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**REPORT IN 45 DAYS**

## Centre sets up panel to look into withdrawal of AFSPA in Nagaland

Decision taken in Dec 23 meeting chaired by Shah

**TORA AGARWALA & DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
GUWAHATI, NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THREE WEEKS after six civilians were killed in an Army ambush on December 4, and eight more in violence triggered by the incident in Nagaland's Mon district, the Union government Sunday instituted a high-level committee chaired by a Secretary-level officer to examine the possibility of withdrawing the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Nagaland. The committee will submit its report within 45 days.

According to officials, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India Vivek Joshi will head the five-member committee and Additional Secretary in the Union Home Ministry Piyush Goyal will be its Member-

**EXPLAINED**

### Panel may calm frayed nerves

THE SETTING up of a committee to consider AFSPA repeal in Nagaland will assuage public sentiments in the north-eastern state after civilians were killed on December 4-5. The panel will consider the views of state police and Central security forces before submitting a report in 45 days.

Secretary. The Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Nagaland and the DGP of Assam Rifles will be the other members of the committee, they said.

Earlier in the day, a press statement signed by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, Deputy CM Yanthungo Patton

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



## TRIBUTE TO DESMOND TUTU

The Indian and South African teams observe a moment of silence ahead of the opening Test in Centurion, in honour of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who died Sunday. Reuters **PAGES 15, 18**



**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNY

I hope parties stick to covid protocol. Dur big asset is the electorate that is alive and kicking.

2022 POLLS

## Ministries can't resolve row, CVC opens probe into ITBP LAC outpost

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THE CENTRAL Vigilance Commission (CVC) is learnt to have taken cognizance of the tussle between the Home and Water Resources ministries over the "poor construction" of an Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) outpost on the western bank of Pangong Tso in Ladakh.

Sources said the vigilance watchdog has opened a probe into the ambitious border infrastructure project after complaints by ITBP that the National Projects Construction Corporation Ltd (NPCC) had failed to deliver the project to its satisfaction despite an expenditure of over Rs 20 crore.

The ITBP is one of India's five Central Armed Police Forces,



The Indian Express report on September 19

which are governed by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## 'PRECAUTIONARY' DOSES FROM JAN 10

# First shots to those who got 2nd jab 9 months ago

Not a 'booster', additional shot seeks to protect only vulnerable groups for now

**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

WHEN THE "precautionary" dose of the coronavirus vaccine begins to be administered on January 10, the first recipients will likely be those older than 60 years with associated comorbidities, and those who got their second dose nine months previously, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The decision to keep the interval between the second and third doses at nine months has been based on the findings of five scientific studies carried out by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad, top government sources who were part of the deliberations, told *The Indian Express*.

The nine-month interval would mean the initial doses of

**GOVT & POLITICS**

### HEALTH SECY TO BRIEF ELECTION COMMISSION TODAY

### PM: SELF-DISCIPLINE AND COLLECTIVE STRENGTH WILL DEFEAT COVID

**PAGE 6**

the precautionary vaccine will be received by those who had got the second shots in the primary vaccination schedule by April 10 this year — that is, mainly the healthcare and frontline workers who were the first to be inoculated from January 16 onward.

On March 1, India also began vaccinating those older than 60 years, and 45-plus with specified co-morbid conditions. As of May 1, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## Cases up, night curfew in Delhi from today

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

WITH 290 Covid cases and a positivity rate of 0.55 per cent recorded Sunday, the Delhi government has announced a night curfew between 11 pm and 5 am starting Monday.

"It was decided in a high-level meeting today that a night curfew needs to be reinstated in the city to stop the spread of Covid. This will come into force on Monday night between 11 pm and 5 am," said an official. A detailed order listing the exemptions and other conditions is awaited.

On Saturday, the neighbouring states of UP and Haryana imposed night curfews between 11 pm and 5 am. "In Delhi, essential services will not be impacted **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## CJI: No foresight in drafting law clogs courts, Bihar prohibition is example

**ANANTHAKRISHNAN G**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

CHIEF JUSTICE of India N V Ramana Sunday cited the prohibition law in Bihar as an example of "lack of foresight" in drafting legislation that leads to courts being inundated with cases, and



**Judges appointing themselves a myth: CJI NV Ramana**

said it appears that the legislature has "not been able to make opti-

imum use" of the Parliament Standing Committee system to "enhance scrutiny of Bills".

"I hope this will change, as such scrutiny improves the quality of legislation," CJI Ramana said while delivering the Fifth Late Shri Lavu Venkateswarlu Endowment Lecture on "Indian

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## Minorities back raising marriage age of women, flag concerns on personal law

**ESHA ROY**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

EVEN AS the Government has sent the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2021, which seeks to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years, to a

Parliamentary Standing Committee for scrutiny, representatives of minority communities have raised concerns on how the change will affect personal laws in the country.

While most minority communities have not opposed the raising of the age of marriage, they point out that personal laws have

protection under the Constitution. According to the draft Bill, the proposed law will apply to all communities and, once enacted, will supersede existing marriage and personal laws.

Dr Shernaz Cama, the director of Jiyo Parsi, a nodal organisation that represents the Parsi **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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WEB EXCLUSIVE



**BENGALURU'S KAGGADASAPURA LAKE AND THE CONSTANT STRUGGLE TO RESTORE IT**

The lake is one of the many centres for the city's untreated sewage, resulting in the spillage of toxic foam and despite the Lokayukta in 2019 ordering the Revenue department to survey the lake and clear it from encroachments, the restoration work moved at a snail's pace.

**TECH**

**MACBOOK PRO 2021 REVIEW**

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**ENTERTAINMENT**

**HOLLYWOOD REWIND: DISTURBIA**

There is a very Hitchcock-esque feel to Disturbia



**EXPRESS AUDIO**

**Why eating insects makes sense?**

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Srishtaa Aparna Pallavi and Tansha Vohra talk about the practice of eating insects in India, which are rich in protein, why certain foods are considered inferior, and their favourite insect recipes.

**Malaviya not just a person but an institution: Shah**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

PANDIT MADAN Mohan Malaviya held the River Ganga, cow and Hindi in great reverence and laid the foundation of modern Indian nationalism during freedom struggle, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday, adding that an attempt has been made to make the country forget him.

"He (Malaviya) was not just a person but an institution. He did not fight for freedom just as a politician, but also as a journalist, as a lawyer. He was the only freedom fighter to make a loud call for freedom with the mother tongue, Indian culture and Indianness. He knew if he did not talk about these things, there would be efforts in future to make people forget them. Despite great opposition, he did not leave these ideas," Shah said at an event to commemorate the 160th birth anniversary of Malaviya.

The event was organised by Vijnana Bharati, an RSS-affiliated organisation.

"Today we can say without debate that he laid the foundation of modern Indian nationalism in the freedom struggle. He had great reverence for the Ganga, the cow and Hindi. He also built institutions for them. If people are able to bathe in Harki Paudi (Haridwar) today, it is a result of his efforts," Shah said.

The minister said it was a matter of sadness and frustration that Malaviya got Bharat Ratna only in 2014. Recalling, how Malaviya was given the title of 'Mahamana' by Mahatma

Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Shah said, "With time, there have been efforts in the country to forget many such personalities, be it Saradar (Vallabhbhai) Patel, Netaji Subhas Bose... or Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. I just want to say that if there is a great man, whose deeds are great and who thinks about others and not self, his glory cannot be stolen."

Shah said Malaviya not only tried to instill Indianness in the nation, but even in the Congress when he was its president. "In Congress meetings, where once paeanes were sung in the glory of the crown, Malaviya started 'mangalacharan'. He initiated Vande Mataram singing. In 1932, when he realised that Congress was becoming an institution given to compromises, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha," Shah said, adding that he became Congress president even after that.

"Those in journalism today cannot imagine that someone could be in Congress and also be the president of Hindu Mahasabha. I am not talking about the liberalism of that society and those institutions. I talk about the greatness of that personality. How great must that personality be that he was president of both the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha at the same time," the Union Home Minister said.

According to Shah, Malaviya knew that the British were "sowing seeds of Partition". Shah said that by establishing the Benaras Hindu University (BHU), Malaviya brought together ancient Indian knowledge and modern education.

**FROM PAGE ONE**

**Delhi curfew**

and health emergencies will be respected. All markets, malls and shops will shut after 11 pm and the movement of people will be restricted. The imposition of Covid-appropriate behaviour, such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, will be stricter," the official said.

So far, Lok Nayak Hospital has admitted 68 Omicron patients, of whom 40 have been discharged. The Delhi government is also monitoring the positivity rate. In November, the city's average positivity rate was around 0.07 per cent. A week ago, the rate was around 0.2 per cent before it climbed to 0.43 per cent on Saturday.

According to the Graded Response Action Plan, which the government finalised in July and August this year, several curbs are supposed to kick in if the positivity rate remains above 0.5 per cent for two consecutive days.

For instance, if Monday's positivity rate is also above 0.5 per cent, measures under the yellow alert will be implemented. These include the odd-even formula in markets, with capacity in restaurants, transport buses and the Metro at 50 per cent, and shutting down of cinema halls, gyms, entertainment parks, etc.

"It is unlikely that we will be able to avoid another day with a positivity rate of more than 0.5 per cent. It has been rising consistently for the past week. The government is readying its plan and an announcement is expected soon," the official said.

**CJI**

Judiciary: Challenges of Future "at Siddhartha Law College in Vijayawada. In his speech, the CJI also defended the judiciary in the wake of charges that the Collegium system of appointment of judges amounted to judges appointing themselves, terming it as "one of the widely propagated myths".

Speaking on the absence of well-considered legislation, the CJI said that "there is usually no impact assessment or basic scrutiny of Constitutionality before passing of legislations".

"A lack of foresight in legislating can directly result in the clogging of courts. For example, the introduction of the Bihar Prohibition Act 2016 resulted in the High Court being clogged with bail applications. Because of this, a simple bail application takes one year to be disposed of," he said.

Highlighting the importance of debates in law-making, the CJI said: "Unrefined law leads to a mushrooming of litigation. A proposed law can only be refined through the involvement of all stakeholders and through meaningful debate. Parliament introduced a remarkable mechanism in the 1990s to enhance scrutiny of bills—that of standing committees. However, it appears that the legislature has not been able to make optimum use of the Committee system."

Speaking about the selection of judges, CJI Ramana said it has become "fashionable to reiterate phrases such as, 'judges are themselves appointing judges'".

"I consider this to be one of the widely propagated myths. The fact is the judiciary is merely one of the many players involved in the process. Many authorities are involved, including the Union Law Ministry, state governments, Governor, High Court Collegia, Intelligence Bureau, and lastly, the topmost executive, who all are designated to examine the suitability of a candidate. I am sad to note that the well-informed also propagate the aforesaid notion. After all, this narrative suits certain sections," he said.

Pointing out that filling vacancies is one of the challenges facing the judiciary, the CJI appreciated the Government's efforts in ap-

**First shots to those who got 2nd jab 9 months ago**

1.11 crore people had received both doses, according to Health Ministry data.

"The Co-win platform will automatically reflect who will be eligible for the precautionary dose. We have the numbers ready as to how many will be eligible from January 10. An announcement will be made in the next few days," a top government official said.

The sources drew a distinction between the precautionary doses planned by India from January 10, and the "booster" shots that are being administered by several countries around the world, including the United States and United Kingdom.

In his address to the nation on Saturday night, the Prime

Minister did not use the expression "booster"; he said three priority groups—healthcare workers, frontline workers, and those above 60 with associated comorbidities—would get a "precautionary dose" of the vaccine.

"Two doses of a two-dose vaccine (such as Covishield or Covaxin) may not produce a sufficient level of antibodies in individuals who are immunocompromised or immunosuppressed—their primary vaccination is, therefore, deemed incomplete," a source said.

"To complete the primary vaccination for this specific group of immunocompromised and immunosuppressed individuals, an additional shot is re-

quired."

Globally, the words booster doses and additional doses refer to different things, the sources said. "Booster doses are used on a population-wide basis; they are administered irrespective of the physical (comorbidity) status of the beneficiary," a source said.

"Since we (India) do not have extensive population-based data on a booster shot, we are, as a measure of abundant caution, giving vulnerable groups that are exposed or could be exposed to the virus, another shot, which is the precaution dose," the source said.

According to the sources, a few members of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) were

pointing several judges in the recent past. "However, some recommendations made by High Courts are yet to be transmitted to the Supreme Court by the Union Law Ministry," he said, adding that "it is expected that the Government needs to strictly adhere to the timelines laid down...".

The CJI also responded to criticism of judicial overreach through the power of review, saying that "such generalisations are misguided". He said that "if the judiciary does not have the power of judicial review, then the functioning of democracy in this country would be unthinkable".

Stating that "a popular majority is not a defence for arbitrary actions taken by a Government", the CJI said "the concept of separation of powers cannot be utilised to restrict the scope of judicial review". The concept, he said, "only protects bona fide legitimate actions" and added that "it is required that the legislative and executive wings recognise their limits under the Constitution to ensure the smooth working of the democracy".

The CJI pulled up the executive for what he said was "a growing tendency to disregard, and even disrespect Court orders" and said that "ensuring justice is not the responsibility of the judiciary alone". He said that "unless the other two coordinate organs make sincere efforts to fill the judicial vacancies, appoint prosecutors, strengthen infrastructure, and make laws with a clear foresight and stakeholders analysis, judiciary cannot be held responsible alone".

Referring to pressures faced by public prosecutors, the CJI stressed that there is "a need to liberate the institution of public prosecutors" and that "total independence must be granted to them and to make them answerable only to the courts".

The CJI said that "historically, prosecutors in India have been under the control of the Government" and "hence it is not a surprise that they do not act independently".

"They do nothing to prevent frivolous and non-deserving cases from reaching the courts. Public prosecutors automatically oppose bail applications, without independently applying their mind. They attempt to suppress evidence during trial, which could benefit the accused," he said, adding that "a holistic rework needs to be undertaken".

"In order to insulate the public prosecutors, an independent selection committee may be constituted for their appointment. Best practices should be adopted after a comparative analysis of other jurisdictions," the CJI said.

The CJI also highlighted the need to fix accountability for "faulty and inordinately delayed investigations".

"There is absolutely no system of accountability in place for faulty and inordinately delayed investigations. A person wrongfully in-

carcerated due to false implication loses his right to liberty, property, etc. He suffers enormously. There is no real remedy left for him and no compensation whatsoever even after an acquittal," he said.

The CJI flagged what he said is the "increasing attacks on judges". "In recent times, physical attacks on judicial officers are on the rise. At times, there are also concerted campaigns in print and social media against judges if parties do not get a favourable order. These attacks appear to be sponsored and synchronised," he said.

CJI Ramana also termed as "alarming" the number of vacancies in various tribunals, and pointed out that the "rising number of media trials" is another aspect that affects the independence of judiciary.

**LAC outpost**

NPCC is a PSU under the Ministry of Water Resources.

"A CVC technical audit team visited the concerned BoP (border outpost) in Ladakh a couple of months ago. It has taken possession of all the documents related to the project and is currently examining them," a senior government official said.

Sources in the NPCC confirmed that a CVC team had visited Ladakh to inspect the project. "We have handed over everything they wanted. We want the CVC, an independent agency, to probe the project and come up with a conclusion. The impasse remains unresolved despite multiple meetings between the two ministries," an NPCC official said.

Sources said NPCC has advised the Home Ministry to hire another agency to complete the project if it is not satisfied with the work. The BoP in question is at Lukung on the western bank of the Pangong lake, which saw a nine-month standoff between Indian and Chinese troops last year.

The Indian Express reported in its edition of September 19 that the project had been launched in 2015—one of over 40 planned BoPs intended to provide better living conditions for troops along the Sino-Indian border.

The BoPs were supposed to be first-of-their-kind structures in the region, with freeze-proof toilets, running water, and temperature maintained above 22 degrees Celsius at all times.

The project was seen as a significant step in improving border infrastructure for frontline troops at a time when infrastructure on the Chinese side is seen to be years ahead of India's.

The project was awarded to NPCC, which began working on the Lukung BoP as a pilot. Five years later, and after spending about Rs 20 crore, the project has, for all practical purposes, been declared a failure by the ITBP, a contention that has been refuted by NPCC.

Sources in the ITBP and the

MHA said the BoP is unable to maintain temperatures above 10-11 degrees Celsius, and that the quality of construction is so poor that the 40-odd jansons staying in the BoP have begun to miss the insulated pre-fabricated huts where they stayed earlier.

The MHA, sources said, is so unhappy that it has not only stopped part payment to the NPCC for the project, but is also thinking of dumping the project altogether.

The NPCC, on the other hand, has blamed ITBP and the MHA for the failure of the project, claiming that the withholding of payment has resulted in the sub-contractor not maintaining the heating system, which has impacted the efficiency of the BoP.

Sources said ITBP has withheld payment to the tune of over Rs 5 crore to NPCC for its failure to maintain the desired temperature within the BoP.

"ITBP and NPCC have had multiple meetings on this issue, but the former is not ready to release payments. Contractors and sub-contractors involved with the project are suffering because of this. NPCC has even proposed that if the MHA is dissatisfied with its work, it can withhold 10% of the payments and release the rest. It can use that money to hire another agency," an official privy to the negotiations between the two ministries said.

**Minorities**

community before the Government, says the move does not affect the community in which "men and women get married late". But what needs to be scrutinised, she adds, is the possible changes in personal law.

"Women in the Parsi community do not get married under the age of 28-30 years, and men don't usually marry under 35 years. This is much more than the national mean age of 22-24 years... (But) personal laws are protected under the Constitution. This must be studied by the standing committee, which must predominantly have women members," said Cama, who is also director of UNESCO's Parsi-Zoroastrian project PARZOR.

"I personally don't think anyone has the right to interfere on the issue of when an individual can or cannot get married if that individual has reached adulthood," she said.

Father Savari Muthu, spokesperson of Delhi Archdiocese, says the Christian community welcomes the Government's move but warns of the proposed law's impact on marginalised societies in rural areas.

"We believe that the rule of law of the land must supersede Canon law... In any case, within the Catholic as well as other communities, girls are getting married later. But this is primarily in urban areas. The concern is the rural areas, especially marginalised communities such as Scheduled

against the administration of booster doses due to "insufficient pan-India" data on waning immunity post the second dose across all age groups.

"What we have are five small studies in the range of 200-1,000 subjects. These studies are by ICMR and THSTI. These studies tell us that the antibody response starts to decline significantly between the seventh and ninth month after the second dose," the sources said.

NTAGI is India's apex advisory body that provides guidance to the government on vaccination by undertaking technical reviews of scientific evidence on matters related to immunization policy and programmes.

Castes and Scheduled Tribes," he said.

"The fear is that they will continue to get married younger and hide it. It is also possible that the new law may be misused to harass these communities, and young people. These are concerns that the Government must look into before the Bill becomes law," he said.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), which has spoken out against the proposed law, described it as "very irrational".

"This is not just about personal laws, but also looking at what actually benefits women. The biggest requirement in India is the safety and security of women. And when a girl has to be kept at home, her safety becomes the responsibility of the parents, which is why she is often married off. When women and men are given the right to vote at 18 years, they can take any decision independently when they reach adulthood. How can the Government stop them from getting married?" said Niaz Ahmad Farooqui, general secretary, Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind, and AIMPLB member.

"The Government also does not have the right to interfere with personal laws, which is the fundamental right of a community," he said.

"We are definitely not advocating that girls get married younger. Before, they would even be married off at 12-13 years—we definitely don't want that. We are also not opposing the move because we believe it has been made against the personal laws, but what is the scientific reasoning behind it? If a girl is too undernourished to get married at 18, how does this suddenly change at 21? The issue isn't the age of marriage then, but poverty," Farooqui said.

Mohsin Taqvi, Imam Jama Masjid (Kashmir Gate), says that even in the Muslim community, girls are rarely getting married under the legal age.

"It isn't like before when girls would have to get married young. Very rarely do girls get married before they turn 21-22 years. So in that sense, there is no problem with the increase in marriage age for women. However, the Government should still carry out extensive consultations with community leaders before passing the law," the Imam said.

Data from the fifth edition of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) show that 23.3 per cent of women aged 20-24 years were married under the age of 18 compared to 26.8 per cent in NFHS-4. The latest data also show that 6.8 per cent women were pregnant between 15-19 years compared to 7.9 per cent in NFHS-4.

According to NFHS-4, the median age of marriage for women in India between the ages of 25 to 49 years, is 19.8 in urban areas and 18.1 in rural areas. The lowest median age for women in this category among Hindus is 18.5 followed closely by Muslims at 18.6

years. The median age of marriage among Buddhists is 19.2, Sikhs 20.9, Jains 21.2 and Christians 21.6.

NFHS-4 data also show that 28 per cent of women aged 18-29 and 17 per cent of men aged 21-29 marry before reaching the legal minimum age of marriage.

**AFSPA**

and Naga People's Front Legislature Party leader TR Zeliang said the decision to set up the committee was taken in a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on December 23. Convened to discuss the present scenario in Nagaland, the meeting was attended by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma as well.

"The committee will submit its report within 45 days and withdrawal of Disturbed Area and AFSPA from Nagaland will be based on the recommendations of the committee," the statement said.

In the December 23 meeting with the Union Home Minister, the Nagaland delegation impressed upon him to replace the Assam Rifles unit in Mon district with immediate effect.

The demands for repeal of AFSPA—an Act that gives sweeping powers to the armed forces to arrest without warrants and even shoot to kill in certain situations in 'disturbed areas'—from Nagaland and other north-eastern states have been growing louder since the December 4-5 incidents. Over the last few weeks, the state witnessed massive protest rallies in eastern districts as well as capital Kohima for the law to be scrapped.

Right after the December 4 incident, Rio had called for its repeal stating that Nagaland had "always opposed AFSPA". Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma too had demanded in a tweet on December 6 that "AFSPA should be repealed".

In a special one-day session on December 20, the Nagaland Assembly had unanimously resolved to demand the repeal of AFSPA. It said that the House "appreciated and supported" citizens and civil society organisations over their demand for the repeal of AFSPA and delivery of justice and appealed to "all sections to follow democratic norms and non-violence in the collective endeavour towards realisation of peace and delivery of justice".

The three signatories to the statement also said they were "grateful" to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah for "taking the matter with utmost seriousness" and appreciated the Centre for taking the required steps to ensure justice and "positively responding to the voices of the people".

The statement on Sunday also said that "a Court of Enquiry will initiate disciplinary proceedings against the army unit and army personnel who are directly involved in the Oting incident and action will be taken immediately on the basis of fair enquiry". "The identified persons who will face the enquiry will be placed under suspension with immediate effect," it said.

During the meeting with the Union Home Minister, it was also decided Nagaland would provide government jobs to the next of the kin of the deceased, the statement said. "To initiate this process, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Superintendent of Police of Mon district, will carry out necessary procedures in consultation with the concerned village councils and government jobs will be given on compassionate grounds on the basis of eligibility," it said.

In March 2018, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs ordered removal of AFSPA completely from Meghalaya. In Arunachal Pradesh too, AFSPA was removed from several police stations during 2018 and 2019; at present in the state, only three districts and four police stations that border Assam are under AFSPA.

**Classifieds**

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290 CASES ON SUNDAY

# Positivity rate at 0.55%, city inches towards 'yellow' alert

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THE SHARP rise in the number of Covid cases reported in the city over the past week has not just brought back the night curfew to Delhi but is likely to bring in a slew of other restrictions as well.

A rapidly increasing positivity rate, alongside the threat of the high infection rate posed by the omicron variant of the novel coronavirus is pushing Delhi towards the "yellow" alert as per the Graded Response Action Plan.

Over the past month, the positivity rate has climbed from under 0.1% to 0.55% Sunday, when 290 cases and one death due to Covid was reported. The positivity rate was 0.43% Saturday.

The yellow alert is implemented under either of the three conditions — positivity rate is over 0.5% for two consecutive days, 1,500 cases are recorded in a week, or average occupancy of oxygen beds is 500 for a week.

Over the past week, 1,155



52,947 tests were conducted in last 24 hrs. Praveen Khanna

one big concern and that is why the odd-even formula will be implemented for markets and shops will be allowed to open only between 10 am and 8 pm. Restrictions on public transport will also be implemented. Buses and metro will allow 50% of the total capacity at any given time," said an official. Officials said a final call on issuing the yellow alert will be taken on Monday.

### Gurgaon sees first omicron case

Gurgaon reported its first case of the omicron variant Sunday. Health department officials said a 30-year-old man, who had arrived from the UK on December 10, tested positive on repeat RT-PCR testing for Covid on December 18.

Rajeev Arora, additional chief secretary, health and family welfare, Haryana, said, "The patient's sample was sent for genome sequencing and he tested positive for the omicron variant on Sunday. He is being quarantined in an isolation facility."

### COLOUR-CODED GRADED PLAN

Graded Response Action Plan on Covid is a plan whereby a new set of restrictions is added to existing ones as alerts are issued

#### YELLOW

Positivity rate over 0.5% for two consecutive days or 1,500 cases in a week or average occupancy of oxygen beds at 500 for a week

#### Restrictions

- Odd-Even in markets (except for essential items)
- Market timing - 10 am to 8 pm
- One weekly market per week allowed per municipal zone

#### AMBER

■ Positivity rate over 1% for two consecutive days or 3,500 cases in a week or average occupancy of oxygen beds at 700 for a week

#### Restrictions

■ Timings of shops in markets and malls will be from 10 am to 6 pm.

#### ORANGE

■ Positivity rate over 2% for two consecutive days or 9,000 cases in a week or average occupancy of oxygen beds at 1,000 for a week

#### Restrictions

- All malls and markets to close (except essential services and items)
- Metro services to close, buses to operate with 50% seating capacity only with passengers engaged in essential activities
- Autos, cabs, e-rickshaws

will be allowed to take a maximum of two passengers

- Construction activities halt. Only those sites offering accommodation facilities to labourers will be allowed
- Only factories producing essential commodities will be allowed if workers can live on site

#### RED

- Positivity rate over 5% for two consecutive days or 16,000 cases in a week or average occupancy of oxygen beds at 3,000 for a week
- More restrictions will be in place for public transport

## Ahead of MCD polls, Cong sees leaders jumping to AAP, BJP

ABHINAV RAJPUT  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

AHEAD OF THE MCD polls scheduled for April, the Delhi Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal in the capital are seeing a depletion in their ranks with several leaders jumping ship to join either the AAP or BJP.

At least 12 out of 31 councillors from the Congress have left the party, including its biggest leader, Mukesh Goel, who joined AAP. Goel was the leader of the party in the North MCD.

In the SAD, councillor Raja Iqbal Singh, who is the current North MCD mayor, and former MLA Manjinder Singh Sirsa have joined the BJP. SAD former national vice-president Sardar Kuldeep Singh Bhogal also joined the BJP last week.

According to BJP insiders, a fresh push is being made to reach out to the Sikh community — a meeting of its Sikh cell was held on Friday while Home Minister Amit Shah visited Sirsa's residence on Saturday. "We have sent out a message that SAD leaders are welcome; there are more people who we are in talks with," said BJP national spokesperson R P Singh.

A senior BJP leader said during the Sikh cell meeting, it was decided that community leaders will reach out to people and tell them of the work done by PM Narendra Modi for them.

However, Delhi SAD president Harmeet Singh Kalka said

the party is intact and it will fight the polls: "Some people have left but we have a fresh energy from those who won the gurdwara committee elections."

In the Congress camp, out of the 12 councillors who left, 10 have joined AAP. Delhi Congress president Anil Chaudhary said, "Yes, it's true that people have left but those from other parties have also joined. These things happen around elections, but it won't damage the party." Insiders, however, said more than one-third of the leadership switching sides is a matter of concern.

AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said the main reason behind people joining the party is because they are convinced by the leadership skills of CM Arvind Kejriwal.

A senior AAP leader said, "For Congress leaders, it is easier to join AAP because ideologically they are closer to us than BJP. Secondly there is an impression that three years of anti-incumbency has built up against BJP leaders in the MCDs."

The BJP has been ruling all three MCDs since 2012.

## Musical on Ambedkar postponed

New Delhi: A musical on the life of Dr B R Ambedkar, organised by the Delhi government, slated for release on January 5, has been postponed due to rising Covid cases. CM Kejriwal tweeted, "Delhi Govt had planned a grand show... this show is being postponed in light of rising Covid cases. We shall announce a new date as soon as the situation improves." **ENS**

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Notification No. 04/2021 Dated: 24.12.2021

**WALK IN INTERVIEW**  
FOR ENGAGEMENT OF ASSISTANT TRAINING & PLACEMENT LIAISON OFFICER  
(PURELY ON CONTRACTUAL BASIS)

The Institute will conduct walk-in-interview on 12.01.2022 for contractual engagement of Assistant Training & Placement Liaison Officer on a consolidated remuneration ranging from Rs. 36,000/- to 45,000/- per month. For more details, please visit the Institute's website www.sliet.ac.in. **REGISTRAR**  
(भारत सरकार के अधीन सम विश्वविद्यालय)

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VACCINATIONS IN  
LAST 24 HOURS  
**1,09,032**



		Total	Vacant		
TOTAL CASES		<b>13,494</b>	<b>13,234</b>		
HOSPITAL BEDS		<b>2,787</b>	<b>2,755</b>		
ICU BEDS					
		Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Dec 25		249	96	1	57,295
Dec 26		290	120	1	52,947
Total		1103*	14,17,144	25,105	3,23,99,242

\*Total active cases

## BRIEFLY

## 15-year-old boy jumps off sixth floor of building, dies

**New Delhi:** A 15-year-old boy died after allegedly jumping off the sixth floor of a building on Saturday night, police said. "At the time (around 8.30 pm), the boy's parents had gone to Mayur Vihar market and the boy was alone at home. He was taken to Max Hospital by the neighbours, where he was declared dead after initial treatment. So far, no foul play is suspected and further enquiry is on," said DCP (East Delhi) Priyanka Kashyap.

## One dead, 2 injured as car rams into divider

**New Delhi:** A 35-year-old man was killed and two others were severely injured after their car ramed into a divider and turned turtle in Vasant Kunj Sunday. Police said the deceased was identified as Ankit Kumar. The injured, Aditya and Rajkumar, both aged 35, are undergoing treatment at AIIMS Trauma Centre. "At 7.40 am, Vasant Kunj South police station received information about an accident near Mahipalpur flyover. Police found the damaged car and rescued its occupants," a senior police officer said. All three men were taken to AIIMS, where Ankit was declared dead on arrival.

## Nigerian national jumps to death

**Noida:** A 25-year-old Nigerian national allegedly jumped to death from the 14th floor of a housing society in Greater Noida Sunday. Police said the victim had come to India four days ago from Nigeria. "We received information that a woman died after jumping from the balcony of a flat. Prima facie it appears tensions with her family led her to take the extreme step. We are ascertaining further details," said a police officer from Beta 2 police station. **ENS**

## Man held for impersonating magistrate

**New Delhi:** A 35-year-old man who allegedly posed as a chief judicial magistrate of Gurgaon was arrested during a vehicle checking drive at Paharganj circle, police said. **PTI**

## Razing Supertech twin towers: Delays, challenges

AMIL BHATNAGAR  
NOIDA, DECEMBER 26

ALMOST A month after the deadline to demolish two towers of a Supertech housing project in Noida, set by the Supreme Court, expired, the buildings are still standing.

On August 30, a bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah upheld a 2014 Allahabad High Court judgment which ordered the demolition of the two towers at Emerald Court, located in Noida Sector 93A. The SC ruled that the demolition had to be completed within three months.

After several rounds of consultation between the Noida Authority, Supertech builders, and specialist agencies, plans are being drawn up and an agency is to be selected.

As per court orders, demolition has to be carried out by Supertech under supervision of government authorities in Noida and in consultation with the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee. So far, the company that is supposed to execute the demolition is yet to be selected and it will likely take another six months to bring down the towers. The position, location and structure of the towers will also be a challenge for the executing agencies.

## The demolition

Supertech Ltd had nominated the names of two companies, Edifice Engineering and Genesis Engineering, to provide demolition services and solutions. One of the two will be selected by the Noida Authority in consultation with the RWA and CBRI. Two weeks ago, Edifice Engineering gave its presentation on their proposed demolition.

In such cases, the companies prefer the 'implosion' method. As per experts, the explosive charges are placed at strategic points in pillars, beams and the detonation causes the structure to collapse into the compound itself. It is also referred to as the 'waterfall' method since it resembles dropping water from a height in which the splash represents the spread of debris. The Mumbai-based company was the executing agency in bringing down three of the four towers under the illegal Maradu Apartments in Kochi in January 2020. The controlled demolition of the four towers, which violated Coastal Zone Regulations (CRZ), was hailed as near "perfect", according to company partner Utkarsh Mehta, with no damage to structures in the vicinity. The entire structure was brought down in six seconds using the 'implosion' method.

Edifice Engineering will be roping in Jet Demolition, a South Africa-based company that provides professional demolition services to industries and multinational clients.

"If our company is selected, the blast plan will be prepared by Jet. They have an entire team which will be assessing the area, the impact, and the structure. It is a very technical process since every detail, from the fall to the post-explosion debris, is taken into account. The plan will be further executed by our com-



On August 30, the Supreme Court had ordered the demolition of the two towers at Emerald Court, located in Noida Sector 93A. *Gajendra Yadav*

## THE TIMELINE

**NOV 2004:** Noida Authority allots plot to Supertech in Sector 93A for development of Emerald Court  
**JUNE 2005:** Building plan sanctioned under New Okhla Industrial Development Area Building Regulations and Directions, 1986, for construction of 14 towers, each with 10 floors and a total height of 37 metres  
**JUNE 2006:** Additional land area in same plot leased to Supertech under same conditions  
**DEC 2006:** Revised plan sanctioned for project, as per new regulations, and two floors, two towers and a shopping complex are approved  
**MARCH 2010:** Third revised plan sanctioned by authorities, allowing Supertech to raise 40 floors as a part of the two new

towers  
**DEC 2012:** RWA approaches Allahabad High Court to quash revised plan, demands demolition of the two towers alleging various violations and misrepresentations on part of Supertech  
**APRIL 2014:** Allahabad HC orders demolition of the two towers. It said distance between the building blocks must be at least 16 metres under NBR 2010 and Supertech, in collusion with authorities, obtained sanctions for the layout which violated mandatory requirement. The UP Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Act, 2005 has also been violated, the court held  
**AUG 2021:** Supreme Court upholds the High Court judgment and orders the demolition to be completed within three months. Deadlines lapses

## THE PROJECT

COST OF EMERALD COURT	CEYANE AND APEX TOWERS	
<b>₹750 cr</b>	Area of twin towers	6,556.51 sq sqm
	Total establishments	915 apartments, 21 shops
	No. of bookings	633

pany on the ground," said Mehta. The South African demolition specialist, based in Randburg, was named 'Best of the Best' at the World Demolition Awards (WDA). It also won in the Explosive Demolition category. Both awards were for the successful implosion of the 108-metre-high, 22-storey Bank of Lisbon building in Johannesburg in November 2019.

The Bank of Lisbon building was demolished following the death of three firemen in September 2019. The Gauteng provincial government made the decision to implode the building following a structural assessment which deemed it unsafe. The Lisbon implosion was one of the biggest in the world which used nearly 900 kg of explosives to bring down the tower.

The building was surrounded by structures, and no building

nearby sustained any damage as the bank went down, Mehta said. Jet Demolition demolished the structure in less than 30 seconds.

In the Supertech case, challenges the officials will face is the slant of the building and the chosen direction of the collapse. "In every demolition, our effort is to ensure there is no damage to areas around it. In the Supertech case, there is a driveway leading up to the building, which is weak. For this, we are taking the south-east direction, which has ample space and a slight slant will be given," said Mehta.

As per officials, there will be a pre-blast and post-blast assessment. Prior to the blast, aspects including evacuation radius, area in which debris will collect and weak points of the building are considered. Following the blast, the engineering company will take a survey from locals living

in the area to assess if any damage was done to their houses or flats. The exercise prevents any claims of damage that could be made following the demolition.

Genesis Engineering, the second company in the fray, will present its demolition plan in the coming weeks. They too will be using the implosion method and taking technical assistance from companies based abroad.

"We are well equipped to carry out the demolition. We have partner agencies based in US and UK, which we will include in the technical assessment. The other decisions will be taken once the presentation process is done," said Piyush Gandhi, MD, Genesis Engineering.

The company carried out demolitions of the Atrium 2 project in Mumbai and Langham Palace in Pune. The expertise of the organisation lies in "industrial, plant and factory demolition services along with high reach demolition excavator services".

The task for the executing agencies will be to prevent damage to the closest Aster Tower in the Emerald Court compound. A gas supply pipeline running in the premises will have to be shut for the duration of the implosion. Nearly 600 families reside in the housing compound. From wire meshes to sandbags, several other tools will be used to prevent the debris from spilling over to far off, risking damage to other buildings.

Both Ceyane and Apex are nearly 100 metres tall. Following the third revised plan, it was allowed for Supertech to raise the height to 121 metres and the number of floors from 24 to 40. The available ground clearance for the Supertech demolition is 9 metres, officials said.

For the RWA, which was the main petitioner in the case, it has been a long battle that needs to find its conclusion. "It has been a back and forth between the Noida Authority and Supertech. All organisations have been putting the onus on each other. This will send a strong message to the officials that builders will not be given a free hand. It is likely that the demolition will take a lot of time. So our fight continues," said RWA president UBS Teotia.

The RWA had alleged various violations and misrepresentations by the developer in building the two towers. It also sought setting aside permission granted to link the two towers through a space frame, in court. Supertech had argued that the two towers were sanctioned in accordance with Noida Building Regulations, 2006. The authorities in Noida told the court that permission for connecting the towers was granted only after the design was approved by IIT-Roorkee.

Ordering demolition, the Allahabad High Court in 2014 had raised issues with the way the buildings were constructed and rights of other residents in terms of "ventilation, light and air and adherence to fire safety norms".

The Supreme Court had further ordered Supertech Limited, the developer, to refund all existing flat purchasers the amount invested along with an interest of 12% per annum within a period of two months.

DDA SPECIAL HOUSING SCHEME  
Now, visit sample flats before making a bid

ABHINAV RAJPUT  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

AS PART of its special housing scheme, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has provided a facility for prospective buyers to visit sample flats in different localities. They will be assisted by an DDA official for the same.

On Thursday, the DDA launched its special scheme in which 18,335 flats are on sale in four categories — High Income Group (HIG), Middle Income Group (MIG), Lower Income Group (LIG) and Janta flats — at areas such as Jasola, Dwarka, Rohini, and Narela.

A senior DDA official said these sample flats are in Dwarka 19 B and 16 B, Jasola, Sirsapur, Rohini Sector 34 and 35, Narela, Mangla-puri. He said that DDA officials would be present at the sites from 10 am to 6 pm to assist people.

The exact location of the flats and their categories have been uploaded on the DDA website. A dedicated help desk has been set up at its office at DDA Vikas Sadan for resolving people's grievances regarding the scheme.

There are 205 flats in the HIG category of which 182 are at Jasola. These are priced between Rs 1.9 to Rs 2.1 crore. There are 976



## FLATS ON OFFER

- **HIG (3 BHK): 202** in Jasola, Vasant Kunj, Paschim Vihar
- **HIG (2 BHK): 3** in Vasant Kunj block F
- **MIG (2 BHK): 976** in Dwarka, Vasant Kunj, Jahangirpuri, Narela
- **LIG (1 BHK): 11,452** in Dwarka, Rohini, Narela, Zafraabad, Sirsapur, Lok Nayak Puram
- **EWS or Janta: 5,702** in Manglapuri, Narela, Rohini, Shivaji Marg

People can apply for the scheme till Feb 7. *Archive*

flats in the MIG category in areas like Dwarka Sector 19, Dwarka Sector 16, Narela Sector A1. In 1 BHK category of LIG, 11,452 flats are up for sale in areas like Narela, Rohini, Sirsapur. There are 5,702 Janta flats, mostly in Narela.

The houses in the special scheme are from previous schemes — unsold or surrendered — which have been clubbed together and offered at a cheaper rate, said a DDA official.

The official said people can apply for the scheme till February 7. "Based on the response, draw of lots is likely to be held in February end."

## Days after man abducted and beaten up, police yet to trace wife

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

FOUR DAYS after a 22-year-old man was abducted and beaten up by his wife's family members, who objected to their relationship and wedding, police have said the woman is untraceable and suspect her parents have forcibly taken her away. "We are conducting raids to nab her parents and two uncles and rescue her," a senior police officer said.

The accused had kidnapped the man on December 22, soon after the couple eloped and got married on December 21 in Jaipur. When they informed the woman's parents about their wedding, they decided to teach the man a lesson," an officer said.

The man alleged his wife's family had objected to their relationship from the start and had allegedly threatened him many times. He said, "After coming to Delhi, I decided to move an application for police protection. On December 22, we went to Rajouri Garden police station to file a complaint. A head constable called our families to the station to resolve the issue but they couldn't come. As soon as I left the station and reached TDI mall in Moti Nagar, 2.5 km away, I was surrounded by 15 people who took me to their house in Sagarpur, where they assaulted me brutally." An officer said the family dumped him thinking he was dead.

Later, a PCR call was made to police regarding the assault, but an assistant sub-inspector did not lodge an FIR immediately. The ASI has since been suspended. The head constable at the police station was suspended as well for calling the families earlier instead of filing a complaint.

An FIR has now been filed under sections of attempt to murder and abduction. Additional DCP (West district) Prashant Priya Gautam said, "The two personnel have been suspended."

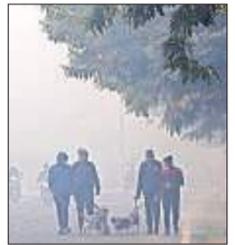
friendship soon grew into a relationship. The couple eloped and got married on December 21 in Jaipur. When they informed the woman's parents about their wedding, they decided to teach the man a lesson," an officer said.

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## Delhi gets first spell of winter rain



City's AQI on Sunday was 'severe'. *Gajendra Yadav*

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

DELHI RECEIVED its first spell of winter rain on Sunday, with the rain gauges recording 3.4 mm till 11.30 pm. Light rain continued till late at night. The national capital, which usually receives 5.6 mm of rain in November, did not receive any during the month.

According to officials at the India Meteorological Department, light rain is expected on Monday and Tuesday as well.

Because of overcast conditions, the maximum temperature, at 21.4 degrees Celsius, and the minimum, at 9.8 degrees Celsius, were both above normal. The temperature over the next two days is expected to be between 22 and 10 degrees Celsius.

The city's AQI, which stood at 459 in the 'severe' category, is expected to see an improvement over the next two days, primarily because of the rain. SAFAR forecasted the AQI will be in the 'very poor' range during this time.

## No cooked mid-day meals at Delhi schools for now, education dept cites logistics

SUKRITA BARUAH  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

SCHOOLS IN Delhi have been shuttling between opening and closing for primary and middle school children, but reintroducing cooked mid-day meals is not on the cards for now.

Last month, the Ministry of Education's Department of School Education and Literacy had written to states and union territories, advising them to "resume provision of hot cooked meals to eligible students attending schools by adhering to prevalent Covid-appropriate protocols and social distancing norms as prescribed by the competent authority".

Among states where cooked mid-day meals have resumed are Karnataka and Uttarakhand.

In lieu of cooked meals, the Delhi government had begun dis-



In lieu of cooked meals, the govt had begun distributing dry ration to students last December. *Archive*

tribution of dry ration — amounting to 145 grams per day for children up to class V and 217 grams per day for classes VI to VIII — last December. They were given ration for a period of 6 months from July to December 2020, and monthly starting from this January.

Though physical classes have been off and on for children of eligible grades since November 1, cooked mid-day meals are not likely to resume soon with the education department citing a logistical challenge. "We will stick to distributing

dry ration for the time being. Even when schools are open, only 50% of the children are allowed to come on a given day to maintain Covid protocol. Re-introducing cooked meals in schools poses the challenge of how to cater to students who are not coming to school on the given day, juggling both ration distribution and cooked meals does not seem feasible. Ration distribution can reach more children for now," said a senior government official.

According to Arvind Singh of Matri Sudha, an NGO which works in the field of nutrition, there is scope to ensure nutrition quality and standards when hot-cooked meals are consumed by children in school. "Once dry ration kits are given, there is no way to ensure that the food — which is measured as per the child's nutrition requirement — is going to their stomach," he said.

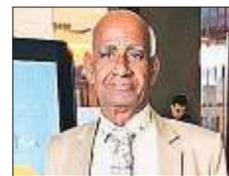
## 'Wanted to take son to exam next day': Kin of man who died trying to stop carjacking

GAYATHRI MANI  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

DAYS AFTER a retired government school teacher died of cardiac arrest while trying to stop a carjacking, his family said he had stepped out to fill petrol in his WagonR so he could take his son for an exam the next morning when two men decided to steal the vehicle.

The incident took place on Thursday around 11 pm near G35 mall in Rohini's Sector 11. The victim, Ramesh Chander Rana (65), tried to stop the accused by hanging on to the door. He was dragged on the road for a few metres before he collapsed and died.

"He left home that night to fill petrol, so he could take our younger son to his exam centre the next day. We can't believe he isn't with us anymore... he al-



The victim, Ramesh Chander Rana, was a retired govt school teacher

ways wanted to do good for others... he dreamed big for his children and grandchildren," said his wife, Vijaya Rana.

Rana used to work at a government school in Rajouri Garden as a physical education teacher before he retired in 2018.

He is survived by his wife, daughter, and son. "The day started like any other

day. He went out and came home around 9.30 pm. Our son had to appear for the Central Teachers Eligibility Test (CTET) on Friday morning and the exam centre was far, so my husband decided to step out to fill up fuel so he could drop him. He was excited as he wanted our son to get a government job. I do not know if the men were following him... the car was not even new, we had bought it 10 years ago. There was Rs 1 lakh inside the car which my husband needed for personal work... but he was in a rush and forgot to take it out," said Vijaya, who works as a section officer at a government school in Mukarba Chowk.

Recounting their last conversation, she said: "He called around 10.30 pm and said he was near G35 mall and would be home in 10-15 minutes for dinner. Those were his last words... After a while, a police officer

came home and said my husband had met with an accident and was in the hospital. When my son and I got there, doctors said he was brought dead on arrival. His head was covered in blood, his backbone and hip were broken... He was strong and fit despite his age..."

His daughter Sameeksha Mathur, an English teacher at a government school in Rohini Sector 22, said, "He was fun-loving... he worked even after retirement, teaching poor children on the streets. During the pandemic, he even provided food and ration to the poor."

Police on Saturday said the carjackers were nabbed. DCP (Rohini district) Pranav Tayal identified the accused as Kapil Tiwari (27) and a 17-year-old boy. They had left the car in Shahbad Dairy after the incident and fled.

# CORONA ISN'T OVER REMEMBER TO FOLLOW ALL COVID PRECAUTIONS



## Wear a mask properly

Wear your mask before stepping out of the house.



## Wash your hands frequently

Wash your hands regularly with soap or use sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.



## Practice social distancing

Avoid going to crowded places, and remember to maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet.

"According to experts, Omicron spreads very rapidly, but there is no need to panic. Continue to wear your mask and remember to follow all covid norms."

- Arvind Kejriwal



## 6 GOVT &amp; POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



## BRAHMIN OUTREACH

THE BJP leadership in Uttar Pradesh may deny that there is disillusionment in the Brahmmin community over the style of functioning of the Yogi Adityanath government but the party's central leadership appears to have taken this into account. In order to spread the message that the BJP government in the state has always worked for Brahmmins, central leaders, including Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who is in charge of UP elections, in a meeting with state leaders from the community, formed a panel of Brahmmin leaders to initiate an outreach programme in all 403 Assembly constituencies. The panel has senior leaders Shiv Pratap Shukla (Rajya Sabha chief whip), Mahesh Sharma, Abhijit Mishra and Ram Bhai Mokariya (MP from Gujarat). Incidentally, the party is keen on roping in Union Minister Ajay Mishra, whose son is an accused in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, as well for the party's campaign among the upper castes, sources said. BJP leaders said the party cannot afford to ignore the community, which constitutes 17 per cent of the population.

## MOVING OUT

AFTER THE BSF celebrated its raising day on December 5 on the India-Pakistan border in Jaisalmer, the government has now asked all forces to celebrate their respective raising day outside Delhi. While border guarding forces have been suggested to celebrate their key days near the borders they guard, other paramilitary forces have been asked to look for locations in regions of their operation. Recently, the government even suggested the Army, which celebrates Army Day on January 15 in Delhi, to move out of the Capital. However, sources said, the Army asked to be excused for this year since all preparations had already been made and it would be difficult to move out of Delhi at the last minute.

## 'HUNAR MAN'

UNION MINISTRY for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi is now being called the "Hunar Man" by artisans and craftsmen. The moniker has been bestowed on him since the he has been travelling the length and breadth of the country, inaugurating the ministry's flagship programme, the Hunar Haats, which showcase artisans and traditional craftsmen from all over the country. The Haats are a way of giving the artisans exposure as well as some income. They have been doing so during much of the pandemic as well. Often, the minister invites colleagues, ministers and Governors as well as senior BJP leaders, to attend these haats.

## UP raids: Yogi says businessman has links with SP

PRESSTrust OF INDIA

PRAYAGRAJ, DECEMBER 26

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that the businessman whose premises was raided by central agencies recently is linked to the Samajwadi Party, a charge denied by the Opposition party earlier.

Unaccounted Rs 150 crore in cash was unearthed in a series of raids by various agencies on the premises of Kanpur-based industrialist Piyush Jain, sources said on Friday. The BJP had said that he had links with the SP.

Addressing a public meeting in Prayagraj, the CM said around Rs 100 crore more recovered from the trader. "For the past two-three days, continuous raids are being conducted on the premises of a person belonging to the SP. This money belongs to the poor," he said.

## IN POLL-BOUND GOA

## Smarting from setbacks, Congress gears up to take on BJP

MAYURA JANWALKAR

PANAJI, DECEMBER 26

REELING UNDER recurrent defections from its ranks and the emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) as new contenders in Goa's electoral battlefield, the Congress party is putting up a brave front and trying to get its act together in order to challenge the ruling BJP in the forthcoming state Assembly elections.

Despite facing various setbacks in recent days, the Congress has been the first party off the blocks to announce its first list of eight candidates for the Goa polls due in February 2022.

Eying the "anti-incumbency factor", the Congress has been gearing up to take on the Pramod



Former CM Pratapsingh Rane

Sawant-led BJP dispensation over its alleged non-governance. It has undertaken various agitations against the BJP government over the last several months. Its campaign against a minister Milind Naik, a three-time BJP MLA, over a sexual exploitation case led to Naik tendering his resignation earlier this month.

But the Congress has been in dire straits in Goa for a long time. It had emerged as the single largest party with 17 seats in the 40-member state Assembly in February 2017 polls. It not only



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses supporters during BJP's Jan Vishwas Yatra, in Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday. ANI

## Akhilesh wants to stop Ram temple work: Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday lashed out at the Samajwadi Party (SP), alleging that its president Akhilesh Yadav was planning to stop the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya if elected to power in the upcoming state elections.

Shah claimed that Akhilesh was upset with the BJP because the Narendra Modi government at the Centre had outlawed the practice of triple talaq to do justice to Muslim women, and because the Prime Minister had laid the foundation of the Ram Temple that would be ready within months.

Referring to the police firing on *kar sevaks* who had gathered near the Ramjanmabhoomi site in Ayodhya in 1990 — the Mulayam Singh government was in power at the time — Shah said, "Who had opened fire on *kar sevaks*? Which party had opened fire? Who had brought down the Kalyan Singh government? He [Akhilesh] waits and dreams... that UP public will

elect him and he will lock Ram Janmabhoomi... Akhilesh *babu*, use your strength as much as you can but no one can stop the work of Ram Lalla temple."

The Home Minister alleged that the SP and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) indulged in caste-based politics and will work for only their vote banks. In contrast, the BJP's motto was "*sabka saath, sabka vikaas* [together, development for all]", he added. Shah appealed to the crowd to defeat the SP and the BSP, and help the ruling party cross the 300-seat mark in UP.

The minister made the comments at two public meetings organised as part of the party's *Jan Vishwas Yatra* in Other Backward Class (OBC)-dominated areas in the Braj and Kanpur-Bundelkhand regions. He said the BJP's victories in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2017 Assembly polls would not have been possible without the guidance of former chief minister Kalyan Singh who died in Lucknow on August 21, aged 89. Singh was a prominent OBC leader and a Hindutva icon, and was in power in 1992

when the Babri Masjid was demolished.

One of Shah's meetings was organised in Kasganj under the Etah parliamentary constituency. In the 2009 Lok Sabha polls, Kalyan Singh was elected from the constituency that is currently held by his son Rajveer. "Kalyan Singh was the first to speak about the backward class people in Uttar Pradesh, and it was he who gave rights to the people of the backward castes," said the Union minister.

Shah said that during the rule of the Akhilesh Yadav government, "SP goons" used to harass people and there was a "*dada, a bahubali* [strongman] and one mini CM" in every district. "In the five years of the Adityanath-led government, goons have fled UP," he added. Shah alleged that more than 700 riots occurred in Akhilesh's five-year rule. In contrast, no one would dare indulge in riots now, he added.

He said "3 Ps" dominated the SP's rule — *parivarwad* (nepotism), *pakshpaat* (favouritism), and *palayan* (exodus). The BJP replaced these with politics of development, he said.

## MANN KI BAAT

## Collective strength, discipline will defeat Covid-19: PM Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday cautioned against the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 and said that the country's collective strength lies in self-discipline and self-awareness that will eventually defeat the coronavirus.

"It is because of everyone's effort that India could fight the biggest pandemic in 100 years. We stood by each other like a family... everyone tried to do more than what one could have done. If we compare the vaccination figures of the world today with those of India, it feels that the country has handled such an unprecedented task... how big a goal has been achieved," the Prime Minister said in his monthly radio programme *Mann Ki Baat*.

"We also have to keep in mind that a new variant of coronavirus has already knocked at the door. Our experience of the past two years is that our own effort as a citizen is very important to defeat this global pandemic. Our scientists are continuously



PM Narendra Modi

studying this new Omicron variant... In such a situation, self-awareness, self-discipline is itself the country's strength in fighting against this variant of Coronavirus. It is this very collective strength of ours that will defeat coronavirus; with this very sense of responsibility we have to enter into 2022," he said.

The PM's remarks come a day after he announced that Covid-19 vaccination will start January 3 onward for children in the 15-18 age group, while healthcare and frontline workers will be administered a booster — he called it "precaution dose" — from January 10.

During the address, he also remembered Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife and other defence personnel, including Group Captain



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at an event to lay the foundation stone of a BrahMos production unit and a DRDO Lab, in Lucknow. ANI

## Manufacturing BrahMos so no country can cast an evil eye on us: Rajnath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Sunday said India is making BrahMos missiles not to attack any country, but to ensure that "no country dares to cast an evil eye on us".

Speaking at an event after laying the foundation stones for the Defence Technologies and Test Centre and BrahMos Manufacturing Centre in Lucknow, Singh said: "The BrahMos missile and other weapons we are manufacturing are not to attack any country. It has never been the character of India to attack or grab even an inch of the land of any country... India is a peaceful country. We are not building BrahMos to attack any country. We want it because if a country casts an evil eye on us, we are capable of replying."

Singh also lashed out at Pakistan for organising terror attacks in India. "There is a neighbouring country. It got separated from India sometime back. I don't know why its intentions vis-a-vis India are always bad. It committed

acts of terrorism in Uri and Pulwama," he said.

"And then our Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) took a decision, and we went to the soil of that country and destroyed terrorist hideouts. When there was a need for air strikes, we did that successfully. We gave the message that if somebody dares to cast an evil eye on us, then not just on this side of the border, but we can go to the other side and hit them," he said referring to Balakot airstrikes of 2019 after the Uri and Pulwama attacks.

Praising Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Defence Minister said: "When I spoke to Yogi-ji and expressed the desire to establish this project, he did not take a second and said the land will be made available at the earliest." Hitting out at the previous governments of UP, Singh said: "Before 2017, you know how things were. Rioters and mafia were on high morale... Now, one can say that your CM has ensured law and order."

Adityanath too said at the event, "If someone raises an eye on the security of India, then it will not be tolerated..."

## SKM not contesting any polls, says Rakesh Tikait

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

JAIPUR, DECEMBER 26

FARMER LEADER Rakesh Tikait said on Sunday that the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) will not contest any elections.

Tikait's comments comes days after 22 farmer organisations, who were a part of the (SKM) that spearheaded the year-long farmers' agitation, announced they will contest all the 117 seats in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Punjab.

"Samyukt Kisan Morcha is not contesting any elections. Some people have gone on four month's leave. What can we do if someone wants to play cards or visit Mussoorie? After four months we will see who went, what all did they do, where all

did they go. We have a meeting on January 15, we will speak on January 15," said Tikait in Jaipur.

Tikait asserted that he does not want to join politics.

"The government is also there and the farmers are also there. We will speak with them," said Tikait, reacting to the reported statement of Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who said that the government took a "step back" and "will move forward again" while talking about the three farm laws during an event on Friday.

## Cong: Women's marathon held in Jhansi, Lucknow event tomorrow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

THE CONGRESS on Sunday organised a marathon for women in Jhansi district. The party claimed that more than 10,000 women participated in the event that was held as part of its outreach programme for women in the upcoming polls.

Earlier this week, the Congress had announced it would organise marathons in Jhansi and Lucknow. But after it was not granted permission to hold the event in Lucknow, the party said the marathon would be held at Ekana stadium in the city on December 28.

Speaking about the Jhansi marathon, Congress spokesperson Anshu Awasthi said, "Without using government buses and resources, more than 10,000 women took part in the marathon on Sunday in Jhansi. The marathon event was a huge success. Every woman in the state is connecting with the Congress's slogan *Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon* [I am a girl, and I can fight]." He added that, "Yogi Adityanath (Chief Minister) is against women, and that is why the government didn't allow us to hold the event in Lucknow."

Lucknow Commissioner DK Thakur said, "For administrative reasons, the permission was not granted for an open event. We have given them permission to hold it in a stadium on December 28."

Jhansi resident Chhaya Thakur won Sunday's marathon. Youth Congress president Srinivas BV was the chief guest at the event.

The Congress has announced it will give 40 per cent of the tickets for the upcoming state elections to women. It has also released a special manifesto for women.



Rakesh Tikait

VACCINATION COVERAGE IN ELECTION-BOUND STATES		
	First dose coverage	Second dose coverage
Uttar Pradesh	83%	46%
Punjab	77%	41%
Uttarakhand	99.76%	80%
Goa	82%	70%
Manipur	67%	50%



Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan

district administrations have to pay special attention to ramp up vaccination in these pockets. Elections are expected in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur early next year.

On December 23, the directions by Bhushan came just hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting with officials in the backdrop of the emergence of Omicron.

The Health Ministry has sent multidisciplinary teams to Uttar Pradesh and Punjab — for reporting vaccination below the national average. Uttar Pradesh has administered a cumulative 19.45 crore doses — 83 per cent have re-

ceived first dose and 46 per cent are fully vaccinated. Punjab has administered a cumulative 2.60 crore doses — 77 per cent have received first dose and 41 per cent are fully vaccinated.

The teams, which will remain stationed in the states for the next 3 to 5 days, will assess the situation, suggest remedial actions and submit a report every evening by 7 pm. They will

specifically look at five areas: contact tracing, including surveillance, containment operations; Covid-19 testing, including sending of adequate samples from clusters to INSACOG network for genome sequencing; Covid appropriate behaviour and its enforcement; availability of hospital beds, ventilators and medical oxygen; and vaccination progress.

In recent weeks, the Congress lost its three MLAs: Ravi Naik to the BJP, Luizinho Faleiro and Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco to the Trinamool Congress.

Even Pratapsingh Rane's candidature from his bastion Poreim has now come under a shroud of uncertainty as his son Vishwajit has also staked his claim to contest it as a BJP candidate, insisting that it is time for his father to announce his retirement.

Brushing aside the long saga of setbacks, GPCC president Girish Chodankar, however, says the defections have actually been an "opportunity" for the party. "It is not really a question of who remains or who goes. Those who

have greed for money or those who are between two parties were not wanted. It was our choice not to give (election tickets) to such people... We take this as an opportunity to cleanse our party," he says.

Echoing the line that the AAP and the TMC would split the anti-BJP votes in the Goa polls, Chodankar claims that they had joined the fray "only to dent" the Congress party's electoral prospects. He, however, adds that "When you are in the battlefield you have to fight and we are giving a tough fight."

Earlier this month, the Congress formally announced an alliance with the Vijai Sardesai-led Goa Forward Party, AICC in-charge Dinesh Gundu Rao is credited with stitching the alliance about which Chodankar refrains from

commenting much, thereby betraying some disconnect between the AICC and the GPCC.

However, senior Congress leader and former Union law minister Ramakant Khalap, who is a member of the party's manifesto committee for the Goa polls, said, "When the party announced an alliance, of course, there were repercussions. Some people felt this was unnecessary because GFP does not have a pan-Goa presence, others thought they should have merged with Congress... Even a monolithic party goes through this turmoil. BJP is no exception."

The party's detractors have often accused the Congress of taking too long to take decisions. Chodankar disagrees. "Where are we late? We are the first party to declare our candidates," he says.

# MP plans to pull back Panchayat Act Ordinance

IRAM SIDDIQUE  
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 26

THE MADHYA Pradesh government on Sunday decided to withdraw an Ordinance that amended the Panchayat Act, which effectively nullified the rotation on reservation and delimitation following the Supreme court order staying the poll process on seats reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the panchayat elections. The move is likely to delay the panchayat elections.

"After the Supreme Court's decision, the state cabinet has decided to request the Governor to withdraw this Ordinance. The delimitation and reservation exercise ordered by the Supreme Court cannot be possible without withdrawing the Ordinance," said MP Panchayat Minister Mahendra Singh Sisodiya during a press conference after the cabinet meeting.

The cabinet's move to withdraw the Ordinance is believed to have made way for a stay on panchayat elections.

BS Jamod, secretary state election commission, said, "We have not been notified about the withdrawal of notification. Once it is received, a meeting will be called of all officials concerned, including experts, to decide on further course of action."

When asked if the state government has approached state election commission with any request to delay the panchayat election, BS Jamod said, "We have not received any communication from the state government in this regard so far."

On November 21, the state government passed the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj and Gram Swaraj (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 ahead of panchayat elections. The Ordinance effectively annulled the last rotation on reservation carried out by the Congress govern-

ment in 2019 and instead, the delimitation, rotation on reservation exercise carried out in 2014 under the BJP regime became effective for the panchayat elections.

Notably, on December 23, Madhya Pradesh unanimously passed a resolution stating that there will be no panchayat polls without Other Backward Class Reservation. The resolution was proposed by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan himself who also stated that central government has approached Supreme Court to review their order and had also requested for an early hearing in the matter.

On December 17, the apex court stayed the reservation on OBC seats for the upcoming general elections and directed the state election commission to de-notify these seats as general seats. The SC order came while it was hearing an application filed by Congress leader Manmohan Nagar, who had approached the apex court pleading that the BJP government had violated the Constitutional provision of rotation reservation and delimitation for the panchayat polls.

A day after the SC's order, the State Election Commission (SEC) had decided to postpone the panchayat election process on the seats reserved for OBCs. Before the SC's order, a total of 155 posts of members of jila panchayats, 1,273 members of janpad panchayats, 4,058 sarpanchs, and 64,353 posts of panch were reserved for OBCs during this election process.

On December 4, the state election commission announced polling for 859 posts of district panchayats across 52 districts in MP, 6,727 posts under 313 Janpad Panchayats, Sarpanchs of 22,581 village panchayats and 3,62,754 posts of Panch members will be held in three phases - on January 6, January 28 and February 16.

## PROPOSED RAIL CORRIDOR

# Stick to party line or face action, Cong Kerala unit chief to Tharoor

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
DECEMBER 26



Shashi Tharoor

publicly spoke in favour of the proposed rail corridor in Kerala.

Contrary to the Congress's opposition, Tharoor has expressed support for the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF government's proposal for a semi-high speed rail corridor project in Kerala. The Thiruvananthapuram MP said the project will spur development and investments in the state.

Addressing the media in Kannur, Sudhakaran said no leader has the right to reject the party's stand. The state unit chief also said Tharoor may "not be in the party" if he does not adhere.

"Everyone would have their own opinion. If he is not yielding to the party line, he would not be in the party. If he is yielding to

**EXPLAINED**  
Govt's big infra project

THE RS 63,940 crore-SilverLine project envisions a semi high-speed railway corridor through the state linking its southern end and state capital Thiruvananthapuram with its northern end of Kasaragod. The proposed 529 km-line, which aims to cover 11 districts, is believed to be one of the largest infrastructure initiatives of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government. However, activists say the project will uproot ecosystems and cause irreparable environmental damage along the path of the route.

the party stand, he would be in the party. It does not mean that Tharoor has distanced from the party," said Sudhakaran, also an MP from Kannur.

Last week, Sudhakaran sought an explanation from Tharoor after the Thiruvananthapuram MP did not sign a Congress petition —

addressed to Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw — against the corridor last week.

"Be it Tharoor or Sudhakaran, nobody has the right to reject the party stand. If a party takes a stand, all should stick to that," the Congress Kerala chief said.

Tharoor's reluctance to sign the petition and his tweet that "political differences should be set aside on some issues" created a furore within the state Congress last week.

Amidst criticism by senior Congress leaders, Tharoor also praised Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for his push for development in Kerala.

"Enjoyed discussing Kerala's development with CM @vijayanpinarayi. On some issues it is necessary to put political differences aside & get on with growth. The young people of our state deserve opportunities that the current economic situation does not offer them," he wrote on December 16.

This is not the first time that Tharoor has aired an opinion on investment and projects different to party line. Last year, he backed the move to privatise the international airport in Thiruvananthapuram after the Adani Group won the bid to run it.

# Maharashtra govt plans to hold Speaker election tomorrow, seeks Governor nod

VISHWAS WAGHMODE  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26



Bhagat Singh Koshyari

Friday decided to hold the Speaker's election on December 28, and this was communicated to the governor accordingly. The governor has to notify the election programme for the Speaker's post, after which the election will be held, sources said.

The Speaker's post fell vacant in February after the then Speaker Nana Patole resigned. Subsequently, Patole was appointed state president of the Congress.

"The programme for the election of the Speaker has been given with recommendation of the CM to the Governor. We met him requesting to announce the election programme tomorrow," said minister Balasaheb Thorat of the Congress. He was accompanied by Shiv Sena Minister Eknath Shinde and NCP's Chhagan Bhujbal.

Thorat also said the name for the Speaker's post has not been finalised yet. However, senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan has emerged as a frontrunner for the post. Another name doing the rounds is Sangram Thopate, sources said.

# BJD does not have boss in Delhi, will cut state poverty rate to 10% in 5 yrs: Naveen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BHUBANESWAR, DECEMBER 26



Naveen Patnaik

ASSERTING THAT the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) does not have a "boss in Delhi", Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday said his party would continue to work for people of the state, and pledged to reduce its poverty rate to 10 per cent in the next five years.

Addressing party workers and leaders on BJD's 25th foundation day, Patnaik, in a virtual address, said the party was ac-

countable to the people of Odisha, who have turned it into a social movement.

Attacking the state's two main opposition parties, the Congress and the BJP, the chief minister said, "We (BJD) don't have a boss in Delhi. Whatever we do is for the people of Odisha, who are our boss."

"Behind the success of BJD was the dream of the people for a pros-

perous and strong Odisha. The party will work for the next 100 years with the support of all residents of the state," the regional outfit's founding president said.

With BJD preparing for rural and urban elections early next year, Patnaik said the party has achieved success with the support of the people of Odisha.

"Born with the vision of the legendary Biju Patnaik, the BJD has now turned into a social movement. The party is a symbol of the trust and belief of 4.5 crore people of Odisha," he added.

**SALUTE THE SOLDIER**  
5041563K RfN DIL BHAUDR GURUNG  
27 DEC  
On this day 5041563K Rfn Dil Bahadur Gurung of 5/1 Gorkha Rifles made the supreme sacrifice during 'OP PAWAN', Srilanka in Dec 1987 in a true act of valour and courage. The brave soldier will always be remembered for his enthusiasm. To this brave heart we pledge that we shall always be guided by his immortal spirit and make his name proud.  
CO AND ALL RANKS, 5/1 GORKHA RIFLES

Ministry of Culture  
Government of India  
**Nehru Memorial Museum and Library**  
Cordially invites you to a Public Lecture on  
**The Making of India- Some Early Manifestations**  
By  
**Dr. Meenakshi Jain**  
Senior Fellow  
Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi  
Tuesday, 28 December 2021 at 3:00pm  
Venue:  
Seminar Room, Library Building  
Nehru Memorial Museum and Library  
Google Meet Link: <https://meet.google.com/dkj-pect-nwf>  
All are Welcome  
davp 09142/11/0021/2122

**BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-III, DELHI**  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Notice under section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rule 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules) 1993.  
In the matter of  
O.A. NO 302/2021  
DCB BANK LTD. Vs MAYOOR KUMAR AND ORS  
Applicant Defendants  
D-1 MAYOOR KUMAR AND ORS.  
D/W/S/O- H NO 9, ROAD NO 28, BLOCK T, DLF CITY PHASE III., Gurgaon, HARYANA -122001  
Also At. B 1/1, B BLOCK, RAM PRATAP BAGH, DELHI-110009  
Also At. 13, PASCHIM MARG, DLF PHASE-I, HARYANA 122001.  
Also At. 25/25, 110 4TH FLOOR, SHAKTI NAGAR, DELHI - 110009  
D-2 MANJU AGGARWAL  
HOUSE NO 9, ROAD NO 28, BLOCK T, DLF CITY PHASE III, HARYANA, GURGAON-122001  
Also At. B 1/1, B BLOCK, RAM PRATAP BAGH, DELHI-110009  
Also At. 13, PASCHIM MARG, DLF PHASE-I, HARYANA 122001.  
Also At. 25/25, 110 4TH FLOOR, SHAKTI NAGAR, DELHI - 110009  
D-3 M/S GIRDHAR TRADING COMPANY  
HOUSE NO 9, ROAD NO 28, BLOCK T, DLF CITY PHASE III, HARYANA, GURGAON-122001  
Also At. B 1/1, B BLOCK, RAM PRATAP BAGH, DELHI-110009  
Also At. 13, PASCHIM MARG, DLF PHASE-I, HARYANA 122001.  
Also At. 25/25, 110 4TH FLOOR, SHAKTI NAGAR, DELHI - 110009  
Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case 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 this Tribunal **08.02.2022 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 Cisco 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](http://drt.gov.in) under the Public Notice Head.  
(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph.No.23748469.  
Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this the 16th day of December 2021.  
BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL

Ministry of Power  
Government of India

**Powering the Progress of Himachal Pradesh**

Laying of  
Foundation Stones  
of  
**210 MW Luhri Stage-I Hydro Electric Project**  
(Shimla & Kullu)  
&  
**66 MW Dhaulasidh Hydro Electric Project**  
(Hamirpur & Kangra)

- Ensuring Uninterrupted Power Supply to Himachal Pradesh.
- Free Power to the State from Projects.
- Modern & Reliable Grid Support to benefit other States also.
- Agriculture, Tourism, Industries and other Sectors of Himachal to get a Boost.
- Strengthening the Rapid Socio-Economic Development of the State.
- New Employment Opportunities.
- Optimum Utilisation of Resources of Himachal for Development of the State.
- 100 Units for 10 years free to Project Impacted Families.

by  
**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister  
in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2021

August presence

**Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar**  
Governor of Himachal Pradesh

**Jai Ram Thakur**  
Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh

**R.K. Singh**  
Union Minister, Power and New & Renewable Energy

**Anurag Thakur**  
Union Minister, I&B, Youth Affairs and Sports

Programme will be streamed live on DD News.

# 8 EXPRESS NETWORK

## Mumbai records 922 new coronavirus cases, highest daily count since June 4

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

MUMBAI RECORDED 922 fresh Covid-19 cases on Sunday, registering the highest rise in daily cases since June 4 this year. The city recorded a 21 per cent increase in cases over Saturday, when 757 cases were registered.

Covid cases in the city have been rising at a fast pace over the last week. A total of 490 cases were reported on Wednesday, 602 on Thursday and 683 on Friday. As of Sunday the city has 4,295 active cases.

The daily case positivity rate has also gone up to 2.64 per cent, with BMC conducting 34,819 tests across the city. The positivity rate has been steadily increasing over the past few days. On Saturday, when the BMC conducted 42,427 tests, the positivity rate stood at 1.78 per cent. On Friday, with 40,742 tests, the positivity rate was 1.68 per cent.

According to the daily Covid report, 326 patients were recovered and discharged from hospital on Sunday.

Meanwhile, 1,648 fresh Covid cases were reported in Maharashtra and 918 patients discharged after recovery.

As per the state government's Covid-19 bulletin, Maharashtra reported 31 new cases of Omicron, of which 27 were from Mumbai, two from Thane, one each in Pune rural and Akola. With this, Maharashtra's Omicron case tally has reached 141.



Big crowds gathered near the Gateway of India in Mumbai on Sunday. Ganesh Shirsalkar

## Case count in Ahmednagar school rises to 51, declared containment zone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUNE, DECEMBER 26

THE NUMBER of coronavirus positive cases at the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district has gone up to 51, which includes 48 students, a health official said on Sunday.

Their samples are being sent for genome sequencing to know whether they are carrying the Omicron variant of coronavirus,

another official said.

A few days earlier, 19 students from the residential school in Parner tehsil had tested positive for the viral infection. The school has over 400 students across classes 5 to 12.

All the students and staff members were subjected to RT-PCR tests, Parner taluka health officer Dr Prakash Lalge told PTI.

"So far, 51 people, including 48 students and three staff members, from the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya have tested positive for

coronavirus. All of them have been isolated and hospitalised. Most of the students are asymptomatic and their health is stable," the official said.

Ahmednagar district collector Rajendra Bhosale said the school campus was declared a 'containment zone'. "I visited the school today. As a precautionary measure, we have deployed a medical team comprising a doctor and two nurses to monitor other students in the campus (in case they develop any symptoms)," he said.

## Night curfew in Karnataka for 10 days starting from Tuesday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 26

AMID FEARS of a rise in the number of Omicron cases, the Karnataka government has decided to impose a night curfew beginning Tuesday. The curfew will be imposed from 10 pm to 5 am every night for a period of 10 days.

State Health Minister K Sudhakar said the measures were taken after analysing the situation in other states and countries. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai headed a meeting on the issue, in which several ministers, officials, and Technical Advisory Committee members took part.

"The night curfew from December 28 will be between 10 pm to 5 am across Karnataka. There will be a complete ban on all kinds of New Year parties in public places. The hotels, restaurants, pubs and other spaces will be allowed to operate with 50 per cent occupancy," Sudhakar said.

The state government order said the restrictions for hotels, restaurants and pubs would be in effect between December 30 and January 2. All staff members of the said entities will be required to have a Covid-negative RT-PCR report and be fully vaccinated.

## Azad targets Centre, says J&K suffering after constitutional safeguards taken away

ARUN SHARMA  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

TARGETING PRIME Minister Narendra Modi over the abrogation of Article 370, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Sunday said at a rally in Khour in Jammu district: "Maharaja (Hari Singh) thought about things for the welfare of local people nearly 100 years ago, but today's 'maharaja' cannot think about the state which doesn't have enough land for people to do farming, or to construct a house in view of its vast terrains covered by mountains and forests."

Addressing the rally at Khour, which is along the Line of Control, Azad said that even for small jobs, applications were being called for from across the country. He asked how a person from far-off hilly and border areas of Jammu and Kashmir would be able to compete with those having studied in metropolitan cities elsewhere in the country.

"I feel sad about the person who created this thought in the government due to which people in both Jammu and Kashmir divisions are suffering," he said, adding that the government had taken away small stretches of land given to people under the Roshni Act and also the ones on which refugees from Pakistan in 1947 had been settled. This land is for the farmers,



Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad

the poor and the labourers, he said.

Reiterating his resolve to continue fighting for statehood to be restored to Jammu and Kashmir, Azad said: "I had never imagined that a state created by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846, and which was 101 years old in 1947, would be broken and made a Union Territory."

"It never happened in Indian history. While UTs had been upgraded into states, a state was never made a UT," he said, accusing the Central government of taking away "our rights", including constitutional safeguards available to the people with regard to land and jobs.

Without naming anyone, he also cautioned people against attempts being made by some to divide them. Whenever elections are round the corner, they create a divide in people, he said. However, "our party" always talks of democracy, secularism and uniting people, the Congress leader said.

## Himachal sees 1st Omicron case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA DECEMBER 26

HIMACHAL PRADESH on Sunday recorded its first Omicron case.

Confirming the positive case, special secretary (health) and Director of National Health Mission Hem Raj Wairva said that a 45-year-old woman from Mandi has tested positive for the variant. The patient had received both the doses of the vaccine.

She had returned from Canada on December 3 and had done a RT-PCR test on the 8th day (December 11). Her sample

was sent to Delhi for genome sequencing and a positive report was received from WSG laboratory on December 26.

However, the woman has recovered now, testing negative on December 24, he added. He said that three of her primary contacts have tested negative.

A government spokesperson said that 2,167 international passengers have arrived in the state since November 20, 2021. He said that 1,747 of them could take the RT-PCR test, whereas, the remaining 420 were either untraceable or have not completed 14 days of home isolation.

## 19 new Omicron cases in Kerala

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
DECEMBER 26

KERALA ON Sunday reported 19 new Omicron cases, taking the number of people infected with the variant — believed by scientists to be the most transmissible one in the pandemic yet — to 57 in the state.

Kerala Health Minister Veena George said people should remain on high alert as cases of the variant are on a rise.

"People coming from abroad should strictly follow Covid-19

protocol. Symptomatic persons should seek medical aid," she said in Thiruvananthapuram Sunday. Out of the 19 new cases reported on Sunday, three people were contacts of infected patients, and the remaining have international travel history, government officials said.

On December 9, a Covid-19 patient was found to be infected with the Omicron variant during random surveillance in Kannur, possibly hinting at a wider spread than what is known. The 51-year-old man was later established to be a contact of a Covid-19 patient, officials said.

Palakkad-based public health expert Dr N M Arun said the detection of Omicron variant during "sentinel surveillance" or random testing indicates that the variant is already among the people. "If we ramp up testing, more omicron cases would be detected. More such Omicron cases could be detected if testing is increased in the local community without travel history," he said.

According to scientists, the Omicron variant of Sars-CoV-2 — which causes Covid-19 — spreads faster than the Delta variant that led the devastating second wave in India.

## After Christmas prayers, church vandalised in Ambala

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 26

A STATUE of Jesus Christ was damaged allegedly by two suspects at the entrance gate of British-era historical Holy Redeemer Church in Ambala Cantonment in the early hours following Midnight Mass on Sunday.

According to Father Patras Mundu of Holy Redeemer Church, Redemptorists, Ambala, "The Church is centuries old, is of extremely historic value as it was established in 1840s. It is the first such incident of vandalism in this Church".

The district police have launched the investigations. "Two suspects were seen in the CCTV cameras footage who had trespassed into the Church prop-

erty in the early hours of Sunday, broke some lights and vandalised the statue, following the Christmas prayers," a senior police officer said.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the incident took place between 12.30 am and 1.40 am. The suspects stayed on the Church's premises for an hour.

As the incident came to light, a team of Ambala district police led by ASP Pooja Dabla, DSP (Ambala Cantt) Ram Kumar, Cantt police station incharge Anil Kumar and Crime Investigation Incharge reached the church, inspected the spot and initiated investigations.

A FIR was registered at Ambala Cantt police station, against two unidentified suspects on charges of hurting religious sentiments and for desecrating statue of Jesus, trespassing and mischief.

## 24 migrant workers arrested for attack on police in Kochi

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
DECEMBER 26

TWENTY-FOUR MIGRANT workers were arrested on Sunday after they attacked a police team, which went to contain a clash that erupted among the workers during Christmas celebrations in Kochi, police said.

The incident took place at the labour camp of KiteX garments located in Kizhakkambalam area on Saturday night, police said.

"Of the arrested, 18 were made accused in attempt to murder case registered in connection with the attack on police and six others for case related to destroying police vehicles. More arrests would be made after ascertaining the involvement of other workers in the camp," Ernakulam ru-



Remains of a police vehicle after the clashes, in Kochi. PTI

ral SP K Karthik said.

Earlier in the day, police said it took 150-odd workers into custody to identify who attacked officers and torched police vehicles Saturday night. An inspector was among five policemen who were injured. The seriously injured were hospitalised, Karthik said.

KiteX Group managing director, Sabu M Jacob said that the

labour camp has 1,200 migrant workers. "The workers from Nagaland and Manipur conducted a Christmas carol on Saturday night at the camp. As it was late at night, another section of workers questioned the event, leading to a clash among the workers. The incident is unprecedented at the camp. They might have gone on a rampage under the influence of

drugs or liquor," Jacob said.

He said the security at the camp could not control the situation as the workers targeted them as well, so later police was called in. However, the workers attacked the police as well, Jacob said.

Kerala Labour Minister V Sivankutty said apart from the police, the Labour department would also probe into the incident. "What we realise is that workers rioted during the Christmas celebrations. The district labour officer has begun the probe. It is a stray incident and things are under control," he said.

Meanwhile, the CPI(M) and Congress blamed KiteX for the violence. Notably, KiteX has been ruling Kizhakkambalam village panchayat since 2015 after fielding candidates under the banner of its charitable organisation Twenty20. It did so after defeat-

ing both CPI(M) and Congress.

Local CPI(M) legislator P V Sreenjin said the company management cannot evade responsibility for the incident. "It must be checked if any lethal weapons are stocked at the labour camp. When the [state] government acted upon the complaints from local people against the workers, KiteX tried to raise a hue and cry saying that the government is harassing investors and hence, the officials had to recoil from the inspections at the company," he said. He was referring to the inspections several state departments conducted at the KiteX premises in Sept. The company later shifted its proposed apparel park to Telangana, alleging that Kerala is not investor-friendly.

Congress leader and MP Benny Behanan also said the "role of Twenty20 in the violence should be looked into".

## Christmas celebration disrupted in Silchar

TORA AGARWALA  
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 26

A CHRISTMAS celebration organised in Silchar in Assam's Barak Valley was disrupted Saturday evening by a group of young men, who claimed to be Bajrang Dal activists, authorities said. The group, however, denied any involvement with the incident.

On Saturday evening, a Christmas event was underway in an open field in the heart of Silchar town in Cachar district. "A lot of people were present — not just Christians, but people from other religious communities as well. A few Hindu men went there around 8 pm, and asked the Hindus present to refrain from participating in the celebrations. They said they should not engage in celebrating festivals of other religions," said Cachar SP Raman Dhillon.

In a video clip purportedly of the incident, that has gone viral on social media, a youth is seen saying that they have no problems with Christian celebrating Christmas, but they did not approve of Hindus doing so. "Today is Tulsii Diwas... but everyone is lighting candles and saying 'Merry Christmas'... that has hurt the sentiments," he says.

Police said there was no damage to property nor any injuries. Dhillon said the group claimed to be from Bajrang Dal. "However, members of the outfit have denied that," she said. While no formal complaint has been filed, Dhillon said police would act "as per law". Mithun Das, Bajrang Dal's Sangathan Sampadkar of Cachar and Dima Hasao, said nobody from the group was involved in the incident.

## Phishing attacks on Central ministry officials get sharper, targeted

ANISHA DUTTA  
& ASHISH ARYAN  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

IN THE course of a recent phishing attack, several employees of various central ministries received mysterious emails including one from a government domain email address (nic.in) claiming an "internal hand" in General Bipin Rawat's death. This is part of phishing attempts against central government officials through some compromised government domain email IDs (gov.in and nic.in), which are increasingly getting more targeted and sophisticated, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) runs the official email service, handing out email accounts to departments, ministries and public sector units of the central and state governments.

This latest round of cyber attempts was launched earlier this month following the deaths of Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat and 11 others in the crash of an Indian Air Force helicopter near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on December 8. Group Captain Varun Singh who was also aboard the helicopter succumbed to his injuries on December 15.

The phishing email with the subject, "Internal report: Gen Bipin Rawat's incident-inside job", reviewed by *The Indian Express*, was sent to employees of a ministry department through a malicious email ID with the domain name nic.in. It asks the recipients to click a phishing link that claimed to be an internal report.

Another cyber attack bid was made through a compromised gov.in email ID targeting the central government employees in October soon after Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's September visit to the US. This email, also reviewed by *The Indian Express*, was sent with the subject, "Viral Video PM Narendra Modi slapped in USA Visit", attempting to lure the recipients into clicking a link. Soon afterwards, the NIC unit of the ministry concerned issued a security alert, telling users not to open and click on the phishing emails from at least five such compromised email IDs.

Sources within the NIC and the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) confirmed that the breaches in the servers were "discovered" last year, but insisted that it had now been "fixed", and that the "situation was now under control".

"The control of a server and mailing capacities went beyond our control sometime last year for a short time but was brought back immediately. It is impossible to gauge if it has been completely

fixed. To control all such compromised emails, we will have to do a forensic audit which will require the server to be restarted. A clean slate will take no activities for one week, which is not possible," a senior ministry official said.

The cyber attempts were first reported earlier this year in February when several senior gov officials, including from the external affairs and defence ministries, were targeted in a phishing campaign with the attackers using compromised government domain email IDs (@gov.in and nic.in) to launch their hacking attempts. The above two ministries then sent out alerts to their employees, warning about the use of two specific email addresses that belong to the official nic.in and gov.in domains run by the NIC.

One such attack via a compromised @gov.in email address targeted a group of 43 former officers of the army, navy and air

force, who were part of the 56th course of the National Defence Academy (NDA), in February. Significantly, this is the same NDA batch to which all the current service chiefs belong to. The sender of this phishing email sought to lure the targeted officers into clicking on a purported invitation for a dinner, which would lead to a set of malware.

In another such cyber attack that seemed more sophisticated, an email using compromised government accounts targeted groups of officials, attempting to lure them into sharing their passwords on a page that mirrored the government's official mail servers sign-on website — an attack that could let the attackers gain access to sensitive credentials and files. The attack prompted the IT department to send out another alert the following day to groups of officials.

In the wake of a string of targeted phishing attacks on offi-

cial via compromised government domain accounts, the NIC said it was planning to bring in security measures including multi-factor authentication for at least 3 lakh officials.

Sources in the NIC said it suspected several such government email addresses to have been sold on the "Dark Web".

A senior IT ministry official did not rule out the possibility of "nation states" being involved in such targeted attempts. According to the official, an initial internal probe following the breach discovered the role of "specific countries" with capacity to carry out such attacks.

"When such attempts occur, it cannot be done by an individual actor, since it takes a lot of time and effort. Our investigations at this time are not complete yet," the official said requesting anonymity.

Detailed questionnaires sent to the NIC and MeitY seeking details about these phishing attacks on

central officials through compromised government domain IDs, their scale and damages caused by them did not yield any response so far. The NIC and the MeitY also did not respond to specific queries on whether they were aware of such phishing attempts.

As part of its plan to track and control phishing attempts, the IT ministry official said, the NIC had taken back administrative controls from nearly all teams engaged with different ministries. Any approvals for creation of new email IDs or any changes to the server are thus done now only at the "headquarters", the official said.

Earlier this month, Minister of State for IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar had said the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team observed and reported a total of 11.5 lakh and 12.1 lakh cybersecurity incidents during 2020 and 2021 respectively. **FULL REPORT ON** [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

# Stories on marginalisation win Uncovering India Invisible category

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

GOVERNMENT POLICIES are meant to help citizens, not victimise them. But as the Ramnath Goenka Award winners have shown, seemingly corrective and empowering measures not only ended up marginalising the poor, they made their suffering invisible.

In the Uncovering India Invisible category, Shiv Sahay Singh of *The Hindu* is the winner from print media, while Tridip K Mandal of *The Quint*, is the broadcast media winner.

Singh's story, 'Death by Digital Exclusion', exposed how the Jharkhand government's insistence on digitisation deprived people living on the margins of the benefits of the public distribution system (PDS).



In an attempt to plug leakages in the PDS, the state government had decided that all ration cards



Shiv Sahay Singh

should be linked to Aadhaar. Beneficiaries, who could not link their ration card with Aadhaar or had no Aadhaar cards, were denied ration. This led to major distress among tribal communities. While there were reports of deaths due to malnutrition, the state government not only denied them, it also did not attempt to



Tridip K Mandal

bring the families that had alleged malnutrition deaths into the PDS. "I did not know the terrain of Jharkhand, which was both an advantage and a disadvantage. But I could look at everything with a fresh pair of eyes. Getting the marginalised people to talk was a challenge," said Singh. The story involved detailed

fieldwork, visits to several districts where the denial of PDS benefits came to the fore and tallying versions from both right-to-food activists and the state government.

Mandal's story, 'Diaries From The Detention Camps Of Assam', tracked the plight of those who had wrongly been confined in detention camps for years on the assumption that they were illegal immigrants. The story was shot in September 2019, soon after the final list of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was announced. It had left out more than 19 lakh people who had till then been citizens based on their earlier documents. Mandal met Ravi Dey, who was released after four years but lost his hearing ability. Aataf Ali and Habibur Rehman had done their time in the detention camp but could not walk free because their families were too poor to arrange the ba-

sic guarantees for their release.

The third story was of 10-year-old Sawata Dey, whose father Subrata Dey, died in a detention camp two months after he was picked up in 2018 for a name mismatch in his voter ID card. Sawata refused to see the body, and her story struck a chord with the audience across the world. They reached out to *The Quint* and contributions for her poured in. Sawata has since joined a new school, and resumed her dance classes.

"The biggest challenge for me was to find stories that belong to both communities, Muslims and Hindus. The general narrative is that it is just Muslims in detention camps but that is not the case. Another challenge was finding the detention camps. The government has been denying their exist, so it was difficult to find them," Mandal said.

## CHHATTISGARH DHARAM SANSAD

# Religious leader praises Godse; FIR registered

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
RAIPUR, DECEMBER 26

AROUND 20 religious leaders participated in a two-day 'Dharam Sansad' in Chhattisgarh's Raipur this weekend, with some making speeches asking "Sanatani Hindus" to arm themselves and one of them also hailing Nathuram Godse for killing Mahatma Gandhi. Later on Sunday evening, an FIR was lodged against 'Sant' Kalicharan who made the statements against Gandhi.

At the two-day 'Dharam Sansad', more than 20 religious leaders from across the state and the country gathered. In speeches, the leaders urged "Sanatani Hindus" to arm themselves and "be prepared" for the establishment of Hindu Rashtra.

'Sant' Kalicharan, a religious leader from Maharashtra, made derogatory statements against Gandhi and accused minorities of trying to control the politics and administration of various countries.

After he made the statements, the convenor of the sansad, Mahant Ram Sundar Das, the head of Doodhadhari Math, registered strong protest and distanced himself from the sansad, claiming that it was not fruitful. Late on Sunday night, an FIR was registered against Kalicharan under IPC sections 505(2) and 294.

The event, organised by NGO Neelkanth Seva Samiti and the Doodhadhari Math, was attended by Congress leader Pramod Dubey and BJP leaders Brijmohan Agrawal and Vishnu Deo Sai. Swamy Prabhodanand Giri, who had earlier made statements at the controversial 'Dharam Sansad' in Haridwar, also attended the event.

He said, "I have no qualms in repeating what I said in Haridwar and even before that. These secular people are all anti-Hindu, their stomachs hurt even when someone talk about Hinduism." 'Sant' Triveni Das, a religious leader from the state, was one of the many who asked all Hindus to arm themselves to defend the 'Hindu Rashtra'.

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जनजातीय सम्मान - राशन हर ग्राम  
मध्यप्रदेश में जनजातीय परिवारों को मिलेगा घर बैठे राशन

## BRIEFLY

**TELANGANA**  
CRPF head constable kills Si; injures self

**Hyderabad:** A CRPF Sub Inspector was killed on Sunday after his colleague, a head constable, opened fire at him in Telangana's Mulugu district, a senior police official said. "This happened in the CRPF camp where one head constable fired upon an SI of CRPF. The SI died and the head constable is critical as he fired on himself. He tried to kill himself. The injured has been shifted to hospital," Mulugu SP, Sangram Singh told PTI. The official further said the deceased was identified as Umesh Chandra and the injured as Stephen. PTI

**ODISHA**  
Goods train mows down two elephants

**Bhubaneswar:** Two elephants were mowed down by a goods train in Odisha's Khurda district, a forest officer said on Sunday. A four-year-old tusker died on the spot, while a 10-year-old female pachyderm succumbed to the injuries inside a forest close to the railway line near Bhusandpur station at Tangi on Saturday night, he said. The incident took place when a herd of eight elephants was crossing the railway tracks and heading towards farmlands in search of food. Both the forest department and the Railways have launched separate probes into the incident. PTI

**GUJARAT**  
Farmer killed in 'bee attack' in Rajkot district

**Rajkot:** A 69-year-old farmer of Vachhra village in Gondal taluka of Gujarat's Rajkot district died after being attacked by a swarm of honey bees on his agricultural farm, Gondal taluka police said on Sunday. Police said that the incident took place on December 22 when a raptor swooped down on an beehive. The agitated bees attacked children playing on the farm of Damjibhai Sorathiya who tried to push children to safety in a godown, while he was stung by scores of bees. Sorathiya was rushed to a private hospital and from there to a government hospital where he died, police said. ENS

# FIR against UP constable after woman alleges rape

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

AN FIR has been registered in Moradabad against a 31-year-old police constable after a 28-year-old woman complained that the accused had sexually assaulted her for the past two years, and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the matter to anyone.

As per the woman, the constable first raped her at gunpoint when he visited her home two years ago on the pretext of ques-

tioning her in connection with a complaint of kidnapping and rape that she had filed against a youth.

Police said the woman has claimed that she did not file a complaint at the time because the constable promised to marry her. He had allegedly gone on to rape her over the last two years.

"Last week, the victim came to know that the accused is married and has a son. The victim claims that when she confronted the constable, he threatened," police said.

The woman met senior police officers, following which an FIR

was registered on Saturday.

"We will have the statement of the victim recorded before a magistrate tomorrow. The accused constable has been transferred to Ballia from Moradabad recently," police said on Sunday.

According to police, the woman had lodged a complaint of rape against another man in 2019, who she claimed had faked his identity and kidnapped her. Police had arrested this man and filed a charge sheet against him.

The woman said the accused had contacted her a few days af-

ter she had filed the complaint, claiming that he was with the intelligence wing of UP Police. He allegedly took her phone number, called her and visited her on the pretext of collecting information.

"Victim claims that in December 2019 the constable came to her residence when she was alone. He raped her after threatening her with a pistol. He stayed the night at the victim's home, and promised to marry her the next morning. According to the woman, the constable told her that he is unmarried," police said.

# Bring converts back to Hinduism, says Tejasvi Surya

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 26

KARNATAKA BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Sunday said Muslims or Christians, who have undergone religious conversion, should be brought back into the fold of Hinduism. He added that all mutts and temples should have "annual targets" for the completion of such religious reconversions.

"There are people who belonged to Hinduism, but were converted to Islam or Christianity. It is our duty to bring them back into the fold of Hinduism. Also, Hindus in Pakistan who were converted to Islam should be brought back into the fold," the BJP MP, who is also the Yuva Morcha national president, said at a valedictory event at Sri Krishna Mutt.

He added, "All the mutts and temples should have annual targets to bring back people to Hindu religion."

Surya's statements come at a time when the state has witnessed massive protests over the Karnataka Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021, commonly referred to as the anti-conversion Bill, which has been passed in the Assembly. The bill prohibits conversion from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, fraud, allurement or marriage.

"Our own brothers have converted from Hindu religion which is tolerant, scientific, progressive and forward-looking. It is our responsibility to bring them back," Surya added.

During the anti-CAA protests, Surya had courted controversy saying that only the "uneducated, illiterate were protesting against the Act."

Surya further added that there was a time when people thought abrogation of Article 370 and construction of Ram Mandir were impossible but these are realities today.

# Rahul to start 2022 campaign with Moga rally

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUDHIANA, DECEMBER 26

THE Congress will launch its campaign for forthcoming Punjab polls next year with a mega rally to be addressed by AICC leader Rahul Gandhi in Moga district on January 3.

The rally is expected to be held at Moga's Killi Chahlan village for which the local Congress leadership has already started the preparations. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Cabinet minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu said that the rally is tentatively scheduled for January 3. "Since Moga district is the centre point of Punjab, campaign will be started from here. The village Killi Chahlan has locational advantage. It is easily approachable from Majha, Malwa and Doaba so we will be holding first rally in this village," he said.

Notably, in 2019 also Rahul Gandhi had started Congress campaign for Punjab for Lok Sabha polls from Killi Chahlan with a rally.

Recently, Shiromani Akali Dal also held its 100-year celebration rally at this venue. Moga MLA Dr Harjot Kamal said, "A large chunk of land which is required to make adequate arrangements for the rally is always available easily at Killi Chahlan. So the same venue has been selected again. We are expecting gathering to be at least one lakh."

## MADHYA PRADESH

# Violence after VHP rally: 30 booked, 12 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BHOPLAL, DECEMBER 26

THE MADHYA Pradesh police have booked 30 people and demolished a three-storey building of a Muslim man in Manawar in Dhar district after incidents of violence erupted in the town, which were allegedly triggered by rumours of communal clashes in the aftermath of a "Shourya" yatra taken out by Hindu right-wing organisations on December 23.

All the 30 people booked by the Dhar police belong to the Muslim community. At least 12 of them have been arrested so far. Dhar is known to be a commu-



People gather after a boiler explosion at a factory in Muzaffarpur on Sunday. PTI

# Boiler blast in noodles factory kills 7 workers in Muzaffarpur

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PATNA, DECEMBER 26

SEVEN WORKERS were killed and at least half a dozen were injured when the boiler of a noodles factory exploded on Sunday morning in Bihar's Muzaffarpur. The reason of the explosion is yet to be ascertained, officials said.

Muzaffarpur sub-divisional office, East, Gyan Prakash confirmed seven deaths. The injured were admitted to the SKMCH referral hospital where their condi-

tion is said to be critical.

The incident took place around 10 AM when the workers had just gathered at the factory, Anshul Confectionery, in Bela Phase-II, an industrial area that is dotted with small flour and rice mills units and several noodles factories. The sound of the explosion was so deafening that it was heard far and wide and the rooftops of many other buildings in the area including a beaten rice mill and a flour mill were blown away by the impact which reduced the factory to rubble.

Patna chief boiler inspector KP Singh said, "We are trying to ascertain the reason of the boiler explosion. There could be maintenance issue or some technical problem."

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced compensation of Rs 4 lakh each to next of the kin of the victims and ordered a probe.

A press note issued by the Information and Public Relations department said: "The CM has ordered a probe into the issue... Accountability will be fixed."

manage the rally crowd using force, which sparked rumours of communal clashes in the area.

Babbar denied use of lathicharge or force by the police. Additional SP, Dhar, Dheeraj Patidar, said the accused indulged in unprovoked stone-pelting on vehicles parked on the streets and hurt people, including women, in another part of the town, even as the yatra concluded peacefully.

"The FIRs have been registered and arrests have been made on the basis of video footages," Patidar said. On Saturday, Dhar district administration demolished a three-storey house belonging to Khalil Khatri, in which 3 of the accused lived.

# Haridwar hate speech case: Police add two more names to FIR

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
DEHRADUN, DECEMBER 26

THE UTTARAKHAND police added the names of two more accused in the FIR registered in connection with a three-day 'Dharam Sansad' held in Haridwar, during which a series of hate speeches were made targeting minorities.

The FIR was registered on the complaint of one Gulbahar Khan under section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups and acts prejudicial to harmony) of the IPC. Initially, the FIR only named former Shia Waqf Board chairman Waseem Rizvi, who had recently converted to Hinduism and changed

his name to Jitendra Narayan Tyagi. On Saturday night, the names of Dharamdas Maharaj, who is from Bihar, and Annapurna Maa, the Mahamandleshwar of Niranjani Akhada, were also added.

The speeches made during the event, which was held from December 17 to 19, became public last Wednesday, following which the FIR was registered.

Talking to *The Indian Express*, Haridwar Kotwali police station SHO Rakendra Singh said that so far three persons including Tyagi, Dharamdas and Annapurna Maa have been named in connection with the hate speech case. "More names will be added as the investigation follows," he said.

# Lawyers urge CJI to take suo motu cognizance of Delhi, Haridwar hate speeches

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

A GROUP of lawyers Sunday submitted a representation to the Chief Justice of India NV Ramana urging him to take suo motu cognizance of "hate speeches calling for the genocide of Muslims given at" two events in Delhi and Haridwar.

In the letter, the lawyers said that "between the 17th & 19th of December 2021 at two separate events organized in Delhi (by the Hindu Yuva Vahini) and Haridwar (by Yati Narsinghanand), hate speeches consisting of open calls for genocide of Muslims in order to achieve ethnic cleansing, were made by" Yati Narsinghanand and eight others.

A three-day 'Dharam Sansad' was held in Haridwar from December 17 to 19 which saw a

series of hate speeches targeting Muslims. The Uttarakhand Police has filed an FIR under Section 153A — promoting enmity between different groups and acts prejudicial to harmony — in connection with the incident against three people.

Initially, the FIR only named former Shia Waqf Board chairman Waseem Rizvi, who had recently converted to Hinduism and changed his name to Jitendra Narayan Tyagi. On Saturday, the names of two others was also added.

The lawyers said the speeches "are not mere hate speeches but amount to an open call for murder of an entire community." It urged the CJI to take suo-moto cognizance of the same due to the "gravity" of the situation. The lawyers includes senior advocates Dushyant Dave, Salman Khurshid, and Prashant Bhushan.

# SDPI leader's murder revenge for RSS worker's killing: Police BJP delegation meets Kerala Governor, say probe partial

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DECEMBER 26

POLICE ON Sunday said that the murder of Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) state secretary K S Shan in Alappuzha on December 18 was a revenge to the murder of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) worker, Nandu Krishna, earlier this year.

Submitting the remand report in a local court in Alappuzha, police said there was conspiracy behind the killing of the SDPI leader and it was a retaliation for the killing of Nandu

Krishna in February allegedly by SDPI men. The report said that the RSS cadres also helped the gang which attacked Shan, to find a hideout after the crime.

Police have arrested 14 persons, including a five-member gang which hacked the SDPI leader to death, in connection with the case. All those arrested are related to the RSS, police said.

Hours after Shan's killing, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Other Backward Castes (OBCs) Morcha state secretary Ranjith Sreenivas was also hacked to death in Alappuzha.

Meanwhile, a BJP delegation on Sunday met Governor Arif Mohammed Khan alleging that

police are probing the death of the BJP leader in a partial manner. Police are openly discriminating against BJP-RSS workers, said the petition submitted by the the delegation to the governor. As many as 22 BJP-RSS workers were killed by rivals during the Pinarayi Vijayan regime, however, the conspiracy behind the killings was not unearthed, the petition added.

Police are yet to arrest the persons directly involved in Ranjith's murder. However, five SDPI workers, who had abetted the crime by ensuring logistic support, have been arrested in connection with the case, police had said.



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## THE NEXT STEPS

Decisions on booster shots, vaccinating 15 to 18-year-olds, are welcome. Regulator's doubts must be cleared urgently

INDIA WILL BEGIN 2022 with a new phase of Covid inoculation. On December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that vaccination for children in the age group of 15-18 years will begin from January 3. Booster doses — PM Modi described them as precautionary shots — will be administered to healthcare professionals, frontline workers, and senior citizens with co-morbidities from January 10. While the decision on vaccines for children has been on the cards for about two months, the emergence of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus seems to have lent greater urgency to the government's efforts to introduce booster shots. ICMR's real-time tracker shows that breakthrough infections are less than 2 per cent in the general population and around 7 per cent in frontline workers. However, studies point to waning immunity after eight to nine months of receiving the second shot. And Omicron appears to have made the case for boosters even stronger with preliminary data indicating that the variant has evaded vaccine-induced immunity in 50 per cent of those it has infected in India. The highly contagious nature of the variant also increases the risk of infection in the unvaccinated younger population. The decision to broaden the ambit of the inoculation project is, therefore, welcome.

A large section of experts believes that a mix-and-match approach to vaccination is better for shoring up immunity compared to an additional jab of the vaccine administered in the primary phase of inoculation. In India, too, there is preliminary consensus that booster recipients shouldn't receive a third dose of Covishield or Covaxin. The country is well placed to meet this challenge. The government has made advance payments to the Hyderabad-based Biological E to reserve 30 crore doses of the Corbevax vaccine. The job that teaches the immune system to make antibodies using spike proteins has been heralded as a stronger shield against variants such as Omicron compared to viral vector vaccines such as Covishield and Covaxin. Covovax, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India under licence from the US-based Novovax, also uses a protein-based platform. Though these vaccines take more time to develop, they are more affordable, and their production is easier to scale up. The SII-manufactured vaccine has already received an Emergency Use Approval from regulatory authorities in Southeast Asia and the WHO. The Drugs Controller General of India has, reportedly, asked the Pune-based company for more data over its EUA application for Covovax. The regulator's doubts must be cleared urgently to enable a decision on the most effective booster.

In October, the DCGI gave an EUA to Zyduz Cadila's vaccine for children above the age of 12. On December 25, a few hours before the PM's speech, the regulator approved the use of Bharat-Biotech's Covaxin for the young population. But the Hyderabad-based company's performance during the inoculation project for adults — it complained of production constraints several times in the past six months — should be a cause of concern. There is no time to lose in sorting out such sticky matters.

## THE UKRAINE FRONT

Current military tensions are symptom of structural conflict. India will benefit from reconciliation between two sides

A CRISIS IN the heart of Europe may look distant to India, but South Block must track the dangerous developments in Ukraine that promise to end either in a full-blown military confrontation between Russia and the West or a long-overdue mutual political accommodation. Either turn would have big consequences not only for India's relations with the US, the European Union, Russia, and China, but also the larger dynamic of Asian geopolitics. The crisis has boiled over in recent days with the massive Russian military mobilisation on the border with Ukraine. Moscow says it is merely responding to provocations from the West. But the current military tensions are a symptom of a deeper structural conflict in Europe.

Moscow has never really reconciled itself to the break-up of the Soviet Union, but the loss of Ukraine and Belarus is especially painful. Moscow wants to reconstitute the former Soviet Republics into a Russian sphere of influence. Meanwhile, the US and the EU have sought to draw the former Soviet republics into the western orbit. The western pull was reinforced by the eager push of many sections of the newly independent republics to join the EU and NATO. These trends came into conflict in Ukraine during 2013-14 when Kiev sought to defect to the EU, and Russian forces annexed Crimea, supported an insurgency in eastern Ukraine, while the West sanctioned Moscow, and promised to absorb Ukraine into NATO. Since then Ukraine has been at the centre of Russia's conflict with the West. If Washington and Brussels seemed insensitive to Russian security concerns, Moscow deepened its strategic partnership with Beijing to counter the West across multiple theatres.

The good news is that US President Joe Biden, focused on the China threat, is ready to take a fresh political look at Russia. Putin, in turn, sees the value of ending Russia's prolonged confrontation with the West. He has proposed a series of agreements that would keep Ukraine out of NATO and limit NATO's military activities. While calling many of Putin's terms for peace unreasonable, the West has agreed to start talks with Russia and raise its own concerns about Moscow's destabilisation of Europe. The bad news, however, is that agreements will be hard to negotiate, given the deep political divisions within the US and Europe and between them on the Russian question. India will benefit from a reconciliation between the two sides. South Block hopes that a Russia at peace with the West in Europe will be less inclined to back China's quest for Asian hegemony. If Moscow is poised to maximise its new-found leverage in the Sino-American rivalry, Delhi will hope that Putin will not be tempted to overplay his hand.

## FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



## Putting up a harder fight

Increase in ambit of vaccination, administration of third shots, will extend the protective cordon



K SRINATH REDDY

AN UNHERALDED ANNOUNCEMENT by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on December 25, ended the suspense on when additional Covid vaccine shots would be provided to individuals at high risk of either age-related severe disease or repetitive occupational exposure to high viral loads. These groups would be eligible for "protective" third shots from January 10, 2022. This terminology serves two purposes. It is scientifically accurate to describe the first dose as the primer and the second dose as the booster. All additional doses are immunity enhancement doses that augment protection. Avoidance of the term "booster" also signals that previously administered vaccines still carry some protection. It also reassures those who are not eligible to receive the third dose as they are deemed to be at low risk.

To extend the protective cordon further, children in the 15-18 year age group will be eligible to get vaccinated from January 3, 2022 through a full vaccination schedule. Though it has been generally observed all over the world that infected children mostly experience mild illness, a high incidence of infection in the highly mobile age group may make some of them quite sick or predisposed to long-term complications. The move to provide vaccine protection to older children will comfort their parents and teachers. Coincidentally, regulators have now approved the use of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin in the 12-18 age group. It joins Zyduz Cadila's DNA vaccine (ZyCoV-D) as an approved paediatric vaccine.

The much-awaited announcement on permitting third doses comes as a relief to many elderly persons and frontline health workers who have been anxiously weighing the risks posed by a rapidly spreading new variant — Omicron. They are concerned that the immunity they acquired in the first half of 2021 is unlikely to be protective this time against Omicron or even Delta which is still around. Accumulating global data and available sparse Indian data on breakthrough infections and re-infections align with the conclusion that Omicron has a high propensity for immune escape. Comfortingly, global data also reveal that third dose "boosters" will

largely restrict Omicron and Delta infections to mild clinical illness which does not require hospitalisation or result in death.

Though the decision to expand vaccination coverage has been widely welcomed, some issues require clarification. Those guidelines may be provided by the government in the coming days. The questions pertain to the mode of ascertainment of eligibility for the elderly, the choice of vaccine for the third dose and the procedure for registration and certification.

The eligibility of frontline healthcare workers can be easily ascertained, as was done in the first half of 2021. Eligibility criteria for the elderly now come with a qualifier that a doctor must advise a third dose on the grounds of a "comorbidity" being diagnosed. Earlier, age alone was the criterion for registering an elderly person, aged 60 years or above, for Covid vaccination. Neither a documentary proof of comorbidity nor a physician's referral was needed. Will anyone above 60 years be able to register even now, without a formal document attesting co-morbidity? I hope so. If such proof is required, it may place poor people without ready access to a doctor at a disadvantage, especially in rural areas. In any case, there is a high prevalence of comorbidities in the 60+ age group. That justifies the presumption of the presence of a co-morbidity in any person aged 60 years or older. The COWIN app will probably be upgraded to provide the pathway for freshly eligible older adults and children.

There is another group that needs to be considered as a priority group for administering the protective dose. These are persons of any age who are immunocompromised. They have low immunity due to a disease that makes them immunodeficient or are receiving therapies that suppress their immunity. Two doses of the vaccines are likely to elicit a weak or short-lasting immune response in such persons. Additional vaccine doses may raise their immunity levels, to be protective against severe Covid. Perhaps revised guidelines from the government will explicitly describe the eligibility criteria for these groups.

There is another group that needs to be considered as a priority group for administering the protective dose. These are persons of any age who are immunocompromised. They have low immunity due to a disease that makes them immunodeficient or are receiving therapies that suppress their immunity. Two doses of the vaccines are likely to elicit a weak or short-lasting immune response in such persons. Additional vaccine doses may raise their immunity levels, to be protective against severe Covid. Perhaps revised guidelines from the government will explicitly describe the eligibility criteria for these groups.

Presently, only two vaccines are widely available in our vaccination programme. Will there be more soon? This question is pertinent because global experience suggests that a "heterologous" booster (a vaccine different from the previous two doses) is better than a "homologous" repeat of the same vaccine. There is conflicting evidence from studies about how effective a third dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine is against Omicron. We do not yet have national data on boosters. However, an accidental crossover in a small number of persons in Uttar Pradesh produced some evidence that a relay vaccination of Covishield and Covaxin resulted in a high immune response.

Decisions related to heterologous and homologous vaccines will await government guidelines. Even if left to a physician's judgement, the supply chain situation will guide the selection of the third dose. If more varieties of vaccines are available, the choice of a heterologous third dose will be easier. In that context, the arrival of the subunit protein vaccines will be eagerly awaited, even as nasally administered mucosal vaccines are being trialled.

Restricting eligibility for the third dose to high risk groups of adults and older children at this stage is a wise decision for two reasons. The supply chain of vaccines is still not wide enough to immediately cover all adults and all children through the expanded programme. Even as production volumes are rising, India has to meet international obligations as well. Further, our vaccination teams cannot focus exclusively on Covid vaccination. Routine immunisation of children and pregnant women should not be neglected, as it is a high public health priority that lost ground in the initial stages of the pandemic. Extension of the protective doses to other adults and coverage of younger children can be implemented later when our domestic supplies of Covid vaccines are more abundant and vaccination teams can take up the full range of vaccinations.

The writer, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is President, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). The views expressed are personal



SHIKHA AGGARWAL

XI JINPING CONTINUES to remain the most addictive enigma in international political discourse. He has delivered on his next act with the downfall of China's former Justice Minister, Fu Zhenghua due to corruption charges. Since Fu played a pivotal role in bringing down Xi's first "tiger", Zhou Yongkang, his fall signals the beginning of Xi's plans to cover up his tracks ahead of the 20th Party Congress. Therefore, this event heralds the second phase in Xi's mission to dominate the political-security (zhengfa) apparatus of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The first part of this meticulously crafted orchestra began with the fall of China's former security tsar, Zhou Yongkang, and served as a prelude to Xi's long-drawn venture to cut off his umbilical cord with his political cradle, the Shanghai clique. Xi's choice of the anti-corruption campaign as his primary weapon is itself laden with significant strategic nuances. As the CCP had for long recognised corruption as an existential threat, adopting an unbridled anti-corruption programme at the core of his governance model allowed Xi to garner support from the party elders for his initial actions. In fact, by 2013 Xi wasn't yet powerful enough to have taken on Zhou without the blessings of the party elders.

Similarly, the political-legal apparatus has been singled out as the most prominent and sustained battlefield as this arm of the party has direct bearing on the "political security" of the CCP regime. Moreover, the Zhengfa system is the one where the influence of Zhou Yongkang was the most pronounced. From 2007-2012, Zhou represented the

## SAGA OF FALLEN POWER CENTRES

In China, road to 20th Party Congress is marked by factional betrayals

Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLAC) — the apex body of the Zhengfa system on the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). Before that, he was a politburo member between 2002-2007 and simultaneously served as the Minister of Public Security. As such, Zhou sat at the triumvirate of three powerful positions within the party, the party's security apparatus, and the state security machinery. In fact, barring Hua Guofeng and Wang Fang, no other Minister of Public Security had by far held concurrent positions within the Party's organisational set-up. This allowed Zhou to entrench his proteges within the Zhengfa system. Since the beginning of the anti-corruption campaign, at least three of his proteges serving as the vice ministers of public security have come under the corruption net. These include Luo Lijun, Meng Hongwei, and Li Dongsheng.

Zhou's penetration within China's political-legal apparatus could well have been one of the primary reasons behind Jiang Zemin's approval of Xi Jinping's actions against Zhou. As an astute politician, Jiang well understood the importance of retaining control over the Zhengfa system in a country undergoing rapid social and economic transformation. He even exercised this control in the Hu Jintao administration by first getting Luo Gan, the then Secretary of the CPLAC, elevated to the PBSC. This was achieved by expanding the PBSC membership from seven to nine members. Zhou represented a continuum in this Jiang Zemin scheme of things.

In order to exert supreme authority over the Zhengfa system and prevent any machina-

tions designed for outside interference, Xi Jinping once again reduced the strength of the PBSC to seven members and demoted the CPLAC head to the politburo. Both of Zhou's successors in CPLAC, Meng Jiangzhu and Guo Shengkun have been members of the politburo, and not the standing committee.

At the 20th Party Congress, Wang Xiaohong and Chen Yixin are tipped to be promoted as heads of the Ministry of Public Security and the CPLAC respectively. As both these men belong to the Xi Jinping faction, their promotion indicates that Xi's control over the Zhengfa system is now complete and absolute. It is exactly for this reason that the likes of Fu Zhenghua who perhaps were all too aware of the murky secrets of this long battle need to be eliminated. The next target in this line appears to be Huang Ming, who was removed from the Ministry of Public Security along with Fu in 2018. This puts the fate of Wang Qishan, China's Vice President and the man who by all means knows the most about Xi Jinping once again open to speculation.

Any attack on Wang would be regarded as yet another on the powerful faction within China's elite politics and might generate a great deal of disconcertion among them. The road to the 20th Party Congress is a saga of fallen power-centres, factional betrayals, and overturned loyalties — all dedicated to a man's relentless pursuit of his "China Dream".

The writer, a Senior Fellow at India Foundation, is currently in Taipei on the Taiwan Fellowship awarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan



## DECEMBER 27, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

## SWEARING-IN

THE 12TH MINISTRY of Kerala headed by Congress (I) leader K Karunakaran was sworn in on December 26. The governor, Jothi Venkatachalam accepted the United Democratic Front's (UDF) claim of majority and formally invited Karunakaran to form a government. Though firmly disputed by the CPM-led Left Democratic Front, the governor said she was convinced of the UDF claim, but left it to be proved on the floor of the assembly as offered by the UDF. The minister is to be sworn with the former chief minister CM Mohammed Koya of the Muslim League as Deputy Chief Minister. It will have eight mem-

bers. The UDF convenor P Joseph said that the ministry will be expanded later. The assembly will be convened as early as possible, he said.

## SOLIDARITY'S CALL

SOLIDARITY CIRCULATED A clandestine bulletin in Warsaw saying that the representatives of the top church and Communist Party officials were negotiating for "a political solution" in Poland's crisis. The bulletin dated December 23 urged expanded protests to "strengthen the position of the representatives of the Church". It called Communist Party members to resign and Warsaw residents to place candles on their windows to mourn those murdered by the

military and the police.

## ASSAM STALEMATE

THERE IS LESS optimism regarding the next round of negotiations on the Assam problem as compared to the previous round. It is acknowledged in informed circles that an agreement is possible only if the Prime Minister is personally present at the negotiations, the Opposition leaders show statesmanship and the agitating leaders show enterprise in taking a decision. While the complexity of the problem is a major factor in the stalemate, an immediate issue has been the lack of credibility on part of the government negotiators.

# 11 THE IDEAS PAGE

## In crisis, it takes three

Pandemic requires synergy between scientists, bureaucrats and politicians. Overstepping boundaries can be minimised through mutual dialogue



ANAND KRISHNAN

ALL MAJOR PUBLIC health problems need combined technical, bureaucratic and political efforts to effectively address them with an understanding and respect for each other's role. Technical people or people of science are characterised by training and expertise in a specific area which they are expected to regularly update and provide advice on based on evidence. Policymakers or elected representatives are the ones who choose the final set of interventions and arrange for the resources to implement them. Bureaucrats, or those engaged in administration, work through a hierarchical system to implement these interventions or programmes to achieve a given result. While technical people derive their power from their knowledge and expertise, bureaucrats exert their power due to their position in the hierarchy, and politicians derive their power and legitimacy directly from the people. All are expected to work to maximise the public good without any personal agenda.

In simpler terms, technical people identify possible solutions and their characteristics, politicians choose the intervention mix, provide resources and the bureaucrats implement them. Let's take the example of routine vaccination. Sequential actions and decisions are related to the generation of evidence on the disease burden and effectiveness of a vaccine, recommendations by the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI), acceptance of these recommendations by policymakers and allocation of sufficient resources and finally, implementation in terms of arranging logistics and ensuring supply by administrators. The field level implementation would again be carried out by technical implementers, usually monitored by a lower-level bureaucrat.

However, we know that in real life all this does not happen sequentially, and overstepping of boundaries, knowingly or unknowingly, occurs by all three sets of people. During the current pandemic, many scientists have openly taken positions on different pandemic response options including lockdowns or school closures, which involve issues way beyond science. The use of mathematical models to justify a particular political point of view was noted. The choice of people in NTAGI (National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation) may have political overtones. Many high-level technical people are also known to use their personal influence over policymakers to facilitate the process of policy development, or at least in setting the agenda.

A typical bureaucratisation of a response is that the process becomes more important than the end. The best example of such a tendency is when targets are fixed for everything and they become the end in itself. Often, such target setting is politically driven. However, we have enough experience — from sterilisation drives to reporting of cholera and malaria — to know that fixing targets creates problems such as fake entries or non-entries. The practice of thermal testing and collecting phone numbers outside malls and offices when the pandemic is at a



C R Sasikumar

low-ebb is clearly a massive exercise in futility. The restriction of basic public benefits to those who are unvaccinated is an exercise of power in the worst possible sense and has no scientific basis.

Both administrators and politicians want to be seen as doing something even if these are not scientifically appropriate. Is this acceptable if it helps governments gain trust and if there is better adherence to other interventions? Scientists will not agree. Lack of a clear-cut technical definition of community transmission enabled politicians to have a particular "narrative". In addition, commercial interests, say of drug or vaccine manufacturers, are known to influence decisions through any of these three groups of people.

A former DG of ICMR is once said to have remarked that there are no technical people at ICMR headquarters and that all the "scientists" have become bureaucrats. Even the WHO has been struggling to define the right combination of technical and bureaucratic staff. Does the WHO do science or manage science? Most knowledgeable people would say that it manages science, and gets others to "do" the science part. Is the WHO's work technical or more political, especially as it navigates inter-country issues, especially during a pandemic. Quite evidently, the WHO's oversight is political in nature.

This problem is not restricted to health and sciences. Such things are also seen in defence, finance, economic, and agriculture ministries, to name a few. Most of these ministries have a running feud between the technical and bureaucratic wings. These fault lines have always existed but become critical in an emergency — for defence in a war-like situation, for the finance ministry in an economic crisis and for health in a pandemic.

In general, whenever such a debate on crossing boundaries arises, the narrative is always that science is right or has the right answers whereas politicians and bureaucrats are somehow lower in the pecking order. Is this viewpoint valid? Knowledge is useless if it is not applied for public benefit. It is politicians and administrators who enable this to

In general, whenever such a debate on crossing boundaries arises, the narrative is always that the science is right or has the right answers whereas politicians and bureaucrats are somehow lower in the pecking order. Is this viewpoint valid? Knowledge is useless if it is not applied for public benefit. It is politicians and the administrators who enable this to happen. While one can have a clear boundary in pure sciences like mathematics or physics, this is not true for applied sciences like medicine and definitely not applicable to public health.

happen. While one can have a clear boundary in pure sciences like mathematics or physics, this is not true for applied sciences like medicine and definitely not applicable to public health. The 19th century German physician and thinker Rudolf Virchow once said "Medicine is a social science and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale". He meant that while public health has to identify solutions, its implementation is in the hands of politicians.

I believe that rather than calling for doing away with turf wars, we work towards defining clearer boundaries between these three wings, so that one wing hands over the driver's seat to the next with a well-defined endpoint. There is also a need to put in place better dialogue mechanisms to sort out fractious issues. After all, technical issues will impact implementation and vice versa. Clearer boundaries also help in ensuring accountability, something that we need to have in this pandemic, at some point of time.

While, our preparedness to deal with future pandemics requires all these three wings to review their role and approach, I will restrict my advice to scientists. For that, I cannot do better than to paraphrase the advice of Alfred Sommers: Be balanced, objective and credible. Wait till the evidence is solid; if the data are wanting, accept that you may not have all the answers but in an emergency don't hesitate to give a guarded opinion. Perspectives other than science are also valuable as health policy involves issues other than what epidemiologists and other scientists know or care about, so do not go beyond your area of expertise.

Scientists should realise that they need politicians and administrators to achieve public health gains and should learn to give them due respect. This problem of overstepping boundaries can only be minimised by aligning public health, administrative and political goals by mutual dialogue.

The writer is Professor at Centre for Community Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. Views are personal

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"As with Boris Johnson, the Covid bug, not the machinations of Russia, China and the US, may yet be Macron's and Europe's undoing." — THE OBSERVER

## Commission and omission

Letter to EC on a meeting convened by PMO illustrates, and warns of, a changing institutional landscape



VIVEK KATJU

BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE controversy generated by the Ministry of Law and Justice's letter to the Election Commission of India (EC) on a meeting convened by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on the common electoral roll, lies the terrain of India's institutional structure and its traditions and conventions. The letter is a product of a changing landscape; hence, it would be appropriate to derive certain logical conclusions from the ministry's press communique and a portion of the ministry's letter that has appeared in the media and which has not been denied.

The communique clarifies that the PMO had only addressed its communication convening the meeting to the cabinet secretary, law secretary and secretary, legislative department. It was the secretary, legislative department (SLD) who "thought it appropriate" to "invite officials of the Election Commission to this meeting". The PMO did not seek to, at the initial stage, involve the EC in the meeting. It was completely in order for SLD to suggest involving the EC in this meeting. In keeping with standard practice, the legislative department would have approached the EC for its participation only after clearing it with the PMO. It is inconceivable for even a nodal department to take such an initiative on its own.

The text of the legislative department's letter has not been released but the available excerpt points to a troubling discrepancy with the communique. The communique states that the "final operative paragraph" of the EC letter "requested Secretary, Election Commission of India to attend the meeting". However, this is hardly in harmony with the contents of these specific words in the published excerpt, "Principal Secretary to PM will chair meeting... and expects CEC to be present during the conference". These words are as "operational" as can be. They do not admit any other explanation. Thus, it is tenable to suggest that the chief election commissioner (CEC) was not "expected" to attend the meeting? The distinction between the CEC and the institution he heads, the EC, is obvious.

It was correct for the CEC to take umbrage with the letter and he was "extraordinarily generous" in accepting SLD's lame "clarification". In the absence of transparency, doubts will linger that at least some PMO officials or some secretaries to the government now "expect" heads of independent constitutional bodies, like the CEC, to participate in meetings convened by the principal secretary to the prime minister. That has an obvious bearing on the institutional balance of the Indian polity.

The national good requires that the three organs of the state and independent constitutional bodies function harmoniously in ac-

cordance with their constitutional and legal mandates. It also needs that their inter-se relations are marked by a desire to maintain each other's dignity. Clearly, they need to consult each other but that has to be in keeping with convention and tradition. Kanhaiya Lal Misra, a legendary advocate of the Allahabad High Court, well known for his wisdom and learning, said this about the significance of traditions and conventions: "The muscles and the sinews, the coursing blood (are) that give(s) to an institution like the High Court its strength, its resilience and even its glory". What Misra said about high courts applies generally to the polity as a whole. That is why those who head state organs and institutions need to abide by conventions and traditions and zealously guard them. It is through such endeavours — and not the path of convenience — that they can sustain the role that is expected of their institutions and the polity's balance.

Naturally, traditions and conventions are not set in stone. They evolve through the passage of time. This is all the more so when many of them are derived from colonial times. This has happened in India from the 1960s. Traditions and conventions also cannot be allowed to come in the way of national progress. But the only sure yardstick to judge changes in conventions and traditions in the functioning of institutions and in their interaction among themselves is this: Have they strengthened the foundations of Indian democracy in all its manifestations?

The historical experience of the ages shows that all political power is inherently expansive. This has been witnessed in India too where elected Indian executives of different ideological persuasions have sought, at times, to ride roughshod over the other organs and institutions through notions of "committed bureaucracy and judiciary" and sticks and carrots. Hence, democratic polities seek to put constraints through independent institutions. It is wrong to consider these institutions as part of the executive. Consultations between independent institutions and the executive should occur, but it would be appropriate and graceful for the political and bureaucratic executive to show respect for independent institutions.

The judicial organ too has flexed its muscles through interpretations, which have creatively empowered it in a manner that is a departure from tradition but also through elastic interpretations of the Constitution as in the matter of judges' appointments. And those who head the judicial organ of the state have themselves broken convention even if they have remained within the law. The first to do so was no less than a chief justice of India, who resigned his office to stand as the Opposition candidate for the presidency in 1967.

The time has come for those who head the organs of state and the institutions and the public to scrutinise the entire corpus of the Indian state's conventions to strengthen its democratic polity. This is especially so in these times of fierce ideological contestation and no holds-barred politics.

The writer is a former diplomat



T M KRISHNA

## We are us and them

Both the liberal and the bigot lie within. That's our precarious predicament

THROUGH THIS COLUMN, I hope to continue the conversation that Pratap Bhanu Mehta initiated on these pages ('Hindus After Hindutva', IE, December 16). Mehta rightly highlights the dangers of constructing a dichotomous relationship between Hinduism and Hindutva, where associating with one purifies, the other pollutes. But I will cut Rahul Gandhi a little slack because this positioning is today an electoral necessity. Non-BJP parties are struggling to find a vocabulary that allows them to remain connected to the Hindu universe, and they desperately need the vocabulary to convince Hindus to reject the BJP. Whether this strategy will work, I don't know.

But I would suggest that our present struggle is not a confrontation between the vile Hindutva-vadi and the tolerant Hindu. Our situation is far more precarious because these two personas exist within each one of us. In other words, the Hindu is also the Hindutva-vadi and vice versa. Similarly, within the liberal Muslim lies the bigot and the chauvinist lingers beneath the all-embracing Christian. The atheist is not immune to this virus; she too is infected and simply uses ideological frameworks to perpetuate hate. The frightening part is that this is not hypocritical. We are truly both, and have evolved sophisticated ways of rationalising the coexistence of these opposites. With every rationalisation, the Hindutva-vadi ascends. Decency and morality are twisted to defend the sectarian inside.

Religion survives because of its contradictions. On the one side it recommends compassion even as it promotes hegemonic consolidation. The implied understanding is that to share love within the community, we need to hate the "outsider". The faithful are participants in this constant philosophical tug of war. In the past, to some extent, the spiritual ethic subsumed our hatefulness; today, intoxicated as we are with fear and anger, there is no space for such sublimation. Maybe harping on a better past is also unsubstantiated nostalgia. Religion has always been weaponised, but there is a difference in what we are witnessing today: Othello as a nationally accepted action plan. The resentments of the past were constantly fanned, a simmering volcano just below the surface. When, on occasion, it erupted, it was quickly suppressed; the genesis ignored. And as silent onlookers who inhabit shared cultural spaces and perpetuate the foundational negative values that lead to violence, we too are culpable. Through all this, the powerful who lived outside the realm of faith have refused to engage with religion with respect. If we seek conversation with, and a change of heart among, Hindutva-vadis, we must find a way to begin these sincere conversations within our hearts.

We have always been afflicted by the disease that idealises both the good and the evil, and hence we paint characters monochromatically. Mehta is right about Ravana; he was

dharmaic and adharmic. Do we have the courage to say the same of Rama? The separation of the Hindu and Hindutva also comes from our inability to critically perceive the one we worship. When faith is just a metaphysical illusion for affirmation and internal gratification, Hindutva is a necessary antithesis. But if faith is a challenging space for reflection, we don't need a separated identity for our ugliness. Even if some of Rama's actions are unacceptable to me, my bhakti does not diminish. If anything, Rama becomes the truth, reality. Similarly, Rama Rajya must not be paraded as a flawless archetype, because it opens the door to the Hindu/Hindutva separation.

The other problem with Islamophobia being seen as synonymous with Hindutva is that it allows for the evasion of any discourse on casteism and gender discrimination. Where will they be placed: Under Hinduism or Hindutva? There can be no honest solidarity with Muslim citizens without the recognition of caste and gender discrimination of Hindu citizens. Many who speak of the evils of Hindutva are often casually casteist and misogynistic. There also exists the anti-caste Islamophobe who wants to do away with casteism so that Muslims can be cornered more effectively. Is such a person a Hindu or Hindutva-vadi?

There is another point of contention, and this comes from a different quarter: Ambedkarites. The argument is that

Hinduism and Hindutva are one and the same, and there is only one possible solution to the problem they pose: Demolition of the Hindu faith. While I understand this point of view, I do not see it as a solution. This stance shuts the door on any conversation with the savarna Hindu. For our society to change, this thorny conversation has to happen over a sustained period of time. The savarna bhakta has to undergo socio-spiritual realisation, for which he has to listen to Dalit voices. But if that voice brands every savarna Hindu as beyond redemption until he rejects his faith, it terminates all possibility of creative transformation. The faithful are part of a structural design that is inherently hierarchical and many unthinkingly participate in oppressive group action. Ambedkar gifted us Navayana Buddhism, but we also need Navayana Hinduism.

There are many who have been indoctrinated into believing that the aggressive, vicious and bullying Hindu is the need of the hour. We need a discourse that acknowledges the existence of Hindutva within every one of us and convincingly points to the dangers it poses to our very existence. Our country stands at the edge of a cliff. We cannot afford to tip over, remain stationary or step back. We need to build bridges that take us across to the hills and valleys that surround us.

The writer is a musician and an author

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### HATE SPEECH

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Draw the line' (IE, December 25). What happened at a religious occasion in Haridwar is not something unexpected. Hate speech has now become the new normal and the accused are eulogised instead of arraigned. The law and order authorities are hesitant to act against them. Now the spectacle of PM Narendra Modi, attired in a colourful dress, diving into the Ganga in Kashi in the full view of the public has left nothing to the imagination about the BJP's agenda for saffronising the country. Given this situation, the right-thinking people sitting on the fence nonchalantly will have to come down on one side to fight the polarising forces to the end. Shutting eyes to this stark reality will harm the country's unity and democracy immensely.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Draw the line' (IE, December 25). The speeches made by some Hindu religious leaders and political activists in saffron robes have brought great shame to the country and its constitutional and religious values. One only hopes that the Government of India swings into action. The top leadership in the country needs to crack the whip and make it clear that it stands by the core constitutional values of the land. It is a fit case for invoking provisions of anti-terror laws, as the incitement to genocide against the minorities poses a grave threat to public order. One expects the SC to intervene in this extremely important, emergent matter.

SS Paul, Nadia

### WIN FOR SPORTS

THIS REFERS TO the article 'They, too, are champions' (IE, December 24) and 'Play-and-live' (IE, December 25). Coming from Pulela Gopichand, the man who himself has a reputation for training multiple Olympic medalists and top-notch shuttlers, the article aptly questions our approach to judging sporting acumen just through the lens of the medals and honours. It is only when we look at sports as an integral part of good physical and mental health can we be able to persuade more people to take up sports, which would then highly increase the odds of producing medalists at international championships. What we need to understand is that in spite of who finishes on the podium and who doesn't, it is sports that wins when more people get into it with honesty and enthusiasm.

Meghna Mandal, Ulhas Minitown

### TIMELY VISIT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Mending fences' (IE, December 25). Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shrigla's visit to Myanmar shows New Delhi's prudent and timely intervention in Myanmar. Recent events in the northeast suggest that to keep the region stable, engagement with Myanmar is necessary. Moreover, India cannot ignore the attack on democracy in the neighbourhood. Taking a balanced position on the issue is what the situation demands. Asking for in-person engagement with Aung San Suu Kyi, even though unsuccessful, suggests New Delhi is well positioned to tread this tight rope walk of balanced position.

Dewang Thosar, Raigad

**कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता लघु सिंचाई वृत्त मेरठ।**  
पत्रांक 3104 / लॉसि० / टेण्डर / अवर ऑफिस/2021-21 दिनांक 22.12.2021

**शुद्धि पत्र**

इस कार्यालय के पत्र संख्या 2850 / ल० सि० / तालाब जीर्णोद्धार/ 2021-22 दिनांक 02.12.2021 के द्वारा मेरठ मण्डल के अधीन विभिन्न जनपदों में तालाब जीर्णोद्धार के कार्यों हेतु ई-निविदायें आमंत्रित की गयी थी, परन्तु निविदा अपलोड हेतु अवधि बढ़ायी जाने के उपरान्त भी ग्राम-रमाला, वि०ख० छपरौली, जनपद बागपत में प्रस्तावित तालाब जीर्णोद्धार (निविदा सं- E-9/2021-22) हेतु पर्याप्त निविदायें प्राप्त ना होने के कारण उक्त कार्य हेतु ई-टेण्डर पोर्टल पर निविदा अपलोड करने की अवधि पुनः दिनांक 28.12.2021 प्रातः 10:00 बजे से दिनांक 03.01.2022 प्रातः 11:00 बजे तक बढ़ायी जाती है। उक्त निविदा दिनांक 03.01.2022 को प्रातः 12:00 बजे अधोहस्ताक्षरी की अध्यक्षता में गठित समिति द्वारा इस कार्यालय में खोली जायेगी। निविदा की समस्त शर्तें यथावत रहेगी।

(अरुण सिंह)  
अधीक्षण अभियन्ता  
लघु सिंचाई वृत्त मेरठ।

UPID:172816,DATE: 24/12/2021  
WWW.UP.GOV.NIC.IN

S.Sinha College,Aurangabad

**Quotation Notice**

Sealed quotations are invited by registered Post so as to reach the undersign office up to 03/01/2022 for New Year College Diary, Students Diary, Supply of Laptop Bag & Stationery Item through reputed & registered firms having I.T. return and GST Return of the registered Firm must be enclosed with their application. For More details visit the college website https://www.ssinhacollege.co.in

The undersigned shall have right to reject any or all the quotations without assigning any reason thereof.

Principal

Purvanchal Vidut Vitran Nigam Limited (PuVNL) (A subsidiary of UP Power Corporation Limited)

**Open E-Tender Notice**

Open Tender Notice No.: SPJ-ST-S-23-2021  
DRM (S&T)/Samastipur invites open e-tenders on behalf of president of India for following work: (1) Name of work with its location- Signalling Work in connection with Railway Electrification (RE) to suit 25 K.VAC Traction work in NKE-RXL Section of SPJ Division., (2) Approx. cost of the work- Rs. 2,70,91,956/- (Rupees Two Crore Seventy Lakh Ninety-One Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty-six only), (3) Earnest Money to be deposited:-Rs. Nil, (4) Date & Time for Submission of tender & opening of tender:- 13/01/2022 Up to 16:00 Hrs. 13/01/2022 at 16:30 Hrs., (5) Particulars of website where full details of tender may be seen:- www.ireps.gov.in For further details please visit the website www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T)  
E. C. Railway, Samastipur  
PR/01422/SPJ/S&T/121-22/28

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**Open E-Tender Notice**

Open Tender Notice No.: SPJ-ST-S-23-2021  
DRM (S&T)/Samastipur invites open e-tenders on behalf of president of India for following work: (1) Name of work with its location- Signalling Work in connection with Railway Electrification (RE) to suit 25 K.VAC Traction work in NKE-RXL Section of SPJ Division., (2) Approx. cost of the work- Rs. 2,70,91,956/- (Rupees Two Crore Seventy Lakh Ninety-One Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty-six only), (3) Earnest Money to be deposited:-Rs. Nil, (4) Date & Time for Submission of tender & opening of tender:- 13/01/2022 Up to 16:00 Hrs. 13/01/2022 at 16:30 Hrs., (5) Particulars of website where full details of tender may be seen:- www.ireps.gov.in For further details please visit the website www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T)  
E. C. Railway, Samastipur  
PR/01422/SPJ/S&T/121-22/28

**उ.प्र. पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना**

अनुभव की कार्यदायी संस्थाओं से निम्नलिखित अल्प-कालीन ई-निविदा दो भागों में निर्धारित तिथि को 12:00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है जो उसी दिन 15:00 बजे खोली जाएगी। विस्तृत विवरण समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशन के उपरान्त ई-टेण्डर की वेबसाइट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध रहेगा तथा अन्य किसी भी प्रकार के संशोधन/तिथि विस्तार हेतु निविदा खुलने की तिथि तक लाॅग ऑन करें। किसी भी निविदा को बिना कारण बताये निरस्त/अस्वीकार करने का अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरी के पास सुरक्षित रहेगा- अल्प-कालीन ई.टी.सी.-49/2021-22 220 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र, बौनेर (अलीगढ़) पर 02 नग 220 के.वी. हरदुआगंज 'बे' का निर्माण कार्य। ई.टी.सी.-50/2021-22 132 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र, अलीगंज (एटा) पर 02 नग 40 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक की स्थापना से सम्बन्धित कार्य। ई.टी.सी.-51/2021-22 132 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र, अलीगंज (एटा) पर 132 एवं 33 के.वी. परिवर्तक 'बे' का निर्माण कार्य। ई.टी.सी.-52/2021-22 132 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र, इगलास (अलीगढ़) पर 02 नग 40 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक हटाकर 63 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक लगाने का कार्य। ई.टी.सी.-53/2021-22 220 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र, बौनेर (अलीगढ़) पर 100 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक को हटाकर 160 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक की स्थापना से सम्बन्धित कार्य। ई.टी.सी.-54/2021-22 132 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र बौनेर (अलीगढ़) पर 40 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक को हटाकर 63 एम.वी.ए. परिवर्तक लगाने से सम्बन्धित कार्य। ई.टी.सी.-55/2021-22 132 के.वी. उपकेन्द्र कुसुमरा (मैनपुरी) पर 132 के.वी. ताखा 'बे' के निर्माण का कार्य। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत परियोजना मण्डल, लाल डिग्री, अलीगढ़। राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाये, विद्युत चोरी की सूचना [www.igpowerup.org](http://www.igpowerup.org) पत्रांक 2330 -वि.पा.मं.(अ)/टी-30 दिनांक-24/12/2021

**सेन्ट्रल बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया**  
**Central Bank of India**

Regional Office, Mauryalok Complex, Patna-1

**POSSESSION NOTICE [UNDER RULE 8 (1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002]**

Notice is hereby given under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of (Security) Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of the power conferred under sub-section (12) of section 13 read with [rule 3] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002. The Authorized Officer issued a Demand Notice on the dates noted against account as mentioned herein after, calling them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the under noted borrower/guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sec. 13(4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned against account. The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of Central Bank of India for the amount and interest thereon mentioned against account herein below. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section (13) of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Branch	Name of the Accounts/Borrowers/ Guarantor	Name of the owner & Description of the property mortgaged	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession Notice Affixed	Amount outstanding as on date of Demand Notice	Amount outstanding as on date of Possession Notice
Barh Bazar Branch	Borrowers: M/s China Town Gift Corner. Prop.: Manoj Kumar and Guarantor: Mrs. Savitri Devi, W/o Bhola Prasad Bihari.	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Mrs. Savitri Devi, W/o Bhola Prasad Bihari, Full particulars of Property: Sale Deed No.-14444, dtd. 28.11.1983, Area-2.00 Decimal, Thana No.-56, Khata No.-241, Khesra No.-367, Holding No.-301/291, New Holding No.-232/327, Mauza-Kazi Mouddin Chak, Nawabkothi, thana & Pragna-gayaspur, Registry & Sub-registry-Patna. Location of the property: Boundary: North-Rasta, South-SitaRam Choudhary ka Makan, East-Mundrika Thakur, West-Laxmi Rai & Others.	31.01.2021	22.12.2021	₹10,43,402/- (Rupees Ten lacs forty three thousand four hundred two only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 13.01.2021	₹10,43,402/- (Rupees Ten lacs forty three thousand four hundred two only) and interest thereon.
Barh Bazar Branch	Borrowers: Akash Automobile Prop.: Mr. Umesh Singh Guarantor: Mr. Bishun Deo Prasad Singh S/o Late Tribhuvan Singh	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Bishun Deo Singh S/o Late Tribhuvan Singh, Full particulars of Property: Sale Deed No.-7367, dtd.17.07.1986, Area-6.00 Decimal, Thana no.-53, Khata no.-47, Khesra no.-460, Tazui no.-8858, Mauza-Mahmadpur, Thana No.-Barh, Sub-registry-Barh, Anchal-Barh, Distt.-Patna. Location of the property: Boundary: North-Ram Sevak Singh, South-Govt. Road, East-Khanidar Mokhir & Jamun Mahto & Sarjug Mahto, West-Land of Gorakhsani.	24.05.2021	22.12.2021	₹16,35,886/- (Rupees Sixteen lac thirty five thousand eight hundred eighty six only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 24.05.2021	₹16,35,886/- (Rupees Sixteen lac thirty five thousand eight hundred eighty six only) and interest thereon.
Barh Bazar Branch	Borrowers: OM Sai Means Collection Prop.: Sujit Kumar and Guarantor: Mr. Shyam Sundar Ram, S/o Late Banke Ram	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Mr. Shyam Sundar Ram, S/o Late Banke Ram, Full particulars of Property: Sale Deed No.5832, dtd. 09.09.1999, Area-15 Dhoo, Holding No.174(New), 566(Old), Ward No.-22(New), 10(Old), Mauza-Bihari Bigha, Salempur, P.S.-Barh, Dist.-Patna, Sub Registry-Barh, Anchal-Barh. Location of the property: Mauza-Bihari Bigha, Salempur, P.S.-Barh, Dist.-Patna, Sub Registry-Barh, Anchal-Barh. Boundary: North-Ramji Bhagat, South-Giriza Devi, East-Road, West-Kishori Ram	26.05.2021	22.12.2021	₹13,10,127/- (Rupees Thirteen lac ten thousand one hundred twenty seven only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 26.05.2021	₹13,10,127/- (Rupees Thirteen lac ten thousand one hundred twenty seven only) and interest thereon.
Danapur Branch	Borrowers: Mr. Rajesh Kumar, Mr. Dhiraj Kumar and Mr. Chandan Raj all are s/o-Mr. Rajendra Prasad and Co-borrower/ Guarantor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Mr. Rajesh Kumar, Mr. Dhiraj Kumar and Mr. Chandan Raj all are s/o-Mr. Rajendra Prasad, Full particulars of Property: Registered Mortgage Deed No.12216, Dtd.-02.11.2017, Area-2 Katha 10 dhur 0 dhurki, Tazui no.-5403, Thana no.21, Khata No.397, Khesra (Survey Plot no)-1614, SRO-Danapur. Location of the property:- Mauza-Danapur Shahajadpur, Thana-Rupaspur, Registry & Sub-registry-Danapur, Dist-Patna. Boundary: North-Road, South-Survey Plot no.1615, East-Part of Survey Plot no.1614, West-Shri Rajendra Prasad.	07.08.2021	23.12.2021	₹37,87,738.90 (Rupees Thirty seven lacs eighty seven thousand seven hundred thirty eight and ninety paise only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 07.08.2021	₹37,87,738.90 (Rupees Thirty seven lacs eighty seven thousand seven hundred thirty eight and ninety paise only) and interest thereon.
Danapur Branch	Borrowers: M/s Sons Bricks, Proprietor: Mr. Rajesh Kumar, S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad and Co-borrower/ Guarantor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh, Mr. Dhiraj Kumar S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Chandan Raj S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad.	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh, Address of the Mortgagors: Vill+PO-Bypapur, Ps-Maner, Dis-Patna, Pin-801503. Full particulars of Property: Sale Deed No.-4630, Dtd.-25.08.2000, Area-2 Katha 10 Dhur 0 Dhurki, Tazui No.-5403, Thana no.21, Khata No.397, Khesra (Survey Plot no)-1614, SRO-Danapur. Location of the property:- Mauza-Danapur Shahajadpur, Thana-Danapur, Registry & Sub-registry-Danapur, Dist-Patna. Boundary: North-15 ft Road, South-Survey Plot No.1615, East-Plot No.1614(P), West-Aahar PRDA Road.	07.08.2021	23.12.2021	₹72,81,855/- (Rupees Seventy two lacs eighty one thousand eight hundred fifty five only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 07.08.2021	₹72,81,855/- (Rupees Seventy two lacs eighty one thousand eight hundred fifty five only) and interest thereon.
Danapur Branch	Borrowers: Mr. Chandan Raj, S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad and Co-borrower/ Guarantor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh, Address of the Mortgagors: Vill+PO-Bypapur, Ps-Maner, Dis-Patna, Pin-801503. Full particulars of Property: Sale Deed No.-4125, Dtd.-31.08.1999, Area-2 Katha 10 Dhur 0 Dhurki, Tazui No.-5516, Thana no.22, Khata No.32, Khesra (Survey Plot no)-11, SRO-Danapur. Location of the property:- Mauza-Jalalpur, Thana-Danapur, Registry & Sub-registry-Danapur, Dist-Patna. Boundary: North-Road, South-Survey Plot No.11, East-Plot No.11, West-Road.	07.08.2021	23.12.2021	₹26,25,111/- (Rupees Twenty six lacs twenty five thousand one hundred eleven only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 07.08.2021	₹26,25,111/- (Rupees Twenty six lacs twenty five thousand one hundred eleven only) and interest thereon.
Danapur Branch	Borrowers: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh and Co-borrower/ Guarantor: Mr. Dhiraj Kumar S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): Name of the Mortgagor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Late Akhilanand Singh, Address of the Mortgagors: Vill+PO-Bypapur, Ps-Maner, Dis-Patna, Pin-801503. Full particulars of Property: Sale Deed No.-4125, Dtd.-31.08.1999, Area-2 Katha 10 Dhur 0 Dhurki, Tazui No.-5516, Thana no.22, Khata No.32, Khesra (Survey Plot no)-11, SRO-Danapur. Location of the property:- Mauza-Jalalpur, Thana-Danapur, Registry & Sub-registry-Danapur, Dist-Patna. Boundary: North-Road, South-Survey Plot No.11, East-Plot No.11, West-Road.	07.08.2021	23.12.2021	₹81,32,911/- (Rupees Eighty one lacs thirty two thousand nine hundred eleven only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 07.08.2021	₹81,32,911/- (Rupees Eighty one lacs thirty two thousand nine hundred eleven only) and interest thereon.
Rajendra Nagar Branch, Patna	Borrowers: Mr. Mahesh Sharma S/o Shri Braj Mohan Sharma	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): All that part and parcel of Immovable Property (Land/Building) in the name of Mr. Guddu Sharma S/o Mr. Braj Mohan Sharma. Details/Description of the property/ies: Deed No.: Sale Deed No.13776, dated 29.04.2011, Area-441 Sq.Feet or 1.0125 Decmal, Location: Mauza-Kheskhopur u/ Sheikhpura, Haal Thana-Ram Krishna Nagar, Dist.-Patna. Property details: Khata No.37, Tazui No.28, Thana No.111, Survey Plot No.687. Boundary: North-Smt. Meena Devi, South-12 feet Rasta, East-Smt. Priya Priyadarshi, West-Smt. Kanti Devi	21.12.2020	23.12.2021	₹14,45,327/- (Rupees Fourteen lakh forty five thousand three hundred twenty seven only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 21.12.2020	₹14,45,327/- (Rupees Fourteen lakh forty five thousand three hundred twenty seven only) and interest thereon.
Rajendra Nagar Branch, Patna	Borrowers: Mr. Dilip Kumar Sharma S/o Sri Chandan Dev Sharma and Guarantor: Mrs. Shadhna Sharma W/O Mr. Dilip Kumar Sharma	Description of the Immovable Property (Land & Building): All that part and parcel of Immovable Property (Land/Building) in the name of Mrs. Sadhana Sharma W/O Mr. Dilip Kumar Sharma. Details/Description of the property/ies: Deed No.: Sale Deed No.9948, dated 31.03.2010, Area-Four stried building in 1250 sq.ft. area. Location: Mauza-Prithwipur, Das Company Lane, Lohanpur, PO+PS-Kadamkuan, Patna. Property details: Khata No.56, Tazui No.244, Thana No.5, M.S. Plot No.1351, Ward No.25, Circle No.19. Boundary: North-Ganga Musahar, South-Most Puleswarji, East-Gali, West-Fakirchand.	23.02.2021	23.12.2021	₹1,06,05,368.47 (Rupees One crore six lakh five thousand three hundred sixty eight and paise forty seven only) with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f 23.02.2021	₹1,06,05,368.47 (Rupees One crore six lakh five thousand three hundred sixty eight and paise forty seven only) and interest thereon.

Authorised officer  
CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA

**NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED**  
(A Govt. Of India Undertaking)  
SIBIAN ROAD, BATHINDA - 151 003 (Pb)  
Ph. 0164-2270261, 2760262, FAX: 0164-2270463

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

E-tenders in two-part bid system are invited from experienced and financially sound contractors for the following annual rate contract work:

NIT No.	Work Description	Estimated Cost of work (Rs.)	Period of Contract	Cost of Tender (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)	Tender Issuing Authority/ Last date
NFB/ E-31/E/ 2022-23	Misc Electrical Jobs on ARC basis at NFL Bathinda for the year 2022-23	Rs. 206.93 Lakhs + GST	One Year	Rs. 1000/-	NIL	DGM (R&E) / 31.01.2022

For further details and corrigendum, if any visit our website: [www.nationalfertilizers.com](http://www.nationalfertilizers.com), [www.etenders.gov.in](http://www.etenders.gov.in) and CPFR portal: [www.cpfr.gov.in](http://www.cpfr.gov.in)

**कार्यालय-कार्यपालन अभियन्ता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड-जशपुर (छत्तीसगढ़) ई-प्रोक्वैरमेंट निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

एकीकृत पंजीवन प्रणाली अनंतिम उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित कार्यों हेतु ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:- कार्य का नाम:- जशपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड मनौरा में एकल ग्राम नल जल प्रदाय योजना अन्तर्गत 63 से 75 मिमी. व्यास के HDPE पाइप ए 20 मिमी व्यास के कंजोविट पाइप एवं 90 मि.मी. व्यास के यू.पी.वी.सी. पाइप 6 & 10 kg/cm<sup>2</sup>, स्प्रेयबल सहित प्रदाय कर जोड़ने, विछाने, इन्टरकनेक्शन टेरिस्टिंग क्लोरीनेटर स्थापना, क्लोरीनेटर रूम, स्वीच रूम, नोवेवेशन पोर्टल नल कनेक्शन एवं अन्य संबंधित समस्त कार्य, 6 माह दायर रन सहित स्वीकृत शेड्यूल अनुसार।

क्र.	निविदा क्र./सिस्टम नम्बर	योजना का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (राशि रु. लाख में)	अनामत राशि (राशि रु. में)
1	171/21.12.2021/88942	ग्राम गोवारू, रजला, डेंगनी, एवं मुटु के विभिन्न बसाहटों में एकल ग्राम नलजल प्रदाय योजना FHCT 330 नग	222.01	150000/-
2	172/21.12.2021/89343	ग्राम पटिया एवं अजधा के विभिन्न बसाहटों में एकल ग्राम नलजल प्रदाय योजना FHCT 338 नग	290.00	150000/-
3	173/21.12.2021/89346	ग्राम तालसिली एवं जक्वा के विभिन्न बसाहटों में एकल ग्राम नलजल प्रदाय योजना FHCT 299 नग	286.81	150000/-
4	174/21.12.2021/89347	ग्राम अमगाँव एवं खमहली के विभिन्न बसाहटों में एकल ग्राम नलजल प्रदाय योजना FHCT 297 नग	251.91	150000/-
5	175/21.12.2021/89348	ग्राम अलोरी एवं माडो के विभिन्न बसाहटों में एकल ग्राम नलजल प्रदाय योजना FHCT 241 नग	223.58	150000/-

उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्य की ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा दिनांक 23.12.2022 तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। जल जीवन मिशन कार्य की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापन, निविदा दस्तावेज एवं अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वैरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।

हस्ता- कार्यपालन अभियन्ता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड जशपुर (छत्तीसगढ़)

**कार्यालय-उप महाप्रबन्धक (तकनीकी) राज्य कृषि विपणन बोर्ड, एग्री कैम्पस, शीशमबाग,हल्द्वानी (नैनीताल),**

पत्रांक : नि०ख०/निविदा सूचना/2021-795

**अति अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना**

निम्नलिखित कार्यों हेतु दिनांक 03.01.2022 को राज्य कृषि विपणन बोर्ड में वित्तीय रूप से सुदृढ़ पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से अपरान्त 2:00 बजे तक अधोहस्ताक्षरी के कार्यालय में मोहरबन्द निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती हैं, जो उसी दिन अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा अपरान्त 2:30 बजे उपस्थित निविदादाताओं/ प्रतिनिधियों के समक्ष खोली जायेगी।

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	लागत रु० (लाख में)	घरोहर घनराशि	निविदा का मूल्य	समय अवधि	पंजीकरण श्रेणी
1.	जिला स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के गैस गोदाम रोड, आर०के० ट्रेट हाउस मार्ग का, बिडौरिया में पार्वती इन्क्लेव में तथा ग्राम पनियाली में मानस बिहार कॉलोनी में मार्ग का पीओसी द्वारा निर्माण/सुधारिकरण कार्य।	34.09	75000.00	2500.00 + GST	09 माह	ब
2.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी में चुनी -01 में पानपुर की सड़क का तथा जयदेवपुर में बन्सवली विहार में पीओसी द्वारा सहित सुधारिकरण का कार्य।	33.27	75000.00	2500.00 + GST	09 माह	ब
3.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी में ग्राम पनियाली में सीता राम बिहार कॉलोनी की सड़क का सुधारिकरण का कार्य।	8.98	27000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
4.	शहरी विकास के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के लोहरियासाला मल्ला में नैनावाल जी के पीछे वाली सड़क का तथा पीओसी द्वारा सुधारिकरण का कार्य तथा फूलचौड़ मुख्य मार्ग से कैंपटन हरीश सिंह के घर तक पीओसी मार्ग का निर्माण कार्य।	9.40	29000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
5.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी में ग्राम पनियाली में बन्सवली कॉलोनी का पीओसी द्वारा सुधारिकरण का कार्य तथा लोहरियासाला तल्ला में कालिका कॉलोनी के ईमली धडा रिडी सिद्धी दुकान से पहले बाई तरफ सड़क का सुधारिकरण कार्य।	9.12	28000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
6.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी काईटीआई इहरिया में सित्र विहार में पीओसी मार्ग का निर्माण कार्य तथा गोपीनाथ फार्म के अन्तर्गत/ शिवा/सित्र कॉलोनी एवं सत्यलोक कॉलोनी के मध्य पीओसी मार्ग का निर्माण कार्य।	9.86	30000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
7.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी में मानपुर पश्चिम वार्ड नं 56 में गुप्ता जी के घर से हरेश कबडवाल जी के घर तक पीओसी द्वारा मार्ग का निर्माण कार्य।	4.70	14000.00	500.00 + GST	06 माह	द
8.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी में मानपुर पश्चिम वार्ड नं 56 श्री सुन्दर सिंह के घर से श्री भुवन चन्द्र तियाजी की के घर तक पीओसी निर्माण कार्य।	3.22	10000.00	500.00 + GST	06 माह	द
9.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत कालाडूंगी में मानपुर पश्चिम के नैनी बिहार में पीओसी द्वारा मार्ग का सुधारिकरण कार्य।	7.16	21000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
10.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी मानपुर पश्चिम वार्ड नं 56 किसानमंड मार्बल वाली गली में पीओसी निर्माण कार्य।	8.59	25000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
11.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के छडायाल नयाबाद हर हर विहार में पीओसी द्वारा मार्ग का सुधारिकरण कार्य।	6.36	18500.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
12.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के बन्डीनगर 2 में महादेव विहार तक मार्ग का नवनिर्माण व सुधारिकरण का कार्य, पीपलपोखरा न-01 में हिमशंकर एन्क्लेव की सड़क का पीओसी द्वारा नवनिर्माण तथा अन्तर्गत छोटी मुखानी में जोशी कॉलोनी की सड़क का पीओसी द्वारा पुनः निर्माण कार्य।	34.38	75000.00	2500.00 + GST	09 माह	ब
13.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के भगवती कॉलोनी के छडेल नयाबद में पीओसी द्वारा मार्ग का नवनिर्माण कार्य, बिडौरिया न-02 शिव कॉलोनी में मार्ग का पीओसी द्वारा सुधारिकरण का कार्य तथा ग्राम गुलजारपुर रामसिंह में बन्सवली मंडर के घर तक मार्ग का पीओसी द्वारा नवनिर्माण कार्य।	34.48	75000.00	2500.00 + GST	09 माह	ब
14.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के हरीनगर में हनुमान मंदिर से माया तियारी के घर तक सड़क का सुधारिकरण कार्य।	7.55	22000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
15.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के अन्तर्गत प्रमात कॉलोनी मार्ग का पीओसी द्वारा मार्ग का निर्माण कार्य।	9.86	30000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द
16.	जिला विकास स्तरीय विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत विधान सभा क्षेत्र कालाडूंगी के अन्तर्गत छोटी मुखानी में रौतला कॉलोनी की सड़क का तथा नन्दपुर हिमालय परिवार की सड़क का पीओसी द्वारा पुनः निर्माण कार्य।	8.80	27000.00	1000.00 + GST	06 माह	द

नोट :- (1. निविदा व विवरण सम्बन्धी सूचना कार्यालय में किसी भी कार्य दिवस में देखी जा सकती है। (2. घरोहर घनराशि निविदा क्य करने समय प्रार्थना-पत्र के साथ संलग्न करना अनिवार्य होगा, जो उप महाप्रबन्धक (तकनीकी) राज्य कृषि विपणन बोर्ड, हल्द्वानी के नाम बंधक होगी। (3. निविदा 01.01.2022 तक कार्यालय समय में बेची जायेगी तथा राज्य कृषि विपणन बोर्ड में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों को ही अंतिम दर्जा जायेगी। (4.पंजीकृत ठेकेदार/ फर्म को श्रेणीवार पूर्व में अनुबन्धित कार्य की कुल लागत की गणना के सापेक्ष कार्य की क्षमता के अनुसार ही निविदा दी जायेगी। (5. उपरोक्त निविदा राज्य कृषि विपणन बोर्ड की वेबसाइट [www.ikapm.org](http://www.ikapm.org) पर देखी जा सकती है।

**कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम, कोरबा (छत्तीसगढ़) ई-प्रोक्वैरमेंट निविदा सूचना**

दिनांक 24.12.2021 एकीकृत पंजीवन प्रणाली अंगत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु (Online) अनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)	निविदा डालने की अंतिम तिथि
1	नगर पाल		

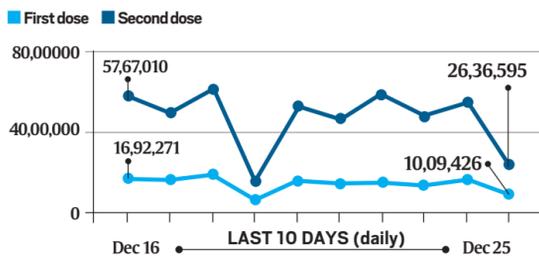


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## CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

INDIA TOTAL DOSES **141,37,72,425**  
(1st DOSE: 83,55,49,174; 2nd: 57,82,23,251)DOSES ON DECEMBER 25 **36,46,021**

DEC 24 : 73,86,104 (1ST DOSE: 10,09,426; 2ND: 26,36,595)

## DOSES ON DECEMBER 25, BY STATE

TOP 5		BOTTOM 5*	
Uttar Pradesh	11,17,704	Kerala	10,969
Rajasthan	3,63,017	Punjab	15,476
Bihar	3,07,001	Chhattisgarh	37,188
Maharashtra	2,84,858	Telangana	49,032
Madhya Pradesh	2,19,772	Assam	67,982

\*Excluding states smaller than Delhi by population (Census 2011)

ACTIVE CASES  
**76,766**266  
from Dec 24

Source: Ministry of Health &amp; Family Welfare; Dec 25 figures updated on Dec 26

## Cases in China hit recent high, many kids hospitalised in NY



Queue for Covid-19 testing in Times Square, New York on Sunday. Reuters

AMITABH SINHA  
PUNE, DECEMBER 26

CHINA DETECTED more than 150 new coronavirus infections on Saturday, the highest daily count since the middle of June, Bloomberg reported. Almost all the new cases were from the northwestern Shaanxi province, whose main city Xi'an was put under lockdown last week following the detection of over 120 cases there.

It was not clear whether any of these infections were caused by the Omicron variant. China has been reporting very few cases, mostly in single or double digits and sometimes none, for the last 18 months. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), China has recorded only about 1.3 lakh infections till now. More than 80,000 of those cases were detected by the first week of March 2020, after which there was a dramatic decline.

The next biggest wave experienced by China was in May this year, when about 500-600 cases were detected for a few days, according to WHO data.

## Fresh restrictions

The spread of Omicron continued unabated in the US and most parts of Europe. Fresh restrictions came into force in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland from Sunday, Sky News reported. Similar posting Christmas restrictions were announced earlier by Germany and Portugal as well. In England, a decision on more restrictions is expected on Monday.

The New York Times reported a jump in hospitalisation of children infected with coronavirus. Between December 5 and now, there was a fourfold increase in the hospitalisation of children in New York where the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly, it said, adding that the New York State Department of Health had appealed to parents to get their children above five vaccinated.



OMICRON TRACKER

## Elections in key states in year of reckoning for BJP and Oppn

Elections in UP, Punjab and Gujarat will test BJP's election machinery and the Congress's position as the nucleus of the opposition. Covid and bitterness over laws &amp; rhetoric, too, are set to dominate politics in 2022.

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

2021 MAY go down in India's political history as the year when a government with a brute majority in Lok Sabha understood the power of a street protest — one that was largely peaceful and apolitical. And dissent found a new idiom. The farmers' protest was not widespread, but the movement had the power to bend the government. And the repercussions of the stir — political as well as social — will be felt in 2022.

Politics sprang back to life in 2021 after the second wave of Covid-19 interrupted normal life. The outcome of Assembly elections, held in the shadow of Covid, were significant political markers: the emergence of Mamata Banerjee as a powerful regional satrap, the Congress defeat that broke Kerala's pattern of alternating Left and Congress governments, and the BJP's resounding victory in Assam.

Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and in other states in the first half of 2022, and in Gujarat towards the end of the year, too, hold the potential to shape a new political narrative and disturb existing equations. The outcome is significant for the BJP and its mascot Narendra Modi, a desultory Congress that is feeling the pressure from other opposition forces, and these regional forces themselves.

The bitterness in the political sphere, both in Parliament and outside, deepened in 2021, and 2022 may be no different with a string of crucial Assembly elections lined up. With a third wave of Covid-19 looming large, politics over the pandemic could take a new turn. The government could unveil its political plan for Jammu and Kashmir, which has the potential to divide the polity.

Societal tensions have deepened with Hindutva groups sharpening their rhetoric and BJP governments looking away. With the new law that raises the age of marriage for women to 21 sought to be applied to all communities, superseding existing marriage and personal laws, the social cleavages are bound to widen.

## Modi popularity on test

Prime Minister Modi and the BJP's election machine will face a mid-term test in 2022 in the form of the Assembly elections. The Opposition had been attacking the government over its handling of the Covid-19 second wave, rise in prices, and unemployment. The government's surprise decision to take back the farm laws gave the Opposition reason to cheer. But there are no clear signs yet that Modi's popularity is on the wane, or that anger is brewing against the BJP. The electoral outcome will be the first indicator.

In elections in 2021, the BJP retained power in Assam and lost the high-stakes battle in West Bengal. It emerged as the main opposition in Bengal but appears to be in no position to repeat the gains it had made in the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The party did not have much at stake in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

In this respect, 2022 will be different. Barring Punjab, the BJP is in power in all the states that will go to polls — UP, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. And the outcome will have huge national significance. UP, especially, is key, both for Modi and for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. A defeat could unsettle equations within the BJP, while a sweep in all these states would be touted as the trailer for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and will be demoralising for the opposition.

The outcome in UP and Punjab will also be an indicator of the political fallout of the farmers' unrest. In Gujarat, Modi's home state, the BJP has replaced its Chief Minister to minimise anti-incumbency, but will that be enough?

2022 is also a crucial for Modi as PM. With the Omicron variant spreading, the government will have to ensure its containment with minimal disruption in economic activity. With the economy slowly coming out of the distress brought by the pandemic, the challenge for the government is to keep it on track.

## Opposition leadership

Mamata Banerjee's resounding victory was



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

perhaps the defining political moment of 2021. Other standouts were the emergence of M K Stalin from the shadow of his late father M Karunanidhi, and Pinarayi Vijayan powering the Left to a second consecutive victory.

Banerjee now fancies a national role for herself. The Trinamool Congress has entered the Congress turf in Goa. The Aam Aadmi Party is challenging the Congress in Punjab and trying to carve out a space for itself in Uttarakhand and Gujarat. The outcome of all these moves will define opposition politics in 2022.

The outcome of the Assembly polls will have a huge bearing on the Congress's pre-eminence among the opposition parties. It will be a test not just for the Congress but for other prominent regional satraps too — especially Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati, the Badals, and Arvind Kejriwal. It is a win-or-perish election for at least the first three.

With some farmers' unions set to enter the fray in Punjab, the electoral scene has turned unpredictable. Not to forget the gamble that former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is playing with the BJP.

If the Congress performs poorly, its role as the nucleus of the opposition camp will come under question. There will be calls for formation of a new opposition grouping or restructuring of the UPA with key roles for regional leaders. The Shiv Sena, NCP and DMK have thrown their weight behind the Congress, while some regional forces such as the RJD, SP and the BSP have so far remained neutral.

## Chaos within Congress

From 1996 to 2004, the Congress spent the longest time in opposition since Independence. By mid-2022, it will break that unenviable record. But the similarity ends there. In 2003, the Congress was in power in 15 states; now, it is reduced to just three. By 2000, after spending four years in opposition and losing three general elections on the trot, the Congress had resolved the leadership question.

In organisational elections in 2022, the party hopes to anoint a new president, quite possibly Rahul Gandhi again, by September, but the outcome of the Assembly elections will hugely decide whether the change of guard would be smooth. The Congress fared poorly in Assembly elections this year. It lost in Kerala and Assam and failed spectacularly in West Bengal.

In the last seven years, the Congress on its

NEW IN  
THE NEW YEAR  
2022  
POLITICS

## CALENDAR 2022

**FEBRUARY-MARCH:** Assembly elections in UP, Punjab, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Goa. UP is key for the both BJP and the opposition, particularly Congress. The outcome in UP and Punjab will also be an indicator of the fallout of the farmers' unrest.

**APRIL-JULY:** Biennial elections to 73 Rajya Sabha seats, almost one-third of the 245 in the House. MPs whose current terms expire include Anand Sharma, A K Antony and Subramanian Swamy (April); Suresh Prabhoo, M J Akbar, Nirmala Sitharaman and Jairam Ramesh (June); P Chidambaram, Piyush Goyal, Praful Patel, Sanjay Raut, Kapil Sibal and Ambika Soni, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi (July).

**AUGUST-SEPTEMBER:** Election of AICC president. While this could possibly be Rahul Gandhi again, the outcome of the Assembly elections will hugely decide whether the change of guard would be smooth.

**DECEMBER:** Assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh.

own has won only five state elections.

In Goa and Uttarakhand, it is up against the BJP, while in Punjab, it appears to be a divided house. In UP, the party is struggling to stay afloat in the multi-cornered race. 2022 could well be the year of reckoning also for Rahul as also Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who is leading the party's campaign in UP.

The tussle in the party is expected to continue or worsen in 2022. Although the G-23 group of leaders are keeping a strategic silence, the Assembly poll outcome could potentially unite or divide the party.

## Societal tensions

2021 began with visuals of a VHP rally creating tension and stoking fear in a Madhya Pradesh village, and is ending with a hate speech conclave in Haridwar. The upcoming election year could be no different: adding to that is the narrative on anti-conversion.

Karnataka became the latest state to bring a Bill to prevent forced religious conversions and the so-called 'love jihad', following similar laws in UP, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The targeting of Christians and disruptions of Christmas celebrations reported from some parts of the country, the lynching incidents linked to sacrilege in Punjab, and protests against Friday namaz in open spaces in Gurgaon are disturbing signs of deep radicalisation in society, and paint a dangerous portent for 2022.

Politics over sacrilege will only sharpen in Punjab with elections coming up. And if the government tables the Bill raising the age of legal marriage in the Budget session of Parliament, it will revive debate on the contentious uniform civil code: The Bill, its critics say, is an attempt to encroach into personal laws and move towards a uniform civil code.

It is also to be seen whether the government will in 2022 notify the rules governing the Citizenship Amendment Act, passed in 2019. That could sow more discord.

## Jammu &amp; Kashmir gambit

With the Delimitation Commission coming out with a draft proposal six new Assembly constituencies for Jammu and only one for Kashmir, there is a sense that Assembly polls could be held in the Union Territory sometime in 2022. The proposed remapping of Assembly constituencies has left most of the state parties unhappy as they believe it is a move to shift political power to the Jammu region.

While Modi had in his Independence Day address signalled that preparations are on for holding elections, political parties in the region are seeking restoration of statehood first. With Article 370 abrogated, the construction of Ram Temple started, a law brought to ban triple talaq, and the Citizenship Amendment Act passed, elections in Jammu and Kashmir are an unfinished business in the BJP's ideological project, which will perhaps figure on the government's agenda next year.

TOMORROW: ECONOMY

## Right to be forgotten: govt position, court rulings, and laws elsewhere

SOFIAHSAN  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 26

LAST WEEK, the Centre told the Delhi High Court that the "right to be forgotten" is part of the fundamental right to privacy, but added it has no significant role to play in the matter. Petitions across courts have been seeking enforcement of this "right" — a legal principle that is not yet backed by statute in India.

## What is the right to be forgotten?

It allows a person to seek deletion of private information from the Internet. The concept has found recognition in some jurisdictions abroad, particularly the European Union. While the right is not recognised by law in India, courts in recent months have held it to

be an intrinsic part of the right to privacy. At least eight petitions are pending before Delhi High Court seeking removal of private information from the Internet, court records of previous convictions and proceedings, and news reports of past events. Only a few have been able to get that relief from courts so far.

## Which countries have such laws?

The EU in 2018 adopted the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Article 17 of which provides for the right to erasure of certain categories of personal data — that which is considered no longer necessary, that for which consent has been withdrawn or processing of which has been objected to, personal data unlawfully processed, and data where there is a legal obligation for erasure. However, the regulations limit the right to

erasure in certain circumstances, including for reasons of public interest in the area of public health, for archiving purposes "in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance" and for "establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims."

Russia in 2015 enacted a law that allows users to force a search engine to remove links to personal information on grounds of irrelevance, inaccuracy and violation of law. The right to be forgotten is also recognised to some extent in Turkey and Siberia, while courts in Spain and England have ruled on the subject.

## What is the position in India?

In a brief reply in one of the petitions earlier this week, the Centre told the Delhi High Court that the right to privacy has been recog-

nised as a fundamental right in the K S Puttaswamy judgment (2017) and that the 'right to be forgotten' is evolving in India. The government said the Personal Data Protection Bill (a Joint Parliamentary Committee's report on which was tabled on December 16), contains provisions to the doctrine of the 'right to be forgotten'.

## How have courts ruled on this?

In May 2019, Justice Pratibha M Singh of the Delhi High Court, dealing with a civil suit seeking removal of certain news reports on MeToo allegations against the managing director of a media house, said the "right to be forgotten" and "right to be left alone" are inherent aspects of the right to privacy, and restrained republication of these news reports.

In April 2021, the court directed removal

of a judgment from search results; the order is now being opposed by Google. In January 2017, the Karnataka High Court ordered its registry to ensure that any Internet search engine does not reflect a woman's name in an order passed in 2015. And in November 2020, the Orissa High Court, ruling in a case relating to videos uploaded on Facebook by a rape accused, opined that "allowing such objectionable photos and videos to remain on a social media platform, without the consent of a woman, is a direct affront on a woman's modesty and, more importantly, her right to privacy". It did not, however, pass an order on removal of the videos.

## What are the ongoing cases in the Delhi High Court about?

Some of the petitioners have sought re-

moval of orders in cases in which they have been acquitted or already served their sentences. There is also an actor's plea for removal of videos, photos and articles related to a drink driving incident. In August, the court in August had allowed an actor's plea for removal of explicit videos from YouTube and other platforms.

Lawyers for the petitioners acknowledge that in the absence of statutory backing, the relief being sought is likely to clash with the public's right to know and the functioning of online platforms such as Google and Twitter.

"The problem is these big national multi-nationals have a different face when they are operating in the European Union but here they take the law for granted," said advocate Akshat Bajpai, who represents one of the petitioners in the Delhi High Court.

# 14 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

SHASHI THAROOR, CONGRESS LEADER

## Parliament has been reduced to a rubber stamp for the government's legislative agenda

Shashi Tharoor talks about disruptions in Parliament, the Hinduism vs Hindutva discussion, on whether the Congress can be a nucleus of a joint Opposition and why he advocates a presidential style of governance. This session was moderated by Deputy Associate Editor Manoj CG

**Manoj CG: Are the frequent disruptions in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha serving the purpose of the Opposition?**

In the second term of the Narendra Modi government, Parliament has ceased to be a deliberative forum and legislative businesses have atrophied. Of course, in the last year due to the pandemic, the government didn't even convene the Winter Session. This year's Budget Session was abbreviated to the elections in five states. And then, the Monsoon Session was disfigured by multiple disruptions, amid which the government Bills were rammed through with minimal debate. In the present Winter Session, we have seen the same story; a pattern of lack of discussions, disruption, avoidance of debates, and hasty unilateral passage of laws. That's not what Parliament is supposed to be like. The government has no interest in being accountable and the Opposition feels that it is determined to show the intensity of their feelings on certain issues and through disruptions. The result is that Parliament is not functioning as it is supposed to. I fear it has been reduced to a combination of a notice board for unilateral government announcements and actions, a rubber stamp for the government's legislative agenda, and a performance stage for Opposition protest.

**Manoj CG: The TMC did not attend most of the meetings called by Mallikarjun Kharge. Developments outside Parliament are casting a shadow on the unity inside Parliament. How do you see Opposition unity in this light?**

What happened, to some degree, in the recent months reflects the acrimony that goes back to the (West) Bengal elections. My hope is that this will fade with time. If the Opposition parties can bury their differences and come together in the future, I am confident that we will be able to mount an effective fight against the government.

**Manoj CG: How prudent is for the Congress to enter the territory of this discussion of Hinduism vs Hindutva?**

I published my book (*Why I Am a Hindu*) in January 2016 when the BJP had spent a couple of years in power trying to promote its notion of Hinduism as a political identity, not really as a spiritual quest. I felt it was important to give a counter view, which was not new because, what I said in the length of the book, I had already mentioned 20 years earlier in a few pages in my book *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*. This precedes my involvement in party politics. The Congress has been wrongly accused of peddling 'soft Hindutva' and Rahul Gandhi has seized the opportunity to draw a clear distinction between the Hinduism he professes and the Hindutva of any kind — soft, hard or otherwise.

**Aashish Aryan: You say Parliament has been reduced to a notice board of sorts. Do you think it is the same for the Standing Committee and Joint Committee of Parliament?**

I see little more constructive work with the Standing Committee, especially because they take place behind closed doors and no one is grandstanding for any camera. There are a couple of things in the committee system that mark a significant departure from seven decades of previous practice. One example I was a victim of, was when the BJP government decided that the perpetual tradition since committees existed of the External Affairs Committee chaired by an Opposition MP, they ended that practice and removed me as Chairman of External Affairs and put a BJP MP on top. The second kind of practice that you're seeing is when there are contentious or sensitive bills, rather than referring them to a Standing Committee, within the mandate they fall, the government has consistently preferred to name instead a Joint Select Committee, which is always chaired by the majority party, namely the BJP. So for example, on the data protection Bill (Personal Data Protection Bill), it was not given to my committee on whose agenda the topic of data protection actually exists, and was given to a separate committee chaired by a BJP MP. We have just seen the same thing happening now on the child marriage Bill (Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021).



### IDEA EXCHANGE

WHY  
SHASHI THAROOR

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has been a visible presence both inside and outside Parliament. An acclaimed author, a former international civil servant and a three-time MP, he is also the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and IT. His will be the voice to be heeded as the Congress faces its challenges

**Aashish Aryan: Experts and civil societies have said that this data protection Bill gives more power to the government than to the people. What are your views as the chairman of the Standing Committee?**

Let me not express my views as chairman, but rather as an individual. In the previous Lok Sabha, before I became chairman of this committee, I had already introduced a private member's Bill proposing a data protection law. I think this Bill does seem significantly deficient. I had taken the very clear view that the basic core principle of data protection in our country ought to be, which is the best practice internationally also, that data belongs to he or she who generates it, that the government may have legitimate reasons to have access to that data for specific purposes, but that should be limited by both purpose and time. And once that purpose is fulfilled, the data should either be destroyed or returned to the person who owns the data. That's principle number one. Principle number two, there can be no exceptions for the government for the simple reason that the government is very much the reason why we need a data protection Bill. And then the third thing I wanted was that in case of any disputes, adjudication must take place with an independent data protection authority, whose members should be completely unconnected to the government.

**Aashish Aryan: Would you agree with the views, especially on the dissent notes of the MPs, that it is like giving a blank cheque to the state to do with the data as they please?**

I'm afraid it does. Every protection afforded by this law, can be ignored with im-

punity by the state, citing national security, national sovereignty, relations with foreign countries — there's that list of seven classic exemptions. Almost anything the government wants to do is bound to fit into one of those seven exceptions. So you're going to end up in a situation where the government will do exactly as it pleases, and ours will be the democracy where the public has the least protection from government intrusion into their data and government control of, and access, to their data.

**Harikishan Sharma: Your party has strongly opposed the introduction and passing of Election Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021, which is aimed at linking Aadhaar with the voter ID. Does the Congress plan to take the fight outside the House too and does the party want to challenge it in the court?**

I think it's pretty clear there will be a challenge in the courts, whether it'll come from the party or from individual lawyers, individual public figures, is a different matter. I think it's for the party leaders who do these things to decide whether it's sufficiently seen as a mass issue, the way in which a price rise affects every single individual, would having to take the Aadhaar number to the poll, be seen in the same way by every voter. That 14-month *satyagraha* by the farmers recently began to threaten the BJP. As a result,

they decided to cut their losses. I don't quite see something similar happening here, at least not yet.

**Vandita Mishra: Common sense says that the Congress is the centrepiece of any Opposition to the BJP. But we have seen election after election, and if you look at the data as well, you find that when the BJP is fighting the Congress, the overwhelming result is in favour of the BJP. Whereas, when the BJP is ranged against a regional force, that's when the BJP is and can be defeated. Is it time to reconsider that common sense? Like Prashant Kishor says that there is a Congress space, but it does not necessarily have to be filled by the Congress.**

I think all Opposition parties must realise that the only way one can effectively defeat the sort of gorilla on the beach in the shape of the BJP is by getting together. The Congress space is a space built on the Constitution, on institutions, on social justice policies, welfare policies, that whole mix of what has loosely been called Nehruvian ideas. If you look at the Opposition parties, I would say the vast majority of them subscribe to those same ideas anyway. If you think of the Opposition space, or the Congress space, as a space occupied by ideas, then those ideas are actually also the ideas of Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee, or of Tejasvi Yadav or Akhilesh

Yadav. Therefore, my argument is that we all broadly believe in the same understanding of India, we celebrate India's diversity, we want people of all communities to get along together, we believe in social justice programmes, we want to see an inclusive India prospering. That space is one that all of us can occupy in a very all-inclusive and embracing way.

**Krishn Kaushik: Do you think a party like Congress, in which there is a leadership crisis at the moment, can be a nucleus of a joint Opposition?**

The Congress is clearly the largest single party in the Opposition. It has the broadest presence in pretty much every state of the country. And that's what makes it the party that naturally others can cluster around. Then that doesn't necessarily enter into tactical questions of who should lead or who should be the convener or the general secretary, and so on. As an observer, I would say that Congress is indispensable to an Opposition formation. But the leadership of a member of the Congress party may not

**Every protection afforded by this law (data protection), can be ignored with impunity by the state, citing national security, national sovereignty, relations with foreign countries — there's that list of seven classic exemptions**

ance, and the BJP's performance has left much to be desired. So to allow the government to get away with purely getting people to vote about identity issues, I believe is an abdication on our part.

**Vandita Mishra: Can you actually continue with this line you're drawing between identity issues and governance issues? The BJP does not draw that line; the BJP talks of identity and governance in the same breath. Can the Opposition then answer the BJP by continuing to draw a hard line between these two?**

When you're going out to campaign, you talk to people about what's on their mind. That's what you need to focus on.

The government understands this. So when they don't have a good performance to point to, what do they do? They beat the drums on national security. Now, somehow, we were not able, perhaps, to keep the conversation sufficiently focused on the developmental and governance failures of the government, that they were able to distract a lot of voters with national security. And that certainly contributed in north India to some of the results we've seen.

**Aakash Joshi: Where the battle is being fought politically and ideologically, there is a sense that the Congress is so afraid of being labelled a Muslim party that you cease to be weighing in on issues that matter.**

We were caricatured as being a party that allegedly appeases the minorities and so I think there was a consciousness among some of the political managers of the party that we must avoid being tarred by that brush. We may have a certain identity, we may have a certain clear vision within our own minds but if we say or do things that can lead to us being portrayed in a certain light to the voters, we will unnecessarily lose votes without in any way changing what we actually stand for. It's not entirely fair to imply that somehow the Congress is trying desperately to signal that it's as Hindu as the BJP or staying away from Muslims and others.

**Krishn Kaushik: Last year, 23 leaders from the Congress wrote a letter, famously now termed as G23. Have any of those issues that were highlighted in that letter been resolved?**

Now that the issue has been blown up out of all proportion into some sort of dissident thing, we have to resolve these things within. Clearly there has been no significant progress in some of these areas and Covid-19 has also cramped the style of the party. The party has decided to hold an AICC in September 2022. In between what may happen, will remain to be seen. Ultimately, a lot of these issues are best settled within the party forums.

**Krishn Kaushik: Previously, you had advocated for a presidential style of governance within the country. What Prime Minister Modi is doing at the moment, is it what you foresaw when you were advocating for presidential style of governance in the country?**

When I speak about a presidential system, I'm anchoring myself on one fundamental principle — of the value of separation of powers. Right now, you have a situation where people are not elected to legislate, to hold the government accountable; they're elected to the legislature to be the government. And once they've created the government, they cease to have any independence or any value whatsoever. In a presidential system, you will have much less danger of the kind of autocratic rule that you're seeing under Modi today, where anything he decides gets through Parliament. Right now, the Prime Minister has given us a situation where he is far closer to the kind of dictatorial ruler that people who oppose the presidential system are afraid of.

**Esha Roy: Once the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill becomes a law and comes into force, it will supersede the other personal laws. What is your opinion about this?**

There is a perception on the part of some minority groups that this is simply a way of bypassing personal laws. A second one is a concern of feminist organisations. Third, there is a concern that once you make any marriage under 21 illegal, you may actually be depriving girls forced into underage marriages of their legal rights upon divorce or abandonment.

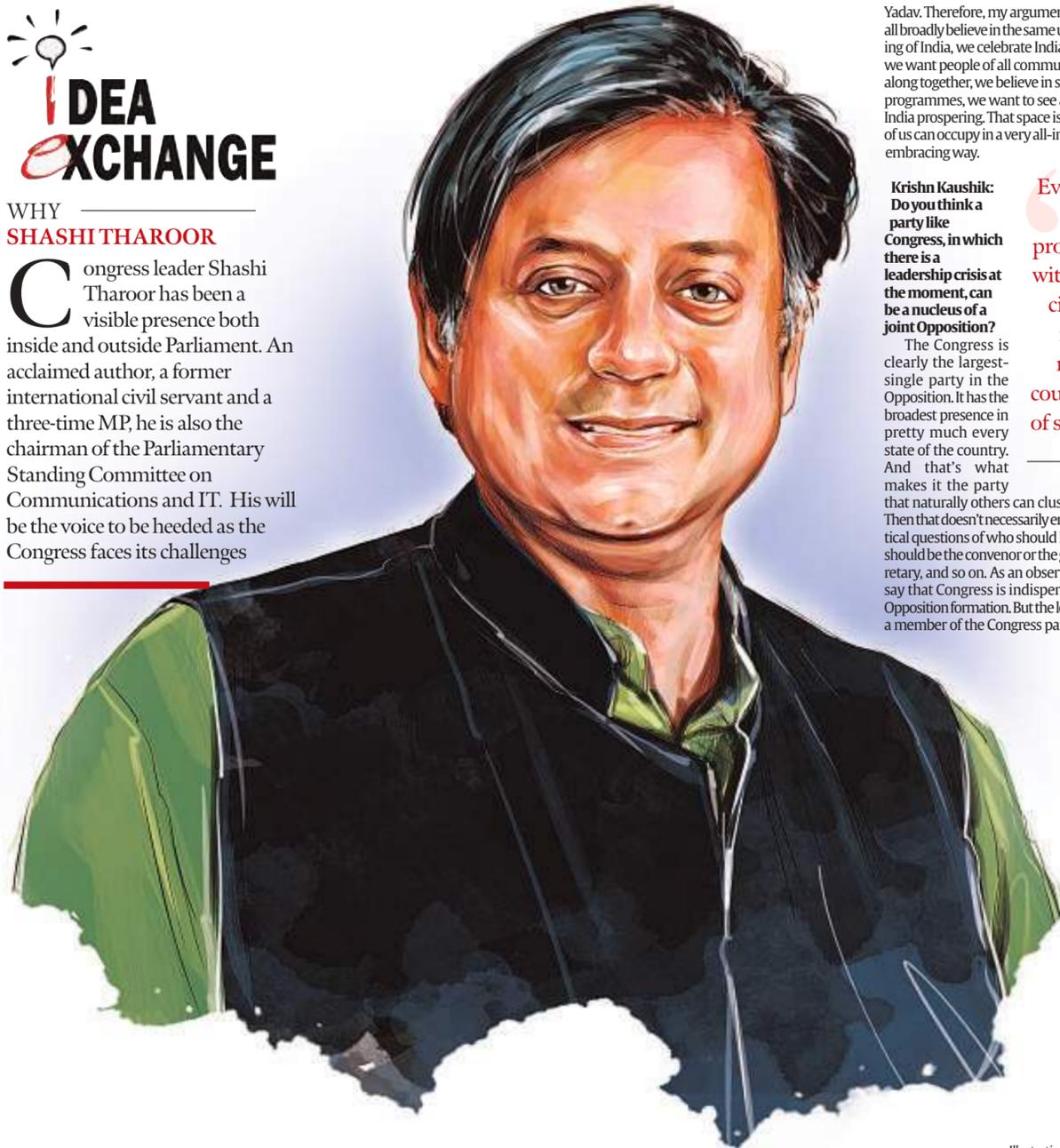


Illustration: Suvajit Dey



We were caricatured as being a party that allegedly appeases the minorities and so I think there was a consciousness among some of the political managers of the party that we must avoid being tarred by that brush

**Vandita Mishra: There is another common sense, especially in the Opposition ranks, which is that you either talk of communal issues, or you talk of secular and developmental issues. Is it that the Opposition is fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of the response that is required to the BJP's project, which is that there is no inconsistency between talking of religious issues and developmental issues?**

The core message is a very simple one: are you better off than before these people came to power? For the vast majority of Indians, their lives have not improved. So you move the conversation from a politics of identity to a politics of perform-



## MEANWHILE

## 'PLEASE, THANKS, SORRY' 3 WORDS FOR MARRIAGE

Pope Francis sought to encourage married couples urging them to seek help and always remember three key words in a marriage: "Please, thanks and sorry." He urged them to keep having children to fight the "demographic winter" which, in Italy, has led to one of the lowest birthrates in the world.

## TOP OF THE WORLD



Japan Airlines cancelled 49 flights. Reuters

## JAPAN

## Over 100 flights cancelled due to heavy snow

Tokyo: More than 100 domestic flights in Japan were grounded on Sunday due to heavy snow in the northern and western parts of the country, Japan's two biggest airlines said. ANA Holdings (9202.T) had halted 79 flights as of 4 pm, affecting about 5,100 passengers, said Hiroaki Hayakawa, an operations director for the airline. Japan Airlines Co (9201.T) had cancelled 49 flights as of 4 pm (0700 GMT), affecting 2,460 passengers, a representative with the airline's operations division said. Worldwide, thousands of flights have been cancelled over the Christmas weekend because of the rapid spread of the new Omicron coronavirus variant. REUTERS

## LIBYA

## 27 migrants' bodies, including child, wash ashore

Cairo: The bodies of 27 Europe-bound migrants, including a baby and two women, have washed ashore in western Libya, the country's Red Crescent said, describing the latest tragedy involving migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in pursuit of better lives in Europe. The bodies were found late Saturday in two separate locations in the coastal town of Khoms, the Red Crescent's branch there said. Three other migrants were rescued, and search efforts were under way for others, it said. AP

## CONGO

## Suicide bomber attacks bar, kills 6

Beni: A suicide bomber attacked a restaurant and bar on Saturday as patrons gathered on Christmas Day, killing at least six others in an eastern Congolese town where Islamic extremists are known to be active. Heavy gunfire rang out shortly after the bomb went off, with panicked crowds fleeing the town's center. The attack marked the first known time that a suicide bomber has killed victims in eastern Congo, where an Islamic State group affiliate earlier this year took responsibility for a suicide bombing near another bar in Beni who had caused no other casualties. AP

## Omicron overtakes Delta strain in US, drives spike in cases around the world

US cases go past last winter peak, deaths rising too

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
DECEMBER 26

THE HIGHLY transmissible Omicron variant has overtaken Delta in the United States, sending the daily case loads soaring to levels higher than last year's winter pandemic peak in parts of the Northeast and Midwest, among other places.

Hospitalisations are starting to tick up, too, although not at the same rate as cases. It is unclear if they will continue to follow the rise in cases, especially given evidence in South Africa and Europe that Omicron may cause fewer severe cases of Covid.

On Friday, before holiday interruptions to data reporting began to affect the nation's daily case totals, the seven-day national average of new daily cases surpassed 197,000, a 65 per cent jump over the last 14 days, and hospitalisations reached a seven-day average of more than 70,000, an increase of 10 percent. Deaths also increased by 3 per cent during that time, to a seven-day average of 1,345, according to a *New York Times* database.

The national all-time high for average daily cases is 251,232, which was set in January during a post-holiday surge.

The numbers do not yet give a clear picture of whether Omicron will cause more severe illness in the United States, but a few patterns are emerging.

In New York, governor Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency earlier this month and put elective surgeries on pause at many hospitals. This week, governor Charlie Baker of Massachusetts said he would activate up to 500 members of the National Guard to help in overburdened hospitals. Many other states have done the same.



Thousands of Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organisers and others joined together on Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down cultural life to stem the spread of the surging Omicron variant. AP

## Australian state sees record Covid-19 cases

Sydney: Australia's most populous state reported a record number of new Covid-19 cases on Sunday and a sharp jump in hospitalisations while thousands of people were isolating at home after contracting the virus or coming into contact with someone who has.

A major laboratory in Sydney, which is located in New South Wales, said 400 people who had been informed a day earlier they had tested negative had in fact tested positive. The lab's medical director said those people were being contacted and informed of the error.

New South Wales reported 6,394 new infections, up from 6,288 a day earlier. Case numbers in the state have surged over the past two weeks but hospitalisations have lagged behind new infections. More than 70% of cases in some Australian states are the Omicron variant but New South Wales does not routinely carry out genome testing to identify the variant. AP

## France sees over 100,000 Covid cases for first time

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PARIS, DECEMBER 26

FRANCE HAS recorded over 100,000 infections in a single day for the first time since the pandemic, and Covid-19 hospitalisations have doubled over the past month as the Omicron variant complicates the government's efforts to stave off a new lockdown.

More than one person in 100 in the Paris region has tested positive in the past week, according to the regional health service. Most new infections are linked to the Omicron, which government experts predict will be dominant in France in the coming days. Meanwhile, a surge in delta variant infections in recent months is pushing up hospital admissions. More than 1,000 people in France with the virus died over the past week, bringing the toll to over 122,000.

The government is holding emergency meetings on Monday to discuss next steps. Some scientists and educators have urged delaying the post-holiday return to school, or re-imposing a curfew.

EXPLAINED  
Govt charts the plan ahead

THE FRENCH government is hoping that stepped-up vaccinations will help curtail spread of cases. It is pushing a draft law that will require vaccination to enter all restaurants and many public venues, instead of the current health pass system which allows people to produce a negative test or proof of recovery if they're not vaccinated.

But the education minister says schools should open as usual January 3, and other government officials are working to avoid measures that would hammer the economic recovery.

## Israel plans to double settlers in Golan Heights

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GOLAN HEIGHTS, DECEMBER 26

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday said the country intends to double the amount of settlers living in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights with a multimillion-dollar plan meant to further consolidate Israel's hold on the territory it captured from Syria more than five decades ago.

Bennett said the new investment in the region was prompted by the Trump administration's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the swath of land and by the Biden administration's indication that it will not soon challenge that decision.

"This is our moment. This is the moment of the Golan Heights," Bennett said at a special Cabinet meeting in the Golan Heights. "After long and static years in terms of the scope of settlement, our goal today is to double settlement in the Golan Heights."

Bennett's office said the government would invest some 1 billion shekels (over \$300 million) into developing the Golan, including the establishment of two new settlements as well as investments in tourism, indus-



Israeli PM Naftali Bennett, at the weekly cabinet meeting in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Sunday. AP

try, clean energy and technology that would create several thousand jobs.

Entrenching Israeli control over the territory would complicate any future attempt to forge peace with Syria, which claims the Golan Heights.

Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed the territory, promoting settlement and agriculture there as well as creating a thriving local tourism industry. The US was the first country to recognise Israel's sovereignty over the Golan, which the rest of the international community regards as Israeli-occupied.

## 'UNNECESSARY INSTITUTES', SAYS OFFICIAL

## Taliban government dissolves Afghan election commissions

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ISLAMABAD, DECEMBER 26

THE TALIBAN dissolved Afghanistan's two election commissions as well as the state ministries for peace and parliamentary affairs, an official said Sunday.

Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban-run government, said the country's Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaint Commission have been dissolved.

He called them "unnecessary institutes for the current situation in Afghanistan." He said if there is a need for the commissions in the future, the Taliban government can revive them.

The international community is waiting before extending formal recognition to Afghanistan's new rulers.



Hawa Alam Nuristani, chief of Election Commission of Afghanistan, centre. AP file

They are wary the Taliban could impose a similarly harsh regime as when they were in power 20 years ago — despite their assurances to the contrary.

Both elections commissions were mandated to administer and supervise all types of elections in the country, including presidential, parliamentary and

provincial council elections. Karimi said the Taliban also dissolved the Ministry for Peace and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. He said they were unnecessary ministries in the government's current structure. The Taliban had previously shut down the former Women's Affairs Ministry.

## THE NOBEL LAUREATE RESTS: 1931-2021



## Desmond Tutu, whose voice helped defeat apartheid, dies at 90

MARILYN BERGER  
DECEMBER 26

DESMOND M Tutu, the cleric who used his pulpit and spirited oratory to help bring down apartheid in South Africa and then became the leading advocate of peaceful reconciliation under Black majority rule, died on Sunday in Cape Town. He was 90.

His death was confirmed by the office of South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, who called the archbishop "a leader of principle and pragmatism who gave meaning to the biblical insight that faith without works is dead."

The statement did not mention a cause of death. Archbishop Tutu had fought an on-and-off battle with prostate cancer since 1997.

As leader of the South African Council of Churches and later as Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Archbishop Tutu led the church to the forefront of Black South Africans' decades-long struggle for freedom. His voice was a powerful force for nonviolence in the anti-apartheid movement, earning him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

When that movement triumphed in the early 1990s, he prodded the country toward a new relationship between its white and Black citizens, and, as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he gathered testimony documenting the viciousness of apartheid.

"You are overwhelmed by the extent of evil," he said. But, he added, it was necessary to open the wound to cleanse it. In return for an honest accounting of past crimes, the committee offered amnesty, establishing what Archbishop Tutu called the principle of restorative — rather than retributive — justice.

His credibility was crucial to the commission's efforts to get former members of the South African security forces and former guerrilla fighters to cooperate with the inquiry.

Archbishop Tutu preached

## MYANMAR DEATHS

## Save the Children says two staff missing after massacre

Bangkok: Two members of the international humanitarian group Save the Children were missing on Saturday after Myanmar government troops rounded up villagers, some believed to be women and children, fatally shot over 30 and burned the bodies, according to a witness and other reports.

Purported photos of the aftermath of the Christmas Eve massacre in eastern Mo So village, just outside Hpruso township in Kayah state where

## TRIBUTES POUR IN

He was a guiding light for countless people globally. His emphasis on human dignity and equality will be forever remembered. May his soul rest in peace.

NARENDRA MODI  
PRIME MINISTER

He was a critical figure in the fight against apartheid and in the struggle to create a new South Africa.

BORIS JOHNSON  
BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

The friendship and the spiritual bond between us was something we cherished. He was a true humanitarian and a committed advocate of human rights.

THE DALAI LAMA  
TIBET'S EXILED SPIRITUAL LEADER

His contributions to struggles against injustice are matched only by the depth of his thinking about the making of liberatory futures for societies.

THE NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION

that the policy of apartheid was as dehumanising to the oppressors as it was to the oppressed. At home, he stood against looming violence and sought to bridge the chasm between Black and white; abroad, he urged economic sanctions against the South African government to force a change of policy. NYT

## THEY'RE LIKE, 'THE WORLD'S OUT OF CONTROL, WHY SHOULD I BE IN CONTROL?': THE PRINCIPAL OF A US SCHOOL SAID OF HIS STUDENTS

## The students returned, but the fallout from a long disruption remained

ERICA L. GREEN  
BETHLEHEM (PENNSYLVANIA),  
DECEMBER 26

THREE HOURS into a recent Monday morning, blood had already been spilled in a hallway at Liberty High School. With his walkie-talkie in hand, the principal, Harrison Bailey III, called on the custodial staff to clean up the remnants of a brawl while hurrying to the cafeteria in hopes of staving off another.

This is how Bailey has spent many of his hours since the school welcomed back its 2,800 students for in-person learning in August: dashing around the 400,000-

square-foot building, outrunning bells and crowds of students, and hoping that his towering presence will serve as an inspiration to pull up masks and a deterrent to other, less obvious burdens that his students have had to contend with since returning.

Like schools across the country, Liberty has seen the damaging effects of a two-year pandemic that abruptly ejected millions of students from classrooms and isolated them from their peers as they weathered a historic convergence of academic, health and societal crises. Teenagers arguably bore the social and emotional brunt of school disruptions.

Nationally, the high school-

age group has reported some of the most alarming mental health declines, evidenced by depression and suicide attempts. Adolescents have failed classes critical to their futures at higher rates than in previous years, affecting graduations and college prospects. And as elected leaders and public health officials scrambled to bring students back to school last winter and spring, the focus on having the youngest and most vulnerable students return to in-person instruction left many high school students to languish, with large numbers missing most or all of the 2020-21 academic year.

And now schools like Liberty must brace for an Omicron-fu-



Liberty High School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. NYT

eled wave of new infections, adding still more uncertainty.

On a recent day, as Bailey stood in one of Liberty's busiest hallways — nicknamed the Hall of Fame for its frequent disruptive

episodes — he described how the resignation and indignation that students brought back to school this year was palpable.

"It's like there's a bomb somewhere," he said. "And you're just

hoping no one lights a match."

Throughout the fall, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic have rippled through Liberty, a diverse regional high school in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania, in the city of 75,000 where the famous Bethlehem Steel was founded.

The school's wellness centre has been overwhelmed with students struggling with anxiety and depression since the first day back. By the end of September, fights were frequent, and "blunt and flagrant disrespect" was rampant, Bailey said. In October, homecoming pep rallies were cancelled for freshmen and sophomores. By November, the principal was av-

eraging at least one "informal hearing" per day for students who had been suspended.

By December, referrals for the school's Student Assistance Programme — in which counsellors and administrators coordinate resources for troubled students — had reached 300, compared with a total of 500 for the entire 2019-20 school year. At a recent meeting, where administrators sifted through their caseloads of "sapped" students, they described them in blunt terms: "feral" and "a mess."

"I think kids are just feeling like — after witnessing Trump, political unrest, what happened in the streets with Black Lives

Matter, now the pandemic — the world's out of control," Bailey said. "So they're like, 'The world's out of control, why should I be in control?'"

Liberty's staff is not faring much better. Only a handful of teachers have taken a formal leave of absence, but they are not whom Bailey worries about most. He is concerned about the ones "right on the edge".

Some of the most engaged staff members have had to pull back to focus on new challenges in their classrooms or their own lives. And for some, the "acting out" among some students is far less concerning than the sheer apathy they have encountered. NYT

# 16 ECONOMY

2020-21 PENETRATION UP 11.7% OVER 2019-20; PENETRATION OF NON-LIFE COVER AT 1%

## Amid Covid worries, insurance net spread further, both life and health

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

AS THE Indian economy registered record negative growth as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, insurance penetration grew by an impressive 11.70 per cent—rising from 3.76 per cent in 2019-20 to 4.20 per cent in 2020-21.

Amid the mass anxiety due to illness and deaths, penetration of the life insurance sector rose from 2.82 per cent in 2019-20 to 3.20 per cent in 2020-21.

Non-life insurance penetration, led by health insurance, went up from 0.94 per cent to 1 per cent during the same period, according to the annual report of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

India's GDP growth declined by 7.3 per cent in 2020-21 as

Covid-19 lockdowns and other curbs hit business activity.

It has taken 20 years since the liberalisation of the insurance industry in 2000 for penetration of the domestic general insurance industry to reach the level of 1 per cent. This is an important milestone for the sector, with Covid catalysing the growth, insurance officials said.

The non-life insurance industry registered an accretion of nearly Rs 10,000 crore during the year, spurred by increasing awareness and mass government health insurance schemes, said Atul Sahai, CMD, New India Assurance and chairman of General Insurance Council, the representative body of general insurers.

"Some 20 per cent of the entire accretion, in terms of quantum, came through New India, and it is a remarkable feat," Sahai said.

The insurance regulator's re-



Covid testing, Chandigarh. Amid the mass anxiety, penetration of the life insurance sector has risen. File

port said general insurers and standalone health insurers received over 9.5 lakh Covid treatment related claims, which the industry "handled quite efficiently".

During the first decade after

liberalisation, the insurance sector reported an increase in insurance penetration from 2.71 per cent in 2001-02 to 5.20 per cent in 2009-10. Thereafter, the level of insurance penetration declined until 2014-15 due to a decline in life insurance penetration.

"The industry has been growing at a healthy CAGR (compound annual growth rate) over the last two decades and yet the penetration has touched just 1 per cent," Sahai said. However, "the industry will soon resume its high growth trajectory and has the potential to double the business in the next 4-5 years," he added.

According to IRDAI, insurance density, after increasing from \$11.50 in 2001-02 to \$64.40 in 2010-11, has stagnated at the level of \$78 during 2019-20 and 2020-21. While life insurance density has stayed between \$55 and \$59 over the last four years, non-life

insurance density has been between \$18 and \$19 during the same period.

The life insurance industry recorded a premium income of Rs 6.29 lakh crore during 2020-21 as against Rs 5.73 lakh crore in the previous financial year—a growth of 9.74 per cent (12.75 per cent in 2019-20). While private sector insurers posted 16.50 per cent growth (13.42 per cent in 2019-20) in their premium income, LIC recorded 6.30 per cent growth (12.41 per cent in 2019).

While renewal premium accounted for 55.67 per cent of the total premium received by life insurers in 2020-21 (54.75 per cent in 2019-20), new business premium contributed the remaining 44.33 per cent (45.25 per cent in 2019-20).

During 2020-21, the growth in renewal premium was 11.60 per cent (7.00 per cent in 2019-20).

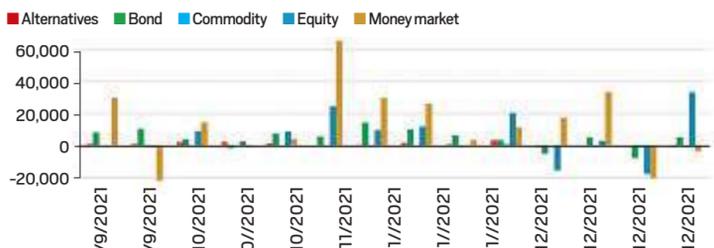
### Global equity funds see big inflows as risk appetite rebounds

Global equity funds saw massive inflows as risk sentiment returned with investors believing that the Omicron variant won't bring a big setback, as per Refinitiv data

Investors purchased \$33 billion worth of global equity funds in the week ending Dec. 22, compared with an outflow of \$13.1 billion in the previous week

Source: Reuters

#### WEEKLY FUND FLOWS INTO GLOBAL ASSETS



Note: Amount in \$ mn, Source: Refinitiv Eikon

## MG Motor: Sustaining ops, financial health challenges for auto cos in 2022

New Delhi: The biggest challenge in 2022 for the automobile industry will be to sustain business operations and ensure financial health amid various challenges, including global semiconductor shortage, according to a top MG Motor India official.

Currently, the domestic market is witnessing increased demand, but it is also impacted by the global semiconductor shortage, which has hit production activities. "The new normal has set unique challenges for the industry. The biggest challenge is to sustain business operations and ensure

the financial health of the organisation and its stakeholders. With the industry having exhibited resilience over the last two years, we are looking towards 2022 with cautious optimism," MG Motor India President & Managing Director Rajeev Chaba stated.

The situation will remain fluid in 2022 due to unpredictable factors - COVID-19, global semiconductor shortage, freight cost and multiple other cost implications, he added.

Chaba added the firm is committed to meet the high demand from its customers and investing

to enhance the plant capacity to reduce the waiting time further.

"The company is trying to meet the growing demand and working towards strengthening the MG family in India," he stated. Chaba said the company is witnessing signs of positive consumer sentiment due to pent-up demand and expects the demand to increase with the turn of the year.

"We have witnessed a year-to-date growth of 56 per cent with retail of 37,723 units (January-November 2021) over 24,152 units sold in the same period last year," he said. PTI

## Cairn drops retro tax lawsuits in US, UK

New Delhi: Britain's Cairn Energy Plc has dropped lawsuits against the Indian government and its entities in the US and other places and is in the final stages of withdrawing cases in Paris and the Netherlands to get back about Rs 7,900 crore that were collected from it to enforce a retrospective tax demand.

As part of the settlement reached with the government to the seven-year old dispute over levy of back taxes, the company - which is now known as Capricorn Energy PLC - has initiated proceedings to withdraw lawsuits it had filed in several ju-

risdictions to enforce an international arbitration award which had overturned levy of Rs 10,247 crore retrospective taxes and ordered India to refund the money already collected.

Two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said Cairn on November 26 withdrew the lawsuit it had brought in Mauritius for recognition of the

arbitration award and took similar measures in courts in Singapore, the UK and Canada.

On December 15, it sought and got 'voluntary dismissal' of a lawsuit it had brought in a New York court to seize assets of Air India to recover the money due from the government.

On the same day, it made a similar move in a Washington court where it was seeking recognition of the arbitration award. Recognition of arbitration award is the first step before any enforcement proceedings like seizure of assets can be brought. PTI



The turn to antitrust levers stems from US President Joe Biden's belief that rising levels of corporate concentration have empowered a few large players to raise prices. AP/PTI file

powered a few large players in each industry to raise prices

higher than a more competitive market would allow.

### MARKET WATCH

#### M-CAP OF FIVE OF TOP 10 VALUED COS SOARS

New Delhi: Five of the 10 most valued companies added Rs 1,01,145.09 crore to their total market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and RIL emerging as lead gainers. During the last week, the BSE benchmark gained 112.57 points or 0.10 per cent. PTI

### INTERVIEW WITH MD AND CEO, NATIONAL STOCK EXCHANGE

## 'Depending upon how many cos sign up, we will launch Prime index'

LAST WEEK the National Stock Exchange (NSE) launched NSE Prime, a category of companies that agree to meet higher standards of corporate governance set for Prime and will voluntarily become part of it. VIKRAM LIMAYE, MD and CEO, NSE, told SANDEEP SINGH that while Prime will provide investors with a universe of companies that is identified with higher governance standards, the companies will benefit from brand reputation and potentially a premium on valuation. Edited excerpts:



mittees as well. So, they will help in better governance and better protection of shareholder interest.

#### How many companies currently meet the criteria you have specified?

The reality is that each company will have to do some rejigging of the committees to qualify. However, if we take the 3-4 more difficult criteria such as minimum public shareholding, segregation of chairman and CEO, then there are a little over 200 companies that would qualify. These companies cut across Nifty 50, 50-100, 100-200 and beyond 200. So, we have a good mix of companies across market capitalisations.

Our hope is that if we get at least some core group of companies in it, it will have an impact on others wanting to come in.

#### Do you plan to come with an index of these companies?

We are giving companies six months to sign up. Depending upon how many sign up and are part of it, we will subsequently come out with an index.

#### How will it benefit the investor and companies?

At least you know that the companies in the category are complying with the higher governance standards norms laid down for Prime.

From an investor perspective, governance has been one of the big concerns and over time several high profile governance related issues have cropped up both in the financial services and non-financial space." VIKRAM LIMAYE, MD & CEO, NSE

From an investor perspective, governance has been one of the big concerns and over time several high profile governance related issues have cropped up both in the financial services and non-financial space"

VIKRAM LIMAYE, MD & CEO, NSE

of the members of audit committee will need to be independent.

Besides, a director on the board of a Prime category company shall not serve on the board of more than five public limited companies.

#### How do you think these will help?

In our country, there are many promoter-run companies and if the promoter owns 75 per cent, what ends up happening is that the decision making and how resolutions get passed is, also to a large extent, promoter controlled, as you need 76 per cent for a special resolution. However, if 40 per cent shareholding is non-promoter holding, then the promoter has to get the support of other shareholders too. We are trying to bring in more and more independence in the composition of com-

#### What is the reason behind creating NSE Prime?

We are creating a category of companies that we are calling NSE Prime. They would voluntarily sign up for governance standards set for the Prime category, which goes beyond what is required by Sebi's Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations, 2021.

The companies will have to meet these standards to get admitted on this list and then comply on an ongoing basis. If someone does not meet the norm for a continued period of time, they will have to exit the Prime category. From a reputation perspective, that won't be good as they will need to disclose why they had to exit Prime.

As it is voluntary, it sends the right message that these companies are ready to raise the bar on holding themselves accountable.

#### What are the criteria that these companies will have to meet?

The minimum public shareholding should be 40 per cent as against LODR requirement of 25 per cent. It is also mandatory to segregate the position of chairman and CEO.

Even on the committee composition front, there are certain changes. Companies will have to have an independent director as the chairperson of risk management committee, stakeholder relationship committee, nomination remuneration committee and audit committee. Also, three-fourths

## At 20%, CPSEs' capex pace strong, yet below target

PRASANTA SAHU  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE by large central public-sector entities — companies and undertakings — rose by 19 per cent on year to Rs 3.1 lakh crore in the first eight months of the current financial year, official sources told FE.

Capex by these state-run entities, each with annual investment budget of over Rs 500 crore, was 52 per cent of their aggregate capital expenditure target of Rs 5.96 lakh crore for FY22 in April-November period.

Investment expenditure as measured by gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) grew by 11 per cent in Q2FY22 over its level in Q2FY21 and by 1.5 per cent compared to its level in Q2FY20. Continued momentum in capital expenditure by the Centre, CPSEs and states is necessary to push GFCF, as low capacity utilisation

#### INVESTMENT EXPENDITURE

Investment expenditure as measured by gross fixed capital formation grew by 11% in Q2FY22 over its level in Q2FY21 and by 1.5% when compared to its level in Q2FY20

and continued uncertainties over the pandemic are deterring private investors from taking the plunge.

In April-November of FY22, the railways was the largest investor by deploying capex of about Rs 93,000 crore or 48 per cent of its annual target of Rs 1.95 lakh crore. Railways' investment is largely in the laying of new lines, doubling of tracks, augmenting traffic facilities and construction of rail over bridges/road under bridges. FE

These duties were imposed following recommendations of the commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR). PTI

## Govt imposes antidumping duty on five Chinese goods

New Delhi: India has imposed antidumping duties on five Chinese products, including certain aluminium goods and some chemicals, for five years to guard local manufacturers from cheap imports from the neighbouring country.

According to separate notifications of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), the duties have been imposed on certain flat rolled products of aluminium; sodium hydrosulphite (used on dye industry); silicone sealant (used in manufacturing of solar photovoltaic modules, and thermal power applications); hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) component R-32; and hydrofluorocarbon blends (both have uses in refrigeration industry).

White House officials say fighting inflation was not the initial motivation for Biden's competition agenda. But, they say, the push has given the president some of his most powerful tools to take action against rising prices, and it will play a central role in federal efforts to reduce costs for consumers. NYT

### BRIEFLY

#### I-T returns

New Delhi: Over 4.43 crore income-tax returns for 2020-21 have been filed, including over 11.68 lakh on December 25, the I-T department said.

#### RIL arm

Mumbai: Karkinos Healthcare received an undisclosed amount from Reliance Digital Health, a statement said.

#### Varma, economy

New Delhi: MPC member Jayanth R Varma said the next fiscal year is also expected to witness decent growth. PTI

## As prices turn red hot in US, Biden turns to antitrust enforcers

JIM TANKERSLEY & ALAN RAPPAPORT  
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 26

AS RISING inflation threatens his presidency, US President Joe Biden is turning to the federal government's antitrust authorities to try to tame red-hot price increases that his administration believes are partly driven by a lack of corporate competition.

Biden has prodded the Agriculture Department to investigate large meatpackers that control a significant share of poultry and pork markets, accusing them of raising prices, underpaying farmers — and tripling their profit

margins during the pandemic. As gas prices surged, he publicly encouraged the Federal Trade Commission to investigate accusations that large oil companies had artificially inflated prices, behavior that the administration says continued even after global oil prices began to fall in recent weeks. The push has extended to little-known agencies, like the Federal Maritime Commission, which the president has urged to search for price gouging by large shipping companies at the heart of the supply chain.

The turn to antitrust levers stems from Biden's belief that rising levels of corporate concentration in the US economy have em-

Corporate culpability for rising prices remains unclear. Inflation is at a 40-year high because of pandemic-related factors such as broken supply chains and high demand for goods from consumers still flush with government-provided cash. But as the price increases have spread across sectors, including food and gasoline, the administration has come under increasing pressure.

White House officials concede that their antitrust moves are unlikely to reduce costs for US businesses or consumers immediately. The efforts, they say, will be more effective down the road. But the rise of inflation has given the White House an opportunity to

take action that Democrats have long encouraged, and that Biden made an early focus of his tenure: using the power of government to break up monopolies and promote economic competition.

In July, before the recent run-up in prices, Biden issued an executive order that included 72 directives for cabinet and independent agencies to more vigorously enforce antitrust laws and to pursue specific actions to promote competition, such as eliminating non-compete agreements for workers and forcing tech companies like Apple to allow consumers to repair their own products.

He has also tapped antitrust crusaders for key roles, including

Lina Khan to be chairwoman of the Federal Trade Commission, and Jonathan Kanter, an adversary of Facebook and Google, to lead the antitrust division of the Justice Department. Tim Wu, a proponent of breaking up Facebook and other large companies, was brought on as a special White House adviser to Biden on competition issues.

White House officials say fighting inflation was not the initial motivation for Biden's competition agenda. But, they say, the push has given the president some of his most powerful tools to take action against rising prices, and it will play a central role in federal efforts to reduce costs for consumers. NYT

The Pandemic year locked them in quarantines but athletes around the world found resilience to call time on people-pleasing and discovered their moral voice to say NO. Gymnast Simone Biles, tennis star Naomi Osaka and Virat Kohli spoke their minds and defied convention. The year also saw athletes discover the full potential of social media - not just the big names but even the hitherto unknowns from small towns became stars in their own right. There were also some breakthrough performances that will stand the test of time. The hockey captain who reawakened a country's nostalgic pride, a Mumbai-born New Zealand cricket returned to his roots to create history, a badminton star who finally learnt how to marry art with commerce, and the man who launched his gold-plated javelin to quench a nation's thirst.

# THE YEAR OF THE PATEL WRAP

Ajaz will rarely get home games and Axar might only get home games but 2021 bunched the unlikely spin twain in their destiny

SANDIP G

THE YEAR would end as it had begun for the Patels — Axar and Ajaz. As afterthoughts, in obscurity, far from the isle of fame and fortunes. Axar has had a superb start to his Test career at home, but it's inconceivable that he will make a Test appearance outside Asia in the foreseeable future. Ajaz has been overlooked for New Zealand's home Test series against Bangladesh, and it's improbable that he will get a steady stream of games at home either. It's the twisted reality of the left-arm spin twins — one will barely get a game at home, the other might only fetch a game at home.

It was just how the year began for them. As afterthoughts, in obscurity, far from the isle of fame and fortunes. Axar, it was presumed, was pitted forever in the white-ball realm, an alternative to Ravindra Jadeja when the all-rounder wanted a break or was injured. Ajaz's fate was already pre-scripted like the fate of countless other spinners to have plied for New Zealand, a forced formality when playing in Asia. Yet, as the year rolled and rumbled, both not just burned the typecasting around them, but enjoyed moments of glorious sunshine, enough for them to be not forgotten by the game, even if they reacquaint with anonymity.

Ajaz leapt into cricketing immortality by becoming just the third bowler to pick all ten wickets in an innings, and will now, come what may, sit in that rarest of rarefied space alongside Jim Laker and Anil Kumble. Axar Patel would grab 36 wickets at 11.86 in five Tests, a five-for in every two innings he has bowled. It's unlikely that either will ever replicate the feats of 2021, but for what they did, they are worth celebrating, least of all for not losing heart as well as holding on fervently to their dreams and ambitions.

There were times both might have nipped hopes of playing Test cricket. After switching from left-arm pace to left-arm spin when he



India's Axar Patel (left) picked up 36 wickets at 11.86 in the five Tests he played this year, and the Mumbai-born Ajaz Patel from New Zealand became only the third player in history to capture all 10 wickets in a single innings. Yet both remain fringe players for their respective countries. PTI and Twitter/Black Caps



was ignored for an U-19 World Cup, Ajaz waited 12 years for his Test cap, a testy spell when he shuffled in and out of his domestic side, and when he didn't even have a permanent contract. It would have been easy to lose hope, but he held onto the burning ambition to play Test cricket, chewed his time patiently and grabbed his opportunity. Sporadic appearances at home — where he has bowled just 49 overs in three games and has yet to register a wicket — didn't deter him.

The moment New Zealand set afoot in Asia, Ajaz spread out his figures like a peacock. Five-wicket hauls in UAE, Sri Lanka and a perfect-10 in India are no mean feats, as overseas spinners, even the best of them like Shane Warne, have historically struggled in Asia despite favourable conditions on their first tours. But Ajaz, after a first-day stunner in Kanpur, quickly readjusted his wares, starting from bowling a fuller length to slowing his pace and

using the arm-ball more judiciously and imparting more revs. "The way he adjusted to the surface was mind-blowing," New Zealand coach Gary Stead later said.

It was akin to Axar adjusting to the demands and dynamics of Test cricket. Axar's first-class numbers (171 wickets at 24.19) are arresting, though not spectacular, yet he was seldom considered as a red-ball operator. Maybe, his craft was more prose than poetry; maybe, he didn't have too many fancy variations, and was supposedly limited; maybe

the world judged him solely on how he bowled in the IPL, where he had been a regular for years. But importantly Axar didn't view himself through the same lens the world saw him through.

"Whenever I have played first-class or India A, I have done well. I have never seen myself as a white-ball specialist. It's all in mind-set as to what you perceive yourself as — a white-ball specialist or red-ball specialist. I always had the belief that whenever I get a chance I will do well," he had said after subjecting England to repeated

agony in Chennai and Ahmedabad.

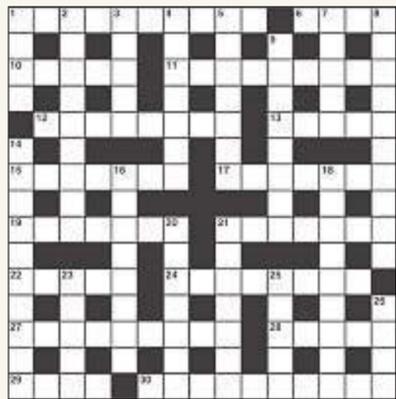
## Not-so-orthodox spin duo

Both are not quite orthodox left-arm spinners, not least in the Bishan Singh Bedi mould. Both have embraced modernity to varying scales. Ajaz doesn't pivot the body as pronouncedly as the romantics, rather it's just a gentle pirouette. Despite his stout frame, he seems loose-limbed, like most left-arm spinners, who like several left-handed batsmen exude elastic grace. He doesn't use that much of his body either, relying more on his shoulder rather. The round-armish action enables spin off the surface, and the wishful release exaggerates the inward drift into right-handed batsmen. But his modes of deception are entrenched in the classical tenets of drift, dip and turn. He is neither Rangana Herath nor Jadeja, but his bandwidth is closer to the Sri Lankan's than the Indian's.

## YEARENDER 2021

As the year rolled and rumbled, both burned the typecasting around them, and enjoyed moments of glorious sunshine, enough for them to be not forgotten by the game, even if they reacquaint with anonymity.

## CROSSWORD 4622



- ACROSS**
- Don't turn to crime? (2,8)
  - False modesty out East (4)
  - Fed up with being drilled (5)
  - Spain sore about slander (9)
  - I mention novel straightaway (2,2,4)
  - A send-off for the wrongdoer (5)
  - Possible purse of plenty (7)
  - Twin cats? (7)
  - A Parliamentary term? (7)
  - Gave a hint (7)
  - Elephantine villain? (5)
  - It's damp around the hill for a traveller (8)
  - Hangers-on disguised as pirates (9)
  - Beer is put in the passage (5)
  - Oriental present is enough for the poet (4)
  - Mere agents may make them (10)
- DOWN**
- Pass the fish (4)
  - Making demands to turn nurses out (9)
  - A source of pleasure or aid perhaps (5)
  - Fancy — game in one move (7)
  - Marks got in out-of-school activities (7)
  - A hit I made in the Caribbean (5)
  - Composer to drive men to distraction (10)
  - Enjoyed by sky divers without costs before autumn (4,4)
  - It indicates I will be missing from 'Who's Who' (10)
  - All things stemming from Eve's ruin (8)
  - The family man most likely to succeed (6,3)
  - A nominal attachment (4,3)
  - The performer rates it differently (7)
  - Wear nothing as an actress (5)
  - Kingdom not fancied by many (5)
  - They may be posted in quadruple (4)

Solutions Crossword 4621: Across: 1 Expound, 5 Annie, 8 Bell tower, 9 Was, 10 Dodo, 12 Seashore, 14 Limpid, 15 Jerkin, 17 Rest cure, 18 Iran, 21 Ewe, 22 Any moment, 24 Steak, 25 Dallas. Down: 1 Ebbed, 2 Pal, 3 Unto, 4 Dowser, 5 Arrested, 6 New Yorker, 7 Eastern, 11 Damascus, 13 Gimcrack, 14 Largess, 16 Brayed, 19 Notes, 20 Cow, 23 Eli.

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The moment you relax your grip on financial affairs, you'll run the risk of making losses. These may be minor (perhaps you will be overcharged for goods), but will nonetheless be easily avoidable. Partners are feeling the pinch, so offer tea and sympathy if they get irritable.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

This week's constructive atmosphere may mark a turning-point between two phases in personal aspirations. The transition may not always be smooth, but you'll handle your affairs with great care and understanding. And always remember, it's good to clear the air.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You may feel as if you're caught between two opposing options, uncertain which is the best way to free yourself from an impasse. The answer lies in your own hands and it's absolutely necessary that you truly understand your deeper motivations. Once you know what you want, you can get it.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Your friends and partners may now be under much more pressure than you, which makes for a change. Why not use this opportunity to help those in need and repay past favours? The tone of the times, by the way, is lively and original, so no settling for the old and familiar. Try new options.

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The point to grasp is that contrasts and contradictions between your personal and professional lives will always be with you, and that you can only do yourself good by dealing with awkward choices and facing hard facts. Partners should respond best if you are totally honest.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You are well-known for your sympathetic and compassionate qualities, and friends will be trooping to your door with problems for you to solve. Be your normal patient self. There do seem to be changes at work, so keep an eye out for interesting openings.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

All the signs point to the likelihood that you've just had, or are about to receive, a serious financial opportunity. In the final analysis, you know that only you are responsible for any losses or gains. The advice is to steer clear of strangers bearing false promises.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Recent events should have been good for your morale. Emotionally, you might be wondering just what has hit you, and why you have been singled out for such intriguing treatment. If there's too much to handle, then stay calm, don't panic and hang on to your secrets.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

It's difficult to think of a more fascinating astrological pattern than that which will be affecting many people around you. It could be a little while longer before the old certainty returns. It could even be a few weeks, so keep your plans good and flexible.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Friends have been sending out mixed messages, and while you're willing to trust that events will work out as planned, a degree of doubt is creeping in. After today, planetary pressures will continue to be tense, but that could be helpful if it stirs you out of a rut.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

It would be an understatement to suggest that current stars are confused. But, then, sometimes it's good to have your options all mixed up. And even if you score the slightest success against overwhelming odds, you will deserve sincere congratulations. If you relish change, so much the better.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

This is a fine time to hold important discussions, not least because partners may at last be ready to see your point of view. The trouble is that family members tend to regard anything you say as a personal challenge. Help yourself by being polite, diplomatic and considerate.

## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

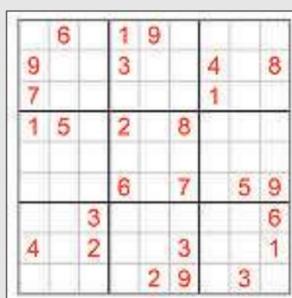
I am always \_\_\_\_, which is perhaps the chief reason why I am always \_\_\_\_. — Elizabeth Cady Stanton (4, 4)



ANSWER: I am always BUSY, which is perhaps the chief reason why I am always WELL. SOLUTION: NOOSE, DULLY, CLUMSY, WEBBED

## SUDOKU 4697

Difficulty Level 4s  
Instructions  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



Difficulty Level  
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4696



## STERLING LEADS CITY PAST LEICESTER

A 6-3 victory, featuring a double from Raheem Sterling, put City six points in front at the top of the Premier League at the halfway point on Sunday with secondplace Liverpool having a game in hand. It secured a ninth successive victory for Pep Guardiola's side with the last three seeing 17 goals scored by City.

## BRIEFLY

## Paralympic champion Krishna Nagar wins 3 gold at Nationals

**Bhubaneswar:** Paralympic champion Krishna Nagar continued his good form as he won three gold medals at the 4th National Para Badminton Championship here on Sunday. Nagar repeated his 2019 National's feat of winning three gold as he emerged champion in all the categories he participated in — singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles. Krishna easily beat Sudharshan 21-12 21-12 in the men's singles SH6 category in a game that lasted just 20 minutes. In mixed doubles, Nagar and Nithya Sre breezed past Dhinakaran and Lataai Umrekar in 17 minutes. In the men's double, he and Raja Magotra defeated the duo of Dhinakaran and Sivarajan 21-15, 21-15 in 35 minutes. **PTI**

## Delhi hold Gujarat to 24-24 tie in PKL

**Bengaluru:** A last-second blunder from experienced defender Ravinder Pahal allowed Dabang Delhi's Naveen Kumar to secure a raid point and hold Gujarat Lions to 24-24 tie in the Pro Kabaddi League here on Sunday. Delhi's star raider once again secured a Super 10 (11 points), his third in three matches of Season 8 - but the team was lucky to escape with a tie after another match filled with mistakes from its defence. Gujarat will only have themselves to blame after Rakesh Sanrogya and Rakesh Narwal had opened up a chance for them to win the encounter against Season 7 runners-up. **PTI**

## I-League club forced to play with 9 players

**Kalyani:** In a bizarre development, debutants Rajasthan United were left to play their maiden I-League match against Punjab Football Club on Sunday with just nine players, instead of 11, due to the confusion over the registration of amateurs. The Jaipur-based side, which had made it to the I-League after winning the qualifying tournament in October, acknowledged that the situation arose due to "errant decision making" by the club. Rajasthan United said the All India Football Federation refused its request to postpone the match to January when they can have enough players with new signings. It also took a dig at their opponents — Punjab FC — for refusing to play the match later. **PTI**

## ICC expresses grief at Illingworth's death

**Dubai:** The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Sunday expressed grief at the death of former England captain Ray Illingworth at the age of 89. He had been undergoing radiotherapy for esophageal cancer. Yorkshire, the English county Illingworth played for, announced his death on Saturday. Born in Pudsey, Yorkshire, the off-spinning all-rounder, started his first-class career in 1951 at the age of 19. He represented England from 1958 to 1973, playing 61 Tests, scoring 1836 runs and picking 122 wickets. He captained England to a famous 2-0 Ashes victory in 1970-71. **PTI**

## Rahul steadies India's turbulence

Shrugging off days of taut tensions, KL and Mayank start SA tour with 117 run partnership in India's 272/3

**SANDIP G**  
DECEMBER 26

AT THE SuperSport Arena, Indian cricket moved from darkness that had shrouded it for a fortnight, to light. A supreme first day performance with the bat, rare as they come in South Africa, brought the focus back on cricket, as it should be. Dispersing in one compelling day of cricket, the scandals and slander that had dominated the build-up, the negativity that had piled up, and the doubts and derisives that lingered on.

It was a day out of a dream. The openers not only survived the first session without damage, but also stitched a 117-run partnership, just the third instance that an Indian opening pair had put on a century-stand on these difficult shores. It was the first time in 14 years that the openers survived the first session of the first morning of a first Test outside Asia (India have been historically shoddy starters). To elaborate the positive thread, KL Rahul, unconquered on 122, illustrated that his hundred in England was not a one-off but the beginning of a truly fruitful phase.

His partner, Mayank Agarwal showed that he is more than a home-track bully and could prosper in hostile bowling conditions. Equally significantly, the belabouring Ajinkya Rahane flowered, and looked to have reconquered his best touch, with a crisp 40 not out. Bearing the collective fruit of labour, India ended the day on a commanding 272/3, eight runs short of the highest score they managed in six innings during the last tour here.

Much of their supremacy owed to Rahul's continuing resurgence as a genuinely high-class opening batsman. There has been so much to like about him since he first burst through — the non-violent aggression, the willowy languidness, and the non-plussed demeanour. All those vaunted traits had pundits stamp potential greatness on him. But it's the resolve, and thus a blossoming maturity, that he had been demonstrating since the series in England that could clear his path to dizzying heights. Before the England series, he did make a few technical tweaks, like trimming his trigger movement and keeping his hands closer to the body than before, but it's mental fortitude that shines through his revival.

Under the menacing, gloomy skies, he was almost ascetic in abstinence. Even when South Africa's rusty bowlers erred in length, which they managed abundantly, his mind didn't waver. He patiently left whatever that didn't threaten his stumps. He resisted the temptation to cut and drive, or that instinctive poke outside the off-stump. Those that veered into his body were blunted with a dead defensive bat. It took 25 balls and an over-pitched gift from Kagiso Rabada to wink in the first of his 13 boundaries. By that time, he had already negotiated a probing spell from the South Africa talisman, one that included a futile review for a caught-behind off an awkward short-ball that he ducked under, with much difficulty.

Even as South Africa's seamers progressively lost their intensity, and Agarwal latched on with a stream of boundaries to motor along, Rahul was content in his self-woven shell of caution. He built the first block of his innings solely through boundaries of delicious loose balls, mostly fullish balls, or sneaky tap-and-run singles. His first 47 runs ate up 126 balls, the next 43 came off 66 balls, before he decelerated towards the end, the last 33 soaking up 56 balls.

The understanding between him and Agarwal was telepathic, expectedly so as they have been teammates since age-group cricket. There was no strain of unhealthy race between them, as Rahul was happy just defending while

Agarwal was keener on hitting boundaries. Both would have a chat whenever they thought their partner was unsettled.

## Agarwal, perfect foil

Taking full toll on the rarely incisive bowling, Agarwal donned the aggressor role in the initial phase of their 244-ball stay. Fresh from a hundred and a half-century in his last Test, he was in buoyant mood, though he was not careless. Rather, he was more ruthless on anything that was marginally loose and within his range. The nervous debutant Marco Jansen was often at the receiving end — he was crunched for three boundaries in his first over in Test cricket — though Jansen almost had his revenge when Agarwal edged behind, unable to ride the steeply bounce the surface at times generated, but for the wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock to shell it. Thereafter, though, he was more alive to the devils the quickening-up pitch was throwing up as well as the corrective measures the South African seamers had sought. They made the Indian pair play at the ball more often, and drew a few edges and misses.

The newfound persistence of South Africa's seamers, especially Lungi Ngidi, was rewarded, as he took out Agarwal and Cheteshwar Pujara off successive balls.

However, by then they were so exhausted of alternatives that they were forced to operate with Wiaan Mulder or Keshav Maharaj from one end. Rahul took on Maharaj with particular fondness, racing thus towards the 90s with a clutch of fours and a six, whereas Virat Kohli bedded in without any fuss. The pair added 82 off 171 balls to prevent a potential meltdown, as they had experienced in England, and it seemed they would carry India till stumps without any damage.

Then departed Kohli, playing a forgettable shot outside the off-stump off Ngidi, bringing joy and hope back on the South African faces. But it was short-lived as Rahane reeled out boundaries, batting like a millionaire rather than someone riding a career-threatening slump. In his company, Rahul completed his seventh Test hundred, with a raft of singles, though Dean Elgar had dangled the carrot by throwing in Maharaj. But Rahul was unmoved into a stroke of imprudence. He bided his time as he had for most part of his magnificent hundred. Then he began to bide his time again, seemingly in a quest to compensate for the time he had lost due to indifferent form.

South Africa's lone hope to salvage the day was the second new ball and inducing a late collapse. But they were as erratic with the second new ball as they were with the first. Rahane and Rahul had few qualms in negotiating the phase — the only note of alarm was an edge that flew off Rahul off a Rabada ball that kicked off the surface — and they walked off the field with both joy and satisfaction after a near perfect first day of a first Test in difficult batting conditions. And symbolically, the sun shone through brightly over the arena, dispelling the darkness that had shrouded Indian cricket.

## SCOREBOARD

## India 1st Innings:

KL Rahul batting 122  
Mayank Agarwal lbw b Ngidi 60  
Cheteshwar Pujara c Petersen b Ngidi 0  
Virat Kohli c Mulder b Ngidi 35  
Ajinkya Rahane batting 40  
Extras: (B-4 LB-4 NB-7) 15  
Total: (For 3 wickets in 90 overs) 272  
Fall of wickets: 1/117 2/117 3/199  
Bowling: Kagiso Rabada 20-5-51-0, Lungi Ngidi 17-4-45-3, Marco Jansen 17-4-61-0, Wiaan Mulder 18-3-49-0, Keshav Maharaj 18-2-58-0.



KL Rahul's first 47 runs ate up 126 balls, the next 43 came off 66 balls, before he decelerated towards the end Reuters

## Fishing for trouble outside off stump

EVER SINCE he poked outside off stump to fall caught behind in India's second innings of the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in June, skipper Virat Kohli has now been dismissed nine successive times in overseas Tests either caught by the wicketkeeper or at first slip. His dismissal to Lungi Ngidi at Centurion in the series opener against South Africa on Sunday was the latest in the trend. We take a look at each of the dismissals.

## WHAT DO THE NUMBERS SAY?

For the first four years of his Test career until the 2014 tour of England where James Anderson sorted him out, Kohli averaged just 28 in the corridor outside off stump. Criziv data shows that in the next four years — from 2015 to 2019 — he averaged an incredible 92 in the same channel. But of late, it has once again become his nemesis.

## WTC FINAL, SOUTHAMPTON, 2ND INNINGS

## c Watling b Jamieson 13

After having gone leg-before to the same bowler in the first innings, Kohli was opened up by a shortish delivery from Kyle Jamieson that straightened on the sixth or seventh stump line. He still poked at it off the back foot and edged it to the keeper to start what has become a trend.

## 1ST TEST, NOTTINGHAM, 1ST INNINGS

## c Buttler b Anderson 0

The first round of the widely-expected contest lasted just one ball in the England series opener. Kohli sprang well forward to try to defend a James Anderson delivery pitched up around the sixth stump. But the ball held its line to take the nick through to keeper Jos Buttler, handing Kohli a golden duck.

## 2ND TEST, LORDS, 1ST INNINGS

## c Root b Robinson 42

Again, a delivery that Kohli could have possibly left was to consume him. Ollie Robinson angled it in a bit on a good length on the fifth or sixth stump line. Kohli was standing almost



outside off stump as he pushed at the ball only to send it to rival captain Joe Root at first slip.

## 2ND TEST, LORDS, 2ND INNINGS

## c Buttler b Curran 20

This was the usual left-arm's angle heading across Kohli, and once more, around that sixth-stump line. He'd just survived a review for lbw against the same bowler for the one coming in at his pads and ended up stretching forward to follow Sam Curran's angle. Jos Buttler took the thick edge low and safe.

## 3RD TEST, LEEDS, 1ST INNINGS

## c Buttler b Anderson 7

Anderson had had his great rival defending at Trent Bridge, he would get him on the drive at Headingley. Yet another one on or about the fifth or sixth stump, slanted in full, and inviting the big shot. Kohli obliged, the ball changed direction and Buttler accepted one more edge into his gloves.

## 3RD TEST, LEEDS, 2ND INNINGS

## c Root b Robinson 55

He'd just made his first half-century of the tour, but Kohli was to depart in what was by now familiar fashion for the second time in the series to Robinson. The inward angle from the right-armed perhaps made him play a length ball on fifth stump, and captain Root gobbled up the edge at first slip.

## 4TH TEST, OVAL, 1ST INNINGS

## c Bairstow b Robinson 50

This one bucked the trend somewhat, but only in the sense that Kohli was trying to turn Robinson to the leg side. The delivery was similar, angled in towards the fourth stump on a good length. Kohli played with a closed bat-face from the crease, but the ball still found its way to the keeper off the leading edge.

## 4TH TEST, OVAL, 2ND INNINGS

## c Overton b Ali 44

All the previous seven dismissals had been to pace, Moeen Ali's off-spin was to account for Kohli now. The area was the same: the corridor outside off, on the fifth stump. Kohli leaned forward to try to defend a flighted delivery, but he was pushing for more turn than there was and the ball carried to slip comfortably.

## 1ST TEST, CENTURION, 1ST INNINGS

## c Mulder b Ngidi 35

Lungi Ngidi's delivery on Sunday was easily the widest of the lot. It was floated up way outside off stump for the drive. Kohli saw that and immediately went hard at it. But the ball swung away late and a healthy edge flew to Wiaan Mulder at first slip, where the all-rounder completed the snare. **ABHISHEK PUROHIT**

## After final heroics, HP's Arora eyes IPL auction England's backs against wall on day one of 3rd Ashes Test

**DEVENDRA PANDEY**  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

SHUBHAM ARORA waited for this day all his life. So did his Himachal Pradesh team.

Scoring big runs on a big stage has always been the goal but neither his side nor he ever managed to reach the final of a major event. That's why December 26 will go down as a day to remember for both Arora and Himachal Pradesh cricket.

The team, which has always been considered a minnow on the domestic circuit clinched their first ever major domestic title — the Vijay Hazare Trophy on Sunday. They had to chase Tamil Nadu's 315-run target. But while on 299 for 4, after 47.3 overs, bad light was announced and Himachal was declared the winner.

Central to Himachal's success though was the role the Delhi-boy, born in Una, Himachal played for his team on Sunday. The 24-year-old Arora carved an unbeaten 136 with 13 boundaries and a solitary strike over the ropes. He recalls the dressing room talk before he went out to bat in Jaipur.

"We were told that we need to keep wickets in hand and try to play out the entire 50 overs," he says to *The Indian Express*.

"My duty was to try and not get out especially during the play-off. A good start is always needed while chasing a big score. Those who have been following domes-



24-year-old Shubham Arora carved an unbeaten 136 with 13 boundaries and a solitary strike over the ropes. File

tic cricket would have certainly predicted another title for Tamil Nadu — the clear favourite before the clash. But back in the Himachal dugout, the team — that has long been accustomed to punching above its

weight — felt there was a good chance to create history. As per Arora, the surface was a good batting track, so it was just a matter of execution.

## No longer underdogs

As the runs came for Himachal — a team playing without any stress, as if they had nothing to lose — the pressure kept mounting on Tamil Nadu.

"All these years I always wanted to play an innings like this on a big stage. Thankfully it came today and we won. Winning a title is always a special feeling and it took some time for the feeling to sink. To understand what we had just achieved," Arora explains.

The win also means Himachal will shed the underdog tag hereon. No longer will the bigger metro city teams look at them as the small-town boys. Arora too agreed that the win will change the perception Himachal had among their rivals.

"This win will now help us to get rid of the minnows tag. No team will take us lightly now. There has been a lot of hard work that has gone into this. There was a long process that was followed. And this is a result of all that hard work. We did this as a team," the opener adds.

## Gully to the stadium

Playing gully cricket on the streets of Delhi's Patel Nagar, neighbours spotted his

talent and advised his father to push him onto the path that may lead to a successful cricketing career. He took his first steps toward that goal in Delhi, before later heading to the state of his birth to achieve that target.

"I used to play in a small lane when my neighbour told my father that I bat well so they should try and send me to train in the nets. My parents did that. Then I tried to make the Delhi team but wasn't selected," says the self-proclaimed David Miller fan.

"Since I was born in Himachal, I tried out for their state team and have been playing for them since my junior cricket days. Later I made their senior side."

Now with the runs coming in, the wicketkeeper batsman hopes he might have caught the eye of an IPL scout. With the auctions happening in February, the youngster doesn't rule out the fact that he's hopeful of making it to an IPL team.

"If an IPL contract happens it will be good. I hope this knock makes a difference. At the moment at least for now, we are happy to have created our own history," he says.

**BRIEF SCORES: Tamil Nadu:** 314 all out in 49.4 overs (Dinesh Karthik 116, Baba Indrajith 80, Shahrukh Khan 42; Pankaj Jassal 4/59, Rishi Dhawan 3/62) lost to Himachal Pradesh 299/4; 47.3 overs (Shubham Arora 136 not out, Amit Kumar 74, Rishi Dhawan 42 not out) by 11 runs (VJD Method after bad light suspended play)