



TROUBLED SOUL

Hollywood star Angelina Jolie says her 'Eternals' character is someone who is not very comfortable during peace time

LEISURE P2



RECORD-BREAKING ODYSSEY

Rutherford is set to land her aircraft 150 days after setting out to become the youngest woman to go round the world solo

INTERNATIONAL P10



NADAL BREEZES THROUGH

Rafael Nadal begins his quest in Australian Open dismissing World No 66 Marcos Giron of the US

SPORTS P12

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Nuapada: CRPF jawan shoots himself dead

Nuapada: A havildar of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) shot himself dead with his AK-47 service rifle at Barkote CRPF camp under Komna police limits in Nuapada district, Monday. The deceased was identified as Ram Prasad, 49, a native of Uttar Pradesh. The incident occurred when Ram Prasad was on duty in the guard room Monday morning. He was sitting on a bed when he suddenly pointed the gun towards his neck and pulled the trigger. He was rescued by co-jawans and rushed to the community health centre at Komna where doctors pronounced him dead. The reason behind the extreme step by him is yet to be ascertained.



Credit Suisse chief quits for Covid breach

Geneva: Credit Suisse says its chairman, Antonio Horta-Osorio, has resigned following an internal probe that reportedly turned up that he had violated quarantine rules intended to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The resignation of Horta-Osorio, a British-Portuguese national who took up the job barely eight months ago, was announced shortly after midnight Monday. It amounts to the latest upheaval at the top-drawer Swiss bank that has faced an array of recent troubles including bad bets on hedge funds and an internal spying scandal.

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ANIMAL SPIRIT



Bull-tamers attempting to subdue a charging bull during Alanganallur Jallikattu, in Madurai, Monday

PTI PHOTO

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Gentlemen, you should wait a little more before joining our party. Till then keep serving the party while doing your job

TASK FORCE ON NARCOTICS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: With an aim to control drug trafficking and drug abuse in the state, the government has constituted a task force under the chairmanship of former DGP Abhay.

The home department issued a resolution elaborating the duties and responsibilities of the task force. The department said the task force will coordinate and suggest actions in drug demand reduction, raise community awareness, increase community participation and public cooperation, focus intervention in schools and colleges.

"In Odisha, it is imperative to give a serious push to efforts to contain drug abuse and drug trafficking, so that the emerging problem is nipped in the bud. This can be done by a combination of demand reduction, supply reduction, and harm reduction measures," read the resolution. There will be a multi-departmental coordination committee headed by the Chief Secretary and co-chaired by the state task force's chairman. The task force will also formulate a state policy within the context of National Policy on Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 2012.

The chairman can constitute smaller sub-committees to study any aspect in detail and make recommendations. He can also nominate/invite any other state/central government official, or expert to any of the subcommittees. The chairman can seek cooperation from agencies of the United Nations as per the resolution. The task force will emphasize focused intervention among vulnerable sections, reach out to community, schools, colleges, and youth.

Filing of nominations begins for rural polls

■ On Day One, 7,116 papers were filed for ward members, 1,122 for sarpanchs, 512 for panchayat samiti members and 22 for ZP members

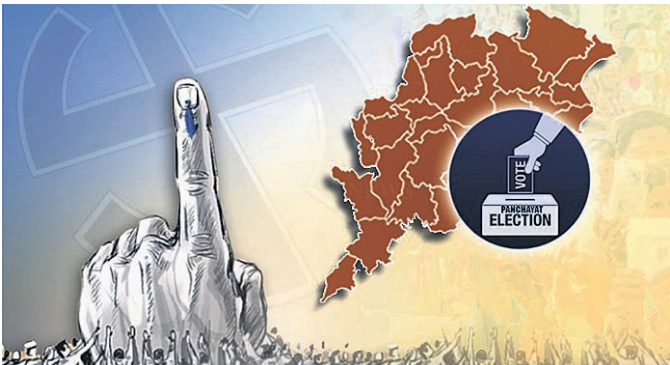
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: As per schedule, filing of nomination papers by candidates for the three-tier panchayat elections began Monday. The process will continue till January 21.

According to official sources in the State Election Commission (SEC), 7,116 nomination papers were filed for ward members while 1,122 nominations were filed for the posts of sarpanch, 512 for panchayat samiti members and 22 for Zilla Parishad members on day one.

Scrutiny of the nomination papers will be conducted on January 22 while the last date for withdrawal of nominations is January 25. The final list of candidates will be out January 25.

As per revised norms, those who will file false affidavits in their nominations will be punished with imprisonment for a term which may



extend to six months or with a fine, or with both. Meanwhile, State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi held a meeting with 38 general observers and 34 expenditure observers appointed to ensure smooth conduct of the rural polls.

Sources said general observers have been asked to ensure safe and fair conduct of the polls and monitor proper implementation of the Covid-19 protocols during the poll process. They will also look into proper enforcement of the model code of conduct which is already in force in the state.

Expenditure observers will have to ensure that the candidates should

not exceed their expenditure limits set by the SEC. Recently, the poll expenditure limit for Zilla Parishad members was enhanced to ₹5 lakh while for panchayat samiti members and sarpanch candidates, it was increased to ₹2 lakh.

Now, a candidate contesting for Zilla Parishad member can use up to five jeeps or cars and 10 two-wheelers whereas a panchayat samiti member nominee can use a maximum of two jeeps or cars and five two-wheelers. Similarly, a candidate contesting for sarpanch can use two jeeps or cars and five motorcycles. Use of auto-rickshaws will be allowed as well.

Man stabs wife as cops look on

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: In yet another stabbing case in the city, a woman sustained severe injuries after her husband attacked her with a knife before the police at Budheswari Colony in Laxmisagar here Monday morning.

The accused has been detained at Laxmisagar police station and will be produced before court Tuesday.

The couple- Durga Shankar and Kalpana Mahapatra- hailing from Konark area in Puri, stays in the city for past few years. Durga works as a daily wage while the victim sells snacks at Bhubaneswar railway station. They have two sons.

The accused, an alcoholic, beats his wife regularly for various reasons. The disgruntled wife had also changed her locations to avoid living together with Durga. Recently, the accused had submitted a written submission before Laxmisagar police promising not to beat Kalpana in future.

However, he again beat her up after a heated argument early Monday morning. Police immediately reached the spot when they were informed by the landlord. Kalpana went inside the house for some reasons. Subsequently, Durga

WOMAN BIDS TO KILLS SELF

Bhubaneswar: A woman tried to end her life by dousing herself with kerosene and putting her on fire at Aloji Padmapur village under Balipatana police limits, Monday morning. This followed a heated exchange with her sworn brother. Aliva Mania, 35, entered into the kitchen and doused herself with kerosene before lighting herself. Police are probing the case and have detained the man who belongs to the same village. Aliva is the wife of Bijay Kumar Mania who has been in jail after he was caught in a drugs case two years back. Aliva has been staying with her children.

rushed inside home pretending to bring some articles and quickly locked the house.

Once inside, he attacked Kalpana with a knife and tried to flee the place as police were waiting outside. Police rescued the victim and rushed her to the Capital Hospital where doctors referred her to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. The accused was nabbed by the locals who later handed him over to police.

Kathak legend Birju Maharaj dies, laughing & smiling

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 17: Kathak doyen Birju Maharaj, who took the classical Indian dance form to the world and helped make it accessible for generations of students and audiences, died at his home here in the early hours of Monday. He would have been 84 next month.

Maharaj-ji, as he was popularly known, died surrounded by his family and disciples, laughing and smiling till the very end. They were playing 'antakshari' after dinner when he suddenly took ill, his granddaughter Ragini Maharaj said.

Birju Maharaj, one of India's best known artistes who was also a thumri exponent and even voiced a song for Satyajit Ray's "Shatranj Ke Khiladi", was from Lucknow's Kalka-Bindadin Gharana. He is survived by five children, three daughters and two sons, and five grandchildren. He had been suffering from a kidney ailment and was under dialysis treatment for the last month due to high diabetes. He



probably died of a cardiac arrest, his granddaughter said. "He was with us when this happened. He had his dinner and we were playing 'antakshari' because he loved old music. He was lying down... and suddenly his breathing became uneven. We think it was a cardiac arrest as he was also a heart patient.

Condolences poured in as news came in of the death of the Kathak maestro. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his death is an "irreparable loss" to the entire art world. "The demise of legendary Pandit Birju Maharaj marks the end of an era. It leaves a deep void in the Indian music and cultural space," President Ram Nath Kovind tweeted. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said his death is a "huge loss" to the world of performing arts. "... My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members. Om Shanti," the Vice President Secretariat tweeted, quoting Naidu. **OBITUARY P2**

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	61308.91	↑	85.88
NIFTY	18308.10	↑	52.30
DOLLAR	74.55	↑	₹0.12
EURO	84.68	↑	₹0.05
GOLD	₹47,901	↑	₹123
SILVER	₹61,865	↑	₹262

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
TEMP MAX	24.8°C	24.0°C	
TEMP MIN	15.0°C	14.0°C	
Humidity	69%	77%	Forecast
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Dry weather most likely

China's birth rate falls 5th year running

■ Its population increased by 480,000 in a year-on-year comparison from 2020 down from 12 million, as per the NBS data

AGENCIES

Beijing, Jan 17: China's population grew by less than half a million-last year to 1.41 billion as the birth rates fell for the fifth consecutive year, stoking fears of a looming demographic crisis and its adverse impact on the world's 2nd largest economy.

At the end of 2021, China's population on the mainland grew to 1.4126 billion from 1.4120 billion in 2020, the National Bureau of



Statistics (NBS) said Monday. China's population increased by 480,000 in a year-on-year comparison from 2020 down from 12 million, as per the NBS data.

The figure does not include Hong Kong and Macao residents and for-

eigners who live in the mainland's 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities, the NBS said. The number of newborns in 2021 in the world's most populous nation stood at 10.62 million, according to the NBS data, with the birth

rate at 7.52 per thousand, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The national death rate was 7.18 per thousand last year, putting the national growth rate at 0.34 per thousand. Experts have warned that a demographic turning point may be just around the corner in the world's most populous nation, and some say it threatens to erode the foundation of China's booming economic growth over the past 40 years, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

In such a situation, the ratio of people in the workforce and dependent persons (retired with pension and other benefits) may be adversely affected, straining the economy, they said.

2 Indians among 3 killed in Abu Dhabi drone attack

AGENCIES

Dubai, Jan 17: A possible drone attack may have sparked an explosion that struck three oil tankers in Abu Dhabi and another fire at an extension of Abu Dhabi International Airport Monday that killed three people and wounded six.

Abu Dhabi police identified the dead as two Indian nationals and a Pakistani. It did not identify the wounded, who police said suffered minor or moderate wounds. Police said an investigation was underway.

While Abu Dhabi police did not immediately offer any suspects for the possible assault, Yemen's Houthis rebels claimed responsibility for an

attack targeting the United Arab Emirates, without elaborating. The Iranian-backed Houthis have claimed several attacks that Emirati officials later denied took place.

The incident comes while Yemen's years long war rages on and as an Emirati-flagged vessel found itself recently captured by the Houthis. That's as Abu Dhabi largely has withdrawn its national forces from the conflict tearing apart the Arab world's poorest nation while still supporting local militias there.

Abu Dhabi police said preliminary probe indicated the detection of small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones that fell in the two areas causing the explosions.

leisure

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ARIES

You can make a difference to others' lives. Considerate and thoughtful, today, you will be treasured more than ever as a boss, colleague, parent or beloved. Utilise this exchange of energy to sort out difficult issues. Ganesha gives a thumbs up to mega projects.

TAURUS

Ganesha sees you taking a day off from your work and immersing your self in domestic activities. A lot of time will be spent blissfully with your family folk chatting away or doing this and that. The idea of getting your interiors redone and give your house a new look will surely occur to you. Instead of doing things on your own, it is very likely you will engage a professional for the job.

GEMINI

There is a likelihood of some household disturbance cropping up today. Your family members could make a lot of demands from you. You may feel angry because of your inability to meet all their needs and wants. Unexpected expenses are also indicated. You need to control your spending, says Ganesha.

CANCER

Watch out for winds of change and act accordingly. Ganesha warns you of drowning in a strong current. Your task will be easier if you adjust to circumstances. Fun and entertainment are today's passport. In the social sector business, you will have success. This is the right time to enhance social prestige.

LEO

You are advised to be more attentive to your work today. You will try to do the best work possible by putting in your maximum efforts. However, the results might turn out to be lower than your expectations. You need to be wary of excessive expenses or financial loss today. You need to escape losses today by keeping your wits above you, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

The thinking cap is on your head, and a passionate pulse shall run through you today. Yet, by the mid-day, expect a laid-back, cavalier attitude to grip you. Government officials and other professionals will have an inspiringly assenting day. Your professionalism will shine through, and you may be in for some serious praise from the superiors. Smile and accept the positive feedback graciously.

LIBRA

Ganesha says you will give more importance to your family and there may be concerns about the health of a family member. There may be news from abroad regarding the health of a close family member, which may disturb you today. Do maintain your mental balance today and remember that this too shall pass.

SCORPIO

A cloud of emotions surrounds you today and you would like to spend the entire day in introspection and self-analysis. You will try to raise your bar at professional level. Your far sightedness and capability to understand human psychology promises a leader in you, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

You are in a mood to spend money of home décor, paintings or artefacts. Go ahead, and decorate your home. Ganesha foresees success on your cards today. Workplace has never been such an interesting place before. Planning and implementation will make your day easier.

CAPRICORN

The day will be a maze of complex problems and situations, but you will find your way out in no time, says Ganesha. At work, you may love to play the leader, but that makes you accountable, for both the good as well as the poor performance of your subordinates. In all likelihood, you may be held responsible for the poor performance of your team members. But all said and done, you will set high standards for yourself, and a perfect example for others to follow.

AQUARIUS

You know how to examine the nuts and bolts of every assignment or project, and it consumes your resources to a great extent. But, like a stitch in time saves nine, your meticulous planning minimises the chances of a loss or a failure, feels Ganesha. Not many are good at this, and such efficient planning gives you an upper hand over others when the competition is tight.

PISCES

You could find yourself re-establishing contact with long lost friends abroad, possibly on matters of business. Social events. There is a possibility that those who are unmarried, may find their match in these social settings. Long term personal or business relationships will likely be established today, says Ganesha.



AMBER ROSE APOLOGISES FOR 'KARTHASHIANS' SLUR

American model Amber Rose has admitted she was immature to brand Kim Kardashian West and her family "the Kartrashians" and insisted they didn't deserve the 2015 slur. The 38-year-old star tweeted the insult in a jibe to former boyfriend Kanye West.

JULIA 'IDEAL CANDIDATE' FOR KANYE'S GIRLFRIEND

Uncut Gems actress Julia Fox thinks she is the 'ideal candidate' for the 'position' of Kanye West's girlfriend because she doesn't care about what people say about her. She believes part of her appeal is because she doesn't worry about what is being written about her.



Pandit Birju Maharaj was not just a legendary dancer, he was a guru in the traditional sense who not only took Kathak to the world but also passed on his craft to generations of students

Maharaj Ji, as known to his admirers, was the consummate artiste, a poet, writing under the pen-name 'Brijshyam', a vocalist who had mastered thumri and other forms too, and also an instrumentalist. But it was Kathak, that most graceful Indian classical dance form, which became his calling in life. He dedicated every waking minute to finetuning and popularising the craft in India and beyond its shores.

Born the more prosaic Brijmohan Nath Mishra, Birju Maharaj, who would go on to rule many a stage with his impeccable footwork and emotive, stylised story telling the Kathak way, once recalled how he was just three

FEBRUARY 4, 1938 - JANUARY 17, 2022

when he would walk and waddle towards the "taleemkhana" where young students were taught dance skills as well as the harmonium and the tabla.

It was those early growing up years at his ancestral home in Lucknow that gradually moulded the young Mishra into Birju

Maharaj, the leader of Lucknow's Kalka-Bindadin Gharana.

"It was like a sea of rhythm and beat, and for seven generations that was the only topic of discussion back home. Laya, swar, taal, bhangima, saundarya, aur nritya (rhythm, tone, beat, pose, beauty, and dance) that was all we

A life dedicated to dance

When Maharaj ji trained Madhuri, Deepika

The Kathak 'Maestro' had choreographed two famous tracks of contemporary cinema -- *Kahe Chhed Mohe*, filmed on Madhuri Dixit in the SRK starrer *Devdas* (2002), and *Mohe Rang Do Laal*, which was picturised on Deepika Padukone, in *Bajirao Mastani* (2015). On a personal note, Madhuri Dixit remembered the lighter side of Maharaj ji, whose hallmark was his infectious smile. The actress tweeted: "He was a legend but had a childlike innocence. He was my guru but also my friend. He taught me the intricacies of dance and *abhinaya* but never failed to make me laugh at his funny anecdotes."

talked about.

"All we heard was the sound of ghunghru, tabla, and harmonium. Everybody would start practising at 4 in the morning, I would also get there with some sweets in my pocket. Sometimes I would try my hand at a tabla or a harmonium, had started learning bit by bit from the very beginning," he told recently said in an interview.

Artistes remember 'The Maestro'

Birju Maharaj romanced Kathak like few others ever did. His mastery over the classical dance form writing him into lasting fame as one of India's greatest performing artistes.

For dancer Sonal Mansingh, it is still tough to believe that Pandit Birju Maharaj is no more.

"It will take time to absorb the fact that he is physically no longer with us. Of course, his legacy will live on, thanks to his unmatched contribution to the art form," she said.

BJP MP-actor Hema Malini, who is also a trained Bharatanatyam dancer, took to Twitter and penned an emotional note on Birju Maharaj's demise.

"The nation mourns the passing of a true legend, Shri Birju Maharaj, Kathak exponent par excellence. His ghunghroos were on his ankles till he breathed his last. I always admired and respected him as a giant of the medium of Kathak and will miss his presence on the firmament of dance," the 73-year-old actor wrote.

Kamal Haasan, who trained under the maestro for a song in *Vishwaroopam*, remembered Birju Maharaj as an 'unparalleled dancer'.

On Twitter, Bhansali Productions mourned his passing as the banner shared stills from the songs of *Devdas* and *Bajirao Mastani*, the films for which the legend trained Madhuri Dixit and Deepika Padukone, respectively.

"Today, we are extremely saddened and heartbroken by the loss of an incredible talent, Pandit #BirjuMaharaj. Your legacy inspired us and so many," the production house, owned by director Sanjay Leela Bhansali, tweeted.

Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan said his passing away was a personal loss for him.

"The passing away of Pandit Birju Maharaj marks the end of an era for Indian dance and Kathak. For me it's been a personal loss," said Khan.

Sitar player Anoushka Shankar, daughter of Pt. Ravi Shankar said she was 'devastated' to hear of the passing of Birju Maharaj.

Singer Durga Jasraj, called his death "a monumental loss to Indian performing arts."

Angelina calls her *Eternals* character a troubled soul

Mumbai: Hollywood star Angelina Jolie, who essays the role of Thena in Chloe Zhao's superhero film *Eternals*, describes her character as someone who is not very comfortable during peace time and this trait emanates from the moral injury of the character.

Due to her special ability to manipulate cosmic energy to augment her life force which grants her virtual invulnerability and immortality, Thena is known for being a social misfit. Commenting on this, Angelina says, "Thena is like a soldier who is affected by the memories of battle and has PTSD or moral injury to live with."

Talking about the complexities

of her character, Angelina says, "Thena is not comfortable in peace time. She doesn't know how to exist as a civilian or as a lover or as a friend, but she does know war. She knows who she is in combat."

The film, which features an ensemble of Salma Hayek, Kit Harington, Gemma Chan, Richard Madden and Kumail Nanjiani, is available to stream on Disney+ Hotstar in English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam.



Uttar Purush's 3-day drama fest concludes

BHUBANESWAR: Artistes of City-based theatre troupe Uttar Purush presented the play *Chhata* on the third and last evening of the theatre festival *Nataka Parikrama-2022* here at Rabindra Mandap, Monday.

Written by playwright Dr Narayan Sahoo and directed by Dr Prasanna Mishra, the play highlighted the misery of the inmates of an old age home. It showed how people build a home to spend their twilight years in the company of their children in joy but they are abandoned by their offsprings and they ultimately have to take shelter at old age homes.

Artistes who infused life into the characters included Pabitra Mohan Kar, Laxminarayan Acharya, Debadutta Pati, Nishikanta, Amit, Ajit, Debalendu,



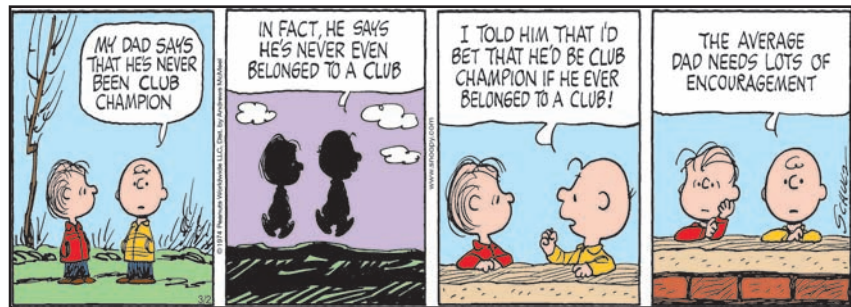
A scene from the play *Chhata*

Pranati and Pihu. Kailash Senapati scored the music while Nishikant assisted in the production.

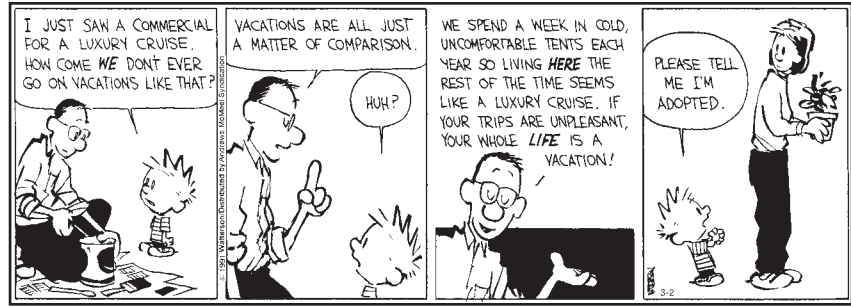
Odisha Natya Sangh president Haren Sahoo and Natya Chetana founder Subodh Patnaik attended

the event as guests while playwright Dr Narayan Sahoo and Uttar Purush vice-president Chittaranjan Swain were also present on the occasion. Debadutta Pati coordinated the programme.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

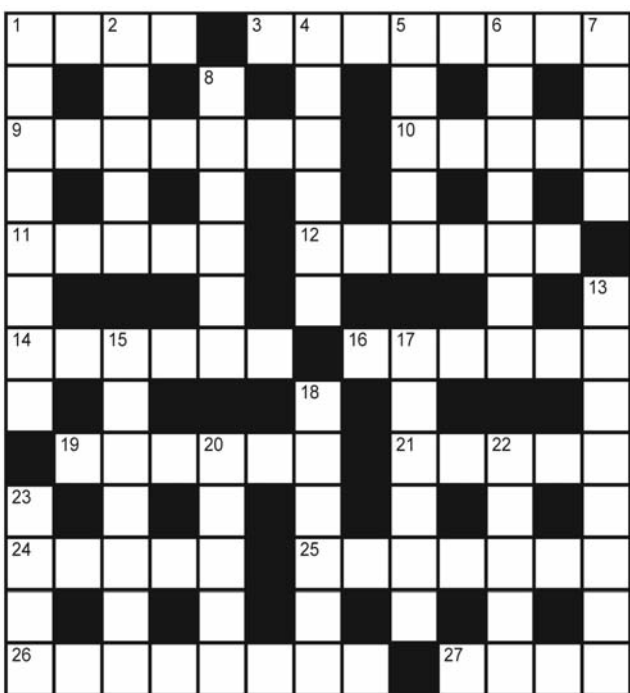


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

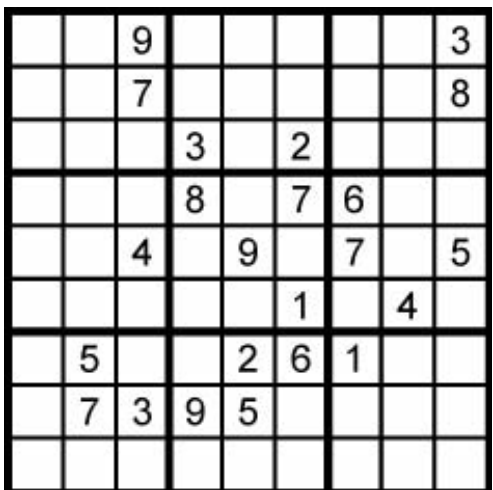


- Across**
- 1 Blowgun missile
 - 3 Picnic staple (3,5)
 - 9 Took to task
 - 10 Sufficient
 - 11 Change, as a clock
 - 12 Bird of prey
 - 14 Sell or transfer abroad
 - 16 Mistake fixer
 - 19 Unpolished
 - 21 Clean, as a spill (3,2)
 - 24 Deduce
 - 25 Family tree entry
 - 26 Target part (5,3)
 - 27 Sailor's cry
- Down**
- 1 Circumspect
 - 2 Origins
 - 4 Coniferous trees
 - 5 Title-holder
 - 6 Engages
 - 7 Arduous journey
 - 8 Newspaper man
 - 13 Prediction
 - 15 Like a kitten
 - 17 Comment
 - 18 Largest of the Channel Islands
 - 20 Links rentals
 - 22 Fuzzy fruit
 - 23 Arm or leg

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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

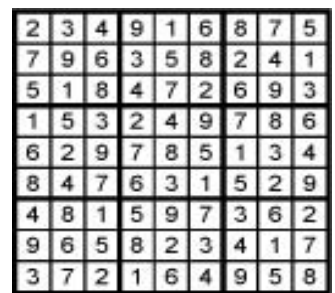


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU





BJP meets Guv over illegal sand mining

The BJP alleged that despite repeated reprimands from the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the state government is mostly mum on this issue, cementing the suspicion about the latter's nexus with the sand mafia. Speaking to the media, Sahu said, "Thousands of truckloads of sand are being illegally excavated from river beds and transported on a daily basis right under the nose of district administrations and police to different parts of the state as well as outside the state," He added.

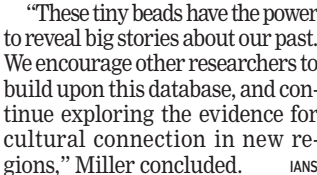


OP PHOTO

SC notice to City school on plea of Class X students

The students have also sought direction to the school to provide answer sheets to them.

Long before FB, social networking was on using ostrich eggshells



nCoV DIFFUSION AT AIIMS-BHUB

Above 300 staffers +ve since Jan 1



PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar, has reported over 300 infections of Covid-19 since January 1, 2022. This comes at a time when Odisha is undergoing the Covid-19 resurgence, with detection of more than 10,000 daily cases from all

over the coastal state. The authorities of the premiere health institution, as a counter-measure against the invading virus, announced Saturday a temporary halt of walk-in OPD services at all of the hospital's specialty and super-specialty departments wef January 17. At the same time, the authorities made it clear that only on-

line registered patients and emergency cases will be facilitated with OPD services. The online registered patients can access their destined departments by showing their booking number at the hospital entrance. As per the AIIMS Bhubaneswar's release, the hospital's Swasthya app and telemedicine services will remain functional. The release also intends to encourage digital interactions over physical presence at the OPDs. Telemedicine facilities will be available in the 9am-5am window from Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm Saturday, on all working days. Similarly, the Swasthya app will remain active from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and 8.30am to 1pm Saturday, on all working days, the release notified.

PADDY PROCUREMENT



Farmers stage a demonstration near the panchayat office in Khurda alleging irregularities in paddy procurement, Monday

OP PHOTO

Rourkela among 10 cities in 'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Rourkela, Jan 17: Smart City Rourkela has secured a place among the 'Top 10 Cities of India' as part of the 'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge' under the aegis of the Smart Cities Mission of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), an official said Monday. According to the MoHUA, the winning cities include Bengaluru, Hubballi-Dharwad, Indore, Jabalpur, Kakinada, Kochi, Kohima, Vadodara and Warangal. Sources said the finalists were selected after thorough evaluation of their proposed and implemented projects by a jury consisting of representatives from MoHUA, Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF), and independent experts in urban design, early childhood development, and behavioural change. In the first stage of the challenge,



the Rourkela Smart City Limited (RSCL) and Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) jointly responded to MoHUA's open call for proposals to implement neighbourhood-level pilot projects improving public spaces, streets, transport, and access to services to enhance the health and wellbeing of 05-year-old children and their caregivers. In February 2021, Rourkela was shortlisted by an expert committee from 63 applicant cities across the



country. Over the next seven months, it was part of a cohort of 25 cities that received technical assistance and capacity building to solicit citizen participation, implement trials and pilots, and build consensus around their proposals. "Happy to note that Rourkela is one of the Top 10 Cities in the 'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge'. Under the programme, future plans are being made to provide children with a variety of

components, a better environment, and to build better relationships between senior citizens and children in urban slums," said Sundargarh Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan. Sources said RSCL and RMC targeted interventions in Basanti Colony and Udit Nagar neighbourhoods spreading across seven wards. Infants and toddlers living in informal settlements on the periphery of these neighbourhoods access nearby Early

Happy to note that Rourkela is one of the Top 10 Cities in the 'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge'. Under the programme, future plans are being made to provide children with a variety of components, a better environment, and to build better relationships between senior citizens and children in urban slums

NIKHIL PAVAN KALYAN | DM, SUNDARGARH

Childhood Development (ECD) services. Recognising anganwadis as one of the most important ECD services, the city upgraded two anganwadi centres with play spaces, nursing-cum-counselling stations for pregnant women and kitchen gardens. Envisioning holistic development catering to the most vulner-

able parts of the city, RSCL and RMC have jointly taken measures to create learning-based play areas for underprivileged children and the community at Malgodam and Leprosy Colony, towards strengthening healthy development in the early childhood years. RMC commissioner and RSCL CEO Subhankar Mohapatra said, "Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge helped us visualise and learn how much we can do for infant, toddler and caregiver communities in our city. This becomes a platform for us to work under area of early childhood education, mother and children's health, slum development, women freedom under the umbrella of infant, toddler, caregiver-friendly and children-friendly city. Rourkela had an incredible experience working on this thematic area and we are looking forward to work more on this significant issue."

Harekrushna Mahatab State Library to remain closed till January 26

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: The Odia Language Literature & Culture Department announced Monday that the Harekrushna Mahtab State Library in the state Capital will remain closed till January 26, 2022 as 10 employees of the library have tested positive for Covid-19. Readers have been requested not to come to the library during this period. The premises of the institution will be sanitised and disinfected over these 10 days, sources said. Earlier, the library was announced to remain closed till January 31. However, owing to the protests by students, the concerned authorities had overturned the decision. Now, after more cases were reported, the authorities decided to close the library till January 26. Authorities added that visitors must submit RT-PCR negative report before entering the library.

CM congratulates para-athlete for Guinness record

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday congratulated para-athlete from Odisha, Kamalakanta Nayak, on entering the Guinness Book of World Records by covering maximum distance in 24 hours in a manual wheelchair. Patnaik through his official twitter account said, "Congratulate para-athlete from Odisha, Kamalakanta Nayak on entering Guinness Book of World Records by covering maximum distance in 24 hours in a manual wheelchair. Your grit amidst all odds is an inspiration for others. Wish you all the best for future." The Sports and Youth Service Department also shared the achievement of Nayak saying, "After a spinal cord injury, record-breaker Kamalakanta Nayak was barely able to walk. But, he overcame all difficulties to make a Guinness World Record. We salute this man's grit, determination and will power. Undoubtedly, he is our Monday Motivation."



State Sports and Youth Services Commissioner-cum-Secretary R Vineel Krishna felicitated para-athlete Kamalakanta Nayak at Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

'SCOUT' A PLATFORM TO LAUNCH STARTUPS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: Electropreneur Park, Bhubaneswar, with support from Bhubaneswar Smart City Ltd (BSCCL) organised a pan-India Virtual Acceleration Program for Smart City Solutions namely Smart City Challenge & Outcome for Urban Transformation (SCOUT 2021) and the valedictory and product showcase event. The objective of SCOUT was to invite innovative products and solutions from the startups to mitigate smart city problems and making the city life better as well as ushering in transformation through disruptive technologies. The virtual event was attended by Arvind Kumar, DG, STPI, Bhuvnesh Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Electronics & IT, Government of India, BMC Commissioner & CEO Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited

and others Sanjay Singh. In this regard, a virtual exhibition was launched by Bhuvnesh Kumar to showcase the products of the 26 finalists developed in SCOUT. Among rewards, cash prize up to ₹3 lakh, 2 lakh and 1 lakh were given to the winner (Cocoslabs Innovative Solutions), 1st runner up (Earthzy Technology Solutions) and 2nd runner up (Racketail Solutions) respectively. Individual cash prizes up to ₹50,000 were given to four best performing teams (Fuselage Innovations, Malhari Projects, Backyard Creators, Ewarn Systems). Speaking on the occasion, Arvind Kumar, Director General, stated that with support of industries, the mission of STPI and Electropreneur Park-Bhubaneswar, the outcome of SCOUT will be far reaching for achieving more than the desired goals and promote startups and entrepreneurship in the field of ESDM.

Vaping increases frequency of Covid symptoms: Study

A STUDY, PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL OF PRIMARY CARE & COMMUNITY HEALTH, FOUND THAT SYMPTOMS INCLUDE HEADACHES, MUSCLE ACHES AND PAIN, CHEST PAIN, NAUSEA AND VOMITING, DIARRHEA, AND LOSS OF THE SENSE OF SMELL OR TASTE

People who use electronic cigarettes and test positive for Covid-19 have a higher frequency of experiencing Covid symptoms, compared to people who don't vape, according to new research from Mayo Clinic. The study, published in the Journal of Primary Care & Community Health, found that symptoms include headaches, muscle aches and pain, chest pain, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of the sense of smell or taste. People who vape and also smoked tobacco, and tested positive for Covid, complained of laboured

breathing and had more frequent emergency department visits than those who did not vape. "The study was designed to compare the frequency of common Covid-19 symptoms, such as loss of taste or smell, headache, muscle aches and chest tightness in Covid patients who vaped, compared with those who were not vapers," said David McPadden, from Mayo Clinic. The team interviewed more than 280 Covid-positive vapers and compared them with 1,445 Covid-positive people of the same age and gender, and who don't vape. All of these common Covid symptoms were reported more frequently



among people who vape, the researchers said. Use of e-cigarettes has grown significantly over the past decade,

especially among high school students and young adults, though the short- and long-term health effects of e-cigarettes are unknown.

"There are a lot of studies that have shown that e-cigarette use may be associated with inflammation in the lungs and also may cause severe lung injury in certain users, causing a condition called e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury," said Robert Vassallo, a Mayo Clinic pulmonologist and critical care specialist. "Our research was not designed to test whether e-cigarette use increases the risk of acquiring Covid infection, but it clearly indicates that symptom burden in patients with Covid-19 who vape is greater than in those who do not vape," he added.


The increased inflammation of lung tissue promoted by Covid-19 infection and the inflammation induced by vaping may worsen the likelihood of systemic inflammation, with an associated increase in symptoms such as fever, myalgias, fatigue and headache, the study noted. "During a pandemic with a highly transmissible respiratory pathogen like SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid-19), it is highly advisable to reduce or stop vaping and e-cigarette use, and minimise the potential for increased symptoms and lung injury," Vassallo said. IANS

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“Detachment is the beginning of mastery.”

SRI AUROBINDO



Back To Cash

A woman from Mumbai has been reported to have lost ₹11 lacs while ordering pizza and dry fruits 15 January 2022. In another incident reported from Gurgaon, Haryana, a lady was cheated to the tune of ₹16 lacs when she tried to seek help from Customer Care of a reputed private bank to resolve an issue with her bank account 16 January 2022. These are not rare events. Some who have been duped are shy to come out publicly and admit they are dumb enough to have been so easily taken for a ride while many are not even aware their accounts get debited because the fraudsters are smart and, to avoid detection, deduct less conspicuous amounts. Once they get their hands on data like CVV numbers and date of birth, they generally tend to bleed the account holder each time a transaction is conducted. It is also internationally acknowledged that Indians have been in the fore front of bank account related fraud acts. Many videos on YouTube bear testimony to the crafty Indian, sitting in a cooped up room somewhere out there, merrily siphoning off hard earned money of young and old while posing as an employee of some call center. The list of such fraudulent activities is never ending. The efficacy of the cheats seems to be constantly improving but the government and especially the internet based banking apparatus have not bothered to improve or bring in stricter checks on their systems.

The Union government, since Demonetization 8 November 2016, has been constantly harping on and encouraging financial ‘digitization’ across the board in this country. It is undoubtedly much easier for a certain section of the populace to order various things online and make payments using their credit cards. On the other hand, digital payment is still a distant dream for most rural Indians. The funny aspect is that the cheats pry on that chosen ‘certain section’ which seems to have enough money in the accounts. After demonetization, as the next step, the Union government now seems hell bent on getting crypto currencies to become acceptable in India. One may notice that new taxation and financial laws and regulations are being introduced, virtually something every week, that are aimed at facilitating easy and smooth transition to crypto currencies. The efforts should have been to trace who in India are opting out of the national currency and preferring to invest in the crypto world. Admittedly, with an internet connection, anyone can purchase crypto currencies. Today, with a fairly strong net link and dependable electricity, some small room as physical space and a few computers to spare, an average person can even do crypto mining. This is to accept the fact that such activities may be very difficult to ban but can certainly be monitored. Our government, on the contrary, seems prepared to completely decapitate the Indian rupee for good. It is not difficult to observe the chain of events that have come to pass in the economy of India. The government, both under Manmohan Singh (less brazen) and now Narendra Modi (far more on-your-face brazen) has been undermining India’s inherent financial strengths. While Manmohan dreamt of moving large part of the population away from agriculture and the rural land they occupy to facilitate the super rich to grow, Modi has been sledge hammering financial systems and institutions from the beginning to break the credibility of the INR. Those with economic knowledge explain that the acts of the past two decades will start bearing fruits quite soon. Religious fervor, according to a few, may hold up the rickety supports for some more time but eventually the financial system operating in India could blow out and crumble. Another interesting angle related to encouraging crypto currencies could also be to help political parties in their fund raising efforts. They most probably are currently using expensive technology to attain and maintain anonymity that will never be understood or accessible to the common citizens. It could be for this very reason that no political party in India is asking questions on the need for the government to offer so many facilities to crypto currencies while most nations across the world are still grappling with the issue.

The only way the public at large can stop such mischievous eventualities from taking place, so we are told, is by relying and using more cash for as many deals as possible and limiting digital transactions to the minimum. Are we, Indians, aware and smart to see through this game, could be the poser.

WISDOM CORNER

“In oneself lies the whole world and if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either the key or the door to open, except yourself.”

JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

“The conscious mind may be compared to a fountain playing in the sun and falling back into the great subterranean pool of subconscious from which it rises.”

SIGMUND FREUD

“Whether one believes in a religion or not, and whether one believes in rebirth or not, there isn’t anyone who doesn’t appreciate kindness and compassion.”

DALAI LAMA

WORDSWORTH

Rhinotillexomania

This word had its fifteen minutes of fame at the IgNobel awards at Harvard University in October 2001. These annual ceremonies recognise research that, in the words of the organisers, “cannot or should not be reproduced”. The award for Public Heath went to an article, A Preliminary Survey of Rhinotillexomania in an Adolescent Sample, which was published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry in April that year. The judges described this as a “probing medical discovery that nose-picking is a common activity among adolescents”. Rhinotillexomania does indeed mean picking one’s nose, though habitually rather than occasionally. It looks like an example of word invention for its own sake, but it has appeared a few times in scientific publications. An early example commonly referred to is a postal survey carried out by two Wisconsin researchers in 1994; this was written up in 1995, also in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, which seems to have a near corner on the term. The word seems to have been invented in imitation of trichotillomania, an older term for a compulsive desire to pull out one’s hair. This comes, in part, from Greek tilleshai, to pull out.

Rhopalic

Rhopalic describes in which each word contains one more letter or syllable than the one preceding it. It derives from the Greek rhopalos, for a club or cudgel which, like most of its kind, is thicker towards one end than the other. Though the English word is first recorded only at the end of the seventeenth century, the technique is almost certainly much older. It is commonly applied to poetry whose words advance each time by one syllable, or sometimes one metric foot, but it can also apply to prose.

LOL

Swerve to avoid a box

Driving to work, a gentleman had to swerve to avoid a box that fell out of a truck in front of him. Seconds later, a policeman pulled him over for reckless driving. Fortunately, another officer had seen the cartoon in the road. The policemen stopped traffic



and recovered the box. It was found to contain large upholstery tacks. “I’m sorry sir,” the first trooper told the driver, “but I am still going to have to write you a ticket.” Amazed, the driver asked for what. The trooper replied, “Tacks evasion.”

CLOUDED BY POLLS, PANDEMIC

FOCUS UNION BUDGET



Ajit Ranade

IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT WE WILL HAVE A GROWTH-ORIENTED, EXPANSIONARY BUDGET WITH A HIGH FISCAL DEFICIT OF SIX PER CENT OF GDP

In the Union Budget of 2021, the finance minister had announced that the new labour laws would come into effect from April 1, 2021. These are the four labour codes, which will replace 29 existing labour laws, considerably improving the status of the labour market in the country. It constitutes a major economic reform by the Modi government. The four codes as individual bills have already been passed by Parliament and will go into effect once the rules are framed by the Labour Ministry, and by respective state governments, since labour is a concurrent subject. But rules have not yet been notified by the Union government. One reason could be the upcoming elections to the five state Assemblies. Labour reforms can be tough even at the best of times, but why risk political capital at a time of close electoral contests? One impact of the new codes is that take home pay of employees might decrease since high contributions to pensions are mandated. The employers’ share also might have to go up. Another reform is that firms with less than 300 employees do not need government permission for layoffs. Yet another feature is a new category of fixed term employment, which relieves the burden from employers to make workers ‘permanent’. Since each such reform creates a constituency which will be adversely affected, leading to noise from these quarters, status quo is to be maintained at least till the elections are over.

The repeal of the three farm laws too was perhaps necessitated with an eye on the elections. Of course, this is not to deny that the year-long agitation led by farmers was the biggest major factor. The farm unrest over the three reform laws was most manifest from Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh, where elections are due to be held. So, poll prospects surely affected the final decision to repeal.

The free ration scheme introduced in March 2020 as part of pandemic relief, has now been ex-



With a combination of pandemic related anxiety (hopefully temporary) and uncertain poll prospects, these two will have a large influence on the Union Budget proposals to be unveiled February 1

tended all the way till the end of March 2022. This is the Pradhan Mantri Gram Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) which covers nearly 800 million people under the National Food Security Act. The free rations of 5 kilo foodgrain per family per month was necessitated and introduced during the first wave of the pandemic itself. It has been extended twice already. Recently the government of Uttar Pradesh unilaterally announced doubling of the free ration, and extension all the way till the end of March 2022. The Union government then followed suit and it covers the whole country. This fifth extension for four months beyond November 2021 too appears to be driven with the electoral impact in mind. The incremental cost of the extension of free rations is about ₹53,000 crore to the Central exchequer with an additional outgo of 16.3 million tonnes of foodgrain. In the two years since March 2020 the PMGKAY would have cost ₹260,000 crore and distributed 60 million tonnes. It is by far the largest free food-grain distribution scheme in the world. With GDP growth expected to be 10 per cent during this fiscal, continuation of the free food scheme is a validation of its necessity from the welfare point of view, and also for

electoral prospects.

So, we can see, whether it is the delay in notifying the rules of new reforms in labour laws, or the repeal of farm laws, or the generous extension of PMGKAY, the political and electoral angles loom large. Even the progress on the asset monetisation initiative announced in the last Budget has been slow due to political resistance. Bank unions are increasing their pitch in opposition to privatisation.

Two more factors are now in play. One is the third wave, the so-called Omicron phase of the pandemic. Much more infectious and with a faster spread, albeit less potent and with lower fatalities, it has affected the economy. The slowdown is palpable in the macro-economic statistics like index of industrial production, sales of two-wheeler vehicles, consumer spending in retail, urban unemployment and so on. Hopefully this is a temporary setback, and the Omicron spike is soon expected to fade. Exports are doing extremely well, thanks to a booming world economy. If India can grab and hold onto this export momentum it could become a significant driver of growth well into the next year. Another worrying sign is a very high wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation at about 14 per

cent. It is reflecting high inflation in input commodities used by producers. The consumer price inflation is still modest around 5 per cent, but there is a risk that WPI might spill into CPI inflation. The second factor now in play is pre-poll surveys showing the narrowing gap between incumbent governments and challengers. The Uttar Pradesh Assembly is a very big prize, but elections in Punjab, Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur are important too.

With a combination of pandemic related anxiety (hopefully temporary), and uncertain poll prospects, these two will have a large influence on the Union Budget proposals to be unveiled February 1. The economic size even after a 10 per cent growth this year will be barely above its 2019 level. Unemployment and underemployment numbers are large and worrying. Schools have been shut for nearly two years, and hardest hit have been children of the urban poor, the informal sector and the rural schools with poor connectivity. Tax collections on GST have been quite good, reflecting good profitability of the organised corporate sector. The relatively higher inflation and high imports have also helped GST collection. But non-tax revenues, especially the disinvestment target of last year will be badly missed. The Budget for 2022-23 will still need a lot of fiscal support to get the economic engine revved up, and a heavy dose of social welfare spending for the unemployed, for the health sector and for education. There will of course be an eye on the upcoming state elections. It is most likely that we will have a growth-oriented, expansionary Budget with a high fiscal deficit of 6 per cent of GDP. No new taxes on the middle class are expected, but some extra burden on the super-rich cannot be ruled out. India’s struggle with a low tax to GDP ratio will continue.

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

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SPECTRUM AUTHORITARIANISM

Can state surveillance strengthen dissent?



Krzysztof Krakowski

AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES USE SURVEILLANCE TO DETER PROTEST THROUGH FEAR AND DISRUPTION

The increased use of sophisticated surveillance techniques, including digital monitoring, makes it harder for dissidents in authoritarian states to evade the authorities’ radar. Thousands of secret police agents in Belarus, China, Russia, and many other countries watch, listen to, and follow opponents and suspected opponents of the regime. According to one estimate, 39% of governments in 2019 used surveillance in partial or full violation of their citizens’ right to privacy.

At first glance, state surveillance should suppress dissent. After all, effective anti-government opposition requires a considerable amount of collective effort, skillful coordination, and strict secrecy. This kind of organisation should be difficult if not impossible to establish and sustain in an environment where the regime can reliably access activists’ communications and monitor their movements. Many scholars conclude that surveillance is effective at dampening resistance. By helping the authorities identify and eliminate key opposition figures, it instills fear in the population. The experience of being surveilled can induce an almost obsessive compliance with the law, as Eugeniusz Gatnar, a dissident in communist-era Poland, described in his memoirs: “I knew that the secret police were following me. I always

told myself: don’t cross the street on a red light, validate tickets in the tram.” Beyond terrorising citizens and discouraging them from supporting opposition movements, surveillance enables a regime to infiltrate opposition organisations and disrupt dissident networks.

Recent high-profile cases demonstrate the reach of modern surveillance. After Russian dissident Alexei Navalny was poisoned after an electoral event in central Russia in August 2020, a joint investigation by The Insider and Bellingcat revealed that Navalny had been followed by the Russian secret services for more than three years. Agents patiently surveilled Navalny, waiting for an opportunity to apply a nerve agent to his clothes.

The detention of Belarusian blogger and government critic Roman Protasevich is another striking example. In May, Belarusian security officers allegedly tracked Protasevich to Athens. Returning on a commercial passenger flight to his home in Vilnius, Lithuania, Protasevich never made it: while traveling through Belarusian airspace, the plane was forced to land in Minsk, and he (and his girlfriend) were arrested on the spot.

A similar fate befell Paul Rusesabagina, an outspoken Rwandan government critic who is credited with saving more than 1,000 lives during the 1994 geno-

cide. August 31, 2020, Rusesabagina reportedly was followed by Rwandan agents on a trip from the United States to Dubai and abducted while trying to reach Burundi on a subsequent flight.

But dissidents are not helpless in the face of this pervasive surveillance. My recent research, conducted with Anselm Hager, reveals the remarkable resilience of dissident organisations under surveillance. By analysing declassified secret police archives from communist-era Poland, we discovered that localities surveilled most heavily by secret police in the 1980s also hosted more strikes and rallies. Our research focused on the wave of protests that marked the foundation of Solidarno (Solidarity), the movement that eventually toppled the regime in 1989. To determine how opposition groups continued to thrive despite intense monitoring, we first examined why people continued to join them. We found that the fear of surveillance was trumped by another, more powerful emotion: anger – which our research revealed was the most common sentiment expressed by opposition members while discussing surveillance. Some Polish dissidents argued that being monitored constantly was such a humiliating experience that they took to the streets.

We also examined how surveilled dissident organizations protected

themselves from infiltration and the corruption of members. Unexpectedly, we found that one of the hallmarks of surveillance in communist regimes – heavy reliance on civilian informants – was one of its major weaknesses.

In Poland, widespread use of informers meant surveillance could be conducted by anyone, including close acquaintances or relatives. Essentially, everyone was a potential regime collaborator. One might expect that the resulting social mistrust would have made it harder for the opposition to organise. Instead, it provided citizens with an incentive to reveal their true loyalties in public. By openly acting against the regime, people could prove to their friends and family that they were not collaborating. In one testimony, a dissident countered suspicion against him with a public hunger strike. Many others followed suit.

Authoritarian regimes use surveillance to deter protest through fear and disruption. But our research shows that surveillance can encourage people to stand up against the regime. Both processes strengthen anti-regime resistance movements, highlighting the unlikely resilience of opposition organizations in the face of surveillance.

The writer is assistant professor at the Collegio Carlo Alberto in Turin, Italy.

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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
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A first in the US

Sir, For the first time in the history of the United States, a black woman’s image has appeared on a US coin. What makes it noteworthy is that the image is that of legendary poet and activist Maya Angelou. The US announced that it is rolling out a quarter with Angelou on it. This development assumes enormous significance as racism and social discrimination are rooted in the country’s history and culture. The government’s decision to distribute coins with Angelou’s image sends a good message to the people of the country as well as people across the world. The coin depicts Angelou with outstretched arms. Behind her are a bird in flight and a rising sun. These images symbolise the black people’s freedom and hopes. These images were inspired by her poetry and symbolic of the way she lived. Apart from showing the importance of equality of man, the coins remind people of the great contributions of Angelou to poetry. It will motivate people to read and appreciate the poems of Angelou which depict the lives of black women. Apart from being a world famous poet, Maya Angelou was hailed as an internationally regarded figure for her role as a civil rights leader who fought for social and racial justice. During the Civil Rights Movement, she worked with great people like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. The US government’s decision to distribute coins depicting the great personality is commendable. More prominent women will appear on US coins in the future. The legacy left by Angelou will continue to inspire people.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Great cultural loss

Sir, An inferno has ravaged yet another iconic heritage structure, the Secunderabad Club. An electrical short circuit following a spell of rain triggered a massive blaze, which gutted the main edifice of the club. The building made up of wood added fuel to the fire. While the club pegged the loss at over ₹25 crore, the members rue that the cultural loss is much more. The club, established in 1878, on the lines of cantonment clubs popular in British India, sits on a 22-acre lush green expanse in the city’s heart. Initially christened as Secunderabad Public Rooms, the name was later changed to United Services Club and finally became the Secunderabad Club. The massive blaze has erased a piece of history!

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

of the day quote

So far, two crore 85 lakh vaccine doses have been administered in Delhi

SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

Those who want a regime change (after 10 years of misrule) will vote for the Congress. Those who want the regime to continue will vote for the BJP. The choice before the voter in Goa is stark and clear. Do you want a regime change or not? I appeal to the voters of Goa to vote for a regime change and vote Congress

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS SENIOR OBSERVER OF GOA

The BJP's Uttar Pradesh government has ensured a fear-free environment for the people by reining in criminals in the state

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Guj fisherman dies in Pak jail

Veraval (Guj): A 50-year-old fisherman from Gujarat, who was apprehended by Pakistani authorities a year ago on high seas, died in a jail in that country due to unknown reasons, an official said Monday. The deceased is identified as Jayanti Solanki, a resident of Sutrapada village in the Gir-Somnath district. He died a few weeks back but the information was received by local authorities Sunday, the official said.

U'khand Mahila Cong president joins BJP

Dehradun: In a shot in the arm for the BJP ahead of the Uttarakhand Assembly polls, state's women Congress president and former Nainital MLA Sarita Arya Monday joined the ruling party and has been expelled from the Congress. The former MLA joined the BJP at its state headquarters here on Balbir Road in the presence of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, state party president Madan Kaushik and other leaders. She was expelled from the Congress for six years.

3 held for raping and killing minor

Gwalior (MP): A 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped and killed by three men, who dumped her body into the Chambal river, in Gwalior district of Madhya Pradesh, police said Monday. The three accused included two truck drivers. The incident had occurred December 27 last year. Police arrested the three men Sunday, said Superintendent of Police Amit Sanghi.

Minor among 3 PLFI Naxals held

Khunti (Jharkhand): A 14-year-old boy was among three Naxals belonging to the banned People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) outfit who have been arrested in Jharkhand's Khunti district, police said Monday. Acting on a tip-off, police nabbed the trio in Rangrodi village in Rania police station area Sunday.

Two terrorist associates held

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police have arrested two terrorist associates at Awantipora in Jammu and Kashmir, and recovered explosive materials from their possession. Police said that based on a specific input, Awantipora Police along with Army's 42 RR and CRPF have arrested two terrorist associates linked with proscribed terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).



In the Jallianwala Bagh case innocent people were killed by the Britishers by shooting them I their chest, but in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident innocent farmers returning home were crushed under the wheels of the vehicle

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

VETERAN PWP LEADER PROF ND PATIL NO MORE

Veteran political leader of Peasants & Workers Party (PWP), an ex-cabinet minister and a four-time legislator, Prof Narayan Dnyandeo Patil passed away following a brief illness, party leaders said Monday



Blinded by pandemic, banks grapple with fraud surge: Survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: In the wake of Covid-19 and new digital operations, banking and financial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents and the trend is expected to continue, a Deloitte India survey said Monday.

Key reasons identified for the increase in fraud incidents over the next two years include large-scale remote working models, increase in customers using non-branch banking channels and the limited-ineffective use of forensic ana-

lytics tools to identify potential red flags, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (DTTL) said in a release.

About the survey, Deloitte said it gathered the views of 70 key C-suite stakeholders senior management responsible for compliance and fraud risk management, audit finance, asset recovery from varied financial institutions based in India. Banks and financial institutions which participated in the survey included private, public, foreign, co-operative and regional rural banks in India.

In the wake of Covid-19 and new digital operations, banking and fi-



ncial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents, the Deloitte India Banking Fraud

Survey said, adding this trend is expected to continue, with 78 per cent respondents stating that frauds could increase over the next two

BIG CITIES RECORD SHARP FALL IN COVID INFECTIONS

REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 17: India's capital Delhi and financial hub Mumbai have reported a big fall in Covid-19 infections in the past two days and most of those who contracted the virus have recovered at home, authorities said Monday.

Mumbai's daily new infections fell below 10,000 Sunday for the first time since early this month, after touching an all-time high of 20,971 January 7. It reported 7,895 infections late Sunday, Mumbai's municipal corporation said.

Delhi's cases have fallen consistently since hitting a peak of 28,867 January 13 and is expected to be fewer than 15,000 Monday, for the first time since early January, the city gov-



INDIA REPORTS 2,58,089 NEW INFECTIONS, TOTAL AT 37.38 MLN
REPORTS 385 DEATHS, 40% DELAYED RECORDING OF PREVIOUS FATALITIES
INFECTIONS SHARPLY DOWN IN MAIN TWO CITIES, HOSPITALISATION LOW

ernment's health minister told reporters. Both cities have said more than 80% of their Covid-19 hospital beds have remained unoccupied since the fast-transmitting Omicron variant led to a massive surge in cases from the start of the year.

"With very large numbers of sub-clinical, asymptomatic and undetected cases, it is difficult to pinpoint a peak by new cases," Rajib Dasgupta, head of the Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, said in an email.

"In this situation, monitoring hospitalisation is more prudent; today's case can be next week's hospitalisation." Other epidemiologists say a national peak in cases could come by early- or mid-February. Experts have attributed the low hospitalisations to high levels of previous infections

and vaccination. India has fully vaccinated about 70% of its 939 million adults and hopes to give the primary two doses to another 70 million or so teenagers by next month. The government has advised states to mainly ask only people with symptoms of Covid-19 to get tested instead of random checks like earlier that badly stretched resources, especially in the last major wave in April and May when millions were infected and tens of thousands died.

India's Covid-19 infections rose by 258,089 in the past 24 hours, the health ministry said Monday, taking the tally to 37.38 million - the most in the world after the United States. Deaths rose by 385 - nearly 40% of them due to a delayed recording of previous fatalities in the southern state of Kerala - for a toll of 486,451.

R-Day flypast this yr will be 'grandest and largest' with 75 aircraft: IAF

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: A total 17 Jaguars will roar above the Rajpath in the national capital this Republic Day in the grandest flypast comprising 75 aircrafts from Air Force, Army and Navy. This year MiG 29K and P 8i will make an entry while Tejas will be missed.

"The grandest flypast ever will take place over Rajpath during the Republic Day parade with 75 aircraft, including the planes from IAF, Army, and the Navy. This is in line with the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' celebrations," Indian Air Force officer Wing Commander Indranil Nandi said.



The officer said that five Rafale will also fly over the Rajpath in the 'Vinaash' formation. The navy's MiG 29K and P-8I surveillance aircraft will fly in the 'Varuna' formation. The Rafale will be seen in three formations. The Vinash formation will have five Rafale jets, Baaz formation will have one Rafale, flanked by two Jaguars, Su 30s and two Mig 29s. A single Rafale will perform a Vertical Charlie in the 'Vijay' formation. The flypast will bring back memories of 1971 war and at the same time showcase India's modern day aviation capabilities across the three forces. The flypast will be divided in two phases.

3 babies killed in K'taka: Nurse kept vaccines in hotel fridge

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Jan 17: The probe into the deaths of three babies after measles-rubella (MR) vaccination in Belagavi district of Karnataka has revealed that the nurse had obtained the vaccination vials one day earlier from the pharmacist and had kept them in a hotel fridge along with food items, violating all protocols.

This led to bacterial infection and after the administration of these vaccines the three babies died due to 'aseptic shock syndrome'. Two deaths were reported after being vaccinated at Bochagala camp January 12 while one death was re-

ported from Mallapura camp January 11. As many as 17 babies were vaccinated at Bochagala and four babies had received shots at Mallapura in Ramdurg taluk. Two girls, one 18 months old and the other 12 months old are recovering in hospitals.

Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar stated Monday that directions have been given to immediately suspend nurse Salma and pharmacist Jayaram.



GEARING UP



BSF's all-women biker team Seema Bhawani practise daredevil stunts during the rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day Parade at Vijay Chowk, on a cold winter morning in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Over 16cr forced into poverty in 2 yrs of Covid: Oxfam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Davos, Jan 17: The first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic saw incomes of 99 per cent of humanity fall and over 16 crore people were forced into poverty even as the world's ten richest men saw their fortune more than double to \$1.5 trillion (over ₹111 lakh crore) at a rate of \$1.3 billion (Rs 9,000 crore) a day, a new study showed Monday.

In its report titled 'Inequality Kills' released on the first day of the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda Summit, Oxfam International further said inequality is contributing to the death of at least 21,000 people each day, or one person every four seconds.

This is a conservative finding based on deaths globally from lack of access to healthcare, gender-based violence, hunger, and climate breakdown, it added.

The world's ten richest men saw their fortunes grow at a rate of \$15,000 per second during the first two years of the pandemic and if these ten men were to lose 99.999 per cent of their wealth tomorrow, they would still be richer than 99 per cent of all the people on this planet.

"They now have six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion people," said Oxfam International's Executive Director Gabriela Bucher.

"It has never been so important to start righting the violent wrongs of this obscene inequality by claw-



Representational image

ing back elites' power and extreme wealth including through taxation — getting that money back into

the real economy and to save lives," she said. According to Oxfam, billionaires' wealth has risen more

years. As per the survey findings, retail banking was identified as a major contributor to fraud incidents, with 53 per cent of respondents indicating that they had experienced more than 100 fraud incidents (over the last two years) - a 29 per cent rise since the previous edition. Similarly, the non-retail segment saw an average of 20 fraud incidents, highlighted by 56 per cent of survey respondents - again, a 22 per cent rise.

Additionally, data theft, cyber-crime, third-party-induced fraud, bribery and corruption, and fraudulent documentation have been

identified as the top five concerns with over 42 per cent of respondents (cumulative) reporting to be victims of these, the release said.

Survey respondents indicated that the top three outcomes of COVID-19 on their Fraud Risk Management (FRM) function would be increased dependence on analytical tools for fraud monitoring and detection (25 per cent), the need to create awareness about fraud amongst customers and employees (23 per cent), and a change in the target operating model to enhance capabilities of the remote FRM function (21 per cent).

Vaccination for 12-14 age group likely from March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: India may begin inoculating children in the 12-14 age group against Covid-19 in March as the 15-18 population is likely to get fully vaccinated by then, Dr N K Arora, chairman of the Covid-19 working group of NTAGI, said Monday.

Of the estimated 7.4 crore (7,40,57,000) population in the 15-18 age bracket, over 3.45 crore have received the first dose of Covaxin so far and their second dose is due in 28 days, he said.

"Adolescents in this age group have been actively participating in the inoculation process, and going by this pace of vaccination, the rest of the beneficiaries in the 15-18 age group are likely to be covered with the first dose by January-end and subsequently their second dose is expected to be done by February-end," said the Chairman of the Covid working group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI).

Once the 15-18 age group is covered, he said, the government is likely to take a policy decision for initiating the vaccination drive

for the 12-14 age group in March, he said. According to him, there is an estimated 7.5 crore population in the 12-14 age group.

Provisional vaccination reports till 7 am Monday showed that with more than 39 lakh doses being administered in a span of 24 hours, the cumulative number has exceeded 157.20 crore doses.

According to government data, over 3.45 crore first doses have been given to children in the 15-18 years age group so far. The country-wide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2, 2021. The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions.

The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1, 2021. The government then decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1.

IIT student jumps to death from hostel building

Mumbai: A 26-year-old student of IIT Bombay committed suicide by jumping off the terrace of his hostel located on the Powal campus here in the early hours Monday, police said. Prima facie, the deceased student was undergoing treatment for depression, a senior officer said. The deceased student, identified as Darshan Malviya, had written a message on the board in his hostel room, stating that no one should be held responsible for his death, a Powal police station official said. Malviya's body was spotted by a watchman outside the seven-storey hostel building who called up an official of the institute. The deceased student, who hailed from Madhya Pradesh, was pursuing a post-graduate course at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology from last July.

Visited Central Vista Avenue to review progress of the project. Despite the unprecedented rains a few days ago & the current Omicron outbreak, work is progressing on schedule

HARDEEP SINGH PURI | UNION MINISTER

The issue of Chief Ministership was already settled for the Congress in Punjab three months back and there is no need for any further debates or discussions about it

RANA GURJEET SINGH | PUNJAB CONGRESS MLA

Telangana, the youngest state in the country, is blessed with natural advantages in geographical resources, a world-class skill base, and existing manufacturing practices and expertise, which have opened new opportunities for investments

KT RAMA RAO | TELANGANA MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND IT

SHORT TAKES

Zomato delivery boy shot dead

Rewari (Har): A delivery boy of online food delivery platform Zomato was shot dead in Rewari when he went to serve an order in Ansal township in Sector 19. His mobile and wallet were also found missing and the police suspected that he was shot with intent to rob. An FIR has been registered at the Model Town police station.

Militants hurl grenade at PCR

Srinagar: Militants hurled a grenade on Monday at the police control room (PCR) in Srinagar city but it exploded without causing any damage. Police sources said militants hurled a grenade at the 6th India Reserve Battalion at the PCR in Batmaloo area of Srinagar.

Three dead in landslide

Shimla: Three persons were killed in a landslide in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour district on Monday, a senior state Disaster Management Department official said. The victims were identified as Kahan Chand of Uttarakhand and Jitender Singh and Ashok of Rajasthan, the official said, adding they were hit by boulders during the landslide near Menus Road on Hatkoti-Paonta Sahib National Highway number 707.

Leopard rescued

Hoshiarpur: A leopard was rescued from a trap by a team of the forest and wild life department in village Sherpur Gulind Monday. The team was called to rescue the leopard trapped in the forest area by a seasonal creek. It took four hours for the team to rescue the leopard, officials said.

Revised guidelines

New Delhi: There is no evidence of injectable steroids benefitting Covid patients not requiring oxygen supplementation or in continuation after discharge, according to the revised 'Clinical Guidance for Management of Adult COVID-19 Patients'. The revised guidelines issued by AIIMS, ICMR-COVID-19 National Task Force and Joint Monitoring Group (DGHS) under the Union Health Ministry also stated that anti-inflammatory or immunomodulatory therapy, such as steroids, can have the risk of secondary infection like invasive mucormycosis, when used too early, at higher dose or for longer than required.



We will fulfil all the expectations that the entire world has from us

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

STRICT INSTRUCTIONS

Hours after Chief Justice of India (CJI) N V Ramana expressed unhappiness over disruptions during virtual hearings due to the use of mobiles, the Supreme Court Monday asked the advocates and litigants to use a desktop or the laptop with a stable internet connection to join proceedings conducted through video conferencing



Punjab Assembly polls postponed

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 17: Accepting a demand by the state government and various political parties, the Election Commission decided on Monday to hold the single-phase assembly polls in Punjab February 20 instead of February 14 in view of Guru Ravidas Jayanti.

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, BJP and its allies, the BSP and other organisations had urged the poll panel to postpone the date of voting as lakhs of followers of Guru Ravidas travel to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh to celebrate his birth anniversary February 16.

In a statement, the Commission said polls would now be held February 20. It coincides with the third phase of polling in Uttar Pradesh.

The parties had said that several followers of Guru Ravidas would not be able to exercise their franchise February 14 as they would be travelling for the festivities.

Sources in the poll panel said there have been precedents when the EC had rescheduled assembly polls and bypolls after announcing the election schedule.

In October 2013, the EC had tweaked certain dates for the assembly polls in Mizoram to be held in November 2013.



A bye-election, again in Mizoram, in April 2014 was rescheduled and the date of phase one of Uttar Pradesh assembly elections was changed in March 2012 due to similar reasons, including religious beliefs of voters and the then prevailing law and order situation.

The EC statement said that after consideration of all facts made available, it had announced the schedule for Punjab assembly polls January 8 under which notification for the election was to be issued January 21.

According to the earlier schedule, single-phase polls in Uttarakhand, Punjab and Goa were to be held together February 14.

It noted that the Commission has received several representa-

tions from the state government, political parties and other organisations drawing attention towards the movement of a large number of devotees from Punjab to Varanasi for Guru Ravidas Jayanti celebrations February 16.

"They have also brought to the notice that a large number of devotees start moving for Varanasi around a week before the day of celebration and keeping the poll day February 14 will deprive a large number of electors of voting. In view of this, they have requested to shift the poll date a few days after February 16," the poll watchdog said.

The Commission said it has also taken inputs from the state government and chief electoral officer of Punjab in this regard

AAP's CM face to be announced today

New Delhi/Chandigarh: Delhi Chief Minister and AAP's national convener Arvind Kejriwal Monday said his party's chief ministerial candidate for the Punjab Assembly polls will be announced Tuesday. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has received over 15 lakh responses under its campaign to elect its CM face for the Assembly polls, a party leader said. Kejriwal had January 13 asked the people of Punjab to suggest names of their preferred chief ministerial candidates and launched a mobile number for the purpose.

and its decision is based on new facts emerging out of the representations, inputs from the state government and CEO, precedent and all facts and circumstances in the matter. According to the revised schedule, notification will now be issued January 25 and the last date filing nomination is February 1.

The date of scrutiny of nominations will be February 2 and the last date for withdrawal will be February 4.

The counting of votes will be March 10 for all the five poll-going states -- UP, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur.

R-DAY TABLEAU ROW INTENSIFIES

After Mamata, TN CM writes to Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Chennai, Jan 17: The controversy over the rejection of the Republic Day parade tableaux of some states intensified Monday with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin joining his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee in seeking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's immediate intervention.

While some leaders from the non-BJP ruled states including Kerala alleged that it was an "insult" by the Centre, sources in the Union government rejected the charge and decried the "wrong precedent" by chief ministers to portray the outcome of an objective process carried by an expert committee as a "flashpoint" between the Centre and the states.

Stressing that the shortlist was not prepared by the Centre, they said the proposals of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were rejected by the subject expert committee after due process and deliberations.

A total of 56 proposals had come from states and central ministries. Out of these, 21 were shortlisted and a similar process of selection is adopted every year, the sources said and added that tableaux from these states have been approved multiple times in the past under the Modi government. In a letter to the prime minister, Stalin said that excluding the Tamil Nadu tableau would deeply hurt the sentiments and patriotic feelings of the people of the state. Terming it as a "matter of grave concern to Tamil Nadu

and its people," he sought the prime minister's "urgent intervention to arrange to include the tableau of Tamil Nadu" that will showcase the freedom fighters of the state in the Republic Day parade 2022 in New Delhi. This came a day after Banerjee shot off a letter to Modi expressing shock over the exclusion of West Bengal's tableau, which focussed on Subhas Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary year, and said such a move would cause "pain" to the people of her state.



Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, "amounts to belittling and undermining the freedom fighters". Her Trinamool Congress party accused the BJP-led central government of "repeatedly" and "systematically" insulting "our history, culture and pride".

Senior BJP leader Tathagata Roy also urged Prime Minister Modi on Monday to allow West Bengal's tableau but made it clear that his request should not be interpreted as extending support to Trinamool Congress' "petty politics". The Congress has expressed its dismay over the developments, with its leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury writing to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Saturday.

Banerjee said that exclusion of the tableau, which also featured other icons like Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar,

NO RESPITE FROM COLD WAVE



Devotees covered themselves with blankets on a chilly winter morning in Haridwar

UNI PHOTO

I- T DEPT RAIDS IN HARYANA

₹550cr unaccounted cash detected

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Income Tax Department Monday said that they conducted search and seizure operations at the premises of a diversified business group across Haryana and Punjab's Mohali and detected unaccounted cash around Rs 550 crore.

The IT team has also recovered incriminating documents during the raid on the group which deals with manufacturing of plywood, MDF boards, inverters, and vehicle batteries, and in the refining of



lead. An IT official said that more than 30 premises across the cities of Yamuna Nagar, Ambala, Karnal, and Mohali were covered in the search operation. The search action has resulted in seizure of unaccounted cash of more than Rs 6.60

Clarify stand on marital rape criminalisation, Delhi HC tells Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Centre to clarify its position in principle on the issue of criminalising marital rape after the government sought time to formulate and place its "considered stand".

Justice Rajiv Shakdher, who is heading the bench dealing with a batch of petitions challenging the legality of the marital rape exception in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), said that the Centre has to say "yes or no" as in issues such as the present one, deliberation does not end. "In a matter like this, they (Centre) have to in principle say yes or no because if they don't, however much they may deliberate, it is not going to come to an end," the judge said. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said that it will not be appropriate to place before the court a "less discussed and consulted stand" and time was needed to undertake the process of consultation.

"I don't mind that (consultation) but they have to take a decision which way they are going... there are some matters, for whatever reasons, I think the court ul-

timately decides one way or the other and that's how it gets resolved. You take your time," Justice Shakdher observed.

"Yes and no is the end product of consultation," responded the solicitor general who also submitted that "nothing imminent was going to happen within a couple of weeks".

"We have to formulate our stand and place our considered stand for your lordship and considering that this a 2015 matter if your lordship can grant us a reasonable time. This might need a little consultation etc," the solicitor general said. The bench, which also comprised Justice C Hari Shankar, said that it would continue to hear other lawyers appearing in the case which would give time to the Centre. "You come back. We will decide how much time to give you then," the bench told the solicitor general. The Centre, January 13, had told the high court that it was considering a "constructive approach" to the issue of criminalising marital rape and has sought suggestions from several stakeholders and authorities on comprehensive amendments to the criminal law.

Edu institutes told to cut ties with Ed-tech companies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: The University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) have warned their recognised varsities and institutions against offering courses in distance learning and online mode in association with Ed-tech companies, saying no "franchise" agreement is permissible as per norms.

The higher education regulator (UGC) and technical education regulator (AICTE) have also advised students and parents to check recognition status of any programme on their websites before enrolling in any course. "The regulations mandate that the HELs shall not offer ODL or online programme under any franchise arrangement and the HELs themselves are completely responsible for the programmes. However, it has come to the notice of UGC recently that some EdTech companies are giving advertisements in newspaper, social media and television etc that they are offering degree and diploma programmes in ODL and online modes in association with some universities and institutions recognised by the UGC," commission secretary Rajnish Jain said in an official order.

PM SECURITY BREACH CASE

SC lawyer again receives threat call

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: A Supreme Court lawyer Monday once again received a threatening call warning the judges to refrain from hearing the Prime Minister's security breach case.

"Today I once again received a threatening call on the same pattern as it was earlier received but this time the caller also took the name of Retired SC judge Justice Indu Malhotra," Supreme Court lawyer Vishnu Jain told IANS.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli had constituted an inquiry committee headed by former judge Justice Malhotra to probe the PM's security breach in Punjab January 5.

The other members on the committee are Director-General or his nominee not below the rank of Inspector General of Police of the National Investigation Agency; Director General of Police, Union Territory of Chandigarh; Additional Director General of Police (Security), State of Punjab; and Registrar General, Punjab and Haryana High Court-Member cum Coordinator.

THE CENTRE, IN AN AFFIDAVIT, SAID: "VACCINATION FOR COVID-19 IS OF LARGER PUBLIC INTEREST IN VIEW OF THE ONGOING PANDEMIC SITUATION. HOWEVER, NO PERSON CAN BE FORCED TO BE VACCINATED AGAINST THEIR WISHES"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: Covid-19 inoculation guidelines issued by the Union Health Ministry do not envisage forcible vaccination without obtaining the consent of an individual, the Centre has told the Supreme Court.

The Health Ministry in an affidavit filed before the top court submitted that India's vaccination programme is the largest in the world and as on January 11, 2022, a total of 1,52,95,43,602 doses have been administered.

It said that 90.84 per cent of the eligible adult population has received their first dose of the vaccine and 61 per cent has received their second dose as well.



"Furthermore, a total of 23,768 doses have been administered to disabled persons who have voluntarily chosen to be identified as such by using their Unique Disability ID Card/Disability Certificate for reg-

istration at the time of their vaccination," it said. On the issue of exempting persons with disabilities from producing vaccination certificates, the Centre told the apex court that it has not issued any

SOP that makes it mandatory to carry the vaccination certificate for any purpose. The Centre said this in its affidavit filed in response to a plea by NGO Evara Foundation seeking door-to-door, priority Covid-19 vaccination for persons with disabilities. "It is submitted that the direction and guidelines released by the Government of India and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare do not envisage any forcible vaccination without obtaining consent of the concerned individual.

"It is submitted that vaccination for Covid-19 is of larger public interest in view of the ongoing pandemic situation," the affidavit filed by the Health Ministry said.

The ministry said that "it is duly advised, advertised and commu-

nicated through various print and social media platforms that all citizens should get vaccinated and systems and processes have been designed to facilitate the same."

On the issue of door-to-door vaccination, the affidavit submitted that guidance has been provided to states and union territories to undertake meticulous, need-based planning so that Near to Home Vaccine Centres (NHCVCs) strategy is undertaken at block or urban area level and identification of NHCVC sites done according to guidelines.

The location of NHCVCs is to be done by district/urban task forces so as to ensure maximum reach of services to the eligible population, it said.

international

of the day quote

I didn't kind of expect, which was like a healing role, because we've faced so much as a nation

JILL BIDEN | FIRST LADY, US

My thoughts are with the Jewish community and all those affected by the appalling act in Texas. We stand with US in defending the rights and freedoms of our citizens against those who spread hate

LIZ TRUSS | FOREIGN MINISTER, UK

Climate change is becoming a stern reality before our eyes. I hope that UAE and South Korea's hydrogen cooperation will bring forward carbon-neutral, sustainable futures

MOON JAE-IN | PRESIDENT, SOUTH KOREA

SHORT TAKES

Khan praises Putin

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Monday spoke to Vladimir Putin and exchanged views on bilateral cooperation as well as regional and international issues and also appreciated the Russian President's "emphatic statement" that freedom of speech could not be a pretext to abuse the Prophet. During a telephonic conversation with President Putin, Prime Minister Khan said he has regularly highlighted the appalling rise in Islamophobia and associated hatred in his addresses to the UN General Assembly, pointing towards its serious ramifications, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

Daily virus cases in Russia double

Moscow: Russian authorities Monday reported a sharp spike in new coronavirus cases, apparently driven by the rapid spread of the omicron variant health officials warned about last week. The country's state coronavirus task force registered 30,726 new infections over the last 24 hours, which are twice as many as 15,830 just a week ago and the highest daily tally since early December. The task force has also reported 670 deaths.

China-NK cargo railway restarts

Beijing: China has restored railway freight traffic with North Korea that had been suspended over pandemic concerns, its foreign ministry said on Monday. Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the connection across the Yalu River between China's Dandong and Sinuiju in North Korea had been restored after "friendly consultation between the two sides". Zhao said normal trade would be maintained while pandemic controls stay in place, but gave no other details.

Taliban parade after protests

Maymana: Taliban paraded through a northwest Afghan city in a show of strength at the weekend, days after reinforcements were sent to quell unrest over the detention of a popular commander. Protests erupted last week in Maymana, capital of Faryab province, after an Uzbek Taliban commander was detained for alleged links to a kidnapping plot. The unrest sparked fears of tensions between Uzbek and Pashtun civilians and Taliban, with unconfirmed reports that members of both ethnic groups had been killed in isolated clashes.

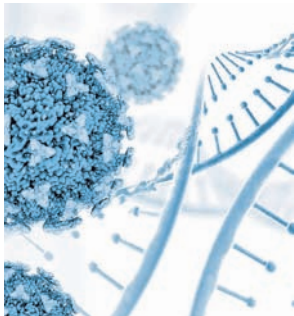


Our world today is far from being tranquil; rhetorics that stoke hatred and prejudice abound. History has proved time and again that confrontation does not solve problems; it only invites catastrophic consequences

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

CRUCIAL FINDING

Researchers have identified a specific gene variant that protects against severe coronavirus infection. The study, published in the journal Nature Genetics, shows that genes can influence whether we become severely affected or only suffer mild illness from COVID-19



Typhoons, wildfires, missiles: Teen flies solo around world

AT THE AGE OF 19, ZARA RUTHERFORD IS SET TO LAND HER SINGLE-SEATER SHARK SPORT AIRCRAFT IN KORTRIJK, BELGIUM, MONDAY, MORE THAN 150 DAYS AFTER SETTING OUT TO BECOME THE YOUNGEST WOMAN TO CIRCUMNAVIGATE THE WORLD SOLO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Jan 17: Avoid typhoon in the Philippines. Check. Steer clear of massive California wildfires. Check. Keep away from test missiles in North Korea. What Wait.

As teenage pilot Zara Rutherford flew ever onward in a record-challenging global odyssey, she met little as strange or scary as when she tried to squeeze in between North Korean airspace and a massive cloud threatening to cut off passage for her ultralight plane. "Well, they test missiles once

in a while without warning," Rutherford said. More importantly, she was just 15 minutes from flying over one of the last places one should enter uninvited.

So she radioed her control team to ask if she could cut the corner over the isolationist communist dictatorship to get to Seoul. Straight away they said, "Whatever you do, do not go into North Korean airspace!" Fortunately the clouds co-operated enough and she didn't have to continue the crash course in applied geopolitics.

At the age of 19, she is set to land her single-seater Shark sport



aircraft in Kortrijk, Belgium, Monday, more than 150 days after

setting out to become the youngest woman to circumnavigate the

world solo. American aviator Shaesta Waiz was 30 when she set the previous benchmark.

Flying runs in her blood since both her parents are pilots and she has been traveling in small planes since she was 6. At 14, she started flying herself and about 130 hours of solo flights prepped her for the record attempt, which she hopes will also have a bigger meaning.

With the final touchdown in a plane that looks like a fly among the giants parked at an airport like New York's JFK, the Belgian-British teenager wants to infuse

young women and girls worldwide with the spirit of aviation — and an enthusiasm for studies in the exact sciences, mathematics, engineering and technology.

Two mathematical statistic stands out for her — only 5% of commercial pilots and 15% of computer scientists are women.

"The gender gap is huge," she said.

Yet once the canopy closed over her cockpit and another six- to eight-hour flight began, lofty thoughts of global outreach receded as she concentrated on one lonely individual — herself.

Tonga assesses damage post tsunami

REUTERS

Sydney/Wellington, Jan 17: Australia and New Zealand sent surveillance flights Monday to assess damage in Tonga, isolated from the rest of the world after the eruption of a volcano that triggered a tsunami and blanketed the Pacific island with ash.

Australia's Minister for the Pacific Zed Seselja said initial reports suggested no mass casualties from Saturday's eruption and tsunami but Australian police had visited beaches and reported significant damage with "houses thrown around".

"We know there is some significant damage, and know there is significant damage to resorts," he said in an interview with an Australian radio station, adding that Tonga's airport appeared to be in relatively good condition.

One British woman was reported missing, he said.

The surveillance flights would assess the situation in outer islands where communication is completely cut off.

Tonga's deputy head of mission in Australia, Curtis Tu'ihalangie, asked for patience as Tonga's government decides its priorities for aid. Tonga is concerned about the risk of aid deliveries spreading COVID-19 to the island, which is



AUS, NZ SEND RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS TO TONGA

RED CROSS SAYS SCALE OF DEVASTATION COULD BE IMMENSE

ONE BRITISH WOMAN MISSING
ASH CLOUDS FROM ERUPTION MOVING TOWARDS NZ, AUSTRALIA

COVID-free.

"We don't want to bring in another wave - a tsunami of COVID-19," he told Reuters by telephone.

The eruption of the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Haapai volcano triggered a tsunami on the shores of Tonga and cut off phone and internet lines for the entire island.

International communication has been severely hampered by damage to an undersea cable, which

could take more than a week to restore, and Australia and New Zealand were assisting with satellite calls, he said.

Telephone networks in Tonga have been restored but ash was posing a major health concern, contaminating drinking water.

'COMPLETELY DESTROYED'

The Ha'atafu Beach Resort, on the Hihifo peninsula, 21 km west of the capital Nuku'alofa, was "completely wiped out", the owners said on Facebook.

The Red Cross said it was mobilising its network to respond to what it called the worst volcanic eruption the Pacific has experienced in decades.

Katie Greenwood, the Pacific head of delegation for the International Federation of Red

China blames lone Omicron case on mail from Canada, US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 17: China Monday blamed the lone Omicron case in Beijing to an international mail delivered from Canada to Beijing via the US and Hong Kong, as the Chinese capital was on alert ahead of next month's Winter Olympics. The single Omicron case detected in Beijing was traced back to an international document from Canada, and it was found to have similar strains from those in North America and Singapore, official media here reported.

The detection ahead of February 4 Beijing Winter Olympics sent officials on a leather hunt to prevent it from spreading. Few days ago, the Omicron variant was found in the nearby Tianjin city.

The Beijing patient received an item of mail January 11 delivered



from Canada via the United States and Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region, Pang Xinghuo, deputy director of the Beijing centre for disease control and prevention, said at a press conference.

The patient said that she touched the outside of the package and the first page of the document inside, Pang said.

Officials collected 22 environmental samples from the piece of international mail, and the nucleic acid tests all came back positive, she said.

The patient had no travel history in other provinces or cities within 14 days before the onset of symptoms, nor did she have contact with risk groups.

So far, the results of nucleic acid tests of 69 close contacts and more than 810 environmental samples have come back negative except for those collected from her home and workplace, Pang said.

Eight people that were in connection with the mail were tracked. Their nucleic acid testing results were negative, the official said.

NK fires 2 missiles in 4th test this yr

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, Jan 17: North Korea Monday fired two suspected ballistic missiles into the sea in its fourth weapons launch this month, South Korea's military said, with the apparent goal of demonstrating its military might amid paused diplomacy with the United States and pandemic border closures.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North likely fired two short-range ballistic missiles from an area in Sunan, the location of Pyongyang's international airport, but didn't immediately say how far they flew.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said the missiles did not pose an immediate threat to US personnel or territory, or to its allies, but highlighted the destabilising impact of the North's "illicit" weapons program. Japan's Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said the missiles landed outside the Japan's exclusive economic zone, and the



North Korea had conducted a pair of flight tests of a purported hypersonic missile Jan 5 and Jan 11 and also test-fired ballistic missiles from a train Friday in an apparent reprisal over fresh sanctions imposed by the US for its continuing test launches

chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, condemned North Korea's actions as threats to peace.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who is visiting the United Arab Emirates, instructed officials to make "utmost efforts to ensure stability" on the Korean Peninsula, his office said. It also said members of the presidential National Security Council stressed the need to revive nuclear diplomacy with Pyongyang.

North Korea has been ramping up tests in recent months of new missiles designed to overwhelm missile defenses in the region.

Some experts say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is going back to a tried-and-true technique of pressuring its neighbors and the US with missile launches and outrageous threats before offering negotiations meant to extract concessions.

Dognappings on rise as thieves target French Bulldogs in US

The reasons behind why French Bulldogs are targeted by thieves are their high resale value -- \$3,500 to \$5,000 or more -- and their relative rarity

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Jan 17: The two thieves who brutally robbed 27-year-old Marieke Bayens at gunpoint on a California street were not after her purse -- or her. They wanted the little dog at the end of her leash Merlyn, a French bulldog. From New York to Los Angeles, and from Miami to Chicago, thefts of the prized breed have been on the rise.

Small and friendly -- and thus easy to grab -- French bulldogs are hugely popular, selling for thousands of dollars on the black market.

They have the added draw of being a dog of the stars.

The most famous victim so far

The most famous victim so far has been Lady Gaga. Armed men last year stole her pet bulldogs Koji and Gustav

has been Lady Gaga. Armed men last year stole her pet bulldogs Koji and Gustav, even opening fire on an employee who was walking them (he was wounded but survived).

The superstar singer offered a \$500,000 reward for their return and eventually got the dogs back. Police made five arrests in the case. Bayens survived a similarly traumatic

attack in November while walking Merlyn, a friend's dog, in the California city of Oakland. The brazen attack occurred in broad daylight.

Bulldog thefts elsewhere in the country have been carried out with similar cold-blooded tactics.

Last year, people in San Francisco heard the distressing story of 30-something Sarah Vorhaus, who was stopped by three armed men -- and brutally

beaten by one -- before they made off with her five-month-old French bulldog Chloe. Pictures



on social media showed the young woman with a badly swollen face.

Tempting target So why are French bulldogs quite such a tempting target for thieves?

"Two key reasons their high resale value -- \$3,500 to \$5,000 or

more -- and their relative rarity," Brandi Hunter Munden, vice president of the American Kennel Club, told AFP.

"This is not a breed that has large litters... and it can take a while to get one," she said. "Their rise in popularity has led to an increase in thefts."

The use of violence, however, is new and alarming. In the face of the spate of dognappings, experts offer a list of precautions for owners have a computer chip implanted in the pet to allow tracing; always keep it on a leash when outdoors (and seal any dog door that allows it to leave home unescorted); keep its identity papers in a safe place; use a GPS-equipped collar; and be wary of

strangers who come knocking.

But the most crucial recommendation -- and the one probably least observed -- involves social media owners are strongly urged to resist the temptation of posting cute photos or videos of their pets, which may allow thieves to locate them.

Countless celebrities -- actors, athletes, musicians, models and influencers -- have ignored that rule. They include stars like Reese Witherspoon, Hugh Jackman, Chrissy Teigen, Leonardo DiCaprio, Madonna, Snoop Dogg, Michael Phelps and Hilary Duff.

So it's not surprising that Hollywood has become a hotspot of French-bulldog thievery.

of the day **QUOTE**

With global demand picking up gradually and industry reporting handsome orders in hand, apparel exports are likely to pick up in 2022. We need to strongly focus on efforts for promoting Brand India

NARENDRA KUMAR GOENKA | CHAIRMAN, APPAREL EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

The 'Get More Mileage or Give Back Truck' Guarantee across the range of trucks is a landmark move for the light, intermediate and heavy commercial vehicle industry

VEEJAY NAKRA | CEO (AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR), MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD

We are sharpening our commitment to business growth by focusing on core business areas and leveraging the capabilities of our central resources

ADARSH MENON | SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT AND HEAD, FLIPKART WHOLESALE

SHORT TAKES

■ **₹6,600cr dividend received from CPSEs**

New Delhi: The government has received about ₹6,600 crore as dividend tranches from a dozen Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), including GAIL, NMDC and Power Grid. "Government has received about ₹792 crore and ₹2506 crore from Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited as Dividend tranches," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said in a tweet Monday. "Government has received about ₹1605 crore and ₹913 crore from NMDC and GAIL respectively as Dividend tranches," he said in another tweet.

■ **UltraTech declares ₹965 crore capex**

New Delhi: Leading cement maker UltraTech Cement Monday announced a capital expenditure (capex) of ₹965 crore for its modernisation and to almost double the production capacity of its white cement brand Birla White. The Aditya Birla Group company plans to increase the capacity of Birla White from the current 6.5 lakh tonne per annum (LTPA) to 12.53 LTPA, UltraTech Cement said in a post-earnings statement. The company's board at its meeting Monday approved a capex of ₹965 crore towards modernisation and the expansion of capacity at Birla White in a phased manner.

■ **Tech Mahindra acquires CTC**

New Delhi: IT company Tech Mahindra Monday announced acquisition of 100 per cent stake in Europe-based Com tec Co IT (CTC) and 25 per cent stake in two IT platforms for a total of EUR 330 million (about ₹2,800 crore). The company said the acquisitions will strengthen its digital engineering and insurance technology businesses. The acquisition of CTC is the second-largest acquisition that the company has made after scam-hit Satyam in April 2010.

■ **Metro Brands shares rally 20%**

New Delhi: Shares of footwear retail chain Metro Brands Monday rallied 20 per cent after the company reported a 54.63 per cent jump in consolidated net profit for the third quarter ended December 2021. The stock zoomed 19.99 per cent to its upper circuit limit of ₹609.45 on the BSE. At the NSE, it jumped 19.99 per cent to its upper circuit limit of ₹609.50.



India is a renewable energy powerhouse and a country whose energy transition actions speak louder than their words

FRANCESCO LA CAMERA | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, IRENA

WORLD'S TOP TEN RICHEST SEE THEIR WEALTH DOUBLE

Oxfam projects that by 2030, 3.3 billion people will be living on less than \$5.50 per day

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 17: The 10 richest men in the world have seen their global wealth double to \$1.5 trillion since the start of the global pandemic following a surge in share and property prices that has widened the gap between rich and poor, according to a report from Oxfam, The Guardian reported. The report 'Inequality Kills' comes ahead of the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda.

DURING PANDEMIC

- ELON MUSK SAW HIS WEALTH INCREASE 10-FOLD TO \$294BN
- JEFF BEZOS'S NET WEALTH ROSE 67% TO \$203BN
- MARK ZUCKERBERG'S WEALTH DOUBLED TO \$118BN
- BILL GATES' WEALTH INCREASED BY 31% TO \$137BN

Urging governments to impose a one-off 99 per cent wealth tax on Covid-19 windfall gains, the charity said World Bank figures showed 163 million more people had been driven below the poverty line while the super rich were benefiting from the stimulus provided by governments around the world to mitigate the impact of the virus, the report said.

The charity said the incomes of 99 per cent of the world's population had reduced from March 2020 to October 2021, when Elon Musk, the founder of the electric



Indian billionaires' number rises

New Delhi: The number of Indian billionaires grew from 102 to 142, while 84 per cent of households in the country suffered a decline in their income in 2021, which was also a year marked by tremendous loss of life and livelihoods, according to non-profit Oxfam India's latest report published Monday. It indicates that the collective wealth of India's 100 richest people hit a record high of ₹57.3 lakh crore in 2021. In India, during the pandemic (since March 2020, through to November 30th, 2021) the wealth of billionaires increased from ₹23.14 lakh crore to ₹53.16 lakh crore.

car company Tesla, and the other nine richest billionaires had been collectively growing wealthier by \$1.3 billion a day.

Musk, according to figures taken from Forbes magazine's billionaires list, saw his wealth increase 10-fold to \$294 billion in the first 20 months of the pandemic, catapulting him above Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, to be the world's richest person,

the report said.

While people on more modest incomes have also seen their assets rise in value during the pandemic, Oxfam said the 10 richest men own six times as much wealth as the bottom 40 per cent (3.1 billion people). It would take the 10 billionaires 414 years to spend their combined wealth at a rate of a million dollars each per day, the charity added, the report said.

DESPITE OMICRON Economic activity remains strong: RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 17: India's overall economic activity remains strong, driven by an upbeat consumer confidence and uptick in bank credit and most importantly, on expectations that Omicron may turn out to be a "flash flood rather than a wave", have further brightened the prospects, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has noted in its bulletin for January 2022.

"On the vaccination front, India has made rapid strides. On the Omicron variant, the recent data from the UK and South Africa suggest that such infections are 66 to 80 per cent less severe, with a lower need for hospitalisation," the article on the state of economy published in the RBI Bulletin said.

Amidst upbeat consumer and business confidence and an uptick in bank credit, aggregate demand conditions stay resilient while on the supply front, rabi sowing has exceeded last year's level and the normal acreage, it noted.

The central bank said the views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the RBI.

10-YEAR BOND YIELD HITS TWO-YEAR HIGH

India's benchmark 10-year bond yield hit a two-year high Monday, tracking an uptick in US yields and a continued rise in global crude oil prices which has raised expectations of rate increases by the Reserve Bank of India



FREIGHT TRAIN CRUNCH

Rice traders stop new export deals



REUTERS

Mumbai, Jan 17: Nearly a third of India's rice exports for this month are stuck due to a shortage of freight trains and most traders have stopped signing February export contracts to avoid demurrage charges, industry officials told Reuters.

The slowdown in exports from India, the world's biggest rice exporter, has allowed rival suppliers such as Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam to increase overseas sales at higher prices. Slowing exports could force the Indian government to increase procurement from farmers.

"Shipments of more than 500,000 tonne of non-basmati rice that need to be transported to ports on India's east coast from the central state of Chhattisgarh have been stuck due to the shortage of freight trains," dealers said. They are part of around 1.5 million tonne of rice that India had planned to export this month. "Cargoes cannot move from producing centres to ports because of freight train scarcity," said Nitin Gupta, vice president of agricultural commodities trader

Higher prices and shipping delays are prompting some buyers to switch to rival suppliers such as Thailand and Myanmar

BV KRISHNA RAO | PRESIDENT, INDIA'S RICE EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Olam India's rice business. "There is no clarity on the availability of trains so nobody is offering fresh cargoes."

Railway authorities have diverted wagons to ship fertilizers and to serve thermal coal power plants to ensure adequate power supply this winter after power plants ran out of coal a few months ago.

Traders have started quoting higher prices for overseas shipments to cover higher demurrage charges, and prices for India's 5% broken parboiled variety of rice have risen to \$380 per tonne, the highest in six months.

International rice prices turn higher on Indian export delays

Thailand's 5% broken rice prices rose last week to their highest since mid-July 2021 at \$404-\$405 per tonne.

COAL CRISIS

OASME seeks CM's intervention

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: With no respite in sight to the ongoing coal crisis the Odisha Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises (OASME) asked Chief Minister Naveen Patanaik's intervention to avert the crisis and help sustain industry operations.

In a letter to the CM, Satwik Swain, Secretary General, OASME, said that despite the untiring efforts of the government to support the industry, the continuing coal shortage due to stoppage/curtailment of coal supplies and rakes has threatened the very survival of local industries with the risk of loss of lakhs of livelihood and closure of thousands of MSMEs in the state.

Highlighting the natural advantages enjoyed by the state, the organisation pointed out that Odisha holds about one fourth of the total coal deposit of the country. Out of the 150 million tonne of coal produced through Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCA), 65% is being transferred to other states and only 35% is reserved for Odisha industries, against the actual minimum requirement of 55% for local Captive Power Plants (CPPs). "The CPP-based industries in



Orissa who are heavily dependent on coal as their primary raw material are unable to run smoothly due to the current situation. Since August 2021, the CPPs are getting just 40-50% of the required coal supplies, creating a backlog of over 1500 coal rakes," the letter said. Sources said that such shortage is creating a dangerous situation for the manufacturing sector, threatening the shutdown of MSMEs, leaving the state deprived of domestic value addition along and a bad impact on the global investment.

"This struggle to receive uninterrupted coal supplies for continuing operations has brought down the industry to a standstill and left with no time to devise any mitigation plan to continue sustainable oper-

ations. Due to the aforesaid reason, the operational power plants are forced to operate at reduced power generation levels, creating a huge risk of closure of the plant," it added.

Seeking government support, Swain requested the Chief Minister's personal intervention to help normalise the situation. Suggesting prompt action needed for the immediate resumption of coal and rake supplies from MCA, he asked CM's assistance to help meet 100% coal requirement of the local CPP-based industries of Orissa.

"The timely action could be in the greater interest of thousands of MSMEs and save lakhs of people from the loss of employment and livelihoods," Swain said.

China tops forecasts with 8.1% growth in '21

China's economy recorded its weakest growth in 44 years in 2020 but staged a faster recovery than other major economies

REUTERS

Beijing, Jan 17: China's economy rebounded in 2021 with its best growth in a decade, helped by robust exports, but there are signs that momentum is slowing on weakening consumption and a property downturn, pointing to the need for more policy support.

Growth in the fourth quarter hit a one-and-a-half-year low, government data showed Monday shortly after the central bank moved to prop up the economy with a cut to a key lending rate for the first time since early 2020.

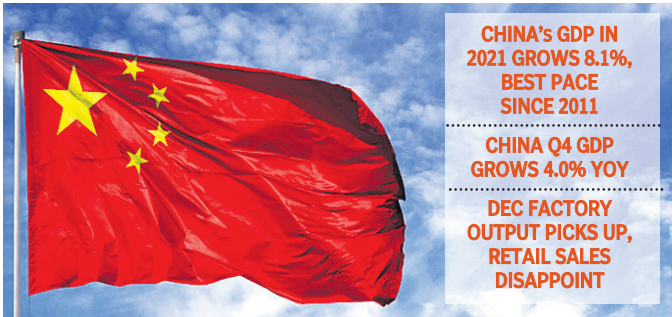
The world's second-largest economy is struggling with a rapidly cooling property sector, as well as sporadic small-scale Covid-19 outbreaks that could deal a blow to

its factories and supply chains. The economy grew 8.1% last year - its best expansion since 2011 - and faster than a forecast 8.0%. The pace was well above a government target of above 6% and 2020's revised growth of 2.2%.

Gross domestic product grew 4.0% in the final quarter, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showed, faster than expected but still its weakest pace since the second quarter of 2020. Growth was 4.9% in the third quarter.

"At present, the downward pressure on China's economy is still relatively big, and growth of residents' employment and income is restricted," Ning Jizhe, head of the NBS, told a news conference.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, GDP rose 1.6% in October-



December, compared with expectations for a 1.1% rise and a revised 0.7% gain in the previous quarter: China's economy got off to a strong start in 2021 but economists expect growth to slow in the coming months.

The central bank unexpectedly cut the borrowing costs of its medium-term loans for the first time since April 2020, leading some analysts to expect more policy easing this year to guard against developers' mounting risk of defaults. The People's Bank of China said

it was lowering the interest rate on 700 billion yuan (\$110.2 billion) worth of one-year medium-term lending facility (MLF) loans to some financial institutions by 10 basis points to 2.85%. It also cut the 7-day reverse repo rate.

Economic momentum remains weak amid repeated virus outbreaks and a struggling property sector. As such, we anticipate another 20 bps of cuts to PBOC policy rates during the first half of this year, said analysts at Capital Economics, in a note.



PERFECT START FOR NADAL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Melbourne, Jan 17: Spanish tennis stalwart Rafael Nadal began his quest for a 21st Grand Slam – and his second Australian Open title in 13 years – dismissing world No 66 Marcos Giron of the US 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 to advance to the second round at Melbourne Park Monday.

Enjoying a trouble-free opening round, the 2009 Australian Open champion seemed to have recovered fully from the left-foot injury which had forced the 35-year-old to miss the Wimbledon, the Tokyo Olympics and the US Open last year.

The Spaniard has improved to 4-0 for the year, having won his 89th title at the Melbourne Summer Set in week one. Winner of a record 13 titles at the Roland Garros, Nadal dropped just eight points on his first serve and slammed 34 winners, including seven aces in his opening-round win.

“You never know when you come back from injury, which unfortunately I have a lot of experience with, how things will be, so you have to take it day by day. You have to forgive yourself if things aren’t going the proper way,” Nadal said after the match.

Nadal is also attempting to become just the second man after

Serbian world No 1 Novak Djokovic to win all four majors at least twice. He is also trying to become the third man in the Open Era to win the Australian Open after turning 35 after Swiss master Roger Federer and Australian great Ken Rosewall.

Nadal won the Australian Open in 2009 and is the only past champion in the men’s bracket after Djokovic’s late withdrawal Sunday. Monday, the top-ranked Serbian landed in Dubai, then caught a flight to Belgrade.

Monday was Nadal’s first appearance at a major since he lost to Djokovic in the semifinals of the French Open. He missed Wimbledon because of fatigue, skipped the US Open with a painful left foot and, after recovering from Covid-19, started 2022 with a title in a tuneup tournament in Melbourne.

“Honestly, it’s been very tough moments and there are still doubts,” Nadal said. “But here I am and I can’t be happier to be back in this amazing stadium. It’s fantastic.”

The 35-year-old Spaniard said Djokovic’s absence would have an impact on the tournament. “In a personal level, yes, I would like to see him playing here,” Nadal said. “If it is fair or not that he’s playing here is another discussion that I don’t want to talk anymore.”

Djokovic may be able to play 2023 Australian Open

MELBOURNE/DUBAI: World men’s tennis No 1 Novak Djokovic headed reluctantly home Monday after being kicked out of Australia because of his Covid-19 unvaccinated status, but the government left the door open for a possible return to his favourite Grand Slam in 2023. The 34-year-old Serb, a vaccine sceptic, has won nine of his 20 major titles at the Australian Open.

But instead of beginning his quest for a record 21st Grand Slam at Melbourne Park – to go beyond Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer – he was on planes to Dubai then Belgrade after being twice detained and then booted out by Australian immigration.

“100% the Australian Open has lost its value. Whoever wins it now, doesn’t really count. Because Djokovic is the number one. That’s the guy, you need to beat him to win it,” said Alek Drakoo, a member of the local Serbian community, who was at Melbourne Park and



had hoped to watch him play. “I am uncomfortable that the focus of the past weeks has been on me and I hope that we can all now focus on the game and the tournament I love,” Djokovic said in a statement, expressing disappointment but respect for a court decision against him.

Under Australian law, Djokovic cannot be granted another visa for three years unless the immigration minister accepts there are compelling or compassionate reasons.



OSAKA BEGINS TITLE DEFENCE IN STYLE

Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina, Switzerland’s Belinda Bencic, American Amanda Anisimova, and Italy’s Camila Giorgi also earned early first-round wins Monday

Melbourne, Jan 17: The first test of Naomi Osaka’s new approach to tennis might have been when she completely whiffed an overhead to give her opponent a break point on Day 1 of the no-Novak Djokovic Australian Open.

Osaka didn’t throw her racket. She didn’t roll her eyes. She smiled.

“There are situations where I previously would get upset. But at this point in my life, like, I’m here because I want to be here and because I find that it’s fun for me,” Osaka said. “Might as well enjoy it while I still can.”

“I think I was pretty solid. I think I was up 5-0 and had a little dip, but I was fortunate enough to close it out. I think that’s something that I hope I’m not in that position in my next match. If I am, I already did it this time around, so I guess I’ll learn from it”

NAOMI OSAKA



In Osaka’s mind, the drama involving nine-time champion Djokovic’s deportation on the eve of the Australian Open was something for the players in the men’s draw to worry about. Her title defence began smoothly enough: She won the first five games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Camila Osorio.

With so much attention on the 11-day saga of Djokovic’s attempt to participate in the year’s first Grand Slam tournament, the returns of Osaka and Rafael Nadal have been overshadowed.

Osaka wasn’t bothered by that. Nadal didn’t seem to be put off by it, either, renewing his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam singles title with a 6-1 6-4 6-2 win over Marcos Giron.

Nadal is tied with Djokovic and Roger Federer with 20 major singles titles each, the most in the history of men’s tennis.

With Djokovic unable to defend his crown in Melbourne because he didn’t meet Australia’s strict Covid-19 vaccination criteria, the door is slightly more ajar to Nadal. Osaka’s main concern, meanwhile, is winning a third Australian title in four years

“To be completely honest, it didn’t really affect me,” Osaka said of the Djokovic drama.

“My goal, like even before this whole situation, is to just focus on

myself more, what I need to do to become better. Me, I’m a tennis player. I will focus on my matches. You as, I guess, an audience, focus on whatever is in the news, no?”

A potential fourth-round meeting with top-ranked Ash Barty could be waiting. Barty, aiming to be the first Australian woman to win the title in Melbourne since 1978,

beat Lesia Tsurenko 6-0, 6-1.

Osaka, after winning the title last year, pulled out of the French Open before the second round, then sat out Wimbledon. She played at the Tokyo Olympics, where she lit the cauldron, but ended her 2021 season early after a third-round loss and a teary news conference at the US Open.

EASY WIN FOR WORLD NO 1



Melbourne: World No 1 and top seed, Ashleigh Barty, began her quest for a maiden Australian Open title in emphatic manner, dropping just one game on way to beating Lesia Tsurenko of Ukraine in the first round of the year’s first Grand Slam at the Melbourne Park

Monday. Also, in late-evening matches Monday, Madison Keys upset former champion Sofia Kenin in an all-American contest, while Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia and Jessica Pegula of the US too came through tough three-setters on the opening day. No 1 seed Barty’s quest for a first Australian Open title got off to a perfect start with a 6-0, 6-1 rout of qualifier Lesia Tsurenko in 54 minutes. Two years ago, the Australian had been given a scare by the Ukrainian at the same stage of her home major, eventually pulling through 5-7, 6-1, 6-1.

New PC rule by FIH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lausanne, Jan 17: The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has allowed players defending penalty corners to keep their protective equipment on even after the ball goes outside the striking circle.

“Rule 4.2 has been changed to allow for defending players using Penalty Corner (PC) protective equipment to continue to play the ball outside the circle after an interception during the taking of a penalty corner. Players can now continue to run with the ball while keeping their protective equipment on but they must remove that same equipment immediately after, at the first opportunity to do so and always inside the 23m area,” FIH

Sport Director and double-Olympian Jon Wyatt said in a statement. Rule 4.2 relates to removal of penalty corner protective equipment.

Wyatt said, “No player using PC protective equipment can play the ball outside the 23m area at any time. This has been introduced to protect athlete safety so that the focus can be on the ball and the play, and not on removing protective equipment during a pressurised defensive situation. It was trialled in the FIH Odisha Hockey Men’s Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar in December 2021, and received unanimous support from coaches, athletes and officials.”

The FIH also granted relaxation over intercepting a falling aerial ball, which used to be illegitimate.

Modri, Benzema secure Madridistas medals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Riyadh, Jan 17: Real Madrid lifted the 2022 Spanish Supercup with a 2-0 win against Athletic Club Bilbao in the final played in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh, Sunday.

A 37th-minute goal from Luka Modri Sunday night and a penalty from Karim Benzema seven minutes after the halftime gave The Whites their 12th Supercup.

An 88th-minute penalty save from Thibaut Courtois saved the club from nervous moments in the closing minutes. The Athletic Club never let their heads drop, but lacked effectiveness in the Madrid area.

The game started with Real Madrid looking to control the ball



around the Athletic penalty area, but although they created a few nervous moments for the home defence with the combination of Luka Modri, Lucas Vazquez, Benzema and Rodrygo, they failed to work Unai Simón in the Athletic goal, Xinhua reports. At the other end, the Basque side had a penalty shot waved away despite David Alaba’s handball.

The game evened up as the half progressed, but despite getting into some decent positions, Athletic were too wayward in the final ball and Casemiro had two chances for Real Madrid, but his shot was parried for a corner by Simon, who then tipped the Brazilian’s header over the bar.



Odisha FC looks for a new dawn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Margao, Jan 17: Odisha FC will look for a new dawn after parting ways with coach Kiko Ramirez when they take on fellow stragglers NorthEast United FC in the Indian Super League here Tuesday.

Odisha parted ways with Ramirez after their last game against Kerala Blasters which they lost, finding themselves in ninth position with 13 points from 10 games.

Kino Garcia was announced as his interim replacement and Tuesday will have a job at hand to resurrect the ship against a NorthEast United side who are looking to galvanize their arsenal themselves.

NorthEast United are a rung below Odisha in 10th position having nine points from 11 engagements.

Meanwhile, Marcelinho is all set to make his NEUFC debut against former club Odisha as the Brazilian forward marks his return to the tournament.

With 33 goals and 18 assists in the ISL, Marcelinho brings ample experience and final third ability as NorthEast United hope to turn their season around.

Garcia’s first job will be to steady the porous defence. Odisha have conceded 24 goals in just 10 games this season. No team has conceded more goals than Odisha.

NorthEast United’s midfield lynchpin Hernan Santana scored a stunner of a free kick in their draw against FC Goa and has looked good of late. Among Indian players, only Roshan Singh (5) has more assists than Imran Khan. The last time the two sides met in the first half of the season, Odisha ran out 1-0 winners.

Hyderabad 1st Indian city to host Formula E

WITH THIS FEAT, THE CITY WILL NOW JOIN THE ELITE CLUB OF ROME, PARIS, LONDON, HONG KONG, NEW YORK AND BERLIN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Jan 17: Hyderabad Monday achieved the distinction of becoming first Indian candidate city to host the Formula E world championship and is expected to host the first race of electric cars between November this year and March 2023.

The Telangana government and Formula E Association, along with promoter of the event Greenko, signed a letter of intent to make Hyderabad a candidate city for hosting Formula E race on yearly basis.

The tripartite letter of intent was signed in Hyderabad in the presence of Telangana’s Industry

Minister KT Rama Rao, FIA Formula E Chief Championship Officer Alberto Longo, Greenko Group Chief Executive Officer Anil Chalamasetty, Mahindra Racing CEO and Team Principal Dilbagh Gill and other officials.

Hyderabad will now join the elite club of Rome, Paris, London, Hong Kong, New York and Berlin. Eighteen cities around the world are hosting the race organised every year by the Federation of Internationale de Automobile.

Alberto was impressed with the speed with which the Telangana government moved to sign the letter of intent in less than a month since the idea was mooted. He said he had never seen a government tak-



ing decisions at such a speed. He said Hyderabad would soon become an official host city with the first race happening between December 2022 and March 2023.

Rama Rao said hosting Formula

E is the right step to position Hyderabad as electric vehicles hub. It’s more than a race. It’s the perfect combination of future technology, sustainability and most importantly, the spirit of innova-

tion, he added.

He hoped that the event will give a big fillip to the city’s image and infrastructure. The state government plans to promote awareness around EVs and encourage innovation by hosting an EV summit parallel to the Formula E championship. Leading EV players and charging infrastructure companies from around the world will be invited for the summit.

Stating that India is going to witness revolution of electric vehicles, the minister said that Telangana wants to be the epicentre of this revolution.

KTR, as the minister is popularly known, said Formula E from FIA family is the fastest growing

“I am impressed with the speed with which the Telangana government moved to sign the letter of intent in less than a month since the idea was mooted. Hyderabad will soon become an official host city with the first race happening between December 2022 and March 2023”

ALBERTO LONGO | FIA FORMULA E CHIEF CHAMPIONSHIP OFFICER

sport with viewership being more than half of Formula One. He said the popularity of Formula One is increasing every year and it is expected that by the end of the decade, it will equal Formula One in the popularity.