

**VOLUME 11, ISSUE 301 | www.orissapost.com** 

Actor Tejasswi Prakash has gone home with Big Boss Season 15 trophy and a cheque of ₹40 lakh LEISURE P2



#### PRATAP WRITES TO GIRIRAJ

H&UD Minister Pratap Jena urged Centre to consider state's demand for synchronisation of data on its rural housing portal

DOWNTOWN P3



#### AWARD FOR SREEJESH

India men's hockey team goalkeeper PR Srejeesh wins the prestigious World Games Athlete of the Year award

SPORTS P12

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**BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1 | 2022** 

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#### **EC extends ban on rallies till February 11**

New Delhi: The Election Commission Monday extended the ban on roadshows, 'padyatras', vehicle rallies and processions till February 11, but enhanced the number of people allowed in door-to-door campaigning from the present 10 to 20 and permitted a maximum of 1,000 people for physical public meetings. This was stated after Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra along with Election Commissioners Rajiv Kumar and Anup Chandra Pandey held another review of the COVID-19 situation in the poll-bound states of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The commission has decided that no roadshows, 'padyatras', and cycle/bike/vehicle rallies and processions shall be allowed till February 11, 2022, a statement said. The also decided to allow physical public meetings of political parties or contesting candidates in designated open spaces with a maximum of 1,000 people, instead of existing 500 people, or 50 per cent of the capacity of the ground.

#### **4 Sr Advocates elevated as Orissa HC Judges**



New Delhi: The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the appointment of four advocates as judges to the Orissa High Court. The apex court collegium, headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana, passed a resolution to this effect after the deliberations were held January 29. The collegium recommended Advocates V Narasingh, Sanjay Kumar Mishra, Biraja Prasanna Satapathy and Raman Murahari for elevation as judges of the High Court. The Orissa High Court currently has nine vacancies as against a sanctioned strength of 27 judges. In total, the collegium recommended 17 names for appointment as judges in Andhra Pradesh, MP and Orissa High Courts.



### CEREMONIAL TURNOU



Widespread vaccine coverage, supply-side reforms and easing of curbs will support it in next fiscal

**SURVEY 21-22** 

9.2

2018-19 2019-20 2020-21 2021-22

GRAPHICS Source: Economic Survey 2021-22

assumption that there will be no fur-

ther debilitating pandemic related

economic disruption, monsoon will

be normal, withdrawal of global

liquidity by major central banks will

with the forecast by the World Bank

The growth projections are in line

be orderly," the survey said.

FM may unveil plans to boost spending to revive investment and create jobs in her 4th Budget to be presented today

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 31: India will retain its tag of the world's fastestgrowing major economy as the pre-Budget Economic Survey Monday forecast an 8-8.5 per cent GDP growth in the fiscal year starting in April, saying it has the fiscal space to do more to support the economy and is well placed to meet the future challenges. India is poised to wrest the title

world-beating economy tag this fiscal with a projected growth of 9.2 per cent, and the widespread vaccine coverage, supply-side reforms and easing of regulations are going to support it in the next fiscal.

The Economic Survey -- an annual report card of the economy -- presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, warned about risks from global inflation and pandemicrelated disruptions. Sitharaman is expected to announce plans to boost spending to revive investment and create jobs in her Budget to be presented Tuesday.

The survey assumed oil prices will range between USD 70 and 75 per barrel next year even though they are above USD 90 now. It also assumed a normal monsoon rainfall and an orderly withdrawal of global liquidity by major central banks.

#### **Economic Survey** 2021-22 **Growth contracts Fiscal Deficit** by 6.6 pc in 20-21 (% of GDP)

Service sector share 4% up in state's GVA

The survey states that services sector has 34.37 percent share in Odisha's Gross

Value Added in 2020-21. Over the last three years, share of services in Gross State

Value Added has increased by over 4 per cent for Odisha. It was 30.27 per cent in

2018-19 as compared to 34.37 percent in 2021. However, the growth in Services

imposed in movement following the COVID-19 outbreak. It was 8.43 in pre-pan-

demic year, 2019-20. The survey also highlighted that around 1.30 crore workers

"The projection is based on the but less than 9 per cent forecast of

Gross Value Added contracted by 1.01 per cent in 2020-21 due to restrictions

registered on the e-SHRAM portal as on January 18 this year in Odisha.

Indian economy contracted by 6.6 per cent in 2020-21 as against the earlier estimate of 7.3 per cent decline, showing that the COVID-19 pandemic hit economy did not perform as badly as was initially worked out. As per the provisional estimates released in May 2021, the GDP had contracted by 7.3 per cent during 2020-21 on account of the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent lock-

### NINL to go to Tatas at ₹12,100cr The finance ministry said TSLP

President's bodyguards arrive at Parliament House on the first day of the Budget Session 2022 in New Delhi, Monday

New Delhi, Jan 31: In its second acquisition of a PSU in recent weeks, Tata group firm beat the likes of Jindal Steel and JSW Steel to snap loss-making Odisha-based Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) for ₹12.100 crore.

In a statement, the finance ministry said Tata Steel Long Products Ltd's (TSLP's) bid of more than double the reserve or base price, for NINL, whose 1.1 million tonnes a vear capacity steel plant at Kalinganagar in Odisha was shut in March 2020 due to continued losses, has been accepted.

Just last week, a Tata Group firm completed the takeover of Air

#### **2ND AFTER AIR INDIA**

■ Tata Steel Long Products Ltd pips the likes of Jindal Steel, JSW Steel to acquire the 1.1 mn tonnes a year capacity steel plant at Kalinganagar

NINL is a JV of 4 CPSEs -- MMTC, NMDC, BHEL, MECON and 2 Odisha govt PSUs -- OMC & IPICOL

to be privatised in nearly two decades. Tata Group had bid ₹18,000 crore for Air India, higher than the reserve price of ₹12,906 crore. The NINL deal, which will be the second successful privatisation by the Modi government, will take at least a couple of months to conclude.

outbid a consortium of Jindal Steel & Power Limited and Nalwa Steel and Power Ltd; and JSW Steel Ltd, in financial bid put for buying NINL, which is a joint venture of 4 CPSEs -- MMTC, NMDC, BHEL, MECON and 2 Odisha Government PSUs -- OMC and IPICOL.

The bid by TSLP was double the reserve price of ₹5,616.97 crore set by the government based on the valuation of transaction adviser and asset valuer.

Since the government does not hold any equity in the company, hence the sale proceeds would not accrue to the exchequer and would instead go to the 4 CPSEs and 2 state government PSU

According to an order by Special Relief Commissioner PK Jena, both the guidelines for Covid-19 and Panchayat elections will remain in force till February 28. However, the night curfew timing in urban areas has been relaxed by an hour. Now, the night curfew will be enforced in urban areas from 10 pm to 5 am. All types of shops, malls, shopping complexes, markets/haats, cinemas, swimming

pools, entertainment complexes,

**NIGHT CURFEW** 

**EASED BY 1 HR** 

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The state

government Monday extended the

Covid-19 restrictions issued for

January by another month till

February end with a little relax-

POST NEWS NETWORK

theatres, auditoriums, assembly halls and similar places can remain open across the state from 5 am to 10 pm everyday. Home delivery of food, groceries, vegetables, egg, fish, meat, milk

I love pre-Budget reports. Before every Budget they make me believe my life would change after the Budget

### Woman MD netted for ₹100crore fraud

■ Accused Amrita Kindo was forwarded to court and remanded to judicial custody POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha police has arrested a woman for her alleged involvement in misappropriation of ₹100 crore loan taken from various financial institutions, officials said here Monday.

The accused was identified as Amrita Kindo, managing direc-

tor of Diya Dairy Agro Processor Pvt Ltd. She was arrested and forwarded to local court here Sunday, and remanded to judicial custody.

IMF. They are slightly higher than

that predicted by S&P and Moody's.

nomic adviser at the finance ministry

and the lead author of the survey, said,

"India does need to be wary of im-

ported inflation, especially from el-

evated global energy prices." P11

Sanjeev Sanyal, principal eco-

Though the arrest was made on the basis of a ₹5 crore loan fraud case registered against Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd, it was found during investigation that the firm had collected over ₹100 crore from various finance institutions and misappropriated the same, the police officials said.

As per the complaint, accused Deepak Kindo, MD of Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd, Bhubaneswar, had fraudulently availed a loan to the tune of ₹5 crore from Annapurna Finance Pvt Ltd on the basis of forged documents and misappropriated the same without refunding the amount.

During the course of investigation, the police found that the accused company (Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd), from 2015 to 2020, in a similar manner had raised funds of more than ₹100 crores from different investors/lenders like DCB Bank, SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India),

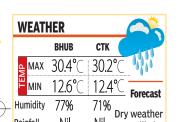


BOPA PTE Ltd (a Singapore-based company) and DIA Vikash Capital Pvt Ltd and misappropriated the same by diverting the amounts to their sister concerns. Amrita Kindo is the wife of Dipak Kindo and the director of Diya Diary Agro Processor, a sister concern of Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd.

From 2017 to 2020, out of the loan amounts availed by the accused company, ₹22.72 crore was diverted to the accounts of Diya Diary Agro Processor Pvt Ltd and misappropriated, the police further said. Notably, Hyderabad police had arrested Dipak Kindo from Odisha in July last year in connection with a cheating case.

#### and other essential items by restaurants and aggregators have been allowed. Religious functions, puja and festivities like Saraswati Puja, festivals namely Magha Saptami/Magha Purnima will be observed/celebrated in February, 2022. Saraswati Puja can be observed with all rituals in religious places without participation of devotees. The Puja will be allowed in educational institutions with participation of a limited number of students observing Covid curbs.





### Mamata blocks WB Guv on Twitter

■ Dhankhar had said, Bengal has become a gas chamber for democracy. People are so scared that they can't talk about that fear

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 31: A day when Trinamool Congress leader in Parliament formally told President Ram Nath Kovind to remove West Bengal Governor, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee told in a press conference that she has blocked Dhankhar's twitter account making it clear that the ruling party will not leave any stones unturned in

their battle against the Governor. "I apologise for it in advance. He (Jagdeep Dhankhar) tweets

something every day abusing me or my officers. Unconstitutional, unethical things, he says. He instructs and advises. Elected government has become bonded labour. That's why I have blocked him from my Twitter account. I was getting irritated every day," Mamata Banerjee said at a press conference Monday.

Alleging that the Governor has been sitting on files and continuously threatening his officers, the Chief Minister said, "I have written several letters to the PM about him. That he [Governor] is not listening and he is threatening everyone. I have even been to him and spoke with him. We have been patiently suffering for the past years. He has not cleared several files. He is keeping every file pending. How can he speak about policy decisions"? Accusing



the Governor of tapping phones, the Chief Minister said, "Why has the PM not removed him [Governor]? Pegasus is running from Governor house. He is tapping phones," she added. Earlier, he had said "Bengal has become a gas chamber for democracy. People are so scared that they can't talk about that fear. Minutes after the CM announced to block the Governor's Twitter account, Dhankhar from his Twitter handle wrote: "Mandated under Article 159 of the Constitution to ensure none in the state

'blocks' Constitutional Norms and Rules of Law and those in authority bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India

The decision to block Dhankhar's Twitter account comes just a day after the Governor appealed to the CM to forget her ego and come for discussion, "Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee should work according to the constitution. I shall request the CM to take out her time and sit for discussion. There is no place for conflict in democracy. In democracy people who are sitting on the top should work in tandem so that it can help people in general. There is no place for arrogance in democracy. The way the CM makes comments on the Governor is not correct. We should sit for discussion and find a solution to it," Dhnakhar said.

### Model kills self in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: A young entrepreneur and model ended his life allegedly over his failure in a relationship. The deceased, Saumya Ranjan Panigrahi, was staying at Nandan Vihar area

under Infocity police limits here. Sources said the family members Monday morning found Panigrahi hanging from the ceiling fan of his room. Later, they informed Infocity police that reached the spot and recovered the body and seized a suicide note written by the deceased. Police later sent the body to Capital hospital for autopsy. The body was later handed over to the family members of Panigrahi.



modeling in Mumbai, had returned to Odisha after the onset of Covid-19 pandemic. After return, Panigrahi started his own business and opened a cafe in Infocity area. The lady and the deceased were allegedly in a relationship for two years. Panigrahi received a shock when he learnt that his girl friend was in a relationship with another guy.



leisure



#### **MICHELLE WILLIAMS QUITS MOVIE INSPIRED BY HER FIANCÉ'S DEATH**

Actress Michelle Williams decided just before filming that she couldn't star in a movie inspired by the loss of her late fiance and actor Heath Ledger, Bradley Rust Gray, the film's director and a friend of Ledger, told Entertainment Weekly.

#### **GROWING UP AS OUEER WAS ISOLATING: CARA**

Actress-model Cara Delevingne has opened up about the challenging time she had navigating her sexuality. Speaking to The Sunday Times, Delevingne said, "Growing up as a queer child was isolating and hard to navigate at times."





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You will be very logical and rational today, as creativity is put on the back-burner. The situation at your workplace will be full of challenges, but you will take them head-on. Later, all the stress will be mitigated by the soothing touch of your loved ones, says Ganesha.

#### **TAURUS**

Today, you will strike a great balance between your pro-fessional and personal life, predicts Ganesha. You will save your money from being swindled by others. You may be lagging in the race to catch up with your goals, but will not be disapnointed by what you achieve. It is an auspicious day to undertake business deals and start new projects, feels Ganesha.

#### **GEMINI**

A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesha, You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do. Some of you, who want to go for further studies, may take a well informed decision today.

#### **CANCER**

Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

The complete family man that you are, it is your near and dear ones who have always laid the foundation of your success. So why should today be any differ ent. The auspicious tides of the day begin from your home and follow you everywhere. Be it work or play, you have a tempo that is undiminished. It's going to be a great day, says Ganesha, so just go with the flow and smile your way through everything.

#### VIRGO

The extraordinary way in which you do things will earn you many admirers. Superiors at work will laud you for your commitment. Evenings will be fun-filled and entertaining. Look to relax with some meditation or music... or both.

Put up that 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door today feels the tingle in your bones to want to stick to your preferred subject matter. This will help you achieve good progress in your research. Also, expect to be hit by a wave of nostalgia, as loving memories from the past sweeten your heart. Keep your eyes open, for, you are likely to find someone special with whom you will share vour innermost feelings, says Ganesha.

#### **SCORPIO**

Ganesha predicts you will possibly plan to launch a new product today. But put off the launch if you want to supersede cer tain unscrupulous elements. But after a waiting game, you may go ahead with your plan with much fanfare, says Ganesha.

#### **SAGITTARIUS**

Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesha. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them. Your day will get even better when perhaps, news from an overseas friend reaches you.

#### CAPRICORN

Today, you will get back to playing the power game, using both fair and unfair means to achieve your goals, says Ganesha. Intellectual growth will be phe-nomenal; equally good will be your intuitions. In fact, your gut feelings will guide all the decisions you take today, and rest assured, none will leave you in a soup. You will be sensitive to and understanding of others' problems, and will lend a helping hand to those who seek your assistance.

#### AQUARIUS Expect the unexpected

today! Success, money love, whatever it is that you'd lost hope of will suddenly come your way! In the evening, you may catch up with reading, research, discussion or other such activity, says Ganesha.

#### PISCES

Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a generous winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesha.



weeks of drama and suspense, and occasional talk about the in-

ability of Season 15 to get the kind of audience engagement that the previous editions were able to manage, the reality show's host Salman Khan well past Sunday midnight declared Tejasswi Prakash as the winner of *Bigg* Boss 15.

Tejasswi, engineering graduateturned-television actress who was earlier in the evening named as the face of Naagin 6, Ekta Kapoor's fantasy drama aired Colors, gets to go home with the Bigg Boss trophy and a cheque of Rs 40 lakh.

Reacting to the victory, the actress said, "Thank you #TejaTroops and every

come true after four months of a very challenging journey! The trophy comes home!!!! #salmankhan @voot @vootselect @colorstv @endemolshineind."

The favourite to win the tro-

winner, Salman Khan created a heart-stopping moment by pulling a prank on Pratik, saying he had been evicted, only to

call him back on the stage and break the bad news to Karan that it was he who had to exit Kundra said he was disappointed that he was not able to make it to the Top 2. IANS

MUMBAI: Ending 16 made this possible! A dream

phy, Pratik Sehajpal, an Amity Law School alumnus who's now a motivational speaker and actor, had to be content with the runner-up slot. Karan Kundrra, a former Roadies 'gang leader' who later hosted the crime show Gumraah, was No. 3.

Moments before declaring the

#### INT'L FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

### **ODIA MUSICIAN ANURAG** COMPOSES THEME SONG

BHUBANESWAR: Though India's hopes of progressing deep into the ongoing Women's Asian Football Cup 2022 under Asian Football Confederation (AFC) were dashed by the emergence of multiple COVID cases in the squad, we can still cheer up every time Are You Ready, the theme song of the tournament is played during the matches.

The song is composed by Anurag Patnaik, a Bhubaneswar-based musician.

Shot and edited by Mausam Sahoo at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Navi Mumbai, the song's lyrics have been penned by Imran Farhan. Navya Jaiti has lent the voice. The song was recorded at Studio 6 here while the final packaging was taken care of by Musictechnica Studios.

Anurag, who works in movies of different languages including Odia, says, "Earlier





### Hindi version of Rashmika's Pogaru crosses 200 mn views

Anurag Patnaik

BANGALORE: Actress Rashmika Mandanna, who's basking in the success of Pushpa - The Rise, has one more reason to celebrate now.

The Hindi dubbed version of her Kannada film, Pogaru, has crossed 200 million views on YouTube in just a few months.

This is not the first time that Rashmika has crossed the milestone on the video streaming platform. The Hindi version of her blockbuster film, Dear Comrade, has also crossed 300 million views on YouTube, apart from her two songs, Inkem Inkem from Geetha Govindam, and Karabuu from Pogaru, both crossing the 200 million views mark.

With Pushpa enjoying unprecedented success in all the five languages it was released in, Rashmika has earned the sobriquet of 'National Crush.'

Her song, Saami Saami from Pushpa has become a global rage, leaving the audiences eager to savour her Hindi releases. Mission Majnu and Good Bye are her two major Hindi projects slated for release this year. IANS



#### become Punjab's Katrina, after getting mar-Bigg Boss, but king ek hi tha and that ried to Vicky Kaushal, and then asked the host why he looked so happy about it. is Siddharth Shukla," Shehnaaz told And she added wickedly: "Being single Salman, IANS

Being single suits you

MUMBAI: While actressTejasswi Prakash

hogged the limelight bagging the Big

Boss trophy this season, the other big

part of the finale was the emotional ap-

pearance of Shehnaaz Gill, the rumoured

girlfriend of late actor Sidharth Shukla,

the winner of Season 13 of the reality show.

Apologising to Salman for breaking into

tears, Shehnaaz said she had been work-

ing on herself and improving her skills

Then she engaged in banter with

best: Shehnaaz to Salman

Salman, saving that Katrina Kaif had

Shukla's mother.

suits you best. Stay that way.

After performing to Tuada

Kutta, a song based on the

favourite expression of Shenaaz

from Bigg Boss 13, Salman hugged

Shehnaaz for a long time and said

he was proud to see Shehnaaz try-

ing to move on in life. Salman added

that the last few months had been

tough for Shehnaaz and Sidharth

Remembering Sidharth, Shehnaaz

said he will always be special to her "There have been many winners of

ALL MY

ARMS ARE BROKEN!

#### PEANUTS

on Salman's advice.

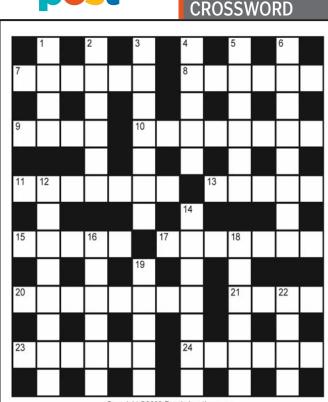


#### CALVIN AND HOBBES



#### **BREVITY**





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20 Delighted

21 Fishing spot

23 Igloo dweller

Acre		
7	Chess	niece

POST

- 8 Polished
- 9 Greek portico 10 Driver's aid
- (4,4)
- 11 Beat up
- 13 Capital of
- Lombardy
- 15 Parlour piece

17 Movie promo

- **Down** 1 Huffy state

24 Relax

- 2 Large lizard
- 3 Take aback
- 4 Very, in music
- (2-4)19 Endured
- 5 Ornamental tree 22 Neck problem
- CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

6 Cease to flow

accessory

18 Acquired kin

unrestrainedly

12 Travel

14 Laugh

(5,2)

16 Reach

#### 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.

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

#### SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

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

## downtown



#### **TAKING STOCK**

Srimandir chief administrator Krishan Kumar takes stock of arrangements at the shrine in Puri, Monday, as it reopens for public Tuesday

22 23	COVID-19 TRACKER					
		INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD		
	World	37,59,43,816	29,72,37,771	56,83,595		
	India	4,13,02,440	3,89,76,122	4,95,050		
	Odisha	12,49,240	12,01,546	8,612		
		- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -				

# Centre's deaf ear to sync housing Sarai app access controlled: Dash data with Awaas+: H&UD Minister The twin city Commissionerate Police had in Police had in Police had in the check-in and check the police had in the check-in and check to monitor the CCTV cameras put up across

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Panchayati Raj and Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) department Minister Pratap Jena Monday wrote to Union Minister Giriraj Singh, alleging that the Centre did not pay heed to Odisha's demand for synchronisation of data on its rural housing portal with 'Awaas+' initiative, an exercise to create an additional list of eligible beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) scheme.

He also accused the Union government of ignoring a promise made to Odisha in May 2019 in the aftermath of the cyclonic storm Fani for approval of 1.84 lakh houses under the special PMAY-G programme.

Jena also urged the Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj to open the Awaas+ window to incorporate those who were not included in the list of beneficiaries under the scheme.

Notably, rural housing has emerged as a major issue in the upcoming three-tier panchavat elections in Odisha as the opposition BJP has been attacking the ruling BJD for "not providing houses to poor people in the western part of the state and eligible tribal beneficiaries in the Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput region".

"The people of western Odisha and tribal areas have been denied housing facilities by the BJD government," BJP state president Samir Mohanty said.

The saffron party has also alleged that there was corruption in the rural hous-



Rural housing has emerged as a major issue in the upcoming three-tier panchayat elections in Odisha as the opposition BJP has been attacking the ruling BJD for "not providing houses to poor people in the western part of the state and eligible tribal beneficiaries in the Kalahandi-Bolangir Koraput region'

An exercise for identification of households eligible for assistance under PMAY-G was carried out by the Union Ministry of Rural Development using a mobile application o achieve the objective of

providing "Housing to All" by 2022, the Centre rolled out the revamped rural housing scheme, PMAY-G, in 2016

he programme envisaged completion of 2.95 crore houses with all basic amenities by 2022

ing scheme in the state, a charge denied by the BJD.

"I would request your august office to rectify this (closing the window for registration) injustice being meted out to the state of Odisha and its people," Jena

said in the letter to the Central Minister. He also mentioned that synchronisation of data of the Karnakata government with "Awaas+" programme was allowed

"Ignoring the repeated requests from the state will not support the cause of Odisha and it will further deprive lakhs of tribal beneficiaries living in the scheduled areas of the state," Jena said.

Referring to his discussion with the Union Minister through video conference January 27, and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he demanded "svnchronisation of data of 6.65 lakh households on the state-owned rural housing portal with the Awaas+ initiative".

An exercise for identification of households, which were eligible for assistance under PMAY-G but were included in the list of eligible beneficiaries, was carried out by the Union Ministry of Rural Development using a mobile application 'Awaas+'. The survey started in January 2018 and ended in March, 2019.

To achieve the objective of providing "Housing to All" by 2022, the Centre rolled out the revamped rural housing scheme, PMAY-G, in 2016. The programme envisaged completion of 2.95 crore houses with all basic amenities by 2022.

August 2021 launched Sarai, a mobile application, to receive information from hotels and lodges in the City about their guests under the Sarai Act, 1867. The move aims at keeping tabs on the stay of suspicious persons, mostly anti-socials, in hotels and lodges. Of the 800 hotels in City, more than 500 have been enrolled in the app. However, concerns have been raised over the privacy of the guests, given the chances of hacking the app, and resources with the hotels to check the authenticity of the data shared by their guests.

The issue assumes significance at a time when owners and a few staffers of two City hotels were grilled by the police as they failed to verify the authenticity of data shared by their guests - a few anti-socials, who were arrested for a series of thefts from chemist shops recently.

**Bhubaneswar Deputy** Commissioner of Police **Umashankar Dash** speaks to Orissa POST over the issue.

Is the Sarai app secure? What happens to travellers or business representatives if their the hotels data is leaked? routine au-

out details of their guests with respective police stations through hard copies or emails. Chances of data leak prevailed then as well. In fact, the present system (Sarai app) is more secure and access con-

Tourism has borne the brunt of the pandemic. Isn't arresting or detaining hotel owners or staffers at this juncture harassment to the very business that needs help?

No one is being arrested. In fact, if they provide data electronically, there will be a lesser need for blanket hotel checking by police. It is in the interest of the hotels to know who their guests are.

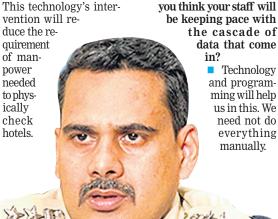
each guest? We are asking for nothing more than the usual documentation procedures fol-

manager or owner can verify the details of lowed by the majority of

identity proof and phone Bhubaneswar and number provided by the Cuttack? All CCTVs need not be guest is correct. monitored 24 hours. Many

Does Commissionerate Police have enough manpower to study every guest data that each of the hotels of the twin cities will upload through the

Sarai app? This technology's intervention will re-



CCTVs are required dur-

ing investigation post in-

Public is told that police stations across

understaffed. How do

cident.

Odisha

needed and programming will help to physically us in this. We need not do check hotels. everything manually. How do you think a hotel

AWARENESS DRIVE



Youths spread awareness on segregation of waste at source during an event organised by BMC near Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Monday

### Respite from biting cold in next few days: Met

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Odisha is set to get respite from the biting cold in the next few days, but may have to bear the brunt of thundershowers later this week, the Met Office said on Monday.

Cold wave enveloped some districts Monday, while the mercury dropped significantly below normal at many places across the state, a bulletin stated.

At least nine weather stations logged a minimum temperature below 10 degrees Celsius due to the northwesterly dry and cold winds over the region, it said.

Similiguda in the Koraput district was the coldest place at 5.9 degrees Celsius. Phulbani town in Kandhamal shivered at 7 degrees

Bhubaneswar recorded 12.6 degrees Celsius, 4.7 notches below normal, the Met office said The minimum temperature is expected

to rise gradually by 3-5 degrees Celsius in the next three to four days, it said.

The weatherman has also warned of thundershowers at some places in Bargarh. Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Deogarh and Keonjhar districts Thursday

#### 38-yr-old woman found dead in well

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: A 38-yearold woman was found dead in a well under mysterious circumstances in Samantarapur area here Monday, an official said

The deceased identified as Krishna Mohanty, who hailed from Balasore, had been residing at a rented accommodation at Lane 13 in Sri Ram Nagar area under Lingaraj police limits here for the

Police said Mohanty had quit her job as a conductor with the Mo Bus service a few days ago to

Sources in Capital Region Urban

Sources said Mohanty's landlord spotted her body in the well on the premises of the house and informed the police that reached the spot and sent the body to Capital Hospital for an autopsy. The body

Police suspect Mohanty might have had fallen into the well accidentally while speaking over phone late Sunday evening. Her family has

regard.

### यनियन बैंक 🕼

POST NEWS NETWORK

last few months, it was learnt.

focus on studies.

Transport that manages the Mo Bus service, however, refuted the claims regarding Mohanty's employment.

was later handed over to the woman's father.

not alleged any foul play. Police have been investigating into the matter after registering an unnatural death case (5/22) in this

'The real cause of Mohantv's death can be ascertained after obtaining the autopsy report," said

### REGIONAL OFFICE: BALASORE MANIKHAMB, OT ROAD, POLICE LINE, BHASKARGANJ, DIST.: BALASORE, PIN-756001,

Email: cb8832recovery@unionbankofindia.com, Mob.: 8827539953, 8249176744

#### SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE/MOVABLE PROPERTIES (E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and

Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Movable/ Immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/symbolic/physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India (Secured Creditor), will be sold on "As is where is" and "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" basis on 17.02.2022, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union Bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) & Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money

Dist.: Mayurbhanj, Ph. No.: 06795-232004, Email: bm2554@unionbankofindia.com **Amount Due** Name & Address of Borrower & Guarantors: Borrower: M/s. Mahalaxmi Egg Traders, Prop.: Mr. Sashikanta Nayak, S/o: Mr. Anadi Charan Nayak, At ₹ 21.90.227/-Udala Town, Gopabandhu Nagar, P.O./P.S.: Udala, Dist.: Mayurbhanj-757041 / Guarantors: 1) Mr. as on 31.03.2021 Radhakanta Nayak, S/o: Mr. Anadi Charan Nayak, 2) Mr. Umakanta Nayak, S/o: Mr. Anadi Charan Nayak Both are At: Udala Town, Gopabandhu Nagar, P.O./P.S.: Udala, Dist.: Mayurbhanj-757041

Property No.1: All that part of the property consisting of Immovable Property of Residential Land and Building in the name of Mr. Radhakanta Nayak, Mr. Sashikanta Nayak & Mr. Umakanta Nayak, Plot No.: 1212/2096 of Khata No.: 201/34, Area: Ac.0.60 dec, At: Udala Town, Gopabandhu Nagar, P.O./PS.: Udala, Dist.: Mayurbhanj-757041, Bounded by North: Common Road, South: Land of Satyabhama Nayak, East: Self, West: Land of Bishuprasad Sadual

Type of Possession: Symbolic / Reserve Price: ₹40,20,000/- / Earnest Money to be deposited **Amount Due** 

Name & Address of Borrower, Guarantor, Co-obligant & Mortgagor:

Borrower: M/s. Nayak Chicken Centre, Prop.: Mr. Umakanta Nayak, S/o.: Mr. Anadi Charan Nayak, Ward No.: 10, Gopabandhu Nagar, P.S.: Udala No.: 119, Dist.: Mayurbhani, Odisha / Co-obligant / Guarantor / Mortgagor: Mrs. Satyabhama Nayak, W/o: Mr. Anadi Charan Nayak, Ward No.: 10, Gopabandhu Nagar P.S.: Udala No.: 119, Dist.: Mayurbhanj, Odisha

₹ 32.93.575/as on 31.05.2018 with further interest Cost and expenses Property No.2: All that part and parcel of the Immovable Property residential Vacant Land measuring Area: Ac.0.500dec., situated

at Mouza: Udala Town, Plot No.: 1211/2097, Mutation Khata No.: 201/64, Kissam: Gharabari-1, Unit No.: 10, Gopabandhu Nagar, P.S.: Udala No.: 119, Dist.: Mayurbhanj, in the name of **Mrs. Satyabhama Nayak**, W/o: Mr. Anadi Charan Nayak, Bounded by North: Jaychandra Patra, South: Sasikanta and others, East: Self Plot, West: Anadi Chandra Nayak & Road Type of Possession: Symbolic / Reserve Price: ₹44,54,000/- / Earnest Money to be deposited: ₹4,45,400/-SATHIPUR BRANCH, P.O.: Dulakhpatna, Via: Barundai, Dist.: Jajpur-755025,

Ph. No.: 9368855121, Email: bm1004@unionbankofindia.com

Name & Address of Borrower, Co-obligant & Guarantor: Borrower: M/s. Shyamshree Industries, Prop.: Mrs. Manaswini Dhal, W/o: Manoj Dhal, Brajanagar,

Rudhia, Jajpur-755043 / Co-obligant/Guarantor: Mrs. Menaka Kumari Dhal, W/o: Shyam Sundar Dhal, Brajanagar, Rudhia, Jajpur-755043 / Guarantor: Mr. Manoj Dhal, Brajanagar, Rudhia, Jajpur-

₹ 11,25,951/- as on 31.03.2019 with further interest, Cost

Cost and expenses

**Amount Due** 

₹ 36.90.331.39

Sd/- Authorized Officer, Union Bank of India

**Amount Due** 

Property No.3: 1) Factory Land and Building belonging to Mrs. Manaswini Dhal bearing Khata No.: 89, Plot No.: 188, Area Ac.0.160 Dec. & 2) Vacant Plot belonging to Mrs. Menaka Dhal bearing Khata No.: 89, Plot No.: 310, Area: Ac.0.110 dec., Total Area: Ac.0.270 Dec., Kissam: Gharabari, Mouza: Brajanagar, P.S.: Jajpur, Tahasil: Jajpur, Dist.: Jajpur, Plot No.: 188 is Bounded by North: Plot No.: 179, 189 & 190, South: Plot No.: 187 & 181, East: Plot No.: 191, West: Road, Plot No.: 310 is Bounded by North: Road, South: Plot No.: 187 & 181, East: Plot No.: 309, West: Plot No.: 308 & 311

Type of Possession: Symbolic / Reserve Price: ₹42,43,000/- / Earnest Money to be deposited: ₹4,24,300/-Amount Due

Name & Address of Borrowers/Co-applicants:

Place: Balasore, Date: 31.01.2022

Borrowers/Co-applicants: 1) Mr. Gopal Bal, S/o: Makar Bal, At: Tarapada, P.O.: Tarakote, Dist.: Jajpur Mrs. Snehalata Samal, W/o: Harekrushna Samal, At: Damodarpur, P.O.: Kumbhiragadia, Jajpur-755025, Mr. Dilip Kumar Bal, S/o: Gopal Chandra Bal, D.No.: 8-8-130, Kattedhan, TNGOs Colony, Hyderabad, Mrs. Swarna Prava Dhal, W/o: Prabhu Dhal, At: Nerada, P.O.: Bhandaripokhari, Jajpur-755025, 5) Bidyadhar Bal, At: Tarapada

P.O.: Tarakote, Dist.: Jajpur-755025, 6) Santana Bal, S/o: Makar Bal, At: Tarapada, P.O.: Tarakote, Jajpur-755025 Property No.4: Immovable Property i.e Land and Building belonging to Gopal Bal, Bidyadhar Bal, Santana Bal, Swarna Prava

Bal, Snehalata Bal situated at Plot No.: 346, Khata No.: 65, Area: Ac.0.09 Dec., Mouza: Tarapada, SRO: Dolipur, P.S.: Korai, Dist. Jajpur, Bounded by North: Road & Nilakantheswar, South: Gouranga Bal, East: Gobinda Bal, West: Own Land Plot No.: 345

Type of Possession: Symbolic / Reserve Price: ₹20,91,000/- / Earnest Money to be deposited: ₹2,09,100/-

BALASORE BRANCH (ERSTWHILE ANDHRA BANK),	
Balasore, Ph. No.:06782-263530, Email: bm1022@unionbankof	ı

Name & Address of Borrowers & Guarantor: Borrowers: 1) M/s. Sindhujema Agarbati Works, Prop.: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Haripur, Via: Motiganj, Balasore-756003, 2) Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Haripur, Via: Motiganj, Balasore-756003 / Guarantor: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: Mrs. Subhadra Shaw, W/O: Mrs. Narayan Prasad Shaw, At: Kalidaspur, P.O.: M P.O.: Haripur, Via: Motiganj, Balasore-756003

Property No.5: All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Immovable property being Land & Building admeasuring Area Ac. 0.110 Dec and Ac.0.190 Dec., Total Area: Ac.0.300 dec., situated in Plot No.: 277 & 278, Khata No.: 157/86, situated at Jhatigudia, Gobindapur , Khantapada, Kuligaon Road, Balasore held in the names of Mr. Narayan Prasad Shaw, Bounded by North: Plot No.: 560 & 561, South: Road, East: Purna Ch. Behera, West: Srinath Dutta and Immovable property being Residentia Land and Building, admeasuring area: Ac 0.040dec. situated at Plot No.: 275, Khata No.: 157/100, situated at Jhatigudia. Gobindapur, Khantapada, Kuligaon Road, Balasore, held in the name Mr. Narayan Prasasd Shaw, Bounded by East: Purnachandra Behera, West: Srinath Dutta, North: Plot No.: 560 & 561, South: Road

Type of Possession: Symbolic / Reserve Price: ₹49,06,000/- / Earnest Money to be deposited: ₹4,90,600/-

BID INCREMENT AMOUNT FOR EACH PROPERTY: ₹10,000/-

DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION: 17.02.2022 between 01:00 P.M. to 05:00 P.M. (with 10 minutes unlimited auto extention), e-Auction Website: www.mstcecommerce.com LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD : On or before the commencement of E-Auction

> For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit: https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp

For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/tendelViewAllAuction.aspx

bility metrics" as proxy measures for social distancing behaviour and potential Covid-19 transmission. But that analysis can be flawed.

on general surveillance data such as the number of confirmed cases, hospitalisations and deaths to track the spread of Covid. But that process can lag actual disease transmission by days and weeks. Analysing close personal contact rates is much faster, the researchers said.

### Can mobile device data help predict Covid-19 outbreaks?

researchers have accurately predicted outbreaks of Covid-19 using anonymous location information from mobile devices.

The novel analysis applied in the study. led by a team at the Yale School of Public Health, could help health officials stem community outbreaks of Covid-19 and allocate testing resources more efficiently, researchers said. In the study published in the journal

Science Advances, the researchers were able to identify incidents of high frequency close personal contact (defined as a radius of 6 feet) in Connecticut down to the municipal level.

The CDC advises people to keep at least six feet of distance with others to avoid possible transmission of Covid-19.

"Close contact between people is the primary route for transmission of SARS-CoV-2. the virus that causes Covid-19." said lead author Forrest Crawford, an associate professor of biostatistics at Yale.



study can reveal high-contact conditions likely to spawn local outbreaks and areas where residents are at high transmission risk days or weeks before the resulting cases are detected through testing, traditional case investigations and con-

tact tracing," Crawford said. The findings are based on a review of Connecticut mobile device geolocation data from February 2020 to January 2021.

A novel algorithm computed the probability of close contact events across the state (times when mobile devices were within six feet of each other) based on ge-We measured close interpersonal con-

tact within a 6-foot radius everywhere in Connecticut using mobile device geolocation data over the course of an en-This effort gave Connecticut epi-

demiologists and policymakers insight to people's social distancing behavior statewide." Crawford said.

Other studies have used so-called "mo-

Many health officials currently rely

## **Final notification for ULB** posts reservation declared

Notably, the state government has amended the Odisha Municipal Rules, 1994, to hold direct election for the posts of mayors of municipal corporations and chairpersons of municipalities and NACs during the upcoming poll

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Moving a step forward in conducting elections to the urban local bodies (ULBs) in state, the Odisha government Monday issued final notification on reservation for the post of chairperson in 107 municipalities and notified area



As per the notification issued by the Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) department, the offices of chairpersons in 54 ULBs have been reserved for women candidates. The chief posts in 9 ULBs have been reserved for Scheduled Caste (women), five for Scheduled Tribe (women) and another 40 for unreserved women.

Similarly, the chairperson posts in eight other ULBs have been reserved for Scheduled Caste and three for Scheduled Tribe, while 42 others are under unreserved category.

The department has issued the final notification after seeking objections and suggestions from all stakeholders and the general public on the draft reservation list.

'In pursuance of sub-section (4) of Section 47 of the Odisha Municipal Act, 1950 (Odisha Act 23 of 1950) read with sub-rule (6) of rule 67 of the said rules, the state government do hereby reserve the offices of Chairpersons for the categories," read the notification.

The H&UD department had reserved mayor seat in Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) for women candidates while Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Mayor post is unreserved.

Notably, the state government has amended the Odisha Municipal Rules, 1994, to hold direct election for the posts of mayors of municipal corporations and chairpersons of municipalities and NACs during the upcoming poll. The urban election is very likely to be held soon after completion of the Panchayat polls in the state, sources said

### Expectations from Union Budget '22 POST NEWS NETWORK

ture outbreaks.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the fourth Annual Budget of the Modi 2.0 government Tuesday. The focus of the Budget is expected to be on accelerating India's pace of recovery from the pandemic-dented state, along with shoring up India's healthcare system to prepare for any fu-

The government will continue to spend more to aid the recovery and put India back on a higher growth trajectory. Orissa POST interacts with experts from different sectors over their expectations from the coming annual budget.

Mona Lisa Bal, Chairperson of KIIT International School, said the year 2022 has started with a fresh wave of the pandemic that has further shaken the backbone of our education system. The learning loss created by the pandemic demands immediate attention of the Budget. The existing digital divide in the country is no longer news. According to UNESCO's State Education Report 2021, the availability of computing equipment in schools in India has been found to be only 22 per cent, and only 19 per cent of the schools have in-



ternet facility. The development of digital infrastructure did not receive due consideration last year. Hence, it is imperative to allocate sufficient fund for the development of a robust and improved digital infrastructure.

With physical classes being shut once again, students will be dependent on online classes. We must ensure no student in the country is left behind owing to financial and technological disadvantage, she added.

General Secretary of Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) Srinibas Subudhi said, We expect special plans from government for the hospitality sector which employs nearly 4.5 crore people and provides livelihood to around 16 crore people. We also expect measures like rationalisation of taxes and facilitation of ease in doing business along with health cards for those who have less than ₹15,000 salary.

Health Expert Amrit Pattojoshi opined that deduction limit on health insurance premium should be increased. Healthcare is exempted from GST, limiting healthcare providers to avail input credit. 'We should not forget that while healthcare providers do not charge GST, they do pay GST on many of their purchases, creating an imbalance. A remuneration and pension scheme should be created for many athletes and not just for the medal achievers in international events. Unfortunately while the top ones achieve glory and substantial financial rewards, others find it difficult to even survive. A good financial support will help create more athletes of repute as it would provide a means of livelihood even when one doesn't study," he said.

City resident and urban planner Piyush Ranjan Rout said, "The pandemic has presented more poor in urban areas than unemployment. So an employment guaranteed livelihood programme seems reasonable for India's urban sector budget 2022. The government can't do much on price escalation in LPG & Petroleum products. However, it can abolish taxation in Bicycle & Cycling accessories for affordability of majority of people."

Environment expert Jaya Krushna Panigrahi said in addition to various pro-people programmes, the government is expected to emphasise on the environmental challenges by making appropriate budget provisions. Areas such as alternative sources of energy, electric vehicles, green technology, pollution prevention, forest and wildlife conservation, and aforestation need to be prioritised. Provisions for adaptation and mitigation measures regarding global warming and climate change should be atop our environment agenda to meet

#### **Vignesh Mahanti** to command COSA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Brigadier Vignesh Mahanti, Sena Medal, took over the charge of Commander of Chhattisgarh and Odisha Sub Area (COSA) Monday from Brigadier Prashant Chauhan, Sena Medal, at a solemn ceremony at Nava Raipur.

During his illustrious career spanning over three decades, Brigadier Mahanti acquired the experience of numerous important operational and administrative appointments, both in India and abroad. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (Khadakwasla), Army School of Ammunition (UK), Defence Service Staff College (Wellington) and National Defence College (Phillipines). He has commanded an Engineer Regiment in Kashmir Valley and a Mountain Brigade in Eastern Theatre.

An engineering graduate, he holds a post graduate degree in Defence & Strategic Studies from Chennai University, and Masters in National Security Administration from the Philippines.

#### **Vice Army Chief CP Mohanty retires**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Lieutenant General CP Mohanty superannuated as Vice Army Chief Monday, an official statement said.

Mohanty took charge as Vice Army Chief February 1 last year. He was heading the Army's Southern Command when he was appointed as Vice Chief of the Army Staff (VCOAS). "Lieutenant General CP Mohanty, Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS) superannuated today," the Indian Army tweeted

An alumnus of Indian Military College, Dehradun, and National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Mohanty was commissioned into the Rajput Regiment June 12, 1982.

#### **CLASSIFIED**

#### **AFFIDAVIT**

By the virtue of an affidavit No. 52AA186207 Dt.27.01.2022 before the Court of Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar, that I, do hereby declare that, myself Bishnu Prasad Lenka and Bishnu Prasada Lenka, who is son of Maheswar Lenka of Jagannath Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 25 is one and same person.









### **BACK TO**

Forest officials catch a Gharial from Mahanadi near Madhusudan bridge in Cuttack. remove a net from its mouth and release it back to the river. Monday

OP PHOTOS

ulation (na%4300) and included

people from South and North India.

perimental and computational

modeling studies to unravel the

They used a combination of ex-

#### **CLASHING SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT**

### **Another group demands** timely Plus II board exam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Few days after some Plus II students demanded cancellation of board exams due to the ongoing pandemic, another group of students Monday here staged a protest demanding quite the opposite, i.e. commencement of board examination.

Several Plus II students gathered near the Master Canteen Square Monday to press for their demand of conducting the board examination. They said they are prepared for the exam which should be held at any cost as "it is directly linked to their future." 'We have gathered here to de-

mand for the commencement of our board exams, be it in offline or online mode. Our future will be uncertain if the examination is

not held," said students. They further remarked that only pared for the exams are demanding for the cancellation.

Earlier January 27, several Plus II students had staged a protest at the same venue i.e. Master Canteen Square demanding cancellation of board exams. They had alleged that their future would be at stake if the exams were held without completing their curriculum. They demanded complete cancellation of the exams, asking as to why the board exam needed to be held in an offline mode while classes were

being conducted online. The students had also said that the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) and the state government should announce their Plus II board exam result over marks scored in quarterly exams in their respective colleges.

The annual Plus II examinations are tentatively scheduled to be held\_



### IIT-Madras team finds gene spurring Indians' risk of diabetes, BP

n international team of researchers led by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has identified a gene protein variation present among Indians and other South Asians that increases their risk of diabetes, heart attacks and hypertension.

The team found that the gene variation was present in approximately 15 per cent of Indian and other South Asian populations. Further, people carrying this variant are 1.5 times more likely to have hypertension, type-2 diabetes, and coronary artery disease.

This combination could account for the higher prevalence of metabolic diseases among Indians and other South Asians, according to the study published online in the

peer-reviewed Diabetes journal. Pancreastatin is a small part (peptide) of a protein called Chromogranin A (CHG-A) in mammals. It exerts important physiological effects, mostly with respect

This study has implications in the area of diagnostics and personalised medicine. For example, our research findings may help in identifying individuals (at earlier stages of their lives - much before the onset of the disease · because the genetic make-up mostly remains unchanged throughout the life) who may be susceptible to Type-2 diabetes. This should be particularly useful for people with family history of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases for preventive healthcare and better management of disease NITISH MAHAPATRA | RESEARCHER, DEPARTMENT OF

BIOTECHNOLOGY, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MADRAS

to insulin release. It inhibits the re-

lease of insulin in the body in response to blood glucoseglucagon and drugs like sulphonylurea.

The IIT Madras team had earlier analysed the effect of this genetic **NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK** 

The researchers used a combination of experimental and computational modeling studies to unravel the mechanistic basis for the higher activity of the variant peptide (PST-297S) in comparison to the wild-type peptide (PST-WT) and to account for the higher disease risk in the carriers of the 297 Ser allele

he study showed that the variant peptide had a higher affinity to the insulin receptor in cells, which prevents insulin from binding to the receptor of the cells for glucose uptake

his results in a higher risk of insulin resistance and diabetes among people who carry the variant

tended the sample to a larger popmechanistic basis for the higher ac-

carriers of the 297 Ser allele.

tivity of the variant peptide (PST-297S) in comparison to the wild-type peptide (PST-WT) and to account for the higher disease risk in the

The study showed that the variant peptide had a higher affinity to the insulin receptor in cells, which prevents insulin from binding to the receptor of the cells for glucose uptake. This results in a higher risk of insulin resistance and diabetes among people who carry the variant of this peptide.

'This study has implications in the area of diagnostics and personalised medicine. For example, our research findings may help in identifying individuals (at earlier stages of their lives - much before the onset of the disease - because the genetic make-up mostly remains unchanged throughout the life) who may be susceptible to Type-2 diabetes," said Nitish Mahapatra from the Department of Biotechnology.

"This should be particularly useful for people with family history of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases for preventive healthcare and better management of disease," he added.

#### CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING ST

variation on cardiovascular and

metabolic disease states in a small

Indian population (na %400). They

found that variation was associated

with higher plasma glucose levels.

In the latest study, the team ex-

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, **Saheed Nagar**-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

#### SHORT **TAKES**

**OrissaPOST** 

TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 1 | 2022 | BHUBANESWAR

#### Fire at Keonjhar **DHH**; none hurt

Keonjhar: A major fire broke out at the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) in Keonihar Monday, but no one was injured in the mishan. a senior health department official said. The blaze erupted inside the dialysis unit of the state-run hospital around noon. Though the exact cause is yet to be ascertained, short circuit is suspected to have led to the accident, the official added. The incident took place when 11 patients were in the dialysis unit, he said, adding, all of them are safe and have been shifted to other beds. The blaze has been brought under control with the help of fire brigade personnel and hospital staffers, the official added.

#### **Talcher JE under** Vigilance glare

Angul: Vigilance sleuths Monday conducted simultaneous raids on properties of a junior engineer (JE) in Talcher block of Angul district on charges of amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. The JE has been identified as Biranchi Narayan Sahu. Sources said the Vigilance sleuths conducted raids at four places including his residential house at Kumuda and another house at Ambal - both under Sadar police limits in Angul districta relative's house at Meramundali in Dhenkanal district and Sahu's office room

#### Youth held for raping 8-yr old

Berhampur: Police arrested a youth on charge of raping an 8-year-old girl under Sadar police limits here, Monday. The accused was identified as Ananta Behera, 20, in the area. The survivor was taken for a medical examination Monday while her statements will be recorded before a magistrate, Tuesday. Later, the accused will be produced in the court. The incident occurred Saturday, when the survivor was on her way to her grandmother's house near their residence. Finding her alone, Behera lured the girl to an isolated place where he raped her. The victim's mother lodged a complaint at the police station after she came to know about the crime.

# Kids engaged in poll campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 31: Campaigning for three-tier panchayat elections has intensified in Malkangiri district with candidates affiliated to various political parties launching a poster war to draw the attention of the voters. However, many candidates have illegally engaged minor children in the cam-



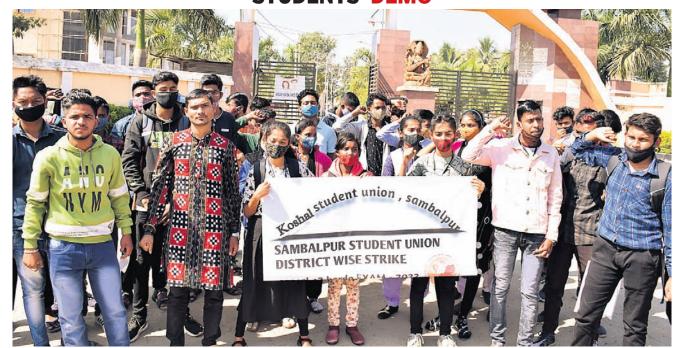
Children sticking posters and putting up party flags for some BJP candidates at MV-10 village in this district is a case in this point, it is alleged.

The rule says no candidate of any political party or contesting as an independent is allowed to engage children below 18-years of age in the campaigning.

However, several schoolchildren were found engaged by BJP leaders in sticking posters and in putting up banners and party flags. This has sparked resentment as well as surprise among the residents, who claimed that this has revealed the true face of the party which is advocating for development of children and vouching for a transparent government.

Sources said the party leaders have engaged the children in party works by giving them some paltry sum which is highly disappointing.

#### STUDENTS' DEMO



Students stage a demonstration at the main gate of Gangadhar Meher University in Sambalpur, Monday, demanding cancellation of Plus II final year offline examination

## **Poor literacy, admin apathy bane of Juangs**

#### DEVELOPMENT A FAR CRY

It is alleged that crores of ru-

pees are being spent for their up-

lift through various agencies, but

the Juangs fail to reap the bene-

fits of the welfare programmes.

More shockingly, the literacy rate

among the Juangs is still ex-

According to the report, Juangs,

one of the primitive tribes in the

state, live in 148 villages under

Telkoi, Bansapal, Harichandanpur

and Ghatagaon blocks. As per an

official survey, their population

is 21,146 (4,575 families) in the dis-

trict. The annual population growth

of this tribe is recoded at 2.6 per

cent while average literacy rate

tremely low.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 31: Despite execution of a host of development programmes by the state and the Central governments for the Juang tribe in the district, their progress on socio-economic and education fronts has been dismal, if the literacy rate of 12.24 per cent among these tribals is any indication.

Most of the Juangs are leading a miserable life in hilly and forested pockets without basic amenities and decent livelihood. Given their miserable condition, they seem to be far from the social mainstream, a report said.

TRACKS TO HOSPITALS ARE A COMMON SIGHT IN THE JUANG VILLAGES SCORES OF JUANGS HAVE NOT YET BEEN PROVIDED PATTAS FOR THE FOREST LAND UNDER

FOREST RIGHTS ACT RATIONS UNDER PDS DO NOT REACH THEIR VILLAGES DUE TO

COMMUTING WOES

MOST OF THE JUANG VILLAGES DO

NOT HAVE ALL-WEATHER ROADS,

LET ALONE ACCESS TO

HEALTHCARE FACILITIES. PATIENTS

BEING CARRIED ON COTS IN HILLY

among them is as low as 12.24 per cent

Most of the Juang villages do not have all-weather roads, let alone access to healthcare facilities. Patients being carried on cots in hilly tracks to hospitals are a common sight in the Juang villages. In many cases, patients die on the way to hospitals.

In 1987, the government had set up Juang Unnayan Samiti at Gonasika under Bansapal block to carry out development works for the tribals. Initially, seven Juang villages were brought under the Samiti. In 1996, 32 more villages were included in it which was the last addition.

Residents of the remaining 116

Juang villages have been demanding their inclusion in the Samiti for a long time but to no avail. They alleged that the government has been apathetic towards their development.

Moreover, several other agencies like Juang Development Agency (JDA) and Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) are spending crores of rupees for development of tribals. Sources said Juangs fail to reap the benefits of various schemes due to lack of proper monitoring.

Moreover, scores of Juangs have not yet been provided pattas for the forest land under Forest Rights Act (FRA). Rations under PDS do not reach their villages due to commuting woes.

Most of the Juangs migrate outside in search of work due to lack of livelihood opportunities in their

Most Juang kids are deprived of education. They are seen grazing cattle while some of them work as child labourers to supplement their family income.

However, ITDA project administrator Bijan Thamb said all possible steps are being taken for development of Juangs.

Land is being provided to them under FRA while steps are being taken for road, healthcare, education and drinking water, he

### 256 in the fray for 69 ZP zones in Ćanjam



PI HAS FIELDED SIX

CANDIDATES, CPM THREE, BSP **FIVE WHILE 14 ARE FROM OTHER** PARTIES AND 13 ARE INDEPENDENT

ATOTAL OF 1,563 CANDIDATES ARE CONTESTING FOR SARPANCH POSTS, 10,500 FOR WARD MEMBER AND 1,348 FOR **SAMITI MEMBER POSTS IN 503** PANCHAYATS OF 22 BLOCKS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhamapur, Jan 31: Altogether 256 candidates are in the fray for the 69 zilla parsihad (ZP) zones in Ganjam district, said sources.

According to reports, 67 ZP seats will see triangular fight as the Congress was unable to field candidates for two ZP seats.

CPI has fielded six candidates, CPM three, BSP five while 14 and 13 candidates are from other parties and independents respectively. Meanwhile, candidates contesting for posts of sarpanch, samiti member and ward member have started their door-to-door campaign.

A total of 1,563 candidates are contesting for sarpanch posts, 10,500 ward member and 1,348 samiti member posts in 503 panchayats of

According to political observers, the BJD and BJP are focusing on winning more sarpanch and ZP member seats while the Congress seems to have lagging behind in campaign, given its weak organisational base. Congress had failed to find a candidate for ZP zone-15 in Chikiti block. CPI has fielded its candidate for ZP zone-25 in Digapahandi block as part of a seat arrangement with Congress, said Maheswar Patra, vice president of the district unit of Congress.

In ZP zone-15 under Sadar block, both CPI and CPM have fielded their own candidates, pointing out lack of mutual support and coordination. On the other hand, the BJD and

BJP have been working on their own strategies to grab more ZP\_\_\_ zones in the district.

#### **FARM PROTEST**



Farmers under the aegis of 'Samyukt Kisan Morcha' during a protest in Berhampur over inability of the Union government in announcing the minimum

### Parking on NH-49 threat to movement of jumbos

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 31: Scores of heavy vehicles plying in Keonjhar district for extraction and transportation of minerals have posed a serious threat to the free movement of elephants, said sources.

Parking of hundreds of heavy ve hicles on National Highway-49 leaves little space for free movement of animals, as per sources. The trucks have to stand in queues on the highway and adjoining roads waiting for their turn to carry minerals. As a result, the passage for wild animals gets shrunk, prompting them to stray into the nearby villages. This often leads to loss of human lives and properties.

The blazing lights of hundreds of trucks parked on the highway near Kaipur and the deafening



sound of their horns are deterring the animals to move from one jungle to another

The man-animal conflict is only increasing by the day while forest officials are clueless about a lasting solution to the problem.

The Kaipur-Anjar stretch on NH-49 has become a vulnerable zone for the pachyderms. Elephant herds residing in forests under Bhuyan

ing it difficult to cross the highway with hundreds of trucks parked en route. Unable to cross the highway, a herd of nine elephants have stayed put at Bhejidihi-Talakainsiri jungle and are unleashing a reign of terror in the area. This has spread panic among the residents. The jumbo herd is now holed up

and Juanga Pidha ranges are find-

the jungle Sanamachhakandana river bank and destroying crops and properties of people. The presence of the herd has posed a serious threat to the tourists visiting Badaghagra.

Environmentalists have demanded an early solution to the problem. Zilla parishad chairperson Kamalini Patra has apprised the DFO and sub-collector about the problem. However, the authorities are yet to come up with a solution.

### Migrant workers' votes crucial in Kendrapara rural polls

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Jan 31: With the campaigning for the ensuing rural polls in Kendrapara district picking up pace by the day, the contestants here have eyed on migrant workers' votes to emerge victorious.

Many of the candidates are busy making arrangements for the return of the migrant workers. Local party workers are leaving no stone unturned in convincing the migrant workers' families and booking tickets for the return of the migrants.

A source said around 46 per cent of the total number of bona fide voters under Aul, Rajnagar and Mahakalpara Assembly segments are working outside the district and even outside the state. Every single vote counts as the total numAround 46 per cent of the total number of bona fide voters under Aul, Rajnagar and **Mahakalpara Assembly** segments are working outside the district and the state

ber of voters in panchayat segments is very limited.

'Candidates in panchayat elections here win or lose by a very narrow margin. The three major political parties – BJD, BJP and Congress – have been attaching 11tmost importance to the upcoming three-tier polls in Kendrapara district, as it is perceived as a litmus test ahead of the 2024 general elections. It has now become a prestige issue too," said Sunil Kumar Panda, a social activist.

Around 57,000 educated youths in Kendrapara, who have registered their names under the district employment exchange, are still jobless. Similarly, more than 3 lakh workers have migrated to places outside the district and state as well, Panda stated.

Meanwhile, local BJD youth wing leader Rajesh Kumar Panda said Chief Minister and the party supremo Naveen Patnaik has always given priority to employment. The BJD government has implemented welfare schemes such as KALIA and BALARAM for the farmers.

The state government has introduced schemes providing loans to SHGs at nominal rate of inter-



est in a bid to promote women empowerment. It has launched singlewindow facilities for young entrepreneurs to avail loans, the

youth wing leader added. BJD-government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ArcelorMittal group to set up a heavy industry in Kendrapara, in order to generate employment opportunities. In addition, the government has opened State Institute of Plumbing Technology (SIPT) at Pattamundai. including a skill development centre in the district. Employment

fairs (Nijukti Mela) are being held for the local youths, Panda further said.

BJP local youth wing leader Dillip Dash said, "The agricultural and industrial policies of the Central government are very much clear. If properly implemented, no job aspirant would have to leave the district and work elsewhere. The Union government's welfare schemes are being hijacked by the BJD government and voters have understood it."

Congress local youth wing leader Sambit Srichandan said, "Our party is always concerned about migrant workers and youth workforce. Former Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik had introduced the 'Thousand Industries Thousand Days' scheme. The party is capable of finding out a solution to curb migration, he stated.

#### 8 minors rescued from **Berhampur rly station**

**Berhampur:** Childline officials

Monday rescued eight children including two girls from Berhampur railway station while they were being trafficked to Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The children were rescued from Platform No-2 of the railway station where they were waiting to board a train. The officials of Sishu Sahayata Kendra and Railway Protection Force assisted the Childline officials during the rescue of the minors. The rescued children admitted that they were being taken to Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu for work in various establishments there. Among the minors, five had railway tickets to Tamil Nadu while the remaining three had tickets to Viiavawada in Andhra Pradesh While three boys and two girls belong to Ganjam district, two boys are from Kandhamal and one minor from Gajapati district.



In concentration and silence we must gather strength for the right

THE MOTHER



### Pegasus Again

t could be a coincidence or an attempt to brazen it out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi waxed eloquent on India-Israel ties January 29, a day after 👢 the New York Times reported the Israeli spyware Pegasus and a missile system were the 'centrepieces' of a roughly \$2 billion deal of sophisticated weapons and intelligence gear between India and Israel in 2017. The report and the damning 'disclosure' proves false the Centre's persistent denial of ever buying the spyware. A massive controversy had erupted last year when the NSO Group of Israel hit the headlines over the alleged use of its Pegasus software by some governments to spy on journalists, human rights defenders, politicians and others in a number of countries, including India. This caused consternation among the people as the spyware was suspected to have been used to invade their privacy through access to their mobile phones that could track all their calls, messages and even their movements in their homes and outside as captured in the camera of their mobile sets.

The NYT, in a report titled 'The Battle for the World's Most Powerful Cyberweapon', said that the Israeli firm NSO Group had, for nearly a decade, been selling its surveillance software on a subscription basis to law-enforcement and intelligence agencies around the world, promising that it could do what no one else - not a private company, not even a state intelligence service - could do. It could consistently and reliably crack the encrypted communications of any iPhone or Android smartphone. Noteworthy is that it not only can collect present data but is capable of gathering messages and

The report also referred to Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017 - to become the first Indian prime minister to visit the country. That itself, the report suggested, showed there was more to the visit than met the eye. For decades, India had followed a policy of 'commitment to the Palestinian cause' that resulted in frosty relations with Israel. The Modi visit, however, was very cordial and then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Indian counterpart were seen walking together barefoot on a local beach.

The NYT report says the two leaders had every reason to feel happy and warm towards each other as their countries had agreed on the sale of a package of sophisticated weapons and intelligence gear. Months later, Netanyahu made a rare state visit to India and in June 2019 India voted in support of Israel at the UN's Economic and Social Council to deny observer status to a Palestinian human rights organisation, a first for this nation.

As if to confirm the NYT report about Modi's bonhomie with Israel for handing over to his government the spyware to carry out targeted surveillance on citizens he considers inimical to his political career, Modi said, in a video message January 29, the importance of India-Israel relations "grew even further with the changing global scenario." When the world is witnessing important changes, the importance of India-Israel relations has increased even more, the PM said on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel. Apparently to create the impression that there is nothing amiss, Modi even went a step further to say there cannot be a better opportunity than now for setting new targets for mutual cooperation between the two nations when India is celebrating 75 years of its Independence and Israel will do so next year. The rhetoric was not missed on the Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett who delivered a video message on the occasion iterating India and Israel shared much in common and their relations would grow from strength to strength. Several monuments in India and Israel were also lit up on the occasion.

Interestingly, a Supreme Court advocate, Manohar Lal Sharma, has circulated in the media a signed online copy of a plea he claims to have filed in the apex court for an investigation into the purported disclosure in the NYT that India had bought Pegasus spyware. His plea is the apex court issue necessary direction to register FIR for investigation to recover public money paid for the alleged deal keeping the Parliament in the dark and prosecute concerned persons, including the PM, in accordance with law. The advocate is one of the petitioners who had earlier approached the SC seeking a probe into whether the Indian government possessed the spyware and had used it to snoop on citizens, including parliamentarians, journalists, activists, court

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India NV Ramana had in a 46-page order October 27 last year set up an expert technical committee monitored by a retired SC judge, Justice RV Raveendran, to inquire into the allegations of spying and file a report. The order came after the government did not file a 'detailed affidavit' in court in response to the petitions, citing national security reasons among others. The SC came down heavily on the government for using national security as a pretext for stonewalling investigation into allegations of wrongdoing by the government. The Justice Raveendran committee recently invited persons who suspect themselves of being snooped on to come forward and hand over their electronic equipment for technical

examination to detect the presence of the spyware. This Budget session, like the Winter session, of the Parliament, is going to be stormy on the Pegasus issue as the Opposition is gearing up to take on the government for denving on the floor of the House any deal with the NSO and snooping. The apex court, the Opposition also demands, should take suo motu action after the NYT disclosures.

It remains to be seen how the government crawls out of this imbroglio now.

#### WISDOM CORNER

We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them.

Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success

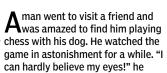
When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it. PAULO COELHO

#### WORDS**WORTH**

■ Roo

t has no connection with those bounding marsupials of Australia. It means to pluck the wool from the fleece of a sheep. The word is closely associated with the crofting communities of Orkney and Shetland, though the technique is now rarely practised because it takes so long. As you might guess from its heartland, it's a Scandinavian term, brought to the islands by Norse settlers more than a thousand years ago, and which has modern equivalents in such languages as Norwegian and Icelandic. In such harsh northern climates, to shear sheep would be to put them at risk of dying from the cold and wet, even in summer. However, the local breeds naturally shed their old wool in the Spring as the new fleece grows out. With a lot of painstaking work that required nimble fingers, local women would pluck or roo the old wool close to the sheep's skin as it grew out on various parts of the body. The new fleece was left in place, providing protection for the skin against the elements. One of the advantages of this method was that the fibres, being uncut, had no sharp ends and so the spun wool was softer than that obtained by shearing.







"Nah, he's not so smart," the friend replied. "I've beaten him three games out of five."

FOCUS TAXATION

### A REGRESSIVE SYSTEM

Parliament is one of the most awaited and watched events of this season. Our democracy requires that not even a rupee can be spent by the government unless we give our consent. This consent is given in the form of the passage of the Finance Bill by the Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha's approval is not needed for the Finance Bill. The members of Parliament vote on the Bill, and approve it on behalf of all of us, the citizens who are also taxpayers.

he presentation of the

Union Budget to

The expenditure of the government is ultimately borne by taxpayers. If it is running a fiscal deficit, then that is paid by borrowing, which is nothing but taxation on future unborn taxpayers. The size of the deficit of the Union government has been rather large, because of the burden of extra spending due to the pandemic. As of this fiscal year, roughly ₹21 trillion of spending is raised as tax revenue, and ₹14 trillion is through borrowing. This excludes some non-tax revenue like privatisation, which is small in relative terms. So, the size of borrowing i.e., fresh loans are a twothird of revenues. That borrowing is in the form of 10, or 20, or 30-year sovereign bonds, which must be repaid. But the repayment is from revenue raised by taxation. So that is why deficit financing is nothing but future taxation. Can the revenue raising capacity of the government not be more toward taxes on the current generation, and less toward borrowing? Excessive borrowing and high fiscal deficit become unsustainable and can lead to a debt trap or spiraling in-

How should more revenue be raised by a higher level of current taxes? Nobody likes to be taxed. So, the answer to this question depends on what is the 'least bad' solution to the challenge of taxation. Firstly, it has to be efficient i.e., the cost of collecting taxes should not be more than what is collected. Secondly it should be efficient in the sense that imposing of taxes should not



The share of direct tax in total revenue is a sign of the maturity of the tax system. By charging a higher tax rate on richer individuals, the direct tax system becomes more 'progressive'

alter taxpayer behaviour. For example, a steep tax on solar lamps will make people simply abstain from buying solar lamps, defeating the social objective of promoting renewable energy. Thirdly, taxation should also be efficient in the sense that there should be less leakage and no room for tax evasion. Thankfully digital trails of all banking transactions make it difficult to hide or evade taxes. Finally, taxation also has to be fair. There are two notions of fairness, vertical and horizontal Vertical fairness means that the rich should bear a higher burden than the poor (in relative and absolute terms). Our income tax system does follow this principle. But if a rich person is making all his income through capital gains and dividends, it is possible that he pays less taxes than someone who has only salaried income. So, we need to examine the violation of vertical fairness. The other notion, i.e., horizontal fairness means that if two people are making the same income, their tax burden should be the same. This latter notion is often violated. For instance, if one person gets all is his income from agriculture and another gets her income from a salary, then the two are taxed very differently. This is a consequence of the fact that our Constitution prohibits income tax on agricul-

tural income, and only the States have the right to tax that income. One broad indicator of the fairness of taxation is the share of direct taxes in total taxes collected. About thirty years ago the share of direct taxes, which included income tax and tax on capital gains, was merely 19%. Indirect taxes which include excise duties (which later were subsumed as Goods and Services Tax i.e., GST), sales tax, import duties, made up the remaining 81%. The share of direct tax in total revenue is a sign of the maturity of the tax system. By charging a higher tax rate on richer individuals, the direct tax system becomes more 'progressive'. Even if we had a single flat tax rate, with just one slab for all, it would still mean richer individuals pay a more absolute amount. This is not as progressive as multiple slabs, with increasing marginal tax rates. An indirect tax system is however regressive. That is because the tax paid depends on the price paid

and not on the income of the buyer So, the GST paid on a pack of biscuits is the same for a rich or a poor person. It will however pinch the poor person more, and hence is re gressive. To reduce the regres sivity of GST, multiple slabs were created, with a low rate for essential items like food and medicines, a median rate for most goods. and a high rate for luxury goods But this classification is arbitrary. A plain biscuit is classified as essential and a cream biscuit is luxury. Chappals are essential and shoes are not. This can lead to too much power of discretion in the hands of the taxman, endless litigation, even harassment or cor ruption. Ideally the GST rate should be uniform for all products except perhaps only a tiny, excluded set. As of now GST covers only about 40% of the GDP, with a vast number of goods and services excluded. And even among those which are included, there is a demand for lowering the rate from 18 to 12 or 5%

The reality is that the share of indirect taxes which had gone down from 81 in 1990-91 to 44% in 2014-15, has gone up again to around 55% now. Thus, our system has become more regressive. We need to have a higher share of direct taxes from not just salaries but all sources of incomes. The share market rose by nearly 100% from the lows of March 2020, yet capital gains tax collection has not even risen by 20% We are able to tax dividends since taxes can be deducted at source (TDS) at the company level but taxing realised capital gains remains a challenge. Similarly, taxing other forms of wealth or inheritance is still a bridge too far. As a result, our system remains regressive, and the total tax to GDP ratio is barely 10.5%, among the lowest compared to large peer countries. We need to move to a more fair, equitable and efficient tax system, with a greater share of direct taxes, and a lower dependence on fiscal deficit financing.

> The writer is an economist and Senior Fellow, Takshashila Institution.

#### SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Ajit Ranade

**WE NEED TO** 

**MOVE TO A** 

MORE FAIR,

**EFFICIENT** 

**OF DIRECT** 

**A LOWER** 

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WITH A

TAX SYSTEM,

**GREATER SHARE** 

**DEPENDENCE ON** 

**FISCAL DEFICIT** 

**EQUITABLE AND** 

### India's Central Asian outreach



Asad Mirza

**COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA IS ESSENTIAL FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND PROSPERITY** 

ndia's ties with Central Asia Asia is essential for regional se-earnestly started its outreach with potential for India to work collec-Lient Silk Road, along which goods, people, and ideas flowed. Geographically, Central Asia has been at the intersection of crucial political and economic transformations for centuries. While the dissolution of the Silk Road limited exchanges, there is a renewed effort to reconnect India with the region by the leadership.

The importance which India attaches to the five Central Asian Republics (CARs) was shown by its commitment to hold a virtual summit with the Presidents of 5 CARs, when they were unable to travel to India to participate at the Republic Day parade as chief guests due to COVID travel restrictions.

As expected, the issue of Afghanistan constituted one of the focus areas of the agenda for the summit. PM Narendra Modi and the five Presidents decided to set up a joint working group on Afghanistan, with a broad consensus emerging on issues such as combating terrorism and drug trafficking. Modi outlined the three focus areas for India in its relationship with CARs: Central Asia is central to India's vision of an integrated and stable extended neighbourhood and cooperation between India and Central

establish a framework of regular interactions at different levels and among various stakeholders; and lastly to create an ambitious roadmap for future cooperation.

Modi also referred to India's close ties with all the Central Asian states at a bilateral level, and also underlined the importance of each of these countries. He described Kazakhstan as an important partner for India's energy security.

He highlighted the fact that India's state governments are active partners in growing cooperation with Uzbekistan, while there is an active partnership with Kyrgyzstan in education and highaltitude research. Modi described Turkmenistan as an important part of India's vision for regional connectivity, and said this was evident from "our participation in the Ashgabat Agreement.'

With Tajikistan, he said: "We have a longstanding cooperation in the field of security. And we are continuously strengthening it.'

In the last decade, Central Asian nations have also been looking for viable partners particularly in economic and security sectors. Both share common concerns in tackling radicalisation and terrorism. India

can be traced back to the anccurity and prosperity; secondly to its 'Connect Central Asia Policy' initiated by UPA II. Later Modi became the first Indian head of state to visit all five nations in 2016. Since then there has been significant progress in cooperation, particularly in the fields of defence, energy and connectivity. The renewed Indian focus on the region can be attributed to the geopolitics of the region, particularly China's aggressive outreach with all 5 CARs.

> India has also initiated multilateral engagement with the region at two levels. The first is through regional connectivity, with a renewed push for long delayed projects. This received a boost after Iran and India signed an agreement to develop Chabahar Port, when Modi visited Iran in 2016. The port has now become commercially operational. Further, to facilitate transport of goods between India and Central Asia via Iran, India joined the Ashgabat Agreement in 2018, including Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

More importantly, 12 years after becoming an observer, India joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a full member in 2017. SCO is not only beneficial for India to remain connected with Central Asia, but also has the the region to address economic and security issues that may have potentially detrimental concerns for the world.

China has aggressively wooed the CARs through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), besides leveraging its geography, finances and population to ensure that its projects can contribute to making its dream of a new and improved Silk Road a reality. Operating at several levels the Chinese economic strategy in Central Asia also focuses on development of western China, through opening up of Xinjiang and ensuring its economic development in order to cool tensions there. In addition China needs CARs as a market for its goods besides getting its energy requirements through CARs.

As stability in Central Asia remains critical to the interests of big players like Russia and China, the CARs will remain in focus at multilateral forums concerning Afghanistan. This also underlines the importance of improving relations with CARs for India to expand regional cooperation.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi.

## etters

TO THE EDITOR

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

rissaPOST B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

#### Sublime Rafa

Sir, One of tennis' all-time greats Rafael Nadal, has attained sublimity. The left-handed Spaniard added only his second Australian Open title but that was enough for him to overtake his two great rivals Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic to lift his 21st Grand Slam. In 2020, by winning his 13th French Open title to his kitty of 19 Grand Slams, Nadal had equalled the record of 20 Grand Slams held by the peerless Swiss Roger Federer, Later, of course, Djokovic had equalled the record of Federer and Djokovic. At the Melbourne Park Sunday, Nadal came back strongly to overcome Russia's Daniil Medvedev, the world's second ranked player who had crushed Djokovic's dream of bagging the 21st Grand Slam in the US open. The lanky Medvedev was on the verge of foiling Nadal's dream too after he had gone two sets up on Sunday evening in front of a boisterous crowd that firmly stood behind Nadal. But egged on by the crowd, Nadal's artistic onslaught was too much for the 25-year-old Russian. Though he managed to salvage a match, point in the final set, that was not enough for Medvedev. In fact, Nadal's comeback, after struggling with a serious injury, and a surgery, to lift a Grand Slam was unbelievable. And, only Nadal could have done so because modern tennis has not seen a more resilient player than him.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

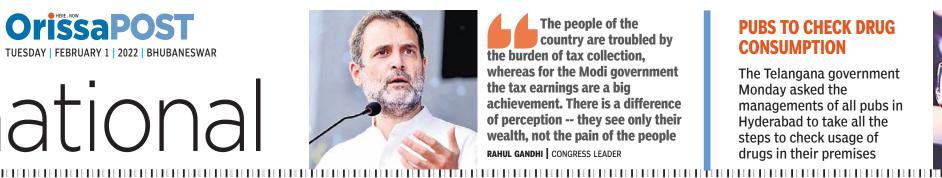
#### Sickening episode

Sir, The Centre has found itself again at the centre of the Pegasus spyware scandal that has sent seismic waves across the political spectrum. The sickening episode could possibly prove to be a whammy to the ruling BJP ahead of the elections in the five states. Two years ago, the spyware developed by the Israeli company NSO hit the global headlines for being put to use by some governments, including India, for snooping on human rights activists and journalists. It is disheartening to see the despicable issue has surfaced yet again in India. The NSO Group has maintained and officially declared that the surveillance spyware it sells are only sold to law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and it doesn't sell them to private players. If this is so, the ruling BJP must come clean and issue a categorical statement, clarifying its relationship with NSO and whether or not it has used Pegasus on Indian citizens. Any quiescence from PM Narendra Modi and his party will only add up to the strong suspicion and mistrust on the issue. And if the allegations are proved true, they bode dangerously for the health of our democracy

Ranganathan Šivakumar, CHENNAI



## national



The people of the country are troubled by the burden of tax collection, whereas for the Modi government the tax earnings are a big achievement. There is a difference of perception -- they see only their wealth, not the pain of the people RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

#### **PUBS TO CHECK DRUG CONSUMPTION**

The Telangana government Monday asked the managements of all pubs in Hyderabad to take all the steps to check usage of drugs in their premises





The schemes launched by the Central and state governments empowerment have been implemented



BANDARU DATTATRAYA HARYANA GOVERNOR

The state would simplify the laws to enable the poor to own sites



smeared with the blood and they are also responsible for the killing of 'Ram bhakts' in Avodhva. They had pushed the state into the flames of riots

YOGI ADITYANATH UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

#### SHORT TAKES

#### HP govt relaxes **Covid-19 curbs**

Shimla: In view of a decline in Covid-19 cases, the Himachal Pradesh government has decided to restore six-day work week for employees with immediate effect, an official spokesperson said. The cabinet, during its meeting headed by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur here Monday, however, decided to continue the night curfew from 10 pm to 6 until further orders, he said. All government offices will remain open as usual for six days a week with 100 per cent capacity, he added.

#### **Electricity Board** staff strike today

Pondicherry: Engineers and staff of the Department of Electricity here Monday said they would go on strike Tuesday (February 1) to protest against the move of the Central and the **Puducherry governments** to privatise the power sector. A spokesperson of tne association of the powe sector staff told reporters today that privatisation would affect everyone, mostly farmers.

#### **Kashmir gets** respite from cold

Srinagar: The minimum temperature across Kashmir improved as 'Chilla-i-Kalan' the harshest winter period when the chances of snowfall are maximum and most frequent -- ended, officials said Monday. However, the minimum temperature settled below the freezing point across the valley Sunday night, the officials said.

#### **Usha Sharma Raj's** new Chief Secv

Jaipur: Senior IAS officer Usha Sharma, who had been appointed Rajasthan's second woman Chief Secretary, took over charge Monday evening. Incumbent Niranjan Arya, who has retired, handed over the charge to Sharma, who was released from Central deputation Sunday at the state goverment's request. A 1985 batch IAS officer, she was posted in the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

#### Bengal schools, colleges to reopen

Kolkata: Schools for classes 8 to 12, colleges and varsities will reopen in West Bengal February 3, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced Monday. Addressing a press conference, Banerjee said flights from Delhi and Mumbai will be allowed to operate daily, instead of thrice a week. The ban on flights from the UK to Kolkata was also lifted but passengers need to undergo RT-PCR tests, she said.

## **Prez's address bereft** of anything new: Oppn

New Delhi, Jan 31: The opposition leaders Monday criticised the President's address to the joint session of Parliament saying that not only did it lack anything new but was silent on several key issues.

Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge told IANS that the address was nothing but a compilation of the government's claim of its last seven years' work. "Whatever Modi ji used to say outside the House, which is rarely seen inside the House, the same has been repeated in the President's speech. We expected something substantial on the growing unemployment. The Prime Minister had said that every year he will be providing 2 crore jobs. Where are those two crore jobs?, In seven years, it should be 14 crore jobs.'

People are still striving for employment. They are fighting for small Railway jobs and are protesting on railway tracks. Therefore, there is nothing new in this speech, he said.

On economic growth, he said that in the last seven years, the GDP has been the lowest and during Covid, lakhs of people suffered as the government did not have data to help the affected. As far as the farmers are concerned, Kharge said that four farmers were killed by the son of the Minister of State for Home Affairs and the same Minister is sitting with those in power. Airing a similar opinion, Congress Member from the Upper House KC Venugopal said that there was nothing new in the

old style of functioning and as they make a lot of promises during the elections which are left unfulfilled, the same thing has been repeated here. They are talking about Kisan (farmers) but have they done anything for them? They were on the streets for more than a year. When the election was near ing they succumbed to the pressure fearing a drubbing in the Assembly elections.'

Shiv Sena Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi called it yet another publicity stunt with any eye on the Assembly elections in five states. "I believe that the people of the country understand that the government has not done anything for them and has been only busy with the PR exercise," she commented. On the economic front, she said that the country has the highest number of unemployment. The youth is frustrated, outraged and protesting. On the inflated prices of the consumers' goods, the government has not been seen doing anything. Nothing has been done by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to make the the country 'Atmanirbhar'

CPI(M) Member from the Upper House Binoy Viswam also said that the President's address was silent on many issues. It did not say anything on Minimum Support Price, nothing for MSME and no compensation announced for the farmers. "Nothing has been for the repeal of the electricity Act and to improve the economy. The President spoke about all this on the insistence of the government."





Tourists visit the snow-covered Solanganala in Manali

### Channi, Badals, Amarinder file nomination papers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 31: Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, his predecessors Amarinder Singh and Parkash Singh Badal, and SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal filed their nomination papers Monday for the February 20 assembly polls.

Channi, who is contesting from two seats, submitted his nomination papers from the Bhadaur (SC) seat in Barnala district and the Congress leader said he has come with a 'mission' in Malwa.

The nomination process, which started January 25, will continue till February 1. Voting for Punjab's 117 Assembly seats will be held February 20 and the counting will take place March 10.

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) patriarch Parkash Singh Badal (94) became the country's oldest candidate to fight elections as he filed his nomination papers from Lambi, which the 11-time MLA has been representing since 1997.

Former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, who has floated Punjab Lok Congress and is fight-



with the BJP after parting ways with the Congress, filed his nomination papers from Patiala Urban Assembly constituency.

SAD's Sukhbir Singh Badal filed his nomination papers from the Jalalabad Assembly constituency in Punjab's Fazilka district. After filing his nomination papers from Bhadaur, Channi said "I have come with a mission in Malwa (region)," and noted that the area is backward in terms of development.

Though Capt (Amarinder Singh) and Badal sahib (Parkash Singh Badal) were there, the area promising to uplift the area.

Channi said he has come like 'Sudama' and hoped that people of the Malwa region will take care of him like 'Lord Krishna'. Later, the chief minister posted his picture seeking blessings at Rudra Shiv Temple Pathran Wali.

'We will register a big win in Malwa," said Channi who was flanked by senior Congress leader and former Union minister Pawan Bansal, whose son Manish Bansal is the party contestant from Barnala. Kejriwal Sunday had taken a jibe at Channi for contestThe nomination process, which started January 25, will continue till February 1. Voting for **Punjab's 117 Assembly** seats will be held February 20 and the counting will take place March 10

losing from the Chamkaur Sahib (SC) seat which the Congress leader currently represents. Meanwhile. Parkash Singh Badal, a five-time Chief Minister, completed the paperwork before the returning officer of Malout in Muktsar district, officials said. Amarinder Singh was accom-

panied by Union Minister and BJP's Punjab election in-charge Gajendra Singh Shekhawat when he went to file his nomination papers from Patiala Urban seat. Amarinder had been winning from Patiala since 2002 on a Congress ticket

The 79-year-old scion of the erstwhile Patiala royal family served as Chief Minister of Punjab twice.\_\_\_

#### Six killed as bus rams into multiple vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanpur (UP), Jan 31: Six people were killed and seven injured, three of whom are in critical condition, after an off-duty electric bus rammed into multiple vehicles in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur, officials said Monday.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and several other political leaders expressed grief over the incident that took place around 10.30 PM Sunday in the Rail Bazar area of Kanpur. The private agency engaged for electric bus operations has extended a financial assistance of ₹5 lakh to the families of the deceased, ₹1 lakh to the severely injured and ₹50,000 to those with minor injuries in the crash, the officials said. According to witnesses, the driver of the bus moved it onto the wrong side of the road after which it rammed into auto-rickshaws, motorcycles, cars and a traffic booth.

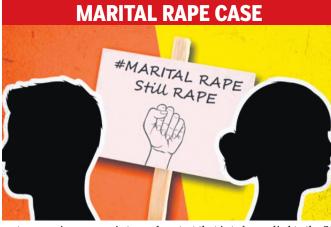
### 'Woman cannot be treated as commodity'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi. Jan 31: A woman cannot be treated as a commodity, an advocate for a petitioner in the matter related to the criminalisation of marital rape told the Delhi High Court Monday.

A bench of Justices Rajiv Shakdher and C Hari Shankar were hearing a batch of pleas, challenging the exception to Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and seeking a direction that marital rape is declared as an offence and a crime.

'We will address the issue of punishment, as it does not serve either the victim or the perpetrator. The exception is entirely independent of that concern," advocate Karuna Nundy representing petitioner NGOs RIT Foundation and All India Democratic Women's Association, said in her rebuttal submissions for the petitioners. "It is quite clear that a rapist does



not remain a rapist and marriage does convert him to a non-rapist," she added. Nundy said that her arguments

were divided into three sections. "First, our constitution is transformative and requires us to travel to the destination of constitutional morality. The second is what is the

test that is to be applied to the SC judgement in independent thought. Third thing is that we will address the marital rape argument and the fact that is pre-independence, has no application of mind." "Our Constitution is in our hands, women have gained universal suffrage, right to work, right to worship and

right against divorce by utterance of three words," she said. The arguments, which were inconclusive Monday, will continue Tuesday

Leading lawyer Rebecca M John, who is assisting the court in the matter as amicus curiae, had earlier told the court that there was a fair expectation of sexual relationship in a marriage.

"Expectation cannot be penalised. The spouse has a right to resort to civil remedies. But if the expectation becomes a physical act based on coercion and force. then that sexual act must become

an offence," she had argued. The Centre had recently filed a fresh affidavit in the high court, in response to a clutch of petitions to criminalise marital rape, maintained that it was examining the issue of broad changes in criminal law of the country and that the petitioner could also give their suggestions to the competent authorities.

### **ICG RECOVERS** ₹3,950CR IN '21



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) seized drugs and contrabands worth ₹3,950 crore in the last one year and the force is likely to have 200 ships and 80 aircraft by 2025, an official statement said Monday.

The force has saved 1,226 lives at sea in the last one year and 11,082 lives since its inception which translates into the saving of one precious life at sea every second day, the statement noted.

The Indian Coast Guard is celebrating its 46th Raising Day Tuesday. "From a modest beginning with just seven surface platforms in 1978, the ICG has grown into a formidable force with 158 ships and 70 aircraft in its inventory and is likely to achieve targeted force levels of 200 surface platforms and 80 aircraft by 2025,' the statement mentioned.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the ICG has maintained a roundthe-clock vigil in India's exclusive economic zone in seas by deploying about 50 ships and 12 aircraft daily, it noted.

"The hawk-eye vigil of the ICG ensured seizure of drugs and contraband worth more than ₹11,924 crore since the inception of which more than ₹3,950 crore worth drugs and contrabands were seized in the last one year," it stated.

The ICG said that to date, it has apprehended more than 13,354 crew and over 1,568 boats involvedin illegal activities in India's exclusive economic zone.

## 'Cooler' February likely, says weather office

The latest MMCFS forecast is indicating that these La Nina conditions are likely to persist during the FMA season. Thereafter the La Nina conditions are likely to start weakening to reach to cold ENSO neutral conditions during the second *quarter of the 2022, the* IMD report said



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 31: India is all set to experience below normal temperature over most parts of the country in February, while Punjab and Haryana are expected to get above normal rainfall, the weather office said Monday. According to the monthly outlook

for rainfall and temperature for February, the India Meteorological Department said the forecast suggests that normal to below normal rainfall is most likely over most parts of North India except most parts of Punjab and Haryana where above normal rainfall was expected.

"During the month of February 2022, below normal minimum tem-

peratures are most likely over most parts of the country except eastern parts of northeast India, south peninsular India and southeastern parts central India, where normal to above normal minimum temperatures are likely," it said.

'Below normal maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country except along the eastern and southwestern coastal areas of peninsular India where it is likely to be normal to above normal," the outlook for February said.

It said currently, weak La Nina conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific region. The La Nina weather phenomenon is associated with harsh winter conditions. The latest Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) forecast indicates that these La Nina conditions are likely

to weaken starting from the northern hemisphere spring season and to reach cold ENSO neutral conditions during the second quarter of 2022. It said IMD has adopted a new

strategy for issuing monthly and seasonal outlooks of rainfall and temperature over the country.

The new strategy is based on the newly developed Multi-Model Ensemble (MME) based forecasting system. The MME approach uses the coupled global climate models (CGCMs) from different global climate prediction and research centers including IMD/MoES Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) model. The IMD had, Sunday, forecast that Delhi along with other northwestern states like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh will receive rainfall during February 2-4.

#### **THANJAVUR GIRL'S SUICIDE**

## Madras HC orders CBI probe

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 31: The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court has ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the alleged suicide of a class 12 girl student at a Christian missionary school in Thanjavur district.

The girl had allegedly committed suicide January 19.

Justice GR Swaminathan ordered the probe following a petition filed by the father of the girl who alleged that the Christian missionary school in Thanjavur had forced her daughter to do household chores after she refused to convert to Christianity.

The girl's father alleged that after she completed her class 10 from the school, the school had tried to compel him and his wife to agree to convert their daughter to Christianity.

The victim's father said that both he and his wife had refused and this led to the hostel warden forcing his daughter to do household chores in the hostel, including washing clothes and other utensils.

The girl's father said that she was forced to clean the school campus and was not even allowed to visit her house during holidays.

The victim's father in his petition requested for a CBI probe into the matter as the physical and mental torture inflicted by the school authorities had led to the suicide of

He told the court that a CBI probe would bring to light the conditions that led to the suicide of his daughter, including how the school authorities were forcing children from poor sections of society to convert to Christianity.

Justice GR Swaminathan in his order said that it was not fair for the state investigating agencies to conduct an inquiry into the death of the girl and ordered a CBI probe into the matter.

Tamil Nadu BJP President, K Annamalai had alleged that the school was indulging in forced religious conversions and that the girl died because she was forced to convert. Hindu Munnani and the RSS had also demanded a CBI probe into the matter.

#### **NCPCR fact-finding team meets officials**

Thanjavur: A 'fact-finding team' of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) Monday met district officials and others in connection with the recent death here of a minor girl by suicide, amid claims that she took the extreme step after being coerced to convert to Christianity. Led by NCPCR Chairperson Priyank Kanoongo, the threemember team also visited the school in the district where the deceased girl was studying. Kanoongo had earlier requested those who wish to provide any information or help to the fact-finding team regarding the issue to meet them at the Railway Officers Guest House here, where the meetings were held today. In the closed-door meeting, the NCPCR team met with officials, including the district police chief, government doctors who had conducted the post-mortem, local villagers, representatives of the school

### POLITICAL PARTIES REWARD TURNCOATS WITH TICKETS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 31: Several turncoats, cutting across political lines, have been rewarded with tickets by their new parties for the February 20 Assembly polls in Punjab.

Prominent among these include former sports minister and sitting MLA Gurmit Singh Sodhi, MLA Fatehjang Singh Bajwa and former minister Anil Joshi.

Sodhi, who was the sports minister in the Amarinder Singh-led Congress government, later joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The saffron party has now fielded the four-time Guruharsahai MLA in Ferozepur district from Ferozepur City Assembly seat.

Another former Congress leader and MLA Fatehjang Singh Bajwa, who switched over to the saffron party, has been fielded from Batala. Bajwa is a sitting legislator from Qadian. The Congress has fielded his elder brother and Rajya Sabha member Partap Singh Bajwa for the February 20 polls.

Former Punjab minister Anil Joshi, who quit the BJP and joined the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) last year, will contest from Amritsar North Assembly seat. Joshi was the MLA from this constituency in 2007 and 2012. He, however, faced dePUNJAB ASSEMBLY POLLS





feat in the 2017 Assembly polls. Sitting MLA and ex-Congress leader Harjot Kamal, who too joined the BJP, will contest from Moga. Kamal quit the Congress after the party denied him the ticket from this constituency and chose to field Malvika Sood Sachar, sister of actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood, instead.

After joining the BJP last month, Kamal had said he worked wholeheartedly for the Congress for 21 years but the party ignored him. "What is her qualification (Malvika Sood) She is just Sonu Sood's sister," Kamal had then said.

Two-time MLA and former Congress leader Arvind Khanna. who recently joined the BJP, will contest from Sangrur. Considered close to former chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh, Khanna had quit the Congress in 2015.

Former Punjab minister and three-time MLA Joginder Singh Mann, who joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) after snapping his 50year-old ties with the Congress, will be fighting from Phagwara.

Before joining the AAP, Mann in an emotive letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, had written, "The Maharajas, landlords, moneybags and opportunist leaders like Captain Amarinder Singh, Navjot Singh Sidhu and others came in the party for sake of vested political interests due to which the party had drifted from its core values and focus shifted merely to contest the polls and grab power."

#### SAD PATRIARCH, 94, IS INDIA'S OLDEST CANDIDATE IN FRAY



Chandigarh, Jan 31: Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch Parkash Singh Badal (94) became the country's oldest candidate to fight elections as he filed his nomination papers from Lambi Monday

Former chief minister Amarinder Singh, too, filed his nomination papers from Patiala Urban Assembly constituency for the February 20 polls in the state. Badal, a five-time chief minister.

completed the paperwork before the returning officer of Malout in Muktsar district, officials said.

With this, he broke former Kerala chief minister VS Achuthanandan's record of being the oldest candidate in the fray – the CPI(M) leader was 92 years old when he fought the Assembly polls in 2016.

The 11-time MLA has been ruling Lambi since 1997.

Voting for Punjab's 117 Assembly seats will be held on February 20 and the counting will take place on March 10.

and some present and former students of the institution. They later also

### Kejriwal defamed me, spread my name as CM face: Rajewal

Samrala (Pb), Jan 31: Sanyukt Samaj Morcha chief Balbir Singh Rajewal, who heads a front of farmer unions, has accused AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal of trying to defame him by circulating his name as their CM face for the Punjab Assembly polls before the party picked Bhagwant Mann. Rajewal defended his outfit's de-

cision of fielding Lakha Sidhana, an accused in a case related to Delhi's Republic Day violence last year, saying farmer leaders did not want him initially but he was people's choice and promised to mend The farmer leader also ques-

tioned the delay in the allotment of party symbol to his outfit by the Election Commission, calling it a BJP and AAP conspiracy. The Sanyukt Samaj Morcha

(SSM) is a political front of several farmer outfits who had taken part in a vear-long protest at the Delhi borders against the Centre's contentious farm laws, which have been now withdrawn.

Before the SSM was formed, speculations were rife that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had approached Rajewal to become its CM face for the Assembly polls, which was denied by the AAP.

The farmer leader denied that he was approached by AAP to be the CM face but claimed his name was circulated by AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal. After an election meeting Sunday at a village in Ludhiana's Samrala, the constituency from where the farmer leader is contesting, Raiewal told PTI that he had asked

Kejriwal to stop circulating his name. His strategy was to defame me by circulating my name as the CM



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Before the SSM was formed, speculations were rife that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had approached Rajewal to become its CM face for the Assembly polls, which was denied by the AAP.

The farmer leader denied that he was approached by AAP to be the CM face but claimed his name was circulated by AAP leader Arvind Keiriwal

the CM or hold talks with them. Rajewal said, stressing that he told the Delhi chief minister during a meeting that it was unacceptable and his party has given tickets by taking money. AAP has in the past rejected accusations that they gave tickets after taking money.

now withdrawn.

Rajewal also said AAP had offered them 20 to 25 seats as against the demand of at least 60 seats. He had earlier ruled out an alliance with AAP and claimed that his outfit never held talks with the party over seat-sharing.

Kejriwal had said an alliance with the SSM for the polls did not happen because of differences over seat-sharing. When asked if his

face. I never said that I want to be front will support AAP, Congress or any other party in situation of a hung Assembly after the polls, the farmer leader said it will be seen when time comes

On giving ticket to the Republic Day violence accused Lakha Sidhana, Rajewal said it was people's choice and he was given ticket after due deliberations.

The leader, however, said they didn't like Sidhana during his stay at the Delhi protest site as he often spoke against them.

When asked then why they fielded him and that too after knowing his criminal background and the trouble he caused, Rajewal said Sidhana had promised to mend

#### After the violence, Sidhana had rejected the charges, saying he was not involved in it.

On the allotment of party symbol, the farmer leader questioned the Election Commission's impartiality and accused the BJP and AAP of being in hand in glove against them. He alleged that the BJP and the Election Commission are playing a game, claiming that his outfit had responded promptly to the poll panel's objections over the application for the allotment of party symbol.

The farmer leader alleged that the poll panel never responded in yes or no to their application due to which they can't approach the court for the redress of their grievance. I as the SSM president wrote a letter to the Election of Commission of India through the state poll panel, which was forwarded but no reply was given, he said. He alleged that the poll panel is under pressure. Either they want to help the BJP or Keiriwal, he alleged.

The farmer leader also condemned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks after he was stuck on a flyover in Punjab's Ferozepur last month. The PM had returned without attending a rally there and according to some reports he told officials at the Bathinda airport to thank the Punjab CM that he is going back alive.

Rajewal said to speak as if to create a divide between Hindus and Sikhs in the state on the part of the PM was condemnable.

It was a political stunt to hide the fact that only a few people had turned up for the rally there, he claimed. The farmer leader also targeted former CM Amarinder Singh, saying he colluded with the BJP over the farm laws.

### BJP to go solo in TN ULB polls



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 31: K Annamalai, the President of BJP's Tamil Nadu unit, said Monday that the saffron party would contest the upcoming urban local body (ULB) polls on The party, according to

Annamalai, would field its candidates in all the constituencies of the state, as BJP functionaries want the party to contest a larger number of seats. However, the state BJP chief said that the alliance with AIADMK would continue for the 2024 general elections just like in 2019 Lok Sabha polls, and the 2021 Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference here, Annamalai said that BJP does not have any problem with senior AIADMK leaders O Panneerselvam and E K Palaniswami, adding added that BJP's national leaders have approved of the stand taken by the state unit of the party.

The BJP leader said that this decision would also help the AIADMK leadership to provide more seats to their party leaders.

The former IPS-turned-politician said that the AIADMK had

the party leaders along with the state functionaries of the RSS, it was brought to the notice that in urban local body polls, the chances of winning rests more with the ruling party This has led the senior leaders of

In a brainstorming session held by

the party to try and field as many candidates as possible and to assess the grass-root strength of the party

provided it 10 per cent of the total seats, but the BJP wants more share of seats, as it is difficult to share seats in local body elections.

It may be noted that several senior leaders of the BJP were pressuring the state leadership to go solo in the urban local body elections.

In a brainstorming session held by the party leaders along with the state functionaries of the RSS, it was brought to the notice that in urban local body polls, the chances of winning rests more with the ruling party. This has led the senior leaders of the party to try and field as many candidates as possible and to assess the grass-root

strength of the party.

### Rahul's claims of deciding CM face farce: Amarinder

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Jan 31: Even as he dubbed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's claims of deciding the Chief Minister face with inputs from the ground as farce, Punjab Lok Congress (PLC) chief Capt Amarinder Singh Monday predicted an abysmal defeat for Navjot Singh Sidhu from Amritsar East, which he had won in the past only with the support of the BJP.

Addressing the media after filing his nomination papers from Patiala Urban and inaugurating his party office there, the former Chief Minister termed Sidhu's charge of his hand in pitting Bikram Singh Majithia against him by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) as ridiculous.

"I'm not Majithia's uncle," quipped Capt Amarinder, adding that with 38 per cent of the voters in Amritsar East being Hindus and 32 per cent Scheduled Castes, Sidhu's defeat was certain. The BJP, as part of alliance with the PLC and SAD Sanyukt, has fielded a strong candidate from the constituency, he added.



With 38 per cent of the voters in Amritsar East being **Hindus and 32 per cent Scheduled Castes, Sidhu's** defeat was certain. The BJP, as part of alliance with the **PLC and SAD Sanyukt, has** fielded a strong candidate from the constituency

CAPT AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB LOK CONGRESS (PLC) CHIEF

On Rahul Gandhi's statement that the Congress would announce its chief ministerial candidate in the state after taking inputs from the ground, Capt Amarinder said this was just theatrics. He pointed out that as per procedure, the people elect their MLAs and then the CLP elects the chief minister, "and so all this talk of is just drama".

#### Tamil Nadu turning into a global space sector hub INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 31: A combination of factors - existing and emerging supply chain, entry of private rocket and satellite makers, an upcoming space port on the coast - is all set to make Tamil Nadu a global space sector hub, said industry experts. According to them, all the makings and markings are there to make it happen provided nothing contrary is done.

City based space sector startups like Agnikul Cosmos, GalaxEye Space Solutions and defence and aerospace electronics company Data Patterns (India) Ltd are into making small rockets, satellites and related systems.

Already Tamil Nadu is well known as a global hub for automobile production. There exists a vibrant auto ancillary eco system which is already being leveraged by rocket maker Agnikul. Agnikul is planning for a com-

mercial launch sometime this year

and serious talks are on with a couple of satellite companies. The Chennai based Data Patterns, a defence and aerospace electronics company has supplied the cable

harness health checkout systems



Everything that is needed for making solid fuel fired rocket engines are available within Tamil Nadu. Only few countries make solid fuel fired engines and India is one of them. The Sivakasi headquartered firecracker industry facing issues like pollution, Chinese competition can look at making solid fuel engines

S R CHAKRAVARTHY | PROFESSOR AND HEAD-COMBUSTION R&D CENTRE, IITM

for Gaganyaan – India's human space mission - crew module

The health checks of wiring harnesses such as high voltage insulation, continuity, isolation, current carrying capacity and other electrical parameters play a vital role in the safety of the crew module. Data Patterns with its long association with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has supplied the 14,000 point countdown checkout system for the second launch pad, upgraded the launch vehicle tracking radars and supplied the X-Band and C-Band weather radars.

Though not on very large-scale,

The trend of launching constellation of small satellites, the entry of small rockets -- from ISRO and private players -- coupled with the rocket port in Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu can become a global space sector hub

M ANNADURAI | FORMER DIRECTOR, ISRO

industrial units in Chennai, Coimbatore and other places in Tamil Nadu have been supplying components for Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) for the past several years, said Padma Bhushan Ramanujam Varatharaja Perumal, former Director at the ISRO and now consulting couple of space sector players.

The Indian space agency has its ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district for realising propulsion technology products.

According to Perumal, the greater boost for the space ecosystem in Tamil Nadu came with India's engineering giant Larsen and Toubro(L&T) deciding to make space sector related items in Coimbatore.

But how can making rockets and satellites make Tamil Nadu a global space sector hub? The answer to this lies in Kulasekarapattinam in Tuticorin district and the global space sector trend.

The Indian space agency ISRO is building its second rocket port at Kulasekarapattinam where from small rockets laden with small satellites can be launched. The ISRO is also in the process of realising its small rocket with a 500kg carrying capacity to be launched from

Kulasekarapattinam rocket port. Additionally, through the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UN-OOSA) ISRO has taken initiative to showcase the non-space faring nations its space capabilities and also provide training to make small satellites. Those nations are interested in remote sensing satellites for their needs. There is a strong possibility of the first set of satellites being made and launched into

orbit by India. Indian private and government rocket companies can offer cost effective launch services as Kulasekarapattinam is an ideal location for putting a satellite intopolar orbit since it is located on the east coast and near the equator.

## national



made a record of administering more than 150 crore vaccine doses in less than a year RAM NATH KOVIND I

#### **DELHI HAS REPLACED B'LORE** AS STARTUP CAPITAL: SURVEY

Delhi has replaced Bangalore as the startup capital of India as the national capital added over 5,000 startups between April 2019 and December 2021, according to the Economic Survey 2021-22. The survey, which was tabled in Parliament Monday, said 4,514 startups were added in Bangalore during the period





role of women expanding, so all women's commissions will also have to increase their scope of work and give a new direction to the women

NARENDRA MODI PRIME MINISTER, INDIA

Children are as susceptible as adults to catching Covid-19 infection as severa serosurvevs have proved but they are

unlikely to develop severe diseases

NK ARORA NTAGI CHAIRMAN



days and why there has been constant u-turns by senior

ALKA MUNDRA RAJ BJP MAHILA MORCHA

#### SHORT **TAKES**

#### Home delivery of medicines

New Delhi: In a new initiative, the defence ministry will roll out Tuesday the home delivery of medicines for veterans and serving military personnel in Delhi, seeking healthcare services under an online medical consultation platform. The home delivery of medicines under Services e Health Assistance and Teleconsultation (SeHAT) will be started with the Base Hospital in Delhi Cantonment and the scheme would be extended to more and more stations in the future, the ministry said.

#### Schools to re-open with 50% capacity

**Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh):** The Madhya Pradesh government Monday decided to re-open schools for all classes from February 1 (Tuesday). The classes, however, will resume at 50 per cent capacity. A decision in this regard was taken by the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan after reviewing the Covid-19 situation in the state Monday.

#### Maha: Man, daughter killed in road mishap

Latur: A man and his teen daughter were crushed to death by a speeding truck in Latur in Maharashtra Monday, police said. The incident took place near MHADA colony in Babhalgaon Naka area when the duo was going on their motorcycle from Shivani (B) to the teen's school, Vivekananda Chowk police station official SS Budde said.

#### **Leopard rescued**

Nashik: A leopard strayed into a residential area of Nashik city in Maharashtra Monday and also attacked a person, causing panic among locals, officials said. The feline, spotted around 6 am behind a bungalow in Jai Bhavani Road area, was later rescued by forest personnel after hectic efforts for about eight hours, they said.

#### IAS officer in CBI net

New Delhi: The CBI has arrested a Director Punjab Roadways, Chandigarh for senior CBI official said that was alleged that the complainant was due for promotion to the rank of General Manager, for which a Departmental Promotion Committee(DPC) was constituted in January



## No road shows till Feb 11



New Delhi, Jan 31: The Election Commission Monday extended the ban on the road shows, padyatras, cycle/bike/vehicle rallies till February 11, in view of the Covid-19 situation, particularly in the poll-bound states of Goa. Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

However, it has decided to allow physical public meetings of parties or candidates in designated open spaces with a maximum of 1,000 persons (instead of existing 500) or 50 per cent of the ground capacity or the prescribed limit set by State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), whichever is lesser, from February 1, for all phases.

The poll panel has also enhanced the limit for door to door campaigning, with now 20 persons, excluding security personnel, allowed, instead of 10 so far. Other

instructions will continue, the of-

ficials added.

The Commission has also now granted relaxation for parties to the extent that indoor meetings now can have a maximum of 500 persons (instead of existing 300) or 50 per cent of the hall capacity or the prescribed limit set by the SDMA while the parties/candidates shall ensure the compliance of Covid appropriate behaviour and guidelines and Model Code of Conduct at all occasions during activities connected with elections.

All remaining restrictions, as contained in the Revised Broad Guidelines for Conduct of Elections, 2022 issued January 8, shall continue to operate, the EC said in a statement. According to the EC officials, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra, along with Election Commissioners Rajiv Kumar and Anup Chandra Pandey, Monday

THE LIMIT FOR DOOR TO DOOR CAMPAIGNING, WITH NOW 20 PERSONS, EXCLUDING SECURITY PERSONNEL, ALLOWED, INSTEAD OF 10 SO FAR

ALL REMAINING RESTRICTIONS, AS CONTAINED IN THE REVISED BROAD GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS, 2022 ISSUED JANUARY 8, SHALL CONTINUE TO **OPERATE** 

of the present situation of Covid-19, particularly in the poll-bound states.

The Commission, accompanied by Secretary General and Deputy Election Commissioners, met the Union Health Secretary and the Chief Secretaries and the Chief Electoral Officers of the five poll-bound states, through virtual mode, to assess the present status and projected trends of the pandemic.

"In-depth discussions were also held with respect to current vaccination status of first and second doses for eligible persons in the respective states as also arrangements for polling personnel," the officials said. All the Chief Secretaries informed the Commission about their states Covid situation and how the positivity rate is showing a decline with the number of hospitalisation cases also coming down. They, however, said that Covid protocol precautions need to be continued to be observed so that no undue spurt takes place due to intense public contact because of heightened political activity.

#### Akhilesh files nomination from Karhal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Jan 31: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav Monday filed his nomination papers from Karhal seat of UP's Mainpuri and said the upcoming state Assembly polls will write the country's history for next century as he appealed to people to defeat negative politics.

Yadav said his "mission" is positive politics with progressive thinking. The Samajwadi Party (SP) has declared Akhilesh Yadav as its candidate from the Karhal Assembly seat, which is part of the Mainpuri parliamentary constituency represented by party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav.



"This nomination is a mission as this UP election will write the country's history for the next century. Let's take part in this movement of positive politics with progressive thinking. Defeat negative politics, remove it. Jai Hind!, Yadav said in a Hindi tweet.

He also shared a picture of his leaving on the Samajwadi Vijay Rath bus for Mainpuri from his native place Saifai in Etawah. Karhal will go to polls on February 20 in the third of the seven-phase elections in the state.

### Nobody losing jobs due to non-vaccination: Govt

Advocate Prashant Bhushan had filed an intervention application in the main petition, claiming people are losing jobs due to vaccine mandates

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Centre Monday refuted the argument by advocate Prashant Bhushan that people are losing their iobs and ration allegedly due to the Covid-19 vaccine mandates issued by various state governments.

At the outset, Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner Jacob Pulivel, a former member of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, contended before a bench headed by Justice L.Nageswara Rao and comprising Justice BR Gavai, that people are losing their jobs due to vaccine mandates issued by several state governments

'What is urgent is the vaccine mandate because people are losing their jobs. They are losing their rations," Bhushan said, arguing that people are not able to move around freely due to these vaccine

Opposing this argument, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, submitted that nobody is losing jobs due to non-vaccination. "Nobody is losing anything and nobody has come before your lordships," he told the bench,



which is hearing a matter involving issues in connection with disclosure of data on clinical trials of Covid-19 vaccines and vaccine mandates.

tion application in the main petition, claiming people are losing jobs due to these mandates. The bench told Bhushan that

Bhushan had filed an interven-

there are various situations in connection with vaccines that can be brought before the court, and it cannot handle all the situations.

It further added that high courts can also examine some

Bhushan submitted there is evidence to establish that if a person had the infection, his or her protection from the infection is far superior than any vaccination. He argued that vaccine mandates are restricting the fundamental rights of the citizens, and added, it is the fundamental right of an individual to decide whether he wants vaccination, while clarifying that he was not arguing that the vaccine mandate cannot be issued at all.

After hearing arguments, the top court said it will list the matter for final hearing.

agree to expand

cooperation at UN

New Delhi, Jan 31: India and

Russia Monday agreed to deepen cooperation at the UN Security

Council after the two sides held

wide-ranging talks on issues be-

Russia is set to assume the pres-

The two sides held bilateral con-

sultations on UN-related issues at

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Reenat Sandhu, Secretary (West) in

the MEA, while the Russian dele-

gation was led by Ambassador

Sergey Vasilyevich Vershinin,

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

ing Presidency of the UN Security

The MEA said Sandhu congratulated Russia on its upcom-

The Indian delegation was led by

idency of the UN Security Council

India, Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

fore the global body.

in February

Council.

### **Govt misled Parl** over spyware use, says Opposition

New Delhi, Jan 31: Indian opposition parties said Monday they will move parliamentary motions accusing the government of providing misleading information around the use of technology from Israeli spyware firm NSO Group.

The New York Times reported Friday India purchased NSO's Pegasus software as part of a \$2 billion weapons package in 2017. The government has previously denied reports it used Pegasus to spy on activists, journalists and politicians.

"This government is misleading the House, the Supreme Court, the people... as opposition, it's our responsibility to raise this issue,"Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, leader of the opposition Congress

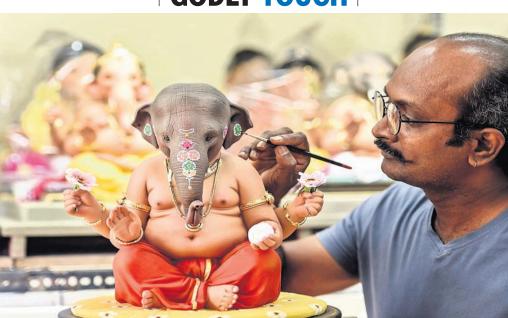
in parliament's lower house, told local media. The Trinamool Congress, a second opposition party, said it would move a similar motion in the a session of India's parliament, that began Monday. CPI MP Binoy Viswam Monday submitted a notice to move a privilege motion against Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for his statement in Parliament last year on the Pegasus spyware issue. Viswam said he submitted the notice in light of a recent New York Times report.

The report claimed that India bought the Pegasus spyware as part of a USD 2 billion defence deal with Israel in 2017.

It has triggered a major controversy with the Opposition alleging that the government indulged in illegal snooping that amounted to "treason".



### **GODLY TOUCH**



Artist Vishal Shinde gives final touches to a clay idol of Lord Ganesha ahead of Ganesh Jayanti, in Mumbai PTI PHOTO

### Majithia gets SC protection from arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: In a relief Bikram Singh Majithia, the Supreme Court Monday directed Punjab Police not to arrest him till February 23 in a drugs case so he can undertake electioneering, saying "we are a democracy" where politicians be permitted to file nominations and it should not get the impression that "motivated" cases are filed. Flagging the sudden



spurt in criminal cases against political opponents just before the assembly polls, a bench headed by Chief Justices N V Ramana asked senior advocate P Chidambaram, appearing for the Punjab gover ment, to advise the authorities to ensure that it does not get the impression that the state is acting against political rivals with vindictiveness

While protecting Majithia against coercive measures, the bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and Hima Kohli, directed him to surrender after the Punjab assembly polls, scheduled February 20, before a trial court which would be at liberty to hear and expeditiously decide his regular bail plea.

### "Both sides held wide-ranging discussions on issues on the UN

Security Council agenda and related developments. Both sides agreed to deepen cooperation on issues of mutual interest at multilateral platforms," the MEA said in a statement.



The two sides held bilateral consultations on UN-related issues at a meeting in Delhi, according to the **Ministry of External** Affairs (MEA)

"The Russian delegation briefed India on its priorities during the 76th session of the UN General Assembly. Both sides also agreed to work closely together, given the common challenges faced and in keeping with their long-standing special and privileged strategic partnership," it said.

Vershinin also called on Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and briefed him on Russian priorities during its upcoming-Presidency of the UN Security Council.

## Hamsters can infect humans with Covid: Study

CURRENTLY, AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE IN HONG KONG WERE CONFIRMED TO HAVE BEEN INFECTED BY THESE HAMSTERS, WITH ONE OTHER PERSON INFECTED THROUGH HUMAN-TO-HUMAN TRANSMISSION AFTER THIS

New Delhi/Hong Kong, Jan 31: The Delta variant of Covid-19 can be transmitted from humans to hamsters and then be transferred back to humans, according to a new study.

The new study, published in The Lancet in pre-print and awaiting peer-review, suggests that hamsters can spread the virus back to humans, Jerusalem Post reported.

The study revealed that the firstever hamster-to-human transmission was found January 15, 2022 in Hong Kong, linked to a hamster imported from the Netherlands, the report said. Before this, however, Hong Kong had ordered the culling of thousands of hamsters in pet shops, particularly those



purchased on or after December 22. Currently, at least two people in Hong Kong were confirmed to have been infected by these hamsters, with one other person infected

through human-to-human transmission after this.

If the findings are accurate and hamsters can indeed transmit Covid-19 to humans, this could become a serious concern, as they would serve as yet another vector to spread the virus worldwide, the researchers noted

The only other animal known to transmit SARS-CoV-2 back to humans was in the case of minks, which resulted in a mass culling of mink farms around the world, especially in Denmark

Besides hamsters, the novel coronavirus has been seen in many other animals after having been spread to them by humans. This includes cats, dogs, otters, minks, mice, deer, gorillas, ferrets, and pigs. However, these animals may often deal with the virus differently. Cats, for example, were noted by some as having recovered from Covid-19 very quickly. Deer were shown to be able to spread it to

one another, but they showed no symptoms. Pigs, while they are shown to catch coronavirus, not only do never show symptoms, they also never spread it to others, the report said. Due to Hong Kong's strict meas-

ures to stop the spread of Covid-19, the city had seen a sharp decline in cases. In particular, as noted by the study, there had been no locally-spread Delta cases since October 9. Airport screenings and quarantine measures had kept other cases out.

The cases currently in Hong Kong were, until now, of the Omicron variant.

Now, however, Delta has returned because of these hamsters, showing how they can unwittingly spread the virus even further.

#### allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹2 lakh from a complainant. A a case was registered against the Director (an IAS officer), on a complaint. It

## international



A quasi-state of emergency has already started, and our basic thinking is that we will confirm its effect, see how the situation develops and work closely with municipalities before comprehensively making a

ASSOCIATED PRESS

United Nations, Jan 31: The

United States and Russia are squar

ing off at the UN Security Council

over Ukraine, with Washington

calling Moscow's actions a threat to international peace and security, while a Kremlin envoy ridiculed

Monday's meeting as a "PR stunt."

The session kicks off more highlevel diplomacy this week, although talks between the US and Russia

have so far failed to ease tensions

in the crisis. Russia has amassed

an estimated 100,000 troops near

Ukraine's borders, stoking fears

Russia denies it intends to launch

an attack but demanded that NATO

promise never to allow Ukraine to

join the alliance, halt the deployment

of NATO weapons near Russian

borders, and roll back its forces

from Eastern Europe. NATO and the

US call those demands impossible.

Lavrov and US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken are expected to

speak by phone Tuesday, according

Russian Foreign Minister Sergev

in the West of an invasion.

FUMIO KISHIDA | PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN

#### **ISRAELI BOY CATCHES** THREE COVID VARIANTS

In a rare case, an 11-year-old Israeli boy has been infected with three different Covid variants in a year. Alon Helfgott has officially been infected with Alpha, Delta, and now Omicron, the Times of Israel reported

Russia, US square off at UNSC





was a unique opportunity for everyone, from the youngest to the

MARCELO REBELO DE SOUSA PRESIDENT, PORTUGA

I am not astonished by the harsh words from my opponents, but I am astonished by the silence of my well-



YUSUF RAZA GILANI LOP, PAKISTAN

EU leaders cooperation with Libvan authorities is keeping desperate people trapped in

unimaginable horrors in Libya. It is high time to put an end to this callous approach

MATTEO DE BELLIS | MIGRATION RESEARCHER

#### SHORT TAKES

#### AU suspends **Burkina Faso**

Ouagadougou: The African Union has suspended Burkina Faso from all its activities in response to last week's military coup, effective until constitutional order is restored, the AU said Monday. Burkina Faso had already been suspended from the West African regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, though ECOWAS stopped short of imposing sanctions after the Jan 24 coup that ousted President Roch Kabore.

#### 2 cops shot dead during traffic stop

Berlin: Two police officers were shot dead on a rural road in western Germany while on a routine patrol early Monday, police said. The shooting happened during a traffic check near Kusel at about 4:20 am, police in Kaiserslautern said in a statement. They were able to radio that shots were being fired, spokesman Bernhard Christian Erfort told n-tv television, Reinforcements were unable to help the officers — a 24-year-old woman and 29-year-old man when they arrived.

#### Pak: 17 hurt in grenade attack

Karachi: At least 17 people, including two policemen, were injured in a grenade attack in Jaffarabad district in Pakistan's restive southwestern Balochistan province, police said. Senior police officials said that unidentified motorcyclists hurled a hand-grenade near a shop in a busy market in Dera Allahyar town of Jaffarabad district Sunday night. At least 17 people, including two traffic constables, were injured in the attack, they said. No group so far claimed responsibility for the attack.

#### 10 killed in Kenya vehicle explosion

Nairobi: A local official in northeastern Kenya says at least 10 people are dead after their vehicle ran over an explosive device on a highway Monday morning. North Eastern regional commander George Seda said the blast occurred outside Mandera town. It was not clear how many people were in the vehicle. Witnesses said the toll could rise because others had serious injuries. Police suspect the explosive device was placed by al-Shabab extremists operating in the area after crossing from nearby Somalia.

#### MARKING **eu presidenc**'



A view shows the Eiffel Tower lit up in blue to mark the French presidency of the European Union in Paris, France

says report

earn immediately,

ohnson to make

into what has become weeks of a

steady drip of stories about events

in Downing Street during the

COVID-19 lockdown, with reports

of aides stuffing a suitcase full of

supermarket alcohol and dancing

gatherings - including a bring your

own booze party in the Downing

Street garden - have provoked wide-

spread public anger. Millions were

kept apart from loved ones for

months because of the restrictions

and many were not able to say

their final goodbyes to dying fam-

of rule-breaking gatherings at

Downing Street or other govern-

ment offices, 12 were under inves-

tigation by police. As I have noted,

a number of these gatherings should

not have been allowed to take place

or to develop in the way that they did,

she said in the report, entitled

Investigation into Alleged Gatherings

on Government Premises during

Opponents were critical of the

This watered down update is ut-

terly pointless, said Ed Davey, leader

of the opposition Liberal Democrat

party. Everyone knows Boris

Johnson broke the rules and lied

to the country.

COVID Restrictions - Update.

limited nature of the report.

Her report said of 16 allegations

Accounts of more than a dozen

until the early hours.

ily members.

Dartygate scandal has hit

statement to parliament

PARTYGATE PROBE

London, Jan 31: An inquiry into

COVID-19 lockdown-breaking par-

ties at Prime Minister Boris

Johnson's office and residence said

Monday some of these should not

have taken place, and serious fail-

ures of leadership and judgment

occurred at the heart of the British

threat to his premiership over the

parties at Number 10 Downing

Street, and the report by senior

civil servant Sue Gray had the po-

tential to trigger an end to his pre-

miership. However, parts of the

report were not published due to

an ongoing police investigation.

which may allow Johnson to sur-

vive. He has so far weathered calls

from opponents and some in his

own party to resign by saying peo-

ple needed to wait for the report.

At least some of the gatherings

in question represent a serious

failure to observe not just the high

standards expected of those work-

ing at the heart of government but

also of the standards expected of

the entire British population at

sumption of alcohol at Downing

She also said the excessive con-

Gray was tasked with looking

the time, Gray's report said.

Street was not appropriate.

government

REPORT CRITICISES

**LOCKDOWN PARTIES** 

AT UK PM'S OFFICE

### UAE intercepts Houthi missile amidst Israeli president's visit

The missile attack came hours after Israel's President Herzog met Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Jan 31: The UAE's air defence forces Monday intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched by Yemen's Houthi terrorist group towards it, the country's Ministry of Defence said, amidst a historic visit by Israel's President Isaac Herzog.

There were no casualties resulting from the attack and the



fragments of the ballistic missile fell outside of populated areas, the ministry said in a statement to the country's official WAM news agency.

"The UAE air defence forces and the Coalition Command had succeeded in destroying the missile launcher in Yemen after identifying locations of the sites," it said.

In a tweet, the ministry said that the platform for ballistic missile launch at Al Jawf in Yemen was destroyed at 12.50 AM (local time). A video of the destruction was

The ministry also affirmed its 'full readiness to deal with any threats," adding that it will "take all necessary measures to protect the UAE from any attacks.

It also called on the public to follow the news on the latest missile attack from the UAE's official au-

Meanwhile, the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) said that the air traffic movement is normal and all flights are operating as usual as there was "no impact on air traffic"

In a statement to WAM, the GCAA said that "there is no impact on flights and airports resulting from the interception of the ballistic missile launched by the Houthi terrorist militia on the country."

Abu Dhabi and Dubai are important global aviation hubs in



**India Monday abstained** from a procedural vote taken in the UNSC ahead of a meeting to discuss the Ukraine situation

to the Russian Foreign Ministry British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will visit Ukraine Tuesday for talks with Zelenskyy, and will speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin later Monday, to

Dmitry Peskov said Monday that "hysteria promoted by Washington triggers hysteria in Ukraine, where people are almost starting to pack their bags for the front line.

While Russia could try to block the Security Council meeting if it gets the support of nine of the 15 members, the US was confident it had "more than sufficient support" to hold it, according to a senior official in the Biden administration who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk publicly.

#### Rogan apologises on row over Covid



San Francisco: Popular US podcaster Joe Rogan has apologised amid a backlash against-COVID-19 misinformation in his programme, while his platform, Spotify Technology SA, said it would add a content advisory to any episode with discussion of Covid. Rogan, a prominent vaccine skeptic, has stirred controversy with his views on the pandemic and on vaccines and government mandates to control the spread of the virus. Singer-songwriters Neil Young and Joni Mitchell announced last week that they were removing their music from Spotify in protest at coronavirus misinformation

### Ottawa: Demonstrators remain stubborn

Ottawa, Jan 31: Police and officials in the Canadian capital Ottawa say some of the trucks blocking the city center as part of an antivaccine demonstration should start leaving Monday, even as some protesters insist they will stay.

Dozens of trucks and other vehicles have been jamming up central Ottawa since Friday and thousands descended upon Parliament Hill to complain about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and COVID-19 vaccine mandates.

Parliament resumes Monday after a six-week winter break and Trudeau is set to address reporters at 11.15 am Eastern Time (16.15 GMT). "Demonstrations are expected to become smaller after today. However, it will take some time to clear vehicles from the downtown core," Ottawa city coun-

cil said late Sunday. There were few signs of activity



among the protesters early Monday, with many huddling in their cabs as temperatures hovered around -16 Celsius.

'This is still a very tenuous exercise, it's fluid in nature. Negotiations are indicating that some people are leaving the city from a demonstrations standpoint, that's a good thing," police chief Peter Sloly told reporters late Sunday. Canada Unity, one of the groups involved, said it wanted to gather 1,000 people to go into a mall and shop without masks. The Rideau Centre, a large nearby mall, said it would be shut for a second day on Monday.

#### anadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday he had tested positive for COVID-19 but was feeling fine and would continue to work remotely while following

Trudeau COVID +ve

public health guidelines. Trudeau went into isolation last week after one of his children tested positive but at the time a rapid test for him came back negative, he told the Canadian Press.

Police said Friday they would start towing trucks Monday if necessary. But by late Sunday it said they had avoided ticketing and towing vehicles to avoid provoking confrontations with demonstrators. The announcement spurred frustration among local residents who said they were fed up with the non-stop blaring of truck horns and demonstrators using the streets as an open-air toilet.

### Pregnant reporter in Af fights NZ govt to come home

**SHE SAID SHE TRIES** TO STAY CALM AS **SHE WAGES A PAPER WAR WITH NEW ZEALAND'S OUARANTINE** SYSTEM, BUT THAT **SHE WORRIES ABOUT HOW THE STRESS SHE HAS BEEN UNDER WILL IMPACT HER BABY** 

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Islamabad, Jan 31: She reported on the difficult conditions mothers and babies face just to survive in desperate Afghanistan. Now, a pregnant New Zealand reporter has chosen Kabul as a temporary base for her uphill fight to return home because of her country's strict COVID-19 entry rules.

Charlotte Bellis, 35, is expecting her first child with her partner, freelance photographer Jim Huylebroek, a Belgium native who has lived in Afghanistan for two years. Bellis, who is 25 weeks pregnant with a daughter, told The Associated Press Sunday that each day is a battle.

She said she has been vaccinated three times and is ready to isolate herself upon her return to New Zealand. "This is ridiculous. It is my legal right to go to New Zealand, where I have health care, where I have family. All my support is there," she said.

Bellis first wrote about her difficulties in a column published in The New Zealand Herald on

Thousands of New **Zealand citizens** wanting to return home have faced delays due to a bottleneck of people in the country's border quarantine system

Saturday. She had tried without success to enter New Zealand via a lottery-style system and then applied for an emergency return, but

was reiected. On Monday, New Zealand's

COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said officials had suggested Bellis amend her application or try again under different crite-

"I want to be clear, there is a

place in Managed Isolation and Quarantine for people with special circumstances like Ms Bellis. No one's saying there is not,' Hipkins said. He said while officials had needed to make some difficult choices, the quarantine system had worked well overall by saving lives and preventing the health system from getting swamped.

However, Bellis insists the decisions have been arbitrary. She said she sent dozens of documents to the New Zealand authorities, including ultrasounds and physicians' letters specifying her due date is around May 19. Yet she said she was rejected because she was told her pregnancy didn't meet the criteria of "threshold of critical time threat.'

"If I don't meet the threshold as a pregnant woman, then who does" she asked.

Bellis had worked as an Afghanistan correspondent for Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based news network. In November, she resigned, because it is illegal to be pregnant and unmarried in Qatar. Al Jazeera did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Bellis then flew to Belgium, trying to get residency there, but said the length of the process would have left her in the country with an expired visa. In the end, she and her partner returned to Afghanistan because they had a visa, felt welcome and from there could wage her battle to return to her home. They have a house in Afghanistan and after "evaluating all of our op-

tions," returned to Kabul, she said. Bellis said that prior to returning to Afghanistan, she sought permission from the Taliban. She said she had feared arriving "with a little bump and not married" could be problematic.

Instead, the Taliban response was immediate and positive.

## business

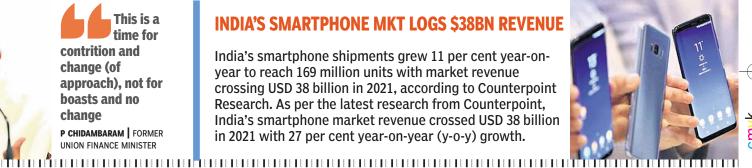


This is a contrition and change (of approach), not for boasts and no change

P CHIDAMBARAM | FORMER UNION FINANCE MINISTER

#### **INDIA'S SMARTPHONE MKT LOGS \$38BN REVENUE**

India's smartphone shipments grew 11 per cent year-onyear to reach 169 million units with market revenue crossing USD 38 billion in 2021, according to Counterpoint Research. As per the latest research from Counterpoint, India's smartphone market revenue crossed USD 38 billion in 2021 with 27 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) growth.





semiconductor supplies have continued to constrain sales this quarter, we continue demand for our products underlining the desirability of our vehicles

THIERRY BOLLORÉ JLR CEO

With the Kia Carens, we bring to the table a whole new set of value propositions aligning with requirements of

the new-age customer. I am excited about the beginning of this new

TAE-JIN PARK MD & CEO, KIA INDIA



implications on the country's financial stability

SANJEEV SANYAL PRINCIPAL ECONOMIC

#### SHORT TAKES

#### **UCO Bank net** profit soars

New Delhi: New Delhi: Public sector UCO Bank Monday reported a multi-fold jump in its net profit at Rs 310.39 crore for the quarter ended December 2021, helped by a modest growth in core interest income and trimming of bad loans ratio. The Kolkata-headquartered lender had posted a net profit of Rs 35.44 crore in the year-ago quarter and Rs 205.39 crore in preceding three-month period ended September 2021. Total income of the bank rose to Rs 4,638.44 crore in Q3 2021-22, up 4 per cent from Rs 4,468.88 crore in the year-ago quarter, UCO Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew by 8.8 per cent to Rs 3,919.30 crore as against Rs 3,602.59 crore. Provisioning for bad loans and contingencies for the quarter were trimmed significantly to Rs 548.61 crore, from Rs 1,008.88 crore parked aside by the lender in the year-ago period. The asset quality showed improvement, with the gross NPAs coming down to 8 per cent of gross advances as of December 31, 2021, from 9.80 per cent a year ago. Net NPAs or bad loans too reduced to 2.81 per cent from 2.97 per cent.

#### **Shipping Corp's** profit jumps

New Delhi: Disinvestmentbound Shipping Corporation of India Monday reported a 136.78 per cent jump in consolidated profit to ₹311.54 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2021, The company had posted a consolidated profit of ₹131.57 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Shipping Corporation of India said in a filing to the BSE. Its consolidated income during October-December 2021 rose to ₹1.456.23 crore, from ₹872.82 crore in the year-ago period, the filing said. Consolidated expenses also increased to ₹1,141.87 crore, from ₹765.42 crore a year ago.

#### **AIPNBOA** holds function in City

Bhubaneswar: A small function keeping in view Covid protocol was organised by the Bhubaneshwar Chapter of All India Punjab National Bank Officers Association here. The welcome speech was delivered by Arabinda Satapathy, Circle President. A booklet containing bank's operational guidelines compiled by the association was inaugurated by Sanjeev Bhardwaj GM (Zone) & Mukti Ranjan Rai GM (ZAO). Both the GMs lauded the effort of the Association in sensitizing the Officer members. They wished for robust growth of the bank in the zone and a cordial



## Railways to see jump in allocation

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Railways is set for a jump in its allocation with the Economic Survey 2021-22 pushing for a rapid growth in Capex for the national transporter to make it future-ready and engine of national growth.

The survey said the influx of funds is needed to not only meet the passenger demand but increase the modal share of railways in freight to 40-45 per cent from the present 26-27 per cent as laid down by the National Rail Plan.

The NRP lays down the road map for capacity expansion of the railway network by 2030 to cater to growth up to 2050.

'The target of 40-45% modal share for railways is necessary from the perspective of sustainability and also from the national commitments made globally for reducing emission levels. Unlike growth, which is linear, capacity grows in surges (sawtooth curve) depending on project completion timelines," the survey said.

According to the National Rail Plan, the freight ecosystem is expected to grow from the present level of 4700 MT to 8200 MT by 2030.

"The next 10 years will see a very high level of CAPEX in the railway sector as capacity growth has to be accelerated such that by 2030 it is ahead of demand. Up to 2014, CAPEX on railway was barely Rs 45,980 crore per annum and consequently the railway was characterised by high levels of inefficiency and highly congested routes unable to meet the growing demand," it said.

"Post 2014, a conscious effort was made to improve the railway sector by substantially increasing the CAPEX. The CAPEX outlay for 2021-22 is Rs 2,15,000 crore which is more than five times the 2014 level." "As more projects are taken on hand and several sources of



#### Rebound in tax mop up

The Economic Survey 2021-22 Monday said a strong revival in revenues and the agile fiscal policy approach adopted by the government have created headroom for additional fiscal support, if needed. The Survey also noted that gross tax revenue during April-November 2021 has grown by 50 per cent year-on-year, while the GST mop up remained above Rs 1 lakh crore mark since July 2021. "... The agile fiscal policy approach adopted by the government, coupled with the buoyant revenue collection received so



far this year, has created headroom for taking up additional fiscal policy interventions based on the need of the evolving situation," the Survey said, Recalling that the fiscal support given to the economy as well as the health response caused the fiscal deficit and government debt to rise in 2020-21, the Survey

said so far in 2021-22 there has been a strong rebound in government revenues. The revenue receipts of the central government during April-November 2021 have gone up by 67.2 per cent (YoY), as against an estimated growth of 9.6 per cent in the 2021-22 Budget Estimates. The tax collections have been buoyant for both direct and indirect taxes and the impact of Covid second wave on GST collections was much more muted as compared to the first wave.

capital funding are developed, the CAPEX will increase further in coming years and the railway system will actually emerge as an engine of national growth," it said.

Survey 2022 has also said that while air passenger traffic is gradually reaching the pre-pandemic levels, Indian Railways passenger traffic is still much below the prepandemic levels, according to monthly data.

In 2021-22 (till December), total freight loading by Indian railways was 1,029.94 million tonnes (MT) which is 18.37 per cent higher than 870.08 MT during the same period in 2020-21

Indian railways recorded almost 16 per cent increase in freight load-

#### Banks weather pandemic shock

The economic shock of the pandemic has been weathered well by the commercial banking system so far, even if some lagged impact is still in pipeline, said the Economic Survey 2021-22. Total net profit of public sector banks (PSBs) increased from Rs 14,688 crore during the first half of 2020-21 to Rs 31,144 crore during the first half

of 2021-22, the Survey tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on Monday said. Similarly, the net profit for private sector banks increased from Rs 32,762 crore to Rs 38,234 crore during the same period, it said, adding, overall, for scheduled commercial banks (SCBs), the net profit increased from Rs 59,426 crore at end-September 2020 to Rs 78,729 crore at end-September 2021. The Survey also stated that the bank credit growth stands at 9.2 per cent as of 31st December 2021. According to the Survey, large surplus systemic liquidity, forward guidance of continuing with the accommodative stance and the external benchmark system for pricing of loans in select sectors aided monetary transmission.

#### More youngsters saving for retirement

ore people are now opting for pension amount of Rs 1,000 per month, under the government-run Atal Pension Yojana (APY), and the scheme is gaining popularity among youngsters, according to the Economic Survey 2021-22. APY, the flagship social security scheme of the government, was launched May 9, 2015, to provide old-age income security particularly to the citizens in the unorganised sectors. As per the Economic Survey, more people are now opting for a pension amount of Rs 1,000 per month. "As on September 2021, around 78 per cent subscribers have opted for Rs 1,000 per month pension amount, as compared to 38 per cent subscribers as on March 2016," it said. Citing



the age-profile related data of the APY subscribers, the Survey said, as on September 2021, more than 43 per cent subscribers were between 18 and 25 years, as compared to 29 per cent as on March 2016, suggesting increasing enrolments at young age.

ing as compared to the corresponding period during the prepandemic year (2019-20), where the freight loading was 888.88 MT.

The Economic Survey 2021-22, tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament, expects the economy to grow by 9.2 per cent during the current financial year, indicating a recovery to the pre-pandemic level.

The economy had contracted by 7.3 per cent in 2020-21 on account of impact of Covid and subsequent nationwide lockdowns to check

#### NTPC among India's best workplaces

New Delhi, Jan 31: India's largest integrated energy producer, NTPC Ltd. was bestowed with the 'India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing 2022 - Top 30' recognition by the Great Place to Work Institute.

This is fifth year in a row, that NTPC has been bestowed with the recognition. In the 5th edition of India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing, 132 organizations in the manufacturing sector undertook the assessment. Based on a rigorous evaluation, Great Place to Work has identified the Top 30 organizations among India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing 2022. These organizations excel both on people practices that they have designed for their employees and act on the feedback to create a high trust culture.



This recognition from the Great Place to Work India mirrors NTPC's commitment towards creating and sustaining an ideal environment for its employees, associates and partners. It is also a testimony of the maturity of the HR Policies at NTPC and the commitment of the senior management of NTPC towards achieving the holistic development and wellbeing of its employees and stakeholders.

To reaffirm its commitment towards diversity and inclusion, NTPC has recruited an all-female engineers batch recently, a pioneering move in the sector. GPTW commended NTPC for

its practices and for creating a high trust culture amongst its em-

#### **AMAZON-FUTURE CASE**

### SC to pronounce verdict on pleas of Future group today

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce Tuesday the verdict on a batch of pleas filed by Future group firms against a Delhi High Court order declining stay on an arbitration tribunal decision refusing to interfere with the Emergency Award (EA) of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC).

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli has fixed the cases for pronouncement of judgement at 10.30 AM. The bench, January 11, had re-

served the judgement and had said that it wanted to send the case back to the Delhi High Court to render a finding on the enforceability of the SIAC award restraining FRL's sale of assets to Reliance Retail.

The apex court has reserved its order on two sets of petitions filed



by FCPL (Future Coupons Private Ltd) and FRL (Future Retail Ltd).

One set of appeals challenged the March 18 order of the Delhi High Court which besides restraining FRL from going ahead with its deal with Reliance Retail, had imposed costs of Rs 20 lakh on the Future Group and others associated with it and ordered attachment of their properties. The second set of appeals has been filed against the Delhi High Court's recent order declining its plea for stay on an arbitration tribunal decision refusing to interfere with the SIAC's EA, which

restrained it from going ahead with the Rs 24,731 crore merger deal with Reliance Retail.

During the hearing January 11, senior advocates Harish Salve and Mukul Rohatgi had appeared for FRL and FCPL respectively and the US e-commerce major, Amazon, was represented by senior lawyers Gopal Subramanium and Ranjit Kumar, and others.

Salve had said for the merger deal to go ahead the adverse orders passed last year February 2 and

March 18 have to be quashed. The US firm, which has invested in FCPL, has been opposing the deal. Salve had said FRL will 'sink with 30.000 employees losing their jobs' if the deal with RRL does not go through. FRL and FCPL had said they are allowed to go forward with interlocutory proceedings of the scheme with Reliance to ensure that they would be able to finalise the deal once the dispute with Amazon is concluded.

#### Sensex races ahead of Budget PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 31: Equity benchmarks notched up solid gains Monday after a two-session sliding streak as healthy growth projections in the Economic Survey and supportive global cues enthused investors.

A robust recovery in the rupee further bolstered sentiment, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on a firm footing and kept its momentum throughout the session. It finally closed at 58,014.17. clocking a gain of 813.94 points or 1.42 per cent.

Likewise, the broader NSE Nifty rallied 237.90 points or 1.39 per cent to end at 17,339.85.

Tech Mahindra topped the Sensex gainers' chart, climbing 4.88 per cent, followed by Wipro, Bajaj Finserv, Infosys, SBI, PowerGrid and Reliance Industries. Only three counters closed in the

red - IndusInd Bank, Kotak Bank and HUL, shedding up to 3.51 per cent.

"Global markets turned positive backed by gains in the US market as investors ignored geopolitical disturbances and turned their eve towards strong earnings numbers



from tech firms," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said participants will now be closely eyeing the Union Budget.

"The main focus would be on the GDP growth numbers, fiscal deficit target and disinvestment plans. Besides, sector-specific an-



nouncements and any relief on the taxation front will also be on participants' radars. At the same time. corporate earnings and auto sales numbers would continue to induce stock-specific volatility," he noted.

Barring metal, all BSE sectoral indices closed higher, led by realty, IT, teck, consumer durables, energy and auto.

### Facebook owner Meta to lift veil off its metaverse business

REUTERS

New York, Jan 31: Since October, Facebook has renamed the company, articulated a vision of the internet where people can digitally connect through virtual-reality avatars or teleport to see places like ancient Rome, and helped trigger the metaverse investment craze.

When the company, now Meta Platforms Inc, reports fourth-quarter results Wednesday, investors will get a new window into the financial impact of CEO Mark Zuckerberg's current passion. Meta plans to break out the re-

sults of its augmented and virtualreality hardware unit, Reality Labs, for the first time, an investment the company previously warned would cause a \$10 billion hit to 2021 profit and would not be profitable

"any time in the near future." The company is hiring engi-

neers and buying up multiple virtual reality gaming studios to build toward the metaverse, which is a broad futuristic idea of shared virtual realms that can be accessed via different devices and which Zuckerberg is betting will be the successor to the mobile internet.

Analysts said they would be keen to see indicators about the Reality Labs division's profitability, how long it might be a drag on the advertising side, and evidence around the strength of VR headset sales. "It's going to be huge for me as

an analyst, not having to surgically dig through Facebook earnings ... and just see a lens into the Reality Labs," said VR market analyst Stephanie Llamas of VoxPop. Meta has said it expects non-advertising revenue to be down year-

over-year in the fourth quarter as

it compares unfavorably with the

"strong launch" of its VR Quest 2



headsets during the previous year's holiday shopping season.

The company has not released sales numbers for Quest headsets, but a July recall notice for the Quest 2's facial foam liners said it affected about 4 million units in the United States. In a sign of strong sales for the headsets during the recent holiday period, its Oculus app hit the top spot on the U.S. App Store for free iPhone apps on **Meta** 

Christmas Day.

#### 'SIGNIFICANT UNCERTAINTY'

Front-of-mind for investors. though, will be how Meta's core digital advertising business is faring, after the tech giant said in October it faced "significant uncertainty" in the fourth quarter.

The company, which has the second-largest digital ad platform in the world after Alphabet Inc's

Google, warned it could face continued hits from Apple Inc's privacy changes which have made it harder for brands to target and measure their ads on Meta's social media services Facebook and Instagram. Analysts said Meta had set the bar low for its coming earnings, but questions remained about these effects and about issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Apple tracking change clearly had a negative impact on Facebook in the September quarter," said Evercore ISI analyst Mark Mahaney. "The question is, were they able to further mitigate that risk ... or did it become bigger?"

Pedro Palandrani, a research analyst at Global X, said the metaverse was the "long-term story' but in the near term investors would look for how Meta navigates Apple's policy as well as e-commerce updates and ways to monetize messaging or features like its short video offering, Reels.

Meta, which reported 2020 revenue of about \$86 billion, has yet to explain in detail how it will make money in the metaverse. In November, it pointed to potential opportunities for brands, from immersive shops to running paid mixed-reality events. The company has invited a group of ad execs to discuss its brand change and its plans for the metaverse at a virtual roundtable next month.

Meta is expected to report revenue of \$33.38 billion, according to Wall Street estimates, up 18.9% year over year, and is expected to post quarterly earnings per share of \$3.84, a slight decline. The company has said it expects total 2021 expenses to come in at \$70 billion-\$71 billion and fullyear 2022 expenses to reach \$91 billion-\$97 billion.

relationship with the Officers.









# SURREAL END TO 21ST QUEST

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 31: When Grand Slam title No.21 belonged to him, when the Australian Open final was over after 5 hours, 24 minutes of twists and turns and he somehow completed a comeback from two sets down, Rafael Nadal dropped his racket to the court, covered his face with his taped-up fingers, then shook his head and smiled.

"Just unforgettable," is how he described his 2-6, 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 victory over Daniil Medvedev, a result that seemed particularly unlikely when Nadal faced three break points midway through the third set.

Tapping his heart with his right hand, Nadal added: "One of the most emotional matches of my tennis career, without a doubt. Means a lot to me."

This was, in various respects, a fitting way for Nadal to set himself apart, at least for the moment, from Roger Federer and Novak Diokovic: coming off a hiatus forced by a painful left foot, doubting his health and his form, worried about his future in tennis and, to cap it all off, climbing out of a huge hole—the match began Sunday night and concluded in the wee hours of Monday — with unrelenting play backed by unrelenting belief.

The last man to win an Australian Open final after dropping the first two sets was Roy Emerson, 57 years ago.

Medvedev's summation: "Unreal." Nadal, a 35-year-old from Spain, is the first member of the Big Three — and, of course, the first man in the history of tennis—to surpass 20 major singles championships. His rivals each got a chance to do so first: Federer lost to Djokovic in the 2019 Wimbledon final; Djokovic lost to Medvedev in the 2021 US Open final.

Now Nadal stands above both.

It is the first time he's ever had more Grand Slam trophies than Federer, who is 40 and sat out the Australian Open while recovering from the latest in a series of knee operations. The No.1ranked Djokovic, who is 34, also missed the hard-court tournament he has won a record nine times; he is not vaccinated against COVID-19 and was deported after an 11-day legal saga that began when his visa was canceled upon arrival in Australia.

And yet, when play began two weeks ago, no one seemed to give Nadal much of a chance to go all that far, let alone win the whole thing.

The skeptics included Nadal himself. He was thrilled merely to be back in action after playing two matches in total over the last half of last season because of chronic foot pain.

He went months without being able to practice. He essentially had zero idea how well he would be able to perform at Melbourne Park. How well his strokes or his body could hold up over the course of five sets, if need be. Worst of all, how many more of these tournaments he'd have left.

And then, once into the final, Nadal found himself so far behind against a significantly younger (25) and higherranked (No.2) opponent, someone who more recently had won a Grand Slam title and more recently had reached an Australian Open final (last year, losing to Djokovic).

This triumph came 13 years after Nadal's other Australian Open title and follows four runner-up finishes in 2012 (against Djokovic), 2014 (Stan Wawrinka), 2017 (Federer) and 2019 (Djokovic).

Those instances of coming up short in Rod Laver Arena flashed through Nadal's mind. "I was repeating to myself during the whole match: I lost a lot of times here having chances. Sometimes I was a little bit unlucky.' I just wanted to keep believing till the end, no?" Nadal said. "I just wanted to give (myself) a chance.

He managed to do that, starting the turnaround by digging himself out of a love-40 situation while down 3-2 in the third set. "Just got a little bit tight," Medvedev acknowledged about that particular juncture.

As for how the match swung from there, Medvedev said: "Tactically, nothing changed. I feel like I was playing right. But Rafa stepped up.'

As he so often has, in so many matches over the years, going back to Grand Slam title No.1, as a teen at the 2005 French Open. His capri pants of vestervear have been replaced by shorts. His muscle shirts now have sleeves. His long locks are much shorter these days. Those lefty swings, those hitevery-shot-like-it's-your-last, that unmistakable drive? All still there.

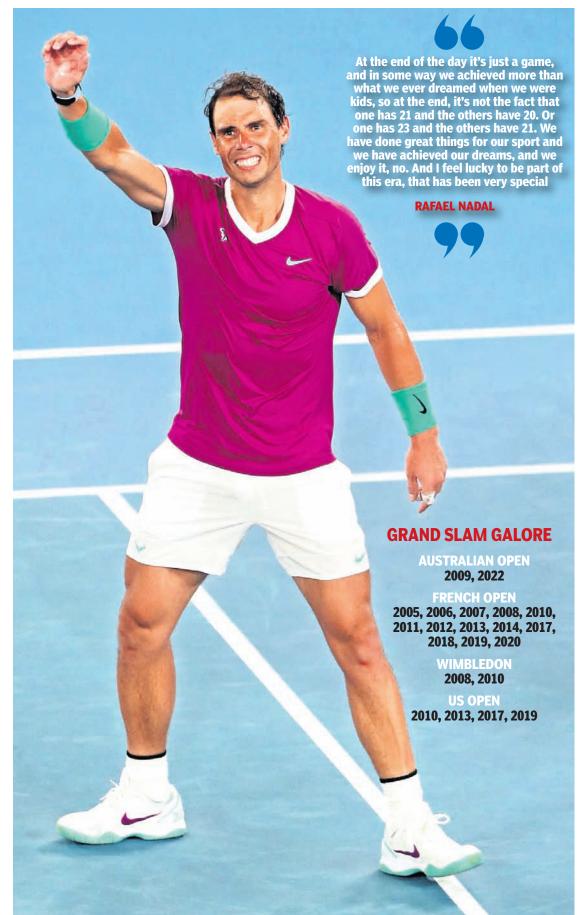
It's why Federer and Djokovic both praised Nadal's "fighting spirit" in congratulatory messages via social

Nadal now possesses 13 titles from Roland Garros, four from the US Open, two apiece from Wimbledon and the Australian Open. Nadal joins Djokovic as the only two men with at least two championships at each major tournament in the professional era.

So where does this victory rank? "The most unexpected, without a doubt. And most surprising, I think, for everyone. For me personally, especially, no? Because I know how I arrived here," Nadal said with the hour around 3 am. In Melbourne at the conclusion of what he termed "a very emotional night."

"Even now, I am destroyed, honestly, physically," he said. "I can't think much. I can't remember a lot of moments of the match.'

Maybe not. But he'll remember that feeling at the end.



### RAFA PRAISED FOR 'INCREDIBLE' FEAT

Stars - current and former - from across the sporting world have taken to social media to honour Rafael Nadal following his stunning Australian Open victory over Daniil Medvedev. It allowed the Spaniard grab his 21st Grand Slam title which moves him ahead of long-time rivals Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the most successful player in the sport's history.

ROGER FEDERER: What a match! To my friend and great rival Rafael Nadal, Heartfelt congratulations on becoming the first man to win 21 Grand Slam singles titles. A few months ago we were joking about both being on crutches. Amazing. Never underestimate a great champion. Your incredible work ethic, dedication and fighting spirit are an inspiration to me and countless others around the world. I am proud to share this era with you and honoured to play a role in pushing you to achieve more, as you have done for me for the past 18 years. I am sure you have more achievements ahead but for now enjoy this one!

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Congratulations to Rafael Nadal for 21st GS. Amazing achievement. Always impressive fighting spirit that prevailed another time. Enhorabuena Daniil Medvedev gave it his all out there and played with the passion and determination we have come to expect from him.

**ROD LEVER:** A final of Herculean proportions, thank you for a brilliant contest Rafael Nadal and Daniil Medvedev, Two AO crowns and 21 majors, given everything you have endured this historic victory is so special Rafa. It has been a privilege to watch you doing what you love. Congratulations.

hour Grand Slam final requires grit, guts, spirit, & determination. Congratulations to Rafael Nadal on his 21st Grand Slam! What a comeback! NICO ROSBERG: What. A. Legend. Rafael Nadal. Super con-

grats to my fellow @SunreefYachts ambassador! Watched

BILLIE JEAN KING: The mental and physical marathon of a 5-

every minute of it! My daughters thought I was crazy shouting at the TV! Well done also to Medvedev. JOSE MOURINHO: Rafa there are not many words. Just to say

DAVID DE GEA: I love tennis' - something which was echoed by Swiss tennis veteran Stanislas Wawrinka who commented

DINESH KARTHIK: What a match and what a man. It looked like a straight set blowout the way Medvedev was playing. But champions never give up One of his best comebacks ever. Congrats Rafael Nadal

that absolutely incredible.

That is absolutely magnificent. Stunning to say the

From 2 sets down to come back and win your 21st

Congratulations @RafaelNadal!



### Odisha FC look to steady ship KOHLI TALKS ABOUT CONTRIBUTING MORE AS A BATTER ONE DOESN'T NEED TO BE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bambolim, Jan 31: Winless in four games, FC Goa will be eager to arrest the slide when they take on Odisha FC, who will also be keen to steady their ship, in the Indian Super League here Tuesday.

FC Goa are sitting in ninth position with 14 points from as many games. They have to start winning matches if they are to push for a playoffs spot but in Odisha, who are one rung above them, they will face an opponent who will harbour similar thoughts.

Odisha have had a mixed bag this season, starting on a good note before tapering off in the middle. With 17 points from 13 matches, they still have time to fight for a playoff spot, and a win Tuesday would put them back in the fray. For Goa, the lack of finishing has

been a problem as they have created more chances and attempted more shots than any other team this sea-

Goa also hold the record for most crosses in a single game this season. They attempted 31 crosses against SC East Bengal, the joint highest attempted by a team in a single game this season alongside ATK Mohun Bagan.

Odisha have been among the goals and their ability to score late goals should make coach Kino Garcia happy. Jonathas also got back among goals in the last game and it was Odisha's ninth goal in the last 15 minutes of a game this season. With four goals, only Aridai Cabrera (5) has scored more for

Odisha this season besides Jonathas.

Indian players Mawihmingthanga Nandhakumar Sekar have been putting in some impressive performances of late.

"The last matches, we have been playing well. We didn't win or get points but the performance was quite good. The positives are that the team is brave to try things we are doing in training. We are trying to create more chances by keeping the ball," said Garcia.

"So the attitude of the players is good. It will be a tough game. Goa doesn't deserve to be where they are. They are playing quite well. They also want to keep the ball. So we need to close down the spaces. They have really good players," he added.

### **'ONE DOESN'T NEED TO BE** CAPTAIN TO BE A LEADER'

New Delhi, Jan 31: Citing MS Dhoni as example, Virat Kohli says one doesn't need to be a captain of a team to be a leader and now that he is not the India skipper; he might contribute more as the side's batting mainstay.

Kohli shocked the cricketing world earlier this month when he stepped down from Test captaincy following the 1-2 series defeat in South Africa. He ended up as India's most successful Test captain. His unexpected decision came

after he stepped down from the T20 side before being removed as ODI skipper. During Digit's 'Firseside Chat with VK', Kohli spoke how one can contribute to the team even when he is not its leader.

"Everything has a tenure and time period. You obviously have to be aware of that. People might say 'what this guy has done' but you know when you think of moving forward and achieving more, you feel like you have done your job.

"Now as a batsman may be you have more things to contribute to the team. You can make the team



You don't need to be a captain to be a leader. As simple as that," he said.

Kohli had taken over captaincy from Dhoni, first in Tests and then limited overs cricket. "When MS Dhoni was in the team it was not like that he was not a leader. He was still the guy we were going to constantly to get inputs.

"But for him to understand that yes it is natural progression and a natural time for me to take over and take Indian cricket forward to a level that I wanted to and as long as I feel that I have done that job without having materialistic goals,

Kohli also talked about the timing of moving on. Rohit Sharma has taken over from him as the white ball captain while the board is yet to announce his successor in the five-day format. "One has to embrace all kinds of

roles and responsibilities. I have played under MS as a player and I have been the captain of the team for a long time, my mind set has been same.

"I always thought like a captain even when I was a player. I want to make the team win. I have to be my own leader." he added.

#### **India drub China** in Women's FIH **Pro League debut**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Muscat. Jan 31: Sushila Chanu scored a brace as the Indian women's hockey team made a grand debut at the FIH Pro League, hammering China 7-1 in the first game of the two-leg tie here Monday.

Chanu (47th, 52nd minutes) converted two penalty strokes while Navneet Kaur (5th), Neha (12), Vandana Katariya (40th), Sharmila Devi (48th) and Gurjit Kaur (50th) netted one each to hand India a convincing win. China's lone goal was scored from a field effort by Xue Deng in the 43rd minute.

With the win, the Indian women's hockey team moved to the third position in the points table, with three points. India will play China again Tuesday at the same venue.

The Indians got off to a flier when Navneet found the net from inside the circle. The Indians were rewarded with their second goal when Neha struck from close range.

India extended their margin through Vandana. Trailing 0-3, the Chinese pulled one back with Deng slamming one in from the right side. After change of ends, India found four goals, including two penalty strokes by Chanu.

### Sreejesh awarded World Games Athlete of the Year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Veteran India hockey goalkeeper PR Srejeesh Monday won the prestigious World Games Athlete of the Year for his 2021 performances, becoming only the second Indian to receive the

In 2020, Indian women's hockey captain Rani Rampal became the first Indian to win the honour for her performances in 2019.

Sreejsh beat competition from sport climber Alberto Ginés López of Spain and Italy's wushu player Michele Giordano for the

"I'm very honoured to win this award. First of all, a big thank you to FIH for nominating me for this award, and secondly thanks to all the Indian hockey lovers around the world, who voted for me," Sreejesh

said in a statement. Sreejesh, a former India hockey

captain and part of the Tokyo Olympics-bronze medal winning side, received 1,27,647 votes, whereas Lopez and Giordane accumulated 67,428 and 52,046 votes respectively.

Sreejesh was the only Indian nominated and was recommended by the International Hockey Federation (FIH). In the FIH Stars Awards in October, Sreejesh was named the goalkeeper of the year for 2021.



