

OPINION 6
WHY TAIWAN IS AN
EYESORE FOR CHINA**WORLD 8**
BOOSTER 88% EFFECTIVENESS
AGAINST OMICRON: UK STUDIES**MONEY 9**
MARKETS KICK OFF 2022 IN
STYLE DESPITE OMICRON

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY JANUARY 4, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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*Air Surcharge Extra if ApplicableRAHANE, PUJARA
FLOP SHOW
CONTINUES
12 SPORT

Delhi, Maha head for Covid crisis

4,099 fresh cases in Delhi, 12,160 in Maha; India's daily spike reaches 33,750

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The Covid-19 is marching relentlessly across the country with each day total case count registering new high and the situation turning for the worse in States like Delhi and Maharashtra. On Monday, Delhi registered 4,099 fresh cases of Covid-19 and one death in the past 24 hours. The positivity rate has increased to 6.5 per cent from 4.59 per cent recorded Sunday.

On the other hand, Maharashtra recorded 12,160 Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of cases from 66,99,868 cases to 67,12,028 cases. Similarly, the State recorded 68 Omicron cases, taking the total number of Covid-19 variant cases from 510 cases to 578 cases.

While 33,750 Covid-19 infections were reported from across the country during the last 24 hours on Monday, the Omicron tally breached 1,700 marks of which 639 people have recovered. According to an estimate, cases of the virus nearly tripled in the week ending Sunday as compared with the previous seven days, registering an unprecedented rise of 181 per cent rise during the period. Covid-cases on Monday were 22 per cent higher than Sunday, while 123 died due to the virus in a day.

The variant of concern has spread to 23 States. Maharashtra topped the Omicron list with 510 cases followed by Delhi (351) Kerala (156), Gujarat (136), Tamil Nadu (121) and Rajasthan (120).

Bihar also reported the highest weekly percentage increase, with cases going from 85 in the December 20-26 week to 1,073, a 12-fold rise although the absolute numbers were low as yet while Bengal recorded the second highest weekly number of cases at 18,524, up more than five times the previous week's tally of 3,550.

Jharkhand numbers also leaped by nearly nine times to 2,879, from 326. Other States where this week's cases were at least five times higher than the preceding one included Gujarat (4,410 cases), Uttar Pradesh (1,617), Rajasthan (1,403), Chhattisgarh (1,133) and Haryana (2,285).



Health workers wearing PPE prepare a Covid-19 ICU ward for the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic, at District hospital in Mirzapur, on Monday

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was optimistic that the Covid-19 pandemic will end in

2022 only if inequity ends. In a statement on Friday, Ghebreyesus said "as we enter the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic, I'm confident that this will be the year we end it, but only if we do it together".

Meanwhile, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that in the last few days, 187 reports of genome sequencing have come, and out of these 187 samples, a total of 152 people were found omicron positive. "Omicron is now the dominant variant in Delhi; around 81 per cent of cases in Delhi are of the Omicron variant," Jain added.

The Minister said that if the international flights had been banned in time, Omicron would not have spread in Delhi. "The people arriving at Delhi

Airport coming from abroad are being tested and are being sent to isolation facilities if tested positive and are being treated accordingly," he added.

Continued on Page 2

Centre allows work from home for 50% of its staff below under secretary-level

New Delhi: The Centre has allowed 50 per cent of its employees below the level of Under Secretary to work from home amid rising coronavirus cases, according to a Personnel Ministry order issued on Monday. Persons with disabilities and pregnant women employees have been exempted from attending the offices, it said.

China building bridge over Pangong lake

It aims to ease rapid deployment of PLA troops on banks of the lake

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a worrying development for India, China is building a bridge across the Pangong Tso (lake) in eastern Ladakh for rapid deployment of its troops on both the banks of the lake.

The two-year-old stand-off between India and China started from Pangong lake when the Chinese troops blocked an Indian patrol leading to exchange of blows.

Situation later turned serious with the Chinese troops transgressed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at several points leading to a bloody clash in the Galwan valley in 2020.

Twenty Indian Army personnel, including the commanding officer, died in the brawl. China is yet to official-



ly announce the number of casualties it suffered. Indian security establishment says more than 40 Chinese soldiers were killed. Two days back, China unfurled its flag on its side of the LAC in the Galwan valley. Sources said here on Monday that the flag shown in a video released by some Government mouthpieces of China is not in the demilitarised zone mutually agreed upon by both the countries.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi asked the Government to explain the latest development regarding the unfurling of the flag.

Incidentally, the unfurling of the flag and construction of the bridge surfaced two days after the two Armies exchanged gifts and pleasantries on the New Year's day at some border meeting points all across the LAC.

On the bridge across the 135-km long strategically-crucial Pangong Lake, satellite footage shows the bridge is coming up at the narrow part of the lake in a region called Khurnak in the Chinese area, sources said here on Monday.

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Home Minister Amit Shah chairs high-level meeting with security and intelligence officials in Delhi on Monday

Over 37 lakh teenagers from 15-18 yrs get first Covid jabs

Vax drive for children begins; 39.88L register on CoWIN till Monday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 37 lakh teenagers between 15 and 18 received their first Covid shots, Covaxin, on the first day of the special vaccination drive for children launched across the country from Monday morning, amid clear signs of the beginning of a fresh Covid-19 wave in the country fueled by the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

Most of the schools and other educational institutions are being used as inoculation centres for those between 15-18 years. The Government has advised States to make separate Covid vaccination centres (CVCs) for children and adults to avoid mixing of vaccines.

Those born in 2007 and before are eligible for the vaccine. As per the data available on CoWIN portal, more than 39.88 lakh beneficiaries, aged 15 to 18 years, registered themselves on the website till Monday afternoon.

Around 7.5 crore children of this age bracket will be vaccinated across the nation under the drive.

Earlier, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had tweeted, "Great to see that our young friends all over the country are uploading their



A health worker administers a dose of Covid-19 vaccine to a teenager in New Delhi on Monday

pictures of getting vaccinated, inspiring people all over India".

In another tweet, he urged this age bracket to get vaccinated at the earliest and further strengthen the world's largest vaccination drive.

Mandaviya had visited the vaccination centre at Ram Manohar Lohia hospital in the national Capital and enquired about the process.

As of now, only Bharat Biotech's indigenously-made Covaxin will be available for vaccinating this age bracket. According to the Union Health

Ministry, all States and Union Territories will get additional doses of vaccines for administering to this population category.

On December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that vaccination for the 15-18 year age group will begin from January 3.

Meanwhile, the administration of the third dose of vaccine for health workers, frontline workers, and vulnerable senior citizens will begin from January 10.

Continued on Page 2

66 people on Mumbai-Goa cruise ship test Covid +ve

PTI ■ PANAJI

As many as 66 of the over 2,000 people on board the Cordelia cruise ship, which came to Goa from Mumbai, have tested positive for Covid-19, State Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said on Monday. The cruise liner, where the NCB busted a high-profile rave party in October last year, was carrying hordes of New Year revellers.

A medical team in PPE kits came on board to conduct RT-PCR tests of the passengers and crew members, and the sample testing process continued till Monday afternoon. The testing of those on board the vessel was necessitated after a crew member was found infected with the coronavirus on Sunday, an official said. Officials had instructed that no one should disembark from the ship till the result of the RT-PCR tests was declared. The liner is anchored close to Mormugao Port Trust (MPT) cruise terminal.

On Monday afternoon, Rane tweeted, "Out of 2000 samples tested from Cordelia cruise ship, 66 passengers tested positive for #COVID19. Respective collectors and MPT staff have been informed. The



authorities will decide whether to allow disembarking of passengers from the ship."

The ship, operated by a private firm, had arrived at Mormugao Port Trust in Goa on Sunday. A day ago, Goa had reported 388 new Covid-19 cases, taking the infection tally to 1,81,570, while one death raised the toll to 3,523, as per official data.

Ensure all voters get both Covid doses: EC to poll-bound States

Polling staff must get second dose on priority, eligible for precaution dose: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After assessing the Covid-19 situation in the five poll-bound States, the Election Commission (EC) has asked them to accelerate the vaccination drive to ensure that all eligible citizens in their respective States are fully inoculated at the earliest. The EC has also asked to ensure that the personnel to be deployed on election duty are "double vaccinated".

The poll panel reportedly expressed concern about the low percentage of first dose vaccination in Manipur.

According to sources, in a



recent letter to the chief secretaries of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur, and Punjab, the EC reminded them that polling personnel come under the category of frontline workers and are eligible for the "precaution dose" of the Covid vaccines.

The commission has said the polling personnel to be deployed in these States should be fully vaccinated and those eligible for the second dose of the vaccines should be administered the jabs on a priority basis, the sources cited the letter.

Continued on Page 2

Wanted LeT terrorist Parray, aide killed in Srinagar shootout

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

One of the three Mughal gardens in Srinagar, Shalimar Bagh witnessed a brief shootout in which dreaded Lashkar-e-Tayyiba terrorist, Saleem Parray, was gunned down by the joint team of security forces on Monday.

In a separate encounter, a foreign terrorist, a close associate of Parray, too was neutralised by the elite commandos.

Meanwhile in Jammu, alert BSF troops neutralised a Pakistani intruder along the International border in the Arnia sector and recovered a huge cache of arms/ammuni-



tion and narcotics.

The seizure included 03 AK-47 Rifles with 5 magazines, 4 pistols with 7 magazines, several rounds of ammunition and 5 packets of heroin.

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Ashish named in Lakhimpur chargesheet, but not dad MoS

Farmers seek Union Min's name in chargesheet

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Ashish Mishra has been named as the prime accused along with 13 others in the chargesheet submitted on Monday in Lakhimpur Khari violence case. But much to relief of his father, Union Minister of State for Home, Ajay Mishra 'Teni', the Special Investigation Team (SIT) didn't mention his name in the 5,000-page chargesheet which was submitted in the court of the chief judicial magistrate of Lakhimpur on Monday.

The chargesheet was



brought to a local court in a big trunk just a day before the deadline of 90 days for the investigation which is to Tuesday.

The farmers fighting the case, however, were unsatisfied with the chargesheet. They demanded that the Union Minister, who is also the MP from Khari seat, should be named as an accused as well.

Speaking to the media, advocate Mohammad Amaan, the representative of the victims, said they had named

Teni in the complaint but still, his name was not included in the FIR. Later, they had also approached SIT to include Teni's name, but nothing happened. Amaan alleged that the team had not probed the case properly. The Thar jeep that rammed into the people was registered under Ajay Mishra's name, but he allowed to go scot free, he added. The advocate said he would move the court, asking for a thorough investigation.

Although Mishra's son, Ashish, figures as the key accused in the case that claimed eight lives, a new name has emerged in the chargesheet, and the accused has been identified as Virendra Shukla who is believed to be Mishra's relative.

Continued on Page 2

Taliban shut down women's baths in Afghan province

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Taliban officials in northern Balkh province, bordering Uzbekistan, have announced the closure of all general baths for women, *Khaama Press* reported.

As the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is taking root across the country, their restrictions, especially on women, are also increasing.

The decision was taken unanimously by religious scholars and provincial officials of the Directorate of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in the province.

Based on the new decision, women can only take shower in private baths while observing Islamic hijab, not in general

baths, the report said.

The head of the Directorate of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Balkh province said that the decision was made after consultations with religious scholars (Ulema).

"Since people do not access modern baths at home, men are allowed to go to general baths, but women are supposed to go to private baths while observing hijab," said the head of the directorate.

Under age boys are also banned from general baths, and body massage is also banned in the baths.

Earlier, local officials in western Herat province had temporarily closed general baths for women.

CAPSULE

CENTRE SUSPENDS BIOMETRIC ATTENDANCE

New Delhi: The Centre on Monday suspended marking of biometric attendance for all its employees till January 31, as a precautionary measure to check the spread of coronavirus. Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said the decision has been taken in the interest of safety and health of the Government employees.

V-P ASKS ICAI TO IMPROVE FINANCIAL LITERACY

Kochi: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday stressed the need for improving financial literacy among the masses and urged ICAI and professionals like Chartered Accountants to work in this direction by explaining financial rules and regulations in simple and easy language for the larger benefit of the public.

Rahul seeks sacking of Union Min Mishra

Says Modi Govt trying to save accused in Lakhimpur Kheri violence as SIT files chargesheet

New Delhi: The Narendra Modi Government is "trying to save the accused" in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Monday and demanded the sacking of Union Minister Ajay Mishra after an SIT filed a charge sheet in the case.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, that claimed eight lives, on Monday filed a charge sheet against 14

accused, including Ashish Mishra, the son of the Union minister of state for home.

Of those named in the charge sheet, Ashish Mishra and 12 others have been arrested in the case. "The entire country has seen the truth of the 5,000-page charge sheet in the form of a video. Yet the Modi government is trying to save the accused. India is a witness! #Lakhimpur #Farmers" he said in a tweet in Hindi, using the hashtag seeking dismissal of MoS Ajay Mishra.

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said "false apologies" and withdrawal of farm laws would not help "cover-up Modi's anti-farmer mindset".

"They are in the position of protector but stand with the

destroyer. In the charge sheet of the Lakhimpur Kheri massacre case, the son of the Union Minister of State for Home is the main accused in the crushing of farmers," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

"But due to Narendra Modi ji's patronage, Minister Ajay Mishra Teni did not even come under the scrutiny of the investigation and he remains in his post," Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged and demanded the sacking of Ajay Mishra Teni.

Four farmers were allegedly mowed down by an SUV in the Lakhimpur Kheri district, the native place of MoS Home Ajay Mishra on October 3 last year. In the ensuing violence, four people, including a journalist and two BJP workers, were also killed.

PTI

Yogi slams Cong for ‘divisive politics’

Those who proclaim themselves accidental Hindus are not Hindus: CM to Gandhian family

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a veiled attack on the Gandhi family for practicing 'divisive politics', Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that those who proclaimed themselves 'accidental Hindus', cannot call themselves Hindus and sought to know why the family goes out and claims allegiance to Hinduism during elections.

"Unhe chunaav me hi 'mandir' aur Amethi ki yad aati hai," he said.

Addressing a public rally in Amethi, a bastion of the Gandhi family in Uttar Pradesh till 2019, the chief minister remarked, "Those who have always adopted divisive politics, who have disintegration and division in their genes, whose ancestors used to say that we are accidental Hindus, cannot now call themselves Hindus."

Yogi laid the foundation stone for a government medical college worth Rs 293 crore and also inaugurated a 500-bed district-level referral hospital built at a cost of Rs 86.42 crore in Amethi. Union Minister Smriti Irani was also present on the occasion.

Taking a jibe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Yogi said, "He does not even know how to sit in a temple and knows nothing about Hinduism or Hindutva. During the elections in Gujarat, the former MP of Amethi went to a temple and sat there in the position to offer namaz. The priest had to interrupt and guide him how to sit in a temple."

Accusing the previous Samajwadi Party government of bringing anti-communal law and playing with the faith of Hindus, the chief minister said,

"By bringing anti-communal law in the country, they wanted to imprison the Hindus of this country and wanted to play with their faith. But as the elections inch closer, they have the audacity to go out and pose as staunch Hindus."

Yogi further said, "We are not hiding anything and we don't have any hesitation. When I was not the chief minister, then too I used to say this which I am reiterating, that everyone should proudly say that they are Hindus. In their lust for power and the politics of appeasement they were always eager to destroy Ram Setu. Sometimes, they used to instigate riots in the name of communalism."

Targeting the Congress brass, the chief minister said, "They remember Amethi in the elections only. When the peo-

ple of this district gave them a chance to serve, they did nothing. The Congress big guns' apathy led to his defeat in the Lok Sabha election in Amethi. But now as the elections are approaching, they have taken out time to visit the district again. They are undertaking political tourism."

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress 'bhai-behen' duo, Yogi said, "During the COVID-19 pandemic, when we were working to save the lives of the common man, the brother-sister duo provided fake registration numbers of buses to ferry stranded workers into UP from Rajasthan. These numbers turned out to be of scooters. Not a single leader or president of Samajwadi Party, Congress or Bahujan Samaj Party came forward to help the public during

the coronavirus crisis. As soon as elections come, these people come here. They will disappear for four and a half years after the elections and will not be seen again."

Slamming the Samajwadi Party chief for crying over the recent IT/GST raids, the chief minister said, "Today we are getting houses built for the poor. In the previous government, the funds were used to go to the pockets of 'babua'. That is the reason they are requesting the Election Commission to postpone the raids and conduct them after the elections."

Ashish...

From Page 1

If the court accepts the chargesheet, a trial in the case will start at a date given by the court.

"Yes, the chargesheet has been filed," the senior prosecution officer SP Yadav told media persons waiting outside court. The police said during the investigation they had found that Ashish was present at the spot when the violence occurred. The report said the name of one of Ashish's relatives, Shukla, has also been added in the chargesheet. Shukla has been accused of destroying evidence in the case.

The SIT of the Uttar Pradesh Police that is probing the violence case had earlier said the incident was a 'planned conspiracy' with 'intent to kill'. On December 14, the SIT had submitted an application in the court to invoke four more criminal charges against the accused, including murder. The SIT requested the local court to drop three charges under IPC sections 279 (rash driving on a public way), 338 (causing grievous injury by act endangering life) and 304a (causing death by negligence) against the accused. The probe team then slapped Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) and 34 (Act done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the IPC against the accused booked in the killing of four farmers and a journalist.

The case relates to the killing of eight people, including four farmers, during a protest in Lakhimpur Kheri district against the Centre's three farm laws on October 3. Violence had erupted when farmers were protesting the visit of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. Four agitating farmers were run over by a vehicle, which farmers' body claimed belonged to Ashish.

The Supreme Court had reconstituted the SIT and added new members, IPS officers SB Shiradkar, Preetinder Singh and Padmaja Chauhan, along with retired judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court Rakesh Kumar Jain, to probe the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

Meanwhile, the SIT has arrested one more farmer in connection with the alleged lynching of three BJP workers during the violence. Lakhimpur Kheri police and senior prosecution officer (SPO) SP Yadav said that Gurbpreet Singh, 22, had been absconding since the SIT released pictures of the suspects nearly two months ago.

Seven farmers have been arrested so far in connection with the lynching case. The SIT had earlier arrested Vichitra Singh, Gurvinder Singh, Avtar Singh, Ranjeet Singh, Kamaljeet Singh and Kawaljeet Singh after they were identified as suspects.

China...

From Page 1

Nearly complete and connecting the northern and southern banks of the lake, it will reduce the distance by more than 150 kms for the Chinese, they said.

The bridge was built with pre-fabricated structures with the objective of denying any advantage to India to dominate the southern and northern banks including the hill tops. The Indian Army in 2020 captured the dominating heights weeks after the Galwan clash.

The bridge will now reduce a 150 km loop from Khurnak to the south banks through Rudok, sources said. The bridge will reduce the route from Khurnak to Rudok to 40-50 kms instead of 170 kms they said.

China has two-thirds of the 135 km Pangong Tso and India has the remaining part. The region has seen stand-offs in the past few years with Chinese aggressive patrolling on foot and by boats.

Besides the bridge, the Chinese Army has also built a road leading to the bridge for quicker deployment of troops and weapons, sources said.

The region saw prolonged face-off between the Indian and

Chinese troops from September 2020 till February 2021. Following prolonged military and diplomatic level talks, the two sides disengaged from the southern banks of the Pangong Tso in February.

Despite the stand-offs and talks, China ramped up its infrastructure development including roads, bridges and helipads besides military garrisons near the Pangong lake and other flash points in the last few months. At present, more than 50,000 troops each from both the sides are deployed in Eastern Ladakh.

As regards the unfurling of the flag in the Galwan valley, sources said it did not violate the demilitarised zone between the two countries in the area.

In other words, the flag is being flown in undisputed Chinese-held areas, and not near the bend of the river where Indian and Chinese soldiers had clashed in June 2020.

The video and the tweet says, "China's national flag rise over Galwan Valley on the New Year Day of 2022".

The Chinese mouthpiece the Global Times tweeted, "In the Galwan Valley near the border with #India, under the characters "Never yield an inch of land", PLA soldiers send new year greetings to Chinese people on January 1, 2022."

Delhi, Maha head..

From Page 1

Jain stated, "The Delhi Government is ready to fight any variant of the Coronavirus with full force. There are adequate numbers of beds available. Almost 100 per cent of people are vaccinated with the first dose and around 75 per cent of the people in Delhi are vaccinated with the second dose. The children between the ages of 15-18 are being vaccinated from Monday. There is no need to panic. The only way to stop the spread of the virus is to always wear a mask at all times when you are heading outside your house and follow all the covid related protocols at all times. Prevention is better than cure. I urge people to get vaccinated as soon as possible."

In Maharashtra, amid the surge in the Covid-19 and Omicron cases, the authorities announced that schools for standard 1 to 9 would remain closed in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane till January 31.

Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I S Chahal and Thane district collector Rajesh Narvekar made separate announcements about the closure of all schools in Mumbai and Thane for standard 1 to 9 from January 4, 2022 to January 31, even as Mumbai recorded 8082 Covid-19 cases and

40 Omicron cases while Thane registered 2084 Covid-19 cases and went blank on the Omicron front. However, the classes for standard 10 and 12 would continue.

As 1748 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the State after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 65,12,610 cases to 65,14,358 cases. The recovery rate in the State dropped from 97.21 per cent to 97.05 per cent.

The number of "active cases" in the State increased from 42,024 cases to 52,422 cases. The fatality rate in the State dropped from 2.11 per cent to 2.1 per cent.

Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 37,274 cases, while there were 6309 active cases in Thane. There were 3808 active cases in Pune, followed by Palghar (1080), Raigad (980), Nashik (691), Ahmednagar (346), Nagpur (406) and Satara (336).

Of the 6,93,70,095 +samples sent to various laboratories across the State so far, 67,12,028 have tested positive (9.68 per cent) for COVID-19 until Monday.

Currently, 3,32,610 people are in-home quarantine while 1,096 people are in institutional quaran-

tine.

Meanwhile, the State recorded 68 cases of Omicron, taking the total number of new Covid-19 variant cases to 578 cases. Of the new Omicron cases reported on Monday, 34 have been reported by the National Institute of Virology (NIV) while 34 cases were reported by National Chemical Laboratory (NCL).

Of the 68 omicron cases reported in the state on Sunday, Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 40 cases, followed by Pune Municipal Corporation (14), Nagpur (4) Pune rural, and Panvel- 3 each, Kolhapur, Navi Mumbai, Raigad and Satara- 1 each.

In a related development, the authorities said the total number of passengers who arrived at Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur airports since December 1 was 2,23,630 (32,705 from At-risk countries and rest 1,90,925 are from other countries), while passengers whose RT-PC tests have been done are 51,735 (32,705 are from high-risk countries and 19030 are from other countries). Similarly, RT-PCR positive and samples sent for genomic sequencing was 490 (302 are from at-risk countries and 188 are from other countries).

Ensure all voters get both Covid doses: EC to ...

From Page 1

To assess the preparedness of election-bound States, an EC team headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and election commissioners Rajiv Kumar and Anup Chandra Pandey recently visited Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, and Goa and held deliberations with all stakeholders.

Several health experts have advised the Government to postpone the Assembly elections. Allahabad High Court has also urged the poll body to postpone the elections and ban rallies and public gatherings amid the Omicron scare.

After meeting with all stakeholders in Uttar Pradesh, the EC stated that all parties in Uttar Pradesh want the Assembly elections to be held as per schedule. "All the political parties, without any difference of opinion, said that elections should be conducted on time while following Covid protocol," the EC said.

While the tenure of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly ends in May, the terms of the Legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur and Punjab end on different dates in March. In a letter to the States and Union Territories, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the personnel to be deployed on election duty in the poll-bound States will be included in the category of frontline workers.

The EC, along with Bhushan, assessed the Covid situation in the five States on December 27 and asked the Government to expedite the vaccination programme in these States. It had noted that the percentage of those who have received the first dose of the vaccines was still less in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Manipur, while it was nearing 100 per cent in Uttarakhand and Goa.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल

(सीवेज शाखा)

// निविदा आमंत्रण //

निम्नलिखित कार्य के लिये ऑनलाईन निविदा प्रतिशत दर पर निविदा प्रपत्र-“ब” में केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली के अंतर्गत लोक निर्माण विभाग में उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत फर्म/टेकदारों से आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र एवं अन्य शर्तें <http://mptenders.gov.in> पर देखी जा सकती हैं।

ऑनलाईन निविदा क्र.	विवरण	अनुमानित लागत	घरोहर राशि	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य	कार्य अवधि
2021_UAD-175297_1	PPE and Safety gears supply for Safai Mitra under Sewage section.	रूपये 15357300/-	रूपये 153573/-	रूपये 12500/-	एक माह

नोट :- 1. सशर्त निविदा मान्य नहीं होगी।
2. घरोहर राशि केवल ऑनलाईन ही मान्य होगी।
3. सफल निविदाकार को ठेके की राशि के 1 प्रतिशत राशि के बराबर परफार्मेंस सिक्यूरिटी जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा।

कार्यालय नगरी सीवेज शाखा नगर निगम, भोपाल

नि.क्र. 1015/021/022

झारखण्ड सरकार

पथ निर्माण विभाग, कार्यपालक अभियन्ता का कार्यालय

पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, लातेहार

(1st Call) ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट सूचना

ई-टेंडर रिफरेंस संख्या—RCD/LATEHAR/2021-22/ 05 दिनांक— 03.01.2022

क्र.	कार्य का नाम	बालूमाथ - सुरपा - लपरा पथ (एम.डी.आर.—143) के कि०मी० 0.00 से 6.00 (कुल लम्बाई - 6.00 कि०मी०) तक में मजबूतीकरण / राईडिंग क्वालिटी में सुधार (Improvement of Riding Quality) कार्य।
1.	कार्य का नाम	रु० - 3,03,52,566.00 (तीन करोड़ तीन लाख बावन हजार पाँच सौ छियासठ रुपये) मात्र
2क.	बिड सिक्यूरिटी - (रु० में)	रु०-3,04,000.00 (तीन लाख चार हजार) मात्र
3.	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	03 (तीन) माह
4.	वेबसाईट पर निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि	05.01.2022 को पूर्वाह्न 10.30 बजे से
5.	निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	18.01.2022 को दोपहर 12.00 बजे तक
6.	निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले कार्यालय का नाम एवं पता	कार्यपालक अभियन्ता, पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल लातेहार, पिन कोड- 829206
7.	ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट पदाधिकारी का संपर्क संख्या	06565-245081
8.	ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट सेल का हेल्पलाईन संख्या	0651-2403007

नोट : निविदा की प्राकृतिक राशि घट-बढ़ सकती है।
निविदा की अन्य जानकारी <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, लातेहार

PR.NO.260934 Road(21-22):D

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (E&M) III
CHANDRAWAL WATER WORKS NO. I
CIVIL LINES: DELHI-110054
OFFICE TELEPHONE NO.011-23812660
E-mail Id: eechwvi@gmail.com

PRESS NIT No. 12(2021-22)

S. N.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in procurement Solution	Last date/ Time of receipt of Tender through e-procurement Solution
1.	Deployment of staff for Running, Operation & minor maintenance of Pump Sets & allied E&M equipments at 20MGD KBL BPS Okhla water works.	Item Rate	Rs. 74900/-	Tender Id: 2021_DJB_213950_2 Publish Date: 31.12.2021 06:55PM	18.01.2022 upto 03:00 PM

Further details in this regard can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

ISSUED BY P.R.O (WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V. 935 (2021-22) "STOP CORONA: Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

Sd/-
(Er. Krishan Kr. Rai)
Ex. Engineer (E&M)III

Wanted...

From Page 1

In Srinagar, a police spokesman said, "The killed terrorist Saleem Parray was a categorised terrorist, active since 2016 and was wanted by law in several terror crime cases." The shootout was carried out by the crack team of the Special Operations Group of Jammu and Kashmir police in civvies. As per the police records Parray was involved in several civilian killings including the killing of Bashir Ahmad Dar and his brother Ghulam Hassan Dar at Shahgund Hajin on 05/05/2018, and the killing of Hilal Ahmad Parray at Parray Mohalla Hajin on 16/05/2018. Besides, he was also involved in the throat slitting of many civilians in the Hajin area. He was also involved in providing logistic support to the terrorists operating in the area to carry terror attacks.

Soon after the operation in Shalimar Bagh ended, another

operation was carried out by Police, CRPF alongwith Army in Gasu area under PS Zakoor. During the said operation, one foreign terrorist identified as Hafiz @ Hamza of Pakistan linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT was neutralized.

While interacting with media persons, IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar said that Pakistani terrorist Hafiz @ Hamza was involved in several terror crimes including recent killing of two policemen at Gulshan Chowk Bandipora on 10/12/21 and after this terror crime, he shifted to Harwan area of Srinagar due to frequent cordon & search operations in Bandipora area. He was also involved in killing of a CRPF personnel at Hajin Bandipora, killing of a civilian namely Nadif Hanief Khan of Bilal Colony Soura in Burchpora.

Moreover, both the killed terrorists were also involved in attack on search party of police/SFs in Hajin in which one police personnel Ct Zaheer Abbas got martyred, the police spokesman added.

Over...

From Page 1

The clearance from the Government came amid a threat of growing cases of Omicron, the highly infectious variant that is sweeping Europe and the US, replacing Delta as

the dominant strain. Since schools and colleges have opened earlier this year, a substantial section of children and teens have contracted the virus. Several outbreaks have been reported from residential schools and college hostels. The Government is yet to take a decision on the booster dose for all.

Surveillance, deployment upped at LoC as Pak pushes terrorists ahead of Republic Day: BSF

Jammu: Deployment of troops and surveillance systems has been "strengthened" along the border with Pakistan amid intelligence inputs of heightened activity at terrorist launch pads on the other side ahead of Republic Day, a top BSF officer in Jammu and Kashmir said on Monday.

Border Security Force (BSF) Inspector General, Jammu Frontier, D K Boora's comments came on a day the force shot dead an infiltrator and recovered a huge consignment of weapons and narcotics in two separate incidents along the International Border (IB) in the Union Territory's Samba district.

The alertness of troops deployed on the border led to the seizure amid heightened terrorist activity on the Pakistani side, Boora said, adding that Pakistan continues to make attempts to push terrorists and smuggle arms and narcotics into Jammu and Kashmir.

PTI

Appeal for Identification

General public is hereby informed that one person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** About 35-36 Yrs., **Height:** 5'7", **Sex:** Male, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Built:** Medium, **Face:** Long, **Wearing:** Maroon Colour Shirt, White lining Sweater, Cream Colour Pant and bare footed, **Place of Recovery:** Found dead near Bankandi Mandir, ORDS, Delhi in the area of P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.

In this regard **DD No. 46A, U/s 174-CR.PC, Dated 28.12.2021** has been lodged at **Police Station, Kotwali, Delhi**. Any clue come to notice please inform undersign.

SHO
P.S. Kotwali, Delhi
DP/1859/N/2022 Ph.: 011-23977100, 23953442

City’s air quality very poor, rain likely from Jan 5-8

New Delhi: Delhi on Monday recorded an air quality index (AQI) of 389, which falls in the "very poor" category, but rain expected in the next couple of days are likely to bring some improvement.

The AQI of neighbouring areas of Ghaziabad (366), Gurugram (355), Noida (346), and Faridabad (340) was also recorded in the very poor category.

At 295, Greater Noida recorded an AQI in the poor category. Delhi’s 24-hour AQI at 4 pm stood at 389. In the morning, the air quality of the national capital was recorded at 387 (very poor).

The government’s air quality forecast agency SAFAR said the AQI will continue to remain very poor on Tuesday.

"High winds and intermittent rains are likely during January 5 to January 8 that are expected to improve AQI significantly to 'lower end of very poor' through strong dispersion and wet deposition. Mixing layer height continues to be about 1 km," it said.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

The maximum temperature in Delhi on



Monday was recorded at 21.5 degrees Celsius, two notches above the season’s average. The minimum temperature settled at 5.4 degrees Celsius, two notches below the season’s average. Humidity levels oscillated between 97 per cent and 43 per cent.

The weather office has forecast partly cloudy sky with shallow fog for Tuesday morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 22 and 7 degrees Celsius, respectively.

On Sunday, the minimum temperature of Delhi was recorded at 5 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal, while the maximum temperature was 20.4 degrees Celsius, a notch above the season’s average.

PTI

Covid-19: DDMA likely to consider more restrictions in today’s meeting

New Delhi: Amid rising coronavirus cases in the national capital, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) is expected to consider more restrictions — to arrest the spread of the infection — in its meeting scheduled on Tuesday, official sources said.

Delhi added 4,099 new COVID-19 cases with positivity rate jumping to 6.46 percent in the past 24 hours, as per the city government’s health bulletin on Monday.

The DDMA in its last meeting on December 29 had decided that Covid-related restrictions imposed in Delhi under the 'yellow alert' would continue in view of a low number of hospitalisations.

However, as per Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), Delhi has reached the stage of Level 4 (red alert) restrictions that stipulates the closure of most activities and total curfew. The 'red alert', as per GRAP,

comes into force after positivity rate stays above 5 percent for two consecutive days.

"In the last DDMA meeting, it was decided to review the emerging situation and consider if further restrictions as per GRAP were required. The meeting on Tuesday will discuss if anything more was needed to be done to check the spread of Omicron," an official source said on Monday. Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Monday said COVID cases were rising fast but the situation was under control because people were not getting seriously ill to require hospitalisation.

Speaking during the ongoing session of Assembly, the minister said none of the Omicron-infected patients in Delhi’s hospitals have so far required oxygen. He said there was no need to panic and appealed for following social distancing and wearing face masks.

PTI

‘Student’ who duped 100 fliers at IGI airport in last 5 yrs arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a man for allegedly cheating passengers at the National Capital’s Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport by posing as a student of a reputed university and then taking money from them for his travel conveyance on the pretext that he missed his flight.

The accused has been identified as Modela Venkata Dinesh Kumar, a native of Guntur district in Andhara Pradesh. Police said that he has cheated more than 100 passengers so far in the last four to five years.

Police said that on December 19, 2021, complainant, who is a resident of PG Mens Hostel Maulana Azad Medical College, travelled from Baroda to Delhi IGI Airport T-3, near the belt, where the accused approached him and stated that he is a student of a reputed university.

According to the com-

plainant, the accused displayed his ID card of the said university and requested that he had come from Chandigarh and had missed his connecting flight to Vishakhapatnam. He induced him and showed him that a flight ticket to Vishakhapatnam is costing Rs. 15,000 and he only had Rs. 6,500 with him.

Later, he convinced the victim to pay the difference as he promised to return the money once he reached his destination. The victim then paid Rs. 9,250 by Google pay in his account, the complainant alleged.

When the accused did not return his money despite demanding several times, he approached police and a case was registered in the matter, police said.

According to Sanjay Tyagi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), IGI airport, the team through its sources and electronic surveillance analyzed and monitored the

CCTV cameras installed at the terminals and located one suspected person who used to visit frequently at IGI Airport.

"On December 30, on the basis of CCTV footage, an alleged suspected person was apprehended from IGI Airport T-2 when he was trying to cheat other passenger," said the DCP.

Interrogation revealed that the accused used to visit different airports for cheating passengers. He used to introduce himself as a student of a reputed university and cheated passengers on the pretext of missing his flight. Once he was able to convince the passenger, he used to get the ticket money transferred into his bank account and would cheat the passengers, said the DCP.

It also came to light that five more FIR’s have already been registered against the accused and on Twitter also, there were many complaints against him, police said.

Delhi Assembly condoles death of Gen Rawat, Vaishno Devi stampede victims

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly on Monday condoled the deaths of Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and others in a helicopter crash last month.

The House also condoled the deaths of those killed in a stampede at the Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir’s Katra and prayed for a speedy recovery of those injured in the incident.

A two-day session of the Assembly commenced from Monday for taking up legislative work.

The members of the House observed a two-minute silence for the departed souls.

Twelve people were killed and 16 injured in the stampede at the hill shrine of Vaishno Devi in the early hours of Saturday after a scuffle broke out between two groups of pilgrims during the New Year rush.

General Rawat, his wife Madhulika and 11 others on board an Indian Air Force helicopter died in a crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu in December 2021. The lone survivor of the crash succumbed during treatment a few days later.

Delhi Teachers’ University Bill 2022 tabled in Legislative Assembly

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Teachers’ University Bill 2022 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Monday.

"Delhi Teachers’ University will set new standards of teacher education in India. It will focus on preparing quality teachers through world-class exposure," said Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia while presenting the bill in the assembly.

"Education is the basic need for the country’s progress. Following the mantra of 'Sikshak ke Dum pe Siksha, Siksha ke Dum par Desh' (Education on the basis of Teacher and Country on the basis of Education), In the past seven years, many historic decisions have been taken for setting up the Delhi education model. The Delhi Government has been providing 25% of its annual budget to education every year. No state government in India does that. As a result, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government was able to create a sustainable Delhi education model, where students of Government schools are able to equally compete for IITs, IIMs and best medical colleges with students from private schools," said Sisodia who hold the portfolio of Education Minister in AAP government.

Mentioning the need of Teachers University in Delhi, in present times, Sisodia said, Teachers are the real changemakers in the evolving Delhi

education model. We gave global exposure to our teachers by sending them to international universities and they completely changed the education system in Delhi government schools. Now there is a need to prepare a force of teachers who can provide quality education of international standards to our students. Delhi Teachers’ University will focus on preparing teachers of such standard. It will not be just a B.Ed. or any other teacher education institution. It will set new standards in the field of teacher education, like IIMs have set standards for management education, IITs for engineering education and AIIMS for medical education.

He further said that education and teachers have played an important role in the development of developed countries of the world. Today the education model of Finland is discussed all over the world. Finland abolished the posts of inspector from its schools and worked on teachers training there and today Finland is at the top in terms of quality education."

He added that the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore inspires the most talented youth of the country to become teachers, whereas in Japan, the post of teacher gets more respect than a civil servant.

Public school teachers in Japan have been given the status of "civil servant", equal to that of an IAS officer in the Indian system.

Cops seek information from Twitter, GitHub over auctioning of Muslim women on Bulli Bai app

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has written to Twitter seeking information about the first account handler on its platform who reported about the 'Bulli Bai' app, which had offensive contents being written about women of a particular community. Police said they have also sought information from Github platform to share details about the developer of 'Bulli Bhai' application, as a part of ongoing investigation.

Earlier, the National Commission for Women had also written to the Delhi Police to expedite its action in the case involving 'Bulli Bai', a dodgy app that has listed Muslim women for auction, to ensure that such crime does not recur.

According to a senior police official, they have also asked Twitter to removed or block any offensive content shared through the alleged "Bulli Bhai" app on its platform.

"As part of the ongoing probe into the matter, we have written to Twitter seeking information about the account handle who had first tweeted about the "Bulli Bhai" app. This is to know how the concerned person came across the alleged application who had offensive contents being written about woman of a particular community," he said.

7,527 in 15-18 age group vaccinated in Gurugram

Gurugram: On the first day of the vaccination campaign for the 15-18 age group, 7,527 teenagers were vaccinated with the first dose of the covid vaccine in Gurugram on Monday.

The target on the first day was 7,700 vaccinations, Civil Surgeon Dr Virender Yadav said.

He said that according to the data provided by the state government, a target has been set to vaccinate about 2 lakh teenagers in the age group of 15 to 18 years in the district.

"Covaxin has been approved by the Central Government for the above age group. Under which its slots have been made available at all the health centres of the district.

Apart from this, vaccination

centers have also been set up in various government and private schools of the district," Yadav said.

Dr MP Singh, Nodal Officer and Deputy Civil Surgeon of the vaccination campaign said that 38 vaccination centers have been set up in government and private schools in the district, 100 slots have been made available at each centre.

District Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg appealed to the health workers and said that with the dedication and hard work with which you have started the vaccination campaign for adults in the district.

With the same morale, the vaccine campaign started for the age group of 15 to 18 years should also be taken to the pinnacle of success.

Man fakes own kidnapping, demands ransom worth ₹2 lakh from wife, held

Gurugram: A man was arrested for allegedly hatching a plan to fake his kidnapping and demanding a ransom of ₹2 lakh from his wife as he wanted to repay a debt he had taken from people, the police said.

The accused was identified as Anoop Yadav a resident of Rajiv Nagar in Gurugram. The accused decided to fake his kidnapping as he was unable to repay the debt he had taken from people.

On January 2, Deepika, the complainant, filed a complaint at the Sector-29 police station about kidnapping her husband Anoop Yadav from Down Town Club in Sector-29 that the abductor sent a WhatsApp message to her, asking her to pay ₹ 2 lakh for his release.

The complainant told the police the message read- Anoop Yadav is in our custody,

and if you want to see his face, then arrange ₹2 lakh.

Acting swiftly in this case, the police through technical surveillance nabbed the accused from IMT Chowk on the Delhi-Jaipur expressway on Monday.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed that no one had abducted him.

"Yadav who is a supervisor at the club himself had sent messages asking for his kidnapping and his wife on WhatsApp asking for money. He earlier had taken debt from several people which was paid by his family," Sub-Inspector Rohtas, the investigation officer said.

Action will be taken against the accused as prescribed law for misleading the police by concocting conspiracy and giving false information, he said.



Member of Delhi Legislative Assembly Ram Niwas Goel, Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, along with Cabinet colleagues, pose for photographs after unveiling wall mural of Jhansi Ki Rani and Jallianwalla Bagh at Delhi Assembly, in New Delhi on Monday

Plea seeks rehabilitation of African elephant kept at Delhi zoo

HC asks authorities to respond

New Delhi: A plea filed in the Delhi High Court on Monday sought the release and rehabilitation of an African elephant gifted to India by the Zimbabwean government and kept chained at the National Zoological Park here for 16 years now. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh issued notices and sought responses of the Centre, Delhi government, National Zoological Park, Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) on the petition and listed the matter for further hearing on March 9.

The court also directed the authorities to consider a representation preferred by the petitioner in this regard in November last year.

The plea filed by 16-year-old Nikita Dhawan, founder of Youth For Animals (YFA), said the lone African elephant named 'Shankar' is a victim of cruelty and viciousness at the hands of caretakers at the zoo, and his present condition is nothing less than illegal imprisonment.

Dhawan said it will be a violation of Article 21 of the Constitution if the animal is not rehabilitated in a sanctuary as his mental and physical health is deteriorating day by day.

The plea cited a 2009 circular issued by the CZA which had banned exhibition of elephants in zoos, as well as CZA guidelines prohibiting an elephant to be held in solitary for over six months.

The petitioner, represented through senior advocate Raj Panjwani, has urged the high court to direct the authorities to rehabilitate Shankar in a suitable wildlife sanctuary that houses other African elephants, and to ask the CZA to submit a rehabilitation and translocation plan for all captive elephants held in zoos across India in order to implement the 2009 circular.

India in early stages of 3rd wave: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several experts have asserted that the rapid spike in daily Covid-19 cases, as well as the spread of Omicron (India has logged at least 1,700 Omicron cases till Monday), indicates that the country is in the early stages of a third wave. A rising R-value is a further indicator of the same.

Professor Mahindra Agarwal, scientist from IIT Kanpur, has predicted that the third wave will come in India in January and end by April. In March, the country will report 1.8 lakh cases daily, he claimed.

However, amid the gloomy prediction, Professor Mahindra, however, said that only 1 in 10 will need hospitalization. Two lakh beds will be needed in the middle of March that the third wave of the pandemic will end by April, he asserted.

The scientist warned that rallies during elections can prove to be a super spreader for Corona infection, as it is not easy to follow the Covid guidelines in such gatherings. Prof Agarwal said that as a large number of people reach the election rallies without following the guidelines, the risk of infection increases to a great extent.

In such a situation, there is a need to be careful. If there are rallies, the transition can pick up ahead of time. According to Prof Agarwal, who bases his predictions of the epidemic on the basis of his mathematical model, the third wave will come in India in January and in March, 1.8 lakh cases can come daily.



"It will be a matter of relief that only 1 in 10 will need a hospital. Two lakh beds will be needed in the middle of March," he said.

He further said that 80 per cent of the population in Africa and India is below 45 years of age. Natural immunity is up to 80 per cent in both countries. In both countries the delta variant has been due to mutants. Like South Africa, India too is less likely to have a major impact, he claimed.

According to research conducted by the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Chennai, the R-value of all major cities has crossed 1 including Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. As of December 21, the R-value of the entire country stood at 1.22.

According to the researchers, led by Sitabhra Sinha, an R-Value higher than 1 is a cause for concern as it indicates a high speed of virus transmission, meaning that the virus is spreading quickly.

According to top virologist Shaahid Jameel, the third wave of the pandemic has already begun. "Both numbers, as well as test positivity rate, have started going up in several places, especially in larger cities," Jameel told Outlook in a previous interview.

However, Jameel, as well as other experts, believe that the third wave may not be as severe as the second, Delta-driven wave.

NEET-PG ADMISSIONS

Centre seeks urgent hearing of EWS quota case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday requested the Supreme Court to schedule a hearing in a matter related to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota in connection with the NEET-PG admissions on Tuesday, citing "some urgency".

The bench of justices DY Chandrachud and AS Bopanna told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who mentioned the

matter before the court on behalf of the Centre, that the EWS quota matter is being heard by a three-judge bench of the top court.

"The moment today's work gets over, I would make a request to CJI NV Ramana for the listing of the case," Justice Chandrachud said. Mehta said if it is not possible to list the matter on Tuesday, then it could be listed on Wednesday. Senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing in court on behalf of

the doctors who have challenged a government notification for the implementation of the quota, said he has no objection if the matter is listed on Tuesday or Wednesday. At present the case is listed on January 6.

Large-scale protests have been held by resident doctors of various hospitals under the banner of the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) in Delhi and other parts of the country over a

delay in the NEET-PG counselling, which has been postponed due to the Centre deciding to revisit the criteria for the determination of the EWS quota. In its affidavit filed in the apex court, the Centre has said it has decided to accept the recommendations of a three-member panel to retain the current gross annual family income limit for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) at Rs 8 lakh or less.

ED attaches property worth ₹26.25 cr of DPIL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached immovable assets worth Rs 26.25 crore in the form of land, residential and commercial properties of Diamond Power Infrastructure Ltd. (DPIL) and its erstwhile directors, promoters and their family members in a bank fraud case.

This attachment is in addition to earlier attachment dated April 24, 2018 whereby properties worth Rs 1,122.72 crore belonging to DPIL and its related entities were attached.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Gandhinagar against DPIL and others for commission of offence under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections relating to cheating and criminal conspiracy among others besides provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act.

The investigation conducted by the ED disclosed that DPIL had availed term



loans/working capital loans, external commercial borrowings and non-convertible debentures from a consortium of 19 banks and institutions, the ED said in a statement.

"The investigation revealed that DPIL had used paper transactions with shell companies/related entities to avail higher credit facilities from the banks and diversion of funds, which ultimately resulted in loss of Rs 2,654.4 crore to the consortium of 19 banks led by Bank of India," the ED said.

In this case, the ED has already filed a prosecution complaint dated December 26, 2018 against DPIL and others, which is pending before the

Special PMLA Court, Ahmedabad.

Meanwhile, the ED has taken possession of immovable properties worth Rs 40.23 lakh belonging to Rambabu Ram alias Rajan Ji alias Prahar and his family members, the agency said.

Rambabu Ram is a Naxalite and leader of banned Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) outfit.

He is the secretary of militant Naxalite Organization CPI (Maoist), Western Zonal Committee of North Bihar and having criminal history of 20 years. Family members of Rambabu Ram and villagers have resisted strongly during course of possession of immov-

able properties. Earlier, the properties were provisionally attached on March 19, which was confirmed by Adjudicating Authority, PMLA, New Delhi on September 14.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of 28 FIRs lodged in various Police Station of Bihar against Rambabu Ram and his family members under the sections of Indian Penal Code, Arms Act, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and Explosive Substance Act for illegal activities including murder, attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, conspiracy to commit offences, dacoity, robbery, collection of levy and extortion from various ongoing development work in Bihar.

A cash reward of Rs 5 lakh has already been announced by Bihar Government on Rambabu Ram,

Investigation under PMLA, 2002 revealed that the accused has invested the proceeds of crime, for acquiring various immovable properties in the name of his family members, so as to project them as untainted, it added.

SC asks Centre to decide on woman's extradition from Af jail



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre to decide the representation of a Kerala-based man seeking direction for extradition and repatriation of his daughter and minor granddaughter, who are at present detained in Afghanistan's Pul-e-Charkhi jail.

A bench comprising justices L Nageswara Rao and B R Gavai directed the Centre to decide the representation made by V J Sebastian Francis, a resident of Kerala's Ernakulam district, said his daughter has been booked in India in a case by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and for other offences. He said that the allegation is that his son-in-law along with his daughter and other accused persons had hatched a conspiracy to propagate terrorist organisation ISIS in waging

war against Asiatic nations.

Francis said after reaching Afghanistan his son-in-law got involved in a war and was killed, and his daughter and granddaughter, who were not actively involved in the fight, had to surrender before Afghan forces on November 15, 2019, along with several other women.

Francis said that the first detainee (daughter) and the second detainee (granddaughter) with an intention to join the Islamic organisation in Afghanistan exited India on July 30, 2016. The Interpol also issued a Red Corner notice on March 22, 2017, in the name of the first detainee, the plea said.

He said during an interview conducted by a news portal, his daughter had repented her decision to join the ISIS and wanted to return to India and face fair trial before courts here.

The top court, however, made it clear that all these are matters for the Government to decide.

Pradhan launches NEAT 3.0, AICTE-prescribed technical books in regional languages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday launched NEAT 3.0, (National Educational Alliance for Technology) a single platform to provide the best-developed ed-tech solutions and courses to students of the country. The Minister also launched AICTE prescribed technical books in regional languages.

Pradhan said that NEAT will be a game-changer in bridging the digital divide, especially among the economically disadvantaged students and also in fulfilling the knowledge-based requirement of India and the world.

The Minister informed that 58 global and Indian start-up ed-tech companies are onboard NEAT and are offering 100 courses & e-resources for better learning outcomes, developing employable skills and overcoming learning loss. He hoped that the e-content & resources and Digital frameworks like NEAT are a step in the right direction in minimising learning loss.

The Minister encouraged AICTE to integrate courses in NEAT with Skill India to tap the opportunities in emerging areas of skill to boost employability and prepare our youth for the future.

He urged the AICTE and ed-tech companies to offer e-resources at least possible costs.

Ayush Aahaar now at Ayush Bhawan Canteen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Ayush on Monday kicked off a pilot project, aiming to make 'Ayush Aahaar' available at its canteen at Ayush Bhawan here with an aim to promote nutritional diet and a healthy living among its staff and visitors amid Covid-19 pandemic.

The 'Ayush Aahaar' includes Vegetable Poha, Bhajani Vada, Gajar Ka Halwa and Kokum Drink. Officials said that all the dishes are very popular among the masses and have high nutritional value.

Speaking at the launch, Ayush Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha said that the Ayush diet made available in the canteen is beneficial for health and easily digestible. Kotecha said the ministry in 2021 collaborated with various states and did some commendable work under the National Ayush Mission. "Our focus this year will be on Education, Research, Manufacturing, Public Health and Governance. We are also working on a single window system," he said.

During the meeting, the officials also discussed their plan of action to promote Ayush lifestyle in the year 2022. On this occasion, Special



Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Pramod Kumar Pathak, said that those buying the 'Ayush Aahaar' will be given a feedback form to fill. Based on the responses, the new diet will be regularised in the canteen.

The officials said that enhancing the body's natural defence system (immunity) plays an important role in maintaining optimum health. We all know that prevention is better than cure. "While there is no medicine for COVID-19 as of now, it will be good to take preventive measures like having nutritious food and doing yoga which boost body's immunity in these times." Among other officials present in the programme were Ayush Joint Secretaries Kavita Garg and D Senthil Pandian.

The Ministry is already promoting Ayush-based diet and lifestyle and is working in convergence with the Ministry of women and child development in the Poshan Abhiyaan (nutrition campaign) to realize the ultimate goal of "Suposhit Bharat" (nourished India).

PM to lay foundation stones of ₹42K cr projects in poll-bound Punjab on Jan 5

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the announcement of Assembly election dates, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is continuing with his visits to the five poll-bound states. On Wednesday, he will head for Punjab.

Modi will be in Manipur on Tuesday. Before that he was in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh- both to go to polls in a month or two. Goa will also elect a new Assembly with these states.

The Prime Minister will visit Ferozepur, Punjab, on January 5 and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 42,750 crore.

These projects include Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway; four laning of Amritsar - Una section; Mukerian - Talwara New Broad Gauge railway line; PGI Satellite Centre at Ferozepur and two new medical colleges at Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC) would set in the



moment elections dates are announced by the Election Commission that enjoins ministers not to combine official visits with election work or use official machinery for the same.

MCC requires that the party must avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections.

Ministers and other authorities should not be announcing any financial grants, or promise any construction of roads, provision of drinking water, etc.

The MCC is operational from the date that the election schedule is announced till the date that results are announced and ensures that opposition

parties too use facilities like government guest houses for poll purposes.

In Punjab Prime Minister will also lay foundation stone of a new Broad Gauge railway line between Mukerian and Talwara of around 27 Km in length, to be built at a cost of over Rs 410 crore. The railway line will be an extension of Nangal Dam-Daulatpur Chowk railway section. It will provide an all-weathered means of transportation in the area.

This project also holds strategic importance as it will serve as an alternative route to Jammu and Kashmir, joining the existing Jalandhar-Jammu Railway line at Mukerian.

Modi will lay foundation stone of new medical infrastructure in three towns of Punjab. The 100 Bedded PGI Satellite Centre at Ferozepur, will be built at a cost of more than Rs 490 crore.

Two Medical colleges at Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur will be developed at a cost of around Rs 325 crore each and with a capacity of about 100 seats.

Nadda flays arrest of Telangana BJP head

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rough handling" of BJP Telangana president Bandi Sanjay Kumar by the State police a day before was described as "highly deplorable and condemnable" by BJP national president JP Nadda here on Monday. He said the KCR Government was "scared of BJP's growing popularity".

BJP has been trying hard to make political inroads in Telangana and also recorded successes in Hyderabad Local elections and recent bypolls.

Nadda said police in Telangana "forcibly entered" the office of the Bandi Sanjay Kumar and resorted to violence and lathicharge, "thrashed and manhandled senior party leaders and workers, it is highly deplorable and condemnable", he said.

"It is yet another glaring example of the murder of democracy and constitutional rights by the Telangana government. The BJP vehemently criticizes and denounces this attack on the BJP leaders and karyakartas", said Nadda.

Teachers and employees of the Telangana state government had come to the office of Bandi Sanjay Kumar at his Karimnagar Lok Sabha office to register their complaint against the KCR government passing the "regressive" transfer order against the teachers and sat on a night-long vigil and fast to show his solidarity with the agitating teachers, he said.

"The KCR government in Telangana was so scared of this peaceful protest by the BJP State president, party workers and aggrieved teachers and employees that it ordered the state police to launch an attack on the peaceful protest", accused Nadda.

"This massive use of force is nothing but an act of political vendetta and political anarchy that is prevailing in Telangana. The Telangana police first cut the iron gates of the office and then forcibly entered where the peaceful protest was going on", he alleged.

"The KCR government in Telangana is worried over the growing popularity and acceptability of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the state", Nadda claimed.

Rajnath unveils Kalpana Chawla Centre for Research in Space Science & Technology

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday inaugurated the Kalpana Chawla Centre for Research in Space Science and Technology (KCCRSST) at the Chandigarh University. He also launched a scholarship scheme, worth Rs 10 crore, for the wards of defence personnel.

Rajnath described the establishment of the Research Centre as an important step towards strengthening the space sector of the country by stressing that it is only through these efforts that India can become a leader in future technologies.

Remembering late Indian-born astronaut Kalpana Chawla, Rajnath described her as a symbol of women empowerment, who took a flight beyond imagination.

He likened the KCCRSST with 'pride of India' Kalpana Chawla, hoping that this research facility would touch new heights of success, similar to the remarkable achievements of the late astronaut who brought universal recog-

nition to her country of origin. "In the 21st century, the future of India can be secured only when you have a gleam in your eyes to reach the stars and planets. More Indians like Aryabhata, Vikram Sarabhai, Satish Dhawan and Kalpana Chawla will emerge from amongst you all if you eye different planets and constellations," the defence minister told the students present on the occasion.

Underlining the importance of the space sector in today's times, Rajnath said, it is deeply connected with mapping, imaging and connectivity facilities, speedy transportation, weather forecast, disaster management as well as border security, adding that it played a crucial role in keeping the world connected during the COVID-19 pandemic, from testing to data-transfer and analyses.

The Defence Minister lauded the Chandigarh University for setting records of success in research and innovation in the last few years. He described the achievements of the University as a symbol of

the increasing participation of the private sector in the field of education. He also commended Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for being one of the world's top space agencies since decades through its hard work and vision.

Established with the objective of training students in space science, satellite development and meet future challenges in space research, the state-of-the-art KCCRSST would be the Ground Control Station for the Chandigarh University's Student Satellite (CUSat), an in-house developed nano-satellite being designed by the students of the university and a Geo-Spatial Centre for research, besides other projects.

The CUSat will be among the 75 student-built satellites to be launched into space on the eve of the 75th Independence Day in 2022. The Chandigarh University has joined the list of 13 institutes like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, IIT Bombay and became the first university in North India to design and develop its own satellite.

IMD: Above-normal temperature in some parts of India this winter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s probability forecast for the minimum temperatures indicates normal to above normal minimum temperatures are most likely over many parts of north-west India, northeast India and adjoining areas of east India in January. "Below normal to normal minimum temperatures are most likely over many areas of the north peninsula and some parts of central India", it said.

The IMD said the probability forecast for the maximum temperatures indicates that below normal maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of the central and peninsular India. Above normal temperatures are likely over some parts of northwest & north India and most parts of northeast India. The rainfall during January, February and March (JFM) 2022 averaged over North India consisting of seven meteorological subdivisions (East Uttar Pradesh, West Uttar

Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh) is most likely to be normal (86 to 114% of Long Period Average (LPA)).

According to the IMD, due to back to back western disturbances, widespread rainfall or snowfall is likely in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand this week. Isolated hailstorms are also likely in the region.

Moreover, western disturbances have a dual impact on winter cold across northern plains. They attract moist winds from the North Indian Ocean and limits northwesterly cold winds from central Asia. As a result, minimum or nighttime temperatures rise. However, as the clouds envelop the region, the morning sun fails to warm the region, leading to a fall in daytime temperatures.

IMD in its forecast for JFM, said January rainfall averaged over North India is most likely to be above normal



(>124% of LPA). The LPA of rainfall over North India during January based on the data of 1961-2010 is about 48.5 mm. The IMD said that monthly rainfall for the 2022 January averaged over the North India is most likely to be above normal (>124% of Long Period Average (LPA)).

Currently, moderate La Niña conditions are prevailing over equatorial Pacific region. The latest Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) forecast is indicating that these La Niña conditions are likely to persist dur-

ing the JFM and thereafter likely to start weakening to reach to cold ENSO neutral conditions during the second quarter of 2022.

IMD predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall in Himalayan states including Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh till January 5. The weather office said heavy rainfall and snowfall are expected to hit Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh on 4th and January 5; and heavy rainfall/snowfall also likely over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on January 5.

EC issues strict Covid norms for Jan 22 civic polls in WB

Govt extends local train timing after commuters’protest

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Within hours of imposing curbs on local train service, the Bengal Government on Monday reviewed its orders extending the timing of the suburban trains from 7 pm to 10 pm.

The Government order revising the train timing came following passengers’ protests at various railway stations including Howrah, Sealdah and other suburban stations where thousands of daily passengers jostled to catch trains back home.

Earlier on Sunday the State Government had imposed a lock-down like curbs shutting down all tourist spots, educational institutions, amusement parks, gyms and spas and slashing attendance by half at theatres, cine complexes, malls and markets.

Even as corona graph continue to climb in Bengal infecting students of Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur where about 32 students were

reported positive, and partially paralyzing the Bengal Ranji Trophy team where at least seven members were down with the viral disease, the State Election Commission on Monday ordered strict corona protocols ahead of January 22 civic polls.

In Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim announced 25 micro containment zones in the State Capital where daily infections breached 3,500 mark.

“The corporation has identified 25 containment or micro-containment zones with more than five cases ... We have also requested the IIM authorities to isolate the infected students in the hostel,” Hakim said appealing to the chambers of commerce to “come forward to help the government and the corporation to fight corona.”

For now the Corporation had planned three “safe homes” for the corona patients who do not have separate isolation rooms in their houses, he said.

Meanwhile, following a

meeting with the State Health Department officials SEC said banned road shows, motorbike rallies and large gatherings but allowed door-to-door campaign with a maximum of five people including the candidate. Campaigning will come to an end 72hours before the elections, SEC officials said.

Reacting to the SEC decision Bengal BJP leader and spokesperson SamikBhattacharya said that the “commission is acting like a TMC party office... at a time when the corona graph is rising and the whole State is in trouble the Commission has refused to postpone the elections ...this is just because they want the TMC to win in absence of public rallies by the opposition parties ... it is a foregone conclusion that the SEC allow the TMC leaders to organise big rallies and stop us from doing the same as it happened earlier ... The people are watching everything and they will give a befitting reply.”

2,560 new Covid cases in Kerala, tally over 48K

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The new year began in an inauspicious note in Kerala as death toll due to Covid-19 mounted to 48,184 by Monday and the Department of Health diagnosing 2,560 new cases during the last 24 hours, according to Health Minister Veena George.

Adding to the woes of the people, the number of cases Omicron detected in the State rose to 181 by Monday evening. Despite the increase in the number of Covid-19 and Omicron cases, Kerala Government Medical Officers Association (KGMOA) continued its State-wide agitation for the 27th successive day on Monday against the indifference of the Government to their demands for appointing temporary hands and restoration of the allowances slashed in 2020.

With both the Government of Kerala and the KGMOA refusing to make any concessions in their stances, the

agitation by the doctors would enter 28th day on Tuesday. The doctors gave advance information to the State Government that there would not be any let up in their agitation or demands. The demonstration on Tuesday is expected to see a massive turn out of doctors in front of the State Secretariat, the permanent venue for all agitations against the government.

The NITI Aayog’s ranking of Kerala as the State with the best medical infrastructure has dampened as the agitation by the doctors is getting stronger by the day. Dr Cini Priyadarshini, State treasurer of Indian Medical Association who is also the District Medical Superintendent, told The Pioneer that there was a severe shortage of doctors and health professionals in the State. “We are short of 700 doctors. The number of doctors and nursing staff who fall prey to Covid-19 has gone up and this has to be addressed immediately.

Differences between CPM, CPI out in open in Kerala

Over forming alliance with Cong to fight BJP together

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

All is not well in the ties between the CPI(M) and its poor cousins the CPI in Kerala. The simmering differences in the approach of the parties vis-à-vis the Indian National Congress came out in the open as Binoy Viswam, widely seen as the next general secretary of the CPI declaring at Kochi on Sunday that “a viable national alliance against the Fascist RSS and its political arm the BJP could be formed only in company of the Congress”.

Viswam, a member of Rajya Sabha, was addressing the memorial meeting in honour of P T Thomas, the veteran Congress leader convened at Kochi by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. “An alliance of the Left and the Regional parties would not be

able to dethrone the RSS and the BJP from power in New Delhi. We should have the Congress playing a significant role in that alliance. Barring Kerala, the CPI and the CPI(M) have electoral alliance with the Congress in rest of the country,” said Viswam, who is seen as the intellectual face of the CPI.

Pinarayi Vijayan, chief minister of Kerala, who is the CPI(M) strongman, has made it clear time and again during his party’s district level meetings held in connection with the triennial State Convention that the Congress was a spent force. “The CPI(M) is for an alliance of Left-led regional alliance at the national level,” Vijayan said in all the meetings where he was the key note speaker.

The CPI(M)’s expectations suffered a jolt on Monday as Kanam Rajendran, CPI’s Kerala secretary, who usually toes the line of Pinarayi Vijayan, said on Monday that Congress could not be kept away from an alternative to the RSS and the BJP. “The CPI and the CPI(M) are not strong enough to

replace the Congress though the latter has become weaker in some States. This is what Viswam said in his speech. The Left is strong in Kerala but in rest of the country, though we are opposing the RSS and the BJP, we require the cooperation of the Congress,” Rajendran told media on Monday.

It may be worth remembering that the CPI was an ally of the Congress from 1969 to 1980 and had vehemently opposed the dictatorial line of the CPI(M). C Achutha Menon of the CPI was anointed as the chief minister of Kerala in 1969 with the help of the Congress and he remained in that position till 1977. In 1979, P K Vasudevan Nair of the CPI was sworn in Kerala Chief Minister with the support of the Congress. “The CPI(M) was in political wilderness from 1969 to 1980 and the party could taste power only after the CPI came out of the alliance with the Congress in support of the former,” I S Kundoor, the cultural and literary face of the CPI till recently, told *The Pioneer*.

15-18 yrs thrilled at getting vax in Kerala, say all should get it

Thiruvananthapuram: Students who got vaccinated on Monday as part of the drive to inoculate those in the 15-18 age group against Covid-19 were excited with the experience and said everyone should get the jab.

“It was an experience, it being the first day (of the drive). It was a good experience. Everyone should get vaccinated,” one student told reporters at a vaccination centre. Another student said she was scared initially, but after receiving the jab there was no problem and the little pain she felt was akin to the vaccine received at 15 years of age.

Similar views were expressed by various other children who had come for the vaccination which will continue till January 10.

Kerala Health Minister Veena George, after visiting a Children’s Vaccination Centre here, told reporters that 38,417 children between the ages of 15 to 18 years were vaccinated with Covaxin on the first day of the drive.

She further said that 551

centres have been set up in the state for vaccinating children between the ages of 15 and 18 and therefore, it would be possible to complete their vaccination on time.

There are 875 vaccination centres for adults, she added.

Pink boards have been put up at Children’s Vaccination Centres to avoid confusion, she further said.

She also said the response from the children and parents was positive with regard to the vaccination drive.

A total of 5,02,700 doses of the vaccine reached the state by Sunday evening and an additional 57,300 doses of Covaxin arrived in Ernakulam by Monday evening, she said and added that more will be provided by the Centre once the current stock was exhausted.

She also said the vaccination would be carried out in a systematic manner and the Health Department has asked the Education Department to furnish the data on the number of eligible children in schools who have been already vaccinated. **PTI**

Akhilesh Govt embezzled welfare scheme funds during their tenure, alleges Nadda

Basti: BJP president J P Nadda on Monday accused the previous Samajwadi Party government of misappropriating funds for various welfare schemes, claiming that the same money is now reaching beneficiaries’ accounts directly under the Yogi Adityanath regime.

Addressing a rally here to mark the conclusion of the BJP’s poll campaign tours -- Jan Vishvas Yatra -- launched last month, Nadda also took pride over the “advancement” of “cultural nationalism” by his party, “forcing” its opponents to follow suit.

The people who did not know the meaning of ‘aachman’ -- a Hindus’ ritual of purification by sprinkling pious water -- and how to drink ‘chharnamrit’ -- the water turned into ‘ambrosia’ after the ablation of a deity’s feet with it -- have now begun ringing bells in temples and boasting of sandalwood paste on their foreheads, he said.

Hurling his allegation of embezzlement of welfare scheme funds during the tenure of the previous SP government, Nadda said, “The difference is now clear in UP. The money of the (various) schemes, now directly goes to the accounts of people. At the time of Akhilesh Yadav gov-



ernment, money used to go for his (Akhilesh) consumption.”

“The Akhilesh Yadav government had promised to give laptops to youths. For this, 15 lakh laptops were purchased but only 6.25 lakh were distributed,” he said and asked, “Where did the rest of the laptops go?”

“The Yogi government has given one lakh laptops and smartphones to youths. One crore youths will be given laptops and smartphones in future,” he said.

Accusing the previous SP government of being sympathetic to terrorists and criminals, Nadda said, “Akhilesh ji had withdrawn cases to save 15

terrorists. But the court did not allow it. And four of them were given death sentences the rest life imprisonments later.” “Do you need a government which protects terrorists?” he asked people in the rally, evoking an emphatic “no” from them.

With the upcoming assembly elections to be held amid the lingering farmers’ resentment over the now-repealed three central farm laws, Nadda also accused both the previous SP and BSP governments of being indifferent to the plight of farmers, including those cultivating sugarcane.

“The Adityanath government alone paid a sum of Rs

1.40 lakh crore to sugarcane farmers while under Mayawati’s rule, 21 sugar mills were sold at throwaway prices and 18 were shut down,” he claimed.

“In the Akhilesh Yadav regime, 11 sugar mills were shut down while the Yogi government started three new sugar mills and brought up the number of running sugar mills to 54,” he added.

Claiming the BJP to be a unifying force amid the opposition’s alleged divisive agenda through the vote bank politics of appeasement, Nadda said his party talks of inclusive growth but the opposition evokes Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s name to further their agenda.

“Those indulging in the vote bank politics are in disarray today. It is because Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ended it and has kicked off the politics of development. Casteism, regionalism, dynastic rule and appeasement have collapsed now,” Nadda said.

Nadda made the remarks while addressing one of the two rallies to mark the conclusion of the party’s Jan Vishvas Yatra which was flagged on December 20 by a galaxy of six senior BJP leaders from six different places in Uttar Pradesh. **PTI**

‘Tripura’s BJP, CPM MLAs in touch with us, may join TMC soon’

Says TMC gen secretary Abhishek

Agartala: Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Monday said a number of MLAs from Tripura’s ruling party, BJP, and main opposition party, CPI(M), are in touch with Trinamool Congress and may join the Bengal-based party at some stage.

“Many MLAs and other elected representatives from the ruling BJP and the opposition have expressed their eagerness to join our party. They are keeping in touch with us. We have given a clear message that they have to join unconditionally and they would be chosen on the basis of their track records, people’s contact and (willingness) to work for people selflessly”, Banerjee, who arrived here on Sunday, told reporters.

He claimed TMC was the only party which can fight against the ‘misrule’ of BJP.

“TMC is the only party which can fight against the mis-

rule of BJP. We will fight against BJP till the last drop of blood. Vandalism and hooliganism have no place in Tripura. We are preparing to fight BJP in the coming Assembly elections”, Banerjee said.

He said leaders and activists would start joining soon and continue throughout the next several months.

Banerjee said he visited the residences of many party workers who were attacked by goons affiliated to the ruling party before and after the civic polls in Tripura that were held on November 25.

He said, his party is working to fight BJP not in Tripura only, but also in all other parts of the country. However, he denied allegations that TMC’s recent political activities were harming the prospects of Congress and may help BJP.

“Ours is the only party which can fight BJP politically. We do not want to harm the prospects of Congress anyway and that is the reason we did not go to Uttar Pradesh or Punjab. But the fight against BJP can’t indefinitely wait for someone”, he said. **PTI**

Schools shut for Classes I-IX till Jan 31 in Mumbai

Maha records over 12K Covid cases, tally crosses 67L-mark

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid the surge in the Covid-19 and Omicron cases, the authorities announced on Monday that schools for standard 1 to 9 would remain closed in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane till January 31.

With no let up in the spread of the pandemic, Maharashtra on Monday recorded 12,160 Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of cases from 66,99,868 cases to 67,12,028 cases. Similarly, the state recorded 68 Omicron cases, taking the total number of Covid-19 variant cases from 510 cases to 578 cases.

Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I S Chahal and Thane district collector Rajesh Narvekar made separate announcements about the closure of all schools in Mumbai and Thane for standard 1 to 9

from January 4, 2022 to January 31, even as Mumbai recorded 8082 Covid-19 cases and 40 Omicron cases while Thane registered 2084 Covid-19 cases and went blank on the Omicron front. However, the classes for standard 10 and 12 would continue.

As 1748 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 65,12,610 cases to 65,14,358 cases. The recovery rate in the state dropped from 97.21 per cent to 97.05 per cent.

The number of “active cases” in the state increased 42,024 cases to 52,422 cases. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 2.11 per cent to 2.1 per cent.

Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 37,274 cases,

while there were 6309 active cases in Thane. There were 3808 active cases in Pune, followed by Palghar (1080), Raigad (980), Nashik (691), Ahmednagar (346), Nagpur (406) and Satara (336).

Of the 6,93,70,095 +samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 67,12,028 have tested positive (9.68 per cent) for COVID-19 until Monday. Currently, 3,32,610 people are in home quarantine while 1,096 people are in institutional quarantine.

Meanwhile, the State recorded 68cases of Omicron, taking the total number of new Covid-19 variant cases to 578 cases. Of the new Omicron cases reported on Monday, 34 have been reported by the National Institute of Virology (NIV) while 34 cases were reported by National Chemical Laboratory (NCL).

Of the 68 omicron cases

reported in the state on Sunday, Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 40 cases, followed Pune Municipal Corporation (14), Nagpur (4) Pune rural and Panvel- 3 each, Kolhapur, Navi Mumbai, Raigad and satara- 1 each.

The following is the breakup of a total 460 Omicron cases recorded in the state so far, Mumbai: 368, PMC-63, Pimpri-Chinchwad--36 Pune rural --26, Thane MC- 13, Panvel--11, Nagpur--10, Navi Mumbai-9, Kalyan Dombivli, Satara—7 each, Osmanabad—5, Vasai-Virar-4, Nanded—3, Aurangabad, Buldhana, Bhiwandi-Nizampur, Mira-Bhayandar, Sangli and Kolhapur-2 each—2 each, Ssangli-2 each, Latur, Ahmednagar, Akola and Raigad—1 each.

Of the total cases 259 patients have been discharged after a negative RT-PCR test.

In a related development, the authorities said the total number of passengers who arrived at Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur airports since December 1 was 2,23,630 (32,705 from At-risk countries and rest 1,90,925 are from other countries), while passengers whose RT-PC tests have been done are 51,735 (32,705 are from high-risk countries and 19030 are from other countries). Similarly, RT-PCR positive and samples sent for genomic sequencing was 490(302 are from at-risk countries and 188 are from other countries).

Additionally, field surveillance of all international passengers who have arrived since 1st November is underway.

“Through airport and field surveillance, 2375 samples have been sent for genomic sequencing. The results of 166 are awaited so far,” the daily health bulletin said.

Welcome Govt decision not to extend Wankhede tenure: Malik

Mumbai: Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik on Monday said he has approached the vigilance department of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs against Sameer Wankhede, seeking action against the IRS officer for allegedly holding a permit room and bar licence, contrary to government rules.

Wankhede, who has been shifted from NCB, has been holding the license in his name since 1997, the NCP spokesper-

son told reporters here.

“Is a Central government servant eligible to hold and operate a permit room and bar license in his name,” Malik said. Malik also claimed that some BJP leaders from Maharashtra lobbied for further extension of Wankhede’s NCB tenure, which ended on December 31 last year.

He welcomed the Central government’s decision not to extend Wankhede’s tenure with NCB. **PTI**

Akhtar seeks dismissal of defamation suit against him over RSS-Taliban comparison

Mumbai: Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar on Monday filed an application before a court in adjoining Thane district seeking dismissal of a defamation suit filed against him over his alleged remarks comparing the RSS with the hardline group Taliban.

The 76-year-old poet-lyricist termed the suit as “vexatious and meritless” that has been filed only to “intimidate and exhaust” him and maintained his alleged defamatory remarks were not specific either towards the RSS or its existing members.

Akhtar submitted the application through his advocate Jay Bhardwaj urging the court to reject the suit filed by RSS activist Vivek Champanerkar on the ground that the plaintiff (Champanerkar) does not have locus standi and cause of action to file the plea. Champanerkar, in his suit, has not demanded any damages for himself, but has sought relief for the RSS, the application said.

“In the present case, the goal of the plaintiff

(Champanerkar) is achieved if the defendant (Akhtar) succumbs to fear, intimidation, mounting legal costs or simple exhaustion and abandons the criticism. Winning is not the intent of the plaintiff,” it added.

The former Rajya Sabha MP further said a suit for defamation can be filed only by a person who has been allegedly defamed. “At the outset, it is most respectfully submitted that the alleged defamatory remarks made by the defendant (Akhtar) are not specific either, he said.”

Prem Chopra, wife Covid +ve

Mumbai: Veteran actor Prem Chopra and his wife Uma Chopra were on Monday admitted to a hospital here after testing positive for COVID-19, a senior doctor treating the couple said.

According to Dr Jalil Parkar, the 86-year-old veteran, along with his wife, was admitted to the Lilavati Hospital here. Both are likely to be discharged in “a day or two”, he added.

“Prem Chopra and his wife tested positive for covid-19 and were admitted under Dr

Jalil Parkar in Lilavati hospital for treatment.


“They both have received the monoclonal antibody cocktail and are recuperating well. Hopefully (he) will be discharged in a day or two. At the age of 86 years (he) is responding quite well,” Parkar said in a statement.

Prem Chopra, known for playing iconic villain roles in Hindi films like “Bobby”, “Do Raaste”, and “Kati Patang”, is the latest Bollywood personality to have contracted the virus.

FIRST COLUMN

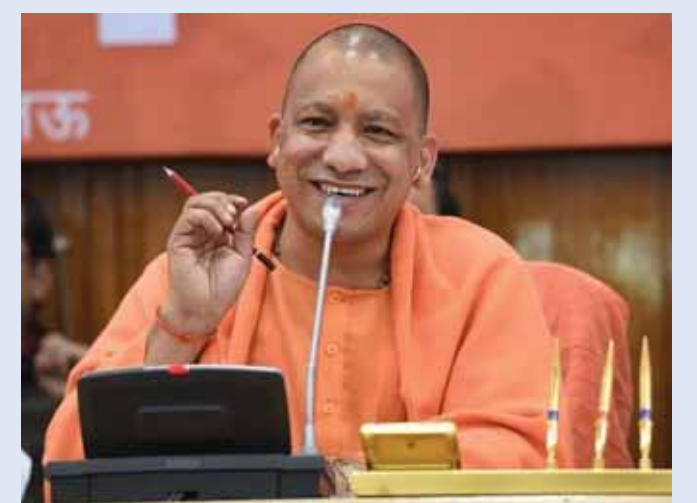
THE TRANSFORMATION OF UTTAR PRADESH

Perceptions about UP have now changed and the State is completely transformed



SHSHANK SAURAV

Uttar Pradesh is in the news as the ruling BJP is not only showcasing its achievements but the cultural agenda is also being asserted. The grand opening of the Kashi corridor was part of the core ideological commitment of BJP. Development and governance are the main themes of the poll campaign which is supported by the iconic images of the Prime Minister and Chief Minister. Even his baiters agree that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has provided a secure atmosphere in the state and ended the mafia raj. Perception about UP has changed now and the state is completely transformed. Overall improvement in infrastructure facilities, control over crime and taming of the bureaucracy has resulted in improvement in ease of business. TheGSDP (current price) of the state has also grown over seven percent over a period of four years from 2017 to 2021 and this is despite the Covid-19 impact. When



Yogi claims about increasing the network of roads and power availability, they are not hollow claims but backed by statistics. The length of national highways has increased from 8,483 km in 2017 to 11,831 km in 2021 recording an increase of 40 percent. Power availability has increased from 10,570 crore units in 2017 to 12,338 crore units in 2021, an increase of 17 percent. Traditionally UP has been a backward and populous state and therefore change in social indicators becomes an important benchmark for performance assessment. The annual social expenditure has increased 1.5 times within four years after Yogi came to power. UP has scored 60 against overall the national average of 66 in the SDG India index published this year by Niti Ayog. Recently Niti Ayog released a report on health ranking of the states and UP has not fared well. However, it is worthwhile to highlight that UP comes at the top when incremental performance (i.e., current round versus previous round) is assessed. An overall performance is the sum total of efforts and performances by all the governments while incremental performance shows the performance of the current regime. Chief ministers of other states were busy giving advertisements during the second wave and their presence was limited to video conferencing while Yogi led from the front in a populous state like UP. UP's 'test-trace-treat' model to fight the pandemic was lauded all across the country and the CM was praised for his efforts. UP's economy is primarily agriculture-based and farmer's agitation was at the centre-stage in this year. UP has registered net value added growth at CAGR of 7.9 percent (at current prices) over a four-year period in agriculture and allied sectors. Initiatives like farm loan waiver in 2017, increase in MSP of farm produces, clearing sugarcane dues, completion of irrigation schemes etc. has contributed towards agriculture sector growth. Ground reports suggest that the farmers' agitation had a limited effect in certain pockets of the State. BJP is showcasing development, Governance, nationalism and cultural Hindutva while the opposition is busy wasting its time in a puerile discussion over Hindu versus Hindutva. Intellectuals who always mocked cultural nationalism and portrayed it against development citing that both are mutually exclusive are speechless now. Road to Delhi goes via UP and it seems like a lost battle for opposition.

(The author is a Chartered Accountant, and public policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

The tale behind putting off key power reforms



UTTAM GUPTA

DBT and de-licensing of electricity distribution hold the key to extricate the sector from morass and make power available to consumers at affordable rates

In the draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, there were four provisions—direct benefit transfer (DBT), de-licensing of the electricity distribution business, creation of the Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority (ECEA) for adjudication of contract disputes, and a single choice committee for appointment of chairman and members of state and central tariff regulators. Reportedly, the Central Government has dropped all four.

While the third and fourth proposals are procedure-oriented aimed at ensuring effective enforcement of contracts, the first two are revolutionary reforms. If implemented in letter and spirit, they have the potential to drastically improve the Indian power landscape.

Before we get to analyze as to what they can deliver and how and why these have been dropped from the bill, it is necessary to take stock of what is ailing the sector.

For nearly two decades, four problems have been haunting the Indian power sector namely, inadequate availability and frequent disruption in supply; financially stressed power distribution companies (PDCs); increasing dues of independent power producers (IPPs) and high cost of electricity supplied to industries and businesses. The Government tried to address them but has not succeeded in making any dent. Meanwhile, the problems have assumed menacing dimensions.

Let us look at some harsh facts to gauge their intensity. As of March 31, 2021, discoms had piled up a mammoth debt of over ₹450,000 crore. This was despite a bailout package coordinated by the Union Government under UDAY (Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana) in November 2015 (under it, their outstanding debt of ₹400,000 crore was extinguished). They also owe a staggering ₹100,000 crore to power producers - IPPs and other generators in the public sector such as NTPC - despite a ₹130,000 crore lifeline given last year under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (ABA).

In most states, electricity is supplied to industries and businesses at more than Rs 10 per unit. As for the availability, the entire network remains vulnerable due to huge receivables of IPPs/PSU generators from discoms. However, for intervention of the Centre by way of arranging funds - for instance, during 2020/21, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) were roped in to give ₹130,000 crore loan to discoms -- to enable them clear dues to IPPs/PSUs, disruption in power supply could happen any time.

What is the root cause or, shall we say, genesis of this perennial mess in the power sector?

A sizeable chunk of electricity is supplied to households and farmers at a fraction of the cost of purchase and distribution or even free (in some states, subsidy accounts for 30-40 per cent of discoms' revenue). Such supplies are made possible



DROPPING THE DRAFT NOW SHOWS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NO LONGER INTERESTED IN PURSUING THE FOUR PROVISIONS. IT ALSO SHOWS THAT NONE OF THE STATES IS WILLING TO LET THE 'GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG' GO OUT OF THEIR HAND. ALLOWING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION BUSINESS ALSO DOES NOT SUIT THEM AS IT HAS THE POTENTIAL OF EXTERMINATING DISCOMS

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



because the State governments order discoms under their ownership and control charge low/nil tariff from these preferred consumers with a promise to reimburse them excess of the cost of supply over it as subsidy.

Most States either don't make reimbursements at all or do it partially and that too after considerable delay. As a result, on units sold to the beneficiaries of subsidized power, discoms incur huge under-recovery. This is aggravated by power theft that happens under the patronage of political brass. Inflated tariff allowed to producers under a cost-plus formula increases the under-recovery.

In a bid to offset this under-recovery, and under instruction from their masters (read: the State government), discoms charge high tariffs on supplies to industries. Considering that the former are sole suppliers of power, the latter have no option but to pay. Despite this cross-subsidization, overall, discoms incur huge loss.

The genesis of the problem lies in an uncompromising stance (albeit populist) of all parties irrespective of their political affiliation to give cheap/free electricity to farmers and poor households (this class matter in elections) and use discoms to achieve it. Even now, in the run-up to elections in 5 states, they are competing with each other to offer free power including waiver of unpaid bills.

Successive governments have made no credible effort to address this endemic problem. All that they have done is to give to discoms the so-called financial restructuring package (FRP) - a fancy nomenclature for condoning their debt. In fact, four FRPs (2002/ 2012/ 2015/2020) have been given in the last over two decades involving

drain of hundreds of thousand crore from the central and state exchequer.

The way forward is to delink subsidy to preferred consumers from the electricity supplier, namely the discoms. The State Government should pay subsidy directly to the beneficiary using the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mechanism on lines similar to DBT of LPG subsidy (this was done during January 2015 - June 2020), even as discoms are free to fix tariff taking into account the cost of purchase, wheeling and distribution. Concurrently, private firms should be allowed in the distribution business to give competition to discoms and ensure that consumers are not taken for a ride.

At present, almost the entire infrastructure for transmission, wheeling and last-mile delivery of power is owned and controlled by discoms. To ensure that there is a level playing field, this infrastructure should be stripped from the discoms and vested in an independent entity. All suppliers should have access to it on 'common carrier' principle in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

There is also dire need for unshackling discoms from state control by converting them into autonomous entities. Preferably, they should be made 'corporate enterprises' and allowed to operate like any private firm. This will enable them independently glide their operations - including tariff setting and negotiations for purchase of electricity - in a professional manner.

These steps will reduce cost of purchase, increase realization from sale of electricity and help eliminate theft. All three outcomes will combine to turn discoms into

profit making entities. Moreover, being under no obligation to supply power to farmers/households at subsidized rates (or free), there won't be any under-recovery hence no reason to charge more from industries and businesses thereby making power affordable/competitive.

In short, these twin reforms — DBT and de-licensing of electricity distribution — hold the key to extricate the sector from the current morass and lay the foundation for ensuring the viability of power producers and distributors on one hand and making this most crucial infrastructure input available to consumers at affordable/competitive rates on the other. Their inclusion in the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2021 would have been the first major step forward in realizing this goal.

Dropping from the draft now shows that the Government is no longer interested in pursuing them. It also shows that none of the states are willing to let the 'goose that lays golden eggs' (read: discoms they use for garnering votes) go out of their hand. However, what prevents states from giving the money directly to farmers or households and still win election? There is a big difference.

Unlike the present dispensation of routing subsidy through discoms wherein, the State government can afford to take things leisurely - not making upfront payment, not paying in full and delaying payment - under DBT, they cannot enjoy any of these luxuries. Hence, they staunchly oppose DBT. Allowing the private sector in electricity distribution business also does not suit them as this has the potential of exterminating discoms.

For now, power reforms are a distant dream.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

LET US TREAT EACH OTHER WITH KINDNESS AND RESPECT. LET US WORK TOWARDS STRENGTHENING THE FEDERAL STRUCTURE OF THIS NATION. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE



THE TRACK RECORD OF THE TMC IN PROTECTING DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES IS ABYSMAL. —BJP NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH

Mixopathy: Integrative medicine as a life-cycle approach

The practice of an integrative approach requires an understanding and recognition of the strengths of each system of medicine



RAKESH SARWAL



SHOBHIT KUMAR

(Dr Rakesh Sarwal, and Vd Shobhit Kumar are civil servants working in NITI Aayog. The views expressed are personal.)

the total to 1.24 doctors to 1000 people, which is above the recommended norm. Incidentally, Ayush manpower was utilized by various States/UTs for different identified roles in mitigation of Covid-19; Ayush infrastructure was utilized as Covid Care Centre, Covid Health Centre, and Vaccination Centre, etc. Further, corresponding to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for modern medicine, research councils exist for each system of traditional medicine. There is a scope for synergy and pooling of expertise of modern medicine and Ayush in research as well.

The National Health Policy, 2017 advocates for improving the health status through concerted policy

action in all sectors. The policy commits Government support in research and integrative practices.

The WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019 reiterates the need for integrating the best of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (CAM) and that of Conventional medicine to tackle the unique health challenges posed in the 21st century.

The WHO defines Integrated Health Care as “a

collaborative, team care approach between a variety of Western medical, traditional and indigenous, and CAM licensed health care providers. The scope of integrative care cum medicine is very broad and it envisages patient-centric, comprehensive care.

Integrative health recognizes that the modern system and Ayush systems have their own strengths and limitations in a way that they can complement each other. Strengths of the Modern system of medicine include emergency management, anaesthesia and surgical management, anti-microbial therapy, management of communicable diseases, etc.

In contrast, Ayush systems have strengths in Preventive and Promotive Health (Swasthritta), dietetics

(Ahara-Vidhi), daily and seasonal regimen (Dincharya and Ritucharya), advocacy for moral conduct (Sadvritha) and yoga which contributes to attaining a state of good health. AYUSH systems aim to provide person-centric care, emphasize eliminating the underlying cause of the disease, a whole of person approach encompassing body and mind.

These systems have a special role in geriatric care, disorders of the intestines, skin, neurological and musculoskeletal systems, autoimmune diseases, reproductive health, mental health, non-communicable chronic diseases, and rehabilitation. In terms of lifespan, and at the cost of over-generalization, traditional medicine is useful in prevention and health pro-

motion, managing chronic diseases, and home-based care.

Modern medicine can better manage emergencies (as stroke, heart attacks), accidents, infections, childhood conditions, and those requiring surgical procedures. The practice of an integrative approach requires an understanding and recognition of the strengths of each system of medicine, which has to be incorporated in their respective curricula. Integration of these systems through cross-referrals will provide scope for holistic and comprehensive care.

Some misinformed people label integrative medicine as “mixopathy”. There is a need for the professions and the consumers to distinguish between the two. It is important to understand that this

integration can be an important move in preserving, protecting, and rejuvenating health along with effective and safe management of conditions. Practitioners with education, training, and license to practice alone can and should practice each system. Integration aims to bring together the best practices of each system without losing their identity. In contrast, “mixopathy” is an illegal and unethical practice of different medicine systems by unqualified practitioners.

A system of integrative medicine in India can avoid the ballooning of healthcare expenditure, provision of comprehensive healthcare through a continuum of care, and help realize the SDG-3 of Universal Health Care.

Booster 88% effectiveness against Omicron: UK studies



Covid Vaccination: A third dose of COVID-19 vaccine can provide up to 88% protection (File)

PTI ■ LONDON

A third dose of COVID-19 vaccine can provide up to 88 per cent protection against hospitalisation from infection by the Omicron variant of coronavirus, according to early results from studies conducted in the UK. The findings compiled in a report by the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) show significantly higher protection provided by third vaccine dose against the highly mutated variant first identified in Botswana and South Africa in November, compared to two doses.

Eric Topol, professor of molecular medicine, and director of Scripps Research Translational Institute in the US noted that vaccine effectiveness drops to 52 per cent against Omicron around six months after taking the second shot of a COVID-19 vaccine.

However, a booster dose substantially increases immunity and lowers odds of being hospitalised with COVID-19 infection. "That's a big boost of protection for 3rd dose vaccine vs hospitalisation from Omicron infection."

Vaccine effectiveness increased from 52 per cent (due to 2-dose waning after 6 months) to 88 per cent after 3rd dose," Topol tweeted on Sunday. "It's pretty impressive that vac-

cines directed to ancestral strain spike from 2 years ago, with virus that's evolved through more than 290 million confirmed cases, and now to hyper-mutated Omicron, have preserved efficacy of near 90 per cent vs severe disease with a 3rd shot," he said in another tweet. The UKSHA report cited two studies which examined the association between both variant and vaccination status and risk of hospitalisation. The first study is based on approximately half a million Omicron cases, and includes all age groups while second one uses a small-

er dataset and is restricted to ages 18 and over. The first study confirms previous finding of reduced overall risk of hospitalisation for Omicron compared to Delta variant.

Both studies found a substantial reduction in risk of hospitalisation for Omicron cases after three doses of vaccine compared to those who are unvaccinated. Despite estimated reduction in hospitalisation risk and preserved vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation, the study authors noted that there may still be large numbers of admissions to hospital. The

risk of hospital admission from emergency departments with Omicron was approximately one-third of that for Delta. The report shows that vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease continues to be lower for Omicron than for Delta with waning by 10 weeks after dose 3rd. After three doses of vaccine, the risk of hospitalisation for a symptomatic case identified with Omicron through community testing was estimated to be reduced by 68 per cent when compared to similar individuals with variant who were not vaccinated.

Pak ready to host SAARC Summit, India can join virtually: FM Qureshi

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Monday that his country was ready to host the 19th SAARC Summit and India can join it virtually if the leadership in New Delhi is not willing to visit Islamabad.

Addressing a press conference to highlight the achievements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021, Qureshi accused India of making SAARC dysfunctional through its stubbornness by refusing to come to Islamabad for the Summit meeting.

"I reiterate the invitation for the 19th SAARC summit. If India is not ready to come to Islamabad, it can join virtually... but it should not stop others from attending the moot," he said.

SAARC - a regional grouping comprising Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - has not been very effective since 2016 and its biennial summits have not taken place since the last one in Kathmandu in 2014.

The 2016 SAARC Summit was originally planned to be held in Islamabad on November 15-19, 2016. But after a terror attack on an Indian Army camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir on September 18 that year, India expressed its inability to participate in the summit due to "prevailing circumstances".

The summit was called off after Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan also declined to participate in the Islamabad meet. Noting that there was no change in relations with India in 2021, Qureshi cited the alleged dominance of "Hindutva thinking" in India for sabotaging the prospects of good ties between the two

countries. "Unfortunately, ties with India in 2021 were frozen. In our view, the potential of regional cooperation has been hit by aggressive Hindutva behaviour in recent years," he said.

He said Pakistan wanted peaceful ties with all its neighbours, including India, but the responsibility for improving the relations was on India.

Qureshi said peace with India was not possible without resolving the Kashmir issue. The bilateral relations deteriorated after India withdrew the special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two union territories in August, 2019.

India has told Pakistan that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Islamabad in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence.

Qureshi dwelt at length on Pakistan's ties with the rest of the world and concluded by saying that political, economic and diplomatic relations improved last year with the entire world, including the US, Russia and China.

Qureshi specially mentioned that the ties with Bangladesh were improving and Prime Minister Imran Khan has interacted with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina. He said Khan invited Hasina to visit Pakistan who also invited him to visit Bangladesh.

To a question on the reported 'Cold War' between China and the United States, he said Pakistan's policy was clear and Islamabad will not become a "part of any camp". Responding to another question on removal of fencing by the Taliban forces on the border, he said Pakistan carried out the fencing work and was aware of the latest incidents (of its removal) while adding that "Afghanistan is our friend and

British PM: Health service under strain, but no new measures

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned on Monday that country's health system will remain under strain for weeks amid current surge in coronavirus infections, but suggested there would be no tightening of measures soon to slow spread.

The highly transmissible Omicron variant has sent Britain's daily new caseload soaring over Christmas and the New Year, with 137,583 infections and 73 deaths reported for England and Wales only on Sunday, with numbers for Scotland and Northern Ireland to be announced after the holiday weekend.

"I think we've got to recognize that the pressure on our NHS, on our hospitals, is going to be considerable in course the next couple of weeks, and maybe more," Johnson said during a visit to a vaccination center in Aylesbury, 85 kilometers (53 miles) northwest of London.

Johnson was speaking after The Sunday Times newspaper reported that a group of hospitals in eastern county of Lincolnshire had declared a "critical incident" due to "extreme and unprecedented" staff shortages. Chris Hopson, chief executive of NHS Providers, which represents health trusts that run hospitals around the country, told BBC: "We're seeing increasing staff absences, and that's coming on top of a very significant amount of wider pressure."

And Matthew Taylor, chief executive of NHS Confederation that represents 1.5 million health workers, said much of health service is in "a state of crisis" that's exacerbated by a high demand for services and staff absences. "Some hospitals are making urgent calls to exhausted staff to give up rest days and leave to enable them to sustain core services."

Fauci: CDC mulling COVID test requirement for asymptomatic

AP ■ WASHINGTON

As the COVID-19 omicron variant surges across the United States, top federal health officials are looking to add a negative test along with its five-day isolation restrictions for asymptomatic Americans who catch the coronavirus, the White House's top medical adviser said Sunday.

Dr. Anthony Fauci said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now considering including the negative test as part of its guidance after getting significant "pushback" on its updated recommendations last week.

Under that Dec. 27 guidance, isolation restrictions for people infected with COVID-19 were shortened from 10 days to five days if they are no longer feeling symptoms or running a fever. After that period, they are asked to spend the following five days wearing a mask when around others. The guidelines have since received criticism from many health professionals for not specifying a negative antigen test as a requirement for leaving isolation. "There has been

some concern about why we don't ask people at that five-day period to get tested," Fauci said. "Looking at it again, there may be an option in that, that testing could be a part of that, and I think we're going to be hearing more about that in the next day or so from the CDC."

Fauci, the nation's top infectious diseases expert, said the U.S. has been seeing almost a "vertical increase" of new cases, now averaging 400,000 cases a day, with hospitalizations also up. "We are definitely in the middle of a very severe surge and uptick in cases," he said. "The acceleration of cases that we've seen is really unprecedented, gone well beyond anything we've seen before."

Fauci said he's concerned that the omicron variant is overwhelming the health care system and causing a "major disruption" on other essential services. "When I say major disruptions, you're certainly going to see stresses on the system and the system being people with any kind of jobs ... particularly with critical jobs to keep society functioning normally," Fauci said.

Prime Minister Morrison upbeat amid Australia virus surge

AP ■ SYDNEY

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday said his country's health system can cope with the new wave of coronavirus infections as Victoria state reported a record number of new cases and hospitalizations surged in New South Wales.

Morrison spoke in two television interviews before Monday's figures were released. Victoria reported 8,577 new cases, a record for the state which eclipsed the previous peak of 7,442 on New Year's Day.

New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, saw a slight decline in case numbers from a record 22,577 on Saturday to 20,794 on Monday. But the number of people in hospitals rose to 1,204 from 1,066 the day before. There were 95 people in intensive care, a rise of 12 on the previous day.

Speaking with the Seven Network, Prime Minister Morrison said Australia's health system is well equipped to deal with the surge in case numbers caused by the spread of the

omicron variant. "It's important that with the rising case numbers, we see that the severity of this illness is already being shown to be around 75 percent less than what we saw with delta," Morrison said.

"Rising case numbers is part of the omicron period, it's part of the new phase of the pandemic we're in." "That doesn't mean to say it can't put pressure on the hospital system."

It can and that's why we're working very closely with the (state) premiers and chief ministers to make sure those resources are there," Morrison added.

Morrison said the federal government would take steps to ensure hospitals had the resources they need to cope with rising admissions. His government last week changed the definition of "close contact" to ensure health workers who might have been exposed to an active case do not have to isolate and can return to work.

"We're looking to make further changes on that this week to get more staff back into our hospitals and deal with the need," Morrison told 9 News.

Biden vows US to act decisively if Russia invades Ukraine

AP ■ WILMINGTON, DEL

President Joe Biden conferred on Sunday with Ukraine's leader over the Russian troop buildup near its border, promising that the U.S. and allies will act "decisively" if Russia further invades the Eastern European nation.

Biden and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's call came as the U.S. and Western allies prepared for a series of diplomatic meetings to try to de-escalate a crisis that Moscow said could rupture ties with Washington.

"President Biden made clear that United States and its allies and partners will respond decisively if Russia further invades Ukraine," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement following the call.

Psaki added that Biden underscored his commitment to principle of "nothing about you without you," the tenet that it won't negotiate policy that impacts Europe without its allies' input. Biden has spoken of hitting Russia with economy-jarring sanctions if it moves on Ukraine's territory, but he said last month that US military action is not on table. The Kremlin has demanded that any further expansion of

NATO exclude Ukraine and other former Soviet countries. The Russians have also demanded that the military alliance remove offensive weaponry from countries in the region.

The White House has dismissed Russia's demands on NATO as a non-starter. A key principle of the NATO alliance is that membership is open to any qualifying country. And no outsider has membership veto power. While there's little prospect that Ukraine would be invited into the alliance anytime soon, the U.S. and its allies won't rule it out.

Zelenskyy said in a Twitter posting after Sunday's call that "keeping peace in Europe, preventing further escalation, reforms, deoligarchization were discussed."

"We appreciate the unwavering support," Zelenskyy said. The United States has made little progress in efforts to persuade Russian President Vladimir Putin to ease tensions. Senior U.S. and Russian officials are scheduled to meet Jan. 9-10 in Geneva to discuss the situation. Those talks are to be followed by meetings at the NATO-Russia Council, and at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Biden spoke with Putin for nearly an hour on Thursday. He told reporters next day that he warned Putin that his economy would pay a "heavy price" if Russia, which has massed some 100,000 troops near border, made further moves against Ukraine. "I'm not going to negotiate here in public, but we made it clear that he cannot — I emphasize cannot — move on Ukraine," Biden said Friday. Biden said he told Putin it was important for the Russians to take steps before those meetings toward easing crisis.

Putin's foreign affairs adviser, in describing presidents' conversation this past week, said Biden's pursuit of sanctions "could lead to a complete rupture of relations between our countries and Russia. West relations will be severely damaged." US intelligence findings indicate Russia has made preparations for a potential invasion in early 2022.

President Bolsonaro hospitalized in Sao Paulo

AP ■ SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was taken to a Sao Paulo hospital for tests early Monday after experiencing abdominal discomfort, the government said. Bolsonaro is "doing well" and further information will be provided later in a medical bulletin, a government statement published by the Globo media outlet said.

Bolsonaro returned to financial capital during night from a New Year break on coast and was immediately taken to Hospital Vila Nova Star, according to Globo.

Globo quoted Bolsonaro's doctor, Antônio Luiz Macedo, as saying Bolsonaro had stomach pains. Macedo operated on Bolsonaro after he was stabbed at a political rally in 2018.

Globo said that Macedo was on holiday in Bahamas and was waiting for a flight back to Brazil to see Bolsonaro, who reportedly had no public appearances scheduled on Monday. Since his stabbing during 2018 presidential election, Bolsonaro has undergone stomach several times.

Sudan's PM announces resignation amid political deadlock

CAIRO (AP) — Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok announced his resignation Sunday amid political deadlock and widespread pro-democracy protests following a military coup that derailed the country's fragile transition to democratic rule.

Hamdok, a former U.N. official seen as the civilian face of Sudan's transitional government, had been reinstated as prime minister in November as part of an agreement with the military following the October coup. In that time he had failed to name a Cabinet and his resignation throws Sudan into political uncertainty amid uphill security and economic challenges.

In a televised national address Sunday, Hamdok called for a dialogue to agree on a "national charter" and to "draw a roadmap" to complete the transition to democracy in accordance with the 2019 constitutional document governing the transitional period. "I decided to return the responsibility and declare my resignation as prime minister," he said, adding that his stepping down would allow a chance for

another person to lead the nation and complete its transition to a "civilian, democratic country." He did not name a successor. The prime minister said his efforts to bridge the widening gap and settle disputes among the political forces have failed.

He warned that the ongoing political stalemate since the military takeover could become a full-blown crisis and damage the country's already battered economy.

"I tried as much as I possibly could to prevent our country from sliding into a disaster. Now, our nation is going through a dangerous turning point that could threaten its survival unless it is urgently rectified," he said.

The October coup had upended Sudan's plans to move to democracy after a popular uprising forced the military's overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019. Four months after al-Bashir's ouster, the generals and the protesters reached a power-sharing deal to rule the country through elections in 2023. However, military-civilian ties

GOVERNMENT OF UTTARAKHAND
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Tender Notice No. 09/SE(R) NHP/e-Tender/2021-22 Dated 03.01.2022
Superintending Engineer, Research Circle, Irrigation Research Institute, Roorkee, Uttarakhand on behalf of "Governor of Uttarakhand" invites item wise rates through e-tenders in "Two Bid System" for the following work.

S.No	Name of work	Cost of tender form (Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of completion
1	2	3	4	5
1	Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of Echo Sounder in Uttarakhand under National Hydrology Project	4,000.00+ GST @ 18%	120 Days	3 months

Key Dates

1	Date of calling	03.01.2022	--
2	Date of online publication	13.01.2022	05.30 PM
3	Documents download start date	13.01.2022	06.00 PM
4	Pre-bid meeting date	24.01.2022	01.30 PM
5	Bid submission start date	05.02.2022	03.30 PM
6	Bid submission end date	14.02.2022	03.00 PM
7	Physical Submission of bid security and cost of bidding document	14.02.2022	03.30 PM
8	Date of opening of Technical bid	14.02.2022	04.00 PM
9	Date of opening of financial bid	To be declared later	

For further details please log on to www.uktenders.gov.in

Superintending Engineer
Research Circle
Irrigation Research Institute Roorkee

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दिनांक 03.01.2022

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... A joint venture with Govt. of NCT of Delhi

TENDER NOTICE
Date: 04.01.2022

Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for following jobs from all bidders

NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BY/21-22/RS/KD/35	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Power Quality Monitoring System	1.18 Crore	2.36 Lakh	24.01.2022, 15:00 Hrs	25.01.2022, 15:00 Hrs

Cost of each Tender Documents: ₹1180/-
For details in respect of qualifying requirements, Terms & Conditions, Purchase and Services /Submission of tender documents/Corrigendum(if any) etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com -> **BSES YAMUNA POWER LTD-> Tenders-> open tenders.**

Head (Contracts & Materials)

Regd.Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 | CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525
TEL: 011-41247111 | Fax:011-4124 7787 | Website: www.bsesdelhi.com

ICICI Bank

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, Landmark Building, 4th Floor, 228A, A/C Bose Road, Kolkata 700020/
CIN No: L65190GJ1994PLC021012, www.icicibank.com

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Excel Auto/ Vineet Kumar Jha-Partner/ Ajay Kumar Singh-Partner/ Satyendra Kumar Sinha- Partner/ Vineet Kumar Jha / Ajay Kumar Singh/ Satyendra Kumar Sinha/ 'Roli Sinha/ 'Ialita Sinha/ 'Suryadeo Singh/ 'Nirmala Singh (Guarantors)/ Suryadeo Singh/ 'Nirmala Singh/ 'Roli Sinha/ 'Ialita Sinha/ 'Satyendra Kumar Sinha (Mortgagors)/ 'Flat No. 204, 2nd Floor Chandan Villa Apartment/ Jagdeepath 'Near Arrah Garden 'Patna' 800014/ 194351000001/ 194355000003/ 625905051907	1) Apartment No. C 4 B- 014 B- Wing 1st Floor Building No. 4, DIF Carlton Estate Phase V DIF City Village- Wazirabad Tahasil and District - Gurgaon Haryana Gurgaon Admeasuring an area of Super area of 126.05 Sq. Mtrs. (1357 Sq.ft.) Parking Space No. 4 B C-16 (Open/ Covered) in The Building No. 4 2) Flat No. 103, First Floor Shiv Radhika Complex Mouza sheikhpapura, Mohalla and P.S. - Shastrinagar, Town And District- Patna, Sub And Sadar Registry Patna, Ward No. 04, Survey Plot No. 1442, Khata No. 59 Revenue Survey Thana No. 09, Tauzi No. 5609 Patna Admeasuring an Rea of Super Built Up Area 1535 Sq.ft. , Car Parking Space on Ground Floor and Undivided Proportionate Share In Land Measuring 497.413 Sq.ft. 3)mouza Kahjepura , Pargana And Survey Thana Phulwari, Hal Thana - Shastri Nagar, S.R.O. and District Patna Tauzi No. 5588 Thana No. 11, Khata No. 259 And 305 Plot No. 252 and 253 Admeasuring an area of Plot No. 252 -2500 Sq. Ft., Plot No. 253- 350 Sq.ft. Total- 2850 Sq. Ft. 4) Tauzi No. 181, Khata No. 82, Plot No. 787 Mouza- Sheikhpura, P.s. Phulwarisharif, Sub and Sadar Registry Office and District Patna P.s. No. 111, Patna Admeasuring an area of 7 Kathas	26/11/2021 Rs. 6,81,55,076.99/-	04/08/ 2021

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : January 04, 2022
Place: Gurgaon

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

21 abducted school kids rescued in northwestern Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria: At least 21 schoolchildren in Nigeria have been rescued hours after they were abducted by armed groups in West African country's troubled northwestern region, police said. The schoolchildren were abducted on Friday while they were travelling with their teacher from Bakura area to an Islamic school in neighboring Katsina state, police spokesman Mohammed Shehu said in a statement over weekend. Security forces responded and rescued 21 students and are "currently working to rescue remaining victims and apprehend perpetrators," Shehu said. He did not say how many hostages are still being held but said assailants seized travelers from as many as five vehicles, suggesting there are many more still in captivity.

NOTICE

A notice of intended marriage has been received from Mr. Golan Mehta S/o Mr. Rajeev Mehta R/o Q-235, Jalvayu Vihar, Sector-21, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar (U.P.) and Ms. Maria Rossan Billo-An Dongque D/o Mr. Paulina Billo-An Dongque R/o 10, Amity Street Capitol Estates-2 Batasan Hills, Quezon City, 1226 Philippines Presently residing at Q-235, Jalvayu Vihar, Sector-21, Noida in the office of the undersigned, any person interested therein, may file objections to it on any day upto 27-01-2022 in the office of the undersigned.

Sd/-
Marriage Officer
Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar (U .P.)

Markets kick off 2022 in style despite Omicron

Sensex leaps 929 pts

Mumbai: Equity indices ratcheted higher in the first trading session of 2022 on Monday, propelled by brisk buying in banking, finance and IT counters amid a global rally even as surging Omicron cases remained an overhang.

A recovering rupee and encouraging macroeconomic data further bolstered sentiment, traders said.

Starting off the session confident-ly, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex gained further momentum as the day progressed and touched the day's high of 59,266.39. It finally ended at 59,183.22, up 929.40 points or 1.60 per cent. Likewise, the broader NSE Nifty soared 271.65 points or 1.57 per cent to settle at 17,625.70.

Bajaj Finance led the Sensex gainers chart with a jump of 3.52 per cent, followed by Bajaj FinServ, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank.

Only five index constituents finished in the red -- Dr Reddy's, M&M, Tech Mahindra, Nestle India and Titan, slipping up to 1.13 per cent.

The Indian equity market ended the year 2021 with robust gains on Friday. On yearly basis, the Sensex advanced 21.99

per cent or 10,502.49 points, while the Nifty rose 24.11 per cent or 3,372.3 points.

"Domestic bourses kicked off the New Year on a strong footing supported by banking, auto and IT stocks, following positive cues from global markets. Auto stocks were in focus today as investors digested the mixed auto sales numbers amid the ongoing chip short-

age.

"India's Manufacturing PMI continued to be in the expansion zone at 55.5 in December supported by strong momentum in production and new orders, although the growth was slower on a sequential basis," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

S Ranganathan, Head of Research

at LKP Securities, said market

breadth was extremely positive with a host of small and midcap stocks across sectors posting smart gains.

Barring healthcare, all BSE sectoral indices finished higher, led by bankex, finance, metal, energy and basic materials.

BSE largecap, midcap and smallcap indices gained as much as 1.48 per cent.

Asian stock markets were mixed on the first trading day of 2022 on Monday. Hong Kong shares retreated while South Korea stocks gained.

PTI

Gold declines by ₹84; silver tumbles ₹369

New Delhi: Gold price in the national capital on Monday dipped by ₹84 to ₹47,053 per 10 grams, in-line with decline in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal settled at ₹ 47,137 per 10 grams. Silver also dipped by ₹369 to ₹61,037 per kg from ₹ 61,406 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading lower at USD 1,823 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 23.11 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded weak with spot gold prices at COMEX trading at USD 1,823 per ounce on Monday. Gold prices traded lower with stronger dollar and higher US bond yields," HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel said.

PTI

Exports up 37 pc to record USD 37.29 bn in Dec; trade deficit widens to USD 22 bn

New Delhi: The country's

exports in December 2021 surged 37 per cent on an annual basis to USD 37.29 billion, the highest-ever monthly figure, on the back of healthy performance by sectors like engineering, textiles and chemicals, even as the trade deficit widened to USD 21.99 billion.

Imports in December too rose by 38 per cent to USD 59.27 billion on account of an increase in oil imports, which soared 65.17 per cent to USD 15.9 billion, government data showed on Monday. Gold imports expanded by 4.5 per cent to USD 4.69 billion. Exports in December 2020 stood at USD 27.22 billion, while imports aggregated to USD 42.93 billion. Trade deficit was at USD 15.72 billion. Cumulatively, during April-December 2021-22 exports rose by 48.85 per cent to USD 299.74 billion.

Imports during the period increased by 69.27 per cent to USD 443.71 billion, leaving a trade deficit of USD 143.97 billion. In December 2021,

exports of engineering goods grew by 37.27 per cent to USD 9.7 billion, followed by petroleum products (140 per cent to USD 5.6 billion), gems and jewellery (15.8 per cent to USD 2.98 billion), chemicals (26 per cent to USD 2.64 billion) and ready made garments of all textiles (22 per cent to USD 1.46 billion).

Addressing a press conference, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said India's merchandise exports will cross USD 400 billion this fiscal.

"With USD 300 billion in the first nine months of 2021-22 we are on track to achieve our target..This growth is satisfying and we must aspire for more," Goyal said.

He added that the third wave of COVID-19 is impacting developed economies like the US, Europe and the Middle East, and problems related to shipping lines can be expected.

"We don't immediately see any supply disruptions or in the supply chains because by and large the world has seen that the effects of this wave are relative-

ly less harmful and the western world has not restricted any movements as yet.

"We've also not seen instances of lockdowns being announced in any major country," Goyal said, adding that the only problem could be temporary in the form of some shipping staff getting infected with COVID-19, causing short-term disruptions. "Most cases are asymptomatic and recover very quickly. Hopefully supply lines and supply activity will continue in full steam," he said.

Commenting on the numbers, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said looking at the current trend, India will achieve the USD 400 billion merchandise exports target for the fiscal.

Goyal also said the country is well on track to go up to USD 230 billion or upwards in services exports this fiscal, which will also be an all-time high.

"We have seen a USD 179 billion services exports in first nine months," he said.

PTI

Fin Min notifies Sebi rules related to procedure for holding inquiry, imposing penalties

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry has notified amended Sebi rules pertaining to the procedure for holding an inquiry and imposing penalties.

The new rules are — Depositories (Procedure for Holding Inquiry and Imposing Penalties) (Amendment) Rules, 2021; Securities Contracts (Regulation) (Procedure for Holding Inquiry and Imposing Penalties) (Amendment) Rules, 2021; and Securities and Exchange Board of India (Procedure for Holding Inquiry and Imposing Penalties) (Amendment) Rules, 2021.

The rules have become effective from December 31.

The amended rules spec-

ify the modes for service of notices and orders. A notice or an order issued under these rules has to be served on the person by delivering or tendering it to that person or his duly authorised agent.

It can also be sent by fax, electronic mail or electronic instant messaging services along with electronic mail, by courier, speed post or registered post.

Sebi has also specified certain conditions in this regard.

In case of failure to serve a notice or an order through any one of the modes, the notice or order may be affixed on the outer door. It can also be on some other conspicuous

part of the premises in which "the person resides or is known to have last resided, or carried on business or personally works, or last worked, for gain and a written report thereof shall be prepared in the presence of two witnesses".

In case of failure to affix the notice or order, it has to be published in at least two newspapers, one in an English daily newspaper having nationwide circulation and another in a newspaper having wide circulation published in the language of the region where that person was last known to have resided or carried on business or personally worked for gain, as per the notifications

PTI

HDFC assigns ₹7,468 cr loans in Dec quarter, sees 5.5 pc growth

New Delhi: Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC), the country's largest mortgage lender, on Monday said it assigned loans of ₹7,468 crore in the quarter ended December 2021, up by 5.5 per cent from a year ago.

It had assigned loans amounting to ₹ 7,076 crore in the corresponding December 2020 quarter of the previous financial year.

All loans assigned during the quarter ended December 31, 2021, were to HDFC Bank pursuant to the buyback option embedded in the home loan arrangement between HDFC Bank and the Corporation, it said in a regulatory filing. Loans sold in the preceding 12 months amounted to ₹ 27,591 crore as against ₹ 16,956 crore, it said.

The company's gross income from the dividend for the quarter ended December 31, 2021, was ₹195 crore (previous year ₹ 2 crore) and the profit on the sale of

investments was nil (₹157 crore a year ago), it further said.

HDFC said that with effect from December 1, 2021, it is required to maintain a liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) of a minimum of 50 per cent.

"As at December 31, 2021, for the purpose of LCR, the Corporation is carrying approximately ₹ 27,000 crore of unencumbered high-quality liquid assets (HQLA), held entirely in government securities.

"Further, approximately ₹13,000 crore of HQLA is held for statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) requirements against deposits and ₹15,000 crore is being maintained for general liquidity purposes," HDFC said.

In aggregate, HDFC has liquidity buffers of around ₹55,000 crore, the mortgage lender said. Shares of HDFC on Monday closed at ₹2,635.45 apiece on the BSE, up 1.88 per cent from the previous close.

PTI

CSC to undertake first-ever cultural survey of villages

New Delhi: Government-promoted CSC SPV, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, will undertake the first-ever cultural survey of India's villages through a mobile application.

The survey, titled 'Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar', will document the cultural identity at the village level by involving citizens to share what makes their village, block or district unique, CSC SPV said in a statement.

"India has a unique cultural identity rooted in its villages. No one can understand it better than the CSC VLEs who are

embedded in the community they serve.

"This survey builds upon a successful track record of CSCs engaging on official enumerations like the 7th Economic Census and some other surveys done for the state governments," CSC SPV Managing Director Dinesh Tyagi said.

The entire exercise is expected to be completed by mid-2022. As per the agreement signed between the two entities, CSC will develop a mobile application and train the village level entrepreneurs (VLEs) in conducting the survey.

CryptoWire rolls out global index 'Cryptocurrencies IC15'

New Delhi: CryptoWire, a crypto super app on Monday announced the launch of India's first index of cryptocurrencies, IC15 with a view to empowering knowledge on blockchain ecosystem.

The index tracks and measures the performance of the top 15 widely traded liquid cryptocurrencies listed on leading crypto exchanges of the world, CryptoWire said in a statement.

An index that captures over 80 per cent of market movement is, thus, a fundamental market tracking and assessing tool to base decisions on and enhance transparency, it said.

PTI

Software exporters set for strong revenue growth in Q3: Report

Mumbai: Export-dependent software companies are set to report a strong sequential revenue growth in the range of 2.6 to 6 per cent in the seasonally weak December quarter, according to a report.

The December 2021 quarter earnings season will begin later this week or early next week with industry leaders TCS and Infosys announcing their numbers.

In a report released on Monday, Kotak Institutional Equities forecast a strong 2.6 to 6 per cent sequential revenue growth in the seasonally weak December 2021 quarter.

The report, which however, did not offer an annualised number, also said the picture is not rosy on EPS (earnings per share) front as it sees a fall of 15

per cent for some and a growth of 11 per cent for others.

According to the report, HCL, Wipro and Tech Mahindra will lead the growth chart among large-caps and LT Infotech (LTI) among mid-caps of the industry that has seen strong headcount addition with higher fresher intake, amid high attrition on one hand and muted total new contracts on the other but strong actual deal-making. December is a seasonally lean period due to furloughs. Despite the impact of furloughs, the report sees strong revenue growth led by high discretionary and continuing transformation spending.

While Wipro, Tech Mahindra and HCL will likely deliver 4.5 per cent growth in constant currency terms, Infosys is likely to

login in a 3.7 per cent topline (revenue) growth and industry leader TCS a modest 2.6 per cent on-quarter growth, the brokerage said. Mid-tier companies are likely to deliver revenue growth of 5-6 per cent in constant currency terms, and healthy overall growth of 20-34 per cent annualised, it added. The export-dependent industry will have a cross-currency headwind of 20-90 bps due to a rise in the dollar against the pound, euro and the Australian dollar.

However, EPS growth will be weak on-year with Wipro's login in muted number, HCL reporting decline, while Infosys offering 6 per cent, and TCS and Tech Mahindra delivering in low-teens.

PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of ICICI Bank Ltd. that Mr. Rajinder Singh was the owner of Flat Bearing No. 52-B, on First Floor, in B-Block, Category-1 Janta, situated at Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi, the said property, by virtue of Conveyance Deed dated 22.10.2008, registration No. 21642, after demise of Late Mr. Rajinder Singh his surviving member Mrs. Gurpreet Kaur is claiming ownership of the said property as legal heirs on the basis of SMC, and registered will dated 20.03.2009. All persons including other legal heirs if any are hereby informed that above mentioned legal heir want to sell the said property to Mrs. Anuradha Kaur who is taking loan facility from ICICI Bank Ltd. for purchase of the said property, if anybody has any objections upon the claiming ownership of Mrs. Gurpreet Kaur its Sale/Mortgage/ligation, and any kind of objections kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 10 days of the present.
Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, 1st Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Mohi Nagar, N. Delhi-15 Ph. 011-4311227-8, www.kumarassociatesadvocates@gmail.com

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th Floor Jeevan Tara Building Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001
OA No 922/19 **DATE : 15.12.2021**
CANARA BANK (Establishment Bank) **Applicant**

MR. VIJAY KUMAR & ORS. **Respondent**
To Defendants
1. Mr. Vijay Kumar S/o Mr. Indrasan Singh
R/o House No. 4/421, Plot No. B-3 & B-1 Sect.-4
Vashah, Ghazabad UP-201001
Also at :- **SOHO Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd.**
Executive Director
SOHO House, Plot No. 69, Gyan Khand-I Indraprastha
Ghaziabad UP - 201001
2. Mrs. Archana Kumari W/o Mr. Vijay Kumar
R/o House No. 4/421, Plot No. B-3 & B-1 Sect.-4
Vashah, Ghazabad UP-201001
Also at :- **Massco SOHO Homes Pvt. Ltd.**
Manager H-106, Sect-63 Noida UP-201301
3. M/s Massco SOHO Homes Pvt. Ltd.
B-22, Ghazipur Village, New Delhi-96
Also at :- D-59, Sect.-63, Noida UP-201301
Also at :- H-106, Sect.-63 Noida UP-201301
Also at :- Plot No. GH-01 B/1 Sect.-16 Greater Noida
Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 40.31,196/- (Rupees Forty Lakh Thirty One Thousand One Hundred Ninety Six Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **09.03.2022** at 10.30 A.M.
Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.
Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-
(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisca Webex" application/Software;
(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer I/ and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the heading "Next Date of Hearing".
(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at **Ph. No. 23748478**.
Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this date: **15th day of December, 2021.**
By Order of the Tribunal
Sd/-
Assistant Registrar
DRT-II, New Delhi

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti PHE, Ground Water Division, Sgr.
Gist of e-Tender.
E-NIT No -PHE/GWDS/ 69 of 12/2021 Dated:31-12-2021
For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders are invited in 02 Cover System for the below mentioned work from registered Electrical/ Mechanical Works contractors as per the details given in tender document.
S.No 1. Name of work :- 1Providing/fitting/installing and commissioning of 01 HP Solar based Water pumping unit (02 No.) with 2000 ltr storage PVC Tank, including the cost of fabrication of mild steel structure of size 06 feet x 6 feet x 4.5 feet including the cost of PV Module with complete accessories as per the annexure A with comprehensive maintenance contract of 05 years.. This is inclusive of all pipes (PPR), lightening arrestors, solar plates, solar controllers and outlet brass taps (03 No's Each) atAsham Bandipora.
Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 5.00 Lacs, **Cost of Tender Document :-** Rs. 500/- **Time of completion :-** 10 Days, **Class of Contract :-** Registered for Electrical/ Mechanical works, **Programme :-** BDC Grants 2021-22.
Critical Dates / Information.
1. Publishing Date :- 01-01-2022 (02:00 PM)
2. Period of Downloading of Bids :- 01-01-2022 (02:00 P.M) to 06 -01-2022 (02.00 P.M)
3. Period of Submission of bids :- 01-01-2022 (02:00 P.M) to 06 -01-2022 (02.00 P.M)
4. Date of opening of Tender. :- 07-01-2022 at (2:00 P.M)
5. Tender Receiving Authority: : Executive Engineer, (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water SrinagarKashmir-190011.
6. Document Cost : Non-Refundable in the shape of Treasury Challan/receipt deposited to Account Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar(at Saddar Treasury Srinagar) (The firm shall specify the name of work for which apply).
7. Bid Validity Period: 180 Days
8. The bids can be downloaded or uploaded on [www. Jktenders.gov.in](http://www.Jktenders.gov.in)
9. Instead of EMD the firm has to furnish "Bid Security Declaration", format of the declaration is mentioned in the Bid Document.
No. D1PK-16094/21
Dated: 03-01-2022
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Jal Shakti PHE Ground Water Division Sgr.

MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI
On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Fur-II, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting open e-tender (No. M-200/MCF/RBL/Fur-activities/LWACCN/2022-23/F26 Date-30.12.2021) based on single packet system online through Indian Railway portal www.ireps.gov.in for following work:-
Description of Work :- Works contract for Interior Mechanical Furnishings & Fittings in LWACCN LHB type Coaches as per scope of work. **Approx. Value (₹) 7,09,41,592.96** **Quantity of work: 578 Coaches** **Work completion period: 12 Months or earlier** ● E-Tender submitted through online up to 15:00 hrs. on 27.01.2022. Manual offer will not be considered. ● E-Tender shall be opened on 27.01.2022 after 15:00 Hrs. through online on <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. ● Detailed Tender E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at Indian Railway IREPS website- <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.
Dy. Chief Mech. Engr./Furnishing-II
On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Fur-III, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting open e-tender (No. M-200/MCF/RBL/Fur-activities/LWACCW/2022-23/F27 Date-28.12.2021) based on single packet system online through Indian Railway portal www.ireps.gov.in for following work:-
Description of Work:- Works contract for Interior Mechanical Furnishings & Fittings in LWACCW LHB type Coaches as per scope of work. **Approx. Value (₹) 1,23,31,486.72** **Quantity of work: 116 Coaches** **Work completion period: 12 Months or earlier** ● E-Tender submitted through online up to 15:00 hrs. on 24.01.2022. Manual offer will not be considered. ● E-Tender shall be opened on 24.01.2022 after 15:00 Hrs. through online on <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. ● Detailed Tender E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at Indian Railway IREPS website- <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.
Dy. Chief Mech. Engr./Furnishing-III
EA Notice No.: 03/EA/2021-22 **Date : 30.12.2021**
E-AUCTION NOTICE NO-03
Modern Coach Factory Raebareli, Lalgaon will be conducting e-auction for disposal of scrap materials (Scrap of EN Steel, Scrap of Corten Steel, Scrap Austenitic Steel, Scrap of Ferritic Steel, Skelton of different shape & size and Misc. other ferrous scrap & non ferrous scrap etc.) through the website www.ireps.gov.in at 11.00 AM.
e-AUCTION DATES FROM January - 2022 to March 2022

Month	January	February	March
Date	07 and 21	04 and 18	04 and 17

The intending purchasers may inspect the scrap materials before the auction during the working hours. To participate in e-Auction, purchasers need to get themselves registered with IREPS e-auction module. For further details regarding Registration, Payment of Earnest Money and participation in the e-Auction for the above item, Dy. Chief Materials Manager/Shell Dept, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli, Lalgaon-229120 may be contacted.
For PCMM Office
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

UJVN Limited
H.O. : "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone: 0135-2763808, Fax No.: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com
R.O. No. 03 **E-TENDER NOTICE** **Dt. 03-01-2022**
The office of the Executive Engineer (E&M-SHP), UJVN Limited, Rishikesh, invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tenders are given below :
E-Tender No. 10/EE (E&M)/(SHP)/Rishikesh/2021-22
Name of Work : Design, Detail Engineering, Supply, Transportation, Installation, Commissioning and Testing etc. of Electromechanical Equipment at 2x1125 kW Pilangad SHP in District Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand on Turnkey Basis.
E-Tender No. 11/EE (E&M)/(SHP)/Rishikesh/2021-22
Name of Work : Design, Detail Engineering, Supply, Transportation, Installation, Commissioning and Testing etc. of Electromechanical Equipment at 2x1500kW Urgan SHP in District Chamoli, Uttarakhand on Turnkey Basis.
Estimated cost with GST : 1. Rs. 97,94,000.00 2. Rs. 1,54,44,455.00
Date of availability of bid document on website:- 04.01.2022 from 16:00 Hrs.
Last date for submission of bids on website: 05.02.2022 upto 16:00 Hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>
Executive Engineer (E&M-SHP), Rishikesh
"Avoid Wasteful use of Electricity"

SEARCH FOR MISSING

Surbhi
General public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Surbhi, D/o: Bijender Singh Chauhan, R/o: 69/K, Gali No. 1, Sagarpur, New Delhi** has been missing since **23.12.2021** at about **9:00 AM** from his house. In this regard **DD No. 143 A, dated 23.12.2021** has been lodged at Police Station Sagarpur, New Delhi. The description of missing girl is as under:
Name: Surbhi, Age: 21 Years, Height: 5'2", Face: Long, Complexion: Fair, Built: Thin, Wearing: Pink Colour Suit & Cream Colour Pajami, and Black Colour Shoes in Feet.
If anyone has any information about this missing girl please inform P.S. Sagarpur, New Delhi.
Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639 **SHO**
Police Station, Sagarpur, New Delhi
DP/981/SW/2021 **Ph: 011-28522655, 7065036228**

SEARCH FOR MISSING


Manish Dutta
General Public is hereby informed that a boy (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Manish Dutta S/o Deepak Dutta R/o House No. RZ- A15/16, Dabri Extension, Sagarpur, New Delhi** has been missing since 14.12.2021 from his house. In this regard a case vide **DD No 125A dated 17.12.2021** has been lodged at Police Station Sagarpur, New Delhi. His physical description is as under:-
Age: 22 Years, Height: 5'9", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Strong, Wearing: Black Colour Jacket & Blue Colour Jeans and Sports Shoes in feet.
Any person having any information/ Clue about this missing boy, may inform SHO, Sagarpur, New Delhi at E-mail **Id- cic@cbi.gov.in or website: <http://cbi.nic.in>**
Phone: **SHO**
011-24368638, 24368641 **P.S. Sagarpur, New Delhi**
Fax No. 011-24368639 **South West Distt., Delhi**
DP/974/SW/2021 **Ph. No. 011-28522653, 28522654**

DOCYARD

DR RISHI RAJ BORAH

Country Director

ORBIS INDIA



Eyes are precious, keep a watch



Eyes are the window to the world, allowing us to see the many wonders around us and enjoy life. But often, we take them and their function for granted-people, in general, tend to disregard their eye health and the problems associated with it. Eye diseases are on the rise around the world, including in India. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), at least 2.2 billion people worldwide have near or distance vision impairment. The WHO also states that visual impairment could have been avoided in at least one billion of these cases if the patient had received proper diagnosis and treatment.

Due to a hectic lifestyle, cases of vision loss are on the rise in India. According to a large scale study, which included data from 14.5 lakh patients, the number of cases of dry eye disease increased to 21,000 in 2019. It states that India is on the verge of a dry eye disease epidemic. By 2030, it will affect approximately 40 per cent of the urban population.

Although the findings are concerning, they are unsurprising given that several international studies have concluded that Indians are at a high risk of diabetes and glaucoma-related vision problems, including total blindness. To keep the numbers from rising, it is critical that public education on eye health issues be prioritized at all levels. Moreover, eye disorders worsen as people get older. Occurrences which seem simple to us such as unaddressed blurred vision, an unattended eye injury, can lead to irreversible vision loss. But, on a positive note, simple and timely interventions can help address the issues in no time and restore one's vision. In this context, large public awareness initiatives for early detection and treatment are critical.

Physical and social impact of eye diseases

Blindness and vision impairment have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life. It also affects their educational and employment opportunities. This burden can be greatly reduced by enhancing people's knowledge and awareness of common eye diseases, allowing them to seek timely eye care. For this, one of the initiatives we can take is to create information and education regarding eye diseases which can be integrated into the school curriculum. At the University level, students in public health can be encouraged to organize eye care awareness camps for the public. This will also aid in better understanding of the problem and decision making for eye care in the future. To fortify our efforts in generating public awareness on quality eye care, we can initiate Knowledge Attitude and Practise Studies on blindness, create IECs around them and have a strong dissemination plan. NGOs like Orbis are already working to support its partners across India to ensure that quality eye care is delivered to the community and, more importantly, to the children of the country.

Preventing eye diseases through public health policy


Preventable blindness is a critical component of our public health policy. In order to address the country's untreated eye conditions, the WHO and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) collaborated with the Indian government to develop VISION 2020: Right to Sight-INDIA. It was founded in 2004 as a parallel NGO confederation to the international body. It aids in the development of state-level plans and programmes, which are led by the state government with extensive input from local and international NGOs. With the active participation of the Government of India, it also organizes World Sight Day, Eye Donation Fortnight, and other events.

The Way Forward

We are aware of prevalent eye diseases, but we become short-sighted when it comes to critical information that can aid in early detection and treatment. Glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), refractive errors, low vision, all require urgent public education. Children, middle-aged individuals caring for elderly parents, and older persons are some specific groups that could be targeted for educational activities to raise awareness on eye health, simple signs and symptoms of eye disorders and actions to take once they identify the symptoms to receive swift treatment and best results. Increased patient understanding of common eye diseases and treatments may lead to a greater appreciation of the value of routine eye exams in the early detection and treatment of many eye problems.

WARMFOOD

CAULIFLOWER : because it feeds the good bacteria in your gut, which helps to reduce inflammation and improve digestion. High in antioxidants, it protects cells from free radical damage and inflammation. Containing only 25 calories per cup, allowing you to consume large quantities without gaining weight. It can also be used as a calorie-free alternative to high-calorie items.





IT IS A LUNG CASE

Hospitals are seeing a significant rise in the number of patients suffering from a lung infection. Few subsets of COVID patients gradually develop the infection leading to pneumonia. SUPRIYA RAMESH speaks with experts to bring a report

Once again, the world is petrified as Omicron cases are on rise and sooner than soon we all might again be put behind the doors. Amidst the pandemic, which certainly doesn't seem to bid goodbye to us and has already caused pandemic-fatigue, there is pneumonia, another lung disease which is increasing its count all over the world.

Termed as an infection of one or both of the lungs, air sacs that are present inside tend to get filled with fluid or pus. It primarily affects infants and people above the age of 65, the severity of disease is more. Age is not the only factor that decides the seriousness of the disease but the type of germ that caused the infection and person's overall health also matter. Bacterial, viral, and fungal infections can all cause pneumonia. However, viruses and bacteria are some of the commonest causes. Some viruses also infect the respiratory tract and can lead to pneumonia. Viral pneumonia may be mild and can go away on its own like a common cold.

Mild signs and symptoms often are similar to those of a cold or flu, but they last longer and the symptoms vary for newborn, young adults and in older people. "Signs and symptoms may include chest pain when you breathe or cough, cough, which may produce phlegm, fatigue, fever, sweating and shaking chills, lower than normal body temperature (in adults older than age 65 and people with weak immune systems), nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea, shortness of breath," says Dr I J Kalra, MBBS, MD — Medicine, General Physician at Dr Kalra's Medical & Dental Centre in Hari Nagar and Paschim Vihar, New Delhi.

Pneumonia's symptoms are almost similar to the coronavirus and there has also been a term coined for the condition patient faces post-COVID. "Pneumonia is a lung infection in general terms, and few subsets of COVID patients gradually get lung infection leading to pneumonia, in medical terms we refer to the condition as COVID Pneumonia," Dr Akshay Budhreja, Senior Consultant, Respiratory and Sleep Medicine, Aakash Healthcare tells us.

According to Dr Vidya Nair, Senior Consultant, Respiratory & Sleep Medicine, QRG Super Speciality Hospital, pneumonia management includes oral or IV antibiotics based on the severity of infection which is ascertained by the doctor. Most community acquired pneumonia with no additional patient risk factors need only monotherapy (single antibiotics), which needs to be given for five to seven days. Elderly patients, patients who have chronic comorbidities, or who have respiratory distress, may need dual antibiotic cover, oxygen support and management of sepsis.

"In case the patient is having spasm (airway spasm) we give nebulization to the patient; along with that other supportive care like nutritional part, medicines for fever (antipyretic), antibiotics for vomiting, and other as per the symptoms," says Dr Davinder Kundra, Consultant — Pulmonology, HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Dwarka.

There has been a surge in cases due to the changes in weather and rising air pollution. "In our hospital, there is a significant rise in the number of patients suffering from a lung infection, including COVID. There is a 200 per cent increase in lung infection cases. However, most of them are having bacterial or other pneumonia, not COVID. Therefore, there is a three fold increase in lung infection cases in the last two to three weeks. The catalyst behind this is changing weather and air quality," Dr Budhreja explains.

More than 60 per cent cases are from rural areas and there could be more than just one reason. What could be the possible reasons? Other than poor hygiene, improper sanitation, less ventilation, no access to proper healthcare facilities and unavailability of vaccination, TB is the reason behind most pneumonia cases in rural areas. "Patients who come from rural areas, keep coughing for two to three weeks and it is only after X-ray and other medical examinations we get to know it is Tuberculosis," Dr Budhreja tells us.

Although pneumococcal vaccination is strongly recommended to prevent serious life threatening invasive bacterial pneumonia especially in people with comorbidities and age greater than 50 years, it doesn't prevent the disease completely.

As the illness is related to lungs, smokers might be at high risk. Dr K Shanmugham, Assistant Chief Medical Officer, Jindal Naturecure Institute, tells us that evidence from several studies confirms that smoking is significantly associated with the development of bacterial and viral pneumonia.

Exposure to tobacco smoke suppresses the activation of innate immune responses to bacterial infection; the front-line defence mechanism considered important in susceptibility to pneumonia. Cigarette smoking is an especially prominent risk factor for pneumococcal pneumonia in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), but even without COPD, smoking remains a major risk factor.

One with less severe infection can resort to home remedies. Herbal teas like peppermint, eucalyptus, turmeric, ginger and fenugreek tea can soothe a scratchy throat efficiently. They also deal with upper respiratory tract infections and break down mucus. Gargling with salt water helps get rid of the mucus sitting in the throat causing a ticklish feeling. Moringa, commonly known as 'drumstick', is a tropical plant with many nutritional and medical benefits.

Insightful book for coping up COVID crisis

If your kid is feeling worried, finding it difficult to cope with anxiety brought in by COVID-19, the go-to book is Kovi's Promise, says ARCHANA JYOTI

Penned by Dr Sujata Sharma, senior doctor from the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Delhi, the book draws on the daily realities of several children since the beginning of the pandemic and attempts to provide the kids to become more resilient, both now and when the COVID crisis is over.

The *Kovi's Promise* was released by AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria at an event in the national capital last week. Appreciating the effort of the professor at the Department of Biophysics who occasionally dons the writer's hat as her passion, Dr Guleria said "The book itself is very useful not only for children but even for laypersons because it explains, in a very simplified manner what COVID is all about.

"It also inter mingles the various aspects of the pandemic and what a child goes through, because of education and peer pressure amidst a family when a child's siblings are doing better than him/her academically," Dr Guleria added.

The book aims to help children



stay hopeful and positive even as COVID-19 unfolds into Omicron and Delta and shows how a child evolves and develops an interest in science and academics, as was also pointed out by Dr Guleria.

The present book talks about a naughty six-year-old boy Bholu who survived the upside down life brought by the pandemic which had struck the world early 2020. Instead of normal, physical school, Bholu had to learn to adjust to attending online classes, play all by himself as he could not meet his friends. Staying away from his school and his

friends, Bholu became miserable and lonely. Then one night, in his garden, he met Kovi, a baby coronavirus. From that moment, an unexpected friendship began. Playing together and talking about the pandemic and science, they found an enchanted purpose. Finally, Kovi made Bholu promise something and the result was that, that little boy grew up as a scientist Dr Pratham who happened to bag an award in 2055 for discovering a new coronavirus.

The storybook which is currently available in English and as *Tumhara Bholu* in Hindi can be used by parents and teachers as well as kids shedding light on how to create the right conditions for impressionable minds to openly share their feelings and worries related to the pandemic.

"The book addresses the fears and concerns children are facing in the current phase of the pandemic, and explores the various coping mechanisms that they can use when faced with emotions like fear, grief and anger," said Dr Sujata, shedding some light on the book.

As COVID enters into its third year, the impact on children and young people's mental health and well-being continues to weigh heavily.

According to the UNICEF, disruption to routines, education, recreation, as well as concern for family income and health, is leaving many young people feeling afraid, angry, and concerned for their future. It says that globally, at least 1 in 7 children has been directly affected by lockdowns, while more than 1.6 billion children have suffered some loss of education.

Kovi's Promise promises to bring hope in such gloomy scenario, says Dr Sujata, who has three other science fiction autobiographical books also, *Warriors in White*, *The Secret of the Red Crystals* and *A Dragonfly's Purpose* to her credit.

Dr Sujata has bagged a string of awards like the *Kalpna Chawla Excellence Award*, the *Peaklife Woman Inspire Award* and the *TWAS Award for Public Understanding and Popularization of Science* for her various achievements, to name a few.

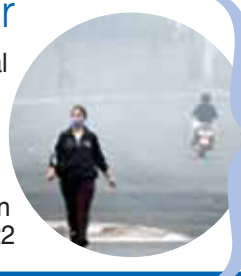
THE PIONEER

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NEW DELHI | TUESDAY | JANUARY 4, 2022

UnhealthyAir

Residents of the national capital will have to breathe severely polluted air as the air quality further deteriorated in the past 24 hours, as per the data shared by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on January 2, 2022



SUPERFOODS FOR THE YEAR



We are a microcosm of our universe. Changes in the macrocosm bring about seasons that influence

the health of our mind and body. MADHAVI K SHARMA tells us how to adapt and align our lifestyle accordingly

Eating seasonal food is the key to a healthy life. Not only does it allow us to benefit from the higher life force energy in such foods, but also adds variety to our meals. Seasonal fruits and vegetables are loaded with nutrients that help boost our immunity and prevent us from the infections that might occur in that season.

However, with technological advancement, preservation of food has become easy and all foods are available throughout the year. The modern generation hardly understands the concept of eating in sync with natural rhythms and its significance towards leading a healthy life.

- JANUARY: TIL

Til keeps the body warm in peak winters. It is loaded with calcium, zinc, omega-3, vitamin E, fiber and antioxidants. It is the go-to food not just for good hair and skin, but also for stronger bones, healthy heart, smoother digestion and balanced blood sugar.
- FEBRUARY: BEIR

Beir is filled with minerals like potassium, phosphorus, manganese, iron, and zinc which are essential for maintaining a good heart health.
- MARCH: KANJI

Iron boosts haemoglobin production, which helps ward off anaemia. Beir is easily digestible as it contains dietary fiber, and is great for those who tend to suffer from constipation.
- APRIL: AMARANTH

Amaranth is a gluten-free option to wheat. It has peptides and oils with anti-inflammatory properties which relieve pain and inflammation. Amaranth is also a good source of lysine which helps calcium absorption and increases muscle mass.
- MAY: PHALSE

With a natural cooling effect, phalse is a hyper-fruit that helps regulate electrolyte imbalance. The unripe portion of the berry helps in cleansing blood and helps heal respiratory problems like sore throat, cold and bronchitis.
- JUNE: SHEHTOOT (INDIAN MULBERRY)

Mulberries boost liver health and purify the blood. They contain iron that is useful to maintain liver health. Also, they are high in vitamin K and calcium, which along with iron help build stronger bone tissues and bones.
- JULY: BHUTTA (INDIAN CORN)

Corn is rich in vitamin A and antioxidants, which helps in maintaining good eye health. Corn is rich in fiber, which is good from the perspective of weight-loss too. Fiber helps in digestion which facilitates weight-loss. The fiber in corn also helps in reducing cholesterol levels.
- AUGUST: APRICOT

Apricots, with high amounts of vitamins, flavonoids, and potassium, have significant health benefits. Flavonoids are good for your blood vessels and reduce chances of inflammation. Potassium promotes nerve and muscle functioning and supports heart health.
- SEPTEMBER: SINGHAADA

Singhaada contains several antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. It has been known to promote hormonal balance in the body and also improve fertility. They are high in potassium and help regulate blood pressure, and boost cardiac health too.
- OCTOBER: CUSTARD APPLE

These tasty treats heal ulcers and prevent acidity. The micronutrients in these give skin a smooth tone. Vitamin C and riboflavin, which are plentiful in custard apple, are good for your eyes, while flavonoids in them are believed to prevent certain types of cancers and tumours.
- NOVEMBER: AMLA (INDIAN GOOSEBERRY)

Amla is known for its immunity boosting properties. Diabetics can include this fruit in their diet as it helps in improving insulin sensitivity and also regulates blood sugar levels. It also helps in regulating production of cholesterol and has cardio-protective abilities.
- DECEMBER: JIMIKAND (ELEPHANT FOOT YAM)

Jimikand has a hot digestive effect on the body and is ideal for winters. Due to its thermal effect, it decreases mucus while increasing bile and thus aiding digestion. It also helps in improving bone health, electrolyte balance and anaemia.
- The writer is Nutritionist and Certified Diabetes Educator, Founder, Informed Health

WRAPPED IN WARMTH

Dress your best with warm and sustainable choices this year. By KHUSHBU KIRTI

It's officially the time of the year when you're capable of melting at night, and burning in the day. Too much? Well, with us embarking on a very fresh start, with the coming of 2022, it's high time we make warm but fashionable choices. With slow fashion trending, we're glad people are making environment-friendly choices, whilst not compromising on the style quotient.

It's never too late to add colour, style and joy to our lives and our wardrobe. And so, here is a smart list of warm options by the best of brands that want you to dress your A-game:

Long coats by United Colors of Benetton

Practically embellishing anything you put on inside - dresses, skirts, jeans, ethnic - the Lapel Coat with a Tie-up is your best friend accompanying you throughout the cold season.

The long diagonal wool cloth is not only extremely layered and lined inside, but also very smooth on the skin.

The puff detail on the shoulder makes one look chic and gives a professional touch at the same time. With buttons complementing its style, one can choose to use the belt or keep it open, flaunting a dress with slacks and boots

inside.

Another option is the stylish Solid Coat With Welt Pockets. The woolen coat is an A-line fit and is doubly breasted. The thick lining inside makes it warm and comfortable. The stitch detail at the lapel/neck only augments the look.



Handwoven wool by Jaypore

The Black Handwoven Bhujodi Wool Shawl with intricate mirror-work is the major beauty element



added to your traditional wear. Be it a silk suit, a saree or lehenga, the draped shawl will deliver both warmth and style.

A win-win on making sustainable fashion choices, the merino-wool shawl is handcrafted by the award-winning artisan family of Vankar Pratap from the Kutch region in Gujarat. The 500-years old craft of Bhujodi is carefully woven into this resplendent shawl, with a motif vocabulary inspired by Lord Shiva's damru.

Jackets at UniQlo

The light-weighted jacket, in attractive colours, is the trendy design one needs this winter! With anti-rounded collars, these jackets are



everything.

UniQlo's Women Extra Fine Merino Ribbed Turtleneck Sweater is a sleek, body-hugging ribbed knit. It flatters the curves and is easy to mix and match. The sweater looks great alone or paired with a parka.

Co-ord sets at Dalchini

Who says you have to compromise on style while layering? These eco-friendly and colourful



co-ord sets are fit both for the night and day, suits both the casual and professional lifestyle.

Say no to fast fashion with Dalchini's Ambroisa - their durable three-piece which is set to elevate your styling this new year.

Pashmina by Looms of Ladakh

A yet another sustainable choice, Looms of Ladakh, a luxury cooperative brand, has introduced new additions to their winter collection.

Heralding straight from the authenticity of Ladakhi culture, these soft pashmina shawls, in varied hues, are fabrics for a utilitarian purpose.



Their management sees participation of herder-artisan member owners. The Changpas of Changthang are custodians of centuries old way of life practising transhumance with their herds of pashmina goats and yaks.

Let these strokes of colour, eye-catching designs, fascinating prints become the perfect excuse to step outside and soldier Covid and the cold! Let's make our winter wardrobes this year bold, beautiful and optimistic.



Rendezvous series

SPIC MACAY concluded the year with a film screening session of the film *Devi* with actress SHARMILA TAGORE

SPIC MACAY concluded the series of programmes 'Rendezvous Series' for the year 2021 with a beautiful programme graced by the actress and Padm Vibhusham awardee, Sharmila Tagore. She speak to young students post the screening of her film *Devi* (1972) under SPIC MACAY's weekly Cinema Classics series. She talked about her film journey, her role in the film and her association with renowned director Satyajit Ray.

Treasures of Indian classics, the mirror of society of old era is a perfect blend of expressions, creativity, and intelligence.

Devi is a 1960 Bengali drama film by Ray, starring Tagore and Soumitra Chatterjee. It is based on a short story by Provatkumar Mukhopadhyay. The title *Devi* means 'goddess'.

The haunting *Devi*, set in the 19th century Bengal and at the intersection of blind faith and rationality, was Tagore's first lead role. Umapasrad tries to save his wife Doyamoyee as his father believes that Doyamoyee is the reincarnation of goddess Durga and worships her but fails to bring her back as tragedy strikes. The story is a fine attack on religious dogmatism in a patriarchal society, and was telecasted live on December 31, 2021, through online medium for students.

The screening was followed by an interactive session with the actress who is also known as Begum Ayesha Sultana Khan.

It all started because of the Covid lockdown, when SPIC MACAY started conducting their activities online. It also became an opportunity to reach out to many more students nationally and internationally, while providing them with holistic alternative sources of inspiration. Cinema has always fascinated so many of us and good cinema is something which should be encouraged to be watched at a very young age. It would then help lay the foundation for good taste and aesthetics besides imparting healthy values while exposing the young mind to different cultures and perspectives.

"In the Cinema Classics module, SPIC MACAY introduces young students to meaningful and well-crafted films; their cinematic appreciation improves, and they understand the potential of cinema, thereby, raising it to a level of an art," appreciated Girish Kasara Valli, the Kannada filmmaker and winner of 14 National Film awards.

For the last one and a half years, SPIC MACAY has taken the Cinema Classics module completely online and has been

able to screen 68 films so far, covering films from 20 languages (regional Indian, English, Hindi, Japanese, Swedish, Tibetan, Iranian, and so on) and 35 directors. They have been able to invite experts (filmmakers, national award critics, film faculty, et al) for discussing the film with the participants after the screening of the film. In the process, they have been able to reach out more to more than 30,000 students through this series.

Screenings of such exemplary artworks of the Indian and world cinema have been taking place regularly under the module, virtually since August, 2020.

Under the module, screening of selected films by legendary filmmakers like Charlie Chaplin, Akira Kurosawa, Vittorio De Sica, Satyajit Ray, Richard Attenborough, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, which are not only artistic treasures but are great lessons in different aspects of the human experience, are organised every week for an audience of students from different schools and from across the country.

The format of the module helps the youth to bridge the gap between them and the cultural heritage of India and the world through the powerful medium of cinema.

Following is the list of weekly programs being conducted by SPIC MACAY every weekend, as part of the weekly series of programmes conducted for schools and colleges across the country and sponsored by SPIC MACAY, free of cost for host institutes:

Cinema Classics Film Screening followed by interaction — every Friday at 6 pm

GMIS — Interaction with disciple of a Great Master of Indian classical arts followed by concert telecast — every Saturday, 3 pm

Rendezvous — Live Concert Module followed by interaction — every Saturday, 6 pm

Folk / Craft Talk Series — Talk Module or introduction to the folk arts or crafts — every Sunday, 12 pm

An early exposure to such master pieces coupled with expert facilitation has the potential to enlighten young minds in unexplored dimensions and inspire creativity and brilliance.

Taking this module forward, they continue to look for supportive institutions and find many more dedicated volunteers to ensure that every child can have the opportunity to feel the inspiration from such experiences.

(Cinema Classics are screened at 6 pm IST every Friday in the Zoom link bit.ly/smcinemaclassic)



Running in New York, DAG's Wonder of India exhibition is about vignettes of India's evolution in the world of modern and contemporary art practises.

According to curator and vice president of DAG, Kishore Singh, the exhibition explores the first views of the country and her people, a canon of art practise that came to be known as Company Paintings, developing vernaculars of playful naivety, movements from impressionism and expressionism to cubism and primitivism as through an Indian lens, and abstraction as a response to its traditional past, in a selection that spans the 19th and 20th centuries attesting to diverse strands of modernism at art centres across India"

In a catalogue designed by the brilliant aesthete Tania Das Gupta this catalogue has vignettes of sheer beauty ,nuggets of nostalgia and plenty to ponder. Begin with a moody gram image of a boat by Prosanto Das that distills hidden embers of delight and the magnitude of magic on the still waters. Its very simplicity and its density of depth in treatment is alluring.

Jamini Roy's Last Supper a magical moment in the leaf from the Bible

Abstraction through Indian lens

DAG's *Wonder of India* exhibition in NYC is about vignettes of the country's evolution in the world of modern and contemporary art practises, says UMA NAIR

and symbolism of Christianity. Roy's understanding and his translation of technique and narrative -to substitute Jesus and his disciples from white men to Santhals is a statement in the power of the story telling and the beauty of telling the story.

Paritosh Sen's two works are a rare testimony to his brilliance in compositional control. His woman as a water carrier and his abstracted study of a couple both have a tenuous resonant tenor that you can't miss.A rare delight is Biren De's early figurative Musician 1 created in the mood of the art practises in the 1950s. His handling of contour colour create its own iota of inventive idioms for this master who became one of India's finest abstractionists in the nation.

The piece de resistance of Chittoprasad's two ink works that reflect the charisma and controlled



compositional brilliance of his passion for translating the human condition of the Bengal Famine and the throes of catastrophe.

"Powerful and emotive, his art of caricature emerged as a statement in favour of the oppressed masses and as a denunciation of the ruling class. As a self-conscious, reflective testimony, the drawings and caricatures of this period were a forceful outcry against the tyranny of domination and an indictment of prevailing conditions. Underlying the biting humour was a compassionate humanism and his images were essentially an appeal on behalf of the labouring poor and the marginalised."

Portraits of pathos stare back at us in these two works. They also drive home the horror of the devastation that caused the death of thousands of people in villages and on the sidewalks of the city. These images are like a visual novel; they illustrate how these hapless people lived without food or nourishment and how they were reduced to living skeletons.

Whether he draws – a woman – lying on the ground, while others, including children, surround her as she dies a slow death or even a man and a woman, it is the angst-ridden depths of despair. But it is his drawings of the crowds that entice and pull at your heartstrings, they reflect the mood of gloom and doom and how even unknown beings became comrades in tragedy.

Contours and proportion of perspectives demonstrate what a powerful draughtsman Chittoprasad was. To recreate the people in the bond of intense grief and hopelessness seemed to be an act of passion and deep love for the oppressed. He was a prolific artist and his singular gouache of a woman suckling her baby while a couple sells vegetables proves that he excelled in the realist style and understood the fine elements of surrealism in a composition

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Book — *The Ninth Flower: Best of Amrita Pritam*

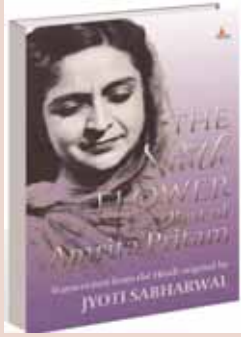
Translated by Jyoti Sabharwal (Stellar Publishers: 2021).

Discussants: Professor Malashri Lal, former Professor of English, University of Delhi, member of the English Advisory Board of Sahitya Akademi and Bharatiya Jnanpith's advisory committee; Nirupama Dutt, poet, senior journalist and translator; and Sabharwal, writer-publisher and translator of the book.

Moderator: Dr Gauri Shankar Raina, Hindi, English and Kashmiri writer and filmmaker.

When: January 6, 5 pm

Where: Conference room at India International Centre



MEET THE ARTIST (MTA)

Anjani Kumar Singh, a retired IAS officer and the 252nd guest speaker of this MTA will present a talk on 'Making of Bihar Museum'.

Singh, a 1981

IAS officer has helped create the iconic Bihar Museum in Bihar, which has set the benchmark for other states to emulate. In the two years since its inauguration, the museum was getting a footfall of over 1,00,000 visitors a month till the pandemic. He has worked as DM of Vaishali and Santhal Pargana districts and was DC for Tirhut and Purnia divisions. He has also worked in the Ministry of Human Resource Development and in the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. He was the principal secretary to the CM of Bihar and retired as the Chief Secretary of Bihar.

When: January 8

Zoom Registration: <https://zoom.us/j/98867256030>

Meeting ID: 988 672 56030



THE MACHINE THAT MADE US

Stephen Fry: *The Machine that Made Us* (UK)

(59 min; 2008; English)

Director: Patrick McGrady

Stephen Fry examines the

story behind the first media

entrepreneur, printing press

inventor Johannes Gutenberg,

to find out why he did it and

how, a story which involves

both historical enquiry and

hands-on craft and technology.

Fry travels across Europe to

find out how Gutenberg kept

his development work secret,

about the role of avaricious

investors and unscrupulous

competitors and why

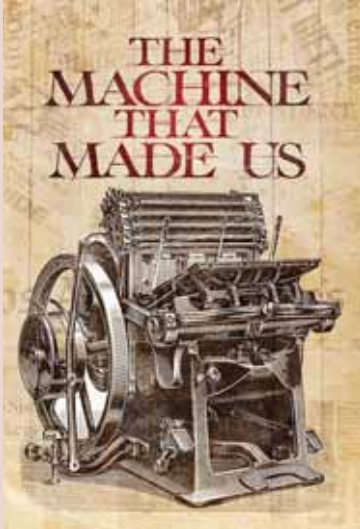
Gutenberg's approach started a

cultural revolution. He then sets

about building a copy of Gutenberg's press.

When: Till January 9

Where: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ocxm3>



DASTKARI HAAT: CRAFTS BAZAAR

A special crafts bazaar and exhibition on *Krishi aur Kala - The Farmer and The Artisan* is being organised by Dastkari Haat.

It will show

the deep relationship between the farming community and the craftsmen of India. The *karigars* arriving at the *Krishi aur Kala* themed exhibition are enthusiastic and have promised to showcase their most important works.

As per DDMA rules, there will be 50 per cent occupancy and all required protocols are supposed to be followed. Please wear your masks. It is advised to visit in the early days just in case it closes down after a week or so.

Don't miss the opportunity to get to explore the works of skilled craftsmen.

When: Till January 15, 11 am-8 pm

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RAHANE, PUJARA FLOP SHOW CONTINUES

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane's saga of failures compounded a shoddy batting performance by India even as stand-in skipper KL Rahul impressed with a defiant show amid the ruins on the opening day of the second Test against South Africa here on Monday.

Rahul's patient 50-run knock on a day when India missed Virat Kohli due to back spasms and Ravichandran Ashwin's cavalier 46 at the rear end ensured that India scored 202 in their first innings on a bouncy Wanderers track.

At stumps, Mohammed Shami sent back Aiden Markram even as Dean Elgar (11 batting) and Keegan Peterson (14 batting) took South Africa to 35 for 1. It could have been two down had Rishabh Pant snapped Peterson off Jasprit Bumrah, which seemed a regulation catch.

Worse, Mohammed Siraj hobbled off with what looked like a hamstring strain and if it's bad news, then India would be left with four bowlers.

However, a lot of blame should go to India's batters as some like Pujara didn't show intent to score while others like Rahane seemed completely short of confidence.



It prompted the legendary Sunil Gavaskar to say it as it is on air, "I think the next innings will be their last chance."

Having given up hopes to play for England, Duanne Olivier (3/67 in 17 overs), playing his first game for South Africa in three years, dismissed Pujara (3 off 33 balls) and Rahane (0) off successive deliveries to make it difficult for the Indians.

Marco Jansen (4/31 in 17 overs), with his giant frame, created awkward lengths for every Indian batter while Kagiso Rabada (3/64 in 17.1 overs),

despite not being at his best, got wickets when it mattered.

In his first game as captain, Rahul concentrated hard as he played 133 deliveries. He was peppered with short balls. He would sway to some and duck the others while pulling the ones that he could.

His back-foot driving was majestic and he rode the bounce while going for the flashy cut shots.

Such is beauty of sport that Rahul, who till five months ago wasn't supposed to start as an opener in England, is now being groomed as an all-format

India captain.

If the first day composure is any indication, he won't do a bad job.

But then there was a moment's indiscretion when he played one pull shot too many and holed out in the fine leg region.

Prior to that shot, the occasional pull that he played, Rahul rolled his bat over and tried to keep it down the ground but in this case, he got under the Jansen short ball and didn't get the required elevation.

He had a nice little partnership of 42 runs with Hanuma

Vihari (20) before an inspirational close-in catch from Rassie Van der Dussen at short leg sent the latter back.

Rishabh Pant (17) and an attacking Ashwin (24 batting 21 balls) added 40 in quick time but what India needed was a partnership of at least 75 if not 100.

At the start, Mayank Agarwal (26) looked fluent in the first hour with five boundaries before Jansen pitched one in the spot from where it wasn't on drivable length as it climbed on. The opener went for a drive only to edge that to wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne.

Rahul, on his part, survived strong caught behind and leg before appeals which were negated by debutant umpire Allahudien Palekar, someone who impressed on debut.

But what would disappoint Pujara and Rahane most is that on a day when they should have taken more responsibility in Kohli's absence, they couldn't even inject a sense of positivity in India's approach.

The manner in which Pujara hopped and skipped to rising deliveries actually would have made the dressing room feel jittery about demons in the pitch which wasn't the case. But there was definitely seam and bounce which one expects here in South Africa.

Bumrah appointed vice-captain for second Test, Iyer misses out due to stomach bug

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

India's leading pacer Jasprit Bumrah was on Monday appointed vice-captain for the second Test against South Africa after KL Rahul was elevated as skipper in the absence of injured Virat Kohli.

Besides regular captain Kohli, who is missing the crucial match owing to upper back spasm, middle-order batter Shreyas Iyer was also ruled out of the game due to a stomach bug, the BCCI said in a statement. "The All-India Senior Selection Committee has named Jasprit Bumrah as vice-captain for the 2nd Test," the Board statement read, adding, "Team India batsman Shreyas Iyer was also ruled out of selection for the 2nd Test owing to a stomach bug."

Iyer made a magnificent start to his Test career, scoring a hundred and a half-century on debut in the home series against New Zealand towards the end of last year.

Bumrah had been appointed vice-captain for the limited overs series against the Proteas starting January 19, a move that was widely seen as an acknowledgement for his all-format consistency over the years.

Regarding Kohli, the BCCI said the superstar batter "had a spasm on his upper back this



morning."

"He won't feature in the second Test against South Africa at The Wanderers. The BCCI medical team will be monitoring him during the course of this Test match."

Kohli, who has been battling a prolonged lean patch with the willow, will thus not be able to complete his landmark 100th Test in the series-finale at Cape Town.

The 33-year-old will be playing in the ODI series against the Proteas starting January 19. Rahul will captain India in that rubber as newly-appointed white-ball skipper Rohit Sharma is out injured.

Captain Kohli ruled out of second Test due to back spasm

India captain Virat Kohli was on Monday ruled out of the second Test against South

Africa here just before start of the game because of an upper back spasm, leaving K L Rahul to lead the side in the crucial match.

Rahul said at the toss that Kohli is expected to be available for the third and final Test from January 11.

"Unfortunately, Virat is having an upper back spasm. The physios are working on him and hopefully he will recover in time for the next Test," Rahul said at the toss when asked about Kohli's absence from the match.

All-rounder Hanuma Vihari has come in the playing XI to replace Kohli.

Kohli, who has been battling a prolonged lean patch with the willow, will thus not be able to complete his landmark 100th Test in the series-finale at Cape Town.



NZ 328, Bangladesh 401-6 at stumps on day 3 of 1st test

AP ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI NZ

Captain Mominul Haque scored 88 to lead Bangladesh to a 73-run, first-innings lead over New Zealand in the first cricket test Monday, in one of its best-ever performances away from home.

Mominul shared a 158-run partnership with wicketkeeper Liton Das, who made 86, steering Bangladesh to 401-6 at stumps on the third day in reply to New Zealand's first innings of 328.

Bangladesh has seldom been so commanding in New Zealand, where it has never won a match in any format, or anywhere outside the sub-continent.

It began the day 175-2 with Mahmudul Hasan Joy 70 not out after a 104-run partnership on the second day with Najmul Hossain Shanto (64). Joy was out early for 78 and Mominul and Liton Das then combined in a partnership which occupied the next 52 overs and saw the tourists attain a first-innings lead 20 minutes after tea.

Trent Boult dismissed both Mominul and Liton Das within four overs of each other in the final session to slightly diminish the tourists' commanding possession. But the day belonged to Bangladesh and for the second day in a row they finished with the upper hand.

"The boys really got stuck in," Bangladesh batting coach Ashwell Prince said.

"We had a good day yesterday but

we had to follow it up with another good day and the guys did exactly that.

"There will be two or three guys disappointed that they didn't go on and get three figures. But all in all we had some good partnerships and it was a very good day."

The partnership between Mominul and Liton Das was critical for Bangladesh who, despite their outstanding performance on the second day when they claimed New Zealand's last five wickets for 70 runs and lost only two wickets in two sessions, still had to consolidate their position.

They lost Joy quickly to a tired shot. He followed a ball from Neil Wagner wide of off stump and struck the ball directly to Henry Nicholls at backward point. Had they lost another wicket quickly at that point, all of the hard work of the second day might have been lost.

But the captain and the wicket-keeper dug in and batted together for more than four hours to ensure Bangladesh capitalized on the efforts of the bowlers and of Joy and Shanto.

It wasn't always easy. When he was 9, Mominul edged a ball from Neil Wagner to wicketkeeper Tim Blundell but was relieved when television replays showed Wagner had overstepped. The South Africa-born fast bowler nursed a grievance for the rest of the day, during he failed to take another wicket, and engaged in a war of words with Mominul until his dismissal.

Pakistan all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez set to retire from international cricket

PTI ■ LAHORE

Veteran Pakistan all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez, who captained his national team in every format of the game, is reportedly set to retire from international cricket.

The 41-year-old top-order batter has signed up with Lahore Qalandars for the upcoming edition of the Pakistan Super League and will continue to be available for franchise cricket around the world, a report on 'Geo News' stated even though there is no word from the player as yet.

Hafeez, who had announced his retirement from Test cricket in 2018, and would be ending a career spanning nearly two decades.

He repre-

sented Pakistan in 392 international matches in which he scored 12,789 runs and took 253 wickets. He has played 55 Tests, 218 ODIs and 119 T20Is for the country including three ICC ODI World Cups and six T20 World Cups.

His international debut came in an ODI against Zimbabwe in 2003 and his last match was Pakistan's defeat to Australia in the T20 World Cup semi-final last November.

During a successful career, he won 32 Player-of-the-Match awards, the fourth-highest among Pakistan players in all international cricket, with only Shahid Afridi (43), Wasim Akram (39) and Inzamam-ul-Haq (33) placed ahead of him.



Spain, Poland win 2nd consecutive matches at ATP Cup

AP ■ SYDNEY

Spain and Poland remained perfect at the ATP Cup with 3-0 wins in their matches Monday, their second consecutive victories in the team event.

Robert Bautista Agut clinched the match for Spain by beating Casper Ruud of Norway 6-4, 7-6 (4) after Pablo Carreno Busta defeated Viktor Durasovic 6-3, 6-3.

Bautista Agut improved to 9-2 in singles at the team event.

"Casper is playing unbelievable tennis, (he did) an unbelievable performance last year, and today I played very good," Bautista Agut said in his on-court interview.

"I returned very well, I made very few unforced errors and I played aggressively."

Kamil Majchrzak gave Poland the early lead over Georgia with a 6-1, 6-1 win over Aleksandre Bakshi before



Hubert Hurkacz clinched it with a 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-1 win over Aleksandre Metreveli.

"He (Metreveli) played well in the first set and things were not going my way. But I got better with each set and am happy to get the win," Hurkacz said.

Spain and Poland later both won their doubles matches to make it 3-0 scorelines.

Poland can book a place in the semifinals if it defeats Argentina on Wednesday in its next group game.

Majchrzak needed only 53

minutes to beat Bakshi.

"I was trying to move (Bakshi) around and I think that was the key to the match," said Majchrzak, who is coached by former world seventh-ranked Joakim Nystrom.

"He brings me a lot of confidence and a lot of calm in my tennis so I can feel that I am improving," Majchrzak said of Nystrom on the ATP Tour's website.

"We are working on (developing an all-court game) but in a way that doesn't interrupt my baseline game. We will take it from the practice to the matches but it takes time."

Greece plays Argentina and Serbia takes on Chile in night matches Monday.

The four group winners in the 16-team tournament advance to the semifinals on Friday and Saturday, with the winners meeting in the final on Sunday.

AICF postpones national chess events due to rising number of Covid cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All India Chess Federation (AICF) on Monday announced the postponement of several national level championships scheduled for this month in view of the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the country and the restrictions imposed by various states.

Among the tournaments put off are the national junior, sub-junior and national school championships. The new dates for the events would be announced later, AICF said in a press release.

"Considering the new wave of pandemic with another variant and the restrictions imposed by various states and agencies, AICF decided to postpone national championships scheduled for January 2022 (National Junior, National School & National Sub-Junior)," AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan said in the release. The national junior championship (Under-20) was scheduled to be held in New Delhi from January 9 while the other events were slated for later in the month. Players have the option of asking refund of entry fees paid or they can keep their registration active for the event on a later date, the release added.

Getafe ends Madrid's unbeaten streak; virus-hit Barça wins

AP ■ BARCELONA

After watching Real Madrid lose its first match in three months, Carlo Ancelotti had one simple message for his players: The holidays are over.

Madrid's run of 15 consecutive games without a loss in all competitions came to an end Sunday when it slumped to a 1-0 defeat at modest Getafe in the Spanish league after a nearly two-week winter break.

League leaders Madrid fell behind early when Getafe striker Enes Unal stole the ball from defender Eder Militao near the goal and beat Thibaut Courtois. Luka Modric's shot off the woodwork in the first half was as close as Madrid got to an equalizer.

Even though Madrid remained in control of the league — with an eight-point lead over second-place Sevilla

— Ancelotti chastised his team for its attitude.

"We can't get carried away by this loss," Ancelotti said.

"We are still leaders and are excited about what is to come... A player who normally stands out for his defensive play gifted them their goal. It seems we didn't finish the year well. We were lacking focus, lacking commitment. This must be a wake-up call. My team looked like it was still on holidays."

While Madrid had got back several players — with the important exception of forward Vinicius Junior, who had been out due to COVID-19 — Barcelona earned a 1-0 win at Mallorca with a team badly hit by the coronavirus.

The absence of 10 first-team players gave the rarely used Luuk de Jong the chance to finally show his worth as a striker since he joined



Barcelona on loan at the end of the summer transfer market as a bargain replacement for Antoine Griezmann.

GETAFE SURPRISE

Madrid's previous loss came on Oct. 3 when it fell 2-1 at Espanyol. Since then, it had won

13 and drawn two across all competitions.

Ancelotti had steered Madrid to wins over Barcelona,

Atlético Madrid, Sevilla and Inter Milan during its unbeaten run.

But it was unable to rally after a mistake by Militao who tarnished his otherwise excellent season with centerback partner David Alaba, with the pair filling the void left by the exits of veterans Sergio Ramos and Raphael Varane.

Toni Kroos appeared to have snuffed out Getafe's attack when he recovered the ball and shuffled it over to Militao, but Unal pressured him hard and poked the ball clear before scoring in the ninth minute.

"Sometimes as a striker, you just sense that there can be something there. Luckily it worked out," Unal said about his goal that gave Getafe its first victory over its star-studded cross-town rivals since August 2012.

Getafe started the season losing its first seven matches. But

the modest club from a neighborhood of Madrid has turned things around in the league after Quique Sanchez Flores took over in early October and is unbeaten in six rounds.

DE JONG'S CHANCE

Barcelona traveled to Mallorca with 10 players from its "B" team after a spate of COVID-19 cases. Coach Xavi Hernandez had to align a front line with De Jong flanked by youth players Ferran Jutglà and Ilias Akhomach.

De Jong, who had failed to earn consistent playing time, succeeded in providing a potent attacking threat for the visitors.

The Dutch striker tapped the ball onto the post moments before he produced a superb bicycle kick that rattled the crossbar. He then headed in his goal when he reached a cross by Oscar Minguezza at the far post just before halftime.

BACK ON TRACK

Angel Correa scored twice as Atlético Madrid beat Rayo Vallecano 2-0 and ends its worst losing run since Diego Simeone took over the club a decade ago.

The defending champions had not lost more than two league games in a row under Simeone. But it finished 2021 with consecutive defeats to Mallorca, Madrid, Sevilla and Granada. Atlético leapfrogged Rayo to reclaim fourth place.

OTHER RESULTS

Iago Aspas scored twice to lead Celta Vigo to a 2-0 win at Real Betis, which was left in third place just one point in front of Atlético.

Elche coach Francisco Rodriguez was sent off for repeatedly protesting during his team's 0-0 draw with Granada, while Real Sociedad drew 1-1 at Alavés.