

WORLD 5

ROCKY FEW WEEKS AHEAD FOR UK HOSPS: HEALTH SECY

MONEY 6

'CONSIDER BANKERS AS FRONTLINE WORKERS FOR BOOSTER DOSE'

SPORT 7

DJOKO HAD COVID LAST MONTH: LAWYERS

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7-phase polls in UP from Feb 10

Election in Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa on Feb 14; EC bans physical rallies till Jan 15 amid Covid surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the midst of a Covid-19 surge, the election commission (EC) on Saturday announced dates for Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Goa, Manipur, and Uttarakhand. The EC disallowed physical political rallies, roadshows, padyatras, cycle and bike rallies till January 15 when it will review the Covid situation.

Voting for the high-stakes Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections will be held in seven phases, starting from the western part of the politically crucial State on February 10 and moving eastwards. Punjab, Uttarakhand and Goa will vote on February 14 while elections in Manipur will be held on February 27 and March 3. The counting of votes for all five States will be held on March 10. Announcing the election schedule with a strong focus on digital and virtual modes of campaigning, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra

State	Phase	Nomination	Polling date
Uttar Pradesh	1	21 Jan	10 Feb
	2	28 Jan	14 Feb
	3	01 Feb	20 Feb
	4	03 Feb	23 Feb
	5	08 Feb	27 Feb
	6	11 Feb	03 Mar
	7	17 Feb	07 Mar
Uttarakhand		28 Jan	14 Feb
Punjab		28 Jan	14 Feb
Goa		28 Jan	14 Feb
Manipur		08 Feb	27 Feb
		11 Feb	03 Mar

said that no physical political rallies, nukkad sabhas, cycle and bikes rallies, and road-

shows will be allowed till January 15. "Situation to be reviewed and fresh instructions to be issued later. The Commission will not hesitate to bar parties from further rallies if Covid protocol is not followed," Chandra said. He said parties and candidates have been advised to conduct their campaigns on virtual and digital modes as much as possible.

In Uttar Pradesh, voting will take place in 58 Assembly constituencies, covering 11 western districts, out of the 403 seats in the first phase on February 10. The second phase to be held on February 14 will cover 55 seats, the third phase of voting will cover 59 seats on February 20, while the fourth phase polling will be for 60 constituencies on February 23.

Continued on Page 2

Covid surge unabated in poll-bound States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The surge in Covid-19 cases continues unabated as 6,411 more people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection and six deaths were reported in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. The silver lining during this period was that despite having 18,551 active cases, the pressure on the hospitals of the State was almost negligible as only around 300 people were

admitted in hospitals.

Uttarakhand on Saturday reported 1,560 fresh Covid cases and 270 recoveries.

Punjab reported 2,901 fresh infections on Friday while one more person succumbed to the disease, according to a medical bulletin.

Goa reported 1,432 new cases with a high test positivity rate of 21.72 per cent.

Manipur recorded 76 new Covid cases on Saturday.

Third wave to peak by Feb 15: IIT-M

On Sat, Delhi records 20,181 cases, 19% +vity; India 1.41 lakh, 3,071 Omicron cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The march of Covid-19 infection slightly slowed down in Mumbai and Delhi during the last 24 hours on Saturday, but overall the situation seems as alarming as ever.

On Saturday 1,41,986 daily infections were reported, taking the country's total caseload to 3,53,68,372, which included 3,071 Omicron variant.

Delhi on Saturday reported 20,181 fresh Covid cases, the highest single-day rise since May last year. The Capital reported 7 deaths over the last 24 hours. On Friday, Delhi reported 15,097 new cases. The test positivity rate stood at 19 per cent.

On the other hand, Mumbai on Saturday reported 20,318 cases in the last 24 hours, marginally lower than Friday's 20,971. The city logged 5 Covid-related deaths. On the whole, Maharashtra added 41,434 new Covid cases, marginally higher compared to Friday. Thirteen people died in the last 24 hours in the State. Of the total cases, 82 per cent are asymptomatic, down from 84 per cent.



Delhi Police check commuters during weekend curfew to curb spread of Covid-19 on Saturday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

However, this is just the beginning, as indicated by a preliminary analysis by IIT Madras which has predicted the peak of the third wave between February 1 and 15.

They attributed this to India's R-naught or R0 value which indicates the spread of Covid-19 was recorded at 4 this week, suggesting a very high infection transmission rate. R0 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.

Based on preliminary analysis by computational modeling done by IIT Madras, the R0 value was close to 2.9 nationally in the past week (December 25 to December 31). The number was recorded

at 4 this week (January 1-6), according to a news agency.

Dr Jayant Jha, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, IIT Madras, said R0 depends on three things — transmissibility probability, contact rate and the expected time interval in which infection can happen.

"Now, with the increase in quarantine measures or restrictions, maybe the contact rate will go down and then in that case R0 can decrease. So, based on our preliminary analysis, which is just based on the last two weeks, we can tell these numbers, but again, these numbers can change based on how much affirmative action is taken with respect to social gathering and all," he said.

World records more than 20 lakh/day Covid cases

270% rise since Omicron outbreak in S Africa in Nov

Paris: The world recorded more than two million daily coronavirus cases on average between January 1 and 7 with figures doubling in ten days, an AFP tally showed on Saturday.

An average of 2,106,118 new daily infections were reported over the seven-day period, shortly after the one million case threshold in the week of December 23-29, 2021.

New global case numbers have soared by 270 per cent

since the highly contagious Omicron variant was discovered in South Africa in late November. But Covid-related deaths were at their lowest level since October 2020, with an average of 6,237 per day recorded during January 1-7.

Although early studies suggest Omicron causes less severe illness, experts have warned the sheer volume of cases fuelled by the strain could still overwhelm health systems.

Countries around the world have reintroduced curbs and ramped up vaccination programmes in a bid to stem the spread of the virus.

Govt restores FCRA of Mother Teresa trust

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of controversy, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has restored the FCRA registration of Missionaries of Charity (MoC), the Catholic religious congregation set up by Nobel laureate Mother Teresa.

According to officials, the orders were issued on Friday evening. Last week, the Ministry issued a statement that the FCRA registration of the MoC was not renewed as "some adverse inputs were noticed". On January 7, the MoC was removed from the list of around 6,000 NGOs whose registration has ceased to exist.

Continued on Page 2

Punjab gets third DGP in 3 months

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Police on Saturday saw its third Director General with the State Government appointing senior Indian Police Service Officer Viresh Kumar Bhawra to the post. The order came just before the announcement of the dates for the Assembly elections in Punjab.

Bhawra, who was the DGP of Punjab Home Guards, replaced officiating DGP Siddharth Chatopadhyaya.

The Charanjit Singh Channi Government selected the 1987 batch officer Bhawra out of a panel of three officers shortlisted by the UPSC.

SEC favours safe conduct of panchayat polls

Govt reserves 15 ZP chief posts for women

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Election Commission (SEC) on Saturday held a discussion with State Government officials for safe conduct of the three-tier panchayat elections keeping the prevailing Covid-19 situation in mind. The high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi and attended by Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra, Special Relief Commissioner Pradeep Jena, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) RK Sharma and other top officials. "The State Government gave a presentation on the present Covid situation. A detailed discussion was held on how the safety of the



voters, representatives of political parties and polling officials can be maintained during the elections," Padhi told reporters after the meeting. Pradeep Jena said the SEC was briefed about the present Covid-19 situation. The commission would take a final decision on panchayat polls after analysing the Covid situation. "They also discussed the planning re-

quired for the initiation and completion of the booster dose administration to frontline and health workers," he added. Meanwhile, the State Government has notified the final list of reservations for the posts of Zilla Parishad Presidents in all 30 districts. As per a notification issued by the Panchayati Raj Department, 12 seats have been reserved

for SC and ST categories. Seven seats are reserved for ST candidates and five for SC candidates. The Government has reserved the ZP chief posts in Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Boudh and Bhadrak districts for the SC category while ST persons are to lead the ZPs in Kandhamal, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Rayagada and Sundargarh. Zilla Parishad President posts for other 18 districts have been earmarked for the unreserved category. Moreover, the State Government has reserved 50% of all ZP chief posts for women in the districts of Kandhamal, Kendrapada, Koraput, Khordha, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Dhenkanal, Nuapada, Puri, Balangir, Boudh, Malkangiri, Jajpur, Rayagada and Sambalpur.

581 Covid cases in BBSR

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

State capital city Bhubaneswar on Saturday registered as many as 581 Covid-19 cases, surging its total tally to 126,073. The active cases were 2,363. Out of the new cases, 499 were local contacts and 82 quarantine cases. So far, 1,103 persons have died of the virus in the city. However, 105 more patients recovered, increasing the total recoveries to 1,22,586.

State sees jump of 3,679 Covid cases

14 new Omicron infections; tally now 75

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State on Saturday reported 14 more cases of Omicron, the Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), Bhubaneswar said. With this, the total number of Omicron cases in the State jumped to 75. Meanwhile, the State on the day registered a massive increase in the Covid-19 positive cases so far in 2022 with 3,679 new infections from 29

districts and the State pool. With this, the total tally surged to 10,66,155. Among the newly-infected were 384 children in the age group of 0 to 18 years. Notably, the State had recorded 2,703 cases on Friday. Out of the new cases, 2,148 were from quarantine and 1,531 local contacts. Khordha district reported the highest 1,233 cases followed by Sundargarh with 582, Sambalpur 372, Cuttack 310, Jharsuguda 134, Puri 100, Mayurbhanj 80, Jajpur 78, Angul 55, Bargarh 48, Keonjhar 44,

Nabarangpur 44, Ganjam 42, Koraput 36, Balangir 35, Subarnapur 33, Nuapada 23, Rayagada 21, Deogarh 20, Bhadrak 18, Jagatsinghpur 17, Gajapati 15, Baleswar 14, Kalahandi 13, Kendrapada and Nayagarh 10 each, Kandhamal six, Dhenkanal five and Boudh two. Besides, 289 cases were reported from the State pool. The active cases stood at 11,663. However, no death was reported in the State on the day. So far, 10,45,971 patients have recovered in the State.

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Channelise deposits thro' UGB, depts told

DDOs asked to recover OGB loan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Department of Finance has requested all the departments to channelise Government deposits through the Utkal Grameen Bank (UGB). The shareholders of the UGB are Government of India holds (50%), State Bank of India (35%) and Government of Odisha (15%).

Due to previous orders issued on Government deposits on banks, many State-run organisations have removed funds from the UGB and deposited them in other

nationalised banks. As a result, the bank has suffered a huge negative growth. So, Director of Institutional Finance, Siddhartha Das has requested ACS, Principal Secretary and Secretaries of various departments to move Government deposits through the rural bank. The Utkal Grameen Bank (UGB) is operating in 17 districts of Odisha, in western and southern parts of the State. It has 435 branches, out of which 365 branches are functioning in rural area, catering to the needs of farming community, rural artisans and others including small entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups and small business enterprises.

In the recent past, withdrawal of Government deposits

from the UGB branches has resulted in a negative growth of Rs 200 crore as on October 31, 2021 and the bank is struggling to get deposits from the public, Das said. "In view of the above, you are requested to advise the State PSUs and State Level Autonomous Societies (SLASs) under your control to allow Utkal Grameen Bank to handle the business and deposits of SPSUs and SLASs as State Government owns 15% of the share of the bank," he said in a communication to the departments. The Finance Department has also urged the Secretaries to ask the concerned DDOs to recover loan availed by Government employees from the Odisha Gramya Bank to return it back

on time. The Odisha Gramya Bank has sanctioned clean loans of Rs 62.77 crore in 4,276 accounts under repairs to house building damaged by natural calamities to Government employees from time to time on the basis of irrevocable undertakings from the concerned DDOs to recover the monthly loan installments from the salary of the employees availing loan, Das said.

But due to non-payment of the EMIs, the loan accounts have become NPA despite the repeated follow-up by the OGB with the DDOs and employees, he said. Non recovery of loan is adversely affecting the bank's credit portfolio, which would have been utilized further for onward lending to ru-

ral sections of the society through priority sector schemes announced by the Government of Odisha. "As State Government owns 15% of the share of OGB, it is requested to advise the concerned DDOs under your control to resolve the matter with the employees who have taken loan and to assist the bank for recovery of loans sanctioned to the employees of State Government departments/undertakings," the Director said.

The shareholders of the OGB are also Government of India (50%), State Bank of India (35%) and Government of Odisha (15%). The bank is operating in 13 districts and it has 549 branches including 465 branches in rural areas.

INBRIEF

BRAHMAMPUR MP'S GENEROSITY FOR CANCER PATIENT



Paralakhemundi : Seeing the plight of one Jhunu Paik of Kandhaadava village under Karchabadi panchayat in Mohana block who was struggling to get proper treatment for her face cancer, Brahmampur MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu came to her rescue in arranging treatment. Jhunu had lost all hopes after a hospital denied using her BSKY card for treatment fund. MP Sahu spoke to Mohan Medical Officer Dr Namita Panda, who first arranged treatment at the Gajapati DHH and then at the HCH Hospital in Visakhapatnam. Sahu also reimbursed her travel cost to Visakhapatnam.

Rs 23-CR GANJA PLANTS DESTROYED IN G'PATI

Paralakhemundi : The R Udayagiri police on Saturday burnt and damaged 2.35 lakh ganja plants cultivated in an area of 117.75 acres in and around Paedikapadar village of Kirama gram panchayat under Nuagada block. The plants were grown in inaccessible hilly tracts. A joint team of police, excise, forest and revenue personnel set fire to the hemp plantation. Police said the value of the destroyed plants was Rs 23.55 crore.



Khariar Women's College holds sports meet



PNS ■ NUAPADA

The fifth annual sports event of the Khariar Degree Women's

College was held on Friday with Kalahandi University Vice-Chancellor Dr Sanjay Satapathi as chief guest. The VC encouraged the stu-

dents for greater participation in sports and cultural activities and wished them success in university level sports, which is going to be held in near future. He also discussed with the teaching staffs and members of the College Governing Body about the examination procedures. "I want the quality of education in our university should achieve high standard so that a degree of this university is highly valued," said the VC.

The event was held in the presence of college Principal Liza Acharya, Junior College Principal Sushmita Prabha Samal, President Dr Fanindam Deo, Binod Bihari Padhi, Ajit Panda and Tapan Das. The chief guest presented awards to the students who won in different events. He also discussed with students, faculties and management members and staffs about the upcoming examination centre arrangements in the college.

TPCODL dispensary for Cuttack dist



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited (TPCODL) has launched its second Mobile Health Dispensary for rural communities of Cuttack district.

The dispensary was inaugurated by Panchayati Raj Minister Pratap Jena in the presence of TPCODL CEO M Shenbagam at the company's corporate office here. The dispensary will cater to over

five lakh people of 90 gram panchayats. It has an MBBS doctor, a pharmacist and an ANM nurse. It will provide free consultation and medication to the needy. It will function for 24 days (except public holidays and Sundays) each month.

The company had launched its first mobile health dispensary in October last catering to 8000 beneficiaries of Dhenkanal and Angul districts.

3 injured in boar attack in K'pada

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

At least three persons, including a 9-year-old boy, were injured on Thursday after a wild boar attacked them at Batighar area under Jamboo Marine police station.

According to sources, while Sheikh Kasim (55) of Kochila Belari village under Batighar GP was working at his field, he was attacked by the boar leaving him critically injured. Later, the boar attacked

Rahim Khan (9) of the village, injuring his left leg. The boar entered into Batighar village and attacked Sanatan Bera (34), while he was working in his field. The trio injured was rushed to the local Batighar Primary Health Centre.

As the harvesting season is underway, the wild boars have been intruding into agriculture fields in herds and destroying the paddy crops. This has given rise to man-animal conflicts in the locality, said sources.

Remove Law Min immediately : Cong



'For remark on women'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Congress on Saturday demanded immediate ouster of Law and Panchayati Raj Minister Pratap Jena for his alleged comment on women which went viral.

PCC vice-president and former MLA Debashis Patnaik questioned how Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who champions the slogan of women's dignity and Mo Parivar, remains silent over Jena's remark towards women in a gathering of women. Of course without naming Jena, Patnaik said the Minister who

holds important portfolios in the Cabinet shrewdly got his name deleted from the charge-sheet in the Mahnaga double murder case and was condemned by local court.

Patnaik wondered how the Minister, who hails from Ganakabi Baistnab Pani's place and proclaims himself as an ex-Ravenshavian, could pass such alleged irresponsible and vulgar comments on women. He also sought the Governor's intervention in the matter.

Srikant questions Rly Div bifurcation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Union Minister Srikant Jena has questioned the way the Central Government is bifurcating the railway divisions in Odisha.

"Whereas the Railways get Rs 25,000 crore as revenue from the State annually, what is the rationale behind bifurcating the East Coast Railway Division (ECoR)," Jena asked. In a Press statement, he asked why the Waltair Division was carved out to merge in new zone in Andhra Pradesh.

Jena demanded that all the Odisha areas under the South Eastern Railway Zone be carved out and merged with the ECoR. He also questioned the stoic silence of the Odisha Government in the issue.

Navdeep Kaur to join Mrs World contest



Leaves for Las Vegas, USA

PNS ■ ROURKELA

Rourkela girl Navdeep Kaur, who had been crowned Mrs India title last year, is now all set to represent India in Mrs World 2021, which will be held in Nevada, Las Vegas, USA from January 9 to 16. Navdeep left for Las Vegas on Friday, to participate in the competition.

Naveed, a married woman of Kansbahal in Sundargarh district, had brought laurels for the district and for the State by winning the coveted Mrs India contest during

the month of January 2021. Besides winning the crown, she had become eligible to participate in Mrs World contest. The semi final and final rounds of Mrs India contest were organised at Daman from December 17 to 23, 2021. Navdeep had been short listed for final round and was among top five contestants.

She is proud mother of five year old daughter Jasleen and her husband Kamaldeep is a businessman. She holds a master's degree in business administration and is a computer science engineer. "I am truly ecstatic that I will be representing India at an international level. This is a dream come true. The competition is tough but I will give my best shot," said Navdeep.

OSDCD chief donates Rs 1.25L to SVM College



Under Mo College scheme

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

Odisha State Cashew Development Corporation [OSDCD] Chairman and a former student of the SVM College here Amarendra Das has donated Rs 1.25 lakh to the Mo College

Abhiyan scheme launched by the State Government.

Das accompanied by hundreds of students from SVM College reached at principal office and handed over a cheque to him sponsored by OSDCD.

Speaking to the students, Das lauded Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's endeavour

to connect former students to college development and requested the other alumni to donate generously. Among others, lecturers, Prasanta Behera, Jitu Prasad Mallick, Nihar Swain, Pradeep Sahoo, Aravinda Das, student leaders Tanmaya Mohapatra, Aswani Barik, Srinivas Patra, Soumya Ranjan Sahoo were present.

Road works delay : RDC (ND) holds review meet

Directs executing agencies to complete in time, maintain quality

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

RDC (ND) Dr Suresh Chandra Dalei who has joined here recently reviewed the roads under construction in the jurisdiction of the revenue division. Dr Dalei joined a meeting with the officials of the executing agencies, engineers of

the NH, NHAI and also the Collectors and ADMs of different districts.

The review included the Sambalpur-Angul, Mundali (Cuttack)-Angul, Panikoili-Rimuli and Binjaha-Keonjhar roads where works are going on in a very slow pace resulting in public resentments. At the same time, the bus and truck owners and even common people have been expressing utter dissatisfaction as they are bearing the brunt of it. Inconvenience apart, the bad roads also lead to consumption of

huge fuels resulting in loss to individuals and the nation as a whole. Even the bus owners of Cuttack decided to stop plying buses in Cuttack Sambalpur, Cuttack-Rourkela routes for indefinite period as they are unable to run their buses smoothly. But after assurance of the NHAI authorities and the administration, they dropped the agitation plan though temporarily.

It is further alleged that the NHAI and the executing agencies under it are making inordinate delay in completing the road works

and even the quality of works are being compromised to a greater extent. Roads are being repaired before completion, as is seen in many places. However, the RDC gave strict instructions to all for timely completion of works without any further delay as they have crossed all time limits. He further asked the officials present to inform him about their problems directly coming in their way for timely completing the works. He also asked them to take the proceedings of the review meeting with all seriousness.

Ahead of closure till Jan 31
Huge crowds throng Jagannath Temple

PNS ■ PURI

A huge number of devotees thronged the Jagannath Temple here to have darshan of the Holy Trinity on Saturday as the shrine would closed for public from January 10 to 31.

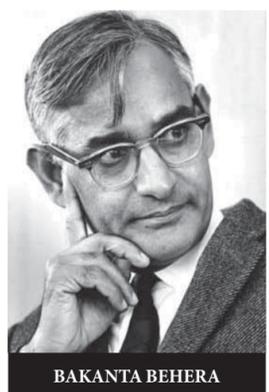
The people stood in long queues on the Grand Road and waited for their turn to have a glimpse of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra. The devotees had the last occasion on the first month of the New Year to get darshan of the Lords as the temple will remain closed from January 9 (being a Sunday) till the end of the month. Hence, they were desperate to have the glimpse of the deities. In view of the alarming spike in Covid-19 cases, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) had on Friday announced closure of the temple from January 10 to 31. Moreover as per the cur-



rent restrictions, the temple remains closed for public darshan every Sunday. On Friday, Puri Collector Samarth Verma had also said that

increasing numbers of servitors are getting infected and the decision to close the temple was taken keeping in mind the safety of both servitors and devotees.

Nobel Laureate Khorana's birth centenary today



BAKANTA BEHERA

from the Government of India, Har Govind went to study in the Liverpool University in England and later moved to the USA. He did his research in Cambridge, United Kingdom, before moving to Wisconsin, USA. There, he conducted his research and made significant contributions to molecular biology while elucidating the genetic code. Known for his vision and leadership, his research on cracking the genetic code paved the way for another technological advance, polymerase chain reaction known as PCR nowadays used to detect the Corona virus. He was awarded the second highest Padma award Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 1969. In 2018, on his 96th birth anniversary, Google honoured him with a Google doodle. Transformational scientific advances revolutionised by the scientists' par excellence like Khorana inspire students, academics and intellectuals for generations. Today on his birth centenary, every Indian, especially every student, should feel proud and inspired by him.

(Dr Behera, Gajapati Nagar, Bhubaneswar, is Senior Consultant Psychiatrist-UK)

Sundarpada murder Police get 5-day remand of 3 accused

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The SDJM Court here has allowed the Commissionerate police to take the three accused in the murder of a Sundarpada youth, Dipu Rout, on a five-day remand for interrogation. Earlier, the accused Vicky Mallia, Sujit Panda and Guna Malia had surrendered before the court. Police would interrogate them to ascertain the motive behind the crime. They would also be questioned about the involvement of others in the crime. In addition, cops would also gather information to see if the trio had any past criminal records, sources added. Notably, Dipu was hacked to death by the three accused following a heated exchange of words during a New Year-eve celebration on December 31 at Nuasahi in Sundarpada. Following the incident, locals staged a road blockade near Sundarpada demanding Rs 20-lakh compensation for the family members of the deceased and the arrest of the murderer within 24 hours. However, two accused in the case, Vicky and Sujit, had surrendered before the court on January 5; and later, Guna Malia surrendered on January 6.

22 more places in BBSR now Containment Zones

Total 41

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As several new Covid-19 cases were detected in the State capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Saturday declared 22 more places as Containment Zones.

These places include four in the city's north zone and 18 in south-east zone. With this, total 41 places in the city have been declared Containment Zones in the past few days. Besides, six places have been declared as Micro Containment Zones. The 18 new Containment Zones in south-east zone include Plot No-223/1752 in Bomikhal,

Plot No-20 and 21 near Angan Restaurant in Sahid Nagar, Plot No-9 near Yamah Showroom in Kharavel Nagar, Plot No-1164/8588 in Lane-1 of Patitapaban Nagar at Canal Road in Badagada, 19-B Ratna Niwas in Tankapani Road and Plot No-14 of Akarpuri Housing Board and Plot No-3314/4736 at Ganga Jamuna Road in Old Town.

The other Containment Zones in the south-east zone are Flat No-301, Block-D and Flat No-301, Block-B at Utkal Villa in Acharya Vihar, Plot No-3889/2 Near Brahmeswar Haat at Tankapani Road, Plot No-264 at Prallahad Residency in Lewis Road, Flat No-301 of Madhabani Enclave in Nuagaon, Flat No-401 (Block-D)

at Utkal Villa, Acharya Vihar, Plot No-1149 near Krishna Kunj Apartment in Unit-9, Plot No-2762 near HP Gas Behind Brahmeswar Temple, Plot No-MB-32 in Badagada Brit Colony, Plot No-722/738 near Taru Apartment in Tankapani Road and Plot No-1087, Dakabangala Square in Old Town. The four Containment Zones in north zone are an XIMB hostel (Studio) in Ward-16, G-3 of Netaji Subas Enclave at Gadakan in Ward-9, Flat No-118 at Kharvela East View Apartment in Patia and Laxmi Residency in Hanspal. The Micro Containment Zones in south-west zone are Flat No- 601 (Tower-1) of Vipul Garden in Kalinga Nagar, Annapurna Finance in Khandagiri

Bari, MIG-78 in Pokhariput of BDA Colony, Plot No-22 in Siddhi Vihar of Jagamara, Flat No-J-214 at Galaxy Residency in Kalinga Nagar and Plot No- 23 in Surya Nagar near the Governor's House.

In larger public interest and to curb further spread of the virus, the BMC directed officials concerned to implement the following restrictions: No public shall be allowed to enter into the containment zone and the inhabitants within the containment zone shall not move out. All the inhabitants within the containment zone shall strictly remain in home. BMC will supply essentials and medicines as required to the inhabitants in the containment zones.

Mission Shakti staffs get CM's package

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday announced a financial package for 50,000 Mission Shakti Community Assistance workers, who are providing services in different panchayats.

All the Community Assistance workers would get Rs 1,000 as annual dress allowance. They all would be provided identity cards. They would also get a one-time

assistance of Rs 5,000 to purchase mobile phones of their choice. Besides, all Community Resource Persons - Community Mobiliser (CRP-CM) - would get remuneration of Rs 3,000 per month. They would also get Rs 350 every month as travel allowance. Also, Rs 150 would be provided to them for telephone allowance. The Government has allocated the required funds for immediate implementation of the package, said Patnaik.

Package for Anganwadi Workers

1.30 lakh to get benefit

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While appreciating Anganwadi and Mini Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers in ensuring nutrition, education and health of children in rural areas, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday announced a financial package for them.

The CM raised the one-time financial assistance from Rs 20,000 to Rs 40,000 for Anganwadi Work-

ers when they retire after 62 years, for Mini Anganwadi Workers from Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000 and for Anganwadi Helpers from Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000. This package would be implemented from January 2019. It would immediately benefit recently-retired 1991 workers. Overall, as many as 1.30 lakh Anganwadi Workers would be benefitted.

Besides, the Anganwadi Workers who fall ill during duty and were hospitalised in Government-recognised hospitals would be given paid medical leave every year.

Paddy procurement begins in JSpur

104 farmers' societies roped in

PNS ■ JAGATSingHPUR

The Jagatsinghpur district administration opened paddy procurement from the farmers on Friday. Collector Parul Patwari inaugurated a Mandi for procurement of Kharif paddy at Tarikunda primary agriculture cooperative society (PACS) premises, 8 km from here.

As many as 104 farmers' cooperative societies across the district will procure paddy from the farmers who are possess token. For the FAQ quality paddy price fixed is Rs 1,940 per quintal and



for Grade A paddy, it is Rs 1,960 per quintal. The RMC will supply tarpaulins to Mandis for protecting paddy from inclement weather. The Collector urged the farmers to follow the Covid guidelines during the paddy procurement. Speaking on the oc-

casation, district CSO Sujata Mishra revealed that as many as nine cooperative societies under Raghunathpur block will collect about 3,000 quintals paddy from farmers through approved millers. Later, the paddy procurement will start in other blocks, the CSO said.

The inauguration programme was attended by Sub-Collector Dharmendra Mallick, DRCS Rudra Prasad Das ARCS Subhadra Patnaik, RMC secretary Suryakanta Das besides representatives of millers and farmers.

Month on, Konark Fest sand artists not paid dues

Tourism, Culture depts humiliating us: Artists

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■

PURI As many as 100 sand artists who had taken part in the sand art exhibition at Chandrabhaga beach during the annual Konark festival are yet to get their dues.

The irony is the artisans that had participated in the sand art exhibition on invitation of the

Government are yet to get a response from the Tourism and Culture departments even after a month has passed since December 1 last year. Sources alleged that the artists have not been even paid their to- and- fro journey charges after sudden departure from the exhibition ground because of a cyclonic alert. As a result, the famous artisans of Odisha traditionally joining the annual sand art exhibition every year have felt offended and decided not to ask for remuneration

by taking it a prestige issue. "It is quite unfortunate that the sand artists have to today run after the both departments for labour charges. The irony is that on the third day of the event, the officials suddenly saw us off at the exhibition ground without paying a single pie towards conveyance expenditure," rued a sand artist on anonymity. He told that it is biggest insult for them as they were invited guests. Sources said that for the five-day-long sand art exhibition from December 1 to

December 5 during the annual Konark Festival, the artists had worked for three days as they were asked to stop on third day and return home due to a cyclonic forecast. Now there is a row in the department on payment to artisans for three days only.

While the artists are demanding dues for full five days the Tourism department is allegedly sticking to its decision of paying for three days only following which an impasse continues between the artists and the Government.

Swargadwar shut for outsiders

PNS ■ PURI

In view of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic situation, the Puri district administration has imposed restrictions on cremation of bodies from outside districts at the Swargadwar crematorium here from January 10. Puri Collector Samarth Verma has issued an order to this effect. In April last year, during the second wave of Covid-19, similar restrictions were clamped at the Swargadwar. Later in August when the situation improved, the restrictions were relaxed.



30 XIMB students test +ve

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the daily Covid-19 cases increasing across the State, over 30 students of the Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar (XIMB) have tested positive for the virus. Taking precautionary measures, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) declared one hostel of the premier management institution as a containment zone to prevent further spread of infection at the campus. The infected students have been kept in isolation for treatment. Sources said the BMC would conduct RT-PCR test on the remaining students staying in the other hostels of XIMB to detect possible Covid cases.

Ganjam registers first Covid death in 3rd wave

So far, 34 affected, mostly Govt employees

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAMAPUR

Ganjam has registered the first death case of Corona in the third wave. The deceased was identified as Laba Kumar Sethi, who was Harigada Panchayat Extension Officer under Bhanjanagar Block. He died while treatment at MKCG Medical College and Hospital here on Wednesday.

Following Covid protocols, his body was cremated at Brahmapur. Sethi was only 34 years old and a bachelor and a permanent resident of Buguda

in Ganjam district. According to information available, 34 people from Ganjam district have been affected by Corona. Sources said, mostly the corona affected patients are employees serving in different offices and private institutions. While some of them have been admitted into local medical college, others are under treatment at their respective home quarantine centre. It may be recalled here that a few days back, Superintendent of MKCG Medical College Prof (Dr) Santosh Mishra was found Corona positive and was hospitalized. Sources said that, 34 Corona positive cases so far have been detected making the situation alarming in Ganjam. The administration has made the imple-

mentation of Government guidelines mandatory. The public is being sensitized through awareness campaign vehicle that moves around the city everyday. The administration has asked the shop owners and proprietors of commercial establishments to put their second dose certificate on their walls so as to make it visible to public. The administration has given more importance on use of face mask and social distancing.

Sources also said that a large number of Medicine Department of MKCG Medical College, some employees of Tata Power and four employees of SBI Khodasingi Branch have reportedly been infected by Corona and are under treatment.

Courts to function with 50% staffs in State

HC hearings to be held in virtual mode

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In view of the increasing Covid-19 cases across Odisha, all courts, including the High Court and tribunals, will function with 50% staffs with effect from January 10 to February 4.

As per an order by the High Court of Orissa, all its Benches shall function only through videoconferencing and its offices shall function with 50% strength

of employees. Based on an order issued by the State Government on January 5, a roster for 50% attendance of employees shall be prepared by the Superintendents in such a manner that the employees are required to attend offices on alternate days and they shall not leave the headquarters during the above period. While attending of office, the employees must carry their Identity Cards. Except the officers and staffs of the High Court, there shall be restrictions for others over entry into the court campus. However, in a case where there is specific direction of any Bench for removal of defects, the advocate con-

cerned may come to the court for the limited purpose of removal of defects with prior intimation to Deputy Registrar (Judicial). Filing of cases and documents shall be done through the e-Filing portal as usual or through Drop Box (kept near the counters of the Copying Section) from 10.30 am to 2 pm. Usual practice of grant of certified copies shall remain suspended and a printout of the Order and Judgment passed by the court as available in the court's website may be utilised in lieu of a certified copy thereof, subject to it being attested by the advocate concerned. Where no advocate has been engaged,

such copy shall be self-attested by the party-in-person.

Besides, the subordinate courts and tribunals shall function with 50% staffs on a rotation basis on each working day during this period, which shall automatically get extended or vacated on extension or vacation of the restrictions. The district judges or presiding officers of the tribunals shall take appropriate measures as per the guidelines of the State Government issued from time to time and also in consonance with the various Covid-related instructions/circulars, issued by the High Court in the year 2020-21.

BJP confident of win in State polls: Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As battle lines have been drawn with the Election Commission on Saturday declaring the schedule for Assembly elections in five States, of which four are BJP-ruled, BJP president J P Nadda expressed confidence that his party will emerge victorious in the Assembly polls and urged party workers to adhere to Covid-related guidelines laid down by the election body.

"People will again bless the BJP, which will return to power with a big majority and take development works to new heights", he said. Nadda said his party will come to power with an overwhelming majority.

"I welcome the Election Commission of India's announcement of the assembly election dates for the five States - Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur.

"I appeal to all the BJP workers to strictly follow all the guidelines announced by the Election Commission of India

Cong: Will retain Punjab, wrest other from BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the five States are all set for Assembly polls, the Congress on Saturday expressed confidence that it will retain Punjab and capture power in BJP-ruled Goa, Manipur and Uttarakhand while expecting to play a decisive role in Government formation in Uttar Pradesh.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala told a press conference that it was a "golden opportunity" to defeat the BJP, whose rule has led to joblessness, price rise and crime against women, Dalits and marginalised sections of the country.

He said the Congress workers will fight the polls with full strength.

related to Covid-19 and all the other important instructions", he said in a statement.

"I also appeal and urge the Bharatiya Janata Party workers to participate with full enthusiasm and vigour in this important festival of our democracy," he said. Nadda said "he is fully confident that in these assembly elections in the five States the BJP will once again win the trust and confidence of the electorate under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." Exuding confidence, Nadda said his party will again win the assembly elections with a massive majority in all the five States.

"Our Governments will take these states to newer heights of growth, development, progress and prosperity", said the BJP chief. Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to the people of all these states "to elect a government that contributes to the progress."

Union Minister and Punjab BJP in-charge Gajendra S Shekhawat said, "We're fully prepared for the polls."

Covid-19 hits paramilitary forces hard

Positivity rate jumps over 11 times in 11 days, 1,668 positive cases reported in last 10 days

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The number of active Covid-19 cases in the paramilitary forces has jumped over 11 times in just 11 days from a meagre 148 cases as on December 28 to 1,668 cases till Friday.

In a single day, the tally of Covid cases jacked up by 441 cases from 1,227 cases on Thursday to 1,668 cases on Friday which is a surge of over 35 percent in just one day.

As on Friday, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) topped the list with 466 active cases followed by 485 cases in Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), 354 in Border Security Force (BSF) and 217 in Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

Likewise, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) had 64 cases followed by 57 in the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and 25 in National Security Guards (NSG).

On December 28, the tally of the infected was just 42 in CRPF, 44 in CISF, 46 in BSF, eight in SSB, five in ITBP, one in NDRF and two in NSG.

"The country has been

Stringent measures needed to contain Covid rise in S-E Asian countries: WHO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Saturday called for stringent implementation of public health and social measures as Covid-19 cases surged in most countries in the South-East Asia region, with some nations witnessing an exponential rise.

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region said that, "All preventive and protective measures must be implemented with full earnestness by one and all. Authorities must implement situation-specific measures to arrest the further spread of the virus. People must adhere to these measures.

witnessing a steady rise in Covid-19 cases in the last two weeks and there is sudden upsurge of the cases from last three days and the potential threat of new variant "Omicron" is looming large," according to a communication

Masks, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, ventilation and physical distancing is an absolute must."

Though the Omicron variant of Covid-19 may appear to be less severe, it should not be dismissed as 'mild', she said. The highly infectious variant, which has emerged as the most predominant one, is already overwhelming health systems around the world, she pointed out, adding that globally the Omicron variant has led to hospitalisations and deaths.

"We must also not forget that not every Covid-19 case is an Omicron infection. Other variants including Delta are also circulating which, as we know, causes severe infections and deaths," the Regional

Director said. Each positive case of Covid-19 should, hence, be a cause of concern.

The covid-19 virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with each other, for example at a conversational distance. The virus can also spread in poorly ventilated indoor settings or crowded settings, Dr Singh said.

Often, infected people do not have symptoms or don't know that they are carrying the virus, so it is important to ensure good ventilation by opening windows and doors when sharing an indoor space with other people. It is extremely important for people to wear well-fitting masks and avoid crowds, besides taking other precautions.

December 27, 2021 has provided a narrative framework for States/Union Territories to facilitate decision making on test positivity of 10 percent or more in the last one week and bed occupancy rate of 40 percent or more on oxygen sup-

port/ICU beds.

However, based on the local situation and population characteristics, states and UTs can take containment measures and restrictions before these thresholds are reached.

In view of the sudden upsurge of Covid-19 infection and potential threat of Omicron, the CRPF has directed all its formations to reactivate all Covid Care Centres (CCC) and dedicated Covid Health Centres (DCHC).

In addition, the CRPF has further directed re-establishment of all isolation/quarantine facilities and strict isolation/quarantine of all returnees from leave/temporary duties/courses in accordance with the Covid-19 state protocols. All social gatherings in the CRPF have been advised to be cancelled/postponed. Meeting of officers may be done in virtual/online mode.

The Medical Directorate of the CRPF has also advised that attendance in offices may be reduced to 50 percent. All non-essential travel of service personnel may be curtailed. Physical attendance in courses/training may be stopped.

Nadda to visit Tripura to reassess party strategy, strengthen alliance



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of Trinamool Congress's recent attempt to expand its footprints from Bengal to Tripura, the BJP's national president J P Nadda will be visiting Tripura from January 10 to January 11 to reassess organisational strategy and endorse party cadre.

Nadda is to address State executive and also sort out tribal differences between the BJP and its ally, Indigenous People's Front of Tripura. The central leadership is continuing to back Chief Minister as the State is to face Assembly poll in 2023.

BJP has recently scored decisive election victory in the local civic elections winning 329 of 334.

BJP is trying to thwart TMC from wooing its MLAs in the State as the latter has done in Bengal. TMC's aggressive moves in the state too would figure in the discussions during Nadda's two-day visit according to central functionaries.

The latest visit of Prime Minister to Tripura where he inaugurated an integrated terminal at Maharaja Bir Bikram airport this week is again part of the Central Government's increasing focus on the state which had been for decades a left bastion.

Demanding money in courts unacceptable: SC

Apex court modifies punishment of court staffer for seeking money



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has said that demanding money as illegal gratification while working in courts is "unacceptable" and very high standards apply to not only judges but also those employed there.

The apex court observed this while modifying the punishment given to a man, who was posted in a district court in Bihar and was dismissed from service on the charge of having demanded ₹50,000 for acquittal of the accused in a case, to removal so that he may explore the possibility of another employment.

A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar was told by the counsel appearing for the appellant that for the last 24 years, the man had an unblemished service and this was the first allegation against him.

"You (appellant) were working in court and demanding money..." the bench

observed, adding that the appellant had admitted his guilt.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by the man against the January 2020 order of a division bench of the Patna High Court which had dismissed his plea against the single judge bench verdict.

The single judge had in January 2018 refused to interfere with the punishment imposed upon the man, who was earlier posted in the office of a presiding officer of a court in Aurangabad.

During the arguments before the top court, the counsel appearing for the appellant said that the man was dismissed from service in 2014 and the punishment imposed upon him was extremely harsh.

"Why do you say harsh? It is after inquiry, is it not?" the bench observed. The counsel said the appellant was exonerated by the enquiry officer in

SCBA to hold candlelight march at Rajpath to express grievances

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on Saturday said it will hold a candle march at the Rajpath here to raise several grievances, including non-consideration of its members' names for elevation as judges in various high courts.

The SCBA said its executive committee held a meeting on Friday and unanimously resolved to organise a candle march at a time and date to be decided by the SCBA President and senior advocate Vikas Singh, when lawyers can participate following Delhi Disaster Management Authority's COVID-19 guidelines.

In a press release, the SCBA said the candle march will be held to raise grievances including, "the lawyers are being muted and unmuted by the court staff and the same militates against the concept of open court hearing as man-

dated in Article 145 of the Constitution".

It said the other grievances included — matters not being listed on non-discriminatory basis, that is, strictly as per date of filing and the delay in finalisation of seniority list for allotment of chambers.

"Non-consideration of SCBA members for elevation to various high courts," said one of the grievances mentioned in the press release.

The bar body said it will also raise grievances regarding no steps being taken for construction of new lawyers' chamber on the land near ITO here and not giving apex court advocates access to the auditorium and additional space in the Supreme Court building.

The SCBA had recently written a letter to Chief Justice of India N V Ramana expressing anguish at the non-consideration of several pending issues of the bar, including

issue of elevation of its members as judges in various high courts.

In his January 6 letter, SCBA president Vikas Singh said the bar body had constituted a search committee which identified 48 names for consideration for elevation in various high courts.

It said the names were handed over to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) several months back.

However, none of the names suggested by the committee has been considered by any of the high court collegium despite having a large number of vacancies in the high courts, it said.

"The entire exercise was also to bring more transparency in the exercise of appointment to the higher judiciary which is repeatedly being alleged to be under a cloak of secrecy," it was claimed in the letter. **PTI**

the first inquiry.

He said later, a fresh departmental proceeding was directed to be initiated and the charges were held to be proved

against him.

"The appellant has admitted his guilt. That is the finding," the bench observed, adding, "If you admit your guilt, what else can

be done, tell us." When the appellant's counsel argued that if possible, the service be restored, the bench observed there is no question of reinstatement. **PTI**

Engineers held by CBI for taking ₹20,000 bribe



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday said it has arrested an Assistant Garrison Engineer and a Junior Engineer, for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹20,000 from the complainant.

A case was registered on a complaint against the accused officials, Mohd. Imran Ullah, Assistant Garrison Engineer and Mahesh Chandra Gangwar, Junior Engineer. Both the officials were working in the office of Garrison Engineer, MES, Satwari, Jammu. It was alleged that the complainant's firm was awarded tender for special repair of a building at Jammu Cantonment, under GE Satwari, Jammu. It was further alleged that the accused demanded a bribe of Rs 25,000 from the complainant for processing his pending bills, the CBI said.

It was also alleged that part bribe of Rs.20,000 (Rs 10,000 to each accused) was to be paid immediately and remaining amount later.

"The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused officials while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 20,000 from the complainant," it said.

Searches were conducted at the office and residential premises of the accused including at Jammu, Bareilly and Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh).

Both the arrested accused officials are being produced before the Court of Special Judge, CBI Cases, Jammu, it added.

Offices of Pak-based TRF waging terrorism in J&K: Experts

Pakistani terror handler runs TRF terror show

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Experts tracking terrorism in the South Asian region and beyond have pinpointed the operational and technical offices of The Resistance Front (TRF), an affiliate of the

Pakistan-based UN-designated terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad, in Karachi and Islamabad respectively through which Islamabad is directing terrorist actions in Jammu and Kashmir.

One key Pakistani terror handler Abu Hamza is running the TRF terror show from Street No. A 9076, Postal Code 75020, Karachi, Pakistan. All the terror commands to the ter-

rorists operating on the ground in Jammu and Kashmir are being directed from this Karachi office, experts said.

The Pakistan Army-ISI combine has floated a company styled as Hoster PK Pvt Ltd. headquartered at 2 & 3, Plaza 117, Civic Centre, Phase IV, Bahria Town, Islamabad to manage the propagand and technical issue of the TRF besides also housing the han-

dlers of the terror outfit, they said.

The virtual space/domain on the social media is being outsourced from a US-based cloud service provider that also provides server services to the ISI as well as terror groups like LeT and JeM, according to the counter-terrorism experts.

The TRF has emerged as a key outfit spearheading terrorist violence in Jammu and

Kashmir at the behest of Pakistan Army-ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) combine and its terror cohorts like JeM and Lashkar-e-Tayabba (LeT), said security officials based in Srinagar.

"All the TRF terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir are being controlled from Karachi office. One main handler Abu Hamza is handling the terror operations in the

Kashmir Valley. All technical issues concerning communication, propaganda and anti-India cyber warfare is being controlled from Islamabad," Counter-terrorism expert Dr Rituraj Mate told *The Pioneer*.

Such a well-coordinated terror machinery could not run without the tactical and operational support from the Pakistan Army and the ISI, Dr Mate said, adding that the role

of American cloud server service providers companies should face international scrutiny for hosting Internet-based services to the terrorist groups which are exploiting the virtual technology for both radicalization and recruitment as well psychological operations against legitimate governments in countries like India.

Counter-terror analyst Dr

Arvind Sahu said, "The TRF has emerged as a key outfit through the Pakistani deep state has let loose terror in Jammu and Kashmir to continually hit Indian security interests through so called low cost and low intensity conflicts."

The TRF is engaged in both radicalization and recruitment besides carrying out direct terrorist action on the ground in the Valley, he added.

Railways to charge station development fee from passengers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Long-distance train travel is likely to cost more for passengers boarding or alighting at redeveloped stations as the Railways is planning to levy a station development fee ranging from ₹10 to ₹50 depending on the class of travel. Senior railway officials said the fee is likely to be added to the train tickets during booking. The fee will be levied only after such stations become operational.

The user fee would be in three categories. ₹50 for all AC classes, ₹25 for sleeper class and ₹10 for the unreserved class. No station development fee will be charged for suburban train journeys, according to a circular issued by the Railway Board. It stated that platform tickets at these stations will also be costlier by ₹10. Station Development Fee (SDF) shall be collected from the passengers (boarding as well as alighting at such stations). Class-wise SDF for developed/redeveloped stations shall be charged as under: For alighting passengers at such stations, the SDF shall be 50 per cent of the rates indicated above. If both boarding/alighting such stations, in that case, SDF shall be 1.5 times of the applicable rate," the circular stated.

NO2 emitting from tailpipe vehicles reason for 20L new cases of pediatric asthma: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

There is yet another reason besides climate change for the Government to switch over to electric vehicles and junk old fossil fuel guzzlers. A study has found that ground concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) — a pollutant that primarily comes from tailpipe vehicle emissions besides power plants and industrial sites — is the reason for nearly 20 lakhs new cases of pediatric asthma every year across the world. The study is published in the Lancet Planetary Health.

Asthma manifests through wheezing attacks and breathlessness, which are spurred by the inflammation of air passages. The nerve endings in the airways also become hypersensitive, contracting and dilating erratically, and restricting airflow to the lungs, as per health experts.

In India, according to estimates around 16 per cent of urban children suffer from childhood asthma while it is 5.7 per cent in rural areas. Main causes may be genetic. But it can be

due to traffic-related pollution too as was found by researchers from George Washington University who had studied ground concentrations of NO2. They tracked new cases of asthma that developed in children from 2000 until 2019 in more than 13,000 cities.

"Our study found that nitrogen dioxide puts children at risk of developing asthma and the problem is especially acute in urban areas," said Susan Anenberg, a co-lead author of the article and a professor of environmental and occupational health at the varsity.

"The findings suggest that clean air must be a critical part of strategies aimed at keeping children healthy," she added. The findings showed that out of the estimated 1.85 million new pediatric asthma cases attributed to NO2 globally in 2019, two-thirds occurred in urban areas.

Despite the improvements in air quality in Europe and the US, dirty air, and particularly NO2 pollution, has been rising in South Asia, Sub-Saharan African and the Middle

East. Pediatric asthma cases linked to NO2 pollution represent a large public health burden for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

In a second study, published in the same journal, researchers from the varsity showed that 1.8 million excess deaths can be linked to urban air pollution in 2019 alone.

The team found that 86 per cent of adults and children living in cities around the world are exposed to a level of fine particulate matter that exceeds the guidelines set by the World Health Organisation.

"Reducing fossil fuel-powered transportation can help children and adults breathe easier and may pay big health dividends, such as fewer cases of pediatric asthma and excess deaths," Anenberg said. "At the same time, it would also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, leading to a healthier climate." In an effort to reduce pollution and curb global warming, India is in the process of taking steps to slowly phase out diesel vehicles with electric vehicles.

MeitY bans social media accounts for misinformation, hateful, explicit content

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 73 Twitter handles, four YouTube videos and one game on Instagram that were allegedly circulating misinformation or hateful content have been suspended or removed.

The Ministry of Information and Technology (MeitY) has taken action against several accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram for circulating morphed videos of a cabinet briefing and promoting explicit or hateful content.

In a tweet, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar revealed that 73 Twitter accounts had been suspended, four YouTube videos had been deleted, and one Instagram game had been taken down. The minister said owners of such accounts are being identified for action

under the law, and asserted that platforms will be reviewed on their due diligence.

"Taskforce on Safe & Trusted Internet at @GoI_MeitY at work. Handles that tried to push fake/inciting content on twitter, youtube, fb, insta have been blocked," Chandrasekhar tweeted on Saturday.

On Friday evening, the minister had responded to a tweet that urged him to take action against the "creators of a very violent video that features the PM," which "has been in the public domain since December 2020". The minister had responded, saying, "On the job. @GoI_MeitY takes its responsibility to keep Internet Safe and Trusted and Intermediaries accountable for the content and due diligence very seriously".

According to the ministry, it had received a number of complaints stating that particu-

lar handles were posting inappropriate content and attempting to split communities.

Furthermore, multiple films have been circulating on social media, including the most recent altered footage purporting to depict a cabinet briefing with overlay audio.

Sources said the government had identified 73 Twitter handles, 4 pieces of YouTube content, and 1 Instagram game. Accordingly, 73 Twitter handles have been suspended, 4 YouTube content and the particular Instagram game have been removed.

The government, last year, had introduced stringent rules for social media platforms to make them more accountable to end-users in one of the world's largest internet markets. The rules require social media companies to take down contentious content quicker, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist in investigations.

Rocky few weeks ahead for UK hosps: Health Secy

London: UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid said that there will be a "rocky few weeks ahead" for the National Health Service (NHS) as Covid cases continue to soar in the country. Speaking during a visit to a hospital in London, Javid said these are "challenging times" for the health service and the "best thing" people can do is get their booster jab, reports

Xinhua news agency. Javid's remarks came after two major incidents were declared in England due to pressures caused by the Omicron variant's spread. "We know now that Omicron is less severe and we certainly know that once you get boosted that your chance of hospitalisation, our latest analysis shows, is almost 90 per cent

less than it was with Delta," he said. The UK reported another 178,250 coronavirus cases in the latest 24-hour period, bringing the total number of cases in the country to 14,279,785, according to official figures. The country also reported a further 229 deaths. The total number of coronavirus-related deaths in Britain now stands at 150,222, with 18,454 patients still in hospital. Some 200 Armed Forces personnel are being deployed to support the NHS in London as hospitals grapple with staff shortages, according to Sky News.

Fifth Covid wave hits Hungary

Budapest: The fifth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic fuelled by the Omicron variant has hit Hungary, a top official announced.

Bela Merkely, rector of Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest and leader of the Clinical Epidemiology Working Group, said that since the Omicron variant is highly contagious, tens of thousands of new cases can be expected in the country in the coming days and weeks, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The Omicron variant typically causes only mild upper respiratory infections in vaccinated people -- runny nose, sore throat, headache and fever lasting for a day or two," he explained, warning that the hospitalization rate for unvaccinated people may increase. "The proportion of serious cases is likely to be lower than in the third and fourth waves," he said. IANS

Indonesia sees 518 new Covid cases, 5 more deaths

Jakarta: Indonesia has confirmed 518 new Covid-19 cases, raising the country's tally of infections to 4,265,187, according to the country's Health Ministry.

The ministry on Friday reported that the death toll from Covid-19 in the country rose by five to 144,121, while 214 more people recovered from the disease during the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 4,115,572, Xinhua news agency reported.

As the Indonesian government is accelerating its national vaccination programs to curb the spread of the virus, more than 168.81 million people have received their first doses of vaccines, while over 116.11 million have taken the second doses.

Indonesia started mass Covid-19 vaccinations in January last year. Aiming to fully vaccinate 208.2 million people in the country, the Indonesian government has administered over 286.23 million doses, including the third booster jabs. IANS

NATO ready for dialogue with Russia: Stoltenberg

Brussels: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains ready for meaningful dialogue with Russia, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Addressing a press conference following the extraordinary meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Stoltenberg on Friday said that the meeting addressed Russia's military build-up around Ukraine and the implications for European security, Xinhua

news agency reported. He said Russia's actions "seriously undermine the security order" in Europe. "NATO remains committed to our dual-track approach to Russia: strong deterrence and defense, combined with meaningful dialogue."

Stoltenberg welcomed Russia's readiness to "come to the table and talk." Next week, the NATO allies will meet with Russia in the NATO-Russia Council. The US and Russia

will also hold talks in Geneva on Monday.

"Next week's series of engagements are an opportunity for Russia to demonstrate that it is serious about dialogue and diplomacy. We are always ready to listen to Russian concerns. And NATO will make every effort to find a political way forward," he said.

Stoltenberg said NATO will engage in dialogue with Russia "in good faith, and on substance," and also "be prepared

for the possibility that diplomacy will fail." He said ministers stressed that "any further aggression against Ukraine would have significant consequences."

Asked about the situation in Kazakhstan, the NATO chief said he was concerned about the crisis and was following the situation very closely.

"We demand that the violence stop and that the right to demonstrate peacefully be respected," he said. IANS

Austrian Chancellor tests Covid +ve

Vienna: Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer has tested positive for Covid, the Federal Chancellery said, adding that he was infected by a member of his security team.

Nehammer shows no symptoms and carries out his official duties from home via video and telephone meetings, Xinhua news agency quoted the Chancellery as saying on Friday. He will not attend in-person meetings in the next few days, the Chancellery said, adding that Nehammer has received three Covid-19 vaccine doses.

Meanwhile, the Chancellor's wife and children have tested negative.

"There is no need to worry, I am fine," Nehammer was quoted by the Chancellery as saying. "My appeal continues to be: Go get vaccinated, get a booster, that will protect you with high probability against serious illness."

All persons with whom the Chancellor was in contact on Thursday were notified. IANS

Fifth Covid wave hits Hungary

Budapest: The fifth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic fuelled by the Omicron variant has hit Hungary, a top official announced.

Bela Merkely, rector of Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest and leader of the Clinical Epidemiology Working Group, said that since the Omicron variant is highly contagious, tens of thousands of new cases can be expected in the country in the coming days and weeks, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The Omicron variant typically causes only mild upper respiratory infections in vaccinated people -- runny nose, sore throat, headache and fever lasting for a day or two," he explained, warning that the hospitalization rate for unvaccinated people may increase. "The proportion of serious cases is likely to be lower than in the third and fourth waves," he said. IANS

Singapore reports 777 new cases of Covid-19

Singapore: Singapore has reported 777 new cases of Covid-19 on Friday, bringing the total tally of the disease in the country to 283,991.

Of the new cases, 366 were in the community, 15 were in migrant worker dormitories and 396 were imported cases, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the statistics released by the Ministry of Health (MOH).

There were 535 new Omicron cases confirmed on Monday, of whom 251 were local and 284 were imported, the ministry said. A total of 165 cases are currently warded in hospitals, with 13 cases being critically ill in the intensive care unit (ICU), the current overall ICU utilisation rate is 43.2 per cent.

Two more patients have passed away from complications due to Covid-19 infection, bringing the death toll to 837. IANS

Sao Paulo cancels Carnival street parades

Sao Paulo: Brazil's largest city of Sao Paulo has cancelled Carnival street parades following an increase in Covid-19 infections and hospitalisations fuelled by the Omicron variant, Mayor Ricardo Nunes announced.

"We have decided to cancel the street Carnival as a result of the epidemiological situation," Xinhua news agency quoted Nunes as saying at a press conference.

The decision impacts neighbourhood bands that traditionally parade through the streets at Carnival time, which draws 10 million to 15 million revellers every February for Brazil's most popular annual celebration.

Nunes said the Carnival highlight, the parade of samba school floats at the city's Sambodrome, will take place as planned at the end of February, since it will be easier to apply sanitary and social distancing measures at the venue.

In the last 10 days, Covid-19 hospitalisations have risen by 30 per cent in Sao Paulo, following Christmas and New Year's celebrations and social gatherings, according to local health authorities. IANS

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Putin discusses Kazakhstan with leaders of CSTO member states by phone

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin held several phone calls on Thursday and Friday with leaders of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), discussing the situation in Kazakhstan, the Kremlin has said.

"The Russian President had telephone conversations with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan," Xinhua news agency quoted Kremlin as saying.

Putin also spoke by phone several times with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, it added.

Meanwhile, since the launch of the CSTO peace-

keeping operation, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has been regularly reporting to Putin on the progress of transfer of peacekeeping forces to Kazakhstan and the completion of assigned tasks, the statement said.

Violent protests in Kazakhstan have caused multiple deaths over the past days, according to various reports. Tokayev accepted the government's resignation on Wednesday, and has sought help from the CSTO.

A joint CSTO peacekeeping force has arrived in Kazakhstan to take part in maintaining order, the Kazakh presidential press service said Friday, adding that they came only for a limited time to ensure the protection of strategic facilities.

The peacekeeping forces include troops from Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the CSTO said in a statement on its website. IANS

Global dementia cases may triple to 150 mn by 2050: Study

New York: Dementia cases are expected to rise by over 150 million by 2050, which is about three times more than in 2019, suggests a new study.

The study, published in The Lancet Public Health journal, indicated that the number of people with dementia would increase from 57.4 million cases globally in 2019 to 152.8 million cases in 2050.

"We estimated that there were more women with dementia than men with dementia globally in 2019 and we expect this pattern to continue to 2050," according to the study. Globally, the number of people affected by dementia was estimated to have increased by 117 per cent between 1990 and 2016, largely due to population aging.

Demographic analyses suggest that these patterns are driven by decreases in fertility coupled with increases in life expectancy, which together lead to large changes in the age structure of the population.

These changes lead to large increases in the number of people affected by dementia. IANS

Turkey registers 63,214 new Covid cases

Ankara: Turkey has reported 63,214 new Covid-19 cases, raising its tally of infections to 9,850,488, according to its health ministry.

The death toll from the virus in Turkey on Friday rose by 157 to 83,388, while 29,197

more people recovered in the last 24 hours.

A total of 406,796 tests were conducted over the past day, it said.

Turkey has started mass Covid-19 vaccination on January 14, 2021.

About 57.06 million people have received their first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, and 51.84 million had got their second doses.

Turkey has so far administered 135.61 million doses including the booster jabs.

21 tourists stranded in cars freeze to death in Pakistan hill station

New Delhi: At least 21 people died of cold after they were stranded in their cars during the snowstorm in Murree in Pakistan on Friday night, according to Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed, Samaa TV reported.

The hill station was crowded after tourists headed there to witness snowfall. On Friday night, the government imposed a ban on the entry of tourists to Murree and Galiyat region. They won't be allowed to go beyond Satra Meel Toll Plaza, Rasheed said, except in the case of extreme emergency.

On Saturday, the minister revealed that so far, 23,000 cars have been brought back, while an operation is underway to rescue 1,000 more cars trapped in the snow. Heavy

machinery has been called in to clear the roads as well. According to reports, this week, nearly 140,000 vehicles entered Murree. Meanwhile, hundreds of people spent Friday night on the roads. Local residents have been out on the streets distributing warm clothes, blankets, and food to stranded tourists, the report said.

The deaths took place because roads were blocked and people were stuck in their cars for hours. They couldn't reach their hotels.

Meanwhile, Pakistan opposition leaders have questioned the role of the government during the crisis. "Where was the government? What was the PM doing now? Why weren't they prepared," asked PML-N's Hamza Shahbaz. IANS

Volcano erupts in Ecuador's Galapagos Islands

Quito: Wolf Volcano, the tallest in Ecuador's Galapagos archipelago, has erupted, the country's Geophysical Institute reported. According to the institute, the eruption began at 12.20 a.m. (local time) on Friday, generating a cloud of gas and ash with a variable height between 1,900 and 3,800 metres above sea level, reports Xinhua news agency.

The natural event did not cause any immediate damage, since "there are no populated areas near the volcano or in the direction of the ash clouds", the institute said. The volcano, 1,707 metres above sea level and in the shape of an inverted plate, last erupted in May 2015. The Directorate of the Galapagos National Park published a photograph of the beginning of the eruption on its Twitter account taken by personnel of the institution observing the event. IANS

EU to share 700 mln Covid vax doses by mid-2022: Von der Leyen

Brussels: The European Union (EU) is on track to meet its pledge of sharing 700 million Covid-19 vaccine doses by the middle of 2022, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

In a video statement, she said the EU had exceeded its vaccine-sharing target in 2021, sharing 380 million doses instead of the planned 250 million doses with low and middle-income countries, reports Xinhua news agency.

More than 255 million of these doses have already been delivered to the recipient countries. Von der Leyen said that "we will step up our efforts to support Africa, where vaccination rates are lower than in other parts of the world".

"We will only control this global pandemic if we fight it in every corner of the world," she said. IANS

Nawaz Sharif asks party to agitate against Imran Khan

New Delhi: Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has directed his opposition PML-N party not to let incumbent premier Imran Khan off the hook on the basis of the Election Commissions damning report on the ruling PTIs foreign funding case, aggressively agitate the matter and not let both Houses of Parliament run smoothly till "justice" is done, Dawn reported.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme directed party President Shehbaz Sharif, to start holding workers' conventions at the district and divisional levels in Punjab province to mobilise party workers ahead of the Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) planned anti-inflation march on Islamabad in March. "Do not let Imran Khan off the hook as he has been caught red-handed while stealing money through the party's foreign funding. His so-called honest image has completely been shattered and he should

be exposed before the nation," Nawaz Sharif told a party meeting, which was attended by the PML-N's central and Punjab leadership, including Shehbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz, in Model Town on Thursday via video link.

Nawaz Sharif was "very categorical" regarding the ECP's findings on the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's foreign funding, directing the PML-N leaders not to let this matter die down till it reaches its logical end, said the Dawn news report. "Don't let the National Assembly, Punjab Assembly and Senate run smoothly, and aggressively agitate this matter in which the true face of Imran Khan has been exposed," Nawaz Sharif was quoted as saying in the report.

Nawaz Sharif, who has been in the UK since November 2019 for 'medical treatment', asked the participants to expose Khan's alleged theft on all forums. IANS

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e-TENDER NOTICE Date: 07.01.2022

Office of the Executive Engineer (E&M), Maneri Dam, Maneri, Uttarkashi invited online bid from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:

(1) Tender No. : 12/EE(E&M)/Maneri Dam/2021-22 & 13/EE(E&M)/Maneri Dam/2021-22
(1) Name of work: Supply and Replacement of Steel Wire Rope with socket and pin etc. for three numbers of Radial gates of Maneri Dam in Distt - Uttarkashi under Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project, Phase-II.
(2) Name of work: Design, Fabrication, Supply, Erection and Commissioning Of Trash Racks at Maneri Dam in Distt - Uttarkashi under Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project, Phase-II.
Estimated cost : (1) ₹66,67,661.00 (inclusive GST) (2) ₹1,38,67,296.00 (inclusive GST)
Date of availability of bid document on website: 15.01.2022 at 10:00 hrs. Last date of submission of bid on website: 14.02.2022 at 17:00 hrs. For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://ukntenders.gov.in> Executive Engineer (E&M)

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one lady **Namely: Maya, W/o: Sudarshan, R/o: 26/168 Trilok Puri, Delhi, Age: 30 Years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Fair, Built: Medium, Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow Colour Suit & Blue Colour Pajami with Black Dupatta & Sleeper in feet has been missing since 26.11.2021 from the area of PS Mayur Vihar, Delhi. In this regard **DD No. 6A, Dated 27.11.2021**, has been registered at **P.S. Mayur Vihar, Delhi**.**

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing lady please inform to the following:-

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in> **SHO**
E-Mail ID: cic@cbi.gov.in **P.S. Mayur Vihar, Delhi**
Fax: 011-24368639
DP/861/ED/2021 **Ph.: 011-22710335, 8750870627**

FORM B PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
(Regulation 12 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016)
FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS OF M/S NARMADA CEREAL PRIVATE LIMITED

S.No.	PARTICULARS	DETAILS
1.	Name of corporate debtor	Narmada Cereal Private Limited
2.	Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	28/03/2007
3.	Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered	Registrar of Companies, NCT Delhi & Haryana
4.	Corporate Identity No. / Limited Liability Identification No. of corporate debtor	U20296DL2007PTC161251
5.	Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	Shop No. 14, Pocket-A Market Santa Vihar, New Delhi - 110076
6.	Date of closure of Insolvency Resolution Process	04.01.2022
7.	Liquidation commencement date of corporate debtor	04/01/2022 (Intimation received from AA on 05.01.2022)
8.	Name and registration number of the insolvency professional acting as liquidator	Prabhat Jain IBI/IBA-001/IP-P01980/2020-2021/13123
9.	Address and e-mail of the liquidator, as registered with the Board	B-61, Flatted Factory Complex, Jhandewalan, New Delhi-110055 Mob-9810290371 Mail-prabhat@pdmco.in
10.	Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the liquidator	B-61, Flatted Factory Complex, Jhandewalan, New Delhi-110055 Mob-9810290371 Mail-liquidator.narmada@gmail.com
11.	Last date for submission of claims	04.02.2022

Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi, Bench-3 has ordered the commencement of liquidation of the Narmada Cereal Private Limited on 04.01.2022. The stakeholders of Narmada Cereal Private Limited are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before 04.02.2022, to the liquidator at the address mentioned against item No. 10. The financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with the proof in person, by post or by electronic means. Submission of false or misleading proof of claims shall attract penalties.

Date : 07/01/2022 Sd/-
Place : New Delhi Name and signature of liquidator: **Prabhat Jain**

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS!

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS DUE TO NON-INTERLOCKING WORK

It is notified for the information of Rail Passenger that Bilaspur Division of South East Central Railway will undertake Pre-Non-Interlocking and Non-Interlock activity at Chulha station on Jaithari-Chulha section from 11.01.2022 to 16.01.2022. As a result following trains will be affected as under:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date (from the Originating Station)
22867 Durg-Hazrat Nizamuddin Express	11.01.2022 (Tuesday) & 14.01.2022 (Friday)
22868 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Durg Express	12.01.2022 (Wednesday) & 15.01.2022 (Saturday)
18201 Durg-Nautanwa Express	12.01.2022 (Wednesday) & 14.01.2022 (Friday)
18202 Nautanwa-Durg Express	14.01.2022 (Friday) & 16.01.2022 (Sunday)

For any kind of information, passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

Visit RailMadad website www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad app.

75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav **RailMadad Helpline No. 139** **Please join us on** **NORTHERN RAILWAY** **Your Convenience-Our Concern** **44/22**
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Office of the Superintending Engineer
3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh
Email: sepwdpth@rediffmail.com

Letter No.159/984C-03/2022 **Short Term E- Tender Notice** Dated: 07/01/2022

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (**Two Bid System**) in anticipation of Sanction on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from date 18-01-2022 at 5.00 Pm onward on website <http://www.ukntenders.gov.in>

S. No.	Name of work	Earnest Money (In lac)	Cost of Tender (in Rs)	Validity of Tender (day)	Time of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	Improvement of Surface with 25 mm S.D.B.C. of Chandak Bans motor road, Rai Mrh Rodipali motor road, Aincholi Barabey motor road, Jajerdelva to Khanker motor road and Aincholi Jakhpuran motor road in District Pithoragarh under Special Assistance Scheme. (Length- 18.19Km.) (in anticipation of Sanction)	10.40	Rs.5000 +18% GST	120	06	Category 'A' and Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India/ Govt. undertaking.
2	Improvement work by SDBC 25 MM of Diffrent Roads in District Champawat under Special Assitanace Scheme 2021-22 (1) Champawat-Manch-Tamli motor road in Km. 3.00, 4.00, 5.00, 30.00 & 31.00 (Length 5.35 Km.) (SH-64) (2) Champawat-Khetikhan Motor road in km. 11.00 to 14.00 (Length- 4.68 Km.) (SH-64) (3) Dhunaghat-Bhingarara-Reethasahib Motor road in Km. 5.00 to 9.00 (Length 5.85 Km.) (SH-64) (in anticipation of Sanction)	5.07	Rs.5000 +18% GST	120	06	Category 'A' and Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India/ Govt. undertaking.
3	Surface Improvement by SDBC of Kathoggam Bhimtal Khutani Padampuri Bhanachuli Padampuri Shaharphatak Mauranala -Devidhr Lohaghat Panchesher M/R SH- 10 km 155 to 169 and Lohaghat Ring Road length 3.420 km under Special Assitanace Scheme. (in anticipation of Sanction)	6.95	Rs.5000 +18% GST	120	06	Category 'A' and Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India/ Govt. undertaking.

Raghavan: Extraordinary zeal of entrepreneurs needs to be matched with domain expertise

Ahmedabad: The "extraordinary zeal" shown by the potential innovators and entrepreneurs needs to be matched with deep domain expertise, or else there is a danger of failing for entirely avoidable reasons, Principal Scientific Adviser to Government of India K VijayRaghavan said on Saturday.

Such innovators and entrepreneurs need a much better connection with the national and global ecosystem of technologies and techno-economic perspectives. For this, they require "a high-quality mentorship at an individual level", he said.

"One thing which is striking to all of us interacting with the potential innovators and entrepreneurs is their extraordinary zeal... But on the ground level today, the zeal-to be slightly critical--needs to be matched with deep domain expertise and/or access to that expertise," VijayRaghavan said.

He was addressing through video conference a grand finale pitch event called 'EVangelise,' virtually organised by iCreate, an Ahmedabad-based start-up incubator, to identify the next generation of innovators in the electric vehicle sub component segment.

In the lack of domain expertise, there are chances of a potential innovator and entrepreneur falling by the way side for relatively obvious and simple reasons rather than falling for more complex reasons and learning in the process, said the distinguished biologist.

"And there, we need to have a much better connect with the national and global ecosystems in every kind of technology, so that the best advice from the scientific perspective -- but also from the techno-economic perspective -- comes in," said VijayRaghavan, who is a former director of the National Centre of Biological Sciences. He said that the "techno-eco-

nomie" part is substantially missing among entrepreneurs in the ecosystem. "I have been saying this for some time, that we need high quality mentorship at the individual level so that this process takes place," he said.

Leaving aside those who have "connections and pedigree", organisations like iCreate can "make sure that everyone who needs access in a particular domain has access, both technologically, financially, techno-economically," he further said.

He also said that entrepreneurs should concern themselves with what they want to do and whose problems they are trying to solve. "Entrepreneurship is solving a problem stated by someone rather than having a new mouse trap and marketing that to the people who want it to buy," he said.

Entrepreneurships should also keep in mind global supply chains and innovations. "Entrepreneurs are so stuck in getting their next day's work done that they sometimes miss this both in terms of opportunities and threats, and there too, advice is necessary," he said.

The grand finale pitch of the maiden EV challenge called "EVangelise," had ten finalists making their pitches to an expert panel of jury, with a total ₹ 88.5 lakh being awarded to them across found innovation challenges and stages.

It has been organised by iCreate (International Centre for Technology and Entrepreneurship), an autonomous technology business incubation centre located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, with the top three winners to receive cash prizes of ₹10 lakh, ₹ 7.5 lakh, and ₹ 5 lakh, besides an assured incubation support of ₹ 50 lakh each as well as market connection and industry mentorship. **PTI**

FIEO inks pact with RebelCorp to help MSME exporters create websites

New Delhi: Apex exporters body FIEO has inked an initial pact with digital platform provider RebelCorp to help MSME exporters create their own websites at affordable cost and expand business.

Saad Khan, Founder and COO of Mumbai-based startup RebelCorp said the company will help the exporters create a portal which can be easily managed by themselves.

"At a time when the world is facing serious issues due to COVID-19 pandemic, our product will help exporters and businesses particularly from the MSME segment to create their own websites and reach out to global players," Khan said.

He added that credibility is crucial to promote business and digital presence of MSMEs is key to attract global customers and boost the country's overall outbound shipments.

"Through our product, one can develop their portal with just Rs 799 and that too without having any technical knowledge. If you can prepare a simple power point presentation, you can develop your portal by using our simple tools and reach out to your customers and expand your global customer base," Khan said.



Talking about the MoU signed with Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), he said the company would design special website templates for the members of the organisation, keeping in mind their requirement as exporters to cater to the global market.

The company would also organise workshops and training programmes for member exporters to help them manage their websites with ease. "Web presence medium is very strong and that needs to be understood by small businesses," he added.

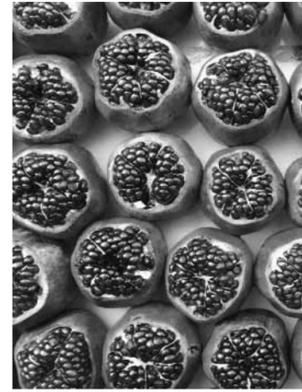
FIEO provides an interface between the international trading community of India with the central and state governments, financial institutions, ports, railways, surface transport and all engaged in trade facilitation.

Sujata Uchil, Regional Head, FIEO Western Region, said the initiative will help exporters in promoting their businesses in different countries. **PTI**

Mango, pomegranate exports from India to US to start from Jan-Feb

New Delhi: Exports of mango and pomegranate from India to the US will start from January-February to boost the country's outbound shipments of agri-products, the Commerce Ministry said on Saturday.

Exports of pomegranate aril to the US and imports of Alfalfa hay and cherries from America would also begin from April this year, it added. In pursuant to the 12th India - USA trade policy forum meeting held on November 23, 2021, the Department of Agriculture and farmer's welfare and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) have signed a framework agreement for



implementing the "2 Vs 2 agri-market access issues", it said.

This access concept includes inspection and oversight transfer for Indian mangoes, pomegranate and pomegranate arils, and market access for US cherries and Alfalfa hay in India.

"Mango and pomegranate exports will start from January - February 2022 and pomegranate aril from April 2022," the ministry said. Further, it said that the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has conveyed its readiness to provide market access for US pork.

These issues were discussed during the Trade Policy Forum meeting. India has not exported mangoes to the US for the last two years. **PTI**

CSB Bank MD&CEO takes early retirement, lender to set up panel to find successor

New Delhi: CSB Bank on Saturday said its managing director and chief executive C VR Rajendran has decided for an early retirement on health grounds, and the lender will set up a committee to find a successor. This is to inform you that the bank's board in its meeting held on January 8, 2022, considered and accepted the request of C VR Rajendran to take an early retirement from the position, to take care of his health under the advice of his physicians, CSB Bank said in a regulatory filing. The board has further requested Rajendran

to continue in the office of MD & CEO till March 31, 2022, it said. Rajendran has been holding the position of MD & CEO since December 9, 2016 and the current term is up to December 8, 2022. "The board further decided to constitute a search committee comprising the chairperson of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee and two members of the board, to identify and evaluate candidates, from within or from outside, for the position of Managing Director & CEO," the bank said in the filing.

Consider bankers as frontline workers for booster dose: AIBOC to FM

New Delhi: Bank officers' union AIBOC has urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to consider bankers as the frontline workers for administering booster shots amid rising COVID-19 cases across the country. In a letter addressed to the Finance Minister, All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC) also suggested the implementation of a 5-day week to break the chain of the spread of the virus.

At all branches or offices, only 50 per cent staff should be physically present, and remaining staff should be allowed to work from home, it said, adding special status to bankers for availing public transport, including suburban railways under essential service category.

The government has said the precaution dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to be given to healthcare workers, frontline workers and those aged 60 years and above with comorbidities from January 10.

There should be mandatory rapid antigen tests for bankers to 'Detect, isolate and treat' at regular intervals, AIBOC general secretary Soumya Datta said in the letter. Iting out that about 2,000 bankers lost their lives in the first two waves, the letter said, "We consider ourselves to be a part of the 'Financial Army',



who have braved the constraints and have served the nation in the time of crisis".

Unfortunately, it said, the recognition of bank employees as Frontline Covid Warrior (FLW) was delayed, denying the opportunity of getting vaccinated along with other FLWs in the first instance, which could possibly have averted the loss of precious lives.

As per the Union Health Ministry latest data, the country witnessed a single-day rise of 1,41,986 new coronavirus cases, including 3,071 cases of the Omicron variant reported across 27 states and Union territories so far. **PTI**

Agility Ventures to launch ₹450 cr fund

New Delhi: Angel investor network Agility Ventures on Saturday said it has received approvals from markets watchdog Sebi for an angel fund with a total corpus of ₹450 crore (USD 60 million) that will be deployed over the next 3-4 years.

Agility Ventures network invests in startups or early-stage businesses in industries such as education, technology, healthcare, e-commerce, automobiles, electric vehicles, robotics, agritech and manufacturing, among others. For 2022, Agility Ventures has set a target of increasing its network by 4,000, which currently stands at over 1,500 angel investors, a statement said. With AIFs (Alternative Investment Funds), it is looking at deploying ₹ 75 crore this year in over 50 startups, which will also include fintech, cyber security and crypto, the statement added.

Sebi's approval to launch the fund is just the kind of start Agility Ventures was looking for in this New Year, co-founder Dhianu Das said. After launching Fluid Ventures (a

D2C focused Sebi-registered category-1 VC fund) last year, this is exactly the kind of fund needed to roll out the plans for 2022, Das said.

"After having invested in 5 companies through Fluid Ventures, we are not only ambitious about deploying Rs 75 crore this year through Agility Ventures angel fund and investing it in over 50 startups but also very focused on achieving it. We are here to create more than just a ripple in the startup investment space and the angel fund will help us reach that goal," he added.

Prashant Narang, co-founder of Agility Ventures, said the interesting thing about raising the kind of angel fund that has been approved by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is that it is sector-agnostic and does not limit itself to co-investments.

"This model also simplifies the financing process without changing the core style of the angel network. In fact, it adds to the pre-existing angel investor's style of financing, which usually entails Bridge rounds to pre-series A rounds," Narang added.

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STAR Health Insurance
The Health Insurance Specialist
Insurance is the subject matter of solicitation.

We are happy to inform that our Gurgaon Branch has shifted to a new premises with effect from 01.01.2022 at the following address:-

STAR HEALTH AND ALLIED INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Plot no 412/2, K-1 Tower, M G Road, Sector-14, Gurgaon, Haryana- 122001, Phone Nos.0124-4255201/0124-4255202
Email ID-gurgaon@starhealth.in

BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI-221004
No.BLW-S/Vendor Meet/2021 Dated: 04.01.2022

VIRTUAL VENDOR MEET ON 11.01.2022
BLW is organizing a Virtual Vendor Meet on 11.01.2022, 10:30 AM to 13:00 PM, to develop new vendors and enhancing product range of existing vendors. All existing and prospective vendors interested to supply materials to the railways are requested to participate through google video online link Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/pdk-zjms-kkx> or link is also available on BLW official Website-www.blw.indianrailways.gov.in.
P.R.O./BLW/S-60 Dy.CMM/M&P
blwvaranasi@blw.indianrailways.gov.in

Delhi Division of Northern Railway made a record

New Delhi: The Delhi Division of Northern Railway has given special focus on freight movement under the Business Development Unit (BDU) in the current financial year. As a result of continuous interaction and fruitful dialogues with trade and industry, the freight and freight earnings of Delhi Division have registered an increase in the current financial year 2021-22. The division has also set a record by carrying the most cargo in a day.

Delhi Division has achieved the best ever container rake loading in a day of 34 rakes and 1,318 wagons on January 07, 2022, which is more than the previous best of 31 rakes and 1316 wagons as on January 23, 2021. This includes container rakes loading from Tughlakabad, Garhi Harsaru Junction, Patli, Palwal, Asavati, Bhodwal Majri, Bhaili, Rajlu Garhi, Diwana and Mohiuddin Pur.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, CONSTRUCTION DIVISION, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM, CHAMPAWAT
Phone/Fax : 05965 - 230044 E-Mail:- executivechampawat@gmail.com
Bid Notification No : 80 / Nivida / 68 Date: 07.01.2022

E - TENDER NOTICE

1- Name of the works : 1. Mouda (Retro) W/S Scheme (JJM)
2. Sulla Phase-2 W/S Scheme (JJM)
3. Kharkagad Dhura (Mangoli) W/S Scheme (JJM)
4. Banoli W/S Scheme (JJM)
5. Bairakh W/S Scheme (JJM)
6. Chilniya & Simalkhet Solar Pumping W/S Scheme (JJM)
7. Mantandey W/S Scheme (JJM)
8. Tappinpal (Retro) W/S Scheme (JJM)
9. Sango & Ghigarukot W/S Scheme (JJM)

Date of Publication on e-procurement portal Date. 10.01.2022 at 15.00 hrs.
Note : Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal - www.uktenders.gov.in & contact 05965-230044.

जल संचय जीवन संचय "हमारा संकल्प, हर घर नल से जल"
"माके पहना है चकरी" "आयस में हो दो गज दूरी" **Executive Engineer**

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
Telefax No. :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

Gist of e-tender
NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2021-22/264/e-tendering
Dated: 06.01.2022

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, e-tenders, valid for 180 days, are invited from the Registered, reputed & experienced firms as detailed in the NIT for below mentioned works:

Name of Work:- Providing and Fitting of new FCUs along with PPR pipeline for various sections at ground floor of Govt. Super Speciality Hospital, Srinagar.
Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs) :- 2.04, Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 200, Completion Time (in days) :- 10, AA No. :- MC/Plan/AAA/6277-19, Dt: 03-01-2022, TS.NO :- MHCHD/TS/187 of 01/2022, Earnest Money (in Rupees) :- 4100

1. Downloading of Bids :- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 06.01.2022 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 06.01.2022 (18.00 hrs).

2. Uploading:- The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 07.01.2022 (10.00 hrs) to 14.01.2022 (16:00hrs) in two (02) covers.

3. Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 15.01.2022 at 14.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

No. DPK-16346/21 Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar
Dated:- 07.01.2022

Equitas Holdings to fully divest stake in subsidiary ETPL ahead of merger with Equitas SFB

New Delhi: Equitas Holdings Ltd will divest its entire stake in subsidiary Equitas Technologies Pvt Ltd (ETPL) as part of the requirement for the merger with Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB).

As part of the RBI's licensing conditions, being the promoter of ESFB, the boards of Equitas Holdings and ESFB had in July 2021 approved the scheme of amalgamation between them.

According to this scheme, all the assets held by Equitas Holdings, including its investments in ETPL, have to be transferred to and vested in ESFB.

"Since ETPL is not engaged in financial services, the company is required to fully divest its investment in ETPL. Accordingly, the board of directors in its meeting held on January 7, 2022, approved sale of its entire shareholding in the company's subsidiary, ETPL," Equitas Holdings said in a regulatory filing on Saturday.

Equitas Holdings Ltd (EHL) has two subsidiaries -- ESFB and ETPL. The latter is engaged in the business of freight aggregation. Equitas Holdings said it has appointed SBI Capital Markets (SBICAPS) to advise on the strategic buyout and/or stake sale of ETPL.

SBICAPS is in the process of undertaking a public auction process to identify potential buyer(s) and complete the transaction, it added. The RBI approved the merger between the promoter and subsidiary company in July last year.

As per the RBI norms on small finance banks, it is mandatory for the promoter of a small finance bank to reduce the stake in the subsidiary to 40 per cent within five years of commencement of operations of the small finance bank.

ESFB commenced operations from September 2016. As of September 30, 2021, EHL held 81.55 per cent stake in Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB), according to data on BSE. **PTI**

S D Polymer signs pact with Dubai-based AI Composites Materials FZE

Mumbai: S D Polymer FZE, subsidiary of S D Polymer, on Saturday said it has signed an agreement with Dubai-based AI Composites Materials FZE for expanding polymer compounding facilities in the Middle East.

Under this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), both the company will invest proportionally in the Middle East to expand the polymer compounding facility for developing, manufacturing and distributing polymer composite materials and advanced polymer compounds, S D Polymer FZE said in a statement.

According to internal sources of the company, S D Polymer is in talks to invest approximately around USD 50 million in the Middle East region. The actual amount, however, remained undisclosed.

It's an amalgamation between SD Polymers Pvt Ltd and AI Components Fze operating under the name of SD Polymers Fze, the statement added.

"We are very pleased to welcome AI Composite Materials as an important strategic and long-term partner of S D Polymer Pvt Ltd. Once materialised, the cooperation under this agreement will not only help our company expand global production footprint and improve its development structure but assist the company to solidify its long-term position in its industry," company spokesperson Dhanish Goyal said.

How chocolate from Assam reached Myanmar markets!

Guwahati: A chocolate named 'dark fantasy', manufactured in Assam's Mangaldai town, made its way into the markets of Myanmar after travelling over 2,000 km and passing through Siliguri, Kolkata, Singapore, Yangon to finally reach Kale.

This nugget of information was shared by K K Dwivedi, Commissioner to the Department of Industries & Commerce, Assam, while speaking at the ongoing Northeast Festival here on Friday.

At the 'Make in Northeast - DoNER Dialogue', Dwivedi also dwelt on several aspects of the region including how

D-Mart Q3 net profit rises 23.6 pc to ₹ 552.53 crore

New Delhi: Avenue Supermarts, which owns and operates retail chain D-Mart, on Saturday reported a 23.62 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to ₹552.53 crore for the third quarter ended December 31.

The company had posted a net profit of ₹ 446.95 crore in the same quarter a year ago, Avenue Supermarts said in a BSE filing. Its revenue from operations was up 22.22 per cent at ₹9,217.76 crore during the quarter under review against ₹ 7,542 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal.

The total expenses also increased 21.72 per cent to Rs 8,493.55 crore in Q3 FY 2021-22, compared to Rs 6,977.88 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Avenue Supermarts CEO and Managing Director Neville Noronha said: "Revenue in the D-Mart stores grew by 22 per cent in this quarter over the corresponding quarter of last year. Overall gross margins are marginally lower due to mix deterioration".

General merchandise and apparel business is consistently seeing relatively lesser sales contribution, while

essentials and FMCG are doing better, he added.

"Inflation and lesser opportunities to go out are negatively impacting certain categories more than others. We are seeing higher inflation as an opportunity to make our buying more efficient, our assortment sharper and continue to keep our costs low," Noronha said.

According to the company, for the last nine months of FY22, its total revenue stood at ₹22,190 crore, compared to ₹16,731 crore in the year-ago period.

"Net Profit stood at Rs 1,066 crore for 9M FY22, as compared to Rs 686 crore for 9M FY21. PAT margin stood at 4.8 per cent in 9M FY22 as compared to 4.1 per cent in 9M FY21," said Avenue Supermarts in a post earning statement.

Over the outlook, Noronha said that considering the current COVID wave, D-Mart's sales and footfalls will be dependent on local regulations.

"We continue to take all precautions to ensure every shopper, employee, and partner is operating in a safe environment," he added. **PTI**

had visited Kale in Myanmar. In a small market there, they saw a chocolate made in Mangaldai called 'dark fantasy'. After inquiring about it, they found the chocolate came through Guwahati, Siliguri, Kolkata, Singapore and Yangon before reaching Kale town," Dwivedi said.

The chocolate travelled over 2,000 km and for nearly two months when it would have taken two days had it travelled through the border town of Moreh in Manipur, he added. Once there is connectivity network, trade and commerce will accelerate, he asserted. **PTI**

Khawaja twin centuries lifts Australia to big lead

AP ■ SYDNEY

Usmán Khawaja's stunning return to test cricket continued Saturday with a blistering century in Australia's second innings on day four which led the hosts to 265-6 declared and set England an unlikely 388 runs to win the fourth Ashes test.

Openers Zak Crawley and Haseeb Hameed then survived a nervous 11 overs in fading light to get England safely to stumps at 29 without loss.

Khawaja, who scored 137 in the first innings in his first appearance since the 2019 Ashes series in England, headlined another dominant day for Australia with an unbeaten 101 off 138 balls as part of a 179-run partnership with Cameron Green. The 35-year-old scored his first fifty off 86 balls, but then accelerated his scoring rate by playing some extravagant strokes and brought up his hundred just 45 balls later with a two off Dawid Malan.

"I don't think it has sunk in yet," said Khawaja, who's 10th test century included 10 boundaries

and two sixes. "I've always wanted to score a century in both innings of first class cricket and never done it."

"But it's a nice one to tick off and put the team in a situation where hopefully we can win a test match tomorrow."

It was just the third time that twin centuries have been made at the Sydney Cricket Ground with former Australia captain Ricky Ponting the last man to score two centuries in an SCG test — 2006 vs. South Africa.

Khawaja is playing his test only because of Travis Head testing positive for COVID-19 ahead of the match, but has surely put in a undeniable claim to be retained for the fifth test in Hobart after back-to-back centuries.

"Happy for him, but obviously would have liked it against different opposition," said England batting coach Graham Thorpe.

"I thought he played very well and made it very hard for Australia to leave him out."

"He looked a better player from when he last played for Australia and not a bad one com-



ing in to the team." Green (74) made a welcome contribution for Australia, which had sunk to 86-4 earlier in the day, with his second half-century in his eighth test.

The record successful fourth innings chase at the SCG is 288 runs, which was achieved by Ponting's Australia in the same 2006 test against South Africa.

While it's highly unlikely England will defy SCG history and chase down a near 400-run target, Crawley (22 not out) and Haseeb (eight not out) helped give England a glimmer of hope that it may yet save the game and achieve its best result so far in the series. "With some of the injuries we've got we're going to need whether it is two, three or four players to really stand up and bat for a long time," said Thorpe.

"What I want to see is us play positively and have a good mental approach to it."

"I thought tonight our approach from Zak and Hass (Haseeb) was very good. I thought they moved well, you could see their intent." Rain is also forecast for Sydney on Sunday which may assist England's

cause in playing for a draw. "It will be interesting to see how tomorrow plays," said Khawaja.

"Fingers crossed we get some good weather because we probably need all those 98 overs that we have."

"It's going to be a bit of a grind but if we can keep asking questions over and over again I think we're a chance."

Earlier, Spinner Jack Leach took four wickets for England, including taking Green and Alex Carey off the final two balls of Australia's innings, in what was his best bowling performance of the series.

Leach (4-84) also took Marcus Harris (27) and then got the prize wicket of Steve Smith for 23, bowling the star batsman with a delivery that kept low of the SCG pitch to reduce Australia to a potentially vulnerable 86-4.

Mark Wood, who has troubled all of Australia's batsmen with his pace this series, got the wickets of Warner (3) and Labuschagne (29), both caught behind by Ollie Pope, who had replaced injured wicket-keeper Jos Buttler.

Cape of 'Confusion': Ishant's restrictive bowling or Umesh's attacking instinct?



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ishant Sharma's immense experience might gain precedence over Umesh Yadav's classical outswingers when Indian team management zeroes in on an injured Mohammed Siraj's replacement for the series-deciding final Test against South Africa.

Siraj, who sustained a hamstring strain while bowling on the first evening of the second Test, managed only 15.5 overs in the two innings and coach Rahul Dravid admitted that his injury did affect the team strategy while defending 240 in the fourth innings.

Dravid had said that it is difficult to commit whether Siraj will get fit in next few days as hamstring injuries don't heal that easily.

They require extensive rest and rehabilitation, more so for fast bowlers, who have way more workload than batters. In this backdrop, India have two options for the Newlands Test starting January 11. One is 33-year-old Ishant, who hasn't been in the best of forms but has experience of more than 100 Tests and is a work-horse.

The other is 34-year old Umesh, who has 51 Tests under his belt and in the recent past has been a better performer than Ishant, who seemed to have also lost out on a bit of pace with age catching up.

However both Dravid and skipper Virat Kohli, who everyone expects would make a comeback from his back injury in the final game, may prefer the lanky Delhi speedster for multiple reasons.

One of the biggest reasons could be his near 6 feet 3 and half inch height, which might help in creating those awkward lengths for the Proteas batters, something that the home team pacers like Marco Jansen and Duanne Olivier have enjoyed. "It just felt like the ball seemed to misbehave a little bit more for them, and that could be [because of the] fact of the height."

On up-and-down wickets sometimes just having that extra height might tend to make a little bit of a difference, so it just felt for us [that] the balls didn't misbehave as much," Dravid had said.

Even former chairman of selectors MSK Prasad agreed that Ishant should be the choice.

"We missed a tall fast bowler in Johannesburg and the only one we have is Ishant. On these kind of tracks, he is my choice ahead of Umesh. Had it been an Indian track which is rugged and feels like dustbowl, Umesh would be my 'go to' man."

The ideal length on South African tracks is somewhere in between back of the length (short) and good length (6 metre).

It's indeed a tricky one says former India keeper Deep Dasgupta, who feels that despite Ishant going off the boil in past few games, he still should be preferred at Newlands. "I won't be able to say whether Kohli has the same faith in Ishant's abilities which he had till 2019. But even then in this game, Ishant, if played, could come in handy compared to Umesh."



Bopanna-Ramkumar pair cruise to final in Adelaide

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

India's Rohan Bopanna and Ramkumar Ramanathan Upstaged fourth seeds Tomislav Brkic and Santiago Gonzalez in straight sets to reach the final of the Adelaide International, here on Saturday.

The unseeded Indian duo ousted the Bosnian-Mexican duo 6-2 6-4 in the doubles semifinals.

The Indians will now lock horns with top seeds Ivan Dodig of Croatia and Brazilian Marcelo Melo in the summit clash of the ATP 250 event.

It will be an interesting match as the 41-year-old Bopanna and Dodig have often paired up together, the most recent being in the US Open in September when the duo was knocked out in the third round. Bopanna and Ramkumar, who have paired up for the first time on the ATP tour, have enjoyed a good week so far. The two have notched straight-set wins in the tournament barring the second round match against the American duo of Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow when they were stretched to a super tie-breaker.

COVID-HIT MAN CITY OUSTS 4th-tier Swindon 4-1 in FA Cup

AP ■ SWINDON (ENGLAND)

Manchester City easily coped without seven coronavirus-infected players in eliminating fourth-tier club Swindon 4-1 to open the third round of the FA Cup.

City was still able to deploy a lineup packed with international players including the first three scorers — Bernardo Silva, Gabriel Jesus and Ilkay Gundogan.

The 19-year-old Cole Palmer scored the fourth after Harry McKirdy scored past goalkeeper Zack Steffen to pull one back for Swindon on Friday.

With manager Pep Guardiola isolating with COVID-19, assistant coach Rodolfo Borrell led the English Premier League champions.

Palmer set up the opener in the 14th minute, playing the ball into the box which was met at the far post by Bernardo Silva to tap in.

Swindon was caught unsuccessfully trying to play the ball out from the back, with City winning the ball back and Kevin De Bruyne playing



in Gabriel Jesus to double the lead in the 28th.

Ilkay Gundogan curled around the wall and into the bottom corner of the net in the 58th. City restored its three-

goal advantage after McKirdy gave Swindon something to celebrate when Palmer picked up the rebound from Silva's strike and shot into the bottom corner in the 82nd.

Naomi Osaka withdraws from Melbourne tournament semifinal



AP ■ MELBOURNE

Defending Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka withdrew from her semifinal match Saturday at a WTA tournament with an abdominal injury, allowing her opponent Veronika Kudermetova to advance to the final on a walkover. "I had a lot of fun playing here in Melbourne. Unfortunately I have an abdom-

inal injury which I need to rest and prepare for the Australian Open," Osaka said in a statement issued by Tennis Australia.

"Sad to withdraw due to injury from my match today, my body got a shock from playing back to back intense matches after the break I took," Osaka added later on Twitter.

"I'll try to rest up and I'll see you soon!" The Australian Open begins

on Jan. 17. Kudermetova on Sunday will face second-seeded Simona Halep, who beat Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 6-2 in the other semifinal Saturday in the Summer Set 1 event.

American Amanda Anisimova advanced to her first final since 2019 with a 6-2, 6-0 win over Daria Kasatkina in the Summer Set 2 event at Rod Laver Arena. Anisimova will play either fellow American Ann Li or Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus, who played their semifinal later Saturday.

In the semifinals of an ATP tournament at Melbourne Park, Rafael Nadal faced Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori in a night match. The winner will play American Maxime Cressy, who beat Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 7-6 (9). At the Adelaide International, top-ranked and Wimbledon champion Ash Barty was scheduled to play her night semifinal against former French Open winner Iga Swiatek.

Danushka Gunathilak, 30, retires from Test cricket

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's aggressive opening batter, Danushka Gunathilak, has decided to retire from Test cricket at the age of 30 to focus on the white ball formats, the country's apex cricket body said on Saturday.

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said the batter "will now be focusing on the shorter formats."

The development comes close on the heels of another 30-year-old batter, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, announcing his decision to retire altogether from international cricket and a day after the board lifted a one-year bio-security breach suspensions on Gunathilak, Kusal Mendis and Niroshan Dickwella with immediate effect.

Schopman eyeing WC berth for India women through women's Asia Cup

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian women hockey team chief coach IJanneka Schopman says qualifying for the World Cup is key objective for her side at the upcoming Asia Cup, where she will also assess her players' style and standard, going forward.

India will enter Asia Cup, to be held in Muscat from January 21 to 28, as defending champions. The winner of the event will qualify for the World Cup, which will be held in Netherlands and Spain from July 1 to 17 this year.

Schopman, for whom the Asia Cup will only be her second assignment with the team, is eager to make a positive start.

"First of all, our key objective will be to qualify for the World Cup. That is most important because that is where the best teams in the world come together to

compete," Schopman said in a Hockey India release. "I am also very keen to see the level where we are at the moment and whether we can execute the style of play that I envision for the team."

"I am not looking to measure my team against our opponents in the competition, but instead against my own expectations of how I want my team to play. I am eager to see how the team will perform in Oman as it will be really challenging," Schopman added.

Schopman, who was Sjoerd Marjine's deputy during the Tokyo Olympics where Indian women narrowly missed out on a historic bronze

and finished fourth, said her main focus in the ongoing training camp here is on striking a balance between attack and defence.

"We are working on defining our style

of play as the Indian women's team. That means a lot of movement on and off the ball and people joining in attack as we want to play fast and attacking hockey. We want to make use of our skills and speed to good effect. "At the same time, we want to be a sturdy defensive unit. I am happy with what I am seeing because the better we defend in training, the more necessary it becomes to attack better, and that really accelerates the progress of the team," said Schopman, an Olympic gold medalist with the Netherlands team in 2008 Beijing.

Also a World Cup gold medalist, Schopman is realistic about her expectations from the Indian women's team.

"Having been a player myself, I understand that there are certain situations when you are just expected to win. However, my expectations from the team are quite different. "Each player has a job to do on the field and I am more concerned with how the players execute their own jobs and responsibilities out on the field. "I am more concerned with the performance than the results, and if we are able to keep performing how we want then I am sure that the results will follow," she concluded. India will open their campaign in the eight-nation tournament against Malaysia on January 21.

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Lawyers for Novak Djokovic filed court documents in his challenge against deportation from Australia that showed the tennis star contracted COVID-19 last month, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. Reported Saturday. The No. 1-ranked Djokovic was denied entry at the Melbourne airport late Wednesday after border officials canceled his visa for failing to meet its entry requirement that all non-citizens be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Djokovic was given a medical exemption backed by the Victoria state government and Australian Open organizers based on information he supplied to two independent medical panels.

But it has since emerged that the medical exemption, allowed for people who tested positive for the coronavirus in the previous six months, was deemed invalid by border authorities. Djokovic is in an immigration detention hotel in Melbourne preparing for his challenge in the Federal Circuit Court on Monday.

The ABC reported that in the documents filed Saturday, Djokovic's lawyers said Tennis Australia on Jan. 1 granted the 34-year-old Serbian player a "medical exemption from COVID vaccination" on the grounds that he had recently recovered from the coronavirus. The exemption certification said the date of Djokovic's first positive test was Dec. 16, 2021, and that he had not had a fever or respiratory symptoms in the past 72 hours. The court submission said



Djokovic received a document from Australia's Department of Home Affairs saying that his travel declaration had been assessed and that his responses indicated that he met the requirements for quarantine-free arrival in Australia.

If he fails to have his visa cancellation overturned and gets deported for not having enough evidence to support a medical exemption to Australia's COVID-19 vaccination rules, Djokovic risks missing more than one Australian Open and could be barred for up to three years. In an emailed response to The Associated Press about what could transpire if Djokovic loses his legal fight, the Australian Border Force said: "A per-

son whose visa has been canceled may be subject to a three-year exclusion period that prevents the grant of a further temporary visa."

"The exclusion period will be considered as part of any new visa application and can be waived in certain circumstances, noting each case is assessed on its own merits."

Australian Open organizers have not commented publicly, except to tell Australian newspapers that no players have been misled over the vaccination requirements.

Tournament director Craig Tiley has continued working with Djokovic, hoping to get the defending champion into the tournament that starts a week from Monday.

Tiley's video message to Australian Open staff about the tournament's "difficult time in the public arena" was published in News Corp. Newspapers Saturday.

"There's been a circumstance that relates to a couple of players, Novak particularly... In a situation that is very difficult," Tiley said in the video. "We're a player-first event. We're working closely with Novak and his team, and others and their team, that are in this situation."

The 34-year-old Djokovic, who shares the men's record of 20 Grand Slam singles titles with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, is one of two players put into detention in a hotel in Melbourne that also houses refugees and asylum seekers. A third person, reported to be an official, left the country voluntarily after border force investigations.

LOOKING AHEAD

From watching out the actors of the year to the most awaited movies to styling your outfits, the year has plenty to offer even though it has started off on an ominous note with 1.42 lakh COVID cases reported as of January 8, 2022, says SUNDAY PIONEER

talktime

HARSH BENIWAL

The actor, who plays Sudheer in MX Player's Campus Diaries speaks with Supriya Ramesh about the show, how he found his knack for comedy among other things

'MAKE UNIQUE CONTENT AND PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT'



What is Campus Diaries about?

It's a college show that depicts the life of our students where they bunk classes and indulge in ragging. They have their experiences with toxic relationships, love, drug abuse, caste discrimination which is showcased elaborately.

What is your role?

I am playing a Haryanvi guy whose name is Sudheer. He is a character for which friends come first and is a jack of all trades. His head is always into getting things done somehow as he throws around promises and then strives to complete them. He finds validation in people's good will.

According to you, how much can one college student relate to the show?

College students can definitely relate to it because it has everything that happens or happened in a person's life during the college phase. Say love, studies, friends, canteen etc. A whole lot of people would relate to it.

How nostalgic was it for you while shooting it?

One example is that when you are sitting in the canteen and you order things in your friends name and let them pay the hefty bill. Back in the day we used to do that along with bunking lectures and falling head over heels love with a beautiful woman even one sided affections. I was pretty nostalgic while doing this project.

How did you find your knack for comedy?

When I was starting out, I wanted to act but realisation hit me like a truck. Acting is a vast department with many disciplines such as thriller, drama, comedy etc. When I made my first video I loved comedic stuff in general as I was with my friends, cracking jokes. I gained significant interest with that and thought that comedy is something that the majority of people love and enjoy. So, I thought I have to do this and then I didn't stop. Luckily, my audience started increasing along with my work so I ventured into it and started exploring the genre of comedy. That's why I created new characters and then kept going further in small calculated steps.

What would be the one thing you would like to tell the aspiring youtubers or someone who wants to do comedy?

I would like to convey that if you want to become an actor like I did and are passionate about it, make your content exclusive for the people who appeal to it. Make sure that your work has the widest reach and leaves people talking about it. This is what happened in my case, where I portrayed myself as an actor and wished to get offers just like that. So, make unique content and put your heart into it with a touch of perfection. If you have talent and potential, things will surely start moving in the right direction.

What were the challenges while doing the show?

One challenge was that in this show I had to play a guy from Haryana. I know how to speak Haryanvi but I didn't want to speak it so purely that people don't understand it altogether. North Indians can relate to it but citizens from elsewhere would not understand that. The challenge was to keep that accent but keep the Hindi speaking audience in the light. So the audience can relate to my Haryanvi but are not left in the dark altogether. I have said some typical Haryanvi words so that they understand new slang words but made sure not to go extreme with the dialect.

I am sure you kept your co-stars entertained throughout the shoot. Tell us about your experience with them?

I enjoyed and made so many memories while I was shooting for this project. I can wholeheartedly say that I now have five new friends and more. The cast has some phenomenal actors and honestly, I had so much to see and learn because they have so much experience with their ventures in the industry. When they are with you, you get to learn new techniques and realise new ways of portraying events. Whenever I go to Mumbai, I make sure that I meet them and they have promised to do the same when they come to Delhi.

What are your upcoming projects?

There are multiple projects that are being worked on. Unfortunately, due to the embargo I can't open up about them. But I assure you that I will keep my best foot forward and entertain everyone like I usually do.

WHEN I WAS STARTING OUT, I WANTED TO ACT BUT REALISATION HIT ME LIKE A TRUCK. WHEN I MADE MY FIRST VIDEO I LOVED COMEDIC STUFF. I WAS ALWAYS CRACKING JOKES WHEN I WAS WITH FRIENDS. I GAINED INTEREST AND THOUGHT THAT COMEDY IS SOMETHING THAT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LOVE AND ENJOY



ACTORS TO WATCH OUT

VICKY KAUSHAL: He has the power to raise the *Josh* among the audience with his mere presence. Tall, dark, and handsome - the actor is the perfect definition of a dreamy man! With his Army Avatar in *Uri - The Surgical Strike*, the hero became the nation's crush. After essaying *Sardar Uddham*, he is ready to mint love with his next *Sam Bahadur* due 2022.

VARUN DHAWAN: The mass entertainer hero boasts a massive female fan following owing to his deadly combination of sharp looks, witty humour, and killer dancing moves. The actor is undisputedly one of the hottest men on the block. While he made a splash with *Coolie No. 1*, the coming year will watch him in *Bhediya* and *Jug Jugg Jeeyo*.

ADITYA ROY KAPUR: There is not an ounce of doubt that Aditya Roy Kapur is one of the most loved heroes in today's time. With his sculpted body and infectious smile, the actor is guilty of making female fans go weak on their knees. The star's flair for music is a brownie point! 2022 will see the handsome star headlining *OM, Thadma* remake, and Hindi adaptation of *The Night Manager*.

RANBIR KAPOOR: One can't talk about desirable men and not have Ranbir Kapoor on the list. From his innocent smile to the boy-next-door vibe, the star has been ruling the hearts since his debut. 2022 holds a bigger surprise for his fans as he will make a comeback after three years with *Brahmastra* and *Shamshera*.

RANVIR SINGH: It is Ranveer Singh's flamboyance that makes him all shades beguiling! The actor holds command over the audience with his quirky looks, infectious energy and unparalleled screen presence. Over the years, the actor has earned himself a massive fan base across the nation. This year will see him in *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* and *Cirkus*.

The 2022 is finally here and we can't wait to see what trends will rock the new year. There are a lot of trends that were seen in 2021 which were only blooming among smaller groups, however these trends are likely to spill over in 2022 and take over the market.

A lot of micro trends which have been peeping in since the last two years will be making a grand entry this year and will be here to stay. The year 2022 is going to be a year where people want to try out new styles since they have missed so much in the last two years.

CORSET TOPS

We saw a lot of cropped rib tops in 2021. This 2021 is transitioning the 2020 crop rib top trend into corset tops. They can be casually worn with wide legged denims or even fitted pants. The corset top trend is a big inspira-

tion from the off duty model look which has been on a watch out since a while now.

MINIS

The mini length in dresses, skirts and shorts will be back in 2022. We all did see a snippet of mini skirts in 2021, specially in



the street style. The mini length will be popular in all the bottom wear categories this year. We can already see a catalogue of minis on many fashion platforms like Stargate Club & Urbanic.

CUT-OUTS

The 2010 teenage trend of cut outs is back in 2022 for all of us. It is a glamour trend this time and hence we will see cut-outs in the occasion/party wear category. A lot of icons like Kendall Jenner and Dua Lipa

were seen flaunting this trend and it is all set to hit the commercial market in 2022.

BRALETTES

Bralettes was the most watched out trend in 2021 but didn't make it to many wardrobes. 2022 will see this trend widely available on a lot of trend focused e-commerce sites and other popular retailers. People observed this trend last year and are now all ready to flaunt it them-



VOLUME SLEEVES

Volume sleeves have been an evolving trend. Initially volume sleeves were seen only as a part of occasion wear outfits, however people are now all ready to take over this trend for casual dressing. Volume sleeves can be worn as a statement piece with casual denims, shorts or skirts which make this trend wearable for everyday wear.

— Courtesy: Mitali Joshi, Marketing Manager, Stargate

STYLE BEAUTIFUL



IT IS ALL ABOUT SELF-BELIEF & HARD WORK



Success requires sacrifices and patience, is what truly proved through several stories of successful people. However, some people have thrived the world with their superpower belief system that they lit in their inner soul. Sharmistha Ghosh is one such role model for several women who dream of going beyond their limitations.

At the age of 19, being a mother with her curiosity in the world of glamour, she fostered her personality by modelling looks. With her dedication towards the fashion world, she participated in the *KingFisher Calendar Model* content in 2011

and was among the top five *KingFisher* models. In spite of her great work in modelling she decided to turn her career towards entrepreneurship and started her own restaurant in Goa called *Our Shack* in North Goa, launched in 2011. With no time her innovative ideas took the attention of tourists towards her restaurant and became popular in the city. It was also awarded by Goa Tourism for best ambiance and service.

However, no success is without thorns. She has to close her restaurants, but she never lost hope, she moved to Mumbai and worked as a marketing manager from 2015 and 2018.

Further, seeing her growth in Toronto, Canada, she migrated and worked as a restaurant supervisor. Realising her unstoppable entrepreneur attitude she is on her urge to start her own restaurant in Toronto, working on her business plan, and waiting for the funding to get approved.

She is the idol of passion, determination, and courage. With the role of a mother, she is emerging as an inspiration to several other struggling women. She wishes to set up multiple restaurants to fulfil her daughter's dreams. She also wants to open a foundation where she can adopt orphan kids.

INNEWS

If all goes well and there is not another lockdown, these are the movies to look forward to

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2: (March 25, 2022); Kartik Aaryan, Tabu, Kiara Advani

Laa! Singh Chaddha: (April 14, 2022); Aamir Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Naga Chaitanya

Brahmastra: (September 9, 2022); Amitabh Bachchan, Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Mouni Roy, Dimple Kapadia

Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness: (May 6, 2022, US); Benedict Cumberbatch, Benedict Wong, Rachel McAdams, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Elizabeth Olsen

Thor: Love and Thunder: (July 8, 2022, US); Chris Hemsworth, Tessa Thompson, Natalie Portman, Christian Bale, Chris Pratt

K.G.F: Chapter 2: (April 14, 2022); Yash, Sanjay Dutt, Srinidhi Shetty, Raveena Tandon, Prakash Raj

Avatar 2: (December 16, 2022, US); Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldan, Stephen Lang, Giovanni Ribisi, Joel David Moore, Vin Diesel Eddie Falco, Michelle Yeoh, Jemaine Clement Cliff Curtis, Kate Winslet, Sigourney Weaver

Black Panther: Wakanda Forever: (November 11, 2022, US); Lupita Nyong'o, Danai Gurira, Martin Freeman, Letitia Wright, Winston Duke, Angela Bassett, Dominique Thorne

Radhe Shyam: (Jan 14, 2022); Prabhas, Pooja Hegde

Badhaai Do: (February 4, 2022); Rajkummar Rao, Bhumi Pednekar, Rekha, Sheeba Chaddha, Ankur Rathee, Neha Dhupia

Bachchan Pandey: (March 4, 2022); Akshay Kumar, Kriti Sanon, Jacqueline Fernandez

TELLY TALE

DRAMA IS ALL YOU NEED

Zee TV recently launched a romantic drama - Aggar Tum Na Hote, that encapsulates the love story of Niyati Mishra (essayed by Simaran Kaur), who is a young, hard-working nurse, and Abhimanyu Pandey (essayed by Himanshu Soni), who is a charming, rich yet seemingly normal young man dealing with mental instability. Showcasing the extent to which a nurse goes to treat her patient, Aggar Tum Na Hote has managed to inspire viewers to love beyond boundaries. While the show seems to have already won the viewers' hearts, the fans



will now watch Himanshu perform a dangerous stunt on the show.

In the upcoming track, Abhimanyu will be seen creating a fuss in a busy market, embarrassing, and insulting Niyati in front of everyone. What will intrigue the audience more is

the jaw-dropping stunt performed by Himanshu where he will be seen breaking a glass with his bare hands, only to express his agitation towards Niyati. In fact, the whole act was spontaneous, and even Simaran didn't know that Himanshu would actually use his hands to break the glass.

Niyati said, "To be honest, I didn't even know that Himanshu would actually go and break the glass with his bare hands. I was stunned to see him do that because usually, a trained stuntman performs these acts and not the actors."

SNEAK PEEK INTO SATRANGI FAMILY

There are families, and then there's a Satrangi family, signifying uniqueness, and diversity like each of the colors in the rainbow in its true sense. This Satrangi family is all set to entertain the audience soon on Sony SAB in the upcoming show, *Sab Satrangi*. With a fine blend of fresh storyline and unique characters, *Sab Satrangi* will take the viewers to the picturesque city of Lucknow, to the Maurya household, an unconventional family who



share their joys, sorrows, dreams, and despite the differences, they hold on to each other and stay united.

The show revolves around, Mankameswar urf

Manu, played by actor Mohit Kumar. Manu is one of the most kind-hearted hardworking, resilient man you'll ever meet, who believes that good things happen to good people and that if you don't harm or have bad intentions towards anyone, bad things won't happen to you. Manu is his Daadi's laadla, the head of the Maurya family, played by Joyoshree Arora.

CONVINCING SEEMS LIKE A TASK

This week, Sony SAB's *Ziddi Dil Maane Na* has arrived at a heartfelt moment where Sid (Kunal Karan Kapoor) asks Sanjana (Diljit Chhabra) out on a date in the most romantic manner ever. While Sanjana is ecstatic and looking forward to the date, her fiancé Kundan (Angad Hasija) is angry because she has refused to get married to him. Agitated and hurt, he calls Sanjana's parents and tells them how their daughter has betrayed him and his mother's trust



and eventually convinces them to come to Devlali.

Sanjana makes up her mind that she will tell the truth to her parents and break off this engagement. Monami sees Kundan asking

for Sanjana, she is shocked to find out that Kundan is her fiancé. While at a crucial juncture in her life, Sanjana is shocked to see her parents outside the academy. Amidst a series of arguments, Sanjana's father is adamant on her and Kundan's marriage.

Sanjana is in a fix. Will she give in to her father's wishes or would take the bold step of stepping out of the marriage? How will Sid react to this? Stay tuned to find out.

the pioneer agenda



Teenagers only have to focus on themselves — it's not until we get older that we realise that other people exist — Jennifer Lawrence



FROM THE INSIDE

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Gear up to brave challenges

We need to be on full alert to brave the challenges coming our way, and grab the opportunities arising well in time



METaverse: THE BIGGEST TREND FOR 2022

You can't escape the world's growing fascination with the virtual world and all that it brings. Metaverse is set to be the hottest trend for 2022, and it will change how we interact with the world forever, writes GAURAV GUPTA

2021 was a tough year as the world bore the brunt of a raging virus, collapsing economies, job losses, political uncertainties and mental health. Everyone billed 2021 to be the year of resurgence after an unexpectedly devastating 2020, but in an anti-climax, this year left humanity reeling as new covid variants took us further away from life as we knew it.

Yet, the resilience of the human spirit stands tall, and if history is something to go by, it is tough times like these that forefront innovation and usher in new ideas. Our lives over the last two years have been reshaped with technology to adapt to the new normal, replacing almost every aspect of our real life experiences — whether it's education, offices, or social interactions. We are seeing newer ideas emerge everyday that help people communicate, collaborate and earn without needing to leave their physical space.

As the importance of "where" fades in our lives and livelihood, humanity is having its first brush with globalisation in the true sense. Digital technology allows us to be present in shared virtual spaces, sharing the same experience as someone across the globe from us, and being counted for who we are, rather than where. You didn't know it, but you are already experiencing life in the Metaverse.

WHAT IS THE METAVERSE?

The metaverse is the next iteration of the internet where users will be able to build virtual lives, cohabitate, share spaces, transact and collaborate in new ways. The term "Metaverse" was coined in 1992 by author Neal Stephenson for his science fiction novel, Snow Crash. He used the combination of Meta and Universe to talk about life-like avatars meeting in virtual reality. Today, that vision comes to life as users can enter the metaverse to share an immersive experience, facilitated by augmented and virtual reality.

The Metaverse has not sprung upon us in a day. It is a natural evolution of our digital and social media interactions. People today spend hours curating a picture for their profile picture, let their food go cold for the perfect Instagram story, and strive to create a happy, successful social media image irrespective of how their day went. The importance given to our digital lives has grown rapidly over the past decade, and now we move from 2D apps to 3D environments to build on our virtual personas.

Imagine a day in life of a 20-something today. They start their morning by grabbing their phone, scrolling through social media, texting friends, getting ready for their office zoom calls, ordering lunch from an app, working out to a Youtube video, and streaming Netflix at night. There is an app on their phone for everything — from banking to grocery shopping, and

even one for reminding them to drink water.

The Metaverse strives to improve this experience — The same person can wake up to attend a Yoga class with his friends who gather in the virtual gardens. He can attend a virtual office with higher employee interaction. He can order his meal from his favorite restaurant in the foodverse, and enjoy it with a friend. He can head to the virtual theatre and watch a movie with his girlfriend. It's the same activities that form his daily routine today, but enhanced by the power of the third dimension.

TECH-TOGETHER

This experience of course will not be possible without interactive technologies and tools. While Metaverses will rely on graphics to create an immersive environment, the virtual world will be ably supported by Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for an overall experience.

Over the past few years, technological developments in VR and AR have made them less futuristic and more of a reality. But with limited use-cases until now, we could not bring mainstream adoption to live up to the potential of the technology. The Metaverse changes that. For the first time, metaverses can usher in mass adoption for VR headsets, AR extensions and gadgets, and tie them together to enhance the virtual experience.

THE METAVERSE WILL BE EVERYWHERE

Contrary to naysayers, the Metaverse will completely blow up in 2022 and become completely mainstream by the middle of the year. With big giants like Facebook and Microsoft setting sights on virtual world dominance, you will be hearing a lot more about metaverse happenings in 2022. The world is now intently watching the dance-off between traditional tech giants and crypto-native projects like The Sandbox and Decentraland for metaverse supremacy.

As we go along the year, metaverse projects are set to move from their early-adopter phase to mass adoption as millions of people will start engaging and investing in these models. Founders will work on creating value in their projects, building communities and we will see not one winner, but many successful decentralised spaces. We will see general metaverses like The Sandbox which will be built out like virtual cities, as well as themed metaverses like OneRare, which is focused on celebrating Food from across the globe.

THE GREAT MENTAL RESET

The Metaverse forces all of us to reset our minds. Since our birth, our lives and life choices are determined by our geographical location.

“THE TERM “METAVERSE” WAS COINED IN 1992 BY AUTHOR NEAL STEPHENSON FOR HIS SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL, SNOW CRASH. HE USED THE COMBINATION OF META AND UNIVERSE TO TALK ABOUT LIFE-LIKE AVATARS MEETING IN VIRTUAL REALITY. TODAY, THAT VISION COMES TO LIFE AS USERS CAN ENTER THE METAVERSE TO SHARE AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE, FACILITATED BY AUGMENTED AND VIRTUAL REALITY”

From our school to our friends, our brains process the gamut of opportunities in our lives based on where we are.

The Metaverse forces us to look beyond our physical presence, and open our minds to the equal opportunities of a virtual world. A person in Kenya can now explore the virtual world on equal footing as the person living in Australia. Life opportunities in the metaverse are equal for all individuals — from education to recreation.

The ability to attend classes in metaverse universities will change the face of education forever. Students will be able to study the subjects of their choice, at their own pace and break away from traditional syllabus models to explore their strengths. They can study in any part of the world and interact with global student communities, with no financial burden of visas and foreign education.

Hiring across all industries will also experience a dramatic shift as virtual offices eliminate the need for employees to be present in the same city as the company. Companies will now gun for top talent across the world rather than be restricted by geographical barriers. The Metaverse is in reality, the first time we are a truly globalised world.

DISRUPTING TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES

With the advent of the Metaverse, we will also see a radical shift in traditional industry thinking in 2022. Despite the wariness to embrace new technologies, many industries will realise the critical advantages blockchain brings to the table, and embrace the metaverse.

The transparency of blockchain transactions and ability to maintain eternal records is a great asset for the Real Estate industry. The piles of documentation, transactions and meetings that come with every sale can be streamlined into a virtual city where marked plots hold all records for the land and transactions are recorded onto the blockchain.

The 9-to-5 Office Model underwent a dramatic transformation as Covid-19 sent everyone home. While employees adapted well to the Zoom & Trello model, there is fatigue setting in after almost 2 years of Work-from-Home. While some companies have enjoyed the financial benefit of cancelling office rental leases, they also realise the lack of team spirit and social connections between employees. Virtual Offices will look to re-energise employees by giving them enhanced social experiences at work, attending meetings in 3D avatars and co-working in an immersive office setting.

Working with the Food Industry ourselves, we see a massive opportunity for Chefs and Restaurants to move beyond their local monetisation models and interact with global audiences for the first time. In OneRare's Foodverse,

food professionals are not restricted to their region. They can monetise their dishes as NFTs, host interactive cooking classes, launch new global menus, and allow users to swap NFTs for real meals at their restaurants. From table reservations to virtual restaurants, there is so much to explore.

BRANDS IN THE METAVERSE

A decade ago, social media platforms started creeping into our lives and no one noticed. It was considered a fad, a whimsy of the young and restless. But it wasn't a fad. Early movers in the space were able to create multi-million dollar businesses on the basis of their social presence. Individuals became brands in their own right, and in the past few years, traditional advertising has been steadily replaced by influencer marketing.

Nowadays, many brands run entire operations via their social profiles without the need for a physical location or a website. Even the ones who begrudged the toxicity of social media had to accept its overarching ability to reach their audience. The Metaverse is the next iteration of social media for brands, and this time, companies and marketers are on high alert.

With more companies realising the power of community, brands are making a beeline for curating the ultimate metaverse experience for their consumers in 2022. Brands are already working hard to leverage social media to make users feel more connected and part of the creative process, and the 3D immersive model will allow them to take this a step further.

THE METAVERSE IN 2022

Everyone in blockchain wants to be early to the party, be ahead of the curve. With the first of the Metaverses coming out, expect a lot of noise in 2022. The believers, the investors, the users, the gamers — everyone has a reason to be excited about the Metaverse and its endless possibilities.

While Metaverse developments are in early stages, we will begin to see the impact of the one-world concept in 2022. Virtual lands will be treated with the same care as real land with NFT Art adorning virtual homes. Users will design their virtual personas with the same passion as their social media profiles. People will begin to explore the true meaning of a life without geographical barriers.

Life in the Metaverse will be a long journey, and while we may not know where it leads, one thing is certain. The Metaverse is here to stay, and 2022 will be a defining moment for the rest of time.

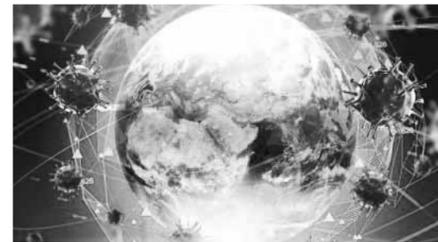
The writer is Co-Founder, OneRare, the first-ever metaverse for food, gaming, and NFTs on the blockchain ecosystem



THE MORE WE COME OUT AND
DO GOOD TO OTHERS, THE MORE
OUR HEARTS WILL BE PURIFIED,
AND GOD WILL BE IN THEM
— SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



HIDDEN SOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK



The kerfuffle continues

The New Year is not going to be different. At least that is what the indications are. Many quarters are making noise about the many variants of coronavirus. While delta is still there, omicron has suddenly cropped up. And there is a new threat called Delmicron. When hybrid is the norm from schools to offices, the hybrid strain has also emerged. With concerns about the possibility of a third wave mounting, the same agencies are back with the same stories. The fallout that is predicted is no better, or rather worse, than what we saw in the past two years. When the vaccines arrived the situation eased, with all and sundry advocating vaccination as the panacea. But there is a change in view point or interest, as the cacophony once again creates the same level of global scare that plunged the world into a thanatophobia. Just as we were beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel, darkness descends again. Some questions must be raised. Some answers must be found. We thought that vaccination would bring relief. But we got a new strain. Vaccines came fast, at unexpected pace, but more than succour we saw vaccine diplomacy. Initially it was one dose that was thought to be needed. Then some people thought once is not enough, so there was clamour for two. Even as we were struggling to give two doses to the global population to rid the world of the pandemic, a sudden and systemic warning of efficacy of two doses began, necessitating a booster or a third dose. There are still many waiting for the first, many more for the second, but the campaign for a booster has picked up. And some are finding reasons for a fourth dose. Where will all this end and why is it not ending are two very vital issues that need to be probed. Perhaps there is need to probe deeper. More so, because it's the same faces who are issuing the grim warnings while acknowledging in the same breath that nothing concrete is still known except masking and social distancing. Interestingly there is a large section of opinion that says that the new variant will not be as deadly. Of course, there are some who swear to the contrary. Certainly there is more of confusion and commotion that seems more like orchestration. While claims and counter claims of my vaccine better than yours are doing rounds, there is need to exercise some pharma covigilance. Commerce is more deadly than the virus. All sorts of opinions are thrown without genuine substantiation. Quoting studies is hardly helpful when there are studies that are pitted against one another. Some say vaccines may not work, while others say it may reduce the impact. But most say keep your fingers crossed. Some find vaccinated are getting affected, and some say it is difficult to say something. Why are they then saying is rather intriguing. And watch out, some pills have also come for those at risk. The names of these medicines are as difficult as the previous ones that were supposed to work but did not work. What confounds the confusion is that everyone is saying something about covid-19, but is not sure what works or will work in 2022. But amid all this uncertainty, one thing is certain. Some investors are making huge profits as people become experimental guinea pigs. While the specialists are groping in the dark, generalists are sermonising.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com

The writer is a spiritual leader

TO NEW BEGINNINGS

This New Year, we must resolve to meditate regularly to experience the divine power within, writes SANT RAJINDER SINGH

A new year, is a new beginning, something to look forward to. It is an opportunity to achieve all that we could not achieve in the year gone by, an opportunity to better and improve our lives. At this time of year, we generally take stock of the year gone by and plan for the year ahead, and how we can improve in various aspects of our lives.

At this time of the year, many of us make resolutions for our progress and development based on our priorities in life. However, there are very few people who stick to their resolutions. As we resolve to improve physically, mentally, emotionally, and intellectually, we should not forget the most important arena — the spiritual arena. We should make an effort to become a righteous, pure and good human being for which, we need to work on our inner selves by ameliorating our thinking and sense of understanding. If our spirit is healed, we will be well in all other arenas, so we should focus on those activities that will heal our spirit.

Reminding us of the golden opportunity of this human birth and the fragile nature of life, it is up to us to take stock of what we need to achieve in our lives. The main reason we have come into this world is to know ourselves. The more we focus on what is truly important, the better use we are making of this precious opportunity that God has given us, to realise ourselves at the level of the soul. We need to be focused on our greatest gift — the gift of this human birth. Living at the level of our physical senses, we believe that the input received through our senses is all we can experience. We spend our time searching for lasting joy and happiness in this transient world, without realising that there are spiritual worlds beyond this earth.

This world is a reflection of these spiritual worlds, which are within us and exist concurrently with the physical world. Living in this physical world, shrouded by layers of illusion, we have forgotten our true essence. We take ourselves to be the body and assume that what we experience through our physical senses is all there is to this life. As we embark on the spiritual journey, and we listen to the words of the saints and mystics, we awaken to the reality of our human existence.

Just as there are many channels of a television, the channel of God is available to us at all times. We just need to take our attention away from the channel of the physical world and direct it toward the channel of God. We can do this through meditation. In meditation we can experience the divine Light and Sound of God. We can bask in the spiritual sunshine of God's Light, much as we bask in the outer sunshine here on earth.

Our time in this existence is an



opportunity given to us by God. Having experienced our divine nature, we find the oneness of our soul with the Creator. In meditation, we take our attention away from the world outside and focus it within. Journeying within, the reality of who we are becomes clear to us; our angle of vision changes, and we begin to embrace our oneness with God and all of God's creation. Then we recognise that we are conscious beings. This is what the saints and spiritual Masters speak of as enlightenment.

When we experience our true selves through meditation, we realise that the power of God which is working within us is also working within other human beings, animals, plants, it is then that we will consider everyone our own. It is only when we invert our attention through the process of meditation that we realise our true nature and experience God's love. Only when we experience God's love can we share this love with others, and only when we share this love and transcend all boundaries do we become truly human.

As we reflect on how we can better our lives in this new year, here is a blueprint to help us lead the kind of life God wishes for us. Our lives should be centred on love — love for God and love for our fellow beings. When we open our hearts to them and take time to be with those we love, think more

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about others, and try to show them how we feel. When we radiate warmth and love to all around us, when we are more patient, more tolerant, more compassionate to others. When we give, give, and give to all around us to bring joy and happiness to their lives and to alleviate their burdens.

It all begins as we connect with God's love through the process of meditation. Our true nature is soul, and as a part of God, our soul is full of the love of God. It has an existence that is unconstrained by the limitations and boundaries we place on our body, mind, and intellect. When we live at the level of our soul, we can transcend the walls of separation and embrace one and all. We develop the godly virtues of truthfulness, nonviolence, selfless service, compassion, and humility, and we lead the life that God wishes for us.

When we experience the Light of God within us through meditation, we also see the same Light in all people and all life forms. We realise that each person is valuable, being made by God, and carrying God within them. Just as astronauts look down and see the beautiful gem of planet Earth floating in space and realise the unity of all life, so do we witness the Light of God in all. This makes us recognise all life as one human family.

True spiritual development comes when we realise that we are all one.

With that realisation, we no longer feel superior to others. We stop feeling that we are special and that all others are inferior. We reach a state in which we recognise that all are important. With this elevated vision, we then develop love and respect for all life. We care about others and do not want to see anyone in pain. We become loving, selfless human beings committed to helping others. If each person awakened to the oneness of all life, there would be peace and happiness on the planet.

The commodity that is most valued in the realms beyond this world, to which we all will go, is spiritual love. The soul is measured not by our financial records, but by the amount of love we have radiated to others. Did we love God? Did we love our fellow beings? Did we love all creation? Love is translated into thoughts, words, and deeds that are expressed in kindness to others. It is expressed in how much we care about others. It is demonstrated by how much we give of ourselves to help or serve others.

So this New Year, for our overall and wholesome development, we should also make a spiritual resolution to meditate regularly everyday and experience the divine power within so that our understanding matures and we become a righteous, pure and a conscientious human being.

The challenge of change

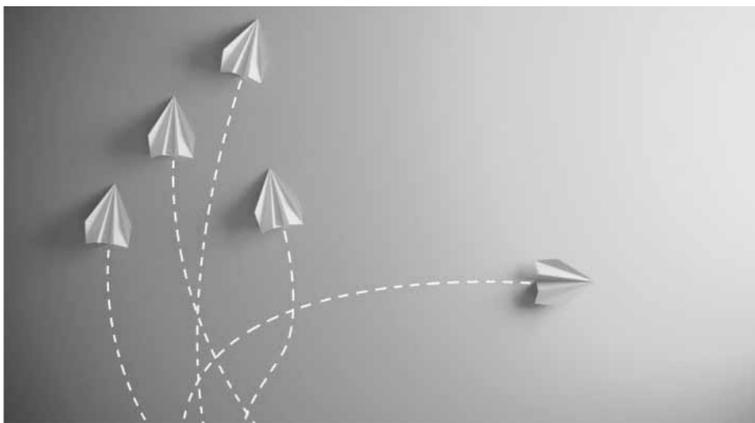
The challenge is not to just survive change but to thrive, writes ANAMIKA YADUVANSHI, as she give tips to build your resilience

Change is inevitable. There is nothing you can do to prevent change. Life moves forward and things change in one way or the other. The challenge is not to just survive change but to thrive.

Change that requires tough times to deal can be sometimes painful. That is what being resilient is all about. When there are bad times, people who have learnt resilient skills, have an increased chance of bouncing back. This can reduce depression and other health issues. Build your resilience by using the following tips:

● **Be Positive:** Being positive is being more relaxed and less worried about a tough situation and coping with out taking any stress. That does not mean that you abstain from taking action regarding the situation. Being positive means that you are relaxed after the necessary steps have been taken. It does not mean ignoring the problem in order to focus on positive outcomes. It means that setbacks are transient and that you have the skills and abilities to combat the challenges you face. What you are dealing with, may be difficult, but it is important to remain hopeful and positive about bright future.

● **Believe in yourself:** Belief in your abilities and potential plays an important role in coping with stress and recovering from difficult challenges. Believe that you are the most capable person to deal with



what has just been thrown in your lap in the form of a challenge. Have faith that you have the skill to deal with the toughest situation. Faith can move mountains. Just affirm that you can do it and you will surely do it.

● **Find out sense of purpose in your life:** Every body has a purpose in their life and sometimes the purpose of your life is bigger than you. The best time that our purpose becomes clear to us is when we are going through the toughest time of our life because you discover a lot in bad or tough times. Perhaps *Bhagavad Gita* was the life purpose of lord Krishna. Lord Ram defeated Ravana and other demons when he was

challenged and his wife was kidnapped, may be killing Ravana was the purpose of Lord Ram's life. If you are going through challenge and you are mindful, there is a possibility which you will be able to find out the purpose of your life.

● **Embrace Change:** If we keep running away from change and don't accept it then things may get worse. If we accept change, that gives an open minded approach to handle it. By learning how to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a crisis. Resilient people often utilise these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes,

highly resilient individuals are able to adopt and thrive.

● **Accept things you cannot change:** Change can be difficult to deal with so people want to change a lot of things around which is not possible so they end up feeling frustrated. For instance, today's Corona time people want to change the corona situation, they want Covid to go away which is sadly not possible overnight. What they should be doing is getting adapted to the new corona world and finding ways to boost immunity and follow Covid protocols like wearing mask, washing hands and maintaining distance.

The writer is a life coach and motivational healer

Rhythm of life

We must find a way to bring our needs, desires, and talent in harmony with each other, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

The word rhythm is mostly used in describing music and is defined as a recurring movement of sound. It is also used for describing speech. This word is also used to describe life. The rhythm of life is a way of life that brings our legitimate needs, our deepest desires, and our unique talents into harmony with each other. And it is different from routine, which is defined as strong, regular, repeated pattern by which people do live.

Let me start with needs. Human beings have certain basic needs. We must have food, water, air and shelter to survive. However these must be according to our individual needs. (*Bhagavad Gita* 6.16-17) This is where most people go wrong. They eat the above and other foods like meats mainly for taste, without considering our individual needs of nutritious and wholesome foods.

The next need is also very important, i.e. to get properly educated and trained. This is where synchronisation is crucial between our basic needs deepest desires and unique talents. When we are born, we bring our desires and talents from our previous births. Our past 'karmas' determine what talents we will be blessed with, and everyone will have some inherent talent in the human birth. This has to be recognised. Slowly, talent/talents will become apparent to the near and dear ones, including the self. This is where desires come in. One has to choose which talent to pursue and accordingly get further education and training.

This is all very nice in theory, but the providence has to be favourable, as was told by Lord Krishna in the



verse # 18.14, "The place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and the fifth in this connection is the providence only." And the providence is specific, i.e. fruits according to 'karmas'. The divine authorities administer the 'karmaphala' principle without any fear or favour. However, God is very merciful; He has kept the power to intervene in any matter He chooses. Therefore, we have to approach God if we really wish that everything falls in place in our lives, necessary for gaining rhythm in life.

Pleasing God is both easy and difficult at the same time. One can do so by praying to God for their needs, be it well-being of their parents or some material need. God welcomes such attempts; He calls such persons noble. (7.18) Why approaching or pleasing God is difficult? Because our

'ahankar' (ego) will not allow us to approach God; children have no such inhibitions. Those, who do manage to link with God, are certainly responded to by God in the manner and time chosen by Him. He may arrange help through some medium, maybe a relative. Or, God may create favourable circumstances. His grace is limitless.

How do all these affect our rhythm? With God in the picture, our needs will most certainly get regulated, i.e. we will seek what is really required. Our desires will begin to correlate to our talents and needs. Our thinking will begin to get somewhat controlled. There will be some direction, some goal of life. *Ahankar* will take a back seat. And gradually a mood of service will develop and life will gain a rhythm.

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Will Kazakh storm end Soviet-era authoritarianism?

Kazakhstan, a former Soviet Socialist Republic, is encountering a colour revolution. These types of colour revolutions are symbolic in nature in many countries of the former Soviet Union simply either to change old-style Communist governments or a series of attempted movements to bring forth pro-democracy reforms.

It seems the current demonstrations in Kazakhstan are not only against the exponential rise in fuel prices. They speak deeper maladies of the decades old authoritarian system shaped by the great Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, wherein there was no breathing space for millions who wanted change.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the current President of Kazakhstan — located in Central Asia, bordering Russia in the north and the west, China in the east, and the south surrounded by three other nations called Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — is facing a serious crisis at home.

All around the country, the protesters are rallying and crying over the fuel price hike. Today this sudden upheaval in the country has led to the resignation of the Cabinet and the declaration of a national emergency. The demonstrators have forced their way into a huge government building in Almaty, the biggest city of the country.

Protesters are armed with clubs and metal bars, indicating a violent clash between the people and the security forces across the country. Thousands massed outside the presidential palace in the city. It is learnt that police, national guard and military units are fully involved in the management of the protesters in all the troubled spots in the country.

Now, who is to be blamed for the unrest: The Tokayev administration or the crowd? The security agencies in Kazakhstan — the largest landlocked country in the world with around 19 million population, recording one of the lowest population densities in the globe — are blaming the emerging radical elements and extremists for inciting the people against the government. There were reports flashing in the media that the angry demonstrators were assaulting public and ransacking huge business establishments in some places. Therefore, how Nur-Sultan (formerly known as Astana) will respond to the raging protests is a matter of serious concern.

The Tokayev establishment is blaming the “foreign provocateurs” for pushing the country into an abyss. Apart from



An armed riot police officer detains a protester during a security anti-terrorists operation in a street after clashes in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on January 8, 2022. Kazakhstan's President authorised security forces on Friday to shoot to kill those participating in unrest, opening the door for a dramatic escalation in a crackdown on anti-Government protests that have turned violent. The Central Asian nation this week experienced its worst street protests since gaining independence from the Soviet Union three decades ago, and dozens have been killed in the tumult AP

clamping down huge restrictions on public movements, the network connectivity seems to be under strict surveillance of the secret agents. The Netblocks, the global internet monitor, stated Kazakhstan is experiencing an urgent internet blackout in the wake of the massive unrest in the country.

Some human rights agencies accuse the Tokayev Government and the Nazarbayev cronies of suppressing public anger and causing gross violation of basic human rights for years in this Central Asian nation, the size of the Western Europe with vast mineral resources and tremendous growth potential.

During the protests, the Kazakhstan government must demonstrate adequate respect for peaceful assembly and free speech. The government must uphold its commitments towards the ethos of international human rights obligations.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW), a top global human rights organisation, appealed to the Tokayev Government this

week, “When policing crowds, force should be used as the last resort and if force is justified, it must be proportionate to the threat and deployed in a way that minimises damage, injury and indiscriminate impact. Stun grenades should not be used on large crowds and given winter conditions in Kazakhstan, the use of water canons should be avoided to prevent potentially life-threatening hypothermia and frostbite. Teargas should not be used in closed spaces.”

These indeed are ideal and human guidelines that need to be observed while dealing with a large number of demonstrators. Of course, the question of safeguarding national security, territorial integrity and public property is of paramount importance. But that should not be a pretext to quell the unrest on the part of the armed units in this security-state wherein stability is hardly compromised.

It is well understood that demonstrators and their sympathisers will have to bear the brunt of the military and the

secret police in the days to come.

Meanwhile, the legendary Nazarbayev — under whose rule the country had attracted massive investments — has been stripped of his role as the Chairman of the most powerful Security Council of the country amid mounting protests.

Some of the demonstrators are chanting slogans against Nazarbayev, the great patriarch (now 81 years old) who ruled the Central Asian Republic for about three decades from the break-up of the USSR in 1991 till March 2019 when he suddenly resigned and handed over power to Tokayev, one of his most trusted men.

The reasons behind the uprising are none other than the harsh realities that are encountered by the commoners across this Central Asian nation. Clearly, longstanding concerns over economic inequality and struggles for survival during the Covid-19 pandemic have added to the current saga of fuel price hike in Kazakhstan. Particularly,

the lower strata of society, including the working-class population of the country, people working in the informal sector, women and children, are badly affected by this global pandemic. They are all battling to survive amid the severe cold and fuel price rise.

Further, the ordinary Kazakhs are tired of a regime that is utterly disrespectful to basic human rights for decades now. The authorities have long restricted universal fundamental rights, including the right to peaceful protest, freedom of association, and free speech.

Additionally, Nur-Sultan has also rejected constant calls from people for initiating meaningful political and human rights reform in this Soviet-era style of governance first under Nazarbayev and now under his protégé Tokayev. Though there are periodic elections in the country, there are no significance of the existence of Opposition parties in the country.

Eventually, Kazakhstan banned Opposition parties,

groups and political activism. Sadly, the Government has also prosecuted many of the prominent political activists in the recent past.

Initially, the protests started for economic grievances, but then gradually they all turned out to target political offices and personalities like the greats of Nazarbayev. Today people on the street are calling for immediate political reforms, including free elections for local officials, and the removal of top political stalwarts.

The fuel price rise has actually added to the woes of the local people. With the rise of the global fuel prices, many of the Kazakhs have converted their vehicles to drive on LPG as its rate is low in comparison to those of petrol and diesel. However, when the price caps on the LPG were lifted, the LPG rates doubled. So, the anger of the commoners was seen all across, gradually targeting the political bosses for all their ills.

Another problem is that though the ministers have resigned, they will continue to

hold their posts until a new Cabinet is sworn in. And also, it is not clear whether such sudden changes of the ministries would have any substantial impact either on the protesting crowd or on the future policy making framework of the Tokayev Government.

Probably, Tokayev with his shrewd counsels and superior intelligence gathering may have asked the Cabinet to resign just to quell the angry protesters on the road.

Is it a perfect storm in the making to root out Soviet-era authoritarianism? What will happen to Tokayev and how he will handle the crisis? The way upheavals are happening in Kazakhstan today may not be sufficient to topple the current authoritarian system of the country.

And Tokayev, being an experienced henchman of Nazarbayev, would be able to tackle the crisis for now, it seems. Thus, he has already ordered all the regional governments to roll back LPG price hike and also extend the same for gasoline, diesel and other socially important consumer goods.

The youngsters, liberal-minded people and the aged who have been suffering from the long-held spectacle of Nazarbayev, are all yearning for a radical change. But the question is how there could be a peaceful transition of power in Kazakhstan? The road ahead for a democratic transition in Kazakhstan would be bloody as the old style Communists and their cronies are not simply going to abandon their decades old benefits and the assets they have so far accumulated from public resources.

Needless to say post-Nazarbayev period is still like having a “frothy drink” and hence no one really knows what is there inside. However, the reality is too harsh in this former Soviet republic. To mitigate such vulnerabilities, Tokayev has limited options. People’s clamour for justice and fairness is well understood. Many such former Soviet republics are experiencing the same scenario today as they are still ruled by the same old-style oligarchy, largely devoid of popular will and consent.

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The scale of demonstration in Kazakhstan may not be sufficient to topple the current authoritarian system of the country. Hence Tokayev, being an experienced henchman of Nazarbayev, would be able to tackle the crisis for now, it seems. Thus, he has already ordered all the regional governments to roll back price hike on LPG and extend the same for gasoline, diesel and consumer goods



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Russia following Ukraine playbook in Kazakhstan

Added Kazakhstan to the list of former Soviet republics whose independence is now being threatened by Russia. Russian leader Vladimir Putin is using a similar playbook in Kazakhstan to one that he has used over almost a decade to threaten the sovereignty of Ukraine.

What began as protests over rising fuel prices on January 2, 2021, quickly escalated into violent clashes on the streets of Kazakhstan. On January 5, Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, a firm ally of Putin’s, requested support from the Collective Security Treaty Organization, of which Putin’s Russian Federation is the leading member. Russia has responded decisively by sending paratroopers, special operations troops and equipment as part of a nearly 3,000-strong force to Kazakhstan.

Tokayev explained his request by claiming that protesters are really “a band of terrorists” trained abroad. On January 7, Tokayev escalated the conflict: “I have given the order to law enforcement and the army to shoot to kill without warning,” Tokayev said. As a scholar of post-Soviet Ukraine, Russia’s involvement in

Kazakhstan looks very familiar to me. It’s similar to what happened in Ukraine beginning in 2014, when peaceful protesters were met with violence by the Government and a protest grew into a revolution that ultimately overthrew the Russian-backed leadership of the country.

Dangerous neighborhood
Seizing on that moment of domestic unrest in 2014, Putin gave direct orders to annex Crimea, a Ukrainian territory, home to a key Russian naval base. Shortly afterwards, he supported a war mounted by so-called Russian-speaking separatists in Ukraine’s east.

For more than eight years now, the Russian Federation has continued to support that conflict in Ukraine and has recently threatened Ukraine with a full invasion. This most recent version of Putin’s aggression toward Ukraine came in November 2021, when he staged 175,000 troops along the Ukraine border. His goal: to use a potential invasion as leverage to stop Ukraine from joining the alliance of Western countries known as NATO.

In Kazakhstan, as in Ukraine in 2014, the Russian government explains its military presence as

appropriate and requested by a legitimate government. As in Ukraine, the Russian government emphasises that external forces are responsible for unrest in the former Soviet republic. As in Ukraine, Russia has pointed out the need to protect the Russian speakers.

These tendencies of the Russian government to assert dominion over former territories that it lost during the breakup of the Soviet empire demonstrate that Russia is willing to act quickly and do anything to keep control of its neighborhood. I see this as an important message about what the Western leaders can expect from a meeting with Russian officials in Geneva on January 10 to discuss the conflict building again along Ukraine’s border and Russia’s demands that NATO not expand to Ukraine.

Soviet and Russian legacies
Russia has long seen Kazakhstan as within its sphere of influence. In a press conference on December 23, 2021, Putin called Kazakhstan a “Russian-speaking country in every sense of the word.” Earlier Putin claimed that before the collapse of the Soviet Union, “Kazakhs never had a state

of their own.” In December 2020, two members of Russia’s parliament claimed that territories of northern Kazakhstan were “a big gift” from Russia to Kazakhstan.

Such claims are reminiscent of the language that Putin has applied to Ukraine. He has often claimed that Ukraine was not a real country, including in an article published by the Kremlin in July 2021, in which he claimed that “modern Ukraine is entirely the product of the Soviet era.”

The use of the same terminology does not bode well for Kazakhstan.

Putin’s references to a Russian-speaking population in Kazakhstan are reminiscent of the experience of Ukraine’s Crimea region. In April 2014, Russian soldiers appeared on the streets of Crimea, forced Ukrainian soldiers to leave their posts, and oversaw a so-called referendum that allowed for Crimea to be integrated into the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation said then, and continues to claim, that its interest in Ukraine is a continued concern for the welfare of the Russian speakers in Ukraine, which in Russia’s view is being oppressed. Controversial Russian politi-

cian Vladimir Zhirinovski claimed on January 6, 2021, that Russian speakers in Kazakhstan are similarly oppressed by Kazakh language requirements. Zhirinovski is a radical figure in Russian politics, but it is usually assumed that he voices the more extreme claims of the Russian government.

Protecting from foreign invaders

Kazakhstan’s President Tokayev claimed that the protests in his country were fueled by the “free press” and foreign forces who were sponsoring terrorist activity in his country. The Russian government willingly accepted this terminology. Tokayev did not specify which external forces he meant.

Putin has long claimed that the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine in 2014, which ousted his ally, President Viktor Yanukovich, was really a coup sponsored and coordinated by the US.

Similar arguments about outside influences were made by the embattled Belarusian dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, about the anti-government protesters in Russia-aligned Belarus in 2020. The spokesperson for the Russia

Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, said on January 6 that there is a need to stop extremism in Kazakhstan. Her words came in response to European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell’s concerns over the Russian troop deployment.

This consistent message supports Putin’s narrative about the need to protect Russia and the countries in its neighborhood against what he regards as destabilising influences like the US and NATO, which, according to Putin, support and promote anti-government extremists and revolutions in the region.

Show of strength

Putin continues to cultivate an image as a decisive leader who responded to a call from a neighboring country to “help Kazakhstan overcome this terrorist threat.”

His actions in Kazakhstan, I believe, are aimed at both internal and foreign audiences. Domestically, Russian media see Russian troops as a part of a multilateral peacekeeping response, which includes troops from Belarus and Armenia. Deployment of so-called peacekeeping forces in Kazakhstan in the middle of instability and violence

will be portrayed in Russia as a huge achievement for Putin.

This is also a message to Ukraine and the West. Putin will not hesitate to show strength to achieve Russia’s goals. Russia now has nearly 100,000 troops along the Ukrainian border. And while there was a reported withdrawal of 10,000 soldiers in late December in a de-escalation effort, most of the troops and military equipment remain.

Geneva outlook

Negotiations in diplomacy require compromise. However, Russia is entering the talks in Geneva with an ultimatum toward NATO and the US.

Russia’s demands, according to Reuters, include a “halt to NATO enlargement, no deployment of its weapons systems in Ukraine and an end to “provocative” military exercises” in the region.

Russian action in Kazakhstan should serve as a sobering reminder to Western countries that Russia is willing to act decisively to protect its interests and retain its influence in the neighboring countries.

(By Lena Surzhko Harned. Courtesy: The Conversation, via AP)



YOUR YEAR AHEAD

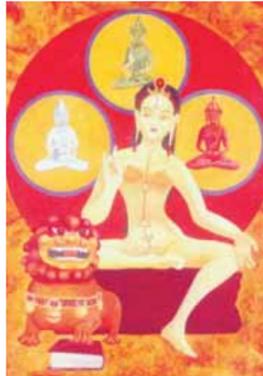
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This year your Yin Yang energies are extremely well balanced and thus you will enjoy a happy and secure relationship with friends, family and beloved. You are likely to spend quality time with your loved ones. Those singles will find someone to warm your heart. Career-wise, you have more than two work avenues that establish your career and a significant income. You will set your goals clear and work sincerely to achieve them. You are likely to face important decisions this year, therefore meditate and connect with your angels to help you in making the right decision. Overall, this year, you will appreciate life to the fullest. In terms of your spiritual beliefs, they will be understood with respect by others.

Lucky Colour Grey, White, Turquoise
Lucky Number 9, 19, 30
Lucky Day Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This year, you will learn from your previous experience and will work towards reinforcing your existing relationships. You will eventually find the strength to move forward and open doors for brand new love to enter your life. In the career sector, you may take a chance which is in all good intentions, but it may not work out as hoped. Finance related worries will soon get over. New opportunities will open their doors as soon as you close the old one. This year, all that was bothering you in the past will fade away and convert into a brand-new beginning. Over a period of time, you have learnt some really valuable lessons that have, in turn, developed inner security and will enable you to follow your dreams.

Lucky Colour Pink, Peach, White
Lucky Number 10, 11, 12
Lucky Day Monday, Tuesday, Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This year, your relationship with your family, friends or beloved look good. You will spend some quality time with your near and dear ones. You will be surrounded by those you love and will be delighted with what's happening around you. Those who are single, love will come your way and grow stronger this year. Your professional life will be enriched and contented and you will have the energy to incline towards the career perks. As you approach a new phase, you will attend important events and meet interesting and influential people who will lead you to new ideas and career opportunities. On the emotional and spiritual front, you will learn from your previous mistakes and will use your knowledge to grow in life.

Lucky Colour Black, Gauge, Peach
Lucky Number 4, 11, 19
Lucky Day Thursday, Saturday, Sunday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

Love is always available to you easily. You attract love into your life because you know the importance of appreciating loved ones. This year you to get comfortable in your current relationship. Those who are single will find a way to connect with their soul mate. Your career is likely to get affected by some changes in your area of romance and relationship. You need to organise and bring balance to your professional and personal life. Like your career sector, your financial situation is also affected by your personal life. Slowly and with the help of friends and loved ones, you will move forward and soon will attain financial stability. New beginnings may arise in March that will help you conquer. Overall, a good time with your family and friends.

Lucky Colour Indigo, Pink, Yellow
Lucky Number 2, 6, 23
Lucky Day Sunday, Thursday, Friday



VRIGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Until now what seemed hard to understand will now become crystal clear. You will realise and trust the cycle of life. You are likely to go with the flow of love life. Love is waiting for you; all you need to do is breathe easy. On the career front, you know how to grab the attention of influential people and gain their trust. This is the year you are likely to make an important decision regarding your existing job. To make the right decision, connect with your inner voice. Your inner self will be your guide to success. Overall, you will reinforce strong energy of prosperity and blessing into your life. The year will be full of new opportunities. In spiritual terms, you will realise that it's a divine right to live in a harmonious and emotionally rich environment.

Lucky Colour Peach, Green, Sky Blue
Lucky Number 14, 18, 26
Lucky Day Monday, Tuesday, Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This year you will receive love and will focus your attention on your loved ones and their happiness. Those who don't feel the energies in your spirits, then you need to leave behind the toxic vibes and let go of the relationship. Career-wise, travel will be relevant to your career growth. The days ahead will bring in career-changing opportunities. Your dreams are just on the horizon. There might be a bit of a struggle to realize your dreams, but you will overcome all hurdles and achieve your goals. Financially, this year will be satisfactory. All you need to do is to stand your ground with your strength. This is because you have a hand of destiny over you. Keep a positive attitude and meditate to connect with your inner self.

Lucky Colour Yellow, Brown, Baby Pink
Lucky Number 7, 12, 13
Lucky Day Monday, Wednesday, Saturday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Love will come to you only when you start loving yourself. You will slowly come out of a phase where you have become exhausted by giving all out to your loved ones. You need to connect with the frequency of love and care. In career, something amazing will happen. Many new opportunities and sources will come your way. You will vibrate in positive and affirmative prosperity. Travel is on the cards either associated with work or further studies. Overall, it will be a good year, career-wise. Financially, you will be doing well. You will experience a spiritual elevation to a higher dimension, and this will make you feel closer to the universe. All your efforts will be paid and you will regain confidence in yourself.

Lucky Colour Orange, Purple, Red
Lucky Number 3, 6, 10
Lucky Day Tuesday, Thursday, Friday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

In terms of relationship, a lot of transformation is expected in this area. The harmony and joy in your life will be affected due to workload. To maintain a balance in your life, you may require to dismantle the current workloads and start afresh. You need to protect your emotional life and need to love and take care of yourself. On the career front, you will take a stand for your rights within conditions. The year ahead looks promising for you. Those looking for a change should take advantage of any kind of experience you have to attract your kind of work. Take your chances, luck will favour you. Your finances will improve gradually, and you will be able to start saving for your future and your family. Overall, the year is looking good for you.

Lucky Colour Brown, Grey, Green
Lucky Number 9, 12, 17
Lucky Day Friday, Saturday, Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This year, new and amazing love experiences are in store for you. New life lessons will come your way. You are about to learn to live and love with full spirit. The card indicates that you will lead to a new level of love that will make you appreciate every individual around you. On the career front, everything will be manageable, until you find yourself as having to undertake unexpected expenses. You need to put in a little more effort and work hard to realise your goals. Dedication is the key to success this year. Financially, you will do well. You will experience a boost of energy that will help you finish pending tasks. New chapters of life await you this year. Get ready to enjoy the fruits of your labour.

Lucky Colour Pastel Color, Magenta, Brown
Lucky Number 8, 18, 20
Lucky Day Wednesday, Friday, Saturday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This year the energy of love will enforce and attract your exciting relationship. Singles will take time to find their soul mates, but you will vibrate in amazing love frequency from their family and friends. In career, you will handle any job with ease and grace. You will be known for your hard work and honesty. All of this will make you feel content. A positive attitude will help you feel comfortable, and success will flow in abundance. Financially, you are likely to start something new. Whatever finance you may need will come to you easily. You are likely to understand your inner self and life path. Though challenges will come your way, this time you know how to deal with them. You will benefit tremendously from your karma credit.

Lucky Colour Parrot Green, Silver, Grey
Lucky Number 13, 15, 18
Lucky Day Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This year is all about energy and passion. You will explore new paths in your life which will allow you to creatively use your skills in your home and relationships. At a certain point in time, you need to take things easy and take your time. Connect with your inner vibration for care and gratitude. Career-wise, you need to understand that what might seem impossible could be a blessing in disguise, later. Financially, you will emerge from the dark phase and will experience hope. You will have more than one source of income and all of them will yield you good. In terms of your well-being, you are likely to gather strength to walk away from a spiritual or religious avenue that has ceased to hold true in your eyes. You can set your goals and pursue them.

Lucky Colour Red, Mauve, Golden
Lucky Number 7, 20, 22
Lucky Day Monday, Saturday, Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You know the meaning of deep love and you will find comfort in your relationship. Your creative visualisation will help you to turn your lifestyle wishes into reality. You are likely to walk away from a negative phase of your life. You will find reasons to celebrate with loved ones. On the work front, you are in the right position to make some career-oriented decisions. You are a hard worker and this year you will bear the fruits of your efforts. As per the card, new beginnings are in alignment that will be very productive. You are likely to undertake something new that offers a substantial increase in your financial status and security. New and influential people will enter your life as you educate yourself and increase your knowledge by expanding your spirituality.

Lucky Colour Green, Sky Blue, Indigo
Lucky Number 15, 23, 31
Lucky Day Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

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ASTROTURF

BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Gear up to brave challenges

I wish the valued readers a happy New Year and a pleasant life ahead. Nothing, however, comes easy. The world remains in a state of flux. Energy dynamics of the cosmos keeps varying, throwing fresh environmental challenges. We have been facing Covid onslaught all across the globe for the past 2 years. It does also unfold fresh opportunities. We have, however, managed the situation much better than the last pandemic between 1918-1920. It's all because of human efforts, especially of scientists aggressively engaged in developing vaccines and medicines, and people's collective response. With Omicron variant of Covid raising head, growing in number day by day, it needs no astrological analysis to make out that the challenge is yet not over. So, we can't lower our guards.

Let us look at the legacy we have carried forward from the previous year, through the lens of the astrological chart drawn at the time of Lunar Eclipse on November 19, 2021. Pisces *lagna* was rising at time of full Moon, with its lord Jupiter in debility in the 12th house identified with losses. It is a clear indication of public health suffering, and common people due for a tough time ahead.

Consequently hospitals would be under great strain. Mercury conjunct Mars in the 8th house, placed adverse to Saturn and Jupiter, points to mortality rate being high. How big? Time ahead will tell. As the Sun, identified with general immunity level enters Capricorn sign, and closes up with limiting Saturn, covid cases may considerably go up. Eighth lord Venus in the 10th placed adverse to Sun identified with ruling class posited in the 8th house indicates that government is on a weak wicket, especially in terms of financial management. Youth will be restless. It will be a tough time for policy makers. Security situation will need watch, especially when Mars transits close to Saturn during March-April. In May, Mars transits close to Jupiter when religious strife and financial trouble seems imminent.

Nation's Independence chart too doesn't appear to be encouraging. Transit Rahu and Ketu will be respectively over their natal positions, indicating unpredictable turn of events, which could affect even polity, akin to 2003-2004, 1984-85, and 1966-67. Transit Saturn opposite natal Mercury implies policy flip flops, literary world coming under great strain, and vilification of intellectuals. During



January and February, transit Saturn will be opposite its natal position and Venus implying financial concerns, baffling the ruling class. During March-April, transit Saturn will be opposite natal Sun. By April end, Saturn moves to Aquarius sign. But early June, Saturn becomes retrograde and will revert back to Capricorn sign in mid-July. Once again transit Saturn will be opposite natal Sun. It is indicative of political uncertainties. Many a times, such alignment lead to change of guard also. Mars transit to Capricorn sign opposite natal Moon, Mercury, Saturn and Venus may raise public anger, youth unrest, upsetting financial situation and serious security concern. Even border skirmishes are not ruled out. Security concern even in May seems probable as Mars transits to Pisces sign wherefrom it will be trine to natal Saturn. For, Mars and Saturn form adverse angle in nation's Independence chart.

Let us now look at the astrological pointers of New Year chart. *Lagna* and 10th lord Mercury placed in the 4th house, adverse to Mars and debilitated Moon is indicative of people's desperation and public anger. Incidentally, the *lagna* sub-lord Moon conjunct Mars and also placed adverse to mischievous Neptune is

indicative of unforeseen turn of events. Many scandals may be in sight. 10th sub-lord Saturn in the 5th house (8th from 10th) placed adverse to Uranus in the 8th house, and tenanted in the constellation owned by Moon in the 3rd house (6th from 10th) is indicative of the Government being on a weak wicket, making them defensive.

Even solar ingress of the Sun in Capricorn sign, the natural signifying sign for India doesn't look any good. Mars firmly placed in its own sign in the 10th house opposite Moon and placed adverse to mischievous Neptune implies that it will become difficult for the ruling clique to face public ire.

These are general indications to be forewarned, and should not be taken in finality. Much will depend on how those at the head of things steer the course of events. We, however, need to be on full alert to intelligently brave the challenges coming our way, and grab the opportunities arising well in time.

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