



## RAISING TEMPERATURE

Actor Mrunal Thakur is set to up the sizzle in Guru Randhawa's upcoming music video *Abhi Na Chhodo Mujhe*

LEISURE P2



## A POLITICAL PONGAL

BJP's JP Nadda and Cong's Rahul Gandhi will be in Tamil Nadu Jan 14 to celebrate the harvest festival 'Pongal'

TWO STATES P7



## FURTHER CLAMPDOWN IN HK

After arrest of over 50 democrats in HK last week, Beijing plans more measures to stifle challenge to Chinese rule

INTERNATIONAL P10

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Hope this bird flu will end soon. Else, mom will continue to put us under lockdown

### SHORT TAKES

#### Police bust fake ghee-making unit

**Bhubaneswar:** Taking a cue from their counterparts in Cuttack, the city police Tuesday busted a fake ghee manufacturing unit at Trilochan Vihar in Sundarpada area under Airfield police limits here. A joint team of Quick Action Team (QAT) and Airfield police also seized a huge quantity of adulterated ghee and coconut oil packets from the spot. Following a tip-off, a joint team conducted the raid on the unit registered in the name of Abhimanyu Prusty on the outskirts of the city. P3

#### City sees drop in fuel prices

**Bhubaneswar:** Fuel prices in Bhubaneswar witnessed a slight drop in the past 24 hours Tuesday. According to sources, petrol, which was sold at ₹84.90 per litre across all the fuel stations in the Capital city Bhubaneswar Monday, was priced at ₹84.80 per litre Tuesday. Similarly, diesel was priced at ₹81.08 a litre in the Temple City Monday. On Tuesday, it was sold at ₹80.98 per litre across all fuel stations in Bhubaneswar. Both petrol and diesel witnessed a fall of ₹0.10 in the past 24 hours.

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	49517.11 ↑ 247.79
NIFTY	14563.50 ↑ 78.70
DOLLAR	73.29 ↓ ₹0.15
EURO	89.18 ↓ ₹0.27
GOLD	₹49,143 ↓ ₹198
SILVER	₹65,770 ↑ ₹215

### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	32.6°C	32.2°C
MIN	19.5°C	17.5°C
Humidity	89%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning	

# SC stays new farm laws, sets up panel

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The Supreme Court Tuesday stayed the implementation of controversial new farm laws till further orders and constituted a four-member committee to resolve the impasse over them between the Centre and farmers' unions protesting at Delhi borders.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde said, "As a consequence, the Minimum Support Price system in existence before the enactment of the three farm Laws shall be maintained until further orders. In addition, the farmers' land holdings shall be protected, i.e., no farmer shall be dispossessed or deprived of his title as a result of any action taken under the farm laws".

The bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said the court-appointed panel shall hear the government as well as the farmers' bodies and other stakeholders and submit a report before the apex court containing its recommendations within two months from the date of its first sitting at Delhi.

In its interim order, the top court directed that the panel shall hold its first sitting within 10 days from Tuesday. The committee comprises Bhupinder Singh Mann, National President of Bhartiya Kisan Union and All India Kisan Coordination Committee, Dr Parmod Kumar Joshi, Director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute, Ashok Gulati, agricultural economist and former chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and Anil Ghanwat, President of Shetkari Sanghatana.

The bench said this panel is "constituted for the purpose of listening to the grievances of farmers relating to the farm laws and the views of the government and to make recommendations". "The implementation of the three farm laws 1) Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation)

## Members of SC-appointed panel are pro-govt: Unions

**New Delhi:** Protesting farmer unions Tuesday asserted they will not appear before the Supreme Court appointed panel, alleging it was "pro-government", and said they won't settle for anything less than the repeal of the three contentious laws. They also raised doubts over the neutrality of the members of the committee even as they welcomed the top court's order to stay the implementation of the laws.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu Border here, farmer leader Balbeer Singh Rajewal said that farmers never demanded the Supreme Court form a committee to resolve the impasse, alleging the Central government was behind this development. "The members of the SC-appointed committee are not dependable as they have been writing on how agri laws are pro-farmer. We will continue our agitation," Rajewal told the presser after a meeting of 32 farmer unions from Punjab. "We are against any committee on principle. It is the government's way to distract attention from the

Act, 2020; (2) Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020; and (3) Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, shall stand stayed until further orders," it said.

The bench said it deems fit to pass the interim order "with the hope and expectation that both parties will take this in the right spirit and attempt to arrive at a fair, equitable and just solution to the problems". The bench also lauded the farmers for carrying out agitation against the farm laws peacefully and

## 3 protesting farmers die at Tikri border

**MUKTSAR:** Another elderly farmer protesting against the Centre's three agri laws reportedly died at Tikri border Tuesday. The farmer has been identified as Avtar Singh and was from Lohara village in Muktsar. The cause of death is reported to be a cardiac arrest. He stayed put from day one at the border to protest against the farm laws. Another farmer from Abul Khurana village died at a hospital in Ludhiana on Sunday night after developing some health issues at Tikri border protest. So far, over 50 farmers have died while protesting against the farm laws on the Delhi borders. Many of them died either owing to the cold weather conditions or accidents.

protest," he said, adding that farmers will go ahead with their proposed January 26 'Kisan Parade' that will be moved into the national capital. Talking to Twitter, Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait alleged the members of the committee set up by the top court have been in support of open market system or three farm laws. On Wednesday, Sankyukt Kisan Morcha, which represents around 40 protesting unions, will hold a meeting to discuss the next course of action.

without any untoward incident. "While we may not stifle a peaceful protest, we think that this extraordinary order of stay of implementation of the farm laws will be perceived as an achievement of the purpose of such protest at least for the present and will encourage the farmer bodies to convince their members to get back to their livelihood, both in order to protect their own lives and health and to protect the lives and properties of others," the bench said and posted the matter for further hearing after eight weeks.

## GOVT ALLOWS MARRIAGE PROCESSIONS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** With the improvement in Covid-19 situation in the state, the state government Tuesday modified its earlier guidelines on conduct of marriage processions. The government allowed conduct of marriage processions, but said all participating in the procession have to wear face masks and maintain physical distance.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena has written a letter to all Collectors, SPs, municipal commissioners and police commissioner in this regard, Tuesday.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the state government had banned the marriage processions since July 6, 2020. The state government has allowed marriage related gatherings with a ceiling of 200 persons and funeral/last rites gatherings with a ceiling of 100 persons subject to a few conditions for the month of January. A maximum of 200 persons including bride, bridegroom, priest, friends, relatives, guests, members of band party, light and sound systems, among others can be allowed for the processions. All have to follow Covid-19 safety protocols.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

## CM orders waiver of HSC exam fees

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday directed the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) to waive the examination fees of matriculation students of this year. The decision will benefit more than 6 lakh students in the state. The decision will cost the state government ₹27 crore.

Due to pandemic, schools were shut for more than nine months in the state. Schools that opened January 8 for Class X and XII students and have been given 100 days to complete the syllabus. Earlier, January 5 the

dates for filling up of forms for the annual HSC examinations-2021 were announced by the BSE. Every student had to pay ₹420 for the matric exam form fill up by January 27.

The filling up of forms will be conducted via online mode for students of regular, ex-regular and correspondence courses. The drive that began from January 10 will continue till January 28 midnight, a BSE notification stated. Those students who fail to fill up forms within the stipulated date and time can do the same again between January 29 and February 2, the notification elaborated.

## FINALLY, VACCINE HERE



The first consignment of Covid-19 vaccines being carried to be preserved at a storehouse of the Odisha State Medical Corporation in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday (Report below)

## Vax here, but not enough to cover target

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state Tuesday received the first consignment of Covid-19 vaccines from both the approved manufacturers of India. However, the stock received here is not sufficient to inoculate even the registered health workers from the state.

The vaccines arrived at the Biju Patnaik International Airport from Pune in a special aircraft and were taken to the storage centre in the state capital amid tight security. According to airport authorities, 34

packets of the prophylactic product weighing around 1200 kilograms were delivered to Odisha.

The government, in a statement, said they have received 4.08 lakh doses of Covidshield from the Serum Institute of India and 20,000 doses of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech. "50 per cent of the vaccines received will be supplied to districts for first dose vaccination and the remaining 50 per cent will be supplied in time for second dose."

Bijay Panigrahi, state health director, said the latest list of registered health workers stood at 3.33

lakh but the quantum of vaccines arrived Tuesday is not enough to cover all the registered health workers. Meanwhile, the government Tuesday announced high risk categories among health workers who will be given priority.

With the vaccines received in the first lot, 1.9 lakh healthcare workers will be vaccinated. As the quantity of vaccines received here is not matching our requirement, we have to make a priority list even in the first list of the health workers. Those health workers who are elderly, working in highly exposed envi-

ronment and other high risk groups will get the vaccines first, Panigrahi said. The official said January 16, a total of 16,000 health workers will be vaccinated with each centre entitled for giving 100 vaccinations.

The government said Covishield vaccines will be supplied to all 30 districts and Covaxin vaccines will be supplied to Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation area. The government clarified that all beneficiaries should complete vaccination using the same vaccines to ensure that there is no scope for interchangeability of vaccines.

## US vote on Trump impeachment today

AGENCIES

**Washington, Jan 12:** The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives would vote on the impeachment of outgoing President Donald Trump on Wednesday on charges of inciting his supporters to carry out a violent attack on the Capitol Hill last week.

Co-authored by Congressmen Jamie Raskin, David Cicilline and Ted Lieu, the article of impeachment - co-sponsored by 211 House members - was tabled Monday. During a conference call with his party colleagues on Monday, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said the impeachment vote will be held Wednesday.

The article of impeachment charges Trump with a count of "incitement of insurrection" for his actions on January 6, when he delivered a speech inciting his supporters to lay siege to the Capitol, an action that temporarily halted the counting of Electoral College votes and resulted in the deaths of five individuals, including an officer of the US Capitol Police.

The Democrats have enough votes to impeach the president in the House, which requires a simple majority. But the Senate, where both the Republicans and Democrats have now 50-50 seats - would require votes of two-third of the members to remove the president out of the office. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in her capacity



as Chairperson of the Senate would add one more to the Democrats when necessary.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said the vote on impeachment in the upper chambers of the US Congress can't happen before the Inauguration Day on January 20.

Later Monday, Congresswoman Ilhan Omar also introduced two articles of impeachment against Trump. The first article cites Trump's abuse of power for attempting to overturn the 2020 presidential election results in Georgia. The second article addresses the incitement of violence for orchestrating an attempted coup against our country.

"I just introduced my impeachment resolution. The full House will now vote on a measure calling on Vice President (Mike) Pence and the cabinet to remove President Donald Trump under the 25th amendment. If Pence does not act, the House will move to impeach this week," Omar said.

## Update won't hit privacy of messages: WhatsApp

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** WhatsApp Tuesday said its latest policy update does not affect the privacy of messages as the Facebook-owned company sought to address concerns around security of user data on the platform.

In a blogpost, WhatsApp emphasised that it does not share users' contact lists or data of groups with Facebook for ads purposes, and that neither WhatsApp nor Facebook can read messages or hear calls between users on WhatsApp.

Last week, WhatsApp had informed users of an update in its terms of service and privacy policy regarding how it processes user data and partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the social media giant's products.

It also stated that users will have to agree to the new terms and policy by February 8, 2021, in order to continue using WhatsApp's service. This kickstarted a spate of conversations and memes on the internet over WhatsApp's alleged sharing of user information with Facebook, and many users have started shifting to rival platforms like Telegram and Signal.

"We want to be clear that the policy update does not affect the privacy of your messages with friends or family in any way. Instead, this update includes changes related to messaging a business on WhatsApp, which is optional, and provides further transparency about how we collect and use data," WhatsApp said.

It added that WhatsApp accesses only the phone numbers from the address book (after getting user's per-



mission) to make messaging fast and reliable, and that it doesn't share contact lists with the other apps Facebook offers. "We use group membership to deliver messages and to protect our service from spam and abuse. We don't share this data with Facebook for ads purposes. Again, these private chats are end-to-end encrypted so we can't

see their content," it noted. A report by internet security researcher Rajshekhar Rajaharia had claimed that at least 1,700 private WhatsApp group links were visible on Google through a web search. WhatsApp noted that users can choose to set their messages to disappear from chats "for additional privacy". The messaging giant - which

has about 400 million users in India - said it will always be clear within the app when users are communicating with any business that uses its features designed for commercial entities. WhatsApp explained that some large businesses need to use hosting services to manage their communication, and that it provides them the option to use secure hosting services from FB to manage WhatsApp chats with their customers, answer questions, and send information like purchase receipts.

"But whether you communicate with a business by phone, email, or WhatsApp, it can see what you're saying and may use that information for its own marketing purposes, which may include advertising on FB. To make sure you're informed, we clearly label conversations with businesses," WhatsApp added.

# leisure



## BRENDAN FRASER TO STAR IN DARREN ARONOFSKY'S FILM

Actor Brendan Fraser will star in the upcoming Darren Aronofsky directorial, *The Whale*, which is about a man with compulsive eating disorder. The film is based on award-winning playwright Samuel D. Hunter's stage play of the same name. Hunter will also be involved with writing screenplay for the project, reports *ew.com*.

## MADONNA VISITS 5 COUNTRIES IN 3 WEEKS AMID PANDEMIC

Singer Madonna has reportedly visited five countries in three weeks amidst the pandemic. The 62-year-old flew from Los Angeles to London with her backing dancer and boyfriend Ahlamalik Williams.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Ganesh says go ahead and indulge in your artistic self today. You can reorganise your home or work place. Expenses are on the cards. If you have been longing for that expensive dressing table or a study table, buy it.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesh sees you getting very impatient and restless this day. Thank the stars, in spite of that you will remain adequately steady and focussed on your work, and perform suitably and commendably as expected. During the latter part of the day, your colleagues and superiors are likely to be more helpful and responsive.

**GEMINI**  
A fruitful day loaded with opportunities awaits you. You will be able to complete all your tasks easily at the work-front. However, you will need to put in extra effort to satisfy others. You will be engaged in discussions with your family members and neighbours later on, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Your intellectual prowess in the of-office will bring you happy tidings. You may give a new look to work culture in office. Ganesh advises you to think twice before embarking on new deals in the afternoon.

**LEO**  
Your day will start off very ordinarily. The latter half of the day too should prove to be uneventful. However, events occurring in the afternoon will win you the praise of your colleagues. You will try to improve your self today.

**VIRGO**  
What you wish to do today is to overhaul the looks of your living space. You might want to add some pieces of furniture or some items of decoration that define your personality. Ganesh advises you to be ready in the evening to be a great performer or probably to lend some valuable help.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that today you will pay more attention to your family and family matters, keeping aside all other things. You will want to change the décor of your home and for that you may buy antique artifacts or new furniture to decorate in your home. You may go to visit a religious place or temple today.

**SCORPIO**  
You are on a mission to solve all the pending problems, by finding their solutions today itself. And very aptly, your optimistic attitude and creative outlook would come to rescue you in difficult moments. At this point of time, even your colleagues and superiors support you, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The day begins with lots of challenges, says Ganesh. Isolated or a one man army, you may have to resolve problems and cross hurdles on your own. Your skills and resourcefulness will go through a rigorous polishing today, may be in a not-so-happening style. However, all's well that ends well.

**CAPRICORN**  
You'll be over-emotional during the first half of the day. You've been quiet for a long period now, and it will be emotionally and physically exhausting for you to express your tensions, fears, dreams, regrets and sorrows, feels Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
Today, you may finally appreciate the beauty of that valuable piece of abstract art in your living room! You have fine taste, but sometimes forget to see things from the heart. Your sensitivity is at an all-time high, says Ganesh, and consequently, you may even get touchy today.

**PISCES**  
Dealings with foreign companies and organizations will translate into financial gains for you today. Today is a good day when it comes to realizing your financial goals. You will also be able to help others improve upon their footing in life.

## Mrunal goes ultra-glam in new video

**Mumbai:** Actress Mrunal Thakur is out to give fans a glimpse of her glamorous side when she stars in Guru Randhawa's upcoming music video.

Details are under wraps, but sources said: "The final track is in the process of mixing. Mrunal has been approached for the video to be shot over two days at an exotic location. The video will feature her in an ultra glamorous look which she hasn't donned for the silver screen yet. The actor in recent times has walked the ramp for notable fashion designers. It will star her in a bold look, upping the sizzle of the video itself."

The song titled *Abhi Na Chhodo Mujhe* will be sung by Guru, who also appears in the song. The video will be shot in Kashmir over two days. The track releases next month. **IANS**

## Nolan wants to work more in India



**H**ollywood filmmaker Christopher Nolan said he wants to come back and shoot again in India, and work with Indian actors. "I never make plans so far ahead. But I had an amazing experience in India, and I definitely want to come back and work more in India with Indian actors. I don't know what I'm doing next," Nolan said while talking about his experience of working in Indian and his next project.

The Oscar-winning Hollywood maverick filmed crucial scenes of his 2012 global blockbuster *The Dark Knight Rises* in Jodhpur. He also shot portions of his new film *Tenet* in Mumbai. For *Tenet*, he panned his camera across Mumbai spots such as Breach Candy Hospital, Colaba



Nolan with Dimple during a shoot

Causeway, Colaba Market, Gateway of India, Grant Road, Royal Bombay Yacht Club, and the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel. *Tenet*, which sees him explore the time dimension

against a backdrop of a spy thriller, also stars Indian talent, including Hindi film actress Dimple Kapadia. "That experience of meeting filmmakers of Mumbai and getting to see the sights and sounds of Mumbai was very inspiring for me. It immediately set my imagination to work on how I could come back there and do some shooting," he had previously said. **IANS**

## A calendar now in memory of Gour-Parbati Ghose

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar:** Actor, director and producer Gour Prasad Ghose initiated a lot of changes and paved the way for the future generations of Odia cinema while his wife actress Parbati Ghose, born as Chapala Nayak, was the first woman film director of Odisha. The duo dominated the Odia film industry during the 50s, 60s and early 70s. A calendar, in the memory of the star couple, was recently launched by GPG enterprise, a company founded by their daughter Ratri Ghose Barman.

"This pictorial narrative through years is an attempt to showcase the contributions of two legendary performers to the Odia cinema," said Ratri, adding, the company also launched a website [www.gourparbati.com](http://www.gourparbati.com), to keep their alive.

They are planning to promote the art and culture of different regions of India to globalise the diversity of the country, she further said.

Gour Ghose (1929 - 1994) is considered as the first romantic actor and has contributed immensely for the growth of cinema in Odisha. On the other hand, Parbati (1933 - 2018) too was a legend like her celebrated



husband. When in peak, her acting was at par with the performances of national-level artistes.

## ICCR, University of Delhi team up to enrol students from abroad



POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the University of Delhi have agreed to work together to facilitate international students studying in India. For the first time ever, ICCR is setting up its Regional Office in New Delhi that will cover all international students in the northern region including Delhi NCR, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

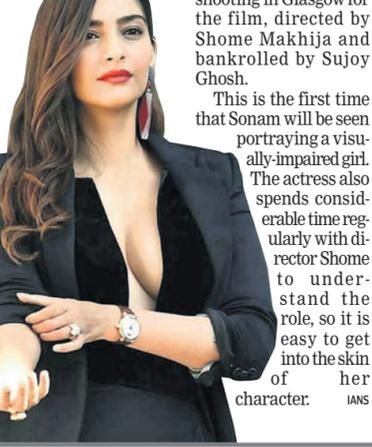
The new office will undertake outreach activities of the Council and oversee the scholarships programmes for foreign students studying in various streams in the region. It will also play a crucial role in organising in-bound cultural programmes, exhibi-

tions, conferences, seminars, visits and lectures in collaboration with University of Delhi.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ICCR and Delhi University was signed Monday in this regard. ICCR was founded in 1950 and was set up to formulate and implement policies and programmes to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries. The Council provides more than 3000 scholarships to the students from other countries every year. While it has various Chairs in foreign universities on different Indian disciplines and the council is also in process of setting up Chairs of neighbouring countries in premier Indian Institutes.

## Sonam to play blind in her next

**Glasgow:** Sonam Kapoor Ahuja is going all out for her role of a blind person in the upcoming thriller, *Blind*. Apart from learning the nuances of body language for her role of a visually-impaired person, she has also taken to dietary regulations to look the role.



"Sonam has been on a healthy diet to maintain the required look in the film. She is expected to resume shoot post pandemic, and she has been involved in various discussions and researches with the film's director," said a source in the unit of the film.

The actor is currently shooting in Glasgow for the film, directed by Shome Makhija and bankrolled by Sujoy Ghosh.

This is the first time that Sonam will be seen portraying a visually-impaired girl. The actress also spends considerable time regularly with director Shome to understand the role, so it is easy to get into the skin of her character. **IANS**

### PEANUTS



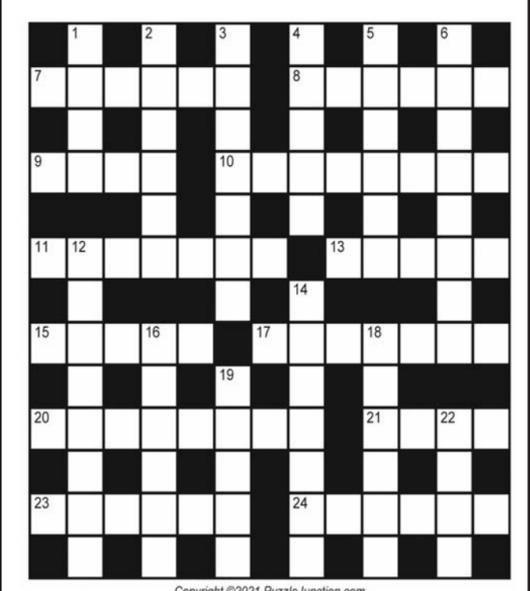
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



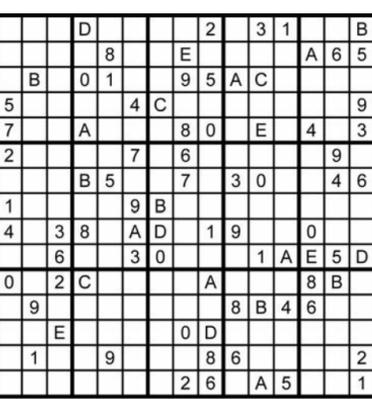
### FUN post CROSSWORD



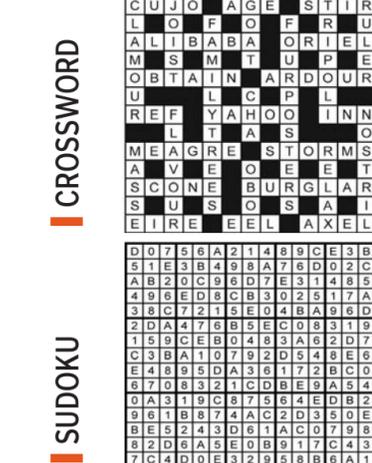
- Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Detective's clue
  - 8 Anglers' baskets
  - 9 Wine holder
  - 10 Bear in mind
  - 11 Walks softly
  - 13 Back street
  - 15 Highly skilled
  - 17 Direction finder
  - 20 Obscurity
  - 21 Fire
  - 23 Oceanic bird
  - 24 Goofs
  - 4 Bloodhound's trail
  - 5 Abnegation
  - 6 Embedded spies
  - 12 Obligated
  - 14 Sporting dog
  - 16 Hand tool
  - 18 Bakery buy
  - 19 Pasture
  - 22 Brusque
- Down**
- 1 Roman wrap
  - 2 Boarding pass
  - 3 Holiday spots

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## CLEANLINESS DRIVE



Activists of Bharat Vikash Parishad clean up Puri beach on the occasion of National Youth Day, Tuesday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	9,15,16,797	6,54,85,390	19,57,907
India	1,04,79,179	1,01,11,294	1,51,327
Odisha	3,32,331	3,28,452	1,894

# 2 beaches to be made world-class hubs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state government has decided to develop Chandrabhaga and Talasari beaches, in an attempt to augment tourist footfall in the state through beach tourism.

Presiding over a high-level meeting Tuesday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the state government has initiated steps for development of Chandrabhaga beach on Puri-Konark marine drive road and Talasari beach in Balasore district. The two sites will be developed as world-class tourist destinations.

He said that state government has given priority to tourism development in order to attract more domestic and foreign tourists.

He directed the officials to develop 1-km area at Chandrabhaga beach and include facilities like water sports, recreation, cycle track, pavement, wooden track by the beach, space for children's activity centre, podium to enjoy sunrise and adventure sports in the master plan to be prepared for the purpose.

Naveen further directed to pre-



File photo of Chandrabhaga beach in Puri district

pare waste management system, landscaping and solar lighting along with ensuring participation of local people.

The Chief Minister asked the officials concerned to develop an area of 2.4-km at Talasari beach and encourage construction of standard and budget hotels there.

Besides, the place will have pavilion, kiosk, sitting islands, solar photo voltaic panels, amphitheatres, restaurants and art & craft

plaza to attract the tourists, he added.

For the security of tourists, Naveen asked to deploy sufficient number of lifeguards at the beaches. The government has set a target to complete the infrastructure development projects by October 2021. The Chief Minister strictly instructed the officials to complete the project on time.

Expressing happiness over Blue Flag tag to Puri beach, Patnaik ad-

## WOING TOURISTS

The state govt has initiated steps for development of Chandrabhaga beach on Puri-Konark marine drive road and Talasari beach in Balasore

Naveen directs officials to develop 1-km area at Chandrabhaga beach and include facilities like water sports, recreation, cycle track, pavement, wooden track by the beach, space for children's activity centre and others

2.4-km area at Talasari beach would be developed and construction of standard and budget hotels would be encouraged there

vised the officials concerned to take steps for getting Blue Flag tag for Jahania, Niladri and Muhan beaches of Puri district and Hariipur & Pati-Sonepur beaches of Ganjam district in the coming two years.

# BMC gears up for vax drive at 5 centres in Capital city

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** With the first consignment of Covid-19 vaccines arriving here Tuesday, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) began its preparations for the first phase of the vaccination to be conducted at five healthcare facilities in the Capital city.

Speaking to mediapersons, BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary said that the inoculation drive will be launched at Capital Hospital, Community Health Centre (CHC) at Unit-IV, BMC Hospital in Old Town, SUM Hospital and Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) at Patia, Saturday.

"Initially, the immunisation will be conducted at five centres in the city. There are about 27,600 beneficiaries of the vaccine in Kurda district during the first phase, out of which, around 20,000 belong to Bhubaneswar alone. Moreover, we have also made arrangements



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

About 27,600 will be inoculated in Kurda district during the first phase, out of which, around 20,000 belong to Bhubaneswar

at 27 government hospitals including Capital Hospital and 18 private hospitals, which will later be used as vaccination centres," Chaudhary said.

Furthermore, the civic authority is said to have prepared about a list of about 21,000 doctors, health workers and medical staff.

The BMC has also asked the vaccination centres to constitute a five-member team for smooth execution of the vaccination drive. The team is said to comprise vaccinators and observers who will be in-

involved in administering the vaccines and observing the patient for any complications.

"A supervisor will oversee the vaccination programme at each centre. Post vaccination, every patient will have to wait for 30 minutes to observe whether there is any complication or adverse effects. An ID proof is must for getting the Covid shot. However, only the beneficiaries registered on the Co-WIN portal will be allowed to be part of the vaccination," said a senior BMC official.

# STATE BAGS TWO NATIONAL AWARDS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state government bagged two national awards at the Second Edition of the Janaagraha City Governance Awards announced Tuesday at a virtual award ceremony presided over by Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri.

The state won the awards in two of the five categories competing with 54 applicants spanning across 17 states. The Centre awarded the Odisha government for implementation of Jaga Mission for transforming urban slums into liveable habitats. The Jaga Mission provides slum dwellers with secure tenure and access to liveable habitat with infrastructure and

The Centre awarded the Odisha government for implementation of Jaga Mission for transforming urban slums into liveable habitats

The PHEO won the Best Civic Agency Award for universal access to piped water supply

services, covering 3,000 slums benefiting over 1.8-million population.

Similarly, the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO) won the Best Civic Agency Award for universal access to piped water supply through demonstrable inter-agency coordination and decentralisation in practice.

Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) secretary G Mathivathanan received the awards.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# Health workers say no to Covid shots

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Jan 12:** A group of health workers has refused to receive Covid-19 jabs even though the first consignment of vaccines against the deadly virus reached Odisha, Tuesday.

The health workers under the banner of Odisha state multipurpose health workers and health inspectors' association have refused to receive the vaccines as a protest against the delay in fulfilment of their various demands.

Members of the association Tuesday submitted a memorandum to Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Bishwa Ranjan Pati in this regard.

The health workers claimed that they have urged the state government to reconstitute their cadres and bring in certain changes in their designations several times but to no avail.

"Around 15,000 multipurpose health workers (both male and female) and health inspectors in state,

The health workers have refused to receive the vaccines against Covid-19 as a protest against the delay in fulfilment of their various demands

including 650 in Khurda district, will not receive the vaccine until the fulfilment of our demands," said the memo.

The association claimed that thousands of multipurpose health workers, health inspectors and ANMs have been working hard for proper implementation of various health schemes at the grass-root level.

"The health workers have toiled hard during the Covid-19 pandemic. The health workers' hard labour has made Odisha a model state in Covid management," added the memorandum.

# Police bust fake ghee-making unit, this time in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Taking a cue from their counterparts in Cuttack, the city police Tuesday busted a fake ghee manufacturing unit at Trilochan Vihar in Sundarpada area under Airfield police limits here. A joint team of Quick Action Team (QAT) and Airfield police also seized huge quantity of adulterated ghee packets from the spot.

Following a tip-off, a joint team conducted the raid on the unit registered in the name of Abhimanyu Prusty, 61, on the outskirts of the city. Prusty also owns the three-storey building where the manufacturing unit was running for the last several



Abhimanyu Prusty

## FOOD FRAUD

The cops found palmolive oil, vanspati ghee, hazardous chemical colors from the spot

The miscreants used to mix palmolive oil and harmful chemical color to make duplicate ghee

The Commissionerate Police arrested Abhimanyu Prusty by registering a case (18/21) under sections 420, 468, 272, 273 of the IPC and 78 and 79 of Trade and Merchandise Act and other acts

years. The cops found palmolive oil, vanspati ghee, hazardous chemical colors from the spot. Duplicate and adulterated products of popular brands like sealed packets of ghee of brands like Durga, Balaji and

Krishna were seized by the police.

The cops seized adulterated ghee, other edible oils and raw materials weighing more than five quintals from the spot. Manufacturing machines and packing materials like

polythene sachets, plastic containers and carton boxes with stickers of reputed brands were also seized. Packing, stamping, weighing and sealing machines and materials were seized from the spot. Prusty

failed produce trade licence or any other documents too.

The miscreants used to mix palmolive oil and harmful chemical color to make duplicate ghee. Later, they market spurious products by misbranding them.

The Commissionerate Police arrested Prusty by registering a case (18/21) under sections 420, 468, 272, 273 of the IPC and 78 and 79 of Trade and Merchandise Act and other acts. The police have started investigations into the case and launched a manhunt to nab the other persons involved in the racket.

Notably, 26 persons had been arrested by Cuttack police during its drive against adulterated food items in the Silver City.



The health workers submit a memo to Khurda CDMO

OP PHOTO

## UMBRELLA FOR THE LORD



A Darzi servitor prepares a huge umbrella for Makara Sankranti rituals at Srimandir in Puri, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

# FLIGHT SERVICES BEGIN AT JHARSUGUDA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Private flight operator, Spice Jet, started services from the Veer Surendra Sai airport to Mumbai and Bengaluru, Tuesday.

As per schedule, the plane flew to Bengaluru at 12:30pm and returned to Jharsuguda at around 5:40pm. It then took off for Mumbai at 6:10pm. The maiden flight of Spice Jet's Boeing 737 that landed at the airport was given traditional water salute.

## CM for Bhubaneswar-Pune air connectivity

In what would give further boost to air connectivity to the state, the Odisha government, Tuesday, agreed to provide financial support to private airline AirAsia to operate a direct flight between Bhubaneswar and Pune for three months.

Taking to Twitter, the Chief Minister's Office stated that the flight connectivity is being made available keeping in mind enhancing air connectivity to Odisha which will boost its tourism sector and attract more investors.

# Cong waves black flag at Pradhan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Youth Congress activists Tuesday showed waved flags at Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in protest against the alleged anti-farmer laws and unprecedented fuel price hike in the country. The video of the incident has gone viral on social media.

Youth Cong activists waved black flags at the Union minister in protest against controversial farm laws and unprecedented fuel price hike

The youth Congress workers led by its state unit president Smruti Ranjan Lenka showed black flags and raised slogans against Pradhan near Care Hospital Square.

Pradhan was on his way to Mahanga in Cuttack to meet the family members of BJP leader Kulamani Baral, 73, and his associate Dibyasingh Baral, 80, who were allegedly killed by some miscreants last month.



Youth Congress activists waving black flags

OP PHOTO

"The three black farm laws have been imposed by the Centre for the betterment of the capitalists. The laws were enforced forcefully without consulting the farmers and the states. Farmers all over the country have been protesting against the new farm laws. But, the Centre is sitting tight on it," Lenka said.

"We demand immediate repeal of all these three laws. We stand in solidarity with the farmers and will fight following the path of non-violence," he said.

Similarly, prices of the petroleum products have increased man-

ifold during the pandemic putting further pressure on the common people. Pradhan, who is heading the Petroleum Ministry, is completely responsible for this continuous fuel price hike, the Congress leader said.

"Why are petrol, diesel, and gas prices soaring in India when fuel prices are low in the international market?" he asked.

If the Centre does not roll back the fuel price hike and repeal the farm laws, the youth Congress will further intensify the protest in coming days, Lenka warned.

# Turn waste to wealth, Collectors told



Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra and other senior officials at the meeting, Tuesday

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state government Tuesday asked the district Collectors and officials of the urban local bodies (ULBs) to turn the waste generated in their localities into wealth with the active participation of the people.

Mohapatra said, asking the district Collectors to make the initiative a mass movement through intensive awareness and active involvement of the people. The Chief Secretary directed the ULB officials to rope in members of the 'Mission Shakti' and transgender groups in operation and management of the MCCs.

from time to time with the changing situation. The focus for the current quarter of the year is on solid waste management and visible cleanliness," he said. Director Municipal Administration, Sangramjit Nayak, said that all ULBs should upload the data along five thematic areas like creation of infrastructure, service level performance, citizen satisfaction, operational efficiency, financial performance, particularly composting and selling, and, institutional capacity.

## AIMING CLEANEST CITY AWARD

The assessment would be done on the basis of information collected from sources like Swachh Sahara portal, Ama Sahara mobile app, Mo Sarkar feedback and third party observation. The 20th of every month would be known as Swachhata Charcha Divas on which all the stakeholders in each of the ULBs would sit together to deliberate on issues relating to urban health and sanitation in respective localities.

## JOB PLEA



Retrenched ANMs pose as death penalty convicts as part of their ongoing agitation at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, seeking job regularisation

## State registers 225 fresh Covid cases, two deaths

Dhenkanal, Kendrapara, Koraput, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur did not report any new case since Monday.

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** State's Covid-19 tally Tuesday mounted to 3,32,331 as 225 more people tested positive for the disease, while two fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,894, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

## Bhubaneswar DCP's noble gesture

**Bhubaneswar:** In a noble gesture, the DCP Umashankar Dash Tuesday stopped on his way to office to help two visually impaired Divyangs cross the busy road near Ram Mandir here. Dash was going to his office when he spotted the two divyangs who were finding it difficult to cross Janpath road. He asked his driver to stop the vehicle and instructed the PSO to help them to go to the other side of the road. The commuters present there praised the DCP's act.

## National Youth Day observed in City

**BHUBANESWAR:** National Youth Day was celebrated at Biju Patnaik State Youth Welfare Bhawan here Tuesday, marking the 158th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The programme was organised by state youth welfare council and state blood transfusion society. On this occasion, E&IT, Sports and Youth Services Minister Tusharkanti Behera paid floral tributes to Swamiji's statue at Kalinga Stadium. The minister said, "Swamiji's life and principles are a true torch-bearing guidance to today's youth and I am glad to be a part of such a great event." Later, he also attended a blood donation camp held there to encourage and motivate the youths. Around 100 units of blood were collected at the camp. Similarly, National Youth Day was also celebrated at DAV Public School, Kalinga Nagar to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. At this event many students described how Swamiji had been an inspiration for every student during their lifetime.

## EOW arrests 3 more in bank cheating case

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of state Crime Branch arrested three persons on the charges of duping a nationalised bank of Rs. 2.87 crores with a forged cheque of Karnataka State Co-operative Marketing Federation (KSCMFL).

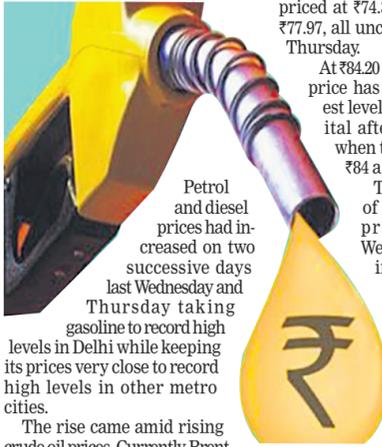


The accused persons conniving with the prime accused B Murthy Pillai cloned a cheque amounting ₹2.87 crore of KSCMFL. Following clearance of the cheque, Pillai withdrew the whole amount on the very same day from his cash credit account in the same branch of bank. He later deposited the amount in different accounts in the name of his relatives and three accused persons arrested by EOW. The sleuths found during investigations that the accused received huge amount of money from Pillai. Notably, the EOW had earlier arrested prime accused Pillai for cheating the bank of Rs. 2.87 crores with the cloned cheque. Pillai who is the owner of BMP & Sons Construction Pvt. Ltd. has a current bank account at the Rourkela branch of the Bank of India. According to the complaint filed by branch manager Anjani Kumar Singh, Pillai deposited a BOI cheque of ₹2.87 crore issued by KSCMFL November 3, 2020. Subsequently, the cheque was cleared by the bank and transferred the above amount into his cash credit account. Subsequently, the BOI's Bangalore LCB branch informed the local branch through email that the cheque deposited by Pillai was a fake one and the original was in possession of their customer KSCMFL.

## City sees drop in fuel prices

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Fuel prices in Bhubaneswar witnessed a slight drop in the past 24 hours, official sources said Tuesday.

According to sources, petrol, which was sold at ₹84.90 per litre across all the fuel stations in the Capital city Bhubaneswar Monday, was priced at ₹84.00 per litre Tuesday. Similarly, diesel was priced at ₹81.08 a litre in the Temple City Monday. On Tuesday, it was sold at ₹80.98 per litre across all the fuel stations in Bhubaneswar. Both petrol and diesel witnessed a fall of ₹0.10 in the past 24 hours. On the other hand, retail fuel prices across the four metro cities remained unchanged for the fifth consecutive day, Tuesday. Accordingly, in the national capital, petrol was sold at the record high of ₹84.20 per litre, reached Thursday (January 7). In Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was priced at ₹90.83, ₹86.96 and ₹85.68 per litre, respectively.



priced at ₹74.38, ₹81.07, 79.72 and ₹77.97, all unchanged levels since Thursday. At ₹84.20 a litre in Delhi, petrol price has breached the highest level in the national capital after October 4, 2018, when the rate had risen to ₹84 a litre. The OMCs' patience of holding back fuel prices was broken Wednesday when they increased the retail price of petrol and diesel for the first time this year after over a month-long pause. Petrol price was very close to breaching the all-time high level of ₹84 a litre (reached October 4, 2018) when it touched ₹83.71 a litre December 7, 2020. But the march had been halted ever since then with no price revision by the OMCs.

## COVID-19 & ODISHA

Sundargarh recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 38, followed by Bargarh and Bolangir at 16 each. Two persons from Khurda and Ganjam succumbed to the infection while under treatment in hospitals. The state has so far conducted over 72.29 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 28,212 Monday. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.6 per cent. Of the new cases, 131 were reported from various quarantine centres and 94 detected during contact tracing. Sundargarh district recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 38, followed by Bargarh and Bolangir at 16 each. Five districts - Dhenkanal, Kendrapara, Koraput, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur - did not report

## ODISHA GOVT STARTS TAGGING OLIVE RIDLEY SEA TURTLES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** The state forest department has begun tagging Olive Ridley turtles in the state to track their movement and conduct more research on their overall behavior. The exercise has been planned by the forest department in association with the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). The exercise was earlier done around 1995 where a total of 8000 ridleys were tagged. The tagging however is likely not to be done through GPS and will be confined to physical tag only. The exercise started at Ganjam coasts Tuesday under the supervision of the forest department. The olive ridleys are said to visit Odisha en masse for nesting. The animal species is often spotted at Rushikulya in Ganjam district and one of the prominent sites in India to witness them. The species is also found at Gahirmata at Kendrapada district.



## TAKING TO STREETS



People under the banner of 'Rail Gharoikaran Birodhi Jana Abhijan' demonstrate near Cuttack Collector's office, Tuesday, opposing the 'privatisation' of railways

## AIIMS-Bhub bags cleanliness award

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhubaneswar was awarded the 1st prize in the KAYAKALP Awards for cleanliness (2019-20) in category B with a prize of ₹2 crores. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan presented the award to the institute in a virtual ceremony Tuesday. AIIMS (Bhubaneswar) has been successfully winning this award for the past three years. In 2018-19 and 2017-18, the institute bagged second place in Category B with ₹1 crore prize money. The award money is utilised to further develop the institute and incentivise the grass-root healthcare workers who are the real champions in this scheme. It is also used in continuous training of AIIMS Bhubaneswar staff to inculcate a culture of cleanliness & sanitation, which can go a long way in rejuvenating the community's trust in government hospitals in Odisha. The Govt of India instituted the KAYAKALP Award as part of the 'Swachha Bharat Abhiyan' on 15 May 2015, as a nationwide initiative to recognize and felicitate public health facilities that demonstrate high levels of cleanliness, hygiene, and infection control measure and for promoting cleanliness in public spaces. Under the KAYAKALP initiative, 'Swachhata' guidelines have been issued to evaluate central government health facilities' performance in the domains of Hospital/Facility Upkeep, Sanitation and hygiene, Waste Management, Infection Control, Support Services, and Hygiene Promotion. The central government hospitals/institutes are divided into Category A & B based on Infrastructure- Bed Strength for evaluating the Institutes. The health facility is put through a stringent three-step evaluation process, i.e., Self-Assessment, Peer Assessment, and Infection Control. A team of experts nominated by MoHPW inspects the health facility against each specific parameter mentioned in the KAYAKALP guidelines. Among the top scoring hospitals, a winner is chosen for each category.

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# Roadblock for new rail route

RECONNAISSANCE ENGINEERING-CUM-TRAFFIC SURVEY REPORT SAYS THERE ISN'T ANY NEED FOR A NEW RAIL ROUTE FROM JAJPUR-KEONJHAR ROAD RAILWAY STATION

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, Jan 12:** Construction of a new rail route for better communication from Jajpur-Keonjhar road railway station, connecting the industrial areas in the district to deep seaport of Dhamra in Bhadrak district has hit roadblocks. The Reconnaissance Engineering-cum-Traffic (RET) survey report has rejected the need of a railway line between these two districts, a report said.

The proposed new railway line has been shelved in the final RET report submitted before the Railways Board. The RET report states that there is no need for an additional railway line of this capacity as there exists a railway line in Bhadrak district—65 km ahead of the Dhamra port.

The existing railway line is being used to 66 per cent of its capacity. The need for an additional railway line will arise when the existing one will be used to 80 per cent of its capacity, the report stated.

However, the need for an additional railway line arises as the existing rail route is not being used for passenger transport while transportation of cargo from Dhamra port has more than doubled in between these years.

With this, the hope of the residents of having railway connectivity to Jajpur town, the abode of Goddess Biraja, the presiding deity of the dis-



CONNECTING JAJPUR & BHADRAK

trict has been upset. The final RET report itself is ambiguous as it contradicts the opinion of the survey officials advocating the need for establishment of an additional railway line. Dhananjaya Singh, director (work-2) of Railway Board has informed this in a letter (18.07.2018) to the chief administrative officer of East Coast Railway. The development remained concealed and no one had inkling about it.

The matter was revealed following available information (May 2020) under an RTI (Right to Information Act) application filed by advocate Satya Prakash Behuria. This has sparked resentment among the residents. A mass agitation will take place if the Centre does not sanction funds for the new rail route in the coming railway budget in February, warned Advocate Satya Prakash Behuria and social activists Digambar Sahu and

Dushmant Rout.

Reports said that a survey was carried out for construction of the 95.950 km length of the new railway route in 2012-13. This length of the new railway route connects Jajpur Road-Keonjhar Road station with Dhamra via Jajpur town and Aradi in Bhadrak district.

The survey report was submitted before the Railways Board in 2015. A primary estimate pegged the cost at Rs 1,043 crore for construction of the new railways route. The survey officials had predicted that the East Coast Railways would reap 33 per cent profit if the new rail route is constructed.

They claimed that the construction of the new rail route will help boost tourism in both the districts as this railway line passes through Jajpur Town, the abode of Goddess Biraja and Aradi, the famous Shiva shrine of Akhandalmami. These

The existing railway line is being used to 66 per cent of its capacity, the RET report says

The need for an additional railway line will arise when the existing one will be used to 80 per cent of its capacity, the report adds

However, the need for an additional railway line arises as the existing rail route isn't being used for passenger transport while transportation of cargo from Dhamra port has more than doubled, say locals

two places are daily visited by devotees from in and outside of the state as well as from foreign countries.

Moreover, Kalinganagar industrial complex in Jajpur district is known as the steel hub of Asia for being home to various steel manufacturing firms. The establishment of the railway line will help export of steel products manufactured in Kalinganagar through Dhamra port.

This apart, the railway line will also help in transportation of vegetables cultivated in the district as well as consumer products to various places through trains. When contacted, Jajpur Lok Sabha MP Sharmistha Sethi said that she is unaware of the RET report and will place her demand in Parliament after reviewing the report.



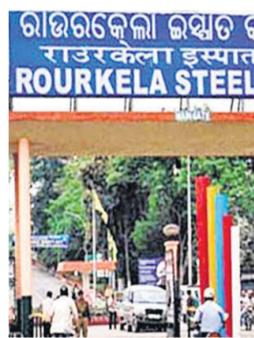
WOMEN'S SAFETY

Under Nirbhaya Yojana, policewomen are being provided pink scooters for patrolling, to ensure safety for female citizens in Chhatrapur

OP PHOTO

## NGT seeks report from RSP on gas leak mishap

THE RSP AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN ASKED TO SUBMIT THE REPORT BY FEBRUARY 11



POST NEWS NETWORK

Assistant Manager (Safety), Smruti Ranjan Sahu.

Ten workers engaged by a private construction company were working at the coal chemical department of the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) January 6 morning when the mishap of toxic gas leakage took place. The affected workers were immediately rushed to RSP-owned Ispat General Hospital (IGH). Four of them who were identified as Ganesh Pailo, Abhimanyu Saha, Babu Panda and Rabi Sahu succumbed while undergoing treatment.

## Stationary truck catches fire, no casualty reported

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sundargarh, Jan 12:** In an untoward incident, a stationary empty truck caught fire in the premises of a cement factory in Kutra police station area in Sundargarh district triggering panic among the cement factory workers and passersby.

While no exact reason of the fire was known immediately, reports said the truck caught fire after coming in contact with a 33 KV live wire at the factory.

An empty truck was parked inside the factory. Suddenly, a 33 KV live wire which was in a low-lying condition on the truck came into contact with the vehicle while the driver was lifting its cargo bed.

## ₹3 cr for mandi handling 'swindled', Labour dept remains mute spectator

THE AMOUNT HAS BEEN MISAPPROPRIATED IN THE NAME OF LABOURERS AT PADDY PROCUREMENT CENTRES IN SONEPUR DISTRICT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Subarnapur, Jan 12:** Funds provided for 'mandi handling' are allegedly not being used properly while nearly Rs3 crore has been misappropriated in the name of labourers at paddy procurement centres in Sonepur district. Millers, some local leaders and officials are involved in the misappropriation of the amount, a report said.

According to the report, forge records showing engagement of labourers at the mandis are produced and funds meant for it is bungled. However, the Labour department has closed its eyes to this corrupt practice.

Subarnapur is one of the highest paddy producing districts in the state. Surplus paddy and rice are exported to other districts and outside the state. It was learnt that about 60 lakh quintals of paddy are procured in Kharif and Rabi seasons through PACSs and SHGs.

In case of custom milling procurement system, millers do not play an important role. After farmers dumped their paddy at the mandis, next responsibilities lie with buyer agencies. To strengthen this system, the Central government has been providing funds towards mandi management (handling).

Funds are provided for various labour wages like for packing paddy, weighing sacks and loading on vehicles. In reality, about 80 per cent farmers in Binika and Dunguripalli and 30 per cent farmers of Sonepur,



Funds for mandi handling are being scammed and none bats an eye!

BALDEV PRASAD BEDBAK | LAWYER

It is unfortunate to misappropriate the funds meant for labourers. An investigation will be carried out in this matter and action will be taken

DILESWAR KHAKHA | DISTRICT LABOUR OFFICER

government is paying Rs 5.08 crore. In comparison to whopping amount of wages, a large number of labourers are supposed to be engaged at mandis. But in reality, only a few labourers are being engaged in a mandi.

False entries are being made in official records for a huge number of labourers. The wages are misappropriated, it was alleged. "Fund for mandi handling is a big scam," alleged lawyer Baldev Prasad Bedbak. He also added that though the district administration, the Cooperation department and the Civil Supplies department know everything, but no action is being taken in this regard.

District labour officer Dileswar Khakha said that millers have been assigned to handle the mandis as per the decision of the district level paddy procurement committee. "It is unfortunate to misappropriate the funds meant for labourers. An investigation will be carried out in this matter and action will be taken," he added.

## Flight services from Jharsuguda to Mumbai, Bangalore

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jharsuguda, Jan 12:** The wait for flight services from the Veer Surendra Sai Airport in Jharsuguda district to Mumbai and Bangalore came to an end Tuesday.

The inaugural flight from Mumbai touched down at the Veer Surendra Sai Airport around 12:30 pm. Similarly, the flight from Bangalore reached the airport at 5:40 pm. Earlier this month, the Odisha Commerce and Transport department made an announcement in this regard on its Twitter handle.

"Happy to announce that @spicejet starting flights from Veer Surendra Sai Airport, #Jharsuguda to Mumbai & Bengaluru from 12th January..." (sic) read the tweet. The flight services between Mumbai-Jharsuguda-Bangalore will be available for four days in a week - Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Jan 12:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has served notice to the authorities of the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) asking them to submit a report on gas mishap at RSP that claimed four lives earlier this month.

The RSP authorities have been asked to submit the report by February 11.

Notably, four workers died while undergoing treatment at hospital and six others got severely intoxicated following a gas leakage at the coal chemical department of the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) January 6.

The Rourkela Steel Plant authorities taking the case seriously had suspended two Deputy General Manager (DGM) rank officials - Gopabandhu Barik of EMD Department and Nabendu Das of CCD Mechanical Department and

## 2-DAY COASTAL EXERCISE COMMENCES IN PARADIP



THE FIRST EDITION OF 'SEA VIGIL' EXERCISE WAS CARRIED OUT IN 2019

ANOTHER SUCH EXERCISE TITLED 'SAGAR KAVACH' WAS CARRIED OUT ON PARADIP COAST NOV 5 AND 6, LAST YEAR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paradip, Jan 12:** A two-day 'Sea Vigil 2021' exercise aimed at strengthening coastal security was launched at Paradip port here Tuesday.

A total of 18 organisations including Indian Navy, Coast Guard, state Marine Police, Customs Department and Fisheries Department have been participating in the exercise. This exercise is also being carried in other crucial sea ports in the country.

Speaking to mediapersons, Jitendra Mani, marine police sub-inspector said that after the 26/11 attack, the coastal security has been strengthened in the country.

This exercise is being undertaken

with an aim to curb smuggling including men and material in the sea route, make an assessment of our preparedness as well as to create awareness among fishermen and seafarers, he said.

Pradyumna Kishore Behera, IIC of Paradip Marine police station said a total of 20 picketing points have been identified on the coast. The teams participating in the exercise will seize suspicious object and people and inform the higher-ups.

Notably, the first edition of 'Sea Vigil' exercise was carried out in 2019 while another exercise titled 'Sagar Kavach' was carried out on Paradip Coast November 5 and 6.

India has around 5,700-km-long coastline spread over nine states and

four Union Territories. The island region of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep are quite vulnerable to intrusions, he added.

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- Should possess sound knowledge about financial products available in market especially Housing Loans/ Vehicle Loans
- Approved agents for selling NSCS/Life Insurance Policies/ Mutual Funds/Govt. approved valuers /Chartered Accountants Tax Consultants and Real Estate Brokers having prior experience in selling Home Loans, mortgage backed products, auto loans, credit/debit cards, demat accounts and any other similar financial products will be preferred.
- Must have phone facility and operate from his/her place. Bank will not provide any office/infrastructure/reimbursement of any expenses.
- Well-established non-individual Firms/Companies having expertise in the above fields may also apply.

Empanelment camp will be held on 18.01.2021 & 19.01.2021 from 10.00 a.m. onwards. Please visit Along with all the necessary documents original and photocopies and 4 passport sized photographs.

Address- Indian Overseas Bank, Regional Office, 2nd Floor, Vijay Bhawan, VOS campus, Engg. School Road, Berhampur- 760010

Note- Nature of empanelment is purely on commission basis and renewal of agreement is based on performance as set by Bank from time to time.

Senior Regional Manager  
Indian Overseas Bank, Berhampur Region

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-876  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, NIMAPARA**  
Mail ID: ee\_nimapara@yahoo.co.in Date: 11.01.2021

No. Tender Online-Divn. NPR-06/2020-21

**e-Procurement NOTICE**

- Name of the Work : Road Works for the year 2020-21
- Total No. of Projects : 05 (Five) No. of Projects
- Estimated Cost of Projects : Varies from 7.07 lakh to Rs.13.26 lakh
- Class of Contractor : 'B' Class & 'A' Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant Class of other licensing authorities.  
: 'C' Class & 'B' Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant Class of other licensing authorities.  
: 'D' Class & 'C' Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant Class of other licensing authorities.
- Mode of Submission of Tender : Tender should be submitted Online only in website www.tendersorissa.gov.in
- Period of Completion : As per TCN
- Other Details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date, time & venue of Opening of Tender
		From	To		
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nimapara	Tender Online Divn. NPR-06/2020-21	18.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	28.01.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	27.01.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	30.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M., Office of the E.E.R.W. Division, Nimapara

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.  
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nimapara  
OIPR-25099/11/0006/2021

**INTEGRATED TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, NABARANGPUR**  
No. 62/2021 Date: 11.01.2021

**e-Procurement Notice**  
Bid Identification No. ITDANBG-01/20-21

Bids are invited from the eligible Contractors for construction of Open Gym, Mini Hall & Mini Stadium (10 Nos. of projects) through e-tender process. The details of the tender are available in the website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> from 15.00 hours of 13.01.2021 to 17.00 hours of 27.01.2021 for online bidding. The bids received online shall be opened on 11.00 hours of 02.02.2021 in this office. The original bid security, Demand Draft towards cost of Bid, GST Certificate and affidavit in original shall be submitted in this office on or before 17.00 hours of 01.02.2021 by Regd. Post/ Speed Post only during office hours. The bidders shall have to participate in online bidding only. Further, any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can be seen in the website only. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- PA., ITDA, Nabarangpur

Government of Odisha No. B-638  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PARALAKHEMUNDI (R&B) DIVISION, PARALAKHEMUNDI**  
Tel. Ph. No.: 06815-222542, E-mail ID: eerparala@yahoo.com

**TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
Bid Identification No. E.E., PKD. R&B Divn. - 14/2020-21

The Executive Engineer, Paralakhemundi (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bid in Single Cover system to be received in ONLINE MODE only for the construction of works as mentioned below:

- Nature of the Work : Building & Road works
- Approximate Estimated Cost : Rs. 19.66 lakhs to 49.22 lakhs
- No. of Works : (4) Four Numbers only
- Tender Paper Cost (Online) : Rs.6,000/-
- Class of Contractor : 'D' Class / 'C' Class / 'B' Class / 'A' Class
- Availability of Bid documents : From Dt.21.01.2021 (10.00 A.M.) to 29.01.2021 (05.00 P.M.)
- Date of Opening of Bid : 30.01.2021 at 12.00 Noon
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>. Any Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Executive Engineer  
Paralakhemundi (R&B) Division  
OIPR-34065/11/0010/2021

**CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, KEONJHAR**  
Advt. No. 187/CDM&PHO, Keonjhar Date 12.01.2021

**SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
No. E-513: Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the intending manufacturers or their authorised stockiest/ Distributors for supply of Hospital Equipments (EIF) to DHH, Keonjhar for 2020-21 to Keonjhar District.

The eligible bidders may submit their tender papers on or before 25.1.2021 by 5.00 P.M. through Registered Post / Speed Post / Courier only to the undersigned. The Technical Bid documents will be opened on 27.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M. Those who will qualify in the Technical Bid, their Financial Bids will be opened on the same day. The details in this connection are available in the district NIC website: [www.kendujhar.nic.in](http://www.kendujhar.nic.in).

The authority will not be responsible for any postal delay. The undersigned has reserves the right to reject or cancel any or all the tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Keonjhar  
OIPR-10033/11/0036/2021

The great are strongest when they stand alone, a God-given might of being is their force.

SRI AUROBINDO



CREDIBILITY LOSS

Every one, mistakenly, thought that it's a sad commentary on the functioning of the country's executive that finally made the Supreme Court get exasperated by its dilatory tactic on the three contentious farm laws passed recently.

That is why the united farmers' union has hardened its stand and said all the farmers' organisations spearheading the agitation are unanimous in their decision that the laws must be repealed forthwith and have decided not to attend the committee formed by the apex court.

On the other hand, the Centre has made it clear before the court that it will not agree to any discussion for repealing the farm laws before the committee. In order to discredit the agitators, the government still keeps harping that farmers of only Punjab are vocal against the farm laws.

The agitating farmers have seen through the ploy and stated in clear terms that they condemn the government's "false" propaganda that the agitation is confined only to farmers of Punjab. They have reminded the government that thousands of farmers from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and some other states have assembled on the borders of Delhi, while thousands more are protesting at various places in different states.

While the farmers do not really need to prove any point in a country such as India, it is the court and the government which should now struggle to find credibility for themselves at this point in history.

WISDOM CORNER

- It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then. LEWIS CARROLL
Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers. SOCRATES
Do what you feel in your heart to be right - for you'll be criticized anyway. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

WORDSWORTH

Bright

It's a noun, not an adjective. If you say, "I'm bright", that's an immodest (and possibly inaccurate) statement. But "I'm a bright" says that you don't believe in God, more strictly that your view of the world is naturalistic, free of what its inventors describe as "supernaturalism and mystical elements of all kinds".

Bringing Home the Bacon

Agreed. It's also been said that it refers to the old fairground contest of catching the greased pig, whose prize was the pig, so the winner brought home the bacon. Your story reminded me at once of one of the tales told in that infamous e-mail about life in the 1500s that endlessly circulates online.

LOL

Forgetfulness

There was an elderly couple who in their old age noticed that they were getting a lot more forgetful, so they decided to go to the doctor. The doctor told them that they should start writing things down so they don't forget.



remember: you want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream."

Then the old lady said she wants a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top. "Write it down," she told her husband and again he said, "No, I got it. You want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top."



Dani Rodrik

ON PAPER, THIS IS A WIN NOT ONLY FOR EUROPEAN INDUSTRY, BUT ALSO FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. BUT THE RECEPTION THE CAI HAS RECEIVED HAS NOT BEEN UNIFORMLY POSITIVE

Just as 2020 was ending, the European Union and China announced the completion of a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between the two economic giants.

The CAI gives European firms enhanced access to the Chinese market, removes (or relaxes) Chinese government requirements on joint ventures and technology transfer in some sectors, and promises equal treatment with state enterprises and greater regulatory transparency.

On paper, this is a win not only for European industry, but also for human rights. But the reception the CAI has received has not been uniformly positive. The US reaction ranged from disappointment to outright hostility.

But many moderates, including President-elect Joe Biden's designated national security adviser, were dismayed as well. The incoming Biden administration would have preferred presenting a unified front against China, by striking an economic deal with Europe first.

For others, it was the EU's apparent naivete on China's human rights promises that rankled. Guy Verhofstadt, a former Belgian Prime Minister and member of the European Parliament, tweeted that "any Chinese signature on human rights is not worth the paper it is written on."

The Europe-China agreement underscores a fundamental question of the post-pandemic world order: How should strategic and economic relations between major powers with very different institutional and political arrange-



Just as 2020 was ending, the European Union and China announced the completion of a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between the two economic giants. This "will be the most ambitious agreement that China has ever concluded with a third country," boasted the official announcement from the European Commission

ments be managed? In particular, can democracies remain true to their values while engaging in trade and investment with China?

To answer this question, we must recognise two facts. First, it is impossible to envisage a significant decoupling of the Chinese economy and the economies of the West that does not induce economic catastrophe. Second, there is little that Western countries can do, individually or collectively, to reshape China's state-driven economic model or repressive human- and labour-rights regime.

Trade and investment agreements cannot transform China into a Western-style market economy or turn it into a democracy. Our best hope, then, is to seek a new global regime that recognizes the diversity of economic and political settings without severely undermining the gains from international trade and investment.

None of this implies that Western countries should put human rights or political considerations aside when they engage China in the economic sphere. It simply means that the US and Europe should pursue more limited, more attainable, and ultimately more defensible goals.

Two such goals are paramount. First, trade and investment rules should ensure that Western firms and consumers are not directly complicit in human-rights abuses

in China. Second, such rules should safeguard democratic countries against Chinese practices that could undermine their domestic institutional arrangements on labor, environment, technology, and national security. The objective ought to be to uphold and protect the West's own values, rather than export them.

So, the important question on the CAI is not whether the EU will be able to alter the Chinese economic system or improve China's human rights and labour regime. Even if the treatment of the mostly Muslim Uighur minority improves, the repression of dissidents and free speech will continue. And even if China ratifies the Forced Labor Convention and enforces its provisions - a doubtful matter - Chinese leaders do not plan to recognize independent unions. The relevant question is whether the EU has given up its freedom to pursue policies that limit complicity in human rights and labor abuses or safeguard European national security and labour standards.

The European Commission has claimed that the CAI allows the EU to maintain its "policy space," especially in "sensitive" sectors such as energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and public services. In the remaining areas, the EU is already fairly open to Chinese investment. That raises the question of what the Chinese

government thinks it is getting with the agreement.

The answer seems to be that China is buying insurance against future restrictions in Europe. The agreement contains an arbitration scheme that enables the parties to bring violation complaints against each other. If consultations fail to resolve the matter, disputes are to be brought to arbitration panels with specific compliance procedures. While the European Commission views this as a mechanism to prevent Chinese backsliding from commitments, it could also serve as a means for the Chinese government to challenge specific entry barriers against Chinese firms.

A dispute resolution framework is essential to any workable global order. But what if, say, a European country wants to bar a Chinese firm that treats its workers badly or operates in Xinjiang? France already requires that large French companies abide by international human rights and environmental norms in their foreign operations.

What happens if European countries adopt tougher measures preventing Chinese firms with problematic labor or environmental practices from operating in the EU? Would the arbitration mechanism find these regulations compatible with the CAI? Similarly, how much deference will panels show to exceptions to market access based on "national security" considerations?

In any case, neither the US desire to forge a united front against China, nor the reality that the CAI will fall short of creating a freer, more market-oriented China is a valid argument against the CAI and other similar trade and investment agreements. We should not judge the CAI by whether it enables Europe to export its system and values. We should judge it by whether it allows Europe to remain true to its own.

The writer, Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, is the author of Straight Talk on Trade: Ideas for a Sane World Economy.

IN JEST THIS

Ask nicely and get requests granted



Melvin Durai

MILLIONS OF STUDENTS IN INDIA ARE EXCELLING IN SCHOOL AND HAVE BRIGHT FUTURES. I HAVE A FEELING THAT SAI ANWESH AMRUTAM PRADHAN IS ONE OF THEM

Millions of students in India are excelling in school and have bright futures. I have a feeling that Sai Anwesh Amrutam Pradhan is one of them. Sai, a student at MBS Public School in Bhubaneswar, is definitely going places, thanks partly to Mo Bus.

Sai sent a series of tweets last Friday to Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT), which operates the public transport bus service, and its managing director Arun Bothra. Identifying himself as a student at MBS Public School and addressing Bothra as "Respected Sir," Sai wrote: "I use Mo Bus as my daily transportation means to go to school. Nowadays the timing of the buses are changed. My reporting time at school is sharp at 7:30 AM. But unfortunately the first bus of route no-13 leaves at 7:40 AM from Lingipur. As a result I will be late for my school. And for this reason I am facing a lot of problems."

Sai finished his message with this request: "So I would be grateful to you if you kindly look into the matter and take some immediate action."

My first thought upon reading his message was this: How polite! My second thought was this: How naive!



Does he really think a government-run bus service will take "immediate action" and make a change to bus timings to ensure that one student gets to school on time? No way. They would probably respond like this: "Dear Sai, thank you for your request. We will certainly look into it. In the meantime, have you considered riding a bicycle to school? Other means of transportation are also available, if you can afford them, including auto-rickshaw, hired car and helicopter."

My skepticism is based on a lifetime of experiences, not just with government organisations but also private ones. If they make a change, it will happen only after they've received many requests -

and even then, it might take weeks or months. Sometimes the change will happen after the person making the request has passed on and you will read something about it in an obituary. "Though John was unable to enjoy the new bus stop in his neighborhood, his widow would like to thank the transportation authority for finally acting on his request."

But CRUT evidently aims to please and responded to Sai's tweet the very next day (Saturday). IPS officer Bothra informed Sai that his request for "immediate action" would be granted.

"Dear Sai, #MoBus moves with love of commuters like you," Bothra tweeted. "The timing of your bus

will be changed from Monday. The first bus will start at 7 AM. You won't be late for school."

Bothra shared a photo of Sai taking the bus at 7 AM on Monday. "CRUT crew members were very excited to take pics with the VIP commuter," he wrote.

Sai must have indeed felt like a VIP. He deserves a lot of credit and has set a good example for other people. The lesson is this: If you want something, ask for it. But do so politely, using words and phrases such as "please" and "kindly" and "you are the greatest person."

Don't make demands, unless you are in a position of authority, but even then, a little kindness and humility often gets better results.

Thanks, Sai, for setting a good example. And perhaps you can tweet another request to CRUT and Arun Bothra: "Respected Sir, Thank you for allowing me to catch the bus at 7 AM. I just have one more request: would you be kind enough to serve some breakfast on the bus? I do not have time to eat at home in the morning. You are the kindest people on earth and I would be eternally grateful. I have even thought of a slogan for you: Eat Mo Food on Mo Bus."

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

A doyen of Odia language, literature

Sir, Fakir Mohan Senapati was born January 13, 1843, at Mallikapur village, Baleswar, and played a leading role in establishing the distinct identity of Odia. Fakir Mohan is regarded as the father of Odia nationalism and the modern Odia literature. He dedicated his life for the progress of Odia language in the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Marriageable age for women

Sir, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan recently stated that the minimum age of marriage for women should be raised from the current 18 years to 21 years. The Central government has also constituted a committee by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development to look into the minimum marriageable age for women. Today, women also have an equal right to receive education and choose their careers like men. Due to the marriage age of girls being 18, they are forced to break the career and get married early by family and societal pressure.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA

# First batch of vax lands in Hyd

**HOPES & PRAYERS: DIVINE BLESSINGS FOR THE SUCCESS OF VACCINATION WERE SOUGHT AS HINDU, MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN PRIESTS OFFERED PRAYERS WHEN THE DOSES WERE RECEIVED BY TOP OFFICIALS AND SHIFTED TO THE COLD STORAGE**

AGENCIES

**Hyderabad, Jan 12:** The much-awaited moment finally arrived Tuesday as the first consignment of Covid-19 vaccine for Telangana reached Hyderabad amid prayers and hopes of an early end to the pandemic.

Priests of various religious faiths offered prayers as the state received 3.64 lakh doses of Oxford-Astrazeneca's Covishield vaccine.

After arrival at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, the consignment was shifted to State Vaccine Centre at Koti, where the vials were kept in the storage under the prescribed temperature.

Divine blessings for the success of vaccination were sought as Hindu, Muslim and Christian priests offered prayers when the doses were received by top officials and shifted to the cold storage.

Director Public Health G. Srinivas Rao said both Covishield and Covaxin will be administered to health workers. In addition to 3.64 lakh doses of Covishield received from Serum Institute of India, Pune, the state also received 20,000 doses of Covaxin, developed and manufactured by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech.

"This is a historic day for mankind as a vaccine is ready in a record time of 10 months," said

Rao while thanking researchers and scientists who worked on developing the vaccines.

The official said they were also proud to receive Covaxin made on Telangana soil. Both the vaccines will be administered to health workers from January 16, the day when the vaccine rollout is scheduled to start across the country.

These vials will be transported to various Regional Vaccine Centres and from there will be shipped to cold chain points. In all, 866 cold chain points have been arranged for transport of the vaccine.

On the first day, 13,900 doses will be administered at 139 sites. The vaccination will be conducted at all 1,213 centres across the state from January 18.

Earlier, the first consignment of Covishield vaccines arrived at the Cargo terminal of RGIA by the Spicejet Freighter, SG7466 at 11:30 am from Pune. The consignment was handled as per the special protocol ensuring cold-chain integrity.

A dedicated Vaccine Task Force that has been formed, with a nodal person, to ensure a seamless and high priority movement of Covid-19 vaccines handled the shipment at the airport.

The Vaccine consignment consisting of 31 boxes were offloaded from the aircraft parked in the adjoining dedicated cargo apron and



This is a historic day for mankind as a vaccine is ready in a record time of 10 months

G SRINIVAS RAO | DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH

swiftly taken to the vaccine storage and handling areas in the GHAC Terminal. The Task Force ensured the quick movement of the vaccine through the domestic inbound section to the reefer truck bound for consignee (state government).

Out of 41 mini-hubs planned across the country by the Government of India, Hyderabad has been notified as one of the designated distribution points for South India.

"GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo (GHAC) has a major role cut out

in the entire value chain of vaccine shipments and is well equipped with the necessary infrastructure to handle hundreds of tonnes of vaccine cargo per day. The terminal offers one of India's largest fleet of the modern temp-controlled Cool Containers viz. Cool Dolly, Envirotainer, VaQtec, etc.," said Pradeep Panicker, CEO, GMR Hyderabad International Airport.

A committee led by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, will oversee the vaccination at state level. Task force committees have been set up at the district and zonal levels.

Somesh Kumar Tuesday held a teleconference with all district collectors to review the preparations for launch of Covid vaccination programme.

He sensitised the Collectors about the importance of the programme which in the first phase is going to cover all healthcare workers from government as well as private facilities.

Somesh Kumar directed the Collectors to ensure that necessary arrangements were made at the identified launch sites in their districts as per operational guidelines including measures for dealing with any cases of adverse effect following immunisation.

He asked Collectors to appoint special officers for each launch site who would be responsible for overseeing the arrangements there. Collectors were advised to keep reserve vaccinators at each site. They were asked to facilitate presence of pre-identified beneficiaries through network of district officials.

Considering the importance of the programme, the Chief Secretary advised the Collectors to seek participation of public representatives at all levels. He further advised them to schedule a smaller number of beneficiaries on the first day and thereafter ramp up the numbers, taking into account the experience.

# T'gana logs 301 fresh cases, 293 recoveries



AGENCIES

**Hyderabad, Jan 12:** Telangana recorded a further drop in daily coronavirus cases to 301 Tuesday even as the state registered 293 more recoveries. Two more fatalities took the state's Covid-19 death toll to 1,568.

The new cases came to the fore after a test on 34,431 samples. Active cases in Telangana now total 4,524, including 2,459 in home or institutional isolation.

According to the Public Health and Family Welfare Director, the fatality rate remained 0.54 per cent as against the national average of 1.4 per cent. While 44.96 per cent of the deaths were due to Covid-19, 55.04 per cent had comorbidities.

The state's recoveries now total 2,84,217, with a recovery rate of 97.90 per cent as against the na-

tional average of 96.5 per cent.

Greater Hyderabad logged 58 new cases during the last 24 hours. Medchal Malkajgiri district recorded the second 27 cases, followed by Rangareddy (16), Warangal Urban (12), and Nalgonda (12).

Of the total tests conducted during the last 24 hours, government laboratories conducted 32,217 and private ones the remaining 2,214. Samples tested per million population ratio rose further to 1,96,465.

The data shows that 63.9 per cent of positive cases so far were aged between 21 and 50, 22.91 per cent aged above 51 and 13.18 per cent below 20. Of the total cases, 60.44 per cent were males and 39.37 per cent females. In 62 government hospitals treating Covid-19 in the state, 7,858 of the 8,577 beds were vacant. In 219 private hospitals, 6,616 of the 7,962 beds were vacant.

# Free drinking water scheme launched in water-scarce Hyd

THE SCHEME IS EXPECTED TO BENEFIT NINE LAKH FAMILIES, WHO USE LESS THAN 20,000 LITRES OF WATER EVERY MONTH

AGENCIES

**Hyderabad, Jan 12:** Fulfilling a major promise made in last month's elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, the TRS government in Telangana Tuesday launched 20,000 litres free water scheme in Greater Hyderabad government.

Minister for municipal administration and urban development KT Rama Rao formally launched the scheme at Rahmat Nagar in the city. The scheme is expected to benefit nine lakh families, who use less than 20,000 litres of water every month. The minister issued zero water bills to some beneficiaries on the occasion. He said though the scheme would put an additional burden of Rs.500 crore on the state exchequer, the government kept its promise.

Ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), in its manifesto for Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, has promised that all households in Greater Hyderabad Municipal



Corporation (GHMC) limits will get free drinking water from December with the ceiling of 20,000 litres per month.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had stated that Hyderabad, which has 10 lakh domestic water connections, will become the second city in India after Delhi to provide free drinking water. The move will benefit 97 per cent of consumers. The chief minister had also revealed that he spoke to his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal about the implementation of the scheme before including it in the election manifesto.

Chandrasekhar Rao also appealed to people to cooperate in ensuring that the water is not wasted. He said if the scheme is successfully implemented in Hyderabad, it will be subsequently extended to other municipalities.

In the elections held December 1, TRS won 55 seats in 150-member GHMC but fell short of majority due

to impressive performance by BJP, which bagged 48 seats.

Even before its candidate is formally elected as mayor, TRS government fulfilled the poll promise.

Launching the scheme, Rama Rao said despite financial crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the state government was continuing all development and welfare programmes. He pointed out that distribution of assistance to farmers under Rythu Bandhu, one rupee a kg rice to the poor, double bedroom housing for poor and social security pensions were all delivered despite the financial constraints.

KTR, as the minister is popularly known, claimed that history was being created. "It's a big day for Hyderabad which witnessed drinking water scarcity and people protesting with empty pots," he said and remarked Sankranti has come two days in advance for people in Hyderabad.

AGENCIES

**Chennai, Jan 12:** BJP president and Rajya Sabha member JP Nadda and Congress leader and Lok Sabha member Rahul Gandhi will be in Tamil Nadu January 14 and celebrate the harvest festival Pongal.

Nadda will participate in the 'Namma Ooru Pongal Vizha' (our city Pongal festival) organised by the Tamil Nadu BJP unit near here.

Nadda will witness the making of the Pongal, sporting events, and traditional arts of Tamil Nadu and also have a bullock cart ride and also give a speech in the end.

Nadda will also participate in annual function of Tamil magazine Thuglak on that day.

On the other hand, Gandhi will witness Jallikattu-the traditional bull taming sport of Tamil Nadu-at Avaniapuram in Madurai district, said the state unit of Congress.

According to Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC), Gandhi will witness Jallikattu January 14, the day on which the harvest festival Pongal is celebrated in the state.

The tag line for Gandhi's Tamil Nadu visit will be 'Rahulin Tamizh Vanakkam'.

Gandhi would lend his moral support to farmers protesting against the new farm laws across the country by witnessing the sport at Avaniapuram in Madurai district, Congress' state president KS Alagiri told reporters here.

"The bull is a symbol of farmers



and part of their lives," the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president said.

His visit is to "honour the farmers and the valorous Tamil culture on the day of harvest festival and he will not engage in election campaign on that day," he said.

Assembly elections are due during April-May in the state.

"The general public should gather in large numbers for the event."

Billing Gandhi's event as 'Rahulin Tamil Vanakkam', he said it was also intended to dislodge the "inept" AIADMK regime, "subservient" to the Centre.



Only Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami and his party the AIADMK supported the Central government's three farm laws and no other political party favoured it, he claimed.

Gandhi is scheduled to arrive at Madurai by 11 am on Pongal day and would be spending about four hours in the temple town.

Though there are no other scheduled events like interaction with farmers, such programmes might take place if the leader so desired, Alagiri said.

Gandhi also has no plans to visit the alliance party DMK's president

Gandhi would lend his moral support to farmers protesting against the new farm laws across the country by witnessing the (Jallikattu) sport at Avaniapuram in Madurai district

KS ALAGIRI | PRESIDENT, TN CONGRESS

AGENCIES

MK Stalin or other leaders, he said. During his visit to western Tamil Nadu, likely towards the month end, Gandhi could meet allies, he said adding his party senior leader had a plan to campaign extensively in Tamil Nadu. Priyanka Gandhi would also be invited to the state in the run up to the polls, he said.

To a question, he mocked at the AIADMK alliance in Tamil Nadu and alleged the partners in the ruling party led combine could not even agree upon the Chief Ministerial candidate.

The BJP, after maintaining for some time that NDA would announce the CM candidate said Monday that the AIADMK, the "major" partner would decide it.

The TNCC chief said his party stood behind DMK chief MK Stalin and he is the CM candidate of the alliance.

Harmony prevailed in the DMK camp and it was absent in the AIADMK combine, he claimed ruling out scope for discord between Congress and DMK in seat sharing for the Assembly polls.

# Former DGP's rare Bonsai tree stolen

AGENCIES

**Hyderabad, Jan 12:** A rare Bonsai tree has been stolen from the residence of former Andhra Pradesh Director General of Police V Appa Rao's residence here, police said Tuesday.

The former police chief's wife V Sridevi lodged a complaint with Jubilee Hills police station that the 15-year-old Bonsai miniature tree was stolen Sunday from their house garden on Road No 18 of Jubilee Hills. Sridevi, in her complaint, stated that she has a huge collection of valuable Bonsai trees and rare tree Saru (Casuarina) which was kept in front of their south-east gate was found stolen.

She told police that their gardener Devender Sunday noticed that the miniature tree was missing while watering the plants.

On her complaint lodged Monday, police registered a case of theft under the Indian Penal Code and launched a probe.

This is the second such incident at the former DGP's house in three years. Earlier, a rare Jade Bonsai tree was stolen.

# ARMOUR HERE



Workers unload packets containing Covishield vaccine after the first batch of vaccines from the Serum Institute of India arrived at a storage facility in Chennai, Tuesday

# ISRO to adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Labs

THE ATL ENABLES OVER THREE MILLION STUDENTS TO ACQUIRE PROBLEM SOLVING, TINKERING AND INNOVATIVE MINDSET

AGENCIES

**Chennai, Jan 12:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has adopted 45 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) in the first phase out of the total 100 labs.

According to ISRO, the decision was announced by Department of Space (DOS), Atal Innovation Mission and NITI Aayog Monday at an online event organised by them. The remaining 55 ATLs will be adopted by ISRO soon, to promote education in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), space education, and space technology related innovations for school students, ISRO said.

An ATL provides activity-based learning so that young minds can give shape to their ideas for societal problems which also fosters entrepreneurship and innovation.

The ATL enables over three million students in 6-12 standards to acquire problem solving, tinkering and innovative mindset.



The Monday event saw the participation of Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog, K Sivan, Secretary, DOS, Ramanan, Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), PV Venkitakrishnan, Director, Capacity Building Programme Office, ISRO and Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog through a video message, ISRO said.

Sivan hoped the move would help promote innovation and the spirit of experimental learning among the school kids.

He said ISRO is taking a small

step in engaging with the students, towards giving them direction in pursuing their space dreams as a part of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.

ISRO officials shall actively mentor the kids as well as interact with teachers in these ATLs - encouraging experiments, brainstorming ideas and spreading awareness about outer space activities.

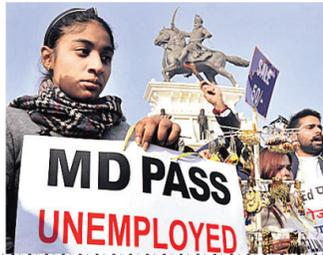
Sivan also said students involved in these ATLs would be invited as guests to witness future launches from India's rocket port located in Sriharikota.



The medical advice terms it dangerous to get back to congregational courts and the number of fatalities will increase by opening courts amid the Covid-19 pandemic

### NSUI ACTIVISTS POLISH SHOES

On the occasion of National Youth Day, the National Students Union of India (NSUI) Tuesday staged a protest outside the Agriculture Ministry by polishing shoes and selling vegetables



### of the day quote

While the short-term objective of establishing new AIIMS in various parts of India is to reduce the 'gaps' in affordable tertiary health care, the long-term vision is to generate wellness amongst the general population of India



For TRP ratings, the ministry had November 4, 2020, constituted a committee headed by the Prasara Bharati CEO, which has submitted its report today. The report will be studied by the ministry and the future course of action will be decided



Farming and farmers have contributed immensely to the progress and development of the country



## Gap of 28 days between two vaccine doses: Govt

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 12: There will be a gap of 28 days between two doses of COVID-19 vaccine and its effectiveness will begin 14 days after the second dose, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press briefing, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said vaccine effectiveness will be seen only after 14 days.

"So we urge people to keep following COVID appropriate behaviour," he said. Bhushan said there will be a gap of 28 days between two doses of COVID-19 vaccine. India will launch its COVID-19 vaccination drive from January 16 with priority to be given to nearly three crore healthcare and frontline workers.

India had recently granted emergency use authorisation to two vaccines, Oxford's Covishield being manufactured by Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. Both vaccines, the statement from the Health Ministry said, have established safety and immunogenicity. Dr V K Paul member, NITI Aayog member, said these two vaccines have been tested in thousands of people, they are the safest and there is no risk of any significance.

"We should have no doubt that the two vaccines approved are the safest of the vaccines. Both the vaccines have been tested on thousands of people and side-effects are negligible. There is no risk of any significance," he said. Bhushan said that as said earlier, there will be a sequential rollout of COVID-19 vaccination. "Healthcare workers (approximately one crore) will be on the top priority, followed by frontline workers (approximately 2 crore) and prioritized age groups (ap-



A health worker shows the Covishield vaccine

PTI PHOTO

### Four more vaccines are in pipeline

Four more COVID-19 vaccines are in the pipeline and their manufacturers may approach the drug controller for emergency use authorisation, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday. Addressing a press briefing, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said Zydus Cadila, Sputnik V, Biological E and Gemova are other vaccines also in the pipeline which are in advanced clinical trials in India.

"In the coming days you may see some of these vaccines too approaching the drug controller for emergency use authorisation," Bhushan said. Elaborating further, Bhushan said Zydus Cadila completed Phase 2 clinical trials of its coronavirus vaccine in December of last year and has been granted approval for Phase 3.

Similarly, Phase 2 clinical trials of Russia's Sputnik-V COVID-19 vaccine have also concluded and

approximately 27 crore). The cost of healthcare workers and frontline

Phase 3 trials are being carried out by its Indian partner Dr Reddy's laboratories, he said. In the case of Biological E, Bhushan said the Phase 1 clinical trials of its vaccine started in December and Phase 2 is expected to begin in March.

Gemova's RNA-based COVID-19 vaccine is currently in Phase 1 with Phase 2 clinical trials likely to begin in March of this year, he said. Bhushan said Pfizer-BioNTech is available at Rs 1,431 per dose, Moderna at Rs 2,348 to Rs 2,715 per dose, Sinopharm less than Rs 5,650 per dose, Sinovac Biotech at Rs 1,027 per dose, Novavax at Rs 1,114 per dose, Gamaleya Centre at less than Rs 734 per dose and Johnson and Johnson at Rs 734 per dose.

All these vaccines, except the one by Pfizer, can be stored between 2-8 degrees Celsius. Pfizer needs to be stored at minus 70 degrees Celsius, he added.

workers will be borne by the central government," Bhushan said.

### Yedi cabinet expansion set for today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bengaluru, Jan 12: The much-awaited Karnataka Cabinet expansion would take place on Wednesday with the induction of 7-8 ministers, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said on Tuesday.

The BJP veteran also indicated one minister might be dropped in the rejig, the third of the 17-month old ministry.

"...New Ministers will take oath at the Raj Bhavan at around 3:30 pm tomorrow, the list of seven or eight ministers who will be inducted will be released in due course," he told reporters here. Asked will anyone be dropped from the 27-member Ministry as there were only seven vacant berths, he said: "It is being discussed, we will see, we may have to drop someone, will think about it and make a decision... There is no confusion."

The announcement comes two days after Yediyurappa finalised the expansion at a meeting with top BJP leaders, including party chief J P Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi. This would be third expansion of the cabinet since Yediyurappa assumed charge in July, 2019 after the collapse of the Congress-JDS government in the wake of revolt by 17 MLAs of the coalition partners. A state Information Department release said Governor Vajubhai Vala will administer the oath of office and secrecy to the new members who will be inducted to the Cabinet at 3.50 pm at the Glass House of Raj Bhavan Wednesday. Yediyurappa, who had been planning the expansion for several months, had Monday said Nadda and party General Secretary in-charge of state Arun Singh will be invited for the swearing-in.

### BIRD FLU SCARE

## Centre asks states to maintain sufficient stock of PPE kits



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: The Centre Tuesday said it has issued advisories to states regarding testing protocols for bird flu and also asked them to maintain sufficient stock of PPE kits and accessories required for culling operations.

Till Monday, bird flu outbreak was confirmed in 10 states - Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat.

"Till 12 January 2021, additional cases of Avian Influenza (H5N8) has been confirmed among dead crows in HCL-Khetri Nagar in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan," the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a statement. Avian influenza (H5N1) has also been confirmed in dead crows and pelican in zoological park, Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh as well as in dead crows in Jagnoli and Fatehpur village in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. The

confirmation of avian influenza (H5N1) in poultry sample from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh has been received on Tuesday from NISAD (National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal), it added. "The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has issued advisory on testing protocol to states, encouraging them to undertake screening at state level ensuring suitable bio secure facilities," the statement said.

A central team has been deputed to visit Maharashtra and Gujarat to monitor the epicentres of avian influenza outbreak in those states. "Constant efforts to generate awareness about Avian Influenza and how to deal with the situation is being shared among the general public through various media platforms including social media platforms like twitter," the statement said. The ministry said states have been advised to maintain sufficient stock of PPE kits and accessories required for culling operations.

### SHORT TAKES

#### India-B'desh to fight against terror

New Delhi: India and Bangladesh on Tuesday agreed to enhance fight against terrorist entities, including global terrorist groups as well as other fugitives, wherever they are present and active. The first delegation-level virtual police chiefs' dialogue between India and Bangladesh also agreed to establish designated 'nodal points' for timely and effective handling and response to existing as well as emerging security and counter-terrorism challenges.

#### Body of Army officer found

Jaipur: The body of Captain Ankit Gupta of the Army Para Commandos (Special Forces), who went missing in the waters of a reservoir in Jodhpur during an exercise, was finally traced on Tuesday on the sixth day of a massive search by around 200 personnel from all three services. Gupta had jumped from a helicopter into the Takhat Sagar during an exercise six days ago and then went missing. Army experts, since then, were searching for him in the reservoir which was 51 feet deep.

#### Sealdah flyover to be closed

Kolkata: A part of the arterial Sealdah Flyover in Kolkata will be closed to traffic from the night of January 15 to January 19 morning for the construction of the west-bound tunnel of the East-West Metro corridor, an official said here Tuesday.

#### Minor gangraped

Ranchi: A 13-year-old girl was gang-raped by two persons in Ranchi, the police said on Tuesday. The minor girl had gone to a shop to buy some goods Monday evening when two persons allegedly abducted and gang-raped her. On Tuesday morning, the culprits left her in front of her house, following which her family members informed the police about the incident. Both the accused are absconding.

#### Fisherman killed

Fatehpur (UP): A 75-year-old fisherman died in a fire at his hut in Harnava village in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur district, police said on Tuesday. The fire broke out around 6 pm Monday, killing fisherman Saryu Bind while he was cooking food, said Asotnar Station House Officer (SHO) Ranveer Singh.

### COVID VACCINATION

## Worst-hit Mumbai gets the lion's share

For the much-anticipated vaccination drives in Mumbai Circle, Mumbai city has got 72 centres, besides Thane (42), Palghar (8) and Raigad (7) in the MMR, Health Minister Rajesh Tope announced

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Jan 12: Worst-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic with 19,260 plus deaths till date, the highest in India, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is likely to get the lion's share of the Covid-19 vaccination doses with over 7,000 slated to be administered the life-saver jab, health officials said here Tuesday. At each vaccination centre, around 100 people shall be administered the life-saving vaccine as per the priority groups identified by the Centre and state health authorities, with the possibility of around 7,200 getting the doses in the country's commercial capital.

Apart from MMR, Pune Circle - the second worst-hit with 11,400-plus fatalities - Pune has got 55 centres, 19 in Solapur and 16 in

Satara. The next is Nashik Circle with 4,993 deaths till date, Nashik has been given 23 centres, 21 in Ahmednagar, 13 in Jalgaon, 7 each in Dhule and Nandurbar.

Nagpur Circle with 4,481 fatalities has been allotted 22 centres, 11 each in Wardha and Chandrapur, 7 in Gadchiroli, 6 in Gondia and 5 in Bhandara.

The Kolhapur Circle with 3,977 deaths till date has got 20 centres, 17 in Sangli, 9 in Ratnagiri and 6 in Sindhudurg.

The Latur Circle with 2,434 fatalities has been allotted 11 centres, 9 each in Beed and Nanded, and 5 in Osmanabad. Aurangabad Circle with 1,957 deaths has been given 18 in Aurangabad, 8 in Jalna, 5 in Parbhani and 4 in Hingoli.

Akola Circle, with the lowest fatalities of 1,526 till now, has been allotted 10 centres in Buldhana, 9 each in Amravati and Yavatmal, 5 each in Akola and Washim.

The 511 centres are conveniently located at health institutions, 69 medical colleges, civic or state hospitals including 199 rural hospitals, sub-district hospitals, primary health centres, 23 private hospitals, 22 district hospitals, 22 civil PHCs, 8 general and 7 municipal hospitals and 4 women's hospitals in the state, said Tope.

### BRAVING THE ODDS



A vegetable vendor breaks the frozen surface of Dal Lake to row his boat, during sunset in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO

### Only namaste in Gujarat temples

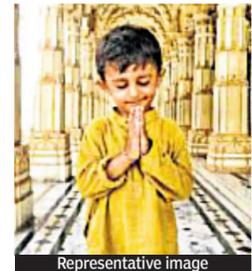
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Jan 12: Nothing is same after the outbreak of coronavirus, not even the way of paying obeisance to God.

"Sashtang pranam" or prostration before the deity is no longer allowed in Gujarat temples. Instead, devotees can only bring their palms together to offer a 'namaste'.

Carrying 'prasad' (offerings) inside the sanctum sanctorum is also not allowed in line with the standard operating protocol of the state government, authorities said. Temples and other places of worship reopened in the state in June, 75 days after the lockdown came into effect.

"Sashtang pranam is not allowed as per the government guidelines. No devotee is allowed to touch anything as per the SOP"



Representative image

said Vijaysinh Chavda, manager of the famous Somnath temple," he said. Sashtang pranam or namaskar involves prostrating oneself in such a way that eight parts of the body touch the floor: "No devotees are allowed entry in the temple for aarti which is performed thrice a day, and no more than five devotees are allowed to sit for prayers at once. No more than three persons are allowed during yagna," Chavda further said.

Ambaji Mata Temple in Banaskantha district, another major shrine in Gujarat, too has banned sashtang pranam as per government guidelines, said its spokesperson Ashish Raval.

## Signal, Telegram grab 40L new users amid WhatsApp row

THE SURGE CAME AS USERS QUESTIONED THE UPCOMING WHATSAPP TERMS OF SERVICE AND PRIVACY POLICY, TRIGGERING A NATIONWIDE DEBATE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 12: As WhatsApp started sending notifications to over 400 million users in India last week asking them to either accept its new policy or see their accounts removed from February 8, it came as a blessing in disguise for its rivals as Signal and Telegram saw over 40 lakh new users signing up within a couple of days, and the number is fast growing.

According to data from app analytics firm Sensor Tower, Signal

led the pack with over 23 lakh new downloads between January 6 and January 10 while Telegram clocked more than 16 lakh new downloads in the same period.

Meanwhile, WhatsApp's downloads fell by 35 per cent over the January 6 to January 10 time-period, with 1.3 million new downloads.

Between January 1 to January 5, WhatsApp had clocked 2 million new downloads.

The surge came as users questioned the upcoming WhatsApp



Terms of Service and privacy policy, triggering a nationwide de-

bate. The rush to join Signal was so high that it led to overload on

its servers. "Verification codes are currently delayed across several providers because so many new people are trying to join Signal right now (we can barely register our excitement). We are working with carriers to resolve this as quickly as possible. Hang in there," Signal had tweeted.

The encrypted messaging service also climbed to the top spot in the free apps category of the App Store in multiple countries, including India.

The official Twitter handle of

Signal shared a screenshot, showing it placed above WhatsApp at the top spot in India.

"Look what you have done," it tweeted. Along with India, it became the top downloaded app in Germany, France, Austria, Finland, Hong Kong, and Switzerland as well.

Signal earlier saw a significant surge in new users signing up for its platform after Tesla CEO Elon Musk tweeted to his 41.5 million followers to use Signal and apparently shun WhatsApp.



Tributes to Swami Vivekananda on his birth anniversary. This Vivekananda Jayanti, there's a creative effort on the NaMo App that lets you share his thoughts and a personalised message. Let us spread Swami Vivekananda's dynamic thoughts and ideals far and wide

### COLD WAVE ALERT

With temperatures falling, an orange alert was issued by the India Meteorological Department Tuesday for the northern plains with a forecast of a cold wave for the next four days



### of the day quote

The country's tourism sector will get a boost in the post-pandemic phase as most of the Indians would prefer to travel local



The state (Tripura) is developing well and the law and order situation has improved a lot since the new government came to power in early 2018



We want to boost the service sector industry by developing the tourism infrastructure in the state



### SHORT TAKES

#### Pb gets first vaccine dose

Chandigarh: The first consignment of 2.04 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine 'Covishield', manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, arrived in Punjab by air on Tuesday, officials said. The vaccine landed at the Chandigarh airport. It will be dispatched to various districts in specially-fabricated vehicles Wednesday. Punjab Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Hussan Lal said that healthcare and frontline workers will be vaccinated initially free of cost.

#### TMC-BJP lock horns

Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress and the BJP Tuesday indulged in verbal duel in a bid to appropriate the legacy of Swami Vivekananda on his birth anniversary ahead of the assembly polls. The opposition BJP said it wants to take the state on the path of development following the principles of the 19th-century monk, while the TMC asserted that the land of Swami Vivekananda will never accept the "hate politics imported from Gujarat".

#### Naik undergoes surgeries

Panaji: Union minister Shripad Naik, who was injured in a road accident in Karnataka, underwent multiple surgeries at the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) near here during the night, a senior official from the hospital said Tuesday. The health condition of the minister is stable, the official said. Naik (68) underwent surgeries for fractures on both hands and a leg, he said. The Union minister received injuries, while his wife Vijaya and an aide died on Monday when their car met with the accident near Ankola in Uttara Kannada district, while he was returning to home state Goa from Dharmasthala in neighbouring Karnataka.

#### Widow killed

Jaipur: In a shocking incident, a widowed government schoolteacher was killed by her neighbour after she stopped him from walking his dog in front of her house in the city, police said on Tuesday. Vidya, 55, was staying alone after her husband passed away a few years back. Her son works as an IT engineer in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. Her brother Yugantar Sharma is a Rajasthan Administrative Service officer posted as an SDM in Jaipur.

## 'Army ready for long haul along LAC'

TALKING ABOUT THE SITUATION IN LADAKH, NARAVANE SAID THAT INDIAN ARMY IS ON HIGH ALERT NOT ONLY IN EASTERN LADAKH BUT ACROSS THE NORTHERN BORDER WITH CHINA

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 12: Army chief Gen MM Naravane on Tuesday hoped for an amicable resolution of the military standoff with China in Ladakh through talks and based on "mutual and equal security" even as he said the collusive and potent threat from China and Pakistan to India cannot be "wished away".

Gen Naravane at the same time asserted that Indian troops are fully prepared to deal with any eventuality along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and will hold their ground as long as it takes to achieve the "national goals and objectives." The Chief of Army Staff was addressing a news conference here ahead of the Army Day on January 15. On increasing security challenges at the LAC, he said a need was felt about "rebalancing" of troops along the northern borders and subsequently steps have been taken to put adequate focus on the borders with China. "I am sure that through dialogue and discussion, we will be able to reach an amicable solution based on the principle of mutual and equal security and in consonance with the talks...I am very hopeful for a positive situation. But as I said, we are ready to meet any eventuality," he said. "We are prepared to hold our ground as long as



it takes to achieve our national goals and objectives. The Army chief said the Indian troops are maintaining a high level of alertness all along the LAC and not just in Ladakh.

"Our operational preparedness is of a very high order and the morale of the troops is high. Whatever has transpired in the last year has highlighted the need for us to restructure and for us to enhance our capability," he added. Asked about the actual situation in eastern Ladakh, Gen Naravane said it remains the same that was prevailing last year, and there has been no

change in status quo.

To another question on the same issue, he said the situation remains the same whatever existed earlier. India and China are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last year.

Referring to the overall security challenges facing India, he said Pakistan and China together form a potent threat to national security. "There is no doubt that Pakistan and China together form a very potent threat and there is an aspect of collusion which cannot be wished away. That is also very much part of our strategic planning and calculus when we are formulating our plans," he said.

Gen Naravane said there has been an increasing cooperation between China and Pakistan in both military and non-military sectors and the possibility of a two-front threat is something India should be prepared for. When queried on China's mobilisation of troops in May last year, the Army chief said it was not new as they came to the region for training and India was monitoring them. However, he added the Chinese Army had the "first mover advantage".

"We had the first mover advantage in August as they did not know we will surprise them," he said, in an apparent reference to Indian

Army capturing a number of strategic heights along the Pangong lake in August last year. Gen Naravane also said China has withdrawn some troops from depth areas on conclusion of training and noted there is no reduction in deployment of personnel at the frontline.

"Every year PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops come to traditional training areas for training. With the onset of winters and completion of the training period, the training areas have been vacated and since these training areas have been vacated, it is fair to assume that those troops who were in depth areas on the Tibetan Plateau have gone back to their garrison," he added. "However there is no decrease in strength either on their side or on our side as far as friction points are concerned."

On Pakistan, Gen Naravane said the country continues to use terrorism as an instrument of state policy and India will continue to confront the menace effectively. "Pakistan continues to embrace terrorism as an instrument of state policy. However, we are very clear that we have zero-tolerance for terror and we reserve our right to respond at a time and place of our own choosing and with precision. This is a clear message that we have sent across," he added.

## Imbalances in gut bacteria linked to 'long COVID' risk

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: Imbalances in the type and volume of bacteria found in the gut may be associated with the risk of 'long COVID', the symptoms of which last for weeks or months beyond the initial illness, according to an observational study.

The research, published in the journal Gut, found that the variety of bacteria in the gut, known as the microbiome, may influence the severity of COVID-19 as well as the level of the immune system response to the infection. The researchers from the Chinese University of Hong Kong also found that imbalances in the make-up of this microbiome may be implicated in persisting inflammatory symptoms, known as 'long COVID'.

They noted that COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory illness, but the evidence suggests that the gut may also play a role.

"In light of reports that a subset of recovered patients with COVID-19 experience persistent symptoms such as fatigue, breathlessness and joint pains, some over 80 days after onset of symptoms, we posit that the dysbiotic gut microbiome could contribute to immune-related health problems post-COVID-19," the re-



searchers said.

"Bolstering of beneficial gut species depleted in COVID-19 could serve as a novel avenue to mitigate severe disease, underscoring the importance of managing patients' gut microbiota during and after COVID-19," they noted.

The researchers noted that the gut is the largest immunological organ in the body and its resident microbes are known to influence immune responses.

The team, therefore, wanted to find out if the bacteria might also affect the immune system response to COVID-19 infection. They obtained blood and stool samples and medical records from 100 hospital inpatients with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection between February and May 2020, and from 78 people without COVID-19 who were taking part in a microbiome study before the pandemic.

### HOOCH TRAGEDY IN MP

## 12 DEAD AFTER CONSUMING SPURIOUS LIQUOR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Morena/Bhopal, Jan 12: At least 12 people have died and seven others have fallen seriously ill after consuming suspected spurious liquor in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district, the second such incident in the state within the last three months.

As per preliminary reports, some residents of Manpur and Pahawali villages in Morena district consumed a white coloured liquor Monday night, a senior police officer said.

This was the second such incident in Madhya Pradesh in the last three months. In October last year, 14 people died after drinking spurious liquor in Ujjain.

"12 persons died and seven others seriously fell ill after drinking suspected spurious liquor (in Morena district)," Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Rajesh Hingankar

told reporters. He said a case has been registered under section 304 (Culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and sections 34 and 91 of the Excise Act.

Few persons were also rounded up for investigation in the case, the DIG said. The senior police officer from Morena said ten people from Manpur and Pahawali villages died Monday night after consuming suspected spurious liquor, and another person died later.

He said those who fell seriously ill were admitted in Gwalior for treatment. The postmortem report is awaited to know whether the liquor was poisonous or not, he added. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has termed the incident "tragic" and ordered suspension of Morena district excise officer for negligence. He said "drastic" action will be taken against the guilty.



Police personnel interact with a person who fell ill after consuming the suspected spurious liquor

### FESTIVE FERVOUR



Students, wearing traditional Punjabi dresses, fly kites to celebrate the Lohri festival, in Amritsar

## Army to induct women as pilots in aviation wing

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 12: Women will be inducted as pilots in the Army Aviation Corps from next year, Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane said Tuesday.

Till now, women are only part of ground duties in the Army Aviation Corps. Women pilots would be flying helicopters to forward locations and be part of operations at the borders, the Army Chief said, adding that the proposal has been cleared.

The Indian Air Force has 10 women fighter pilots. In the Indian Navy, women pilots are flying the



Dornier aircraft and also as observers on board helicopters and P8I surveillance aircraft. Other than the 10 fighter pilots, the IAF has 111 women pilots who fly transport planes and choppers.

During his annual press conference in New Delhi, General Naravane said: "Last month, I had

initiated a proposal that women officers can be recruited to Army Aviation. The next course which will begin in July this year, will induct women for training purposes in flying branch and after one year they will be able to join in operational duties."

The Indian Army raised the Army Aviation Corps on November 1, 1986 and it comprises helicopters that fly in conflict and peace zones. The Aviation Corps is critical for the Indian Army as it is pressed into action for evacuation of injured troops during operations or health emergencies in high altitude areas.

### VACCINE TRANSPORT

## Airlines swing into action

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 12: The country's civil aviation sector swung into action Tuesday for providing the expeditious logistical support to the roll-out of India's mega anti-Covid vaccination drive.

Accordingly, nine flights operated by various domestic airlines ferried 56.5 lakh doses from Pune to Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Guwahati, Shillong, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Bengaluru, Lucknow and Chandigarh.

"Today @airindia @flyspicejet @goairlinesindia @IndiGo6E will operate 9 flights from Pune with 56.5 lakh doses to Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Guwahati, Shillong, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Bangalore, Lucknow & Chandigarh," Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, said in a tweet.



Last week, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued guidelines to airlines and other aircraft operators for transportation of Covid-19 vaccines. As per the guidelines, authorised airlines can carry the vaccine packed in dry ice in the passenger or the cargo cabin.

The circular noted that the carriage of Covid-19 vaccines from the manufacturing units to the place of administration gains significant importance especially in the light of the high expectations of the governments, healthcare personnel and the general public.

## Watching Zombie movies can prepare you better for pandemic

TALES OF POST-APOCALYPTIC LANDSCAPES IN WHICH FEW SURVIVORS EMERGE INTO A NEW AND MUCH DIFFERENT WORLD HAVE LONG BEEN POPULAR TALES WOVEN BY SCREENWRITERS AND AUTHORS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 12: While many enjoy Zombie and horror movies, thinking of them as nothing but a guilty pleasure, they may not realise that immersing themselves in such fiction actually prepared them for the reality of 2020, a fascinating research has revealed.

Tales of post-apocalyptic landscapes in which few survivors emerge into a new and much different world have long been popular tales woven by screenwriters and authors.

According to a team of researchers from the Pennsylvania



A couple dressed as zombies - Danny Zucco and Sandy Olsson from the movie Grease walking in the annual Toronto Zombie Walk

State University (Penn State) in the US, enjoying horror films could have better prepared people for the Covid-19 pandemic as opposed to others who do not enjoy frightening entertainment.

"After factoring out personality influences, which were actually quite strong, we found that the more movies about zombies, alien invasions and apocalyptic pandemics people had seen prior to Covid-19, the better they dealt with the actual, current pandemic," said John Johnson, professor emeritus of psychology at Penn State.

"These kinds of movies appar-

ently serve as mental rehearsal for actual events," Johnson said in a paper appeared in the journal Personality and Individual Differences, adding that "stories are not just entertainment, but preparation for life". To reach this conclusion, the researchers designed a survey they pilot-tested.

They administered the final survey to 310 persons via a website. Participants then indicated the extent to which they were fans of horror, zombie, psychological thriller, supernatural, apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic, science fiction, alien-invasion, crime, comedy, and romance genres in movies

and television.

Next, participants were asked about the past and present experience with and interest in films that were explicitly about pandemics. "What we found was that people who watched certain kinds of movies before the pandemic seemed to be helped by them during the pandemic," Johnson said.

"I'm not sure that watching such movies now would be helpful for our current situation," he said. "However, my understanding of pandemics and other life-challenging events is that similar future challenges are absolutely inevitable."



I call for a collective commitment so that within the next 100 days, vaccination for health workers and those at high-risk in all countries are underway

## OMAN TO NAME 1ST CROWN PRINCE

Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, the Sultan of Oman, has announced a shakeup of the Constitution with changes that include the appointment of a Crown Prince for the first time in the country, a state media report said



### of the day quote

The European Union will invest several million euros on research in the next four years, especially on biodiversity, animal health and emerging diseases



URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT OF THE EU

During the election campaign, he (US President-elect Joe Biden) said that the (nuclear) treaty (with Russia) should be extended. However, this, I believe, is only the first step



MIKHAIL GORBACHEV | FORMER SOVIET LEADER

Britain is in greater danger from the virus than before. The next few weeks could be the "worst" of the pandemic



CHRIS WHITTY | ENGLAND'S CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

### SHORT TAKES

#### US Homeland Security chief quits

Washington: Chad Wolf, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, announced he was resigning Monday as worries rose over more violence during President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration next week. Wolf, whose department is in charge of security for the January 20 ceremony, will step down at midnight, according to a letter he sent to DHS staff. The announcement makes him the third person to resign from Donald Trump's Cabinet after the attack by the president's supporters on the US Capitol last week.

#### 4 killed in Pak avalanche

Islamabad: Four people were killed when the vehicle they were travelling in was struck by an avalanche in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local media reported Tuesday. The accident took place in Mansehra district Monday, Xinhua news agency quoted the local media reports as saying. The deceased were on their way to a village in the district when their vehicle was buried under the avalanche. Rescue teams were only able to recover the bodies late Monday night.

#### Storm Filomena grips Spain

Madrid: Almost two days after Storm Filomena battered central and eastern Spain depositing around half a metres of snow after almost 30 hours of continuous snowfall, the country is still struggling to return to normality. Schools in the capital Madrid, which remains one of the region's worst affected by the snow, will remain closed until Tuesday, with the city's Mayor Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida saying in a TV interview that the closure could be extended.

#### Gorillas in zoo test Covid-19 +ve

San Diego: Several gorillas at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in California have tested positive for Covid-19, in the first known instance of natural transmission to the species, officials said. Officials of the San Diego Zoo Global said in a statement Monday that they initiated the process of testing fecal samples from the gorillas through the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System after two of the animals began coughing January 6, reports Xinhua news agency.

## China plans further Hong Kong crackdown after mass arrests

REUTERS

Hong Kong, Jan 12: The arrest of more than 50 democrats in Hong Kong last week intensifies a drive by Beijing to stifle any return of a populist challenge to Chinese rule and more measures are likely, according to two individuals with direct knowledge of China's plans.

While stressing that plans haven't been finalised, the individuals said it was possible that Hong Kong elections - already postponed until September on coronavirus grounds - could face reforms that one person said were aimed at reducing the influence of democrats.

Both individuals, who have extensive high-level experience in Hong Kong affairs and represent Beijing's interests, spoke on condition of anonymity.

Beijing's involvement was "substantial" in driving and coordinating actions with the Hong Kong government, said one of the individuals, a senior Chinese official.

He told Reuters the latest arrests were part of a wave of ongoing actions to silence activists and to "make sure Hong Kong doesn't slide back to what we saw 18 months ago," when massive demonstrations marked the boldest public revolt against China's leaders since the Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing in 1989.

China has been "too patient for too long, and needs to sort things out once and for all," he added, saying more tough moves would be rolled out for "at least a year".

A spokesman for Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the implementation of a national



The latest arrests were part of a wave of ongoing actions to silence activists and to "make sure Hong Kong doesn't slide back to what we saw 18 months ago" Beijing remained concerned the Opposition could still muster a majority in the legislature should the polls go ahead, given a lingering groundswell of public support

security law last June had restored stability and reduced street violence. "The legitimate rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong have been upheld and criminals are brought to justice through our independent judiciary," he said in an emailed response to Reuters, without responding to questions about Beijing's role.

Hong Kong elections were scheduled for Sept 5 and officials were working to ensure an open, fair and honest poll, he added.

The Chinese government did not respond to requests for comment.

Electoral reform

The Chinese official said Beijing remained concerned the Opposition could still muster a majority in the legislature should the polls go ahead, given a lingering groundswell of public support.

Chinese officials were now discussing ways to change the electoral system to address "deficiencies" in the political structure

The second pro-Beijing source confirmed there were advanced talks on structural changes to Hong Kong's political system, including possibly curtailing the influence of democrats on a 1,200-person election committee to select Hong Kong's next leader in 2022.

"It will likely shake up the whole political base," the source said of the reforms.

Lam's spokesman said authorities were exploring using electronic polling and setting up polling and counting stations in mainland China to allow registered electors there to vote.

## Divers recover 'black box' from crashed Indonesia plane

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jakarta, Jan 12: Indonesian navy divers searching the ocean floor on Tuesday recovered the flight data recorder from a Sriwijaya Air jet that crashed into the Java Sea with 62 people on board.

The device is expected to help investigators determine what caused the Boeing 737-500 plane to nosedive into the ocean in heavy rain shortly after taking off from Jakarta Saturday.

TV stations showed divers on an inflatable vessel with a large white container containing the device heading to a Jakarta port.

Military chief Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto said the plane's other "black box," the cockpit voice recorder, was likely to be found soon because its beacon was being emitted in the same area. The devices were buried in seabed mud under tons of sharp objects in the plane's wreckage, navy Chief Adm. Yudo Margono said. He said at least 160 divers were deployed Tuesday in the search.

More than 3,600 rescue personnel, 13 helicopters, 54 large ships and 20 small boats are searching the area just north of Jakarta where Flight 182 crashed and have found parts of the plane and human remains in the water at a depth of 23 meters. So far, the searchers have sent 74 body bags containing human remains to police identification experts.

## Ireland to apologise for abuses in unwed mothers' homes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 12: The Irish government is poised to make a formal apology for abuses in church-run homes for unmarried women and their babies, where thousands of infants died and were sometimes buried in mass graves.

The final report of an inquiry into the mother-and-baby homes is to be published Tuesday. Prime Minister Micheal Martin is expected to apologize on behalf of the Irish state later in the week.

The Sunday Independent newspaper, which disclosed leaked details of the report, said it found that 9,000 children died in 18 different homes during the 20th century. One in seven of all children born in the homes died, far above Ireland's nationwide infant mortality rate.

Church-run homes in Ireland housed orphans, unmarried pregnant women and their babies for most of the 20th century. The institutions have been subject to intense public scrutiny since historian Catherine Corless in 2014 tracked down death certificates for nearly 800 children who died at the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway - but could only find a burial record for one child.

Investigators later found a mass grave containing the remains of ba-



Funeral boxes, each representing a dead child, are placed together at a procession in remembrance of the bodies of the infants discovered in a septic tank in 2014, at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home, in Dublin, Ireland

bies and young children in an underground sewage structure on the grounds of the home, which was run by an order of Catholic nuns and closed in 1961.

The last of Ireland's mother-and-baby homes did not shut down until the late 1990s.

The inquiry is part of a process of reckoning in overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Ireland to come to terms with a history of abuses in church-run institutions, including the shunning and shaming of unwed mothers, many of whom were pressured into giving up their babies for adoption.

## Indian expats win gold at Dubai fest

Dubai: Two Indian expats won 250g of gold each at the ongoing Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), according to a media report. The two expats won at the Dubai Gold & Jewellery Group (DGJ) grand raffle, where winners receive 250 g of gold each out of a total prize giveaway of 25 kg, the Gulf News report published Monday said. "It was such a relief to win this amazing prize at the end of an unpredictable year. I entered the raffle with my family and am so happy I was the one to win," the report quoted the first expat Christina A S, as saying. Meanwhile, the second expat, Irfan Khan said: "This was the first time in my life I won something."

## COMING OF AGE DAY



Kimono-clad youth wearing protective face masks leave their Coming of Age Day celebration ceremony at Yokohama Arena during the state of emergency for the capital and some prefectures owing to spread of coronavirus outbreak in Yokohama, south of Tokyo, Japan

## Pentagon presses ahead with troop withdrawal

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 12: The US military has not halted a US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Department of Defense told Reuters, despite a new law prohibiting further reductions without the Pentagon sending Congress an assessment of the risks.

"Currently, no new orders have been issued which impact the progression of the conditions-based drawdown expected to reach 2,500 (troops) by Jan. 15, 2021," it said in a statement.

The Pentagon's action will likely anger Republican and Democratic lawmakers opposed to further troop

cuts and renew concerns about the outgoing Trump administration's disdain for Congress, even in its waning days. "If they are continuing the drawdown, that would be a violation of the law," said a congressional aide, speaking on the condition of anonymity. The White House declined to comment.

Halting the drawdown could jeopardize the US-backed Afghanistan peace process as a February 2019 agreement with the Taliban calls for a complete US troop withdrawal by May in return for the insurgents fulfilling security guarantees.

In November, the Pentagon said it would reduce the number of US forces in Afghanistan from 4,500

to 2,500 by mid-January.

But this month Congress enacted a defense policy bill - overriding a veto by President Donald Trump - that bars using funds appropriated

## TURMOIL IN AFGHANISTAN

for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 to pay for a drawdown below 4,000 US troops until acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller submits to Congress a "comprehensive, interagency assessment of the risks and impacts."

It is unclear how many troops have been moved out of Afghanistan

since the law passed. One defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the US troop level already is close to 3,000.

The legislation also requires a risk assessment before the number of U.S. troops can be reduced below 2,000.

The Pentagon said it was "evaluating" the impact the legislation would have on U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan.

The legislation gave Trump emergency waiver power to continue the drawdown. But it said that he must tell Congress why a waiver is "important" to the national interest and provide a detailed explanation as to why.

## 141,078 YEARS IN JAIL

# A LOOK AT WORLD'S LONGEST PRISON SENTENCES

Several countries, including the US and Spain, allow for consecutive sentences, with prisoners condemned in theory to spend many lifetimes behind bars

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Istanbul, Jan 12: As a Turkish Muslim televangelist who surrounded himself with scantily-clad women he called "kittens" starts a 1,075-year jail term for sex crimes, we look at some of the world's longest prison sentences.

**US: 30,000-year sentence**  
Far-right terrorist Terry Nichols was convicted of helping fellow former soldier Timothy McVeigh carry out the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing in which 168 people died.

Although he tried to pull out of the attack on a federal government building at the last minute, he got

161 life sentences plus 9,300 years without parole. McVeigh was executed. Nichols, 65, shares the same Colorado cell block as Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, Olympic Park bomber Eric Rudolph and Ramzi Yousef, a Pakistani convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center attack on the Twin Towers. Another Oklahoma jury sentenced Charles Scott Robinson to 30,000 years behind bars in 1994 for raping a small child.

**Thailand's world record**  
The world's longest non-life sentence, according to the "Guinness Book of Records", was imposed on Thai pyramid scheme fraudster Chamoy Thipiyaso, who was jailed for



141,078 years in 1989. However she was released after only eight years behind bars despite having conned some members of the royal household.

**Spain: Europe's longest**  
Madrid holds the EU record for

handing down the longest prison stretches, often to those convicted of Basque or Islamist terror attacks. Three men were sentenced to a total of 120,000 years in jail for their part in the 2004 Al-Qaeda Madrid train bomb-

ings in which 193 people were killed.

ETA members have been also sentenced to thousands of years each including Ines del Rio Prada, who was sentenced to 3,828 years for her part in 24 murders and other terrorist acts. But she was freed in 2013 after 26 years by the European Court of Human Rights.

**Tough Turkey**  
The sentence handed down to televangelist Adnan Oktar Monday is the second super-sentence in only a few months in Istanbul. Uzbek terrorist Abdulkadir Masharipov got 40 life sentences in September, one for each of his victims for a New Year's Day massacre at the Reina

nightclub in the city in the first minutes of 2017. He got an additional 1,368 years for attempting to kill revellers in the attack claimed by the Islamic State.

**490 years: Britain's longest**  
The highest British sentence handed down to the IRA bomber and sniper Bernard McGinn who got 490 years for his part in various attacks including the Docklands and Baltic Exchange bombings in London. He was arrested by the SAS in Crossmaglen but was released after serving 16 months in 2000 under the Good Friday Agreement, which ended the Northern Ireland Troubles.

# business



It is the need of the hour to bring the tourism sector in the concurrent list of the Indian constitution for effective legislation to place tourism on the national agenda  
**GURBAXISH SINGH KOHLI**  
VICE-PRESIDENT, FHRAI

## SENSEX JUMPS 248 POINTS

Equity benchmark Sensex jumped 248 points to end at a fresh lifetime high Tuesday, tracking gains in index heavyweights Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel amid positive global cues and persistent FPI inflows.



## of the day quote

We're excited to evolve our Greenhouse Accelerator program to new areas including cutting-edge science and technology. We have a lot to learn from this group  
**DANIEL GRUBBS** | MD, PEPSCO VENTURES GROUP

Selecting the right brand ambassador plays a major role in building the brand image. Our qualities are similar to that of John Abraham, hence, this association will definitely bring out the best of U&I  
**PARESH VIJ** | FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, U&I

Having built a proven and trusted edtech brand here, we are now poised for growth with plans to scale our offering to support more people in building their future careers  
**RONNIE SCREWVALA** | CO-FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN, IPGRAD

# Real GDP to grow at 11%

A report said the economy is likely to witness positive growth in H2FY21, though some sectors will continue to record staggered recovery



AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Jan 12:** The country's real gross domestic product (GDP) is likely to expand by 11 per cent in the next financial year due to a faster economic recovery and on a low base, says a report.

The report by domestic rating agency Brickwork Ratings said economic activities are slowly reaching pre-COVID levels following the relaxation of the lockdown, except in sectors that remain affected by social distancing norms.

"With progress in developing an effective vaccine for COVID-19 and signals of faster-than-expected recovery in the domestic economy, and also supported by a low base, we expect the real GDP to grow at 11 per cent in FY22, from the estimated contraction of 7 per cent to 7.5 per cent in FY21," the agency said.

According to the first advance estimates of national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the country's GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during the current financial year.

The report said the economy is likely to witness positive growth in H2FY21, though some sectors will continue to record staggered recovery due to social distancing norms.

## Fiscal deficit seen at 7.4 pc of GDP

India's fiscal deficit in the current financial year is likely to reach 7.4 per cent of the GDP on the back of enhanced government expenditure amid the pandemic, said the SBI Ecowrap report. The report noted that as per the first advanced estimate of the GDP, real GDP will contract by 7.7 per cent in FY21, and nominal GDP growth is expected at (-) 4.2 per cent. Accordingly, the nominal GDP for FY22 would grow by 15 per cent to ₹224.04 lakh crore.

Revival in sectors that fall under discretionary spending is likely to be delayed as the economy is still under the grasp of the pandemic, it said.

"Nevertheless, the outlook for next fiscal has improved with the progress in developing the vaccines," the report said.

It said the agricultural sector may continue with stable growth momentum in the next fiscal also at around 3.5 per cent, but these projections are largely based on normal monsoons and the effective implementation of farm reforms.

The agency expects the industrial sector to grow at 11.5 per cent and services sector to rise by 11 to 12 per cent in the next financial year.

# Budget: Agri sector 'needs' more funds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BETTER PRICE REALISATION FOR THE FARMER AND REDUCING THE COST OF INTERMEDIARIES. THE BUDGET MUST PROVIDE SPECIAL INCENTIVES TO IT**

**AJAY SHRIRAM** | CHAIRMAN, DCM SHRIRAM

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The government should provide additional funds as well as incentives in the upcoming Budget to promote indigenous farm research, oilseeds production, food processing and organic farming for the overall growth of the agriculture sector, according to industry experts.

The direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme should be utilised more to support farmers instead of giving subsidies, they added. Food processing industry has played an important role in better price realisation for the farmer and reducing the cost of intermediaries.

The budget must provide special incentives to food processing through incentives such as interest subvention, lower taxes, access to technology and so on, DCM Shriram Chairman and Senior MD Ajay Shriram said.

Referring to the successful PM-KISAN scheme under which ₹6,000 is paid annually directly into farmers bank accounts, he said the DBT mechanism should be fine-tuned and gradually should be utilized to support farmers



in lieu of other subsidies.

Let the farmer decide how to judiciously use the money. With the benefit of DBT, farmers can then buy better seed, use new-age fertilizers, optimize water usage and so on, Shriram said.

Stating that many Indian startups have invested in the agri-technology space, he advocated for a policy that encourages growth of these companies and adoption of latest techniques.

He said there has not been any significant breakthrough in recent years from indigenous agricultural research and development (R&D) and this could be partly on account of resource crunch.

Two areas that need immediate attention are firstly linking agricultural research with industry requirements and secondly avoiding ideological resistance to new-age technologies such as GM crops, Shriram said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Resort slapped with ₹85L fine

**New Delhi:** Markets regulator Sebi has imposed a penalty totalling ₹85 lakh on Orient Resorts (India) and two individuals for not complying with the watchdog's earlier directive to wind up its operations and refund investors' money. The fine has been imposed on Orient Resorts (India) Pvt Ltd (ORIPL), Dilpesh V Shah and Darshanbhai Arvindbhai Shah (notices). In November 2013, Sebi had passed an order directing Orient Resorts to wind up its operations.

### Realty firm joins hands with SBI

**New Delhi:** Realty firm Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd Tuesday said it has signed an MoU with SBI for faster home loan approvals as well as to offer special discounts to customers and employees of both the companies. Mahindra Lifespace and SBI have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enable an improved and more seamless experience for homebuyers across India. MD Arvind Subramanian said, the company has partnered with SBI to make Mahindra homes more conveniently accessible to customers and employees of both companies.

### ETG Agro India unveils plant

**New Delhi:** ETG Agro India Tuesday said it recently commissioned a state-of-the-art nuts and almonds processing plant with a capacity of 10,000 tonne per annum in the Kheda district of Gujarat. The company in a statement said it will source nuts such as walnuts and cashews from domestic growers, and almonds from global origins such as the US and Australia. The company has established partnerships with key suppliers. For the financial year 2021-22, the company is estimating the sales of over 8,000 tonnes, it added.

### SAT sets aside Sebi's penalty

**New Delhi:** The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has set aside a Sebi order to impose ₹10 lakh fine each on three state-owned financial institutions -- SBI, Bank of Baroda and LIC -- in UTI AMC's stake dilution case. Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), in August 2020, levied the fine on three financial institutions for failing to reduce their stakes to below 10 per cent in UTI Asset Management Company (AMC) within the stipulated timeline.

## CPI INFLATION EASES TO 4.59% IN DECEMBER

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Consumer Price Index inflation eased to 4.59% in December 2020 as compared to 6.93% in November and 7.35% in December 2019, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Tuesday.

The rise in prices in October had been the sharpest since May 2014 when the inflation peaked to 7.61%. Retail inflation showed signs of easing in December, led by easing prices of some food items.

Food inflation declined to 3.41% in December in 2020, compared to 9.5% in the previous month.

The IIP growth for October has been revised upwards to 4.9 per cent from last month's provisional estimates of 3.6 per cent., according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Tuesday.

# No further ITR extension

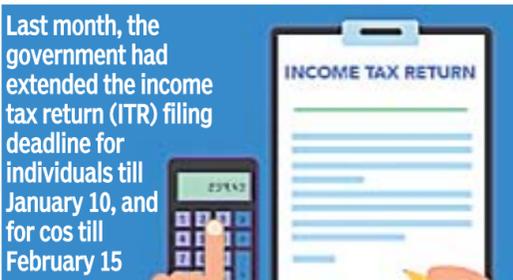
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** The finance ministry has rejected the demand for further extension of the last date for filing returns where audit is required beyond February 15.

Last month, the government had extended the income tax return (ITR) filing deadline for individuals till January 10, and for companies till February 15.

CBDT passes order us 119 of Income Tax Act, 1961 in F No. 3701533920-TPL dt 11th January, 2021, disposing off the representations for extension of due date for filing of Audit Report us 44AB, in compliance with the order of hon'ble Gujarat High Court dt 8th January, 2021, the income tax department said in a tweet on Monday.

This was in response to the Gujarat High Court order dated January 8, 2021 in the case of The All India Gujarat Federation of Tax Consultants versus Union of India directing the finance ministry to look into the issue of ex-



**Last month, the government had extended the income tax return (ITR) filing deadline for individuals till January 10, and for cos till February 15**

tension of due dates for filing of audit reports under Section 44AB of the Income Tax Act.

As per the provisions of the Act, the due date for filing of the audit report under Section 44AB is one month prior to the due date of filing of income tax return, it said.

The due dates for payment of self-assessment tax for taxpayers whose amount due does not exceed ₹1 lakh also coincide with the due

dates for filing of ITR, it said.

On December 30, 2020, the government had announced extension of the last dates for filing of returns by individuals to January 10, 2021 from December 31, 2020.

In case of return for tax audit cases, the date was extended to February 15, from the earlier January 31. It was for the third time the tax department extended the dates.

## ONLINE TRANSACTIONS

# Small-town India major driver

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, Jan 12:** In a year bogged down by pandemic-driven lockdowns and social distancing, online transactions grew by 80 per cent in India as compared to 2019, suggesting a significant adoption of digital payments by consumers and businesses alike especially from the smaller cities, a new report said Tuesday.

The tier 2 and 3 cities were a major driver for online transactions inlets year and witnessed 92 per cent growth, according to the

report by fintech unicorn Razorpay.

Consumers moved to online to make most of their payments, making the Bill payments/utilities sector witness a sizable growth of 357 per cent. The UPI transactions outgrew cards, netbanking and wallets with 120 per cent growth in a year.

"While the overall transactions in 2020 significantly grew compared to the last year, what I'm really excited about is that it grew by about 73 per cent in the last six months alone," said Harshil Mathur, CEO and Co-Founder, Razorpay.

## BIZ BUZZ

### GAIL shares surge nearly 6 per cent



**NEW DELHI:** Shares of GAIL (India) Tuesday gained nearly 6 per cent after the company announced it will consider buyback of shares. The stock jumped 5.74 per cent to ₹143.50 -- its 52 week high -- on BSE. On NSE, it gained 5.74 per cent to its one-year high of ₹143.50. GAIL (India), the nation's largest gas distribution firm, will on Friday consider buyback of shares with a view to returning surplus cash to shareholders, the biggest being the Government of India. In a stock exchange filing on Monday, the company said its board will meet on January 15 to consider share buyback as also payment of interim dividend.

### BMW drives in 2 Series Gran Coupe

**NEW DELHI:** German luxury carmaker BMW Tuesday said it has launched the petrol trim of 2 Series Gran Coupe in India at an introductory price of ₹40.9 lakh (ex-showroom). Introduced with its M Sport package, the new BMW 220i is locally produced at the company's manufacturing plant, the automaker said in a statement. BMW already sells two diesel variants of the model. The company continues to expand its product range as per evolving trends in the luxury car segment. We believe in offering the power of choice," BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said.



### 8 finalists in Flipkart's startup program



**NEW DELHI:** E-commerce major Flipkart Tuesday said it has selected eight finalists for the maiden cohort of its startup accelerator program that will now undergo a 16-week mentorship program and receive an equity-free grant of USD 25,000. The Walmart-owned company had launched 'Flipkart Leap' in August last year to help new startups grow, scale, navigate challenges, and contribute to India's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. After a rigorous four-stage process, eight finalists were shortlisted from among more than 920 applicants across five categories.

## SPECTRUM AUCTION

# DoT asks cos to submit queries by January 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 12:** Telecom firms like Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Tuesday participated in pre-bid conference for spectrum auctions, as the telecom department asked telcos to submit written queries regarding the rules and processes by January 15, according to sources.

During the pre-bid conference, operators raised queries on aspects such as earnest money deposit and roll-out obligations in the bid document, an industry source said.



The Department of Telecom (DoT) sources said telcos, including Jio, Airtel and Vodafone Idea, attended the pre-bid conference on Tuesday. The department has now asked the operators to send their written queries on the issues raised at the pre-bid conference by January 15.

The DoT has already released a notice inviting applications for the spectrum auctions in seven bands -- 700, 800, 900, 1800, 2100, 2300 and 2500MHz bands, and the bidding is scheduled to begin on March 1.

Last month, the Union Cabinet had approved a proposal for the auction of 2,251.25 Megahertz (MHz) of spectrum worth ₹3.92 lakh crore at the base price.

Telecom operators will need to submit their application by February 5 for participation in the auction.

# 11 Indian companies in top-500 globally by value

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 12:** Total 11 private Indian firms have made it to the list of 500 most valuable companies across the world, and the country is ranked 10th on the chart, as per a report.

The total value of these 11 companies grew 14 per cent and has been pegged at USD 805 billion or nearly a third of the Indian GDP.

All these companies in the list of non-state enterprises have gained in value during 2020, which was hit by the pandemic, barring tobacco major ITC and second largest private sector lender ICICI Bank, as per the 'Hurun Global 500' report.

Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries leads among the local enterprises with a 20.5 per cent jump in valuation to USD 168.8 billion as of December 1 and is ranked 54th globally, as per the list.

## COUNTRY AT 10TH

Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries leads among the local enterprises with a 20.5 per cent jump in valuation

The list of 500 is led by consumer technology major Apple with a valuation of USD 2.1 trillion and is followed by Microsoft and Amazon

The US accounted for nearly half of the enterprises with 242 of the 500 entries, followed by China at 51 and Japan at 30 companies



Tata Consultancy Services' value grew by nearly 30 per cent during the year to take its value to USD 139

billion, ranking it 73rd globally and making it the second most valuable Indian firm.

# BUMRAH RULED OUT OF 4TH TEST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Jan 12:** The injury-ravaged Indian team were dealt another telling blow Tuesday as pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was ruled out of the fourth Test against Australia due to an abdominal strain.

If that wasn't enough, Mayank Agarwal - tipped to be Hanuma Vihari's replacement in the playing XI in Brisbane - has sustained a knock on the hands and it could be a hairline fracture.

To make matters worse, Ravichandran Ashwin's back spasms have aggravated after battling for three hours on the final day, leaving little options for India on the bench.

Bumrah, key to India's attack, sustained the strain during the drawn third Test here. It has been learnt that Bumrah's scan reports showed a strain and the Indian team management does not want him to aggravate the injury, keeping in mind the upcoming four-Test series against England.

"Jasprit Bumrah suffered an abdominal strain while fielding in Sydney. He is going to sit out of the Brisbane Test but is expected to be available against England," a BCCI source told this agency.

While the Indian team management is heaving a sigh of relief that Bumrah hasn't sustained a tear but wants to be on the side of caution as playing in Brisbane and breaking down in the middle of the Test match could have an even more adverse effect on the team.

"If we take the risk of him playing at 50 per cent, what if the injury aggravates and he breaks down in the middle of the match and then ruled out for better part of England series?"

"England is the last series which will decide the qualification for World Test Championship final and we are in contention and would re-



Mohammed Siraj (L) will spearhead Indian pace attack in Bumrah's absence

quire a fit Bumrah," the senior BCCI source added.

It is now expected that two-Test old Mohammed Siraj will be leading the Indian attack and will be joined by Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur and T Natarajan in the Brisbane Test, starting January

15. Unless, Bumrah is fielded at 30 per cent fitness, risking the entire England series, Natarajan will make his debut.

The problem with Indian team is after injured KL Rahul's departure and Hanuma Vihari's grade 2 tear, there are no back-up middle-order batsman left in the reserves.

The only two available batsmen are two out of form openers in Prithvi Shaw and Mayank Agarwal. It remains to be seen if India, know-

## Reacting to racism against Siraj during 3rd Test in Sydney

**DAVID WARNER:** I'd also like to say sorry to Siraj and the Indian team as racism, and abuse is not in any way acceptable or tolerated anywhere at any time, and I would expect better from our home crowd

**GAUTAM GAMBHIR:** Very unfortunate and that is something which is absolutely not acceptable in any sport. Not only cricket, but in any sport and that's where I think there need to be stricter laws. When it happens to a certain player, it is only that individual who feels about it. You do get abused, in places like South Africa, Australia, when you are playing in a Boxing Day Test match and those kinds of stuff as well. You got to accept that, but it depends what kind of an abuse that is and what all has been said to you, that is something which is not acceptable, especially on your colour of skin and the abuse as well. It does happen a lot, especially in places like Australia and South Africa. So, these things need to be stopped.

ing their depleted strength and long tail, decide to take the conservative route of playing four bowlers and six batsmen with Rishabh Pant as the wicketkeeper.

If Agarwal's scans reveal that it's a bruise and not a fracture, then it could well be Prithvi Shaw batting at No.3 followed by Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane and Agarwal himself at No.6.

If they go with five bowlers, then collective experience of pace attack will be three Test matches and 10 balls (Siraj-2, Saini-1, Shardul-10 balls on debut, Natarajan-yet to play).

## Injury list which affected Oz tour



ISHANT SHARMA

The senior pacer suffered a left side strain after playing only one match in the IPL in September and after that was ruled out of the Australia series. Ishant got bowling fit before the series but needed more overs under his belt before taking on the rigours of Test cricket. He has just returned to competitive cricket for Delhi with the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and will be selected against England in Tests.

BHUVNESHVAR KUMAR

The white-ball specialist and reserve pacer of the Test team injured his right hamstring during an IPL game and had to undergo an extensive rehabilitation programme which led to him missing the Australia series in full. He has just returned to action with the Mushtaq Ali T20 for UP and will be back in national team for England series.



ROHIT SHARMA

Perhaps the most high-profile left hamstring injury that happened during the IPL. The Mumbai Indians skipper played through pain in the final but was ruled out of the white ball series against Australia. Due to hard quarantine of 14 days in Sydney, Rohit, despite being fit, couldn't play the first two Tests and was back in action from Sydney where he hit a half-century in the second innings.

MOHAMMED SHAMI

India's craftiest pace bowler sustained a fractured forearm while trying to fend a short ball from Pat Cummins in the Adelaide Test and was then ruled out of the remaining three Tests. He is doubtful for the first two Tests against England at home as well.

UMESH YADAV

The senior Indian pacer hobbled out of the field during Australia's second innings with a calf muscle injury and will soon be at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore for a rehabilitation programme. There is a chance he might be back for the England series next month.



KL RAHUL

After a decent outing in the white ball leg, KL Rahul sustained a wrist injury while batting at the Melbourne Cricket Ground nets and was sent back to India to recuperate before the England series. His departure led to India's back-up middle-order being next to nil.

RAVINDRA JADEJA

India's premier all-rounder received a knock on his left thumb from a short delivery bowled by Mitchell Starc in Sydney and scans revealed dislocation as well as thumb fracture. He will be out for at least a couple of months, ruling him out of the England home series as well.

RISHABH PANT

The keeper-batsman received a knock in the left elbow from Pat Cummins and couldn't keep wickets in the second innings in Sydney. However, it was not a fracture and played after popping in a lot of painkillers which provided him initial relief. He will play in Brisbane in the fourth Test.

HANUMA VIHARI

The hero of the Sydney Test, after his epic 161-ball vigil, has a serious hamstring injury (grade 2) and will be out of the fourth Test in Brisbane as well as the following series against England.

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN

The man who has bowled more than 134 overs in the series, most by an Indian bowler, is suffering from back spasms and found it difficult to even sleep or tie his boot laces. With medication and physiotherapy sessions, India will expect their senior-most bowler on the park at Brisbane.

MAYANK AGARWAL

Having failed in the first two Tests, Agarwal was dropped in Sydney and who would have known that during a net session, he would get hit on the gloves and taken for scans. He was supposed to replace Hanuma Vihari and if it's a bruise, Agarwal is expected to play through pain.

## Team India denied basic facilities in Brisbane hotel

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian cricket team, who landed in Brisbane for the fourth and final Test against Australia, was in for a shock Tuesday as they were lodged at a hotel which 'lacked basic facilities', prompting an intervention from the BCCI top brass.

It is learnt that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay Shah and CEO Hemang Amin have all got in touch with their Cricket Australia counterparts after complaints reached them and have been assured that the Indian contingent will be made to feel comfortable from here on.

"There was no room service or housekeeping facilities. The gym is very basic and not of international standards and the swimming pool can't be accessed. This wasn't what they were promised when they checked in," a

senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Asked if the players were being allowed to mingle, the Board source said: "Yes, they have been provided with a team room and are allowed to meet each other inside the hotel."

When asked whether the team had protested with the hotel authorities, the source said: "When the manager enquired about how these things are not being taken care of, all they said was, 'the rule applies to both Indian and Australian teams. There is no one team that has been subjected to hard quarantine rules'."

However, the Indian contingent is confident that both Ganguly and Shah will be able to amicably resolve the matter as the injury-ravaged team prepares for the series-decider.

## Tim's Paine-ful apologies

*Australian captain Tim Paine Tuesday apologised for his on-field behaviour during the drawn third Test against India here, saying that his leadership wasn't good enough and he ended up 'looking like a fool' by sledging Ravichandran Ashwin.*

I spoke to him (Ashwin) really quickly after the game yesterday, as I said to him, look I ended up looking a fool, didn't I? You open your mouth and then you drop a catch and had a bit of laugh about that.

I do want to apologise for the way I went about things yesterday on someone who prides himself on the way I lead this team and yesterday was a poor reflection of that.

(Nevertheless) there is a healthy respect, it is very competitive, but it is all said and done. The way the spirit of this series is being played

99 per cent of the time it's been excellent. Yes, I had a quick chat with him after the game and everything was fine.

### Dropped catches

My leadership wasn't good enough, I let the pressure of the game, I suppose get to me and it sort of affected my mood and then from there affected my performance. So, yesterday when I came off the ground, my reflection was purely on my wicket-keeping. I think I said to my players, I had a really poor game as a leader, not so much as a captain, but certainly as a leader.

Yesterday I fell short of my expectations and our team's standard.

So, I want to apologise for the mistakes that I have made yesterday. Certainly, as I said, not a reflection of the way I want to lead this team. We have set really high standards over the last 18 months and yesterday was certainly a bit of blip on the radar and something I felt I needed to come out and address.

### Argument with umpire

Bitterly disappointed with the way I went about it, I felt that my mood throughout probably the whole Test match was probably a little-bit off. The way I spoke to the umpires early on day 2 was also unacceptable.

So like I said yesterday I want to take that on the chin, it is not the way I want to lead this Australian team, it is certainly not a reflection

of how I want to do it going forward.

I always talk to our players about playing this game on skill and not on emotion and yesterday as I said I fell short of my own standards, and own expectations. But at the same time, bit of self-reflection, being able to learn from it, being able to move on after the (Sydney) Test was important.

I again apologise to our fans and people who heard some of the things I said yesterday, it wasn't good enough particularly from the leader of this team.

### Taking Steve Smith's side (accusation of scuffing up the guard mark of Pant)

I have spoken to Steve about this and I know he is really disappointed with the way it has come across. And if you watch Steve Smith play Test cricket, that is something that he does every

single game five or six times a day.

He is always standing in the batting crease, shadow batting, as we know he has got those sort of many Steve Smith quirks, so one of them is he is always marking sand.

He (Smith) was certainly not changing guard and imagine if he was, then the Indian players would have kicked up a bit of stink (at) that time. But that is something I have seen Steve doing many a times in Test matches and Shield games that I have played with him, when he is in the field, he likes to sort of walk up to where he bats and visualise how is he going to play.

There is no way in the world, he was trying to change Rishabh Pant's guard or anything like that. That is just one of Smith's thing that he does, now that it has come up like it is, again it is something he might need to look at because of the perception of it.

## Saina, Prannoy test COVID-19 negative



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangkok, Jan 12:** Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and HS Prannoy were cleared to compete in the Thailand Open after they tested negative for COVID-19, invalidating their previous positive results that forced them out of the tournament hours earlier on a chaotic Tuesday.

Both the Badminton World Federation (BWF) and Badminton Association of India (BAI) confirmed the development.

"Both Saina Nehwal and HS Prannoy have been cleared to participate in the ongoing Yonex Thailand Open after the fourth-round tests reports confirmed that both shuttlers have been tested negative for COVID-19," BAI said in a statement.

The national body said it was possible after the national body took up the matter with BWF. "BAI have

taken up the matter with topmost BWF officials to ensure if tests were negative, matches for respective players should be rescheduled and no walkover is given," BAI added.

Earlier in the day, chaos gripped India's campaign at the tournament when Olympic medallist Saina was forced out following a positive COVID-19 test, while Prannoy's participation hung in balance after his sample came out negative following a positive result in a bizarre turn of events.

Former Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap too was forced to withdraw 'due to close proximity' with wife and fellow shuttler Saina.

But the day which also witnessed a shock first-round exit of reigning world champion and Olympic silver medallist PV Sindhu, ended on a better note for the Indians following the two shuttlers' clearance.

## Bengaluru FC hold NEUFC

AGENCIES

**Goa, Jan 12:** Bengaluru FC held NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) to a 1-1 draw in their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter at the Tilak Maidan here, Tuesday.

Luis Machado handed the Highlanders the lead in the 27th minute from Federico Gallego's pass but a horrible mistake by goalkeeper Gurmeet Singh allowed Rahul Bheke to restore parity in the match in the 49th minute.

Both Bengaluru and NorthEast United remain on the sixth and seventh positions respectively on the league table. The Blues have 13 points from 11 games while the Highlanders have 12 points from 11 matches.

NEUFC had a troubled start when Lalrempuia had to be replaced after he suffered an injury during warm-up just before the match. Lalengmawia replaced him in the starting eleven.

Machado broke the deadlock in the 27th minute of the match that was not so exciting so far. Gallego won a loose ball in the midfield from Dimas Delgado and made a run down the middle. He entered the box and sent a forward pass for Machado who comfortably found the back of the net.

NEUFC missed a clear-cut chance to double their lead eight minutes later when VP Suhair missed a sitter Rochharzela sent a curling cross from the right flank and Suhair



Bengaluru FC players celebrate the equaliser against NEUFC, Tuesday

had a free header to convert but he headed the ball wide.

Gurmeet Singh Sandhu then denied Bengaluru the equaliser in the first half stoppage time. Cleiton Silva attempted a volley from inside the box and Gurmeet fumbles in the first attempt but managed to somehow stop the ball on the goal line.

However, it didn't take long for Bengaluru to find the equaliser as

Rahul Bheke restored parity four minutes after the change of ends. Bheke went past his marker on the right flank and took a shot which was supposed to be a routine save for Gurmeet but the custodian made a howler as the ball went in.

Both the sides tried their best to find a winner, but poor finishing and some good saves by both the custodians kept the match even.

## Odisha suffer narrow defeat to Hyderabad

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 12:** Odisha suffered a narrow six-run defeat against Hyderabad Tuesday in their Elite Group B match of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament in Kolkata.

This was their second loss after being hammered by Bengal in their campaign opener, Sunday. They will next face Tamil Nadu, Thursday. Chasing a target of 154, Odisha were reduced to 32/2 inside first six overs. They lost opener Aditya Rout (2) in the second over before losing the other opener - Shantanu Mishra (13), in the final over of the powerplay. Chama Milind (2/24) bagged both the wickets.

However, experienced campaigner Govind Poddar (50, 33b, 5x4, 2x6) and skipper Subhanshu Senapati (43 n o, 36b, 4x4) gave Odisha hope with a 55-run third wicket stand. Poddar was going well but failed to judge a Ravi Teja (2/40) delivery and trapped in front. It was after reaching his half century.

Another seasoned campaigner - Biplob Samantray (5) - joined Subhanshu at the middle but the former couldn't make an impact and departed soon off a Ravi Teja delivery.

Odisha were struggling at 95/4 in 13.3 overs, when Rajesh Dhuper (30

### BRIEF SCORES

**Hyderabad 153/8**  
(Tilak Verma 44, Tanmay Agarwal 34; Suryakant Pradhan 3/34, Ankit Yadav 2/23)

**beat Odisha 147/4**  
(Govind Poddar 50, Subhanshu Senapati 43 n o, Rajesh Dhuper 30 n o; Chama Milind 2/24, Ravi Teja 2/40) by six runs.

n o, 26b, 1x4, 1x6) joined his skipper at the middle. The duo almost led their side to a victory, but fell short by only six runs. Their unbeaten 52-run partnership allowed Odisha to finish their innings at 147/4.

Earlier, Odisha won the toss and invited Hyderabad to bat first. Skipper Tanmay Agarwal (34, 30b, 3x4, 1x6) and Tilak Verma (44, 35b, 3x4) forged together a 68-run stand for the second wicket after the early dismissal of Pragnay Reddy.

They lost wickets at regular intervals after the Ankit Yadav (2/23) got rid of the Hyderabad skipper in the 10th over. However, cameos from Rahul Buddhi (19 n o off 8 balls), Bavanaka Sandeep (15 off 9 balls) and Yudhvir Singh (10 off 4 balls) helped Hyderabad reach 153/8.

Suryakant Pradhan (3/34) was the pick of the Odisha bowlers and he was ably supported by Ankit, Pappu Roy (1/22) and Rajesh Mohanty (1/36).