. Keonjhar block has the highest number of very sensitive booths at 40. In Anandapur, five out of 226 booths are very sensitive and 23 sensitive. In Bansapal, 12 booths are very sensitive and 25 sensitive. The number of very sensitive booths in Champua block is 11. There are 33 very sensitive booths and 24 sensitive booths in Ghasipura block; 10 very sensitive booths and 37 sensitive booths in Ghatagon block; 16 very sensitive booths and 42 sensitive booths in Harichandnpur block and 29 very sensitive booths and 42 sensitive booths in Hatadihi block.

Rebels may queer the pitch for BJD in ULB polls for BeMC

MANY WOMEN LEADERS LOBBYING FOR PARTY TICKET AS MAYOR NOMINEE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 30: The refusal of objections against the decision to reserve the mayor post for only women in Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) in the upcoming urban local body(ULB) polls might spell trouble for the ruling BJD. This has created many rebels in the party. Hopes of those aspiring to contest for the post have vanished into thin air. They had wanted keep the post unreserved, a report said. The post of mayor has been reserved for only female candidates in Berhampur Municipal Corporation. The state urban development department had issued a draft notification in this regard, January 12. This time, the mayor will not be picked up by corporators. People will directly elect one. This has recurred after a gap of 30 years. Some male aspirants of the ruling and other parties had objected to such reservation and challenged the draft notification on the ground



that the post of mayor had been reserved for women in the 2013 elections. However, the urban development department rejected the pleas and upheld its earlier decision in a notification published January 28. The rejection of pleas has dis-appointed many male aspirants of various political parties who were expecting to get a ticket for the post to contest in the election. However, this decision has rather left more male aspirants of the ruling BJD fuming. The fresh notification has angered them so much that they are openly venting out their displeasure before the party MPs, MLAs and district unit president. Observers apprehend that if the party lead-

ers do not placate the disgruntled leaders in time, then they might play spoilsport for the party nominee in the upcoming elections.

Meanwhile, many aspiring women leaders of the ruling party have started lobbying to get the party ticket as a mayor candidate. Among the prominent faces in the race for party ticket are Sanghamitra Dalai, BJD's district women's wing president, Mamata Bisoi, president of the zone comprising four districts in south Odisha, K Madhavi, former mayor, Jyotshna Nayak, deputy mayor, Sonali Gantayat, BJD's City women's wing president and several other women leaders. All of them are well educated and keep their fingers crossed for ticket. Earlier, there used to be indirect election for the post of chairperson in this 155-year old civic body. The first direct election for the post of chairperson was held in 1992 when the Janata Dal government headed by Biju Patnaik was in power in the state.



An awareness rally on polythene ban being organised by Jeypore Municipality in Jeypore Town

OP PHOTO

FOCUS IDEOLOGY

THE COSTS OF CLOSED MINDS



While there are exceptions, hyper-nationalism is usually disastrous for an economy in the long run. At a time when policymakers are confronting an ongoing public-health crisis, and in some cases the threat of violent turmoil, the economies that succeed will be those whose leaders keep a clear head

ahead.

The lesson seems even more relevant today. In a globalised world, with new ideas and research emerging everywhere, countries that succumb to nationalist solipsism and pull down their economies' and societies' shutters will be anything but great.

One of the remarkable achievements of post-independence India was that its founding fathers and early thinkers, like the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and the author Rabindranath Tagore, were passionate advocates of openness to the world of ideas. They stood out, not just in India but globally, for their commitment to absorbing the best, from wherever it or they came, and to upholding a common human identity.

I remember a friend of my father's, who visited us regularly and held forth on the need for more strident nationalism. He was critical of Indian thinkers who, while opposing Western colonialism, argued that India must keep its doors open to the best of the West – in science, literature, and philosophy. One day, angry at his failure to persuade us, he thundered, "My motto is: the West does not follow us, so we must not follow the West."

I was in elementary school, but even then, I could see that his aggressive nationalism had blurred his thinking into adopting a motto that contradicted itself. At a time when policymakers are confronting an ongoing public-health crisis, and in some cases the threat of violent turmoil, countries that succumb to hyper-nationalism lay the foundations of their own failure.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

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Boris In the Dock

It goes to the credit of the British institution of democracy and the people's awareness of their democratic right to criticise, without fear or favour, the government of the day perceived to be indulging in wrongdoing. This is glaringly visible in the instance that two high level inquiries have begun into alleged breaches of CoVID-19 lockdown rules on gatherings in Downing Street - the Prime Minister's residence-cum-office - for which Prime Minister Boris Johnson is in the dock. By contrast, it also shows Indian democracy in a poor light as its democratic institutions, governments and ruling parties repeatedly flouted and continue to flout CoVID-19 protocols with impunity. The saddest part is that while Britain could put the searchlight on alleged wrongdoing when a minuscule number of people are believed to have gathered violating rules of social distancing at Downing Street during CoVID pandemic, India has witnessed such gatherings by hundreds of thousands in religious melas, elections and other political activities with the stated and unstated approval of the government and independent constitutional bodies. The powers that be did not even deign to take note of public criticism of these actions, let alone order any probe.

On the other hand, the probes instituted by the British Cabinet Office and thereafter the Metropolitan Police Services may decide the future of Johnson's tenure as Prime Minister. The fears that a cover-up operation may be mounted by Johnson and the findings of the probe watered down or doctored are not ruled out. But, the fact that the Prime Minister can be subjected to such public scrutiny under public and Opposition pressure for safeguarding the credibility of democratic institutions in Great Britain speaks volumes. Unfortunately, similar institutions are virtually in shambles in India as recent experiences have shown. The fall of the Election Commission seems to be the saddest.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, who had earlier been ambivalent about any probe, finally announced officers were looking into "potential breaches of CoVID-19 regulations" in Downing Street since 2020. In fact, the investigation was launched after an internal inquiry led by civil servant Sue Gray passed information to the force. The PM, who understandably enough, maintained he did not believe he had broken the law, all the same welcomed the police probe which he asserted would clear the air.

But, the police inquiry is being interpreted as both a ploy to delay the publication of the report by Sue Gray and a confirmation of criminality of the parties held by Johnson. For months, the British PM has been facing criticism for reports of staff parties in Downing Street, some attended by him, when lockdown laws preventing the whole nation from holding birthday and other parties and gathering on social occasions were in force. The PM has, however, apologised for attending a "bring your own booze" event 20 May 2020, during the first lockdown, saying he thought it was a "work event." The Police Commissioner is still evasive about the number of parties being investigated by the force. Her statement that while breaches of regulations can result in fixed penalty notices, the police inquiry did not mean they would be issued "in every instance and to every person involved" does arouse suspicion about the real intent of the government. This is nothing but prejudging the case before the investigation is complete. Moving from conclusion to premise is a known tactic of whitewashing government or ministerial guilt. This has prompted Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner to renew calls for Johnson to resign and brand him as a "national distraction." Her argument that the police investigation itself points to "potential criminality" and "a truly damning reflection on our nation's very highest office" is not without substance. For, the terms of reference of the Cabinet Office's inquiry state if during the course of the work any evidence emerges of behaviour that is potentially a criminal offence, the matter will be referred to the police and the Cabinet Office's work may be paused. The moment the police announced its investigation the deputy Labour leader had no hesitation in telling the nation the Prime Minister has no reason to stay on.

The report of the team led by senior civil servant Sue Gray, was expected to be released last week, but that schedule got derailed when the Metropolitan Police said they had opened an investigation into some of the events to assess whether criminal offences had been committed. Officials are working on ways to publish Gray's report without compromising the criminal investigation. But there are fears that the report may be watered down to save Johnson. The publication of the report may also be delayed which will give Johnson some elbow room to try and save his tenure. The police, however, maintained it had received information it had requested from the Cabinet Office to support its investigation. Assuring that the probe would be prompt enough, the police claimed it had not delayed the Cabinet Office probe report since "the timing of its release is a matter for the Cabinet Office inquiry team." The government's stand is that since it is an independent investigation, the government is not privy to the details of the investigation or any of its content.

It could be a government subterfuge to appear to be innocent about the two probes into what is now known as "partygate" scandal. This may help Johnson claim not to have influenced the probes in any way should he be cleared of the charges or let off with a minor penalty such as fine. But, what stands out as an object lesson to democratically minded people across the world is that Britain has at least the freedom to make anyone, no matter whether he or she holds the highest public office, subject to investigation and face the consequences for alleged wrongdoing. Here in India, it is an oft repeated saying that "The law will take its own course" while, in reality, law on its own can never decide on which path to adopt.



In order to see, you have to stop being in the middle of the picture.

SRI AUROBINDO



Kaushik Basu

ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR THE UNEVEN RECOVERY HAS MORE TO DO WITH POLITICS THAN ECONOMICS

This year began amid wide-spread despondency about the resurgent COVID-19 pandemic and the struggling global economy, as well as premonitions of heightened political conflict in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and even the United States. True, there is now some hope that the Omicron variant may be the pandemic's last hurrah. But troubling questions remain about the economic and political legacy of the crisis.

The World Bank's latest biannual Global Economic Prospects report, released last week, points to some possible answers. Produced by a team of talented economists, the report is one of the best summaries of the current outlook for the world economy. And while the report uses the diplomatic language of multilateral organisations, it nonetheless packs a powerful cautionary punch.

For starters, the World Bank forecasts that global economic growth will slow to 4.1% in 2022, from 5.5% last year. With debt burdens rising, supply-chain bottlenecks impeding the flow of goods and services, and inflation picking up, governments are losing the capacity to provide further fiscal support. The report warns that the surge in debt caused by countries trying to soften the "pandemic-induced global recession" means that several economies are now "at high risk of debt distress." Some may need relief.

The report also predicts that energy prices, which surged in the second half of 2021, will increase further – and by more than the World Bank was projecting six months ago.

Finally, the report's tables of summary statistics contain a lot of interesting information – in particular, data on major economies' recent GDP growth and forecasts for the next two years. The fastest-growing economies in 2021 were Argentina, Turkey and India, which expanded by 10%, 9.5%, and 8.3%, respectively. But growth after a crash

needs to be interpreted carefully. Much of last year's growth merely reflected the depth of the pandemic-induced downturn of 2020, as economies climbed back toward their earlier GDP level. In 2020, Argentina's economy contracted by 9.9% and India's by 7.3% – making them, along with Mexico, the worst-performing major economies that year.

Usually, emerging market and developing economies, helped by their lower base, grow faster than advanced economies. But, according to Global Economic Prospects, the prognosis for EMDEs through the end of 2023 is worse than for advanced economies, because EMDEs have limited policy space to provide additional support and face greater risk of hard landings. Moreover, the pace of recovery is likely to vary significantly between countries. Once the dust settles after the current turmoil, therefore, there will most probably be new winners and losers.

One of the main reasons for the uneven recovery has more to do with politics than economics.

From advanced economies such as the United States to EMDEs like Brazil, support for aggressive nationalism has grown sharply in recent years. This is bound to play a major role in determining how these economies perform.

While there are exceptions, hyper-nationalism is usually disastrous for an economy in the long run. This stands to reason, because strident nationalism leads to bloated egos and blurry thinking. Countries in its grip try to become self-sufficient by raising barriers to trade, capital, and ideas from elsewhere.

A striking historical example is Argentina, which was among the world's fastest-growing economies during the early decades of the twentieth century and was widely expected to overtake the US. That changed in 1930, when a military coup resulted in the installation of the hyper-nationalist Lieutenant General José Félix Uriburu as president. Tariffs subsequently rose, together with barriers to immigration. Argentina's open economy, now closed to the world, soon stagnated, and the US surged

SPECTRUM UNION BUDGET

Time to focus on job-creation

It may be imperative on Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to refocus the Union Budget from possible populism, an election-time compulsion, to professionalism, creating jobs everywhere. The trigger should be two different recent incidents, tragic and problematic.

One, a family of four from Gujarat chasing 'better' jobs freezes to death in the US. The other is the growing protests over railway jobs in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for roughly 40,000 vacancies—a grim reminder of the state of India's job market. Let not Bihar and UP emerge as ticking social bombs for the sheer size of the unemployed.

The unemployment rate rose to a four-month high to 7.9 per cent in December 2021. It stood at 7 per cent in November last year and 9.1 per cent in December 2020. But jobs were shrinking even before that in 2019 and earlier. The World Bank says that India has the highest total unemployment rate at 21.01 per cent for the 15-24 year-old population.

The NSSO's 2017-18 data stress is that actually the job situation is grimmer. The overall rate of open unemployment (as opposed to under-employment or disguised unemployment) had risen sharply after 2011-12. That has been proven in the NSSO numbers. The 2017-18

unofficially leaked NSSO data revealed that the unemployment rate was never over 2.6% between 1977-78 and 2011-12. But it had jumped to 6.1 per cent in 2017-18. Now it touches 9 plus per cent.

The situation has been aggravating and the country is resorting to welfarism. The Narendra Modi government has shown enough empathy with free food dole and MGNREGA jobs to keep the people afloat. Now it has to move beyond welfarism doles so that the country takes a leap to better life. The previous Budgets came up with entrepreneurship, Skill India, MUDRA and similar other schemes. These did not fulfill the objectives. Overall jobs remain scarce and low paid. The Gujaratati family was apparently well off with a teacher's job and sundry other chores. It could pay \$2.5 lakh for their dream travel through agents for illegal entry to the US. What sparked them like many Gujaratatis and Punjabis rushing to El Dorado may be the flashy 'lifestyle'.

What triggered the crisis in Bihar and UP is lack of jobs. Once private sector jobs were considered well-paid. The Seventh Pay Commission changed that. Now for years the corporates, including the IT sector, are not creating the required number of jobs. And jobs fetch lower wages and remain insecure. Interestingly, during Atal Behari

Vajpayee's NDA-I six crore jobs were created. There is a change. Because of economic slowdown during the past many years manufacturing has suffered. The index for industrial production remains at a low. Educational qualifications have improved causing an aspirational problem. There were 70 million such persons in 2004-05 but increased to 115.6 million by 2017-18. They are growing by about 5 million a year; according to Santosh Mehrotra, Professor of Economics, Centre for Labour. He says what is most worrying is that manufacturing jobs actually fell in absolute terms from 58.9 million in 2011-12 to 48.3 million in 2015-16, a whopping 10.6 million over a mere four-year period.

Indeed, the job strategy has to change. An interesting aspect is that because of the Modi government's less interference in PSU operations, even in the difficult COVID times 171 PSUs continued to have good profits despite better salary structure. This indicates that proper salaries could be paid even during crisis period and profits could be sustained. It also calls for reviewing the PSU disinvestment policy. The world has seen the failure of the global private sector for unethical practices since 2007-08 Lehman meltdowns.

The Finance Minister may open a new leaf. India has thrived with

a mixed economy. The PSUs have the capacity to start a competitive economy that the private sector abhors. No national economy can thrive without competition within. Monopolised private or public sector would cause inbreeding, leading to poor performance. She has to be innovative enough to help create rural farm and non-farm jobs that make the rural economy viable and lifestyle attractive to stem rural migration.

Sitharaman has to observe global practices, particularly sharp Chinese economic policies, European backlash against China and possible escalation of Western sanctions against Russia. These would be important to create India-centric policies to increase jobs in different sectors.

Private sector also has a tendency to employ less and pay less. If jobs are to be a priority this policy has to be given up. The PSUs can deliver here creating a situation where private sector also would have to pay just wages, may be to their dislike. The FM has to have sharp job-creation strategy to initiate the steps to boost urban, rural, private and public employment. This helps India accelerate its growth pace with larger participation of the population and become the cynosure of the new world economy.

INFA

WISDOM CORNER

Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing that we see too late the one that is open. ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The belief that one's own view of reality is the only reality is the most dangerous of all delusions. PAUL WATZLAWICK

WORDSWORTH

Rogue

Let's take first the basic meaning of rogue, an unprincipled or dishonest man. This can be traced back to the sixteenth century, to a thieves' cant that invented a series of words for categories of villains. The rogue was said to belong to the Fourth Order of Canters and was a beggar, idle vagrant or vagabond. By Shakespeare's day it had become well established in standard English with a meaning much as today's, and had already developed a playful sense as a term of mild reproach. It's sometimes suggested that it was originally a Celtic word, and the Breton rog, haughty, is put in evidence (though that word is probably not the direct source, just its cousin); the related French word rogue is also suggested as an possible origin. But such theories have been superseded by a better understanding of the roots of cant. It seems it comes from a slang term roger, a beggar who pretended to be a poor university student in order to play on people's feelings. This can be traced to the Latin rogare, to ask (and so was said with a hard g, not like the proper name). Now to the elephants. There is a specific sense of rogue that refers to a solitary elephant that is savage or destructive. This can't be the source of our word, since it's only recorded in the nineteenth century, long after rogue had become part of the language. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests this sense was actually based on the existing meaning of rogue, perhaps influenced by the Sinhalese hora or sora, a thief.

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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Be wary of future variants

Sir, This refers to "Risk persists despite signs of plateau in India: WHO," Orissa POST, January 30. The WHO's caution to India over plateauing of the COVID cases is very appropriate, in fact, no country in the world is yet out of woods. A weary world wonders whether there will be an end to the pandemic this year. The misconceived optimism that the virus will be vanquished by vaccines in 2021 vanished amidst the assault of variants. The virus has surprised us all with its adaptive ability to evade vaccines by springing new variants and its agility in picking up speed of transmission as it moves to a new leg in that relay race. Further, we recognise that the levels of immunity and susceptibility vary across the world and the experience of the pandemic may differ among countries over the course of the year, even if there is no new variant of concern. As far as India is concerned, we have some reasons to feel cautiously optimistic and some others to watch the future with concern. The optimism springs from the fact that many who weathered the Delta storm and the large number who have been fully vaccinated are likely to experience relatively mild, non-life threatening illness, if infected. In contrast to this optimistic scenario, there are potential threats that we must be wary of. A new variant may arise within the country, in unvaccinated persons who experience severe and prolonged disease. N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

End discrimination

Sir, World Leprosy Day is observed January 30 every year on the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi to raise awareness on the disease and call for an end to social discrimination against people suffering from leprosy. This year the day was celebrated with the theme "United for Dignity". Each year around 200,000 new cases of leprosy are reported globally. India is home to the world's highest number of leprosy patients. On an average, 57 people per 10 lakh population in India are diagnosed with the disease. Today an effective treatment exists in the form of multidrug therapy, and with early detection and treatment, the disease can be cured without complications. Many people across the globe continue to suffer from this curable disease due to a lack of medical care. The day focuses mainly on creating awareness among the public about this ancient disease and provides a platform for creating an inclusive society that treats the afflicted with the respect they deserve. Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

national

of the day quote

The priority of the government should be jobs for the youth, but the priority of the BJP government is spying on citizens



PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

For us Goa is golden Goa, for the Congress, it is Gandhi parivar ka Goa. They want a retreat to come for a holiday every once in a while. Their leaders take a lot of holidays



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Mahatma Gandhi was murdered by the very forces that still slaughter people in the name of religion. They are the biggest threat to our country today. Gandhi's memories are more relevant now than ever before. This #Martyr's Day let's pledge to fight communalism, promote fraternity



PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Man, son held in rape case

Thane: A scrap dealer and his son were arrested in Thane city for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl repeatedly, police said Sunday. They duo has been charged under IPC and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act provisions after a complaint was filed Saturday, a Kalsewadi police station official said. The victim has said the 53-year-old scrap dealer and his 23-year-old son would rape her when her kin were not at home, he said.

Five killed in road mishap

Pune: Four members of a family and their car driver were killed after the vehicle jumped a road-divider and hit a container truck on the old Mumbai-Pune highway near here in Maharashtra Sunday morning, police said. The victims were taking a family member to Kolhapur for medical treatment when the car met with in the accident near Shilatane village around 7.30 am, police inspector, Lonavla rural, Pravin More said.

Naxal killed in encounter

Sukma: A Naxal was killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Sunday morning, an official said. The gunfight took place around 6.45 am in a forest near Thimmapuram village under Chintalnar police station limits when a joint team of different security forces was out on patrolling duty, Sukma Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma said.

30kg IEDs found in J'khand forest

Hazaribag: Two powerful IEDs, weighing 15 kg each, were found in a forest in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district Sunday, police said. The improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were found near Kharki village in Balakmakka jungle in the Bishnugarh police station area, they said. Acting on a tip-off, police began a joint search operation along with CRPF and Indian Reserve Battalion, following which the IEDs were found, said Hazaribag's Superintendent of Police Manoj Ratan Chothe.

4 held for looting train passengers

Thane: Four people have been arrested and one juvenile detained for allegedly looting train passengers at knife-point, Kalyan railway police in Thane district said Sunday.



What our daughters think, the dreams they see for the country, do come true

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

ANOTHER MILESTONE

India achieved another milestone in its fight against Covid-19 Sunday as it administered more than 75 per cent of the adult population with both doses of vaccines, said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya



Google, FB may be forced to pay British newspapers

The move comes amid growing concerns that the tech companies are dominating online advertising, to the detriment of consumers and businesses

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 30: Tech giants such as Google and Facebook will be required to pay newspapers and other media outlets for using their stories, under new laws being drawn up by the UK Government, Daily Mail reported.

Under the plans, which are modelled on a system that has been introduced in Australia, the platforms will be encouraged to negotiate payment deals with news organisations. If the negotiations

fail, an independent arbitrator would set a fair price, the report said.

The move, being driven by UK Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries, comes amid growing concerns that the tech companies are dominating online advertising, to the detriment of consumers and businesses.

The new regime will be regulated by the Digital Markets Unit (DMU), the digital watchdog that was set up within the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to rein in the power of the



tech platforms, the report said.

The unit will also investigate the algorithms used by search engines such as Google, which many news organisations believe are manipulated to disproportionately direct search enquiries towards Left-leaning news organisations, and filter how people read and access news, to the detriment of quality, paid-for journalism, Daily Mail reported.

A source in the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said that the planned regime

was 'pro-competition' and 'supports the sustainability of the press'. The source said: 'The new regime will be an important vehicle to tackle the imbalance of power between the largest platforms and publishers.'

The measures would give publishers greater transparency over the algorithms that drive traffic and revenue, more control over the presentation and branding of their content, as well as greater access to data on how users interact with their content.

5 ultras killed in Kashmir gunfight

THE TERRORISTS, NEUTRALISED IN THE DUAL ENCOUNTERS IN BUDGAM AND PULWAMA, WERE AFFILIATED TO LASHKAR-E-TAIBA AND JAISH-E-MOHAMMED, ACCORDING TO JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Jan 30: A top commander of the proscribed terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and a Pakistani national were among the five terrorists killed in two separate encounters in Kashmir's Budgam and Pulwama districts in a span of 12 hours, officials said Sunday.

Four JeM terrorists were killed in a gunfight with the security forces in Pulwama's Naira area, while one Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist was killed in another encounter in Budgam's Charar-i-sharief area.

The terrorists killed in the encounter have been identified as - Zahid Wani resident of Karimabad, Waheed Ah Reshi from Khadarmura, and Inayatullah Mir from Nyira.

The Pakistani terrorist has been identified as Kafir alias Chotu. He was active in the area since 2020. Zahid Wani was one of the main commanders of the JeM outfit after Lamboo and Sameer Dar, who were masterminds of the 2019 Pulwama attack, security forces said in a statement.

"This module was directly controlled from across with the support of Sakargargh and Kotli camps under the direct supervision of Qari Zarar and Mulana Rouf Azhar (brother of Massod Azhar). Pakistan is continuously trying to push these elements to India from across," the statement said.

Zahid was originally a staunch

overground worker (OGW) of the Tehri-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) outfit. He was arrested in 2016 in Srinagar in connection with harbouring two TuM terrorists, namely Danish and Mugeez belonging to Srinagar's Parimpora police station area.

He had arranged camouflage gear for these two terrorists back then. He was an extreme radical and a hard core jihadi.

Zahid was one of the oldest surviving JeM terrorists and top Commander in South Kashmir after the killing of Lamboo and Sameer Dar.

He was active since 2017 and was responsible for large-scale recruitment of terrorists in South Kashmir.

His elimination will now surely disorient the remaining JeM terrorists operating in the valley since Zahid used to give them planning and leadership. Also, local recruitment in JeM may see a drop in forthcoming days.

Meanwhile, the weapons that were recovered from the slain terrorists included one M4 with night vision sight, two AK Series weapons, two pistols and 12 grenades.

"Five terrorists of Pakistan sponsored proscribed terror outfits LeT and JeM killed in dual encounters in last 12 hours. JeM commander terrorist Zahid Wani and a Pakistani terrorist among the killed. Big success for us," said the Jammu and Kashmir Police in an earlier statement quoting Inspector General Police Kashmir zone Vijay Kumar.

MARTYR'S DAY



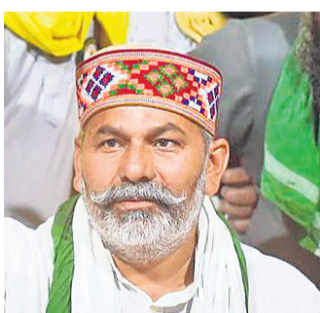
Police personnel pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Martyr's Day, observed to mark the death anniversary of the Father of the Nation in Thiruvananthapuram

Tikait slams govt, says farmers would observe 'Betrayal Day' today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, Jan 30: Allying betrayal by the Centre, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait Sunday announced a country-wide observance of "Betrayal Day" Monday over farm issues.

The national spokesperson of the influential north Indian farmers' union claimed the over-a-year-long protest at Delhi's borders was withdrawn on the basis of a letter



of promises by the government December 9 but those remain unfulfilled.

"A nation-wide 'Betrayal Day' will be observed January 31 because of government's betrayal to farmers. The movement was suspended on the basis of a letter given by the government December 9 but those promises have not been fulfilled," Tikait, whose BKU is a part of the SKM, said in a tweet in Hindi.

The protest on Delhi's borders had started under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a farmers' collective, in November 2020 over the main demands of withdrawal of three contentious farm laws that were introduced by the BJP-led Centre.

BUDGET SESSION

Oppn to raise farmers' issues, Pegasus matter

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 30: The stage is set for a stormy Budget Session of Parliament that begins on Monday with the opposition set to target the Modi government on issues such as the Pegasus snooping row, farm distress and Chinese "incursions" in eastern Ladakh.

The session will begin with President Ram Nath Kovind's address to the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha assembled together in the Central Hall and chambers of both the Houses in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Given the ongoing third wave of the pandemic, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will return to have separate sittings in shifts with members seated across both chambers of Parliament to ensure distancing norms.

The Lok Sabha will take up the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address from Wednesday and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to the debate on February seven.

Lok Sabha secretariat officials said four days beginning February 2 have been provisionally allotted for the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address.

The first part of the Budget Session will be held from January 31 to February 11 after which it will go into recess to examine the budgetary allocations for different departments. The Session would resume March 14 and con-



clude on April 8. The Budget Session is taking place amid a heated election campaign in five states - Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa, and Manipur - which go to polls in seven phases from February 10 to March 7.

The main opposition Congress has declared that it will reach out to like-minded parties to raise issues such as farm distress, Chinese "incursions", demand for relief package for Covid-19 victims, sale of Air India and the Pegasus snooping row during the session.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu are set to chair separate meetings with floor leaders of political parties Monday to ensure smooth functioning of the House during the session.

The Congress in a statement said, "With the Budget Session starting tomorrow, will Modi government address the issues of failing economy, unending price rise, unbearable unemployment, Chinese aggression, dismissal of MoS Ajay Mishra, compensation to the families of Covid victims & martyred farmers?"

Minor ends life due to sexual harassment by TDP leader

AGENCIES

Vijayawada, Jan 30: Suicide of a minor girl in Vijayawada due to sexual harassment by a leader of opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has sent shock waves in the city while the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has demanded harshest punishment to the culprit.

The 14-year-old girl jumped to death from fifth floor of her apartment building in Bhavanipuram area on Saturday. In a suicide note, which police later recovered from her bedroom, the student of class 9 wrote that she was ending her life due to sexual harassment by Vinod Jain, who resides in the same building. Police have arrested the accused, who contested the recent municipal elections as a corporator on TDP ticket.

He has been booked under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The girl's grandfather said when he and his daughter were going for an evening walk she came to them and hugged her mother to say 'I love you'.

When the father and daughter duo returned home from walk they were shocked to learn that she ended her life from jumping down. He said the police recovered suicide note from her bed room in which she wrote how Vinod Jain was sexually harassing her.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh State Women's Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma said that the government has taken the incident seriously and that all efforts will be made to ensure that the culprit gets stringent punishment.

Vax, following protocols remain most effective weapons

THE COUNTRY SAW ITS FIRST CASE OF COVID-19 JANUARY 30, 2020, WHEN A THIRD-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT FROM WUHAN UNIVERSITY TESTED POSITIVE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: As India completed two years since the outbreak of Covid-19, vaccines and following Covid Appropriate Behaviour remain the most effective weapons against the deadly virus.

Though a number of drugs and other methods have been tried, no definitive treatment has emerged as yet. Since then, India has witnessed three waves of Covid-19, though the line of treatment has remained the same throughout.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Saturday said irre-

spective of the Covid-19 variants, "Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate and Adherence to Covid Appropriate Behaviour" continue to remain the tested strategy for Covid-19 management. Several medical treatments were also tried to tackle Covid-19 but no widely accepted treatment has been seen till now.

Recently, at a press briefing, NITI Aayog Member (Health) Dr V K Paul expressed concern over the "overuse and misuse" of drugs.

"The use of steroids can increase the chances of Mucormycosis (black fungus). Steroids are very potent life-saving

WAR AGAINST COVID-19



drugs but they also have side effects and they disturb the immunolog-

ical protection. They disturb many biochemical pathways. So, it was

a very big lesson. We were learning at that time but now we know it," he had said.

"For fever, paracetamol is given, and for cough, AYUSH syrup can be used. This is what we have prescribed in the home care module too. If the cough continues for more than three days, there is an inhaler called Budesonide. These are the only three things that need to be done. Other than that, gargle and take rest. Do not overdo, it has a cost," he had warned.

The country tried treatments such as plasma therapy, Remdesivir; DRDO's anti-Covid drug 2-deoxy-

D-glucose (2-DG) and most recently Molnupiravir; but there has been no definitive medicine to cure Covid-19 patients.

As attempts to tackle Covid-19 and its most recent variant Omicron continue, vaccines remain the most viable option for mitigating the disease.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined the importance of vaccination and the need to further accelerate the 'Har Ghar Dastak' programme to achieve 100 per cent vaccination coverage. AYUSH interventions and Yoga found a special place in the line of treatment.

Cong leaders stay away from campaign

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 30: As election activity begins to peak in Uttar Pradesh, senior Congress leaders are keeping away from the campaign and the party leaders have no explanation for their absence.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra remains the only star campaigner for her party and her 'campaigning' so far, has been limited to the virtual world.

Party president Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh top the list of star campaigners but there is no information of their programme in UP polls.

"We do not know whether or not they will come for the elections in the state," said a party leader.

Other Congress leaders including Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, Rajasthan Congress leader Sachin Pilot and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan have campaigned and addressed press conferences for the party but leaders named as star campaigners like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Salman Khurshid, Raj Babbar are conspicuous by their absence. Leaders like Digvijaya Singh,



MOUNTING TROUBLE

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra remains the only star campaigner for her party and her 'campaigning' so far, has been limited to the virtual world. Other leaders named as star campaigners like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Salman Khurshid, Raj Babbar are conspicuous by their absence

who are popular in UP, especially among Thakurs, have not been included in the star campaigner list. A party functionary said that these leaders would be called when they were needed.

"Priyanka is the biggest star attraction and we actually do not need other leaders," said the

functionary. Former UPCC presidents including Nirmal Khatri, Salman Khurshid and Raj Babbar have neither visited the UPCC office since Priyanka Gandhi took charge in 2019 and nor have they been invited by the state leadership for any event.

DIGITAL OUTREACH

BJP deploys 10L workers with smartphones in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 30: As part of its digital outreach, the BJP has deployed around 10 lakh workers with smartphones across Uttar Pradesh for the upcoming Assembly polls to be held between February 10 and March 7.

Five to six workers with smartphones have been deployed at each polling booth of Uttar Pradesh. The saffron party has also formed its IT and social media teams at the block level in the poll-bound state.

A well-placed source in the BJP said that these 10 lakh workers with smartphones will reach out to each and every voter in their respective areas.

"We have formed a 21-member booth committee at each polling station. Among these, a minimum of five members have smartphones, which has been made mandatory so that all the information reaches the ground at the booth level," he



said. There are 1,74,351 polling booths in the state, an increase of 18.49 per cent from the 2017 Assembly polls.

Another party leader said that with minimum five members at each booth with smartphones, there are over 10 lakh BJP workers prepared to reach out to the voters with digital content across the state.

"We have formed a team of five to six volunteers at each polling booth. Our volunteers are ensuring our digital presence among each voter at every polling booth. These workers, part of booth committees, work in coordination with the Panna

Pramukhs' (head of each page of the voter list)," sources said.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has banned physical rallies and roadshows till January 31, with some relaxation for first and second phase of polling.

Another senior leader said that the BJP has formed a team for IT and social media campaign at the block level in all the 403 Assembly constituencies in Uttar Pradesh to digitally reach out to the voters amid the restrictions put in place by the poll panel.

"Our IT and social media structure is such that Uttar Pradesh BJP has a robust team of social media and IT volunteers at every level in each district of Uttar Pradesh. In addition, we have five workers with smartphones at each polling booth we can take all the information and content to the people through them," Shashi Kumar, Social Media Co-convenor of Uttar Pradesh BJP, told IANS.

Dhami versus Rawat: A tough battle on cards



Though Dhami is a fresh face and his six-month tenure gives a good account of him, achieving a huge target of getting more than 60 seats for the saffron party against a seasoned challenger like Rawat is anything but smooth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Jan 30: Barely six months after becoming Uttarakhand's youngest chief minister in July last year Pushkar Singh Dhami finds himself facing the onerous task of piloting the BJP to a second consecutive victory in the assembly polls against a redoubtable opponent like Harish Rawat who leads the Congress' door-die comeback battle.

Though Dhami is a fresh face and his six-month tenure gives a good account of him, achieving a huge target of getting more than 60 seats for the saffron party against a seasoned challenger like Rawat is anything but smooth.

Rawat had lost both the seats he had contested in 2017 but he continues to be one of the most popular faces in Uttarakhand politics.

He has also emerged as the most preferred chief ministerial face in several opinion poll projections of late.

Rawat is hopeful of reaping a rich harvest due to an anti-incumbency working in favour of the Congress. He raises the issues of BJP giving three chief ministers to the state in five years despite coming to power with a big majority, unemployment and inflation wherever he goes.

The trend of power oscillating between the BJP and the Congress every five years in Uttarakhand also strengthens the Congress's hope.

The BJP is confident of a win because of the big development projects launched for Uttarakhand in different sectors over the past five years. Its leaders at their virtual meetings appeal to people to give another five years to the 'double engine' government so that the projects which have the potential to change the lives of people could be completed.

However, the 46-year-old Dhami's task of recording an even bigger win for the party than in 2017 becomes

Will Gangotri constituency maintain its bellwether status?

ACCORDING TO A WIDELY HELD NOTION ASSOCIATED WITH SUCCESSIVE ASSEMBLY POLLS, WHICHEVER PARTY WINS THE GANGOTRI CONSTITUENCY IN UTTARKASHI FORMS THE GOVERNMENT IN THE HILL STATE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Jan 30: The Ganga originates in Gangotri, and so does the road to government formation in Uttarakhand, it seems.

According to a widely held notion associated with successive assembly polls, whichever party wins the Gangotri constituency in Uttarkashi forms the government in the hill state.

As Uttarakhand prepares to go to the polls February 14, the constituency is once again in focus, but this time it is witnessing a triangular contest with the fledgling AAP is in the fray which, according to analysts, could put to test Gangotri's status as a bellwether seat.

BJP's Suresh Chauhan is pitted against the Congress' Vijayal Singh Sajwan in Gangotri and AAP's chief ministerial candidate Col Ajay Kothiyal.

During the counting of votes in

the 2017 assembly polls also, there was immense interest in the result of Gangotri seat and after the victory of BJP candidate Gopal Singh Rawat, the party came to power under the leadership of Trivendra Singh Rawat with a huge mandate of 57 seats out of 70.

Gopal Singh Rawat died after a prolonged illness last year and the seat was vacant since then.

Chauhan exuded confidence that people will once again give their blessings to the BJP not only in Gangotri but throughout the state.

Apart from the candidates, their parties are also campaigning aggressively on the crucial seat.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited Uttarkashi Saturday and sought votes from the people for the party. Congress nominee Sajwan is also busy in his election campaign and the leaders of his party are leaving no stone unturned to ensure his victory.



"We will win the Gangotri elections and form the Congress government," Sajwan said.

In the first assembly elections of the state held in the year 2002, Sajwan won on a Congress ticket and a Congress government was formed under the leadership of Narayan Dutt Tiwari.

In the year 2007, BJP candidate Gopal Singh Rawat won and his

party came to power under the leadership of Major General Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri.

In the year 2012, Sajwan was once again victorious and the Congress came to power under the leadership of Vijay Bahuguna. In the next election in 2017, Gopal Singh Rawat won and Trivendra Singh Rawat's government was formed.

Political observer and professor Harshpati Doval says such 'myths' of bellwethers 'forecasting' the overall election result are common in electoral politics and do catch the imagination of people.

Like Gangotri, Badrinath seat in Chamoli district and Ramnagar seat in Nainital district have enjoyed similar status.

In 2002 and 2012, when Congress' Anusuya Prasad Maikhuri and Rajendra Bhandari won respectively, the government was formed by their party, while in 2007 and 2017, the BJP's Kedar Singh Fonia and Mahendra Bhat won and the BJP came to power.

Exactly the same results have come in Ramnagar seat as well. In the 2002 and 2012 assembly elections, Congress' Yogbar Singh Rawat and Amrita Rawat won, while in 2007 and 2017 BJP's Diwan Singh Bisht won and his party came to power.

IN FULL SWING



A worker carves stone as part of construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Sunday.

PTI PHOTO

BJP HAS FIELDDED 99 CRIMINALS: AKHILESH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 30: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has alleged that the BJP has, so far, fielded 99 candidates with a criminal history.

"The BJP is short of hitting a century. They have given tickets to 99 criminals," he said in a tweet on Sunday.

The war of words between the SP and BJP has been rapidly escalating on the issue of criminals.

While the BJP has been accusing Akhilesh Yadav and his party of patronising persons with criminal backgrounds, Akhilesh has returned the fire by demanding to know the number of cases against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Maurya.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah



has said during his tours in the state that if the SP comes to power, there will be a reign of criminals in the state.

Yogi Adityanath, meanwhile has said that when he returns to power after the Assembly elections, he would continue with his bulldozer policies against criminals.

Memories of bandits still fresh as Bundelkhand readies for polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jhansi, Jan 30: In Uttar Pradesh's Bundelkhand region the role of dacoits, who used to call the shots in the elections in the past 15 years, is nowadays not that significant but the memories are still alive.

Polling in Bundelkhand is scheduled to be held February 20 and 23 and all political parties are making all out efforts to secure a win.

Though Covid-19 has impacted the electioneering and it is dull, at times, parties' flags can be seen waving in the streets and slogans can also be heard.

Bundelkhand has 19 Assembly seats spread over seven districts. In the 2017 Assembly polls, the BJP had won all the seats in the region. The saffron party has the challenge to retain the seats while the

opposition parties are sweating it out to open their account.

For the past 15 years, political leaders have been taking the help of dacoits to win the elections as the latter used to issue diktats in favour of their preferred candidate.

Dacoits such as Dadua, Nirbhay Gujjar, Fakkad, Kusma Nain and Seema Parihar used to work for political leaders from the rugged terrain in the region.

Nirbhay Gujjar used to say openly that he gets messages from veteran leaders of the political parties, and he used to ask the villagers to vote for the party he had struck a deal with.

Nirbhay had even named a political leader after which he was killed in an encounter and his gang was eliminated.



Most of the dacoits, who used to play a key role in deciding who will win the polls, are either languishing in jail or have been shot dead. Therefore, dacoits are not active this time but the memory

haunts many. Bundelkhand's social worker Amit said that earlier villagers were forced to follow the diktats of the dacoits and vote as per their direction, but now the situation has

changed. Compared to earlier times, there is not even a one per cent impact.

An elderly resident of Madhogarh area of Jalaun district, said that in all types of polls - panchayat, Assembly, Lok Sabha, dacoits used to issue diktats telling villagers the party to vote for.

"We used to be scared till the announcement of the poll results for if the poll results went in the opposite direction to the dacoits' wish, it would have invited trouble for us," he said. A resident on condition of anonymity said that when he was held hostage by a dacoit gang, many political leaders came to the outskirts asking for their support in the polls. The police also used to mediate between the dacoits and political leaders in lieu of money, he alleged.

of the day quote

An apostle of peace and non-violence, Gandhi Ji played a colossal role in India's freedom struggle and in shaping the destiny of India

After a long struggle and great sacrifices, our country got independence. Our great freedom fighters sacrificed their lives to liberate the country. But today we are forgetting their ideals and sacrifices. People are moving away from their ideals and principles

One arrogant person is still sitting with his eyes closed

SHORT TAKES

4 killed as car driven by teen hits them

Hyderabad: Three women and a girl died when a car allegedly driven by a 16-year old hit a group of labourers sitting on a pavement in Karimnagar town on Sunday morning, police said. The incident happened at around 6.50 AM when the teenager lost control over the steering while rubbing his eyes due to thick smog in the area and rammed into a divider and hit those sitting on the pavement, they said. A police official said three women (aged between 27 and 32) and a 14-year old girl died in the incident (three died on the spot while another died on way to being shifted to a hospital) and two others who were injured were admitted to a hospital.

NW to see wet spell from Feb 2-4

New Delhi: Northwest India including Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh will witness rainfall during February 2-4, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday. "Scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall is very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh during February 2 to 4," it said. The IMD also forecast an isolated hailstorm over Punjab, Haryana and northwest Uttar Pradesh February 3.

Man killed over FB post

Ahmedabad: A Muslim cleric was arrested from Delhi by the Gujarat Anti Terrorism Squad in connection with murder of a man in Gujarat's Dhandhuka town recently over an alleged objectionable Facebook post that the accused claimed hurt their religious sentiments, an official said. Kishan Boliya was shot dead by motorcycle-borne men January 25 in retaliation for a Facebook post he had shared January 6, for which some Muslim community members had filed a police complaint claiming it hurt their religious sentiments.

Four killed in fire

Jaipur: Four persons, including three children, were killed Sunday after a fire broke out in a small painting material packaging unit in the Jamwaramgarh area of the district, officials said. "The fire broke out in a hall constructed on a farmland. A man and three children, including his daughter, were burnt alive in the incident," Jamwaramgarh Circle Officer Shiv Kumar said. The deceased were identified as Ramesh (25), his daughter Jaya (3), and two other children - Garima (3) and Kalu (4).



Haryana has emerged as a role model in Covid-19 management and vaccination drive. Almost four crore doses of vaccines have been administered in the state

TODDLER GIRL DRINKS MILK FROM ELEPHANT

People generally consume milk of domestic animals like cows, goats, buffaloes, but a toddler girl in Assam's Golaghat district drank milk from an elephant, making everyone witness a fabulous bonding of love between an animal mother and a human child



PEGASUS SNOOPING CASE

Fresh plea in SC seeks FIR against PM

LAST YEAR OCTOBER 27, THE APEX COURT HAD APPOINTED A 3-MEMBER PANEL OF CYBER EXPERTS TO PROBE THE ALLEGED USE OF PEGASUS FOR SURVEILLANCE OF CERTAIN PEOPLE IN INDIA



New Delhi, Jan 30: A fresh plea has been moved in the Supreme Court seeking that it take cognisance of a news report in international media, in connection with the purchase of Pegasus spyware, and order an FIR against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The plea moved by advocate ML Sharma, lead petitioner in the pending Pegasus case, said the New York Times published a detailed report declaring that in July 2017, the Modi government purchased Pegasus from the Israeli firm. "The report, published Friday, revealed that in 2017, India and Israel

agreed to a \$2 billion sale of a 'package' of weapons and intelligence gear. It further stated that Pegasus and a missile system were the 'centre-pieces' of this deal. In April 2017, it was reported that India had inked a \$2 billion deal with Israel Aerospace Industries for supply of air defence missiles to the Indian Army," said the plea.

The plea seeks registration of FIR "to recover public money paid for the impugned deal and prosecute concerned persons including Narendra D Modi in accordance of law". "That petitioner has also filed an application to issue a letter rogatory to Israeli Court for securing necessary evidence secured by the

government during its raid upon NSO office and other places. Which is still pending," the plea added. On October 27, the top court said it was compelled to take up the cause to determine the truth, as it appointed an independent expert technical committee supervised by a retired top court judge, Justice RV Raveendran, to probe the Pegasus snooping allegations.

It has authorised the technical committee to devise its own procedure to effectively implement and answer the terms of reference. The committee can hold an investigation it deems fit and take statements of any person in connection with the inquiry and call for records of any

authority or individual. Justice Raveendran is overseeing the functioning of the technical committee and he is assisted by Alok Joshi, former IPS officer, and Dr. Sundeeb Oberoi, Chairman, Sub Committee in (International Organisation of Standardisation/International Electro-Technical Commission/Joint Technical Committee). The three members of the technical committee are Dr. Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, Professor (Cyber Security and Digital Forensics) and Dean, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, Dr Prabhakaran P, Professor (School of Engineering), Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, Kerala, and Dr Ashwin Anil Gumaste, Institute Chair Associate Professor (Computer Science and Engineering), Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Maharashtra. A batch of petitions including those by advocate Sharma, CPI-M MP John Brittas, journalist N Ram, former IIM professor Jagdeep Chokkar, Narendra Mishra, Paranjot Guha Thakurta, Rupesh Kumar Singh, SNM Abdi and Editors Guild of India were filed seeking an independent probe into the Pegasus snooping allegations.

No tie-up with NCP-Shiv Sena for Goa polls: PC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram Sunday said an alliance could not be forged between his party and the NCP-Shiv Sena for the Goa Assembly polls despite best efforts but asserted that they "will remain friends" and after the elections, the Congress would continue to explore opportunities to "work together" with them.

Chidambaram, who is the Congress' senior election observer for the Goa Assembly polls, also hit out at the TMC for its barbs at the Congress for not forging an alliance with it, saying the party continued to poach Congress leaders, despite making an offer of a tie-up. The senior Congress leader said he received no instructions from the party leadership to hold talks with the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and added that, "I am sure our leadership had taken into account all the facts and circumstances". In an interview with PTI, Chidambaram said that among all the States and UTs, Goa registered the lowest in real GDP growth in



2019-20, the year for which data has been published by the RBI, and asserted that Goans "deserve better". He also said that whether the Congress would announce a chief ministerial name before or after the elections would be decided after consulting all the candidates and the party would go by the consensus among them.

He also asserted that the contest in the Goa polls is "between the Congress (plus Goa Forward Party) and the BJP and we will be able to win a simple majority". Asked why the Congress was not able to tie up with other Opposition parties especially the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Shiv Sena, Chidambaram said the NCP and Shiv Sena are the Congress' allies in Maharashtra and it would have liked them to be allies in Goa as well.

EC TO REVIEW BAN ON PHYSICAL RALLIES, ROADSHOWS TODAY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 30: The Election Commission will meet Monday to assess the Covid-19 situation in the five poll-going states and decide on whether to continue the ban on physical rallies.

The Commission may also decide on whether fresh relaxations can be extended to political parties and candidates in holding physical campaigning events.

Citing the rise in Covid-19 cases, the poll panel had imposed a ban on physical rallies and roadshows when it announced the poll schedule for Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur January 8.

During its last meeting January 22, it had extended the ban on physical rallies and roadshows till January 31 in the five states but had allowed public meetings with a maximum of 500 people in the constituencies going to polls in the first two phases and relaxed door-to-door campaigning rules.

The Commission has been reviewing the situation regularly and has been granting relaxations to ensure that the virus does not spread and parties get an opportunity to hold physical campaigning in the restricted format.



FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS



A worker sanitises a cinema hall ahead of its reopening for visitors in Gurugram

PTI PHOTO

CHANNI TO CONTEST FROM TWO SEATS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: The Congress Sunday released its third list of eight candidates for the February 20 Punjab assembly polls, fielding Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi from Bhadour and Chamkaur Sahib seats.

The Congress also fielded former Patiala mayor Vishnu Sharma from the Patiala assembly seats against its former leader Amarinder Singh.

Sharma was once considered a close confidant of the former Chief Minister. Former union minister

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Pawan Kumar Bansal's son Manish Bansal has been fielded from the Barnala assembly constituency.

The party announced Mohan Singh Phalianwala from the Jalabad assembly seat against Shiromani



Akali Dal's Sukhbir Singh Badal. The Congress also named Sukhpal Singh Bhullar as its candidate from

Khem Karan and Tarsem Singh Siala from Attari (SC) seat, while Satbir Singh Saini Balichiki will fight from Nawanshahr.

From Ludhiana South, the Congress has named Ishwarjot Singh Cheema. The Congress is seeking to retain power in Punjab where it is pitted against the AAP, the SAD-BSP and the BJP which is in alliance with Ex-CM Amarinder Singh's Punjab Lok Congress and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa's Shiromani Akali Dal Sanyukt.



Testing times for Adityanath

What was looking like a cakewalk once for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh once, is turning out to be its Waterloo. The BJP tried to ward off anti-incumbency in some of the states by changing Chief Minister prior to the February-March 2022 polls. In Uttarakhand, the BJP even changed three Chief Ministers within a period of one year but Goa and Manipur spared. But the leadership is breaking its head as BJP's social engineering narrative is falling apart. The BJP high command had toyed with the idea of changing the leadership in Uttar Pradesh last year itself. Yogi Adityanath even sounded out about it in the middle of 2021. Sensing trouble, Yogi

rushed to Delhi and made a special presentation before the Prime Minister. It transpires that RSS was averse to change in leadership as Yogi has emerged a Hindu icon. The proposal was dropped. When the BJP swept polls by polling 41% of popular votes and obtaining 325 seats, Narendra Modi was the poll mascot. The BJP had come a long way after the Mandal Commission report was implemented by V P Singh in 1990 and L K Advani took "Kamandal" in his hands to retrieve the political challenge. Narendra Modi had ensured that the Mandal politics took a back seat since 2014 and a different narrative had been creative. But the Mandal is back to haunt the BJP. It is visible in the distribution of tickets too. The BJP leadership is confident of retaining the state saying that Uttar Pradesh is not West Bengal where it fought elections mostly on the strength of leaders and workers imported from other parties. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP worker is active in every nook and corner.

Omicron heading towards endemic stage

Prof. N K Arora, head of the country's National Covid Task Force and Chairman of the INSCOG, has completely dismissed the reports appearing that Covid will end by February 15. He said the country is in

the midst of the "omicron wave" affecting as many as 92%-95% cases from across the country are detected with the virus. However, Prof Arora, himself avoided giving a date saying he wouldn't be able to give a specific time-frame when this pandemic will end. Other experts also said the same and asserted that the Omicron wave is better than the Delta variant which was dominant during the second Covid wave. However, the genome sequencing data showed that Omicron has spread in India simultaneously and all across the country. Other experts also suggested that Omicron spread so rapidly largely because it leads to asymptomatic infection; thereby many are spreading it without knowing.

Amarinder loses sheen

Former Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has come in poor light during a series of media interactions in the recent past and showed chinks in his armoury. Though he answered all uneasy questions with complete ease and finesse and did not mince words, he was found wanting. While lambasting his successor Charanjit Singh Channi for his alleged involvement in the Sand scam, a reporter asked him why he did not take action against him when he himself was Chief Minister for such a corrupt practice,

Captain admitted his mistake. He took the blame on himself for not acting against Channi then but failed to explain why. Then came the classic case of Channi's alleged "MeToo moment" in which the Captain revealed that a bureaucratic couple came and complained. When he summoned Channi in this regard, he profoundly apologised and he pardoned him rather than lodging a police complaint or holding an inquiry. Here too, the Captain disclosed that he brought the matter to the notice of Sonia Gandhi. This was a serious issue but it did not show Captain as a true leader who hushed up the case then. Then came the Sidhu moment and he disclosed that the recommendation to make him Minister was sent from Pakistan. However, many wonder how Captain took the high moral ground when he himself had been closely associated with a Pakistani journalist. The BJP leaders are not too happy with it either. They feel that the Captain should have focused on national security issues and dangers to Punjab.

BJP no more a Hindu party in Pb

The BJP is virtually on the rampage in Punjab as it came out of the shadow of the Akali Dal after 40 years. Secondly, it is not a Hindu Party anymore. It is admitting members of the Sikh Community in large

numbers. If it admitted 75 year old Gen J J Singh into the party the other day, it also welcomed Chief of Damdami Taksal, Harnam Singh, once headed by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. His admission raised a lot of eye-brows. But the BJP remains unfruffled. The BJP's two major allies, former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa are also prominent Sikh leaders.

Why are BJP's Brahmin leaders out in the cold

When the list of BJP's star campaigners was released, four names were strikingly missing. The names of two BJP Gandhis' were published. But it did not come to light that even a senior Brahmin leader, former BJP UP Chief and senior Cabinet Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey was dropped too. Varun Gandhi's dropping was understandable. The BJP leaders were shocked but chose to look the other way. The high command thought of sending him a notice. But the idea was dropped until March 10. It was decided that the party will focus on backwards and social engineering formulas in the wake of a series of defections of its leaders to Samajwadi Party. Even Jitin Prasada who was imported from the Congress with big fanfare, was missing from the list.

international

of the day quote

I want to especially thank all democratic partners for their support to Taiwan over the past year. We will continue to deepen exchanges with all countries and stride out into the world



TSAI ING-WEN | TAIWAN PRESIDENT

The NHS is now vaccinating the most at risk 5-11-year-olds ensuring they get their vital dose of protection. Thousands of young people are still getting protected every day with millions vaccinated so far and we are asking parents not to delay coming forward



DR NIKKI KANANI | BY LEAD FOR NHS VACCINATION PROG

I am very confident that for one we will be able to prevent the majority of the oil spill to ruin our natural resources, especially the corals. Of course some of the corals will be damaged but the majority of it we will be able to save and we will be able to minimise the effects on the people



VARAWUT SILPA-ARCHA | ENVIRONMENT MIN, THAILAND

SHORT TAKES

More than 300 migrants saved

Arguineguin (Spain): Spain's sea rescue service Wednesday picked up more than 300 migrants trying to reach the Canary Islands in rickety boats, with nine of them clinging to a semi-sunken dinghy. The rescue service said it was unaware of any drowning as reported by a rights group. Helena Maleno, founder of the Walking Borders migration monitoring group, said 18 people had died trying to make the perilous crossing to the island of Lanzarote from Africa.

Russia Covid cases hit all-time record

Moscow: Russia's daily count of new coronavirus infections surged to more than 121,000 Sunday, an eightfold increase compared with the beginning of the month as the highly contagious omicron variant spreads through the country. The state coronavirus task force reported 121,288 new infections over the past 24 hours — an all-time high and 8,000 more than a day earlier. The country's infection numbers have rocketed since early January, when only about 15,000 new cases per day were tallied.

Portugal chooses new government

Lisbon: Portuguese voters went to the polls Sunday in an early election that looked set to produce another vulnerable minority government, just as the country is poised to start spending a huge windfall of European Union funds. That outcome would leave Portugal back where it started two months ago, when lawmakers rejected the minority Socialist government's spending bill and the country's president dissolved parliament. The center-left Socialists and their main rivals, the center-right Social Democratic Party, were in a tight race, opinion polls suggested.

Christian priest shot dead in Pak

Peshawar: A Christian priest was shot dead and another wounded by unidentified gunmen who opened fire on them as they were returning home from Sunday mass in Pakistan's northwestern Peshawar city, police said, describing it as a "terrorist act". Bishop William Siraj was shot multiple times and died on the spot.

FLURRY OF TESTS

N Korea caps month of tests with largest missile since 2017



POSSIBLE INTERMEDIATE-RANGE MISSILE LAUNCHED | SEVENTH TEST THIS MONTH BY N KOREA
 JAPAN SAYS LAUNCHES ARE THREAT TO SECURITY
 US, S KOREA CONDEMN TEST, CALL FOR NEW TALKS

AGENCIES

Seoul, Jan 30: North Korea conducted its largest missile test since 2017 Sunday, sending a suspected intermediate-range ballistic missile soaring into space, seen as taking the nuclear-armed country a step closer to resuming long-range testing.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that a projectile believed to be a single ballistic missile was launched about 7.52 am (22.52 GMT) from North Korea's Jagang Province toward the ocean off its east coast.

South Korea's National Security Council (NSC), which convened a rare emergency meeting presided over by President Moon Jae-in, said the test appeared to involve an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), which North Korea has not tested since 2017.

The launch takes North Korea a step closer to fully scrapping a self-imposed moratorium on testing its longest-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), Moon said.

He noted that this month's flurry of missile tests was reminiscent of the heightened tensions in 2017, when North Korea conducted multiple nuclear tests and launched its largest missiles, including some

that flew over Japan.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has said he is no longer bound by that moratorium, which included a stop to nuclear weapons tests and was announced in 2018 amid a flurry of diplomacy and summits with then-US President Donald Trump.

North Korea's rulers suggested this month they could restart those testing activities because the United States and its allies had shown no sign of dropping their hostile policies. The United States condemns these actions and calls on (North Korea) to refrain from further destabilising acts, the US military's Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement after Sunday's launch.

A US State Department spokesperson said the launch demonstrates the threat posed by North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes, and called on Pyongyang to engage in sustained and substantive dialogue.

South Korea's JCS and Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno separately said the missile is estimated to have reached an altitude of 2,000km and flown for 30 minutes to a distance of 800km. IRBMs typically have ranges of 600 to 3,500 miles, while ICBMs have ranges exceeding 3,500 miles.

UK's Harry and Meghan voice concern to Spotify

REUTERS

London, Jan 30: Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan have expressed their concern to Spotify about Covid-19 misinformation on its platform and are committed to continuing to work with the company, a spokesperson for their Archewell foundation said Sunday.

Singer-songwriters Neil Young and Joni Mitchell are removing their music from Spotify in protest that the popular streaming service has allowed the airing of misinformation about Covid-19 vaccines.

"Hundreds of millions of people are affected by the serious harms of rampant mis- and disinformation every day. Last April, our co-



founders began expressing concerns to our partners at Spotify about the all too real consequences of Covid-19 misinformation on its platform," the spokesperson said.

"We have continued to express our concerns to Spotify to ensure changes to its platform are made to help address this public health crisis. We look to Spotify to meet this moment and are committed to continuing our work together as it

UK mulls major NATO deployment

REUTERS

London, Jan 30: Britain is considering making a major NATO deployment as part of a plan to strengthen Europe's borders in response to Russia massing troops on the border with Ukraine, the government said Saturday.

Britain has said that any Russian incursion into Ukraine would be met with swift sanctions and would be devastating for both sides.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is due to visit the region next week, and also will speak to Vladimir Putin by phone.

Johnson is considering the biggest possible offer to members of the NATO defence pact in the Nordics and Baltics, which would double troop numbers and send defensive weapons to Estonia, his office said. "This package would send a clear message to the Kremlin — we will not tolerate their destabilising activity, and we will always stand with our NATO allies in the face of Russian hostility," Johnson said in a statement.

"I have ordered our Armed

UKRAINE CRISIS



We have no plans to deploy NATO combat troops to Ukraine ... we are focusing on providing support. There is a difference between being a NATO member and being a strong and highly valued partner as Ukraine. There's no doubt about that

JENS STOLTENBERG | SECY-GENERAL, NATO

Forces to prepare to deploy across Europe next week, ensuring we are able to support our NATO allies. Officials will finalise the details of the offer in Brussels next week, with ministers discussing the military options Monday," he

added. Stepping up diplomatic efforts after facing criticism for not doing enough, Johnson will make a second trip to meet NATO counterparts early next month, his office said. Britain's foreign and defence ministers will also both go to

Truckers throng Ottawa to decry Covid mandates

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ottawa, Jan 30: Hundreds of trucks and thousands of people blocked the streets of central Ottawa Saturday as part of a self-titled Freedom Convoy to protest vaccine mandates required to cross the US border.

Canadian media said the PM and his family had been escorted out of their home and taken to a secret location in the capital, with much of the protesters' wrath directed at Trudeau

Flying the Canadian flag, waving banners demanding Freedom and chanting slogans against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the truckers were joined by thousands of other protesters angered not only by Covid-19 restrictions but by broader



discontent with the government.

An enormous clamor rang out as hundreds of big trucks, their engines rumbling, sounded their air horns non-stop.

Closer to Parliament, families calmly marched on a bitterly cold day while young people chanted and older people in the crowd banged pots and pans in protest under Trudeau's office windows. The protest originated last week

in western Canada, where dozens of truckers organised a convoy to drive from Vancouver to Ottawa to demonstrate against Covid-related restrictions, particularly a vaccination requirement for truck drivers.

Both Canada and the United States imposed that requirement in mid-January, affecting drivers who cross the 9,000-km border — the world's longest.

Israeli Prez visits UAE amid regional tension

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Jan 30: Israel's figurehead president met the powerful crown prince of Abu Dhabi Sunday on the first official visit to the United Arab Emirates by the country's head of state, the latest sign of deepening ties between the two nations as tensions rise in the region.

The UAE and Israel normalised relations in the fall of 2020, part of a series of US-brokered diplomatic deals between Israel and Arab states that had long avoided formal relations with Israel over its decades-old conflict with the Palestinians.

President Isaac Herzog met with Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed

bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the de facto Emirati leader. The UAE's state-run WAM news agency described a royal welcome for the Israeli leader at the palace, with the Israeli national anthem blaring and 21-gun salute roaring.

During over two hours of talks, Herzog urged more countries in the region to join in recognising Israel and condemned the recent aerial attacks on Abu Dhabi claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels that marked a serious regional escalation. "I wish to emphasise that we completely support your security requirements and we condemn in all forms and language any attack on your sovereignty," Herzog told Sheikh Mohammed.

Beijing logs highest Covid cases since June as Olympics nears

CHINA WILL HOLD THE GAMES IN A STRICT "CLOSED-LOOP" BUBBLE AS PART OF ITS ZERO-COVID STRATEGY OF TARGETED LOCKDOWNS, BORDER RESTRICTIONS AND LENGTHY QUARANTINES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Beijing, Jan 30: Beijing recorded its highest number of new Covid-19 cases for a year and a half Sunday, as the Chinese capital gears up to host the Winter Olympics in five days.

China will hold the Games in a strict "closed-loop" bubble as part of its zero-Covid strategy of targeted lockdowns, border restrictions and lengthy quarantines.

The approach has helped the world's second-largest economy keep the number of new infections far lower than many other countries, but it is battling local out-

breaks in several cities as well as in the Olympic bubble.

The upcoming Lunar New Year — China's biggest national holiday — presents further challenges as millions of people return to their hometowns and mingle with family and friends.

Beijing's tally of 20 new cases Sunday was the city's highest since June 2020, according to the National Health Commission (NHC).

City authorities have locked down some housing compounds, while officials in Fengtai district — where most of Sunday's infections were detected — have begun testing around 2 million people for the

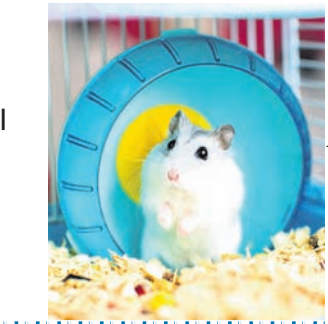


virus. The Olympics bubble separates everyone involved in the

Games from the wider Chinese population to curb the risk of in-

The upcoming Lunar New Year — China's biggest national holiday — presents further challenges as millions of people return to their hometowns and mingle with family and friends

fections leaking out. The estimated 60,000 people inside the bubble are subject to daily testing. Organisers Saturday reported



HK ALLOWS HAMSTER PET STORES TO OPEN

Pet stores in Hong Kong will resume business after being shuttered last week following culling of more than 2,200 hamsters over fears of Covid-19 infection

'NATO wants to drag Kyiv into alliances'

Moscow: Russia's foreign minister claims that NATO wants to pull Ukraine into the alliance, amid escalating tensions over NATO expansion and fears that Russia is preparing to invade Ukraine. In comments on state television Sunday, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also challenged NATO's claim to be a purely defensive structure. Russia's massing of an estimated 100,000 troops near the border with Ukraine has brought increasingly strong warnings from the West that Moscow intends to invade. Russia in turn demands that NATO promise never to allow Ukraine to join the alliance, and to stop the deployment of NATO weapons near Russian borders and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe.

Moscow for talks with their Russian counterparts in coming days, with the aim of improving relations and de-escalating tensions.

Thailand oil spill threatens corals

REUTERS

Bangkok, Jan 30: Authorities are rushing to prevent an oil spill in eastern Thailand from damaging fragile corals, after officials said Sunday the leak that began last week was drifting towards more coastal areas.

Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment Varawut Silpa-archa said it was crucial to try to prevent the main mass of oil from reaching the shore at Ao Prao, a small bay on Koh Samet, which is a popular resort island.

If the oil reached inside this area it could impact the beach and cause heavy damage to the shallow water corals, Varawut said.



Before it was brought under control, an estimated 50,000 litres of oil escaped into the ocean 20 km from the coastline of eastern Thailand

The oil began leaking from a pipeline owned by Star Petroleum Refining Public Company Limited (SPRC) (SPRC.BK) late Tuesday.

Before it was brought under control, an estimated 50,000 litres of oil escaped into the ocean 20 km from the coastline of eastern Thailand.

Mae Ramphueng Beach in Rayong province was declared a disaster area after some oil came ashore there late Friday.

The latest satellite image from the government's Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) showed the oil spill has spread to cover 67 sq km area of the sea.

Most of the oil had formed a thin film rather than a thick oil slick, navy spokesman Vice Admiral Pokkrong Monthathaphalin told reporters, citing aerial photographs.

business



Healthcare should be accorded priority status so that the sector can derive benefit from the GST transition and providers and healthcare service delivery institutions can avail loans at lower rates and extended tenure
ASHUTOSH RAGHUVANSHI | MD AND CEO, FORTIS HEALTHCARE

LIC CHIEF'S TENURE EXTENDED

The government has extended the tenure of chairman of IPO-bound Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) by one more year till March 2023 with a view to facilitate smooth listing of the insurance behemoth, sources said. Besides, the government has also extended the tenure of one of the managing directors, Raj Kumar, for one year



of the day quote

The only reason for our January 2021 move to get a debt recast proposal approved by the NCLT was to ensure that we fully repaid our lenders after we found cash-flow issues since the pandemic

HEMANT KANORIA | FOUNDER, SREI INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE LTD

We are looking at new markets. Huge export potential is there for us. We are expecting to touch about \$16.5 billion worth of exports in 2021-22 and \$19 billion in 2022-23. We are on the cusp of good growth in apparel

NARENDRA GOENKA | CHAIRMAN, AEP

The impact of Omicron on housing sales is not expected to be significant as compared to the last two waves

ANU PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

SHORT TAKES

Coal import drops 22.5% in November

New Delhi: The country's coal import declined by 22.5 per cent to 15.78 million tonne (MT) in November 2021 compared to 20.35 MT in the same month of last year. "India's coal and coke imports during November 2021 through the major and non-major ports are estimated to have decreased by 22.5 percent over November 2020," mjunction services said. On a month-on-month basis, coal imports in November 2021 increased marginally by 0.21 per. During April-November period of the current fiscal, total coal and coke import stood at 138.87 MT, about 1.25 per cent higher than previous year.

Steel output surges 18% to 118 MT in '21

New Delhi: India's crude steel production rose by nearly 18 per cent to 118 million tonne (MT) in 2021, while world leader China recorded a 3 per cent decline to 1,032.8 MT, according to worldsteel. India, which is the second largest steel producing nation, had manufactured 100.3 MT steel in 2020 and China had produced 1,064.7 MT of steel in the same year. World Steel Association said in its report. Out of 1,950.5 MT, the top ten steel producing countries jointly produced 1,624.8 MT, the rest came in from other steel producing member nations.

NCLT okays APSEZ to acquire SRCPL

New Delhi: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) Sunday said the company's composite scheme to acquire Sarguja Rail Corridor Pvt Ltd (SRCPL) has been approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and will be effective from the appointed date of April 1, 2021. APSEZ in a statement said the company will now consolidate all rail assets under a single business entity Adani Tracks Management Services Pvt Ltd. The statement said that once consolidated, SRCPL will add ₹450 crore or five per cent of APSEZ's total Ebitda.

MapmyIndia dips since listing gains

New Delhi: Shares of CE Info Systems-backed MapmyIndia haven't been able to keep its strong bull run and have fallen around 15 per cent since its bumper listing on the exchanges. Making its market debut December 21, 2021, with over 50 premium over its issue price at ₹1,565 on the National Stock Exchange, it had evidently attracted eyeballs of the potential investors during the IPO subscription. Its issue price was ₹1,033.

CSK becomes first Unicorn sports enterprise

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 30: Ahead of the 15th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), one of its most successful franchises, Chennai Super Kings (CSK), has become the country's first sports Unicorn with its market cap having touched a high of ₹7,600 crores and its share in the grey market trading in the ₹210-225 price band. The Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led CSK, which won its fourth IPL title

in Dubai last year, now has a market cap more than its parent entity, India Cements. On Friday, India Cements' market cap stood at ₹6,869 crores. Two key reasons which have led CSK's market cap to go past its parent entity are the team winning its fourth IPL title in Dubai, and two new franchises being added to the upcoming season at record prices. The shares of Chennai Super Kings Cricket Limited (CSKCL),



which controls CSK, had hit an all-time high in the unlisted market October 26 last year, surging from ₹110-120 per share to crossing

Brand CSK will outgrow Brand India Cements. If you look at the history of franchise-based leagues in the US, it will outgrow everything. Passion for cricket is so much in India

N SRINIVASAN | MD, INDIA CEMENTS (CSK'S PARENT ENTITY)

cap to around ₹7,000 crore, which was just ₹500 crore short of making it to the Unicorn club and came just 11 days after they defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 27 runs in the IPL final. Another factor that has contributed to the making of 'Brand CSK' is its unique fan following and the franchise building the team around its growing band of followers. Also, the fact that the side has hardly changed its core group in the last decade.

Q3 mfg improves, cost of doing biz a concern: FICCI

High raw material prices, increased transportation and logistics cost, and rise in the prices of diesel, LPG, natural gas, power, and fuel has been the main contributor to the increasing cost of production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: The outlook for India's manufacturing sector seems to have improved in the third quarter of 2021-22 (October-December 2021-22) even as the cost of doing business remains a cause for concern and hiring prospects remain subdued, according to a FICCI survey. The findings of the latest quarterly survey on manufacturing unveiled Sunday also reflect sustained economic activity in the sector, with existing average capacity utilisation in the range of 65 to 70 per cent.

It also highlighted that manufacturers are looking forward to the upcoming Union Budget to enhance growth and investments in the sector. The Budget will be presented February 1.

High raw material prices, high cost of finance, the uncertainty of demand, shortage of working capital, high logistics cost, low domestic and global demand due to



The survey assessed the performance and sentiments of manufacturers for Q3 for 12 major sectors namely automotive, capital goods, cement, chemicals, fertilisers and pharmaceuticals, electronics & electricals, medical devices, metal & metal products, paper products, textiles, textiles machinery and miscellaneous

supply chain disruptions are some of the major constraints that are affecting the expansion plans of the respondents.

Responses have been drawn from over 300 manufacturing units from both large and SME (small and medium enterprise) segments with a combined annual turnover of over ₹2.7 lakh crore. Around half of the participants expect a rise in their exports for Q3 2021-22 as against the same quarter of the previous year.

"Hiring outlook for the manufacturing sector remains subdued as around 75 per cent of the respondents mentioned that they are not likely to hire additional workforce in the next three months," FICCI stated on the survey.

However, an average interest rate paid by the manufacturers

THE PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING HIGHER PRODUCTION IN Q3 WAS 63%, ALMOST DOUBLE THAN THE YEAR-ROUND PERIOD (33%)

has reduced slightly to 8.4 per cent per annum as against 8.7 per cent during last quarter and the highest rate remains as high as 15 per cent. It highlights that cuts in repo rate in the last few months by RBI have not led to a proportional reduction in the lending rate as reported by around 60 per cent of the respondents.

High raw material prices, increased transportation and logistics cost, and rise in the prices of diesel, LPG, natural gas, power, and fuel has been the main contributor to the increasing cost of production. Other factors affecting the cost of production are increasing labour cost, short supply of raw material, high cost of carrying inventory, and fluctuation in the foreign exchange rate, showed the survey.

MARINE EXPORTS UP 35% DURING APRIL-DEC 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Exports of marine products jumped 35 per cent to \$6.1 billion during April-December 2021 as compared with \$4.5 billion in the same period of the previous year, the commerce ministry said Sunday. In December 2021, the exports grew 28 per cent to \$720.51 million.

"Frozen shrimps constitute the major share in India's marine products exports items with 74 per cent share in value terms," it added. Other major items include Frozen Fish (7 per cent) and Frozen Squid (5 per cent).

The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), launched in May 2020, has set a target of ₹1 lakh crore fisheries export, additional 70 lakh tonne fish production, and generation of 55 lakh employment in the years to come.

In a separate statement, the ministry said India's export of final consumer food products such as Ready to Eat (RTE), Ready to Cook (RTC) and Ready to Serve (RTS) stood at \$2.14 billion in 2020-21. It

The five-top destinations for exports of marine products include the US, China, Japan, Vietnam and Thailand

stood at \$1 billion in April-October 2021-22, compared with \$823 million in April-October 2020-21.

The products covered under the ready to eat (RTE) category include biscuits and confectionery, jaggery, breakfast cereals, wafers, pan masala and betal.

The main markets for these goods include the US, Malaysia, the UAE, Sri Lanka, Australia, Sudan, the UK, Singapore and Nepal.

"Malaysia imported jaggery worth of \$5.09 million and Nepal imported wafers worth of \$3.5 million in 2020-21," the ministry said.

Further, the major exporting destinations for RTE export in 2020-21 are the US (\$18.62 million), Malaysia (\$11.52 million), the UAE (\$8.75 million), Indonesia (\$7.52 million), and the UK (\$7.33 million).



Investment via P-notes surges to ₹95,501 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Investments in Indian capital through participatory notes (P-notes) rose to ₹95,501 crore till December-end and experts believe that flow is expected to be "flat to negative" next month.

P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be a part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to Securities and Exchange Board of India data, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets - equity, debt and hybrid securities - was at ₹95,501 crore by December-end as compared to ₹94,826 by November-end.

Abhay Agarwal, Founder and Fund Manager, Piper Serica, a Sebi-registered PMS, said P-notes data for December suggest a flattish trend. It suggests equity inflows of about ₹675 crore and debt inflows of about ₹716 crore.

This positive inflow is surprising since FPIs were aggressive sellers in equity and debt segment throughout December with net outflows of ₹19,026 crore and ₹11,799 crore, respectively.

Investment level was at ₹1.02L cr in Oct end, which was the highest since March 2018, when P-notes had invested to the tune of ₹1.06L cr

At the same time, it is difficult to extrapolate the numbers for one month into a longer-term trend. The P-note flows are expected to be flat to negative in the month of January, he said.

Of the total ₹95,501 crore invested through the route till December 2021, ₹84,948 crore was invested in equities, ₹10,322 crore in debt, ₹231 crore in hybrid securities.

Sonam Srivastava, founder, Wright Research, Sebi-RIA said that P-notes participation is near the minimum level in six months for equities but has seen an uptick in the debt side. This pattern is as expected globally "We have seen a flight from risky assets among managers and a preference for debt with rising interest rates yields," she added.

The assets under the custody of FPIs rose to ₹52.72 lakh crore in December-end from ₹52.24 lakh crore in November-end.



Incentives for green H2 likely

India's commitment at COP26 of achieving net zero emissions by 2070 and meet 50% of energy requirements from RE by 2030 shows that the govt intends to focus on cleaner sources of energy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: The government may provide for targeted fiscal incentives and allocation of funds for promotion of green hydrogen in the country in Union Budget 2022-23, which is slated to be unveiled in Parliament Tuesday.

The government launched National Hydrogen Mission in 2021. Earlier this month, Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister RK Singh had indicated that a green hydrogen policy will be unveiled in February which would feature many incentives to boost green hydrogen in the country.

"While 2021 saw the launch of National Hydrogen Mission, it is likely that the Budget may provide for targeted fiscal incentives for R&D in green hydrogen segment, creation of domestic supply chain for hydrogen and reduce customs duties on electrolyzers to boost green hydrogen production," says Venkatesh Raman Prasad,

BUDGET 2022-23



Partner, J Sagar Associates (JSA). Hemant Malliya, Senior Programme Lead, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) opines that green hydrogen has many industrial uses and can potentially decarbonise many hard-to-abate sectors, like the iron and steel industry.

He says that an outlay of ₹1,200 crore by 2024 in the upcoming Budget could trigger pilots in various end-use applications such as testing green hydrogen readiness of natural gas pipelines, underground hydrogen storage, and pilots for equipment such as furnaces, boilers, and process heaters. Earlier this month, Union minister R K Singh had said a new green hydrogen policy will feature incentives like free power transmission for 25 years, dollar denominated bids, offer of land in renewable energy parks and land allocation near ports for creating bunkers for green hydrogen or ammonia.

From the top-10 list, State Bank of India was the lone gainer as its valuation jumped ₹18,340.07 crore to reach ₹4,67,069.54 crore. Coming to those whose valuation got eroded were Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), HDFC, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.

The market valuation of RIL diminished by ₹96,512.22 crore to ₹15,79,779.47 crore, taking the biggest hit among the top-10 firms. TCS suffered an erosion of ₹53,488.29 crore to ₹13,65,042.43 crore from its valuation.

Bharti Airtel's market capitalisation plunged ₹15,814.77 crore to ₹3,93,174.23 crore. The valuation of HDFC diminished by ₹13,319.96 crore to ₹4,56,102.42 crore and that of HUL went lower by ₹9,210.39 crore to ₹5,36,411.69 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, RIL remained the most valued company by market valuation followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, HUL, State Bank of India, HDFC, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.

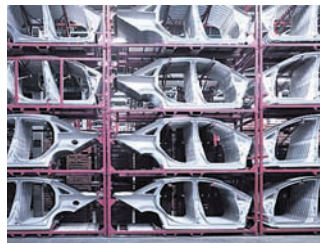
Automakers to suffer from chip, labour crunch

COVID IMPACT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 30: With Covid-19 continuing to impact the global economy in its second year, the automotive semiconductor market will experience severe shortages and tight supply amid labour short-fall, according to a new IDC report.

The general theme for semiconductor in 2021 was shortages in mature process technology nodes. The IDC expects tight semiconductor supply to continue through the first half of 2022 as the industry builds up inventory to normal levels.



The automotive market continues to be impacted as chips move upstream, limiting automobile manufacturing and driving original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to utilise their semiconductor supply for higher value vehicles, which raised the average selling price of vehicles for 2021.

Automotive semiconductors will continue to be a limiting constraint on the automotive market through the first half of 2022, but barring any unforeseen shutdowns or semiconductor manufacturing issues, supply should gradually improve

NINA TURNER | RESEARCH MANAGER, IDC

"Automotive semiconductors will continue to be a limiting constraint on the automotive market through the first half of 2022, but barring any unforeseen shutdowns or semiconductor manufacturing

Bank of America cuts expected US GDP growth rate



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Jan 30: Bank of America slashed its projection for the first-quarter US economic growth from 4 to 1 per cent Friday because of disruptions caused by the Omicron coronavirus variant.

Economists at Bank of America told clients in a report that they expect US gross domestic product (GDP) to rise at an annual rate of 1 per cent during the first quarter, as "risks of a negative growth quarter are significant," Xinhua news agency quoted a CNN Business report as saying.

"That would break a streak of six consecutive quarters of growth that began in the summer of 2020," said the report.

Meanwhile, the Atlanta Federal Reserve's GDPNow forecasting model, released Friday, projected a 0.1 per cent growth in the first quarter, a rapid slowdown from the 6.9 per cent annual rate of growth during the final quarter of 2021.

For the year as a whole, Bank of America sees a US GDP growth of 3.6 per cent, down from its prior expectation of 4 per cent, citing the Omicron surge, along with the expected path of inventories and the outlook for fiscal spending, which is set to slow sharply.

Mcap of 9 of top-10 most valued firms erodes by ₹3L crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Nine of the top-10 most valued companies together lost a whopping ₹3,09,178.44 crore in market valuation last week as selloffs continued. In a holiday-shortened past week, the 30-share BSE Sensex plummeted 1,836.95 points or 3.11 per cent amid geopolitical tensions, global sell-off triggered by a hawkish US Federal Reserve and unabated foreign fund outflows.

From the top-10 list, State Bank of India was the lone gainer as its valuation jumped ₹18,340.07 crore to reach ₹4,67,069.54 crore. Coming to those whose valuation got eroded were Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), HDFC, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.

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In the ranking of top-10 firms, RIL remained the most valued company by market valuation followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, HUL, State Bank of India, HDFC, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.

issues, supply should gradually improve through the second half of the year," said Nina Turner, research manager.

Adding in the time to manufacture the vehicle, this means the "automotive market will begin to improve towards the end of 2022 and into 2023 if there are no other supply chain shocks," Turner added.

While the automotive semiconductor market largely depends on these older processes, many other semiconductor are made on these mature manufacturing process technologies at 40nm and above, such as LCD drivers, power management ICs, power, Auto ICs, and microcontrollers.

NADAL GOES PAST FEDERER AND DJOKOVIC WITH RECORD 21 GRAND SLAM TITLES

RAFA SCRIPTS HISTORY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 30: Rafael Nadal got to 21 first, breaking the men's record for most Grand Slam singles titles and doing it the hard way by coming back from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev in an almost 5 1/2-hour Australian Open final that didn't finish until the early hours of Monday morning.

He was broken when serving for the championship at 5-4 in the fifth set but made no mistake the next time. At 5 hours and 24 minutes, it was the second longest Australian Open final after Novak Djokovic beat Nadal in five sets in 5 hours and 53 minutes in 2012.

With the 2-6, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 win that started Sunday night and was delayed for a while in the second set when a protester jumped onto the court, Nadal also became just the fourth man

in history to win all four of the sport's major titles at least twice.

Nadal won his first Australian Open title in 2009 and lost four other finals at Melbourne Park before his dramatic win over US Open champion Medvedev.

His victory was even more remarkable considering Nadal flew to Australia with just two

matches under his belt in the second half of 2021 because he was sidelined with a chronic foot injury that can be treated but not cured.

Medvedev, who was aiming to be the first man in the Open era to win his second Grand Slam title at the very next major, made Nadal go the distance and win from two-sets down. Medvedev now joins Andy Murray among those who've lost the final at the next major tournament after their career breakthrough at the highest level.

Krejciakova, Siniakova win women's doubles

MELBOURNE: French Open champions Barbra Krejciakova and Katerina Siniakova added the Australian Open's women's doubles title to their resume Sunday, with a 6-7(3) 6-4 win over Anna Danilina and Beatriz Haddad Maia. The number one seeds, who were beaten finalists at Melbourne Park last year, took time to hit their stride and were forced to come back from a set down to claim the title for the first time. The unseeded

duo overpowered the Olympic champions in a tiebreak to win the first set, but the scores were levelled up at the end of the second, as the Czech pair found their rhythm. Krejciakova and Siniakova broke on Haddad Maia's serve five games into the deciding set to claim the advantage and Siniakova's forehand winner down the line on Danilina's serve two games later increased the gap. The win is the Czech duo's fourth Grand Slam title together, after having claimed the French Open in 2018 and 2021 and Wimbledon in 2018.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

AT A GLANCE

Rafael Nadal bt Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 6-7(5-7), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5

It has been one of the most emotional matches in my tennis career and to share the court with you [Medvedev] was an honor. I can't explain the feelings I have now

RAFAEL NADAL



ODISHA OPEN SUPER 100

Unnati's 1st int'l win; George men's champ



Unnati Hooda



Kiran George

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Jan 30: Teenager Unnati Hooda became the youngest Indian to win a Super 100 tournament as she beat compatriot Smit Toshniwal in straight games to claim the women's singles title while unseeded Kiran George emerged triumphant in men's singles final of Odisha Open badminton tournament here Sunday.

Producing an excellent performance to emerge triumphant in her event, the 14-year-old Unnati won 21-18 21-11 to be crowned champion in the inaugural edition of the \$75,000 Odisha Open.

Unnati, who entered the final after she surprised Indian Open finalist Malvika Bansod 24-22 24-22 in the last-four clash Saturday, took 35 minutes to get the better of Toshniwal in the summit showdown of the women's singles at the

Jawahar Lal Nehru Indoor Stadium. Unnati, who had made her debut only in October last year, began the match on the backfoot and trailed 11-7 at the first mid-game interval.

Hosts India dominated the last day's proceedings winning three out of the five finals.

The 21-year-old Kiran George prevailed over fellow Indian Priyanshu Rajawat 21-15 14-21 21-18 to clinch the men's singles title after battling hard for 58 minutes.

George won the opening game quite comfortably and was leading 5-3 in the initial phase of the second game, but Rajawat fought back brilliantly to take the match into the decider.

George had defeated Ansal Yadav, 19-21, 21-12, 21-14, while 19-year-old Rajawat scored a 21-17, 21-14 win over Kausal D in the men's singles semifinals.

Women's Ashes test ends in thrilling draw

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Canberra, Jan 30: In a fantastic advertisement for women's Test cricket, England hung on for a dramatic draw as their Ashes contest against Australia came to a thrilling finish on the last session of the fourth and final day here.

The visiting England finished at 245 for nine after a sporting declaration from Australia captain Meg Lanning set the tourists a target of 257 runs from 48 overs at the Manuka Oval.

England looked on course to pull off the biggest fourth-innings chase in the history of women's Test cricket before escaping with a tense draw after an inexplicable batting collapse.

Captained by the inspirational Heather Knight, England needed 43



runs in the last 48 balls with seven wickets in hands, but ended up drawing the match with just a wicket left.

The Australian bowlers made a terrific comeback to put their team on the verge of victory after struggling against the English top-order.

However, England slipped from 218 for three to 244 for nine to end all hopes of scripting a memorable come-from-behind win after playing catch-up for three days.

RAVI WREAKS HAVOC AS INDIA OUST B'DESH

It was a fitting reply from the 'Boys in Blue' to the 'Tiger Cubs' after their senior batch lost an ill-tempered final in 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Coolidge (Antigua), Jan 30: Left-arm seamer Ravi Kumar bowled a sensational opening spell as India's 'class of 2022' exacted a sweet revenge, ousting defending champions Bangladesh by five wickets to enter the semi-final of ICC U-19 World Cup here Saturday.

India will meet Australia in the semi-final February 2, having won an unprecedented seven out of nine U-19 World Cup quarter-finals.

Son of a CRPF personnel, the Uttar Pradesh-born Ravi, who has followed footsteps of his illustrious state senior Mohammed Shami to ply his trade for Bengal, ended with excellent figures of 7-1-14-3 on a tacky track as Bangladesh were all out for 111 in 37.1 overs.

Bangladesh were 56 for 7 at one stage before SM Mehrob (30) and Ashiqur Zaman (16) added 50 for the eighth wicket to take the team past 100-run mark. In reply, India chased down the target in 30.5 overs with opener Angkrish Raghuvanshi's 44 being the top-score.

Skipper Yash Dhull scored a chiselled 20 not out and his deputy Shaik Rasheed making 26 as the victory was even more satisfying considering the youngsters came back without any training post recovery from COVID-19.



India won a good toss and Ravi made full use of the moisture underneath with initial movement in the air helping team's cause.

Ravi, who has the natural ability to bring the ball back into right-

handers, had right-handed Mahfjuz Islam (2) beaten all-ends up to an inswinger in the second over.

His opening partner left-handed Iftakher Hossain (1) was done in by the slowness of the track as he tried

to square cut and was held at point by vice-captain Shaikh Rasheed.

One drop batter Prantik Nawrose (7) was not at all comfortable during his stay and was late into the drive to a delivery that swung away only to offer a catch to Kaushal Tamble in the slips.

Down at 14 for 3 in the eighth over, there was no coming back for Bangladesh boys as they started losing wickets at regular intervals.

Left-arm spinner Vicky Ostwal (9-1-25-2) was consistent as ever with his flight and dip which was not very easy for the opposition batters.

However if anyone deserves the credit for restricting Bangladesh to a manageable total, it is Ravi, who till few months back, was another outstation cricketer, playing his trade in Kolkata club cricket.

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