



**DESI B'FAST FOR ANUSHKA**

Anushka shared a picture of her drool-worthy Sunday breakfast which included fruits and a scrumptious Podi Dosa

LEISUREP2



**MORE TROUBLE FOR BORIS**

Nusrat Ghani, a former minister, says she was told her Muslim faith was a reason she was fired

INTERNATIONALP10



**SINDHU TRIUMPHS**

Shuttler PV Sindhu overpowers Malvika Bansod to win the women's singles title in Syed Modi Int'l tournament

SPORTSP12

VICE PRESIDENT TESTS COVID +VE

**NEW DELHI:** Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu Sunday tested positive for Covid-19. This is for the second time that Naidu has been infected with the virus. "Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, who is in Hyderabad, tested Covid positive today. He has decided to remain in self-isolation for a week. He has advised all those who came in contact with him to isolate themselves and get tested," the VPT Secretariat tweeted. It seems unlikely that he will participate in Republic Day celebrations Wednesday. Earlier Sunday, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu paid tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary at a portrait of the freedom fighter in Hyderabad. Photographs of the same were posted on his official Twitter account.



SANITARY NAPKINS TO BIHAR SCHOOLBOYS

**PATNA:** Nitish Kumar government's well intentioned scheme to provide free sanitary pads to adolescent girls enrolled in government schools seems to have gained un-intentioned male beneficiaries! The 'unusual extension' of the scheme was found to have occurred at Halkori Sah High School, a co-ed government school in Manjhi block of Saran district. "These irregularities in the utilization of funds, under the scheme, was detected by the headmaster of the school. The headmaster in his report to the competent authority informed that at least seven boys of the school were allegedly distributed funds (Rs 150 each annually) for sanitary napkin during the 2016-17," said Ajay Kumar Singh, District Education Officer (DEO).



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**PANCHAYAT POLLS**

**8,648 nomination papers rejected**

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 23:** As many as 8,648 nomination papers submitted by candidates for election to various positions in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state were rejected during scrutiny, officials said Sunday. During the scrutiny of the nomination papers, 5,544 nominations filed for the election to ward member position were rejected due to various reasons.

Similarly, 1,753 nominations filed for posts of sarpanch, 1,119 for panchayat samiti member and 232 Zilla Parishad member were also rejected. After scrutiny, 2.20 lakh nomination papers have remained valid. Out of the total valid nominations papers, 1,56,753 have remained for the posts of ward member, 32,860 for sarpanch, 27,034 for panchayat samiti member and 3,767 for ZP members. As the candidates can withdraw nominations up to January 25, the final list for the poll will be known on that day.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



No idea who he is. We installed his statue after learning that he was dead against Gandhi and Nehru!

| WEATHER  |     |                              |        |
|----------|-----|------------------------------|--------|
|          |     | BHUB                         | CTK    |
| TEMP     |     | MAX 29.2°C                   | 27.8°C |
|          |     | MIN 17.7°C                   | 18.5°C |
| Humidity | 71% | 82%                          |        |
| Rainfall | NIL | NIL                          |        |
|          |     | Forecast<br>Mainly clear sky |        |

Minor gangraped in Mayurbhanj, 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Saraskana, Jan 23:** Two youths were arrested on charge of kidnapping and gangrape of a 15-year-old girl under Jharpokharia police station limits in Mayurbhanj district, police said Sunday.

The accused were identified as Manoj Singh, 24, and his friend Anil Singh, 25, of the area. The two were arrested over a complaint filed by the survivor's brother.

Police registered a case in this connection and conducted a medical examination on the girl. Later, police recorded her statement before a magistrate and dropped her at a one-stop centre for rehabilitation.

Police said Manoj repeatedly tried to coerce the girl for physical relationship for a year and finally kidnapped and raped her January

Puri: 5-yr-old raped

**PURI:** A five-year-old girl was allegedly raped in Puri town Sunday morning. The minor was admitted to the Puri District Headquarters Hospital in critical condition. After her condition worsened, she was shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. The accused managed to flee. Based on a complaint, the Town police have launched a probe.

17, Monday after she refused to yield to his demand. Later, he dropped her at the house of his friend Anil and fled. There Anil also forced himself on the girl. In the morning, he beat up the girl and drove her out of home. The girl managed to reach her house and narrated her ordeal before his brother who lodged a complaint.



Gujarat police personnel with their trained dog squad taking part in rehearsals for Republic Day parade at Somnath in Gir Somnath district

PTI PHOTO

Omicron in community transmission phase

■ BA.2 lineage, an infectious sub-variant of Omicron, has been found in a substantial fraction in the country

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is in the community transmission stage in India and has become dominant in multiple metros where new cases have been rising exponentially, the INSACOG has said in its latest bulletin.

It also said BA.2 lineage, an infectious sub-variant of Omicron, has been found in a substantial fraction in the country.

The INSACOG, in its January 10 bulletin that was released Sunday, said while most Omicron cases so far have been asymptomatic or mild, hospitalisations and ICU cases have increased in the current wave and the threat level remains unchanged.

"Omicron is now in community transmission in India and has become dominant in multiple metros, where new cases have been rising exponentially. BA.2 lineage is in a substantial fraction in India and S gene dropout based screening is thus likely to give high false negatives," it said. S-gene drop-out is



Sharp rise in City

**BHUBANESWAR:** While Covid-19 cases in the state saw a marginal drop, the state capital has seen a 115% rise in daily positive cases over last 10 days. Government sources said the daily positive cases in the state came down to 8,520 January 22 from 10,059 January 13. However, the capital city during the same period saw its total number of cases rising from 803 to 1532, highest during this month. It can be mentioned that Khurda district alone accounted for 19% of the state's total 12,04,660 cases. The capital city that comes within Khurda district reported 1.45 lakh cases.

a genetic variation like that of Omicron.

"The recently reported B.1.640.2 lineage is being monitored. There

is no evidence of rapid spread and while it has features of immune escape, it is currently not a variant of concern. So far, no case has been detected in India," the INSACOG said.

The INSACOG, in its bulletin of January 3 which was also released on Sunday, also said Omicron is now in community transmission in India and has become dominant in Delhi and Mumbai where new cases have been rising exponentially.

"Further spread of Omicron in India is now expected to be through internal transmission, not foreign travellers, and a revised sampling and sequencing strategy of INSACOG is being worked out to address genomic surveillance objectives in the wake of dynamic changing scenario of virus infection," the INSACOG said.

"COVID appropriate behaviour and vaccination are main shields against all form mutations of SARS-CoV-2 virus," it said.

The INSACOG, under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reports genomic surveillance of SARS CoV-2 across the country through sequencing of samples from sentinel sites and also detailed state-wise district analysis for some states. A total of 1,50,710 samples have been sequenced and 1,27,697 samples have been analysed so far by INSACOG.

SPURT IN KILLING OF STRAY ANIMALS

■ Lack of awareness and compassion towards animals is the main reason behind the rash of ghastly attacks on animals in the City, says an animal rights activist

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 23:** People seem to be losing out their compassion and tenderness towards animals roaming around in the capital city. Some recent incidents of brutality against animals in the capital city have put humanity to shame.

One of the members of 'Seva hin Sankalp' a city-based social outfit, January 19 lodged an FIR against Kitab Patnaik of Jagamara area for killing a dog and leaving another severely injured. The member of the NGO also claimed to have two eye witnesses who saw the entire incident and sought the organisation's help following the brutal incident. The accused allegedly shot at two street dogs killing one on the spot and leaving the other animal severely injured.

In another heart-wrenching incident Saturday, a lady tortured a dog and later burnt it alive at Station Bazaar in Laxmisagar area. Sources claimed, the accused, who stayed alone, got furious after finding that the street dog had entered her house January 21 afternoon and ate her food. In a fit of rage, she



poured kerosene on the animal and set it afire.

Speaking to Orissa POST, IIC of Laxmisagar police station Om Prakash Mohanty stated that a case had been registered in this regard and the woman had been detained. Some relatives of the lady, who claimed that the lady has psychological problems, have been asked to produce evidence to corroborate the claim. Police would arrest her if they fail to produce any documents to support their stance.

Similarly, a pregnant dog with its unborn puppies was beaten to death by a woman and her neighbours at Samantarapur area in April 2020. In another case, a man had run over five puppies in Lingaraj police station area of the city in June last year.

A retired banker was spotted throwing two cats before a pack of hungry stray dogs who killed the kittens at Prashanti Vihar under Infocity police limits in May 2021.

Speaking to Orissa POST, Debashis Tripathy, an animal rights activist, said lack of awareness and compassion towards pets and stray animals are the main reasons behind the current spurt in the ghastly attacks on the animals.

Arunachal boy found; process on for handover

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** China's People's Liberation Army Sunday conveyed to the Indian Army that they have "found a boy" in their territory, across Arunachal Pradesh, and will hand him over soon, days after an MP had claimed that a teenager was abducted by PLA personnel.

Security sources, however, said the PLA has not confirmed the identity of the boy and it is believed that the person is Miram Taron, who was allegedly taken away by the Chinese forces January 18 from Upper Siang district. After the incident came to light, the Indian Army had sought assistance from the PLA to trace the boy.

The sources said the PLA informed the Indian Army that they found a boy and due procedure is being followed to hand him over to the Indian side. Tapir Gao, an MP from Arunachal Pradesh, also told



Miram Taron

PTI that he got the confirmation from the Indian Army that the boy is in PLA's custody and will be handed over soon.

On January 19, Gao had claimed that Taron was abducted by the PLA from Lungta Jor area under Siyungla area (Bishing village) of Upper Siang district. Taron's friend Johnny Yaiying informed the authorities about the kidnapping by the PLA. Both are local hunters belonging to Zido village.

The incident occurred near the place where Tsangpo river enters India in Arunachal Pradesh. Tsangpo is called Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam. On January 20, China's Foreign Ministry said it was not aware of the incident but said the PLA controls the borders and cracks down on "illegal entry and exit activities."

NZ PM cancels own wedding courtesy new Covid rules



■ 'I just joined many other New Zealanders who have had an experience like that as a result of the pandemic and to anyone who is caught up in that scenario I am so sorry'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Wellington, Jan 23:** New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was Sunday forced to call off her own wedding as she tightened Covid-19 restrictions in

the face of an outbreak of the Omicron variant.

"My wedding will not be going ahead," she confirmed after detailing new restrictions including a limit of 100 fully vaccinated people at events.

"I just joined many other New Zealanders who have had an experience like that as a result of the pandemic and to anyone who is caught up in that scenario I am so sorry."

The emergence of nine cases of Omicron in a family who travelled between cities to attend a wedding, and the infection of a flight attendant on one aircraft they flew on, forced New Zealand to impose its

red setting restrictions from midnight Sunday. Omicron is far more transmissible than the earlier Delta variant but is less likely to make people seriously ill.

In addition to limiting crowd numbers, face coverings are now mandatory on public transport and in shops.

Ardern and long-time partner Clarke Gayford have never announced their wedding date, but it was believed to be scheduled for some time in the next few weeks.

The new restrictions are set to remain in place until at least the end of next month.

"Such is life," Ardern said when

asked how she felt about setting regulations which ended her planned nuptials.

"I'm no different to thousands of other New Zealanders who have had much more devastating impacts felt by the pandemic, the most gutting of which is the inability to be with a loved one sometimes when they are gravely ill. That will far outstrip any sadness I experience."

New Zealand has detected 15,104 Covid-19 cases and recorded 52 deaths since the pandemic began. Tough border restrictions and snap lockdowns have been in place for much of the last two years.



## FORTUNE FORECAST

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### ARIES

You feel lost and thoroughly depressed today. This will make you turn towards spirituality, says Ganesha. You will devote more time to meditation and will pray a lot. Despite the adverse circumstances, Ganesha says you will make a good deal of material headway.

### TAURUS

This is a bright, rosy day for students and scholars, particular who are engaged in, or are looking forward to higher studies, specializing in a particular professional stream. This is a great day for making plans for higher studies abroad. Do not miss this opportunity. Plans made today are likely to materialize.

### GEMINI

A long and hectic day awaits you. You will be in the mood to finish off long-pending projects at work or at home. There is a chance that your personal life may get affected due to the extra attention you pay towards work.

### CANCER

Today, you will shift your entire focus on the problems plaguing your personal life, feels Ganesha. Your ability to nip a problem in the bud has helped you to have a good personal life so far. And today, you will have to use your skills to mend the strain in your relationship with your loved ones.

### LEO

You will need to work hard to achieve your goals today. Those who are serious about their work will be easily able to tide over the day. You need to be cautious today. Not only at work, but even in personal relationships, you need to be on guard. You need to maintain a balance between home and at work, says Ganesha.

### VIRGO

Issues regarding religious beliefs and spirituality will surface today. Pursue your goals single-mindedly to attain success in the field of your choice, and exploit your abilities and talents to the hilt, advises Ganesha. You will be more logical and calculative, rather than emotional, in matters of your relationships.

### LIBRA

The clock ticks on, but chances are it can hardly beat you in the race, thanks to your prompt and sincere efforts. Today, you shall be a paragon of excellence. However, Ganesha waves the red flag of caution: it always pays to be safe rather than sorry. Keep your eyes open and pay attention to the fine print before signing any contract or paper.

### SCORPIO

A creative thought or an innovative idea may spice up your routine work. Apparently, you may seem all worked up and disorganised, but actually you may be quite systematic when it comes to your work. Keep the enthusiasm in you alive to make life happier, tips Ganesha.

### SAGITTARIUS

Today, find yourself driving all your thoughts and actions towards your family. You will also spend some superb time with your dearest and discuss intimate matters. A relaxing day today as you spend time with your friends and family, chilling out and having a good laugh or two.

### CAPRICORN

Whether you're an artist, performer, professional or an entrepreneur, career issues will take the foreground today, while personal matters will wait in queue for your attention, says Ganesha. Your performance will be at its all-time high, and your efforts will be duly rewarded, but credit for this must go to your loved ones who will lend their unceasing support for all your endeavours.

### AQUARIUS

You may rave and rant, but all you'll get from colleagues or juniors are wishy-washy excuses for a job not done. Ganesha advises that you take care to finish your own work before you help others.

### PISCES

While you will need loads of moral support to keep your spirits up, you are also likely to be blessed with the company of a person who is equipped to provide just that. Positive results will come your way as long as you do not give up.



## DENZEL 'STEALS' FILMMAKING SECRETS FROM JOEL COEN

Oscar-winning actor Denzel Washington admits he 'stole' directing tips from Joel Coen while working with him on the new movie *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.

## SCREAM 5 MONOLOGUE WAS EXCITING AND TERRIFYING: JASMIN

Actress Jasmin Savoy Brown says performing her *Scream 5* monologue was exciting and terrifying, and she has expressed her love for the franchise's passionate fandom.



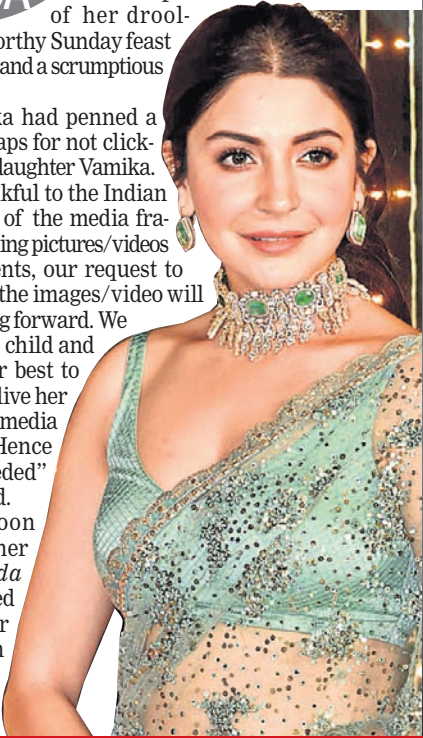
## ANUSHKA ENJOYS DESI BREAKFAST IN SOUTH AFRICA

AGENCIES

**Mumbai:** Anushka Sharma is stationed in South Africa with daughter Vamika, as husband Virat Kohli represents the country at an ongoing cricket tournament. The actress has been dropping adorable glimpses of her stay in SA and on Sunday she offered her followers a sneak-peek of her desi breakfast. The actress shared a picture of her drool-worthy Sunday feast which included fruits and a scrumptious *Podi Dosa*.

Recently Anushka had penned a note thanking the paps for not clicking pictures of their daughter Vamika. "We are deeply thankful to the Indian paparazzi and most of the media fraternity for not publishing pictures/videos of Vamika. As parents, our request to the few who carried the images/video will be to support us going forward. We seek privacy for our child and would like to do our best to give her a chance to live her life freely away from media and social media. Hence your support is needed" Anushka had shared.

Anushka will soon start shooting for her next movie *Chakda Xpress* which is based on the life of former Indian cricket captain Jhulan Goswami.



## Tiger recalls romancing the mic with his first single

**Mumbai:** Action star Tiger Shroff recalled the first time he crooned the number *Unbelievable* on social media. Tiger Sunday posted an old video of him singing the track on Instagram. In the caption, he wrote: "Trying to romance a mike for my first single #throwback #unbelievable"

On the work front, Tiger, who is known for his perfect dance moves and martial art skills, will be next seen in *Heropanti 2* and *Ganapath*.

*Heropanti 2* is the sequel of Tiger's debut film where he was seen opposite another debutante back then, Kriti Sanon.

As for *Heropanti 2*, the film, written by Rajat Arora and produced by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, is being helmed by choreographer actor Ahmed Khan and also stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Tara Sutaria.

*Ganapath*, is a dystopian thriller directed by Vikas Bahl (*Queen*, 2014), which also stars Kriti and boasts of high-octane action sequences choreographed by international stunt directors.

The film, produced by Vashu Bhagnani, Vikas Bahl, Deepshikha Deshmukh, and Jacky Bhagnani, has almost reached the finishing line in London after an extensive schedule.



## SHILPA'S rapping skills shock Badshah

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty shocked rapper Badshah after she rapped a few lines for him on the ninth season of the show *India's Got Talent*.

Shilpa shared the clip on

Instagram and said that she would like to try rapping while Badshah made a face.

Soon, the actress started singing lines from the song '*Kar gayi chull*'. She forgot a few verses so the rapper helped her out. Shilpa is then heard telling Badshah: "Dekha mera hidden talent (did you see my hidden talent)?" To which, a not-so-impressed Badshah said: "Hidden he rehna chahiye (should have remained hidden)."

Talking about Badshah, Kirron Kher said: "He's got a mad look on his face."

Shilpa captioned the clip: "Na dikhe woh talent kaisa, Toh ek jhalak pesh hai mere rap ka zara sa! Gaaya maine gaana aisa, Ke Badshah bhi proud feel hare waista, But reaction aaya unexpected sa, Maano rapper hamaara ho raha ho thoda jealous sa What say, @bad-boyshah?"

India's Got Talent airs on Sony Entertainment Television.

AGENCIES

## Deepika on her chemistry with Hrithik in *Fighter*

**S**iddharth Anand's highly-anticipated film *Fighter* starring Deepika Padukone and Hrithik Roshan has already created a buzz on social media.

While *Fighter* marks the first collaboration between Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone on screen. In a recent interaction with a news agency, the *Chhapaak* actress opened up on her chemistry with Hrithik Roshan in *Fighter*. The actress explained that she always wanted to work with him.

According to her, sometimes it's not just about wanting to work with someone, she just feel like there are so many things, it has to be the right script, it has to be the right director, it has to be the right time in your life.

Elaborating further, Deepika added that there are so many things that decide. The actress feels that it's the right time for us to come together.

Meanwhile, the actress is gearing up for the upcoming *Shakun*

Batra directorial romantic movie that have been going on in full swing since the makers dropped the film's trailer January 20.

It also stars Siddhant Chaturvedi, Ananya Panday, Dhairya Karwa, Naseeruddin Shah and Rajat Kapur in pivotal roles.

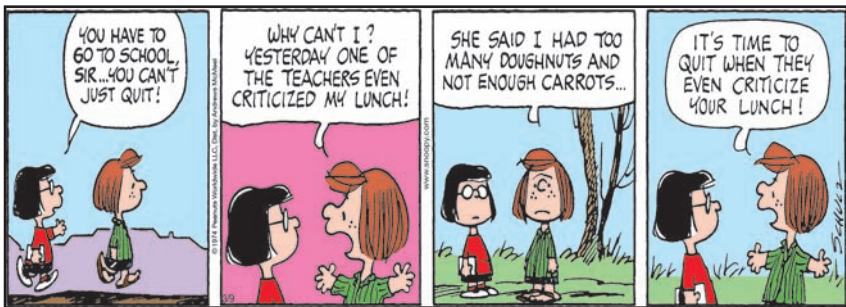
The movie will have its OTT world premiere across more than 240 countries and territories February 11, 2022.

AGENCIES



## FUN post

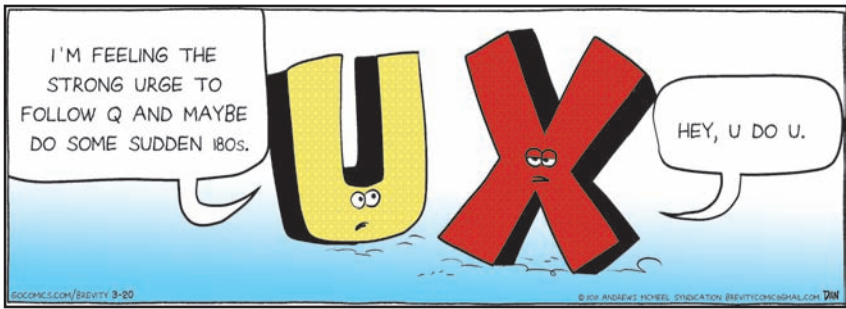
### PEANUTS



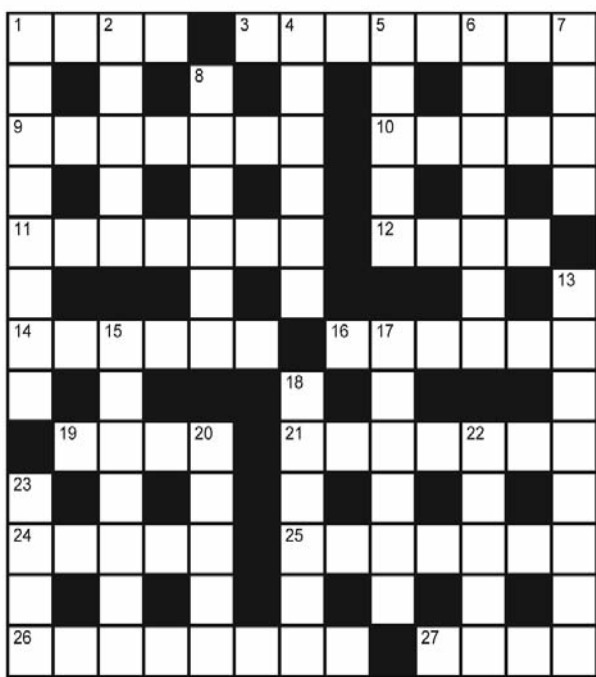
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### CROSSWORD



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#### Across

- Place for a pig?
- Consecrated
- Paradise
- Mélange
- Pasta dish
- Presently
- Gully with a stream
- Small cave
- Bygone despot
- Trade barrier

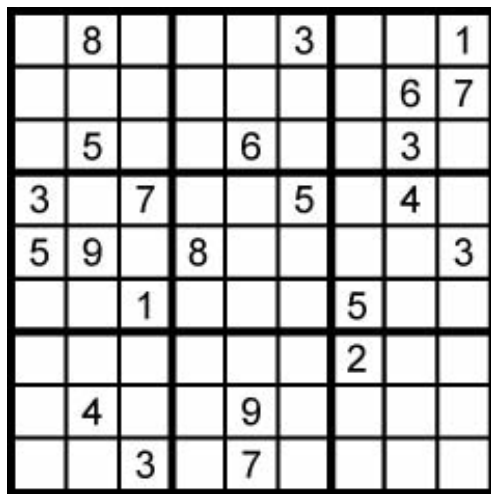
- Underground network
- Loosen, as a cap
- Welcome no-no
- Covet

#### Down

- Duct gland
- Bolshoi rival
- Slowly, to a conductor
- Leans
- Strike
- Extinct bird
- Clunker
- Autobahn, e.g.
- Minced cooked meat or fish
- Full-bodied
- Astronomer's sighting
- Dangers
- Old TV anew
- Small combo

### SUDOKU

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

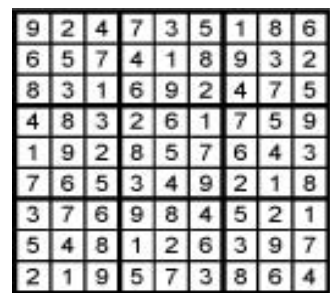


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# downtown

## Below 10k Cov cases for 3rd day in a row

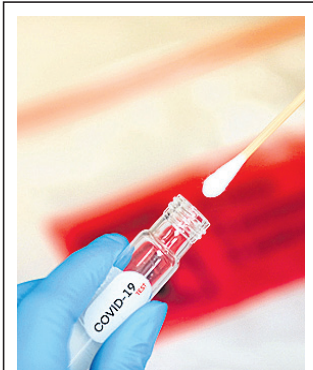
PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 23:** Odisha registered below 10,000 fresh Covid-19 cases for the third consecutive day with the coastal state Sunday reporting 8,520 new infections, 325 less than the previous day, following which the daily test positivity rate (TPR) slipped to 11.7 per cent, an official said.

The state had reported 11,607 cases January 19, and since then, the daily Covid infection graph is on a downward trend. Odisha has registered 10,368 cases January 20, 9,833 cases January 21 and 8,845 infections January 22.

Similarly, the daily TPR is also coming down in the state. The TPR, which was 16.7 per cent January 19, dropped to 13.97 per cent January 20 from 13.21 per cent January 21. It further dipped to 12.89 per cent January 22.

Of the fresh Covid-19 cases, highest (2,262) have been reported from Khurda district, of which state Capital Bhubaneswar is a part, followed by Sundargarh (932), Cuttack (789), Balasore (346), Jajpur (253), Kalahandi (226), Bolangir (217), and Nayagarh (216). Other districts



With 8,520 more cases, Odisha's Coronavirus tally goes past 12 lakh; 6 more fatalities due to the viral infection push the toll to 8,520

Of the fresh Covid-19 cases, highest 2,262 cases were reported from Khurda, followed by Sundargarh (932), Cuttack (789), Balasore (346), Kalahandi (226) and Nayagarh (216)

in Odisha reported below 200 cases Sunday.

As many as 937 children were among those who contracted the



### HELPING HAND

A police officer gives hand sanitiser to a dweller of Kathajodi slum in Cuttack, Sunday, as part of *Basti Chalo Abhiyaan*

## 5-YR-OLD RAPED BY NEIGHBOUR

POST NEWS NETWORK

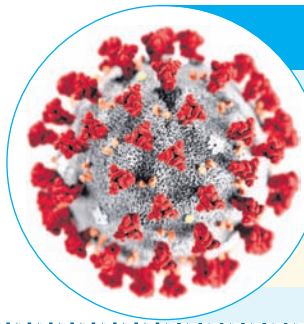
**Puri, Jan 23:** A five-year-old girl was reportedly raped by one of her neighbours, a 33-year-old man, under Town police limits here Sunday morning, police said.

According to police, the accused—Maheswar Mohanty—stays at the first floor while the victim's family resides at the ground floor of a multi-storied building under Town police limits here.

"Mohanty took the girl with him to the terrace around 10:30am. After a few minutes, the victim's mother found her crying at the corner of their home. Later, she came to know about the incident," said Town police inspector in-charge (IIC) Gokul Ranjan Das, quoting the victim's mother.

The profusely-bleeding girl was initially rushed to the district headquarters hospital and later she was shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, where her condition is stated to be critical, said Das, adding that the accused is on the run.

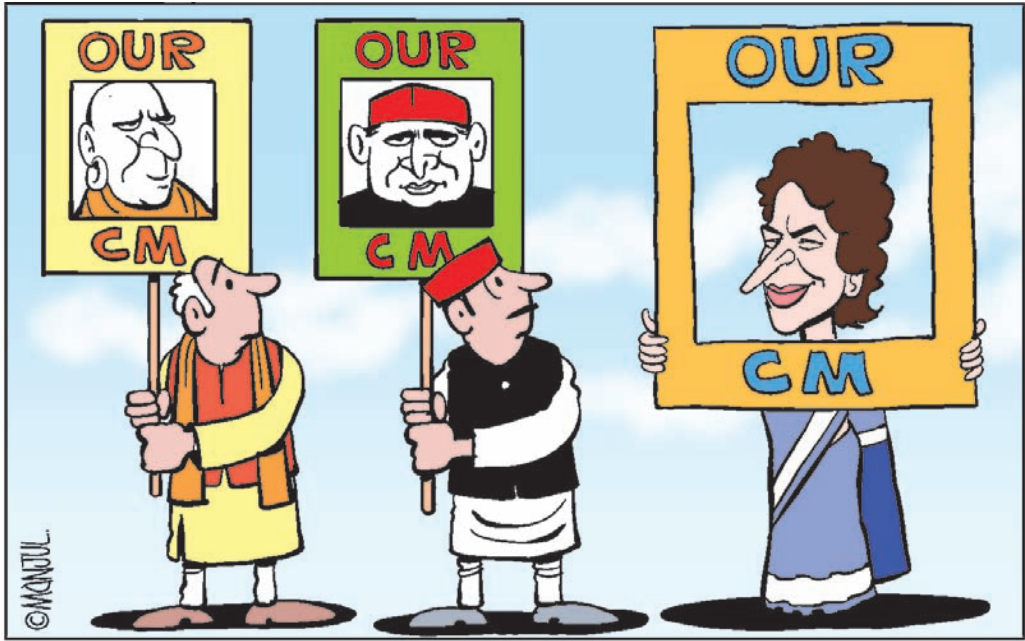
Senior police officials, including superintendent of police (SP) Kanwar Vishal Singh and additional SP Mihir Ranjan Panda, and a forensic team have visited the spot. "As the accused doesn't have a cellphone, it's a bit tough for us to track his location. However, we'll nab him soon," added Das.



### COVID-19 TRACKER

|        | INFECTED     | RECOVERED    | DEAD      |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World  | 35,02,92,303 | 27,87,21,787 | 56,11,459 |
| India  | 3,92,37,264  | 3,65,60,650  | 4,89,409  |
| Odisha | 12,04,660    | 11,21,608    | 8,520     |

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS

# BJD hopeful of improving its tally in Khurda district

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Jan 23:** With the completion of filing of nominations for the upcoming three-tier panchayat elections, political parties are now fine-tuning their strategy to attract the voters in their favour.

While the election to the Zilla Parishad members would be fought with party symbols, the poll for sarpanches, samiti members and ward members would be held without it. However, the political parties have fielded their affiliated candidates for the posts of sarpanch, samiti member and ward member to consolidate their bases at the grassroots.

As the State Election Commissioner (SEC) has put restrictions on meetings and rallies for the panchayat elections due to the prevailing Covid-19 situation, political parties are gearing up to hold door-to-door campaign and use the digital platform to reach out to voters, sources said.

The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) had won 20 Zilla Parishad seats out of the total 30 in Khurda district in the last rural polls in 2017. The candidates of BJP came victorious in 10 seats while the Congress party could not win a single seat in the Zilla Parishad.

This time, the BJD is trying its best to do better in the Zilla Parishad election. This apart, the party is keen to secure most of the posts of sarpanch, samiti member and ward member in favour of its affiliated candidates.

BJD leaders are quite hopeful of doing well in the rural polls due to the good work of party supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Patnaik has recently urged BJD leaders and workers to highlight the



achievements of the state government during campaign for the rural polls. He also asked party leaders to counter the false propaganda of the opposition parties.

BJD Khurda district president Bibhuti Balabantaray Khurda MLA Jyotirindra Nath Mitra and Begunia MLA Rajendra Kumar Sahoo are leaving no stone unturned to ensure victory for BJD candidates, sources said.

The party had initiated its preparation for the rural polls around a month ago. It has formed a few dedicated teams for each panchayat to garner people's support.

"The Naveen Patnaik government has introduced many welfare schemes in the state. The BSKY

smart health card and financial assistance to the women self-help groups will certainly help the party in panchayat elections. The party also fielded around 50 per cent women candidates for the rural polls. We are hopeful of winning all Zilla Parishad seats in Khurda," said a BJD leader.

However, political observers are of the opinion that infighting among some local leaders may affect BJD's poll performance.

On the other hand, the Opposition BJP and Congress are trying to highlight various local issues to attract voters towards them. Khurda district Congress president and Jatni MLA Suresh Kumar Routray and party leaders Pruthwi Ballav Patnaik and Pradip Swain are spearheading the grand old party's campaign.

The BJP candidates are banking on the support base of Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi to fight the elections. The saffron party is facing a tough situation to either retain its earlier position or improve its tally in the upcoming election, sources said.

## Pandiabili villagers threaten to boycott polls

Villagers of Pandiabili under Jatni block of Khurda district have threatened to boycott the three-tier panchayat elections, scheduled to be conducted in five phases from February 16 and 24. The villagers alleged that the administration has failed to construct a bridge over Rajua river to facilitate all-weather road communication to Pandiabili. "We usually depend upon boats to cross the river during the rainy season. We have urged the district administration time and again to construct a bridge over Rajua river and facilitate all-weather road communication to our village. But, all our requests have fallen on deaf ears," said Omm Prakash Badajena, a villager. The villagers claimed that they have conveyed their decision to boycott the panchayat polls to the district Collector. "We have informed the administration that we will boycott the elections if no step is taken to fulfill our demands," said Jivan Baliarsingh, another villager.

# Odisha pays tribute to Netaji, Sai



CM Naveen Patnaik pays floral tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 23:** Odisha paid rich tributes to National Icons Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Veer Surendra Sai on their birth anniversaries Sunday by organising different events.

Bose was born in Cuttack January 23, 1897, while Sai was born in Khinda in Sambalpur district this day in 1809.

Paying homage to the freedom fighters, Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal tweeted, "Humble tribute to legendary freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose on his birth anniversary. Netaji's extraordinary grit and patriotism will continue to inspire generations of Indians."

"Sai will remain in hearts of people for all time to come for great sacrifice and struggle for Independence. His deep patriotism will remain as inspiration for

**My tribute to worthy son of Mother India and great freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Odisha soil had given him the mantra of 'Seva & Sangram' (service and struggle). His strong leadership, incomparable patriotism will remain in hearts of all for all the time**

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

countrymen," he said in another Twitter post.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also paid tributes to the two icons. "My tribute to worthy son of Mother India and great freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Odisha soil had given him the mantra of 'Seva & Sangram' (service and struggle). His strong leadership, incomparable patriotism



Speaker SN Patro, along with others, pays homage to Veer Surendra Sai

will remain in hearts of all for all the time," he tweeted.

In another post, he said, "My tribute to eminent freedom fighter Veer Surendra Sai. His indomitable spirit and sacrifice for the protection of interest of the tribal and general public and armed struggle against British Raj will continue to inspire people."

Several programmes were organised at Netaji Birthplace Museum, Janakinath Bhavan in

Odia Bazaar in Cuttack with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols.

People from different walks of life thronged the museum to pay respect to him, garlanding his statue and raising 'Netaji Amar Rahe' slogan.

Odisha Lalit Kala Academy organised a special exhibition, displaying various clay and wooden idols of Netaji. Eminent sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik created a seven-foot-high sculpture of India Gate and Netaji statue on Puri beach.

# Centre to promote use of drones in agriculture

**THE DRONE OPERATIONS ARE BEING PERMITTED BY THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (MOCA) AND DGCA THROUGH THE CONDITIONAL EXEMPTION ROUTE**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** In a major boost to promote precision farming in India, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has issued guidelines to make drone technology affordable to the stakeholders of this sector.

The guidelines of 'Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization' (SMAM) have been amended, which envisages granting upto 100 per cent of the cost of agriculture drone or ₹10 lakh, whichever is less, as grant for purchase of drones by the Farm Machinery Training and Testing Institutes, ICAR institutes, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and state agriculture universities

## PROPPING UP PRECISION FARMING



THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND GRANTS WOULD BE AVAILABLE UNTIL MARCH 31, 2023

for taking up large scale demonstrations of this technology on the farmers' fields.

The Farmers Producers Organisations (FPOs) would be eligible to receive grants up to 75 per cent of the agriculture drone cost for its demonstrations on the farmers' fields, a release from the Ministry of Agriculture said.

A contingency expenditure of ₹6,000 per hectare would be provided to implementing agencies that do not want to purchase drones but will hire them for demonstra-

tions from custom hiring centres (CHCs), hi-tech hubs, drone manufacturers and start-ups.

The contingent expenditure to implementing agencies that purchase drones for drone demonstrations would be limited to ₹3,000 per hectare. The financial assistance and grants would be available until March 31, 2023.

In order to provide agricultural services through drone application, 40 per cent of the basic cost of drone and its attachments or ₹4 lakh, whichever less would be

available as financial assistance for drone purchase by existing CHCs, which are set up by Cooperative Society of Farmers, FPOs and rural entrepreneurs.

The new CHCs or the hi-tech hubs that will be established by the Cooperative Societies of Farmers, FPOs and rural entrepreneurs with financial assistance from SMAM, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana or any other schemes can also include drone as one of the machines along with other agricultural machines

in the projects of CHCs/hi-tech hubs, the release said.

Agriculture graduates establishing CHCs would be eligible to receive 50 per cent of the basic cost of the drone and its attachments or up to ₹5 lakh in grant support for drone purchases.

Rural entrepreneurs should have passed class 10 examination or its equivalent from a recognised board and should have a remote pilot licence from an institute specified by the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) or from any authorised remote pilot training organisation.

The drone operations are being permitted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and DGCA through the conditional exemption route.

MoCA has published Drone Rules 2021 vide GSR No 589(E) dated August 25, 2021, to regulate the use and operation of drones in India. The Agriculture and Farmers Welfare department has also brought out standard operating procedures for use of drone application with pesticides for crop protection in agricultural, forestry, non-cropped areas, etc and for drone application in spraying for soil and crop nutrients.



# ‘Bengali’ looters fester lawlessness in Capital

THE MISCREANTS ARE BEING REPORTED TO HAVE COMMUNICATED IN BENGALI WITH THE VICTIMS DURING THEIR CRIME, LEADING TO THE SUSPICION ABOUT THE GANG’S PLACE OF ORIGIN BEING WEST BENGAL



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 22:** The Capital city has turned a happy hunting ground for individuals and groups engaged in various criminal activities, raising eyebrows on the law and order situation in the City. Information recently released by the Commissionerate Police has revealed that Bhubaneswar has witnessed a significant rise in theft and snatching cases last year.

Recently, a gang of looters, reportedly from neighbouring West Bengal, have been targeting single shops at isolated spots in City. The gang members have looted two medicine shops here using unique modus operandi.

First, some of the gang members would reach the medicine shops under the pretext of buying some medicines or food tonics. Then they would make such situations forcing the shopkeeper to leave his place. The other members of the group would then rush

**We have initiated coordinated efforts to arrest the miscreants. A team comprising officers from three police stations in the Capital city is investigating into the complaints and soon the gang will be behind bars**

UMASHANKAR DASH | DCP, BHUBANESWAR

to medicine store and decamp with cash taking advantage of the owner's absence.

Recently, two medicine shops at Nayapalli and Rabi Talkies areas were looted in similar fashion by the Bengali group. Sources claimed that one person came to the shop near Rabi Talkies and asked the owner to give a Betadine bottle. He deliberately gave him ₹2,000 note which the shop keeper returned as he did not have change.

Later, another person who bought medicines worth ₹200 paid the amount in ₹10 denominations. However, the shop keeper found the buyer had given ₹170 instead of ₹200.

Subsequently, he followed the person to get rest of the amount. Taking advantage of the situation, one accused decamped with more than ₹36,000 from showcase drawer.

Similarly, a member of the group who went to a shop at Indradhanu market in Nayapalli area asked the owner to give a Horlics packet. When the owner gave him the packet, he suddenly ran away with the item. The owner started chasing the accused leaving the shop. Later, another gang member stole around ₹50,000 and fled the place.

All their activities have been captured in CCTV footages installed at the shop too.

The individuals are being reported to have communicated in Bengali language with the victims during their crime. This has led to the suspicion about the gang's place of origin being West Bengal. The commissionerate police have been actively tracing these miscreants. However, the efforts have so far been futile so far.

Speaking to **Orissa POST**, Bhubaneswar DCP Umashankar Dash said, "We have initiated co-ordinated efforts to arrest the miscreants. A team comprising officers from three police stations in the Capital city is investigating into the complaints and soon the gang will be behind bars."



Students of a dance academy in Bhubaneswar practicing for a dance performance ahead of the Republic Day celebrations at IG Park, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## Absconding killer held after 3 years

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Commissionerate Police Sunday finally arrested an absconding accused who, along with several others, had hacked a youth to death at Rangamatia under Mancheswar police limits here September 10, 2019. The accused was identified as Abhijit Chami alias Papu, 25, of Rangamatia Uparsahi, in Mancheswar. Sources revealed that Papu had attacked attacked Deepak Kumar Behera alias Nanda with sharp weapons when the later was shutting down his eatery at DHPL Home square near Rangamatia at around 8.30 pm September 10, 2019. The cops managed to nab Papu Thursday from his hideout after three years. He was Sunday produced before that sent him to judicial custody.

## RPF with big stick against criminals in stations, trains

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 23:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of the East Coast Railway (ECoR) ran its machinery full throttle for special drive against offenders during train journey and in Railway premises throughout the year 2021. Strict actions were taken against the violators of Railway Rules, as part of which 1,829 offenders were arrested.

During 2021, the RPF arrested 370 criminals involved in various criminal activities at stations, rail premises and during train journey and handed over to the Government Railway Police (GRP) for further action as per law and order. Apart from this, 102 criminals were apprehended including 57 luggage lifters, 33 gold ornament and mobile snatchers, 2 pick pockets, 6 offenders involved in crime against women, and 4 human traffickers.

Similarly, RPF arrested 106 touts involved in cyber crime including unauthorised booking of train tickets. RPF also deactivated 981 fake IDs and seized train tickets worth Rs 53.82 lakh.

Apart from this, 140 criminals were also arrested in 86 cases for transporting contraband items in trains. Contrabands worth around Rs 95 Lakh were also seized. These apart, 8,138 persons were arrested for violating Railway rules and fines to the tune of Rs 18.40 lakh were realised. As many as, 370 individuals were arrested combating of crime affecting Railway property. In 182 cases, Railway property worth Rs 43.97 lakh were realised.

Marching ahead towards safety and security of train passengers, RPF ECoR has escorted 30,156 Mail/Express Trains by utilising 1,10,860 manpower. During the escorting of trains, RPF have rescued 314 passengers that include



**The RPF is always on job to aware passengers on safe train journey, apart from cleanliness, rescue of children and women, and retrieving left behind luggage among others**

minor children, women and senior citizens. Apart from this, RPF have retrieved 518 left behind luggage cases valued worth Rs 2.93 Crore and have handed over to the concerned passengers with proper acknowledgement and verification.

In the project 'Meri Saheli', 68 trains in ECoR jurisdiction (18 of

## Mayurbhanj officers to wear black badges against Tudu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Baripada, Jan 23:** All state government employees including Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) officers working in Mayurbhanj district Sunday resolved to wear black badges demanding action against Union Minister Bishweswar Tudu for allegedly assaulting two officers recently.

The officials will launch a black badge protest from Monday till Wednesday to protest the alleged attack by the Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti on the deputy director of planning board Ashwini Mallik and assistant director Debashis Mohapatra. Both of them were injured and Mohapatra fractured his hand in the alleged attack by the minister January 21. Both the officers were admitted to PRM Medical College and Hospital in Baripada.

OAS association's Mayurbhanj district president RN Mohanty and other associations in separate resolutions have decided to launch black badge agitation against the minister, an official said.

Tudu, however, rejected all the allegations and clarified that he has not assaulted any officer though he invited them for a review meeting. "I could not hold the meeting as I was busy in panchayat poll works. The allegations are being made to malign me and my party ahead of the panchayat elections," the Union Minister said.

Meanwhile, the ruling BJD's Mayurbhanj district president and Odisha Minister Sudam Marandi demanded immediate dismissal of Tudu from the Union Council of Ministers for his "unruly" behaviour towards the officers.

"We condemn the incident. Two government officials were called by the Union Minister and assaulted by him resulting in a fractured arm and other injuries requiring hospitalisation. It's unfortunate that a Union Minister indulged in hooliganism," said Krushna Nanda Mohanty BJD's Baripada president.



Congress leaders holding a meet at the Congress Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, to chalk out party's strategy ahead of panchayat elections

OP PHOTO

## Cancer treatment may inhibit immune response to Covid vax

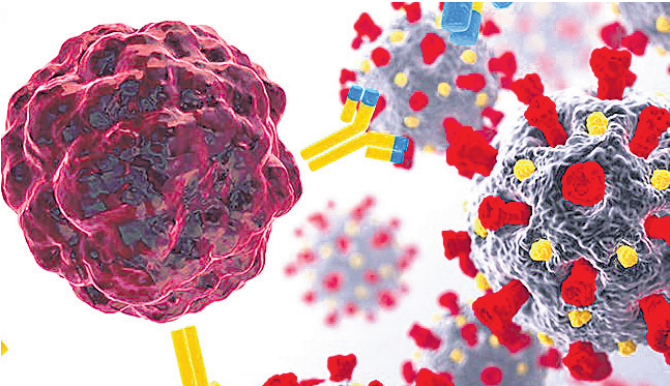
**THE WHO, IN OCTOBER LAST YEAR, RECOMMENDED THAT PEOPLE WITH WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEMS SHOULD RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL DOSE OF A COVID-19 VACCINE, DUE TO THEIR HIGHER RISK OF BREAKTHROUGH INFECTIONS AFTER STANDARD VACCINATION**

**P**atients with cancer who receive chemotherapy and some targeted therapies may mount an inadequate immune response to Covid-19 vaccination, according to a study.

Researchers at Mayo Clinic Cancer Centre have found that targeted therapies, such as CDK4/6 inhibitors, and therapies targeted at B Cells also may cut Covid vaccine response.

"It is important for patients with cancer who are receiving chemotherapy to receive a Covid-19 vaccine," said Saranya Chumsri, a Mayo Clinic hematologist and oncologist, and author of the paper.

Chumsri noted that this advice also applies to patients with cancer who are taking a CDK 4/6 inhibitors. These inhibitors are a newer class of medicines used to treat hormone-receptor-positive and HER2-



negative breast cancers. While CDK 4/6 inhibitors are not conventionally considered to be as immunosuppressive as chemotherapy, Chumsri found that patients with breast cancer who take these drugs exhibited less optimal neutralising antibody activity.

The study recommends that antibody levels be tested in these patients after vaccination, and they should consider receiving booster vaccinations for Covid-19.

The findings are published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings: Innovation, Quality, and Outcomes.

**A**bout 2 per cent of the global population is considered at increased risk of an inadequate response to a Covid-19 vaccine

**T**his includes people with blood cancers or other cancers being treated with chemotherapy, patients on dialysis, those taking medications after an organ transplant or who are taking immunosuppressive drugs for conditions including multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis

About 2 per cent of the global population is considered at increased risk of an inadequate response to a Covid-19 vaccine. This includes people with blood cancers or other cancers being treated with chemotherapy, patients on dialysis, those taking medications after an organ transplant or who are taking immunosuppressive drugs for con-

ditions including multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis.

A real-world retrospective study led by US drug maker Pfizer, involving nearly 1.2 million people, showed Covid-19 infections in the 'fully' vaccinated are rare but are more common and severe in people with weaker immune systems, which includes cancer patients.

Another study, published recently in the journal Annals of Oncology, fully vaccinated patients with cancer who had breakthrough Covid-19 infections remain at high risk for hospitalisation and death.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in October last year, recommended that people with weakened immune systems should receive an additional dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, due to their higher risk of breakthrough infections after standard vaccination. IANS

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SHORT TAKES

MESS IN VOTERS' LIST

No nomination in 22 wards of Khaira

**Khaira:** Nomination process for the upcoming panchayat polls has ended, but no candidate has filed nomination papers for ward member posts in 22 wards of 20 panchayats under Khaira block in Balasore district. All these wards are reserved seats. No nomination has been filed for two wards each in Baunsagadia and Dagarapada panchayats. The administration has not received any nomination for one ward each in Achyutpur, Aaria, Badanugaon, Dalanga, Dungura, Gadapokhari, Gaganadhuli, Jalada, Khaira, Kupari, Makhanpur, Manitiri, Nahanga, Palasa, Saraskona, Saragaon, Shyamsundarpur and Sinduria panchayats.

Sarpanch nominee in two voters' lists

**Rahama:** Subhasri Nayak, backed by the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), has filed her nomination for sarpanch in Chandipur panchayat under Tirtol block of Jagatsinghpur district. But it was alleged that her name was found in the voters' lists of two panchayats. A person, identified as Nrusinghacharan Kandi has alleged before the BDO that Subhasri's name is in the voters' list (with serial number 100 and father's name Dayanidhi Barik) of Katra panchayat while her name is also registered in the voters' list of Gobindapur panchayat (with serial number 428 and husband's name Firoz Kumar Nayak). Besides, she has a ration card in her name in Katara panchayat. The complainant has sought cancellation of her nomination. The BDO said that the issue can be taken up in court, but on basis of two names, her nomination can't be made invalid.

Man trampled to death by tusker

**Dhenkanal:** An elderly man was trampled to death by a tusker at Gopalpur village under Kapilash forest range here in the wee hours of Sunday. The deceased was identified as Fakir Nayak, 70, of the village. The incident occurred when Nayak had gone to attend nature's call to his backyard in the village. He came face to face with a tusker which had strayed into his backyard. The animal killed him on the spot. Gondia police and Kapilash forest officials took stock of the situation.

Locals demand poll deferral, stern action against officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Umerkote, Jan 23:** During correction and revision of voters' lists, names of over 400 people have been deleted in Semala panchayat under Umerkote block of Nabarangpur district. Two persons aspiring to contest the three-tier panchayat polls could not file their nominations for this reason, leading to resentment among voters in the area. According to reports, people whose names have been missing from voters' lists protested against such irregularities in front of the panchayat office. As 400 people would not be able to exercise their franchise in the polls, they have demanded postponement of the panchayat elections. During the revision of voters' lists, four new voters were added to the lists in the panchayat

Two persons aspiring to contest the three-tier panchayat polls could not file nominations, causing resentment among voters in the area

while names of 400 people were axed from the lists. Sceptical of a free and fair election in the panchayat, locals have alleged that some officials are responsible for doing such mischief. They demanded an investigation into it and sought action against the errant officials. Contacted, the BDO said that the Collector has been intimidated about the issue. The State Election Commission will decide on the next course of action, he added.

Sand mines await green nod, govt loses crores

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Anandapur, Jan 23:** The state government is losing precious revenue worth several crores, with sand quarries under this tehsil in Keonjhar district remaining closed after expiry of their lease periods. A status check of the quarries will reveal that the quarries have remained closed as the tehsil officials are yet to get environmental clearance to reopen the quarries. As a result, the state government is losing revenue worth several crores while illegal sand mining and smuggling have picked up in the area. This has happened due to the alleged apathetic attitude of the tehsil officials. It has been more than a year that the lease term of the quarries has expired but the authorities are yet to get environmental clearance for these quarries. Miners are illegally excavating



**ILLEGAL MINING RAMPANT** It has been more than a year that the lease term of the quarries has expired but the authorities are yet to get environmental clearance for these quarries. Various developmental projects implemented in the area by the government authorities even use the sand mined illegally from these quarries sand from these quarries and transporting them to various private and even government construction sites. Various developmental projects implemented in the area by the government authorities also

Blot on khaki: Cop misbehaves with village head at PS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baliapal, Jan 23:** A video of an ASI allegedly misbehaving and shoving a village chief inside a police station has gone viral on social media. The incident has been reported from Baliapal police station of Balasore district. While, the incident occurred a few days ago, the matter came to the fore after the video went viral on social media Sunday.

Baliapal IIC Parshuram Sahu has refuted the charge against him saying, "Nobody was beaten by me"

A source said that the incident took place when some villagers had gone to the police station to resolve a dispute pertaining to assault of a tribal woman by the fam-

ily members of Madhupura sarpanch over the death of a duck. It is said that the sarpanch's family had beaten the woman identified as Gal Murmu accusing her of poisoning the duck January 18. With the help of a few villagers, the tribal woman went to the police station and lodged an FIR against the brother, sister-in-law and nephew of the sarpanch in connection with the assault. Later, police had called the two

parties to the station for a discussion, but the sarpanch's family did not turn up. After waiting for hours, when the complainant asked the police personnel about the cause of delay, the ASI allegedly misbehaved with the village chief. Meanwhile, Baliapal IIC Parshuram Sahu has refuted the charge saying, "A lot of people had gathered at the station, there could be some issues. However, nobody was beaten."

Haryana cop brandishes revolver, attacks journo

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bahanaga, Jan 23:** In a shocking incident, a Haryana policeman forgot etiquettes as he threatened to kill a scribe while brandishing his service revolver at him at Khantapada police station premises in Balasore district, in the wee hours of Sunday. A team of Haryana police personnel was on a visit to Sathi village under this block to arrest a youth involved in a money siphoning case at Gurgram in the northern state. The issue was resolved after the accused police personnel SK Mangal begged apology from the scribe following intervention of Sadar SDPO. The Haryana Police team with the help of Khantapada Police raided the house of Lipu Rout at Sathi village last night. As the accused was not present during the raid, the Haryana Police

YOGA FOR HEALTH



A yoga training camp is underway at Inchudi under Remuna block of Balasore, Sunday. The camp was organised by the All Odisha Yoga Education and Research Institute

Large-scale irregularities scuttle kitchen gardens



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, Jan 23:** Large-scale irregularities have allegedly scuttled the purpose of kitchen garden programme in Bhadrak district. Funds to the tune of over ₹76 lakh have been embezzled in the implementation of the scheme, a report said. Notably, the kitchen garden programme was launched in 2018 with an aim of serving nutritious food to children in the mid-day meal (MDM) at some schools with adequate infrastructure. Saplings of banana, papaya, lemon, coconut and other vegetables had been provided to these schools with help of the agriculture, the panchayati raj and other departments. The district education officer and the block education officers were tasked to monitor the implementation of the programme. As per provision, each school was provided with a special grant of ₹5,000. The agriculture and horticulture departments had been asked to supply seeds and saplings

while other departments were asked to bear the cost of the water supply to the kitchen gardens. In some cases it was found that many schools lacking infrastructure were provided some saplings of banana and papaya. Lakhs of rupees were misappropriated through supply of seeds and saplings. Just after the launch of kitchen garden initiative, Covid pandemic forced the government to close schools and colleges, leading to suspension of mid-day meals. About two years have passed since the closure of schools. Now, only rice and some money are given to children towards mid-day meal. According to information available from the district education office, ₹76.05 lakh has been provided by the school and mass education department to 1,521 schools for kitchen gardens. MDM is being implemented in 1,774 schools in the district. Lawyer Gadadhar Dhal said that government funds are being misappropriated for lack of monitoring by the top officials.

VIMSAR dir applies for early retirement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sambalpur, Jan 23:** The director of the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) Dr Lalit Meher sought voluntary retirement, citing medical reasons. In a letter to the government, Meher said the date of his superannuation is February 28, 2023. However, along with multiple physical illnesses, he is also suffering from mental depression. In view of the health conditions, it is not possible for him to do justice to the job and continue in service, the letter said. When contacted, Meher, who joined as the director of VIMSAR in June 2020, said, "My health condition is not good and hence, I want voluntary retirement from the service." In December 2018, then director Dr Aswini Pujahari, who had hit headlines for his style of working, was sent on leave by the government following agitation by students.



Firefighters are seen struggling to douse a major fire that broke out due to electric short circuit in the wee hours of Sunday at Jeypore daily market in Koraput district. Over 70 small traders were affected by the blaze

BJD, BJP brace for tough fight in two constituencies

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, Jan 23:** Bari and Barchana Assembly constituency segments are expected to witness tough battle between the ruling BJD and the BJP candidate in the Zilla Parishad elections, political analysts asserted. Their observation for the two parties is based on the polling percentage in the last general elections. In the 2019 general elections, the total number of voters in Jajpur district had increased by 13.21 per cent as compared to that of 2014 general elections. Although, BJD could win all the seven Assembly constituencies in Jajpur in 2019, BJP gave a tough challenge to the ruling party in the district.

It was, in a sense, a warning bell for the party in power for future elections. Recently, Bari BJP legislator Biswaranjan Mallick joined the BJD camp which has further doubled the pace of electioneering in the Assembly segment. Now, analysts are of the view that the local voters may not accept party defectors, which could go against the ruling BJD. On the other hand, Amar Nayak, the BJP candidate for Barchana Assembly constituency seat, who had lost with a narrow margin, is not seen around after the 2019 general elections. Nayak was not even seen during candidate selection process for the upcoming Zilla Parishad elections. Taking advantage, BJD has been campaigning in the

JAJPUR: PANCHAYAT POLLS



segment one-sidedly. BJP was placed in the second position in Jajpur district during the last panchayat polls. BJD had then adopted populist strategies and got closer to the local voters by conducting door-to-door campaigns.



However, BJP had obtained 40.5 per cent votes in Jajpur due to anti-incumbency factor. In the last panchayat elections, the saffron party had obtained 43,828 votes in Bari block of this Assembly segment. Against which, BJD had got a total of

40,331 votes in the block. The Zilla Parishad zones No-23 and No-24 had gone to the hands of BJP and zones No-21 and No-22 had gone to the hands of BJD. Similarly in Barchana Assembly segment in 2017 panchayat polls, BJD had secured 63,266 votes, BJP 30,216 votes and Congress 27,781 votes respectively. All the five Zilla Parishad seats had gone in favour of BJD. But, BJP had emerged as second political party. Growing popularity of BJP was reflected in the 2019 general elections as the sitting Barchana MLA from BJD Amar Prasad Satapathy had secured 64,084 votes and BJP candidate Amar Nayak had obtained 62,599 votes. Hence, BJD is leaving no stones unturned now.

IN THE HON'BLE COURT OF THE MACT CUM FAMILY JUDGE AT VIZIANAGARAM M.V. O.P. NO. 344/2021

Between : ..Petitioner

Routhu Lakshmana

And : ..Respondents

Deba Kabasi and others

To

1st Respondent

Deba Kabasi S/o Suku Kabasi aged about 22 years, Driver the Bore well Lorry Bearing No. AP 28R 0118 resident of Markalguda Village, Kamwada Taluk, Malkangiri District, Orissa State.

Take notice the petitioner filed the above said MVOP 344/2021 for grant of Compensation U/s 166 of M.V Act and the same is posted to 09-02-2022 for your appearance before the above said Hon'ble Court that day in person or through your counsel by 10-30 AM without fail, if you fail to appear before the Hon'ble Court the matter will be decided to Ex- parte against you as per the orders of the Honourable Court.

Vizianagaram.

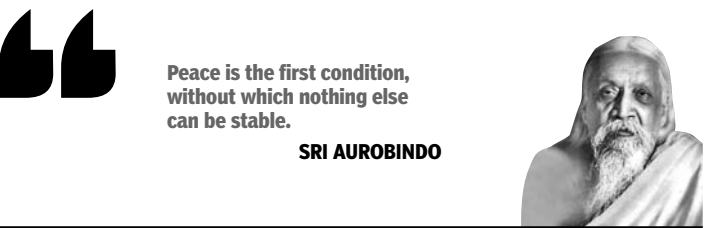
**B. SUNEEL KUMAR**

Advocate,

Vizianagaram.

Cell No. 9440375643





Ball In Motion

War as a tool for grabbing land and resources by force has been going on since time immemorial. It was the war poets during World War I who exposed the hypocrisy and hollowness of war in which soldiers' lives are used as pawns to satisfy the greed of politicians and their financiers - the corporate world. But, when war is waged to defend one's freedom or one's country against aggressors, it becomes a legitimate exercise. However, it is admitted the aggressor must have politicians and money involved behind it to commence hostilities.

Honouring the men wielding arms to protect their country and even embracing death in the process becomes a sacred duty for their countrymen. Playing politics over it, it is considered, is a sacrilege. When an impression is created that such a sin is being committed on the birth anniversary of one of the greatest patriot-warriors of India - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose - this January 23, the exercise makes people sad. In fact, the way the whole thing has been scripted makes the real intent suspect.

Had the Centre's aim been so innocent and devoid of petty politics, it would not have rejected the Republic Day parade tableaux sent by various states highlighting the country's efforts to develop and modernize. Bengal's tableau had highlighted Subhas Chandra Bose's grandeur and that was rejected too. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee vociferously protested against the rejection, but the Centre remained unmoved. Now, with the announcement of the Prime Minister to build a 28 ft high statue of Netaji and install it at the canopy near India Gate, things seem to be falling into place. Usurping other's glory too is an age old petty effort of many.

The ruling establishment of all hues often tries to portray history in the light that suits its purpose and, for this, falsification or reappraisal distorting the truth becomes a convenient method.

The BJP government appears to have been trying to rewrite history of the country's freedom struggle in a calibrated manner. The BJP cannot boast of any national hero in the liberation struggle from its own outfits. Instead, the party is often accused of spawning characters considered collaborators. Systematic attempts are being made by the BJP for quite some time to hijack iconic leaders of those times who made sterling contributions to the country's freedom struggle so as to honour them in a manner the Congress, to which they belonged, had not done. A false narrative has been dished out to create the impression that the Congress had slighted them to enhance the image of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose are being used to fulfill this objective for their purported differences with the then Congress leadership. The same 'statue politics' is being played by the BJP government in case of Netaji as has been done in regard to Sardar Patel. The purpose seems not so much to honour the two great sons of India but to make political capital out of them.

The game this time started with the snuffing out, January 21, of the eternal flame - Amar Jawan Jyoti - burning continuously for five decades at the India Gate in honour of soldiers who died for the country. The flame has ostensibly and in an unheard-of case been merged with the flame at the National War Memorial a few hundred metres away. The move sparked off a political storm with the Opposition accusing the government of attempting to rewrite history. Predictably enough, the ruling establishment scoffed at the charge. Amid the furore, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the nation a 'grand statue' of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose will be installed beneath the empty canopy at India Gate. Originally, a statue of King George V was placed under the canopy in 1936 till it was removed in 1968. The Amar Jawan Jyoti was put up in 1972 to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war which led to the creation of Bangladesh. That was a singular feat achieved by the bravery and valor of the Indian armed forces and its superb commanders albeit during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government. The BJP government set up the National War Memorial (NWM) a few metres away from India Gate with the plea that it is in honour of all soldiers dying in the cause of the country, while the Amar Jawan Jyoti specifically refers to the martyrs of one particular struggle. It is increasingly becoming clear that the NWM was being eclipsed in the presence of the Amar Jawan Jyoti that revives the memories of the 1971 war and, of course, the BJP's arch foe Indira Gandhi. The NWM could not attract daily visitors in equal numbers that the Amar Jawan Jyoti had been doing. Many aged war veterans have opined that no harm would have been done had the eternal flame been allowed to burn at the same place as other countries have multiple such relics to honour their national heroes. In fact, the government did aver in 2019 the two flames would keep burning.

Had erasing a colonial past been the objective, the government should not have chosen India Gate to build Netaji's statue. Any other nearby place would have been better. Some historians say the canopy should be left empty as a reminder of India's past. It only shows the government is not only aware but probably scared of the historical value of the site which permits a historical political rival to bask in its glory and reap whatever political dividends that it may yield.

The statue politics over Netaji stands out as a mockery of the inclusive politics that Netaji championed by bringing together countrymen, irrespective of their religious beliefs and social standing, in the army he built to liberate India. Those who are trying to foist on India a monolithic, false Hindootva system are worshipping Netaji for political-electoral gains only. Undoubtedly the Congress cannot escape its share of guilt for this sordid state of affairs as it had been too miserly in giving Netaji and Patel the honours due to them in order to perpetuate dynastic politics. It left this crack to be exploited by divisive elements later.

A young Indian today, of the 21st century, may be left wondering what on earth all this hullabaloo is about. In a globalized society where children are chatting on their devices with friends from across the world, the concept of 'nationalism' itself has come into question. The mid 1900s saw the rise of nationalism and socialism. Both were put together by National Socialists or Nazis. The world discovered what a horrific idea was spawned by those two thoughts. Today a hologram statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose may move only those youth who have embraced a certain political motive. Condemning or disowning the past does not remain limited to rejecting a particular political party that may have succeeded to gain power in a democratic nation in the past. It may well engulf the nation's roots by disowning one's own parentage since that too belongs to the past. It is time for those young Indians to sit back and think how they will be perceived across the world. A nation without known parents may not be trust worthy for any one.

It is not the Congress or its leaders that built India during the past seven decades. It is the average toiling and poor Indian, with help from the taxpayer, who is responsible for everything that we see around us today. Rejecting the past would imply dishonouring every sacrifice of every Indian till today. Fortunately, politics changes and so do political parties in power. Leaders fade away, just like Indira Gandhi who, at a certain point of time, seemed undefeatable. Unfortunately, this desire to obliterate history to suit personal likes and dislikes may not remain limited to what is being done today. This could well become the way of the future. There is every possibility that whosoever comes to power tomorrow will again attempt to pervert history. The ball has been set in motion forever.

WISDOM CORNER

- There is no way to happiness - happiness is the way. THICH NHAT HANH
- Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark. RABINDRANATH TAGORE
- Let come what comes, let go what goes. See what remains. RAMANA MAHARSHI

UP WORST, KERALA BEST

FOCUS GOVERNANCE



WHAT IS ABOMINABLE IS THAT WHEN UTTAR PRADESH IS SLIDING INTO THE ECONOMIC ABYSS, THE CRIME RATE IN THE STATE HAS BEEN INCREASING

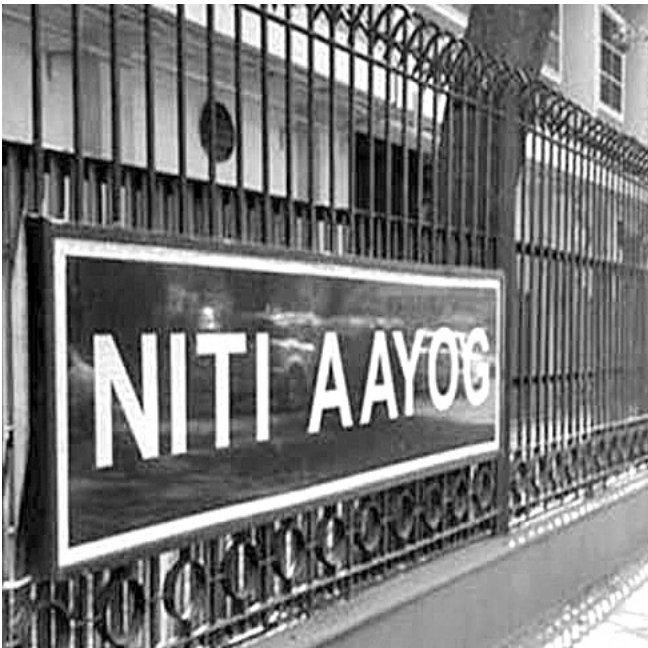
With the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections around the corner the BJP government has resorted to advertisement blitzkrieg. An attempt is being made to portray that UP has transformed under the Yogi Adityanath government. What is reprehensible is the brazen communal polarisation made to influence the electorate spurred by incendiary, hate, violent campaigns, and religious fanaticism.

Before Modi became Prime Minister, there was a lot of debate between the Gujarat model and the Kerala model. Now the Gujarat model has lost its significance and UP's double engine model is being projected as a paradigm of progress. However, if the performances of Kerala and UP are critically analysed, one can conclude that UP is the worst, while Kerala is the best.

UP has been ranked as the state with the worst governance among big states as per the latest Public Affairs Index, released in November 2021, a measure of states' governance prepared by the Bangalore-based think-tank Public Affairs Centre (PAC). UP ranked 18th, last among big states, while Gujarat secured the fifth position. Kerala has once again been ranked as the state with the best governance, a position it has held ever since PAC started publishing the index five years ago. Non-BJP states - Tamil Nadu and Telangana - being ranked just after Kerala in the list belies the double engine concept.

Similarly, according to Niti Aayog's Health Index report for 2019-2020, Kerala has again ranked as the top state in overall health parameters among larger states while UP has been ranked as the worst-performing state. This is the fourth consecutive time that Kerala has emerged at the top of the list in overall performance. Other non-BJP states - Tamil Nadu and Telangana - have emerged as the second and third best performers, respectively, on health parameters.

According to the India Justice Report (IJR) 2020, an initiative of



Now, the Gujarat model has lost its significance and Uttar Pradesh's double engine model is being projected as a paradigm of progress

Tata Trusts in collaboration with others, among 24 large, mid-sized, and smaller states, UP came at the bottom (second-worst) just ahead of Meghalaya. Maharashtra fared the best followed by Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana and Odisha. This shows that non-BJP states are performing better than BJP-ruled states.

In the Human Development Index (HDI) of 2019, among the Indian states and Union territories, Kerala tops the list while UP is ranked second-worst with a rank of 35 just ahead of Bihar which is ranked 36th.

The report on 'Household Social Consumption: Education in India as part of 75th round of NSS - from July 2017 to June 2018' provides for state-wise details of literacy rate among the persons aged seven years and above. According to the report, with 96.2 per cent literacy, Kerala has once again emerged as the most literate state in the country, while UP with 73 per

cent was placed at 18th rank.

In December 2021, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister released the report on the 'State of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in India Index'. This index is based on five pillars such as educational infrastructure, access to education, basic health, learning outcomes, and governance. In the 'small states' category, Kerala grabbed the top spot while West Bengal topped the chart in the 'large states' category. There is a huge gap between the scores of Kerala and the rest of India. Uttar Pradesh is the second-worst performer just ahead of Bihar.

The Niti Aayog's Sustainable Goals Index 2020-21 was released June 3, 2021. The index evaluates the progress of states and UTs on various parameters including health, education, gender, economic growth, institutions, climate change, and environment. Among 28 states, Kerala retained its rank as the top state followed by Himachal Pradesh and Tamil

Nadu. UP (being ranked 25th) is among the bottom five states. In 2019-20, Kerala had occupied the 9th position with a per capita income of Rs 2,45,323 against the national average of Rs 1,34,432, whereas UP with a per capita income of Rs 74,141 occupied the second-worst position (32nd), just ahead of Bihar whose per capita income was Rs 50,735.

According to the India Corruption Survey (2019) conducted by the Local Circles and Transparency International India, UP was ranked third-worst corrupt state, while Rajasthan tops the chart followed by Bihar. Kerala is one of the least corrupt states. Goa, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Haryana and Delhi are the least corrupt states.

According to the Niti Aayog's first MPI Index, Kerala (0.71 per cent) has registered the lowest poverty rate across India, while UP has third-highest poverty rate of 37.79 per cent. Kerala had the second-lowest poverty rate behind Goa as per the Tendulkar Committee report.

If the allocation of expenditure on important sectors as a proportion of the total Budget outlay is considered, UP is far behind other states in 2021-22. What is abominable is that when UP is sliding into the economic abyss, the crime rate in the state has been increasing. According to the NCRB 2020 report, UP had the highest number of murders (20,816) from 2016 to 2020. From 2017 to 2019, 58,222 cases of kidnapping have been registered in the state.

According to the National Commission for Women, 19,953 complaints of crimes against women were received from January to August this year across the country. More than half of these complaints (10,084) came from UP alone. Instead of resorting to publicity, the BJP must improve the various indicators of UP and overall standards of living of people apart from reducing criminal activities.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

SPECTRUM NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

Give wings to the girl child

Replete with immense possibilities, at the micro-level each girl child represents Mother Earth. Radiating immaculate beauty and love in whatever position, she stands by her parents, supporting and guiding them lifelong unlike her brother who may fail after marriage. "A girl child who is even a little bit educated is more conscious of family planning, health care and, in turn, her children's own education," says renowned industrialist Azim Premji.

In recent decades, the Indian mindset has undergone a shift and many couples opt for single girl child, yet historically Indian society preferred male issues with the conviction that while the daughter settles in her new home, the son shall take befitting care of all family responsibilities and the parents in advanced years. In certain communities birth of daughter was seen as a liability, rather a curse, as her marriage entailed substantial expenditure that many families could ill afford. Same rationale prevailed when it came to sending children to school; expenditure on daughters' education was considered thankless; they were also discriminated against in serving meals and providing other facilities. In turn, women

remained largely illiterate, unexposed and consequently disabled to partake in, and contribute to several development activities in mature age. Their proportion in certain sectors like top positions in corporate houses, enterprises and as public representatives still remains low.

In countryside, after reservation of seats for women as village sarpanch, at the ground level situation has hardly improved because in most such cases the husband of the woman as the de facto sarpanch performs all the functions, even the local people address him as 'sarpanch'.

Admittedly, there is no conscientious justification for marginalising half the human population and depriving the fair sex of the existing facilities and provisions ordained by Nature or states. One reason for the pariah status accorded to women is the assumption that women's income is of supplementary nature. Lower wages, less off days; they are also deprived of other benefits and perks available to men. Considering the widespread discrimination against women, on the lines of the International Girl Child Day (11 October), the Ministry of Women & Child Development initiated celebrating the National Girl Child

Day 24 January from 2008. The objective is spreading public awareness about inequities girls face in the country and to recognise the rights of the girl child. It is for the first time in Indian military that the Government of India has allowed entry of women in the armed forces via the prestigious National Defence Academy mode.

We often ignore that a girl child is a pride and the future of the nation provided she's given opportunities to grow. Empowering the girl child means empowering the future. Yet how apathetic it is that after sex detection quite many girls continue to be killed in the womb before coming to the world; female infanticide is a cruel reality. We are oblivious to what Gordon B. Hinckley said: "To save a girl child is to save generations." In fact, action against female infanticide is nothing novel. The first Governor-General India Lord William Bentinck had banned female infanticide, then prevailing in western parts of the country and declared it as a punishable crime. To tackle this heinous practice, the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act came into force. It provides for a three-year jail term with penalty of up to Rs 50,000. Unfortunately, despite rulings by the apex court and

various high courts to give teeth to the law, the courts have shown their reluctance in executing the offenders. India's overall sex ratio i.e. women per thousand men has been skewed though it improved recently, and rose to 1,000 against 1,020 women as reported in November last year.

As a boost to the girl child, governments at Centre and states have launched several schemes and the benefits are being taken by the people. These include: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (for preventing selective gender abortion, ensuring in fant survival and wellbeing of child-hood); Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, a portable scheme; Balika Samridhi Yojana; CBSE Udaan Scheme; National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education. Additionally, states like Rajasthan, Jharkhand Maharashtra, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand have schemes.

Let us bear in mind what Laurel Atherton said: "A daughter is one of the most beautiful gifts this world has to give." A world without girls is as impossible as a world without water, and blessed are the parents gifted with a girl child.

The author is a blogger and writes on spiritual, health and social issues.



Harish Barthwal ADMITTEDLY, THERE IS NO CONSCIONABLE JUSTIFICATION FOR MARGINALISING HALF THE HUMAN POPULATION

Remembering Shanti Devi

Sir, The death of eminent social activist and Padma Shri awardee Shanti Devi is a great loss for the entire humankind. She was undoubtedly a ray of hope and a voice of the poor and the underprivileged. She was known for her dedication towards the underprivileged communities and restoring peace in the Maoist-affected areas in Odisha. Shanti Devi was born April 18, 1934 in Balasore district. After getting married at the age of 17 to Gandhian follower Ratan Das she shifted to Koraput district. She had established an ashram at Gobarpallin village in Rayagada district and worked tirelessly for the development and education of tribal girls. Later, she setup an ashram for leprosy patients at Jabarguda in Padmapur block of Rayagada district and after a few years she shifted her base to Gunupur and established the Seva Samaj in 1964 for imparting education to tribal girls with an aim to make them self-reliant. Shanti Devi had worked extensively for the rehabilitation and education of orphans and destitute children. She became the President of Odisha Prohibition Congress and was also associated with a number of Gandhian organisations. She is the vice-president of Agramamee's governing body since inception. In 1994, she received Jamnalal Bajaj Award. She is also a recipient of Radhanath Rath Peace Award and many state and national-level awards. Shanti Devi is especially known for her work in the eradication of yaws, a chronic bacterial infection. She is also a former director of education and has also been active in propagating Odia culture. She was associated with the Bhoodan movement and worked with Acharya Vinoba Bhave. In 1961, she became the secretary of Utkal Navajeevan Mandal. Her lifelong efforts for the uplift of the distressed will remain an inspiration. Her contribution to social service is incomparable. She worked selflessly to remove suffering and create a healthier as well as just society. I wish peace for the departed soul.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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



of the day quote

The state Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu has no brains

**AMARINDER SINGH |**  
FORMER PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

1,000 youth would be imparted training in adventure sports every year by the state government to enable them to get employment

**MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR |**  
HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER

The BJP's micro-donation campaign will encourage the culture of public participation in politics by giving people a sense of ownership in the party

**JP NADDA |** BJP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

One held in JNU molestation case

**New Delhi:** One person who allegedly molested a female PhD student of the Jawaharlal Nehru University on campus has been arrested, a senior police official said Sunday. More details are awaited. The incident took place Monday around 11.45 p.m. when the research scholar was walking inside the campus. The student raised an alarm and shouted for help, but the accused fled from the spot by his motorcycle.

Two held for smuggling gold

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Customs Department Sunday said it has arrested two persons including a woman in connection with a gold smuggling case. The arrested woman was allegedly a part of a racket which smuggled gold through the country's northeast border.

Woman killed in elephant attack

**Raigarh:** A 67-year-old woman was trampled to death by a wild elephant at a forest near her village in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district, officials said Sunday. The incident occurred Saturday night near Champkachhar village under the Boro forest range when the deceased woman, identified as Devkumari Yadav, was returning home from her field, a forest official said. Her body was found by her family members who had launched a search after she didn't return home, he said.

Maoists blow up bridge in J'khand

**Giridih (Jharkhand):** Maoists Sunday blew up a ₹13-crore bridge on Barakar River in Jharkhand's Giridih district, just a month after its inauguration. The blast took place on the bridge between Baragada and Lurango in Dumri police station area around 2.30 AM Sunday, Giridih Sub-divisional Police Officer Anil Kumar Singh said. The foundation for the bridge was laid in 2018 under the Mukhyamanti Gram Setu Yojana and it was inaugurated a month ago.

Actor Dileep, other accused grilled

**Kochi:** Actor Dileep and others, who appeared before the Crime Branch office here Sunday in a case registered against them for allegedly threatening officials probing the sexual assault of an actress in 2017, were interrogated for 11 hours. The actor and other accused will have to appear before the Crime Branch again Monday and Tuesday at 9 am according to the directions of the Kerala High Court.



**'Vikas overflow' only for 'Humare Do'!** While our 4,00,00,000 brothers and sisters are pushed into poverty

**RAHUL GANDHI |**  
FORMER CONGRESS CHIEF

# Netaji's family seeks more than statue honour

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 23 :**With stories about his disappearance now part of popular folklore, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's family and those researching his life and work say the way to truly honour him is by following his ideology of inclusivity and secularism, and to lift the veil surrounding his demise.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday unveiled a hologram statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at India Gate on the 125th birth anniversary of the iconic freedom fighter: Bose's grand-nephew Chandra Kumar Bose urged the government to implement the freedom fighter's ideology in the country.

"Netaji cannot be honoured just by building his statue, setting up a museum, or making a tableau. A towering personality like Netaji can only be honoured by following and implementing his inclusive ideology of uniting all communities to build India that he envisioned," he said in a statement.

## Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee raised questions on why the issue of Netaji's death has not been looked into by the Centre

While it is believed that Bose died more than 70 years ago, questions regarding the circumstances of his demise -- the time, year, and location of his passing away -- are still shrouded in mystery. In fact, the TMC has demanded that the Centre declassify files on Bose's disappearance in 1945, and said that the ashes preserved at a temple in Japan, believed to be that of the freedom fighter, should be sent for DNA analysis.

Anuj Dhar, who has closely researched Bose's life and the mystery of his death and co-authored Conundrum: Subhas Bose's Life After Death, told PTI that while



The hologram statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

PTI PHOTO

the location of the statue in the heart of the national capital was a magnificent tribute to the iconic leader, it was time to unravel the mystery behind his death.

"The statue will be in the heart of Delhi and is the greatest tribute to Netaji's legacy. The cumulative findings of all that has been released so far on him is that he was the reason that India became free. We expect that in the time to come the issues surrounding his death will be addressed."

"In fact, never has the time been so good for the declassification of all the files. For the first time, both the government at the Centre and that in the state are not hostile to Netaji. They are on the same page on the issue. The TMC has also demanded the declassification of files on Netaji's disappearance in 1945 and his death," Dhar said in a statement.

Chandrachur Ghose, the author of Bose, The Untold Story of an Inconvenient Nationalist, and co-author of Conundrum: Subhas Bose's Life After Death, agrees that the installation of the statue has a symbolic importance as it is an official acknowledgment of Bose's position in the pantheon of freedom fighters.

## TN FIRECRACKER FACTORY BLAST

## SC SETS ASIDE NGT ORDER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** The Supreme Court has set aside a National Green Tribunal (NGT) order directing compensation of ₹20 lakh to the heirs of the victims of a fire-cracker factory blast in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar district last year in which 19 workers were killed.

A bench of justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari noted that the NGT proceeded ex-parte and directed the tribunal to reconsider the case afresh.

"Accordingly, in the interest of justice, we deem it appropriate to set aside the impugned judgment and order and relegate the parties before the National Green Tribunal for reconsideration of the entire matter afresh after giving an opportunity to the parties concerned, including the appellants," the bench in a recent order said.

# Govt clarifies after 'Abide With Me' hymn dropped

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23 :** The Centre decided to drop one of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymns "Abide With Me" from this year's Beating Retreat ceremony as playing more Indian tunes would be appropriate in view of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', which celebrates the 75th year of India's Independence, government sources said Sunday.

"Abide With Me", written by Scottish Anglican poet and hymnologist Henry Francis Lyte in 1847, had been part of the Beating Retreat ceremony since 1960. The Indian Army announced Saturday that it has been dropped from this year's ceremony.

The sources said that the Centre wanted to include maximum number of Indian tunes and consequently, it was decided that only Indian-origin tunes will be played at this year's ceremony January 29.

The Centre had in 2020 also planned to drop "Abide With Me"

## The Centre had in 2020 also planned to drop "Abide With Me" from the ceremony but had later retained it after an uproar

from the ceremony but had later retained it after an uproar.

For this year's ceremony, the hymn has been replaced by the popular patriotic song "Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon", which was written by Kavi Pradeep to commemorate the supreme sacrifice made by Indian soldiers during the 1962 Indo-China war.

"Ae mere watan ke logo" is an Indian tune and pays respect to all who laid their life for the safety and integrity of the nation, the sources noted."

The move to drop the hymn from this year's ceremony came days after the Centre's decision

## WINTER RAIN



Commuters hold umbrellas as they cross a road during rains in Kolkata

PTI PHOTO

## MUMBAI HIGH-RISE FIRE

## COPS REGISTER SIX ACCIDENTAL DEATH REPORTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 23:** Mumbai police have registered six accidental death reports (ADRs) in connection with the fire that broke out in a residential building in Tardeo area of central Mumbai, which claimed six lives and left 23 others injured, an official said Sunday.

The blaze had erupted Saturday around 7.30 am at Sachinam Heights, a ground-plus-20-storey building located opposite Bhatia Hospital at Gowalia Tank.



"As the fire claimed the lives of six persons, separate accidental death reports were registered at the Gamdevi police station on Saturday night," the police official said. The police are waiting for a report by the fire department as well as the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport's (BEST) electricity wing to know the exact cause of fire, although preliminary investigation has revealed that it broke out due to a power short circuit, he said.

Officials had said that the fire was extinguished nearly five hours after it broke out. Deputy Commissioner of Police Sourabh Tripathi had said that primary information indicated that the fire started on the 15th floor and spread upward to the 19th floor, which was affected the most. Following the incident, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) set up an inquiry committee.

# Ex-student leader injured in police firing in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, Jan 23:** An alleged drug trafficker was injured in police firing after he attacked law enforcers in Assam's Nagaon district, a senior officer said.

However, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma ordered a probe into the incident after the former student leader's family and opposition parties refused to accept the police's claim, and alleged that the present situation in the state is worse than that during the "secret killings" of the 1990s.

Police claimed that former Nagaon College general secretary Kirti Kamal Bora was selling drugs and he was shot in the leg after he attacked law enforcers Saturday, while AASU alleged that he had

protested to drunk policemen beating up a youth, which irked them. The Chief Minister said that Additional Chief Secretary Paban Borthakur has been entrusted with conducting an inquiry.

"Borthakur will go into the details of the incident and submit the report within seven days," he said in a statement.

"The police will act tough against criminals, but they should be friend of the common man. If any personnel or officer is found guilty, strong steps will be taken against them," Sarma added.

Bora's mother and some students staged a demonstration in front of Nagaon police station demanding a judicial inquiry and action against the police personnel involved in the firing incident.

## PROPOSED CHANGES IN IAS RULES

# Non-BJP states join uproar

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** The non-BJP governments in four states have teamed up against the Centre's proposal to amend the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954. Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have written to the Prime Minister and urged him to roll back the decision, claiming that the change in the rules for central deputation of IAS officers will affect the states' administration.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written two letters to the Centre. In her second letter she says, "I find the revised amendment proposal more draconian than the former, and indeed its very grain is against the foun-



dations of our great federal polity and the basic structure of India's Constitutional scheme."

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren too wrote to the Prime Minister expressing his concern. He said, "I have written to @PMOIndia expressing strong reservations on the proposed All

India Services cadre rule amendments by Govt of India. They promote 'unilateralism' rather than 'cooperative federalism'. I hope he will consider my request and bury the proposal at this stage itself."

The Chief Minister of Rajasthan Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel have also written letters to the Prime Minister opposing the move.

The government has defended the move and has stated that working with the Centre and state governments both will broaden officers' perspectives and will advance the mission of the all-India services. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu too have decided to oppose the changes.

# A new-look Rajpath to host Republic Day celebrations

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** Spectators arriving at the Rajpath here to witness the Republic Day celebrations January 26 (Wednesday) are all set to find the boulevard in a "new-look" as the work on the government's ambitious Central Vista Project is underway at a rapid pace.

The work on the re-development of Rajpath was going on under the Central Vista Project due to which this year, the ceremonial boulevard will look more beautiful than before.

New footpaths on the Rajpath have replaced the red sand path following which 94,600 meters of walkable roads have been created.

Also, 422 new stone benches have been installed, and 16 bridges would be built on the canals. Currently, some temporary bridges have been installed, ahead of the Republic

Day. People coming to watch the Republic Day parade would also see new sign boards.

A total of 114 modern sign boards have been installed on the Rajpath.

At the same time, 133 new light pillars will also be seen, due to which Rajpath is set to look more beautiful than before.

Over 900 lamp posts have been erected along the Rajpath between Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate. On the occasion of Republic Day, the visitors would also see photographs of some of the lesser known freedom fighters along the Rajpath, which have been prepared by over 500 artists.

These pictures have been prepared in 10 scrolls of 75 metres. Earlier, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, while talking to the media, said: "Despite the Covid pandemic,

## Delhi is currently under a heavy security cover after the intelligence agencies received inputs of a possible terror attack in the city in wake of the Republic day

almost all the work of this project has been completed. During the construction work, 25 trees were removed, 22 trees have been shifted to another place and three have been planted here."

Also, the parking facility has been increased. Now, 50 buses and 1,000 vehicles can be accommodated at the same time. The avenue will now also have four under-

passes. At the same time, a total of 162 dustbins will also be installed. Stone benches have also been made for people to sit. Apart from this, all arrangements have been made for water drainage and power lines. A total of 880 electric manholes and 611 manholes have been made. The work on the Central Vista Project is going on in a total of 85.3 hectares.

In the Project, along with the Parliament House, the residence of the Prime Minister and the Vice President are also being constructed.

The project, announced in September 2019, envisages a new triangular parliament building with a seating capacity of 900 to 1,200 MPs. Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana Sunday said that over 27,000 personnel have been deployed in the national capital in view of the Republic Day.



# Race for tickets tearing apart families

Driven with ambition, close relatives are trying to elbow out each other for a nomination in various assembly segments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 23:** In poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, family ties are going through a test as closely related candidates pull out all stops in their hunt for tickets.

Driven with ambition, close relatives are trying to elbow out each other for a nomination in various assembly segments.

One glaring case of family tussle is in Sarojini nagar assembly seat in Lucknow, where minister Swati Singh and her BJP state vice president husband Dayashankar Singh are locked in a ticket race.

Another keen tug-of-war is witnessed in Amethi, where the first and second wives of former Congress stalwart Sanjay Singh are vying for the BJP nomination.

Garima Singh, Singh's first wife, is sitting MLA of BJP from Amethi. But when Sanjay Singh defected to BJP, his present wife Amita Singh emerged as her challenger. Sanjay Singh had given up his Rajya Sabha seat before joining BJP in July

2019. Sources close to him said he is lobbying to secure nomination for Amita Singh, the former Badminton player he married after divorcing Garima Singh in 1995.

In the 2017 state election, Amita Singh, then contesting on a Congress ticket, had stood fourth in the seat.

BJP's Lok Sabha coordinator Rajesh Masala told PTI-Bhasha that party's word will be final in the choice of candidates.

"Selection of a candidate is no issue here. Whoever the party gives the ticket, their victory will be ensured," he said.

Contest for ticket has created fissure in a prominent political family in Ghazipur district too.

Kin of deceased musclem-politician Krishnanand Rai are competing with each other for the BJP ticket. Rai, a former BJP MLA from Mohammadabad, was gunned down in 2005.

Political strongman Mukhtar Ansari and Munna Bajrangji were booked in this connection. In the



subsequent bypoll, his wife Alka Rai had won the seat, and won it again in 2017 on a BJP ticket defeating Mukhtar Ansari's brother Simatullah Ansari, a Samajwadi Party leader.

Sources in the family said that Alka Rai is now trying for nomination of his son, Piyush Rai, from the seat. But Krishnanand's elder brother's son Anand Rai too has staked a claim on the seat, putting up banners in the area.

On the controversies, BJP state leader Naveen Srivastava said peo-

ple are free to seek tickets, but they will have to accept the decision of the party when it makes them.

In Bidhuna assembly seat in Auraiya district, a father and his daughter have found themselves in the opposite camps.

Sitting BJP MLA Vinay Shakya left the party to join SP along with Swami Prasad Maurya and others.

His daughter Riya Shakya opposed the decision and blamed his grandmother and uncle for the defection. Sources said she is prepar-

ing to contest against her father on a BJP ticket.

Former union home minister Ram Lal Rahi's son Suresh Rahi has been named as its candidate by the BJP from Hargoa seat in Sitapur district, while his ex-MLA elder brother Ramesh Rahi is seeking SP ticket.

Recently Congress prominent face in western UP Imran Masood switched over to the SP, while his elder brother Noman Masood embraced BSP.

Cracks have surfaced in SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav's clan too. His younger daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav, and other close relatives, Hariom Yadav and Pramod Gupta, have joined BJP leaving the Akhilesh Yadav-led SP.

Likewise in Apna Dal, Union minister of state Anupriya Patel and her mother Krishna Patel are two leading factions of party.

Former minister Swami Prasad Maurya may have walked out of BJP to join SP, but his Badaun MP daughter Sanghmitra Maurya continues to remain in the saffron party.

## Himachal on its way to provide tap water to every rural home

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** Congratulating Himachal Pradesh for providing tap water connections at 100 per cent schools and Anganwadi centres, Union Drinking Water and Sanitation Secretary Vini Mahajan said that this will help in reducing water-borne ailments among children.

"Safe water is provided to children for drinking and for cooking mid-day meals to the school administration. Also, providing water in the learning centre enables hand-washing and toilet usage, which is so important during the ongoing pandemic," Mahajan said at a review meeting of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) with Chief Secretary Ram Saubhag Singh.

"Good progress has been made by the state as it ranks 8th in the country for provision of tap connection in rural households. Efforts will be made to provide remaining tap water connections within a few months," Singh said.

When the Jal Jeevan Mission was announced August 15, 2019, only 7.62 lakh (44.19 per cent) house-



holds out of total 17.27 lakh households in the state had access to tap water supply, Singh said

"In about 28 months, 8.25 lakh households have been provided with clean tap water. The achievement made by the state is noteworthy because of Covid-19, lockdowns and difficult terrain."

Mahajan said: "Himachal Pradesh is well on track to achieve the target of providing clean tap water supply to every rural home by 2024 and the Centre is providing full assistance to the state to achieve the goal."

# India's tallest man joins SP, hopes to dwarf opponents

The former event manager, who claims to be the tallest man in India, is making his political debut with the Samajwadi Party and hopes to help it come out on the top in the upcoming state assembly elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 23:** At 8 feet and 1 inch, Dharmendra Pratap Singh from Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh has always stood out, dwarfing most others around him and leaving them awestruck.

Now, the former event manager, who claims to be the tallest man in India, is making his political debut with the Samajwadi Party and hopes to help it come out on the top in the upcoming state assembly polls.

Singh told PTI Sunday, "I will work to take the party to greater heights and dwarf the stature of my opponents. The stature of the rival political parties has already been reduced as a number of their leaders have joined the BJP"

"Whatever duties are assigned to me by the party, I will discharge them to the best of my ability. If the party asks me to campaign for SP chief Akhilesh 'bhैया', then I will go to Karhal and seek votes for him," he said.

Singh said he decided to join the SP as the party does not discriminate against anyone and takes everyone along.

Responding to a question about the SP having a pro-criminal image, Singh said, "If there are criminals



**I will work to take the party to greater heights and dwarf the stature of my opponents. The stature of the rival political parties has already been reduced as a number of their leaders have joined the BJP** DHARMENDRA PRATAP SINGH

and mafia elements in the SP, then you must specifically point them out. There are people who only spread rumours, and rumours should not be believed. Has there been any party under whose tenure there were no riots?"

Asked if he will be contesting the assembly polls, Singh said it is for the SP president to decide.

"As of now, I have just joined the party. As far as contesting the assembly elections is concerned, the decision in this regard will be taken by party chief Akhilesh ji. If he gives me a ticket, then I will definitely contest the elections," he said. He added that if the party gives him a ticket, he will prefer to contest from the Pratapgarh assembly constituency.

Singh Saturday joined the SP in Lucknow in the presence of party president Akhilesh Yadav.

The SP tweeted a photo in which

Singh, dressed in a crisp white kurta-pyjama with a grey Nehru jacket on top, is seen standing with Yadav and other party leaders.

Singh said he requires double the amount of fabric as compared to a normal person to get a kurta-pyjama stitched.

"For a kurta, I need 4.5 to 5 metres of fabric. For a pyjama, I require around 4 metres of fabric," he said.

In a tweet in Hindi Saturday, the SP said, "Expressing faith in the policies of the Samajwadi Party and the leadership of Shri Akhilesh Yadav, today Shri Dharmendra Pratap Singh of Pratapgarh joined the Samajwadi Party."

In a Facebook post, SP's chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said, "We hope that with Dharmendra Pratap Singh (46), the tallest man of India joining the party, the SP will get strengthened."

## Shimla sees season's heaviest snowfall



Tourists gather at the snow-covered Ridge during heavy snowfall in Shimla, Sunday.

PTI PHOTO

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Shimla, Jan 23:** The Himachal Pradesh capital Sunday witnessed the season's heaviest snowfall, which snapped road links but tourists made merry by hurling snowballs at one another.

"Shimla and its nearby areas have been experiencing snowfall since Saturday evening," an official of the meteorological department here told IANS.

Nearby places like Kufri and Narkanda also experienced snowfall, making the destinations more

picturesque.

As news of the snowfall spread, tourists flocked to this resort destination, known for the imperial grandeur of its buildings that were once institutions of power when the town served as the summer capital of British India.

"We have been enjoying snowfall," said Neha Gupta, a tourist from Chandigarh, who was in Shimla along with her friends.

Shimla, which saw a low of minus 0.3 degree Celsius, recorded more than 20 cm of snowfall, while Kufri recorded 62 cm of

snowfall. The snowy landscape in Shimla will stay this way for two-three days, an official of the Met Office said.

Reports said most of the upper areas in Shimla district like Jubbal, Narkanda and Kharapathar experienced moderate to heavy snow.

"High-altitude areas of Lahaul Spiti, Chamba, Kullu, Kinnaur and Shimla districts have been experiencing moderate to heavy snow," the official said. Picturesque tourist resort Manali experienced 8 cm snowfall, while

Dalhousie in Chamba district saw 62 cm snowfall. Kalpa, 250 km from the state capital, and Keylong in Lahaul and Spiti district experienced snow. These towns saw the night temperature fall to minus 2.4 degrees and minus 6.6 degrees Celsius.

Lower areas of the state like Dharamsala, Palampur, Solan, Nahan, Bilaspur, Una, Hamirpur and Mandi towns received rain, bringing down the temperature considerably. The Met Office has forecast more rain and snow in the state till Monday.

## IITian ensures mobile connectivity for his village

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** Determined to ensure children from his neighbourhood do not miss online classes, an IITian's almost 15-month struggle has paid off as his remote village in Himachal Pradesh has finally got 4G mobile connectivity thanks to a new tower in the New Year.

It all started with the March 2020 lockdown. Prior to March 2020, Ph.D scholar at IIT Bombay, Tejasvi Chauhan regularly faced problems of phone connectivity as he could not talk to his grandmother because his remote village in Himachal Pradesh had no phone connectivity. But the lockdown in that month brought him home and his problem became acute.

Chauhan could not attend his online classes. At the same time, he realised that children in his neighbourhood also had no access to online education. There were 1,000-odd students across age groups. In case of a medical emergency too, the area faced problems as there was no connectivity. The village, which is 80 km from Shimla, had no direct road connectivity till last year. People



needed a 20-minute trek to reach the Panchayat village that had a road. The problem was not restricted to just his village, Baag under Jodna Gram Panchayat of Chopal block in Shimla district, but several villages under nearby Panchayats too.

Chauhan, who is pursuing PhD in hydrology and climate change at IIT Bombay, is also one of the Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF). Announced in 2018-19, the PMRF scheme is designed for improving the quality of research in various higher educational institutions across India, including all the IITs, IISERs and IISc, Bengaluru.

He started reaching out to different people. The mobile service

providers were reluctant to invest money into another tower as there was one very nearby, as shown on the map. "But what they failed to appreciate was that there was a range in between and this ridge was taller than the tower, so villages on our side never got proper signal," Chauhan told IANS on phone.

Installing a repeater was an option but BSNL and other private companies did not budge and getting it on their own would have been illegal. One of the options was to have temporary connections as are provided during disaster management as mentioned in research papers by one of his teachers, Professor Rajkumar Pant. The

latter, however, suggested Chauhan to look for permanent solutions instead. He also put the PhD scholar in touch with IIT alumni, Sagar Sharma, a scientist with a government agency. Through Sharma, Chauhan reached out to the Ministry of Communications that has a Universal Service Obligation Fund exactly for erecting towers and getting better communication facilities to remote areas.

Chauhan then approached the Pradhan of his village and got an application signed from him. That was in August 2020. Then, he got it endorsed by the local MLA and finally went to local MP Suresh Kashyap. He took the matter up with Ministry of Communications and the tower was finally sanctioned. Then came the next set of challenges. Although the work for construction of this tower started in January 2021, logistic problems caused a lot of delay. "Sometimes, heavy snowfall in winters and frequent landslides in monsoon that broke road connectivity meant the material and equipment did not reach our village in time," the civil engineer from NIT Hamirpur said.

## Another MLA quits BJP, joins SP

Earlier, UP ministers Swami Prasad Maurya, Dara Singh Chauhan and Dharam Singh Saini had tendered their resignations and joined the SP; a number of other legislators have also quit the party recently

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 23:** Ahead of the first-phase polling in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP MLA from Agra's Fatehabad constituency, Jitendra Verma, resigned from the party and said that he has joined the Samajwadi Party.

Verma's name did not figure in the list of candidates released by the BJP for the first phase of elections. He was replaced by Chhotelal Verma. In his two-line resignation letter sent to Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh, Verma wrote, "I am resigning from the primary membership of the BJP. Kindly accept it."

Speaking to PTI, he said, "There are many reasons why I left the BJP. Even 15 days after I was denied ticket, the party leadership did not talk to me. I have joined the Samajwadi Party and I will not contest this election."

He claimed that BJP workers



and MLAs have no say in the party

"If you are not able to provide fertiliser to a farmer, what are you an MLA for? Not only me, a number of MLAs will be leaving the BJP," he said. Earlier, Uttar Pradesh ministers Swami Prasad Maurya, Dara Singh Chauhan and Dharam Singh Saini had tendered

their resignations and joined the Samajwadi Party.

A number of other legislators have also quit the party recently. They are Brijesh Prajapati (Tindwari in Banda), Roshanlal Verma (Tilhar in Shahjahanpur), Bhagwati Prasad Sagar (Bilhaur in Kanpur Nagar), Vinay Shakya (Bidhuna in Auraiya), Digvijay Narayan alias Jai Chaube (Khalilabad) Madhuri Verma (Nanpara in Bahraich) and Rakesh Rathore (Sitapur).

In the first of the seven phases, polling will be held in 58 assembly constituencies spread over 11 districts February 10.

The districts which are going to poll in the first phase are Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Gapur, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura and Agra.

The final-phase polling will be held March 7 and the results will be declared March 10.



of the day quote

The private sector plays an important role in the journey towards net zero as bulk of the emissions come from industries and it has already woken up to this reality

The "MY (Modi-Yogi) factor" in Uttar Pradesh is the guarantee for security and prosperity of the people, and good governance in the state

We will roll out the tableau during the Republic Day parade on Red Road in Bengal. You (People) will see how vibrant and creative it is, summing up the spirit of Netaji's valour and our 75th Independence. The Centre cannot absolve itself of the injustice done to Bengal by rejecting its tableau

SHORT TAKES

Three cops held for taking bribe

**New Delhi:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Sunday said that they have arrested three Delhi Police officials including Station House Officer (SHO) of Kalindi Kunj Police Station in connection with a bribery case. "Bhushan Kumar Azad, SHO of Kalindi Kunj Police Station, Head Constable Rakesh Yadav and Constable Dinesh have been arrested by us in a bribery case," said a CBI official.

EOW raids MP PWD employee's premises

**Bhopal:** The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Madhya Pradesh police Sunday raided the premises of a state government employee in an alleged disproportionate assets case. As per officials in MP police, the raid was conducted in the premises of a state government employee associated with the Public Works Department (PWD) in Rewa district to unearth disproportionate assets worth Rs 1.5 crore.

ULFA (I) refrains from calling bandh

**Guwahati:** In view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation, Paresh Barua-led ULFA (Independent) has refrained from calling bandh on Republic Day for the first time in over two decades. Welcoming the insurgent outfit's gesture, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hoped that such confidence-building measures may lead to a formal discussion between ULFA (I) and the Centre in the future.

Ex-DGP booked for 'hate speech'

**Chandigarh:** Former Director General of Police (DGP) Mohammad Mustafa, an advisor to state Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, whose wife Razia Sultana is a party's candidate, was booked Sunday for his 'hate speech' during canvassing in Malerkotla, the Muslim-dominated town. He has been booked for promoting enmity among communities.

Minor raped, 1 held

**Jamshedpur:** An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district, police said Sunday. The girl was playing with her friends when the accused, a 40-year-old man, took her to the roof of his house and allegedly raped her, they said.



The BJP in Delhi is running a false campaign in which they are sending messages to Delhi's market associations that Arvind Kejriwal is disrupting Delhi's businesses

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

DELHI RECORDS WETTEST JAN SINCE 1901

Delhi received 80 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours, making it the wettest January in the capital since 1901, data from the Safdarjung Observatory, which is considered the official marker for the city, revealed Sunday



Traffic cops get creative to spread awareness

INDIA RECORDED OVER 3.5 LAKH ROAD ACCIDENTS DURING 2020 IN WHICH 1,33,201 PEOPLE DIED AND 3,35,201 WERE INJURED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** From doing the 'moonwalk' while managing traffic to dressing up as 'Yamraj' for sensitising commuters against drinking and driving, traffic cops from across the country are using creative methods to teach road safety lessons and spread awareness. Ranjeet Singh, a traffic cop from Indore, is a fan of pop icon Michael Jackson and has been performing the singer's signature dance move while managing traffic at busy intersections since the last 17 years.

"Unfortunately, many people do not respect the traffic light. They have an impulse to jump it if there is no cop watching but once they see me performing, they stop and traffic is managed smoothly. The technique also helps whenever I'm deputed at places where we need to do crowd management," he said, adding that he has received recognition not only from his department but also multiple awards for the initiative. Sandeep Singh from Gurgaon traffic police dressed up as Yamraj, the Lord of Death in Hindu mythology, to send across a

message against drinking and driving. "Such drives are to make people aware in a dramatic way. If I explain this to someone in that attire, at least 20 people take notice. I tried this before the Covid-19 pandemic and even during the pandemic we did this for people who were stepping out during lockdowns or at places where there was overcrowding," he said. India recorded over 3.5 lakh road accidents during 2020 in which 1,33,201 people died and 3,35,201 were injured, the annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau



(NCRB) showed. The government data showed that more than 60 per

cent of road accidents were caused due to over-speeding, accounting for

75,333 deaths and 2,09,736 people being injured. "Every year, we read about how many challans are issued by traffic police but I have realised while being on roads that those who violate rules may not necessarily be wary of challans so we have to find out creative ways to convince people about the value of not only their lives but of their fellow commuters," Singh added. For Delhi Police Head Constable Sunil Sen, teachings kids is an easy job as they spread the message in their families with more impact.

'Covid peak likely in next 14 days'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** India's R-value which indicates the rate of spread of coronavirus has further reduced to 1.57 in the week from January 14-21 and the national peak of the third wave of the infection is expected to come in the next fortnight, according to a preliminary analysis by IIT Madras.

R-value indicates the number of people an infected person can spread the disease to. A pandemic is considered to end if this value goes below 1.

According to the analysis shared by IIT Madras with PTI, the R-value was recorded at 1.57 between January 14 and January 21. The number was recorded at 2.2 in the week of January 7-13 while it was 4 from January 1-6 and 2.9 from December 25-31.

The preliminary analysis was done by computational modeling by IIT Madras' Department of Mathematics and Centre of Excellence for Computational Mathematics and Data Science headed by Prof. Neellesh S Upadhye and Prof. S Sundar. According to the data, the R-value of Mumbai was 0.67, Delhi 0.98, Chennai 1.2 and Kolkata 0.56.

Explaining further, Dr Jayant Jha, Assistant Professor,



WHO to bring global system to update vax

**London:** The World Health Organisation is working to devise a central system to update Covid vaccines, much like the current process used for flu jabs, the media reported. The strategy emulates a system currently used to decide on "strain updates" for flu shots, which are updated every six months, The Telegraph reported. It is being worked together with experts from the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and other agencies including the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Department of Mathematics, IIT Madras, said the R-value of Mumbai and Kolkata shows that peak is over there and it is becoming endemic while for Delhi and Chennai it is still close to 1.

"The reason for that could be that as per the new ICMR guidelines they have removed the requirement for contact tracing and therefore there are less infections as earlier," he told PTI.

Apex health body the ICMR has issued guidelines as per which contacts of coronavirus patients

do not need testing unless identified as high-risk based on age or comorbidities.

Jha further said as per their analysis, the coronavirus peak is likely to come in the next 14 days till February 6. The earlier prediction was that the peak of the third wave is likely between February 1 and February 15. The third wave of COVID-19 is being driven by the Omicron variant. India logged 3,33,533 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, raising the tally to 3,92,37,264.

Minister's son opens fire on children playing in his farm



AGENCIES

**Bettiah (WB), Jan 23:** In a shocking incident, the son of Bihar Tourism Minister Narayan Prasad Sah allegedly opened fire on children who were found trespassing and playing on his father's farm. The incident occurred in Hardiya village of Bettiah, located in West Champaran district, where the Bihar Minister's house is located. As per sources, some youngsters were found playing cricket on the Minister's mango orchard at around 11.30 AM Sunday.

When the Minister's son Bablu Prasad and his staff went to ask the

children to clear the spot, the dispute escalated. Bablu reportedly decided to take law and order into his own hands and began to beat up the youngsters.

After attempting to assault the group, he allegedly took out his gun and opened fire, threatening to kill the trespassers. At least one of the minors has sustained bullet injuries during the incident. In retaliation, a group of villagers along with the boys reached the spot and thrashed the Minister's son and his personnel.

The tensions escalated to an extent where the angry villagers also vandalised the minister's car through stone-pelting.

Seeing the fury, all accused, including the Minister's son, fled from the spot. As per sources, the Bihar police have seized a licensed pistol and a rifle from the spot of the incident.

IN FULL SWING



Glimpses of full dress rehearsal of Republic Day Parade 2022 at Rajpath in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO



Look, who is rolling back

If one thinks that the Manmohan Singh government was the only roll-back government, you need to ponder. The Modi government is no less. It kept the Land Acquisition Act in abeyance and later dropped it altogether. The case of withdrawal of three farm laws is classic in the sense that the government first kept them in abeyance for 18 months. When the Assembly polls drew near, it suddenly decided to drop all three farm laws like a hot potato. But this is not all. It has not notified the four Labour laws which it bull-dozed during the parliament sessions held during the Covid era. Now that the political heat is troubling the ruling party, the labour laws have not been notified.

The labour laws were show-cased by the Modi government globally as a game-changer which the previous Manmohan Singh government could not undertake. Prime Minister Narendra Modi used to slam the Congress government for dragging their feet on the reform agenda. But the shocker is yet to come. Only recently, the Modi government rolled back its three decisions due to various considerations and pressures. The prime reason for rolling back three decisions is to win the Assembly polls.

No shadow on Presidential polls

Contrary to reports, the BJP will have an easy run for the ensuing Presidential polls in July this year. The Assembly elections in five states are unlikely to cause any significant turmoil on the outcome of the result. The candidate by the ruling alliance is unlikely to face any major hurdle. Of the 4120 legislators in 31 States/UT assemblies which will elect the next President, only 690 seats are going to polls. Except for Punjab, the BJP is considered to be in a comfortable

position though its number may dwindle in UP and Uttarakhand. Even if it loses the majority in UP, the BJP's number is unlikely to go down significantly. Those keeping track of the Presidential poll say that the BJP is ahead in the race by as much as 1 lakh votes out of a total electoral college of 10.98 lakh votes. Sharad Pawar, NCP Supremo who is working hard to emerge as a joint opposition candidate can turn the tables only if the BJP suffers massive setbacks in UP, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur. In Punjab the BJP is trying to find its feet as it has only three MLAs in the outgoing Assembly. The Congress' vote share in the Presidential contest is likely to be below 1.40 lakh votes while the BJP's own tally is likely to be 4.70 lakh votes. With current allies, the BJP is expected to cross the 5 lakh votes mark.

A poll sop by Modi

Strange are the ways of the Modi government's functioning. With an eye on Dalit vote bank in Punjab and elsewhere, the Union Cabinet approved the extension of the tenure of the National Commission for Safai

Karamcharis (NCSK) for three years beyond 31.3.2022 with big fanfare. The three year extension to the Commission will cost the government another Rs 43.68 crores, to be precise. This commission was created in 1993 by the Narasimha Rao government in 1993 when manual scavenging was rampant in the country and their number was large. Over the past 28 years, the number has come down drastically. According to the Cabinet's own note, the number of manual scavengers in the country are 58,098 to be precise. The Modi government also ignored the proposal to merge the Safai Karamchari commission with that of National Commission for Scheduled Caste headed by Vijay Sampla who is a former minister and Punjab leader. Secondly, the tenure of the Safai Karamchari commission is to end March 31, 2022-three month later. The Cabinet extended the tenure with an eye on Punjab polls.

Uttar Pradesh will decode a hidden message; it may have some tacit understanding with the Samajwadi Party. Though both parties decided to go their own way after a failed 2017 experiment and contesting on all the seats separately. But the poll strategy coined by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and first list released by the Congress tell a different story. Another striking feature is that Congress spokespersons were seen rather elated during TV debates over the exodus of leaders from BJP to Samajwadi Party. The Congress Twitter handle in the state released a series of tweets saying 16 have left and more in the queue as if these 16 were joining the Congress. The spokespersons completely ignored the fact that its own leader MLA Imran Masood deserted the party to join the SP. It did not condemn when another leader Lalitesh Tripathi quit to join the TMC and SP gave that seat to TMC in alliance. Perhaps, Congress is finding solace if it failed to poach any BJP leader, let the task be accomplished by the Samajwadi Party. Its leaders are refraining from attacking the SP despite many of its leaders joining Samajwadi Party.



# international

## of the day quote

For this to happen, we call on Lebanon to distance itself from internal affairs of other countries and avoid being a platform for attacking Arab and Gulf countries



**SHEIKH AHMAD NASSER AL-MOHAMMAD AL-SABAH** | FOREIGN MIN, KUWAIT

We had a talk with some TTP groups. But their conditions were such that they couldn't be agreed upon. If the TTP wants to fight, we will fight them



**SHEIKH RASHEED AHMED** | FEDERAL INTERIOR MIN, PAKISTAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as an active member of the United Nations, has always been committed to paying its membership dues on time



**MAJID TAKHT-RAVANCHI** | IRAN'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN

## SHORT TAKES

### Nepal's ex-PM Oli tests Covid +ve

**Kathmandu:** Former Nepal Prime Minister and CPN-UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli has tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently in isolation at his residence, as the Himalayan nation continues to grapple with an alarming rise in coronavirus cases. "Chairman of our party - CPN-UML, KP Sharma Oli has tested positive for COVID-19 and is taking rest at his residence in Balkot," Bishnu Rijal, Deputy Chief of the party's Central Publicity department tweeted.

### UAE bans drones for one month

**Abu Dhabi:** The United Arab Emirates has banned the use of drones for one month, days after Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a deadly drone and missile attack on Abu Dhabi. "The Ministry of Interior is currently stopping all flying operations for owners, practitioners and enthusiasts of drones, including drones and light sports aircraft," the official WAM news agency reported late Saturday. Last Monday, Houthi rebels claimed a drone and missile attack that struck oil facilities and the airport in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, killing three people, including two Indian nationals and one Pakistani.

### Talks with Taliban begin in Norway

**Oslo:** A Taliban delegation led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi Sunday started three days of talks with Western government officials and Afghan civil society representatives in Oslo amid a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. The closed-door meetings are taking place at a hotel in the snow-capped mountains above the Norwegian capital, Oslo, and the first day will see Taliban representatives meeting with women's rights activists and human rights defenders from Afghanistan and from the Afghan diaspora.

### Boats capsize in Pak; two killed

**Karachi:** Three fishing boats sank off Pakistan's coast in stormy weather, drowning at least two fishermen and causing 10 others to go missing, as navy and maritime security vessels rescued 32 fishermen, a district official said Sunday. The boats sank Saturday in the Arabian Sea near the coastal town of Ketu Bunder. A search-and-rescue operation was begun with the help of navy and maritime security boats.



Iran has a long-term and comprehensive vision of relations and cooperation with Turkey, and we welcome planning for strategic cooperation with Turkey

**EBRAHIM RAISI** | PRESIDENT, IRAN

### EX-JAPAN PM GIVEN NETAJI AWARD 2022

Former Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was conferred with the Netaji Award 2022 by Netaji Research Bureau Sunday. Consul General of Japan in Kolkata Nakamura Yutaka received the honour on behalf of Abe at a function on Netaji's 125th birth anniversary



# 'Russia planning puppet regime in Kyiv'

Britain made the accusation late Saturday, also saying Russian intelligence officers had been in contact with a number of former Ukrainian politicians as part of plans for an invasion

REUTERS

**London/Kyiv, Jan 23:** Russia will face severe economic sanctions if it installs a puppet regime in Ukraine, a senior UK minister said Sunday after Britain accused the Kremlin of seeking to install a pro-Russian leader there.

"There'll be very serious consequences if Russia takes this move to try and invade but also install a puppet regime," Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab told Sky News Sunday.

The British accusations, first made in a statement late Saturday by the foreign ministry, come at a time of high tensions between Russia and the West over Russia's massing of troops near its border with Ukraine. Moscow has insisted it has no plans to invade.

The foreign ministry said it had information the Russian government was considering former Ukrainian lawmaker Yevhen Murayev as a potential candidate to head a pro-Russian leadership.

Murayev, 45, is a pro-Russian politician who opposes Ukraine's integration with the West. According to a poll by the Razumkov's Centre think tank conducted in December 2021, he was ranked seventh among candidates for the 2024 presidential election with 6.3% support.

Murayev poured cold water on Britain's claims that Russia wants to install him as Ukraine's leader, in comments to Britain's Observer newspaper. In a Facebook post later Sunday, he called for an end to dividing Ukraine into pro-Western and pro-Russian politicians.



■ UK accuses Moscow of trying to install former Ukrainian lawmaker Yevhen Murayev

■ Murayev is a pro-Russian politician who opposes Ukraine's integration with the West

■ Russia dismisses the comments as 'disinformation' and blames US for escalating tensions

"The time of pro-Western and pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine is gone forever," he said. "Ukraine needs new politicians whose policy will be based solely on the principles of the national interests of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people."

The British foreign ministry declined to provide evidence to back its accusations. A ministry source said it was not usual practice to share intelligence matters, and the details had only been declassified after careful consideration to deter Russian aggression.

Britain, which this week supplied 2,000 missiles and a team of military trainers to Ukraine, also said it had information that Russian intelligence services were maintaining links with "numerous" former Ukrainian politicians, including senior figures with links

to ex-President Viktor Yanukovich. Yanukovich fled to Russia in 2014 after three months of protests against his rule and was sentenced in absentia to 13 years in jail on treason charges in 2019.

## German navy chief quits over remarks on Putin

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Berlin:** The head of Germany's navy has resigned following controversial remarks on the crisis in Ukraine, a defence ministry spokesman said Saturday. Kay-Achim Schoenbach said the idea that Russia wanted to invade Ukraine was "nonsense", adding that Putin deserved respect, in comments at a think-tank meeting in New Delhi



Friday. The vice-admiral would leave his post "with immediate effect" the spokesman told AFP. In a video filmed at the New Delhi meeting, Schoenbach said that what Putin wanted was "to be respected". "It's easy to give him the respect he wants, and probably deserves as well," he said. He also said that the

Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, was gone and would not come back to Ukraine. Saturday, Schoenbach made it clear that his comments did not represent the government's view and had been ill-advised.

"There is no need to quibble: it was clearly a mistake," he tweeted. In a statement later Saturday, he said he had submitted his resignation "to avoid any more damage being done to the Germany navy and above all, to the German Federal Republic".

## Protest against vax passports in Europe

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Helsinki, Jan 23:** Thousands of people gathered in European capitals Saturday to protest vaccine passports and other requirements governments have imposed in hopes of ending the coronavirus pandemic.

Marches in Paris drew hundreds of demonstrators protesting the introduction from Monday of a new Covid-19 pass. It will severely restrict the lives of those who refuse to get vaccinated by banning them from domestic flights, sports events, bars, cinemas and other leisure venues.

The Finnish government authorized local and regional authorities just before Christmas to introduce "extensive and full measures" in response to rising virus cases involving the omicron variant.

The restrictions included limiting or prohibiting events, moving university classes online, limiting restaurant service and closing venues where people have a higher risk of exposure. Restaurants and events are allowed to require vaccine passports.

Police said some 4,000 people marched Saturday through the streets of central Helsinki to protest. A group called World Wide Demonstration organized the demonstration.

## UK lawmaker claims she was sacked over her Muslim faith

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, Jan 23:** A former minister in Britain's Conservative government says she was told her Muslim faith was a reason she was fired, a claim that has deepened the rifts roiling Prime Minister Boris Johnson's governing party.

Former transport minister Nusrat Ghani told the Sunday Times that when she was demoted in 2020, a government whip said her "Muslimness" was "making colleagues uncomfortable."

She said she was told "there were concerns" that I wasn't loyal to the party as I didn't do enough to defend the party against Islamophobia allegations.

"It was very clear to me that the whips and No 10 (Downing St.) were holding me to a higher threshold of loyalty than others because of my background and faith," Ghani said.

Chief Whip Mark Spencer said he was the person Ghani was talking about, but strongly denied her allegation.

"These accusations are completely false and I consider them to



be defamatory," he wrote on Twitter. "I have never used those words attributed to me."

Several Conservative lawmakers spoke up to support Ghani. Caroline Nokes, who heads Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee, said Ghani's treatment had been "appalling" and she was brave to speak out.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi tweeted that Ghani's allegations must be "investigated properly & racism routed out." His tweet ended with the hashtag

Ghani's allegation comes after another Conservative legislator, William Wragg, accused party whips of intimidating and blackmailing members of Parliament to ensure they supported the government

"standwithNus."

When Ghani was made a minister in 2015, her boss, then Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, said it was proof the Conservatives "were a party of opportunity." But some have accused the party of failing to stamp out anti-Muslim prejudice under Johnson, who in 2018 compared women who wear face-covering veils to "letter boxes." Internal rifts in the Conservative Party have been blown open by allegations that Johnson and his staff held lockdown-flouting parties while Britain was under coronavirus restrictions.

## PERU OIL SPILL

# How Tonga eruption rang an environmental alarm

OIL SPILL IN PERU FOLLOWED THE STUNNINGLY POWERFUL ERUPTION LAST SATURDAY OF AN UNDERSEA VOLCANO NEAR THE NATION OF TONGA, UNLEASHING TSUNAMI WAVES AROUND THE PACIFIC AND AS FAR AWAY AS THE US



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Lima, Jan 23:** Peru declared an environmental emergency Saturday as an oil spill caused by freak waves from a volcanic eruption in the South Pacific keeps spreading.

With the 90-day decree, the government said it plans sustainable management of 21 beaches tarred by 6,000 barrels of oil that spilled from a tanker ship unloading at a refinery last Saturday. One aim of the decree is to bet-

ter organise the various agencies and teams working in the aftermath of the disaster, said the environment ministry.

In Peru the oil spill near Lima has fouled beaches, killed birds and harmed the fishing and

tourism industries.

The government is demanding payment of damages from the Spanish energy giant Repsol which owns the refinery.

The environment ministry said 174 hectares -- equivalent to 270 football fields -- of sea, beaches and natural reserves were affected by the spill.

Crews have been working for days to clean up the spill. But the ministry said it has issued the emergency decree now because the crude still in the water keeps spreading and now reaches 40 kilometers from the spot of the original spill.

In declaring the emergency Saturday, the environment ministry said the spill amounts to a sudden event of significant impact on the coastal marine ecosystem, which has major biological diversity. It said that over the short

term Repsol is responsible for emergency clean up operations.

Repsol has said the spill occurred because of freak waves caused by the eruption in the Pacific.

The company is arguing that it is not responsible for the spill, however, because it says the government gave no warning that there might be rough waters from that undersea blast half way across the world.

Saturday Repsol issued a statement outlining the cleanup operation by 1,350 people using big rigs, skimmers, floating containment barriers and other equipment. Repsol said it is deploying all efforts to attend to the remediation of the spill.

Last week fishermen and other local people who live off the sea and tourism staged protests over the sudden loss of their livelihood.

## Soldiers' mutiny in Burkina Faso; govt denies talk of coup

REUTERS

**Ouagadougou, Jan 23:** Sustained gunfire rang out from several military camps in Burkina Faso Sunday as mutinying soldiers demanded more government support for their fight against Islamist militants and the resignation of the army and intelligence chiefs.

The government called for calm, denying speculation on social media that the army had seized power or detained President Roch Kabore.



Heavy gunfire was first heard at the capital Ouagadougou's Sangoule Lamizana camp, which houses a prison whose inmates include soldiers involved in a failed 2015 coup attempt, as early as 5:00 am, a Reuters reporter said.

Speaking to reporters in front of the camp as soldiers fired into the air behind him, one of the mutineers issued a series of demands, including the resignations of the army chief of staff and the head of the intelligence service.

Burkina Faso's government confirmed gunfire at some military camps. Speaking on national television, Defence Minister General Bathelemy Simpore said the reasons for the gunfire was still unclear.

"The head of state has not been detained; no institution of the country has been threatened," Simpore said. "For now, we don't know their motives or what they are demanding. We are trying to get in contact with them," he said.

## COLORADO FIRE

# California wildfire triggers evacuations

REUTERS

**California, Jan 23:** A 1,500-acre fire near the coastal community of Big Sur, California triggered evacuations and closed part of a major highway, state and local officials said Saturday.

The Colorado Fire, which has been active since Friday, was 5% contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said. A 20-mile stretch of State Highway 1, a scenic north-south route on the Pacific Coast, was closed from near the beach town of Carmel-by-the-Sea to Andrew Molera State Park.

About 400 people in Monterey County were evacuated from 1,100 structures, a spokeswoman for the American Red Cross said, citing county reports.

California has long had an active wildfire season, but in recent years, fueled at least in part by climate change, it has grown longer and more punishing.

Last year, the wildfire season started unusually early amid an



ongoing drought and low reservoir levels, Cal Fire said. In January 2021 alone, the state battled 297 fires on 1,171 acres, the office said.

The Colorado Fire is the only fire listed on Cal Fire's incident list so far in 2022. This year, California is also grappling with the Santa Ana winds. A high wind warning was in effect for the area, with possible gusts of up to 70 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service.



of the day quote

Apparel industry is facing a severe problem of high cost of cotton yarn and fabrics. During the last couple of months the cotton prices have been hiked up to 80 per cent

LALIT THUKRAL | PRESIDENT, NAEC

With the hope of Covid-19 waning away soon, resumption of regular international travels and slew of activities toward business connectivity being planned and proposed by SEPC, we do intend to set a target of \$300 billion for 2022-23

SUNIL H TALATI | CHAIRMAN, SEPC

To further encourage local manufacturers, there should be a differential duty of five per cent between the parts and finished goods. This will provide the much-needed incentive to the manufacturers and help in building manufacturing base in India

ERIC BRAGANZA | PRESIDENT, CEAMA

SHORT TAKES

US tech stocks tumbling in '22

**New Delhi:** US technology stocks have been nursing a new year hangover, pushing the Nasdaq into correction territory, The Guardian reported. Momentum is building against companies with exciting promises to reshape the world, as investors turn to "value" alternatives such as oil and banking, the report said. The tech sector now faces a crunch fortnight as its biggest names report results, including Microsoft Tuesday, Tesla Wednesday and Apple Thursday. They must prove they can thrive in a post-lockdown world where the cost-of-living squeeze is leaving people with less money for tech products and services, the report said.

Mobikwik stays cautious on IPO

**New Delhi:** IPO-bound fintech firm Mobikwik is expecting to close the current financial year with 100 per cent revenue growth, a top company official said. Mobikwik chairperson and chief operating officer Upasana Taku told PTI that the company's initial public offer (IPO) is a monumental opportunity for the company and will not like to hit the market when it is behaving erratically but wait for the market condition to stabilise. The company, which posted a narrowing of loss to Rs 111.3 crore and revenue of Rs 302.25 crore in the financial year 2021. Talking about the path to profitability of the company, Taku did not mention any definite timeline but said that if the company is able to increase revenue and keep control on the cost then losses can be covered over in a few quarters.

HDFC Capital raises \$1.8bn from ADIA

**New Delhi:** India's HDFC Capital, a private equity investment manager, said on Sunday it has raised \$1.8 billion from investors, lead by a unit of sovereign wealth fund Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), for its third low-cost housing fund. This includes an upfront amount of \$1.2 billion with an additional \$600 million committed towards reinvestment of the principal amount, the company said in a statement. HDFC Capital Affordable Real Estate Fund 3 will provide long-term finance to develop about 280 million square feet of affordable and mid-income housing projects across India.



Indian economy has some bright spots and a number of very dark stains and the government should target its spending carefully so that there are no huge deficits

RAGHURAM RAJAN | FORMER GOVERNOR, RBI

Amazon lays down new terms for Future's rescue

Future and Amazon have been locked in a bitter legal tussle after the US e-commerce giant dragged Future Group to arbitration at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre, arguing that FRL had violated their contract by entering into a deal with Reliance Retail on a slump sale basis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** Put on notice to confirm capital infusion to avert a looming loan default, Amazon told Future Retail Ltd (FRL) that Samara Capital remains interested in buying out the debt-strapped retailer's businesses such as Big Bazaar for Rs 7,000 crore.

Asked by FRL's independent directors to confirm if it will infuse Rs 3,500 crore into the cash-strapped retailer to enable it to pay its lenders by the due date of January 29, Amazon wrote to them saying FRL should provide its financial details to Samara Capital for the private equity fund to conduct an expedited due diligence.

"We confirm that based on your letter dated January 21, 2022, Samara Capital has once again reiterated to us that they remain interested and committed to lead and take forward the term sheet dated June 30, 2020, signed amongst Samara, FRL and the promoters of FRL, which contemplates a purchase consideration of (Rs 7,000 crore)," Amazon said in January 22 letter to independent directors of FRL.



Samara Capital, which had in June 2020 signed a non-binding term sheet to acquire FRL's businesses remains interested for buying all retail assets of the company and has agreed to invest ₹7,000 cr to avert loan default

According to sources, Amazon is trying to facilitate the deal between Samara and FRL to protect its own investment in Future, and ensure that FRL doesn't sell its injunction assets to Reliance Retail

Notably, in December, CCI had suspended the 2019 approval for Amazon's deal to acquire a 49% stake in Future Coupons Pvt Ltd, FRL's promoter, while slapping a penalty of ₹202 crore on the e-commerce major

chase consideration of (Rs 7,000 crore)," Amazon said in January 22 letter to independent directors of FRL.

Samara Capital, which had in June 2020 signed a non-binding term sheet to acquire FRL's businesses including Big Bazaar, Easyday and Heritage, among other chains, for Rs 7,000 crore, couldn't be independently reached to confirm the offer.

Amazon, in its January 22 letter, said: "The transaction envisaged in the Samara term sheet would ensure availability of funds in FRL at the earliest, through an asset sale and an equity infusion, which would be a direct antidote to FRL's indebtedness".

The Amazon letter, a copy of which was seen by PTI, asserted that the engagement with Samara will not affect the binding nature of the injunctions passed in the Arbitration Proceedings and by Indian Courts over transfer/encumbrance of FRL's retail assets.

It said the new transaction will have the understanding that "the transaction with the Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani (Reliance Industries Limited) group (MDA Group) will not proceed and not be acted upon; and all assistance would be done through legally compliant structures".

"We understand that this entity has negligible business operations and whose parent entity Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) has received at least Rs 47,265 crore from various foreign investors. We also understand that this amount is proposed to be utilised to fund the acquisition of FRL's retail, wholesale and logistics assets," the letter said.

December gems, jewellery exports up 29% against '19

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** India's gem and jewellery exports during December 2021 grew 29.49 per cent to \$3,040.92 million (Rs 22,914.6 crore) as compared to \$2,348.44 million (Rs 16,712.46 crore) in December 2019 -- the pre-pandemic year; the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council said.



Besides, exports during April-December rose 5.8 per cent to \$29,084 million from \$27,500 during the same period of 2019.

"The holiday bounce has managed to offset part of the post-Diwali export slump when factories normally take a short break. Holiday and festive demand was robust in important trading centres such as the US, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Israel," Council Chairman Colin Shah said.

"And we have every reason to believe that this momentum will carry through the end of FY 2022, bringing us closer to the set target of \$41.67 billion in exports."

Further, exports of cut and polished diamonds in December 2021 grew by 41 per cent to \$1,770.61 million as compared to \$1,253.79 million for the same period of 2019.

During April-December 2021, cut and polished diamond exports rose by 23 per cent to \$18,007.24 million as compared to \$14,666.23 million for the same period in 2019.

Gold exports during December 2021 remained largely steady at \$778 million, the Council said.

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GROCERY STARTUPS' RAT RACE

The concerns reflect the dark side of India's booming gig economy, in which workers often say they feel shortchanged or battle tough working conditions

REUTERS

**NEW DELHI, Jan 23:** Indian grocery startups are luring tech-savvy customers with the promise of deliveries within 10 minutes, sparking a boom in "quick commerce", but heating up concerns about road safety as bike riders scramble to meet tight deadlines.

Competition is already intense in India's \$600-billion grocery retailing industry, populated by the likes of Amazon, Walmart's, Flipkart and Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance.

Now SoftBank-backed Blinkit and its rival Zepto are racing to hire staff and open stores in their bid to grab a share of the market by offering the convenience of delivery in 10 minutes, far lower than the hours, or days competitors take.

Their mission: pack groceries within a few minutes at so-called dark stores, or small warehouses in densely populated neighbourhood buildings, and send bike riders to nearby locations with about seven minutes to spare.

"It's a threat to the larger players," Ashwin Mehta, a lead IT sector analyst at India's Ambit Capital, told Reuters. "If people get used to 10 minutes, those companies offering 24-hour deliveries will be forced to reduce their timelines."

Blinkit and Zepto, started by two 19-year-old dropouts from Stanford, have caught consumers' fancy, satisfying cravings for food and impulse shopping, as well as urgent needs for daily supplies.



The unbeatable convenience of rapid deliveries is evident in Europe and the United States, where companies such as Turkey's Getir and Germany's Gorillas are expanding fast, but India's accident-prone roads make quick commerce a dangerous business.

STARTUPS SEEK FRIENDLY POLICIES

To further aid small businesses and empower entrepreneurs, the Union Budget 2022-23 should introduce additional startup-friendly policies and tax relaxations to enable spending on innovation, ease-of-doing business and reducing compliance costs, a slew of homegrown startups said



MARKET SELLOFF

Mcap of top-10 most valued firms erodes by over ₹2.53L crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** The top-10 most valued companies suffered a combined erosion of ₹2.53 lakh crore in market valuation last week, as the domestic equity benchmarks witnessed heavy selling in line with the global market rout.

Benchmark indices witnessed nearly a 4 per cent cut last week as FPIs booked profits across large-caps and select mid-caps. On a weekly basis, the Sensex lost 2,185.85 points or 3.57 per cent, while the Nifty slumped 638.60 points or 3.49 per cent.

Mirroring the lacklustre trend in the broader market, the combined market capitalisation (m-cap) of the country's top-10 firms eroded by ₹2,53,394.63 crore during last week.

Corporate major Reliance Industries' m-cap fell by ₹40,974.25 crore to ₹16,76,291.69 crore.

IT bellwethers - TCS and Infosys Technologies - together lost ₹1,09,498.10 crore from their cumulative market cap. The m-cap of TCS stood at ₹14,18,530.72 crore, while that of Infosys was at ₹7,51,144.40 crore.

Country's top lenders HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and SBI saw a cumulative erosion of ₹29,239.04 crore in their market capitalisation. HDFC Bank's valuation dipped by ₹13,563.15 crore to ₹8,42,876.13 crore.

The m-cap of State Bank of India (SBI) tanked by ₹4,863.91 crore to ₹4,48,729.47 crore and that of ICICI Bank slumped by ₹10,811.98 crore to reach ₹5,58,699.39 crore.

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) tanked by ₹9,938.77 crore to ₹5,45,622.08 crore and that of Bajaj Finance declined by ₹27,653.67 crore to ₹4,45,033.13 crore.

445 infrastructure projects show cost overrun of ₹4.4L cr



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** As many as 445 infrastructure projects, each entailing investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns totalling more than ₹4.4 lakh crore, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above. Of 1,673 such projects, 445 projects reported cost overruns and 557 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,673 projects was ₹22,23,791.78 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,64,649.18 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,40,857.40 crore (19.82% of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for December 2021 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2021 is ₹13,08,766.65 crore, which is 49.12 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

However, the number of delayed projects decreases to 420 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion. Further, for 838 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative

The report also cited state-wise lockdowns due to the pandemic as a reason for the delay in implementation of these projects

gestation period has been reported.

Out of the 557 delayed projects, 97 projects have overall delay in the range of 1-12 months, 127 projects have been delayed for 13-24 months, 217 projects for 25-60 months and 116 projects have delays of 61 months and above. The average time overrun in these 557 delayed projects is 45.69 months.

Reasons for time overruns as reported by various project implementing agencies include delay in land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and linkages.

Delay in tie-up for project financing, delay in finalisation of detailed engineering, change in scope, delay in tendering, ordering and equipment supply, and law and order problems are among the other reasons.

ANTRIX-DEVAS AGREEMENT

Devas to go on seizing Indian assets abroad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 23:** Unfazed by the Supreme Court upholding winding up of the company, shareholders of Devas Multimedia will continue to seek seizure of Indian government assets abroad to collect \$1.2 billion the firm has been awarded by arbitration tribunals for cancellation of a satellite deal but are open for talks to settle the issue, their counsel said.

"The decision by the Supreme Court does not change anything. The Modi government and the Indian courts cannot rewrite the facts. Their flimsy allegations of fraud will never stand up in courts outside of India," said Matthew D McGill, partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, and lead counsel for several Devas' shareholders.

Devas shareholders are pursuing Indian assets abroad to recover the awards and have got a French court order for freezing Indian properties in Paris and got partial rights over funds maintained by India funds in Canada.

Besides securing a freeze on a Paris property of the Indian government, they have got a Canadian



court order for seizure of about \$23 million that Air India had with IATA, the spokesperson said.

Last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that the government will use the Supreme Court ruling calling the 2005 Antrix-Devas agreement a fraud to counter seizure of its properties overseas.

"The Modi government's strategy is not rocket science. They will use the decision of the Supreme Court to uphold the NCLT liquidation order to attack Devas, around the globe, however, we're ready.

We have already entered liens or obtained seizure and garnishment orders on tens of millions of dollars in Indian state assets. We will continue to identify and seize state assets wherever we find them until India returns in good faith to the negotiating table

DEVAS MULTIMEDIA | SPOKESPERSON

Enforcement Directorate were asked to probe the deal.

Last year, Antrix approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) seeking liquidation of Devas. NCLT ordered liquidation of Devas observing that the firm appeared to have been incorporated with fraudulent intentions. Devas appealed against that before the NCLAT which in September 2021 upheld the liquidation. Devas filed an appeal before the Supreme Court which last week upheld the NCLAT order on liquidation.

Fast delivery promise, least safety contract for riders

TEN-MINUTE DELIVERY TIMES WOW ONLINE SHOPPERS  
GROWTH OF QUICK COMMERCE PRESSURES RIVALS  
ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS RISE IN RACE FOR FASTER DELIVERIES  
EXPERTS SAY BUSINESSES COULD STRUGGLE FOR PROFITS

**RISKY ROADS, DRIVERS' WOES**  
Even in cities, most roads are riddled with potholes, while cattle or other animals straying into traffic present a frequent challenge for motorists, who often violate basic rules.

Last year, the World Bank said India had a death every four minutes on its roads. Crashes kill about 150,000 people each year.

In August, Blinkit's chief executive said on Twitter that riders were not penalised and could deliver "at their own pace and rhythm," as dark stores are always near destination sites.

Delivery riders disagreed. In their rush, many of them told Reuters, they mark orders as having been delivered even before they get to the destination. And if a customer complained about the practice, they faced a penalty of 300 Indian rupees (\$4.03).



SPANIARD TO FACE SHAPOVALOV, WHO ENDED OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST ZVEREV'S RUN, IN THE LAST EIGHT STAGE OF THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN

# NADAL IN QUARTERS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Jan 23:** Rafael Nadal finally got the better of a crazy, long tie-breaker and knew he'd won half the battle.

After saving four set points and missing with the first six of his own, Nadal finally clinched a tie-breaker that lasted 28 minutes and 40 seconds to set himself on course to secure a spot in the Australian Open quarterfinals for a 14th time.

After his 7-6(16-14), 6-2, 6-2 fourth-round victory over fellow left-hander Adrian Mannarino Sunday, Nadal is potentially just three wins away from a men's record 21st Grand Slam singles title.

He later reflected on a tie-breaker where momentum swung wildly; where chants of "Let's go Rafa, Let's go!" rang out; where a point was decided on a 25-shot rally with both players scrambling at full stretch; and that ended only when Nadal volleyed from deep in the court and Mannarino's reflex reply skewed wide.

Nadal will next play Denis Shapovalov, the 22-year-old Canadian who finished off a 6-3, 7-6(7-5), 6-3 win over Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev on Margaret Court Arena less than an hour later to reach the last eight in Australia for the first time.

Women's No.1 Ash Barty advanced to the quarterfinals for the fourth straight year when she beat 20-year-old American Amanda Anisimova 6-4, 6-3.

Barty is aiming to be the first Australian woman to win her home Grand Slam title since 1978 and has gone through the first four rounds without dropping a set.

Anisimova, coming off a third-round upset over defending cham-



pion Naomi Osaka, broke Barty's opening service game of the second set — a first for the tournament — but the two-time major winner responded by taking six of the last seven games. She'll next play No. 21-seeded Jessica Pegula, who beat fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari 7-6(7-0), 6-3.

French Open champion Barbora Krejickova breezed to a 6-2, 6-2 win over two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka and is into the last eight for the third time in four Grand Slam events.

Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini completed a Grand Slam set with a 7-5, 7-6(7-4), 6-4 win over 19th-seeded Pablo Carreno Busta in the last match on Day 7.

The seventh-seeded Berrettini has now reached the quarterfinals

at all four of the tennis majors and will next play No.17 Gael Monfils, who beat Miomir Kecmanovic 7-5, 7-6(7-4), 6-3. The 35-year-old Monfils made it to the last eight for the second time in 17 trips to Melbourne Park.

Nadal, in his 17th campaign in Australia, is now tied with John Newcombe in second spot on the all-time list for most Australian Open quarterfinals, one behind Roger Federer's 15.

It's also the 35-year-old Spaniard's 45th time into the last eight at a Grand Slam tournament, which is third on the all-time list behind Federer (58) and Novak Djokovic (51).

He shares the men's record of 20 major titles with Federer and Djokovic. But he's the only one of the trio playing in this tournament.

Mannarino, who didn't finish his 4-hour, 38-minute four-set, third-round win over No.18 Aslan Karatsev until after 2 am Saturday and appeared to be hampered by an abdominal or upper leg injury, threw everything at Nadal in the opening set on Rod Laver Arena, where temperatures approached 33 Celsius (91 F).

The first set lasted 85 minutes, including the tie-breaker, but after getting early breaks in the second and third sets the match was over in 2 hours, 40 minutes.

The No. 14-seeded Shapovalov spent almost 11 hours on court through the first three rounds, winning twice in four sets and once in five, and was surprised by the relative speed of his 2-hour, 21-minute win over Zverev.

# Sindhu wins Syed Modi Int'l title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 23:** Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu eased past young compatriot Malvika Bansod in straight games to win her second women's singles title at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Sunday.

Playing in a depleted field due to multiple COVID-19 cases, top seed Sindhu hardly broke her sweat to get past Bansod 21-13, 21-16 in a lop-sided title contest. The final lasted just 35 minutes.

It was former World Champion Sindhu's second Syed Modi title after having annexed the BWF World Tour Super 300 event in 2017.

Before that, seventh seeded Indians Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto clinched the mixed doubles title with a straight game win over compatriots T Hema Nagendra Babu and Srivedya Gurazada.

Bhatnagar and Crasto inflicted a 21-16, 21-12 defeat on the unseeded Indian duo in the summit clash that ended in 29 minutes.

Earlier, the men's singles final between Arnaud Merkle and Lucas Claerbout was declared a 'No Match' after one of the finalists tested positive for COVID-19.

Eight seeds Anna Ching Yik Cheong and Teoh Mei Xing of Malaysia defeated seventh seeds Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand 21-12, 21-13 to win the women's doubles crown.

The story was same for the Indians in the men's doubles final as the sixth seeded pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnuvardhan Goud were outclassed 18-21, 15-21 by eighth seeds Man Wei Chong and Kai Wun Tee of Malaysia.

It was expected to be a lopsided women's singles match between World No.7 Sindhu and young Bansod, ranked 84th in the world, and it turned out to be exactly that. Sindhu used her vast experience and skills to great effect as Bansod



Overall, it's been a good week, good matches, so I am happy with the win. In the whole week each match was important because even though I was playing with Indians I could see good talented youngsters who are coming up and are really doing well

PV SINDHU

found it extremely difficult to adjust to her opponent's game from the onset.

The Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist took off from the word go and raced to a 7-0 lead in no time. The ace shuttler used her height and reach to great effect to increase her lead to 11-1 at the break.

After the break, Bansod tried to

up her game and collected a few points to close the gap but it was no match for a much superior Sindhu, who closed out the first game with consummate ease.

The second game, however, produced a better contest with Bansod trying her best to lift her game, and she did that too, but it was not enough to challenge Sindhu's class. Sindhu used her height to mix her smashes with pinpoint drop shots, which Bansod failed to counter as the Olympic medallist raced to a 11-4 lead at the break.

Sindhu continued in the same vein even though Bansod tried her best to forge a comeback and in the process secured four points on the trot to reduce the deficit to 17-12. Bansod managed to pick up four more points but lacked the temperament and class as Sindhu closed out the contest without any fuss.

# Raghuvanshi, Bawa, Sindhu lift India U-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Tarouba (Trinidad), Jan 23:** Angkrish Raghuvanshi (144, 120b, 22x4, 4x6) and Raj Bawa (162 n o, 108b, 14x4, 8x6) smashed centuries, while skipper Nishant Sindhu (4/19) was the wrecker-in-chief with the ball, as four-time champions India recorded a thumping 326-run win over minnows Uganda to top Group B in the U-19 World Cup here. The victory Saturday was India's largest win in tournament history.

The Hrishikesh Kanitkar-coached side thus ended the league stage with three wins in as many games, having earlier thrashed South Africa U-19 (by 45 runs) and Ireland U-19 (by 174 runs).

Put into bat, India colts first rode on hundreds from Bawa and opener Raghuvanshi to post a mammoth 406/5, the highest total in this edition. They then bundled out the opposition for a meager 79 in 19.4 overs to eke out an easy win in a lop-sided affair.

India play their quarterfinals against Bangladesh January 29.

Raghuvanshi and Bawa shared 206 runs for the third wicket to take the game away from Uganda.

India recorded their second highest score in the history of U-19 World



Cup. For the record, India's highest score in the competition remains the 425/3 set against Scotland in 2004, while Australia hold the world record score of 490/6 against Kenya in 2002.

Bawa's unbeaten 162 is now the highest individual score by an Indian in the U-19 World Cup as he surpassed Shikhar Dhawan's unbeaten 155 against Scotland in 2004.

**Brief Scores:** India U-19 406/5 (Raj Bawa 162 n o, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 144; Pascal Murungi 3/72) beat Uganda U-19 79 (Pascal Murungi 34; Nishant Sindhu 4/19, Rajvardhan Hangargekar 2/8) by 326 runs.

# Proteas hand Men in Blue a whitewash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cape Town, Jan 23:** India's formidable batting line-up was a let-down once again as they were handed an embarrassing 0-3 whitewash by a South African team in transition after falling four runs short in the third and final ODI here Sunday.

Despite half centuries by Virat Kohli (65, 83b, 5x4), Shikhar Dhawan (61, 73b, 5x4, 1x6) and Deepak Chahar (54, 34b, 5x4, 2x6), India were on the losing side for a third straight time, this time in pursuit of 288, ending a disastrous tour of the 'Rainbow Nation'.

Asked to take first strike, South Africa were all out for 287 after Quinton de Kock's (124, 130b, 12x4, 2x6) attacking hundred and Rassie van der Dussen's fluent half century (52, 59b, 4x4, 1x6). In reply, India were all out for 283 in 49.2 overs, completely mis-handling a chase that should have been completed smoothly.

Having taken two wickets with the ball, Chahar blazed away with the bat and hit five fours and two sixes, but his effort was not enough in the end.

All in all, the limited overs series turned out to be one of the most disappointing outings for India in recent years, especially after having blanked the Proteas in their backyard in 2018.



QUINTON DE KOCK

They began the tour on a rousing note, winning the opening Test by 113 runs but lost the plot thereafter, failing miserably to challenge the South Africans. It was especially for KL Rahul, who lost all four matches he captained during the tour (one Test and three ODIs).

Looking to restore some pride in their last match of the tour, India overhauled their playing XI by making as many as four changes, bringing in Suryakumar Yadav, Jayant Yadav, Deepak Chahar and Prasidh Krishna. The ones to miss out were Ravichandran Ashwin,

# Man City drop points at Southampton

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, Jan 23:** Man City dropping points, Newcastle winning a game and a drone stopping play — there were plenty of unusual occurrences in the Premier League Saturday, even if a late, late winner by Manchester United at Old Trafford felt ever so familiar.

Few could have expected City to fail to win at Southampton, with a 1-1 draw ending the leaders' 12-match winning run that stretched back to Oct. 30. City is ahead of Liverpool by 12 points but the Reds have played two games fewer, meaning there is still some life in the title race.

Before a 1-0 win at Leeds, Newcastle's only previous victory in its 23 games in all competitions this season was against Burnley December 4. Beating Leeds wasn't enough to lift the Saudi-owned northeast team out of the relegation zone, yet it might be the start of a late-season resurgence for Newcastle — especially if more signings come in before the end of January.

Most bizarre of all Saturday was the sight of players from Brentford



Aymeric Laporte celebrates his goal against Southampton, Saturday

and Wolverhampton being led off the field by the referee because a drone was hovering above the pitch in their match in west London. Play was suspended for nearly 20 minutes in a match Wolves ended up winning 2-1.

In other games, Marcus Rashford scored in the third and final minute of stoppage time to snatch a 1-0 win for United against West Ham, lifting the team to fourth place. Aston Villa won 1-0 at Everton.

Man City needed a 65th-minute header by Aymeric Laporte to earn a point at St. Mary's, after Southampton took the lead through Kyle Walker-Peters in the seventh.

Kevin De Bruyne, who supplied the cross for Laporte's goal, and substitute Gabriel Jesus hit the same post in the second half for City, for whom Raheem Sterling had a gilt-edged chance from close range saved by Fraser Forster before halftime.

Southampton's players defended stoutly after the break, just like they did when collecting a 0-0 draw at Etihad Stadium in September.

# ATLETICO SCORE LATE TO SEAL WIN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, Jan 23:** Diego Simeone sprinted toward the stands and celebrated with Atlético Madrid fans, then jogged back to the bench and dropped his hands to his knees, breathing a big sigh of relief.

Atlético had pulled off a dramatic comeback, and just like that a ton of pressure was lifted from Simeone's shoulders.

With a couple of goals two minutes apart in stoppage time, Atlético rallied from a two-goal deficit to end its poor run with a 3-2 win over Valencia in the Spanish league Saturday.

The thrilling victory ended a three-match winless streak that included elimination from the Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup — and had increased pressure on Simeone. It was only Atlético's second win in its last seven league games.

The result gives a much-needed boost to the team — and coach — and leaves the defending champions within four points of third-place Real Betis with a game in hand. Atlético remains far from the top, though, as leader Real Madrid is 13 points ahead.



Angel Correa and Luis Suarez (L) reacts after the former's goal, Saturday

Valencia opened a two-goal lead in the first half, but Atlético cut the gap with a goal by Matheus Cunha shortly after the break before Ángel Correa and Mario Hermoso scored two minutes apart early in injury time. Hermoso's winner came with the player just barely onside after a shot by Cunha.

American midfielder Yunus Musah gave Valencia the early lead in a breakaway in the 20th for his first league goal since 2020. His other two goals this season had come in the Copa del Rey. Hugo Duro increased Valencia's lead just before halftime.

Simeone's team was coming off consecutive losses to Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup semifinals and to Real Sociedad in the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey.

The crowd at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium supported Simeone by chanting his name early in the game, but there were some jeers when he replaced forward João Félix with defender Felipe early in the second half.

Valencia, winless in four straight league games, stayed in ninth place. Barcelona, 17 points off the lead in seventh place, plays at relegation-threatened Alavés Sunday.