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DJOKOVIC DEPORTED

Tennis player Novak Djokovic at the Melbourne Airport on Sunday before boarding his departure flight. He left Australia after losing his final bid to avoid deportation and play in the Australian Open despite being unvaccinated. *Reuters*

REPORT, PAGE 18

Inflation rates higher in most poll-bound states: RBI data

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

REFLECTING THE development priorities of the five poll-bound states, an analysis of data from the Reserve Bank of India's report on state finances shows that the two big states, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, fell below the national average in terms of spending on education.

In fact, Punjab's expenditure

on health and development were also below average. Four states — Punjab, Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur — showed higher inflation rates than the national average for at least three of the last five years.

In terms of state expenditure on education as a ratio to total expenditure, Uttar Pradesh recorded the sharpest fall, from 16.7 per cent in 2016-17 to 12.5 per cent in 2021-22. The national average was 13.9 per cent in 2021-22 (Budget Estimates).

HEALTH SPENDING

State	2016-2017	2021-2022
Punjab	2.8	3.4
Manipur	4.8	4.2
Uttar Pradesh	4.9	5.9
Uttarakhand	4.8	6.1
Goa	6.1	6.8
National average	4.6	5.5

(as % of total expenditure)

Despite seeing an improvement during this period, from 8.6

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



IDEA EXCHANGE

'Don't see positivity rate or daily cases. Look at how many people are in the ICU'

DR ANGELIQUE COETZEE
CHAIRPERSON, SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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INSIDE

BJP EXPELS SENIOR LEADER HARAK SINGH RAWAT

PAGE 8

OUR PRINCIPALS HAVE SPOKEN: MOITRA

Made an offer on Goa to Cong at top level, awaiting reply: TMC

SOURAV ROY BARMAN & MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

BARELY A month left for voting in Goa, the Trinamool Congress has indicated that its supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had reached out to the top Congress leadership, possibly party chief Sonia Gandhi, two weeks ago and "made a definite offer" for an electoral understanding to take on the ruling BJP.

The reach-out is interesting since Banerjee, during a visit to Goa a month ago, had said that the TMC had already formed an alliance with parties in Goa to fight the BJP and if the Congress so wished, it could join them.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* Saturday TMC Goa in-charge Mahua Moitra said the "principals" of both the parties have spoken.



DECISION 2022



'OPEN TO ALLIANCE IN GOA JUST TO DEFEAT BJP'

MAHUA MOITRA
TMC GOA IN-CHARGE

The polls to the 40-member Goa assembly are scheduled for February 14.

Asked whether Banerjee has spoken to Gandhi, Moitra said, "By principal you, obviously, mean the absolute top leadership of the party. It does not mean the poll in-charge, does not mean the state in-charge,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Lakshya Sen after beating the world champion, Singapore's Loh Kean Yew, in New Delhi on Sunday. *PTI*

Sen beats world champion to claim India Open title

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, JANUARY 16

AS HE claimed the India Open Super 500 at IG Stadium on Sunday, Lakshya Sen simultaneously beat Singaporean Loh Kean Yew and the tempting instinct to match the world champion's showboating.

For a pair of men in their early 20s, both equipped with an exuberant attack, the impulse to get into a 'who's faster, who's hitting harder' contest could have dragged the Almora man into peril at crucial junctures. But Sen

displayed maturity and control, putting to shade the world champion who was crowned only last month. On his debut at the Delhi event, Sen, himself a bronze medallist in the world championships, became the first opponent to hand Kean Yew a defeat on the circuit, with a 24-22, 21-17 victory.

After the win, Sen admitted that he was feeling the nerves. "It feels nice to win. In the end I was a little anxious to win. But I'm happy I pulled off the win," he said.

In both the semis and finals, Sen was under the pump at the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AS INDIA COMPLETES YEAR OF VACCINATION

Govt tells SC: No forced jabs, vaccine certificate not a must

No SOPs that make carrying of vaccination certificate mandatory for any purpose: Health Ministry affidavit

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G.
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

DAYS BEFORE India completed a year of its Covid-19 inoculation programme, the government told the Supreme Court that it has not issued any guideline that envisages vaccination without consent, or makes a vaccination certificate mandatory for any purpose.

In an affidavit filed on January 13, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said that "no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes".

It also said that "the Government of India has not issued any SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) which make carrying of vaccination certificate mandatory for any purpose."

"It is humbly submitted that the direction and guidelines released by Government of India

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED Vaccine mandates, 'passports'

GOVERNMENTS AND businesses have been seeking to enforce vaccine mandates, restricting the entry of the unvaccinated to public places. "Vaccine passports" have been debated around the world.

STATES' VACCINE COVERAGE

Top 5

	First dose	Both doses
Gujarat	100%	94%
Telangana	100%	94%
MP	96%	92%
Karnataka	100%	86%
Haryana	100%	79%

Bottom 5

	First dose	Both doses
Jharkhand	75%	47%
Punjab	81%	49%
Andhra	72%	59%
UP	91%	58%
Bihar	82%	61%

Note: States with over 2 crore adult population; coverage calculated as per the estimated adult population data submitted to the SC

AIIMS STAFFER, MUMBAI DOCTOR

'No longer scared': One year since Day 1, Shot 1

RUPSA CHAKRABORTY & ANONNA DUTT
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

ONE IS a doctor, the other a sanitation worker in a hospital.

On January 16, 2021, more than three months before the devastating second wave, when vaccinating the entire population looked more in the realm of fancy, they were among the 48,276 persons who got the first weapon against the pandemic: the first dose on the first day of India's Covid vaccination campaign.

Dr Gautam Bhansali, a consultant physician at Bombay



The first dose recipients in Delhi (left) and Mumbai

Hospital, was the first beneficiary in Mumbai to get the jab at the BKC jumbo centre. In Delhi, Manish Kumar, 35, a sanitation worker at AIIMS, became the first person in the national capital to get the Covid vaccine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



'Added strength to Covid fight'

70% adults twin-jabbed, younger kids could be part of coverage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

SEVEN OUT of 10 adults in the country have received two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, as India completed one year of the world's largest vaccination drive on Sunday.

While achieving saturation coverage of the adult population as well the 15-18 age group continues to be the priority, the government is looking at two new engagements in the Covid vaccination drive over the coming weeks, The Indian Express has learnt.

One, exploring further the scientific data on the "mixing" of vaccines and, two, considering vaccination for children of age younger than 15.

Top government sources said the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), which provides scientific inputs for the government's

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Collarwali breathes her last, MP's Pench tiger reserve loses its 'Supermom'

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, JANUARY 16

"SHE CAME to the stream and was so weak that she could barely walk. She lay down near the water and did not move for two hours, with only her ears twitching. At that point, there were 42 vehicles inside Pench, and all of them spotted her."

This moving sequence on Friday, according to an eyewitness, was the last public appearance of T-15. Or simply "Collarwali", as she was known in Madhya Pradesh's Pench Tiger Reserve.

Within hours of that sighting at "her usual spot" near the



Collarwali lying near the water stream. *Om Veer Chaudhary*

Bhura Dev "nallah" by Om Veer, a naturalist and wildlife photographer, Forest officials reached the site, closed the roads and took her in for treatment. The

next evening, around 6.15 pm, the first ever tigress to be collared at Pench — hence the name — and one of the stars of the BBC documentary 'Spy in the Jungle',

breathed her last.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Ashok Kumar Mishra, Field Director, Pench Tiger Reserve, said the post mortem revealed the cause of death as multiple organ failure due to intestine blockage resulting from old age. "Her intestine was blocked with mud and hair," he said.

According to officials, T-15 was born on September 22, 2005, to T-1, also known as "Charger", and T-7 or "Badi mata", another famous tigress of Pench. She was the first-born of four cubs, and all of them were featured, along with the mother, in the documentary.

Dr Aniruddha Majumdar, a scientist with the State Forest Research Institute who had

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



New Delhi



FROM PAGE ONE

No forced jabs

and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, do not envisage any forcible vaccination without obtaining consent of the concerned individual," the ministry said.

Underlining that "vaccination for Covid-19 is of larger public interest in view of the ongoing pandemic situation", the government said "it is duly advised, advertised and communicated through various print and social media platforms that all citizens should get vaccinated and systems and processes have been designed to facilitate the same. However, no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes."

It said that the government has formulated operational guidelines for Covid-19 vaccination according to which "all beneficiaries are to be informed about adverse events which may occur after Covid-19 vaccine".

Some states have issued orders to disincentivise the refusal of vaccination by citizens. Maharashtra had said that only fully vaccinated individuals would be allowed on local trains, and the Kerala government had said the state would not bear the cost of Covid-19 treatment for unvaccinated individuals.

The Centre's affidavit was filed in a matter in which the court had permitted the petitioner — Evara Foundation — to formulate any concrete steps to strengthen the existing framework for facilitating the vaccination of disabled persons, and to ensure that they have proper access to the process.

The government said it had accordingly received the suggestions and considered them.

The ministry said that as on January 11, 2022, a total of 1,52,95,43,602 doses had been administered, and 90.84 per cent of the eligible adult population had received their first dose of the vaccine. Sixty-one per cent of the adult population had received their second dose.

A total 23,678 doses had been administered to disabled persons who had voluntarily chosen to be identified as such by using their Unique Disability ID Card/Disability Certificate for registration.

For persons with disabilities who do not have any of the prescribed ID cards, provisions had been made "by following Facilitated Cohort Registration process on Co-WIN", the government said.

‘No longer scared’

Today, exactly a year later, both are deeply aware and grateful that the vaccine — and luck — has helped them keep the infection at bay as the pandemic raged in its second wave and now rides a third.

"I am no longer scared," said Kumar, who stays with his wife, mother and brother in Najafgarh in southwest Delhi.

On January 10, 2022, Kumar would have been the first to get the precautionary booster dose, too, if not for the duty cart at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

"I got a call from the hospital to again be the first to get the third dose. My duty, however, starts at 1 pm so I could not reach early morning. But I ensured that I took my third dose that day itself," said Kumar, who got the Covaxin jab.

In Mumbai, Bhansali is scheduled to get the third dose this week. He lives with his wife and two sons, aged 14 and 6, in a housing society in Wadala.

"During the start of the pandemic, I wouldn't be at home at all. Later, upon my sons' request, I started returning home. I would directly rush to the bathroom and take a shower in warm wa-

ter before mingling with the family members. But until I got the first dose, I stayed in a separate room and always ate alone at the dining table," he said.

It was only in January the next year that he hugged his family warmly after getting the first dose of Covishield.

Recalling the ferocity of the first wave in Mumbai in 2020, with nearly 11,000 lives lost, Bhansali said that despite wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) round the clock, several doctors around him contracted Covid in the line of duty. "I would get frantic calls from my wife and children every day, asking about my health," he said.

"I had to face discrimination, too. Several members of our housing society thought I would infect others. They asked me not to visit my family. But later, when I saved the lives of some of the society members who were infected, they opened their arms," he said.

According to the Indian Medical Association (IMA), nearly 2,000 doctors have succumbed to Covid in India, and almost 90 per cent of the over 10 lakh registered doctors have taken the vaccine.

"Initially, like other healthcare workers, I presumed that the pandemic would be over soon. That was a while ago. But I am still hopeful. It was because of the vaccine that the infection rate among the healthcare workers dropped drastically in the second wave," Bhansali said.

The doctor's duty didn't end with the hospital, however. He started a helpline number with a group of other doctors to spread vaccine awareness, and "received 10-15 calls daily" about vaccination.

"With so much misinformation going on social media that vaccines can cause infertility and other health complications, many shied away from taking the jab. So, we also went door-to-door to counsel the citizens," he said.

According to Bhansali, he also raised funds through his NGO Golden Hour Foundation for the vaccination of slum dwellers in Mumbai, including a camp in Dharavi. The NGO later roped in Ajanta Pharma, World Trade Centre and others who chipped in with their CSR funds. "We have come a long way," he said.

In Delhi, Kumar received his first dose at a time when even doctors were apprehensive, as the clinical trial data had not been made public.

"Many of my co-workers refused to take the shot on the first day, especially after a security guard needed hospitalisation following a severe allergic reaction the same day. But after everyone saw that nothing had happened to me, around 40 others came forward later to get the vaccine," he said.

Kumar then convinced his mother and later his wife and brother, who works with Indigo Airlines, to get the vaccine. His family has got the second dose, too.

Recalling the second wave of April-May last year, when Delhi recorded over 13,000 Covid deaths, Kumar says he witnessed the difference the vaccines made.

"I saw many people who had been vaccinated get admitted to the hospital, but they got better quickly and were discharged. Those who were not vaccinated, on the other hand, had to be given oxygen and stayed in the hospital for longer," he said.

But the pressure, Kumar says, was crushing.

"Everyone was scared about their own and their family's well-being. Initially, even I was scared of going into the isolation ward when we did not know

much about the disease," he said.

In Mumbai, Bhansali says his younger son was only four when the pandemic started, and has hardly got to mingle with the father in the last two years. "But he never complains. He proudly calls me Superman," he said.

Adults jabbed

policy, will be examining the advanced clinical trial data on using a vaccine based on a platform different from the first two doses, for the third, "precaution" dose in the 60-plus age group.

"The primary work that NTAGI is doing at present is looking at a heterologous regimen within the existing groups which have been permitted precaution doses. Because that is where the clinical trials within the country are at an advanced stage," a senior government official said.

"The working group on Covid-19 within NTAGI is in close contact with the institutions conducting the heterologous clinical trials. Maybe data would be submitted to the drugs controller general by the end of January," the official said.

The sources also said that the government would look at lowering the age floor for the vaccination of children once a "substantial part of the 15-18 group" is covered.

"NTAGI has given a generic recommendation on vaccinating children starting from the older ones. They have said that you can cover in a staggered manner, top downwards. Within that recommendation, the government took the decision that first, the 15-18 group would be covered. Once we have vaccinated a substantial part of the 15-18, we will lower the age limit," a top source said.

About 46% of adolescents aged 15-18 years have received their first dose less than two weeks after vaccines were rolled out for them on January 3.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's vaccination programme had added great strength to the battle against the coronavirus, and praised the role of frontline workers in the drive.

As cumulative vaccinations touched 157 crore, Modi posted on Twitter: "Today we mark #1YearOfVaccineDrive. I salute each and every individual who is associated with the vaccination drive. Our vaccination programme has added great strength to the fight against Covid-19. It has led to saving lives and thus protecting livelihoods."

According to official estimates, 92% of the eligible adult population has received the first dose of the vaccine, and 70% have received both doses.

"...The role of our doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers is exceptional. When we see glimpses of people being vaccinated in remote areas, or our healthcare workers taking the vaccines there, our hearts and minds are filled with pride," Modi tweeted.

India completes a year of its vaccination drive — the first shots were administered on January 16, 2021 — amid the Omicron surge: On Sunday, the country's active caseload touched 15.50 lakh, and the weekly positivity rate was close to 14%. Third "precaution" doses of the vaccine are being given to vulnerable sections of the population — 17.92 lakh healthcare workers and 14.45 lakh frontline workers have received the precaution dose, according to official data.

Modi underlined the imperative of continuing to follow all Covid-19 protocols. "India's approach to fighting the pandemic will always remain science-based," he said. "We are also augmenting health infrastructure to ensure our fellow citizens get

proper care. Let us keep following all Covid-19 related protocols and overcome the pandemic," he tweeted.

While some high-performance states have pushed to achieve saturation first- and second-dose coverage, some continue to report vaccination coverage below the national average.

According to official data, Andhra Pradesh (72%) and Bihar (82%) are large states reporting first-dose coverage below the national average. Six large states are reporting second-dose coverage below the national average: Uttar Pradesh (57%), Andhra Pradesh (59%), Bihar (62%), Maharashtra (64%), West Bengal (64%), and Tamil Nadu (65%).

Among mid-sized states, two are reporting below-national-average-coverage for both the first and second doses: Jharkhand (75% and 47% respectively) and Punjab (81% and 48% respectively).

Four Northeastern states are reporting low first-dose coverage: Nagaland (50%), Manipur (69%), Meghalaya (61%), and Arunachal Pradesh (85%).

Four large states are reporting second-dose coverage above the national average: Gujarat (94%), Madhya Pradesh (92%), Karnataka (86%), and Rajasthan (73%).

There are five mid-sized states in this category: Telangana (94%), Haryana (79%), Kerala (77%), Assam (73%), and Odisha (72%).

"The entire world community is surprised with our efforts in fighting the Covid pandemic. Despite having a high density of population, we have been able to administer more than 156 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses. India has encountered various challenges along the journey but it is the resolve and dedication of more than 135 crore people that we could overcome every challenge," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said.

"Credit goes to our indigenous research and development and streamlined production and distribution of vaccines. Amidst the environment of criticism and disbelief, the country gathered its spirits and worked against those who wanted to spread doubts and misinformation against indigenous vaccines and create vaccine hesitancy," he said.

TMC-Cong

does not mean general secretary or a vice president. It means the person who is the main decision-maker of the party." Asked about Moitra's remarks, Congress leader P Chidambaram, the party's senior observer for Goa, said: "I have no desire to enter into a verbal exchange with Ms Mahua Moitra, Honourable MP". Sources in the Congress said the party is not exactly rushing in. "The state unit is dead against...The TMC has been poaching our leaders and now that they have realised they are not in a position to win any seats, they are talking about an alliance. If we enter into seat-sharing with the TMC, what signal will it send our leaders and cadre? It will be suicidal," a top Congress leader said.

The relationship between the Congress and the TMC came under strain after Banerjee's big victory in West Bengal last May. While she did meet Gandhi last July and joined a virtual meeting of Opposition called by her in August, ties took a hit after the TMC decided to enter Goa insisting that the Congress should reconcile to its diminished influence at the national level.

Moitra said TMC made the offer "in the interest of defeating the BJP", adding that the Congress has, at the highest level, sought more time to respond to

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EXPRESS AUDIO

Bishop Franco Mulakkal's acquittal: All you need to know

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Today on the 3 Things podcast, Vishnu Varma joins host Snigdha Sharma to discuss Bishop Franco Mulakkal's acquittal and what happen's next in the case

UP, Punjab among states that spent below avg on education

per cent in 2016-17 to 10 per cent in 2021-22, Punjab remained below the national average. Only Uttarakhand, at 17.3 per cent, spent more than the national average. Manipur spent 10.7 per cent, and Goa 13.1 per cent. As for state expenditure on health as a ratio to total expenditure, Punjab (3.4 per cent) and Manipur's (4.2 per cent) spending levels were below the national average of 5.5 per cent. Goa's health to total expenditure ratio was 6.8 per cent, Uttarakhand 6.1 per cent, and Uttar Pradesh 5.9 per cent.

Between 2016-17 and 2021-22, barring Manipur, spending on health improved for all states, in line with the national average moving up from 4.6 per cent to 5.5 per cent during the same period. In terms of overall spending on development activity, Punjab and Uttarakhand were below the national average. This is measured as development to GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) ratio, which basically reflects development expenditure as a proportion of the total economic output in a state. While the national average was 13.1 per cent in 2021-22, development expenditure to GSDP ratio for Punjab was the lowest at 11.5 per cent while that for Uttarakhand was 11.7 per cent. Manipur reported the highest (43.7 per cent), while UP and Goa were at 17.1 per cent and

STATE-WISE AVERAGE CPI INFLATION RATES (IN %)					
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Uttar Pradesh	4.3	2.4	3.8	5.9	6.1
Uttarakhand	3.7	3.9	4	5.9	8.1
Punjab	4.4	3.7	3.8	5	5.3
Manipur	10.1	12.4	8.7	6.9	6.7
Goa	5.1	3.8	2.6	4.3	6.9
All India	4.5	3.6	3.4	4.8	6.2

Source: RBI

17.9 per cent respectively, in 2021-22.

Between 2016-17 and 2021-22, Manipur recorded a rise in the ratio from 28.2 per cent to 43.7 per cent. For Punjab, it rose from 7.6 per cent to 11.5 per cent, while UP remained constant at 17.1 per cent. Goa recorded the sharpest fall from 21.3 per cent to 17.9 per cent, while Uttarakhand posted a marginal decline from 12.5 per cent to 11.7 per cent. "The development needs of each state are different depending on the initial conditions. A state with better health and education outcomes may need lesser expenditure compared to a state with a lower health and education outcome. Fiscal growth and fiscal position of a state have a larger bearing on developmental expenditure. Uttar Pradesh has been maintaining a revenue surplus from the last one-and-a-half decade, whereas Punjab has generally

remained a revenue deficit state. As a result, UP has been able to spend more on development expenditure compared to Punjab," Devendra Kumar Pant, Chief Economist, India Ratings, said.

Some of the states also reported higher inflation rates than the national average. For instance, Uttarakhand reported a higher inflation rate for four years (2017-18 to 2020-21). In 2020-21, the annual CPI inflation rate for Uttarakhand was 8.1 per cent as against the all-India level of 6.2 per cent; in 2019-20, it was 5.9 per cent as against the national average of 4.8 per cent.

In Punjab, the inflation rate remained above the national average for three of the last five years: 5 per cent as against 4.8 per cent national average in 2019-20; 3.8 per cent as against 3.4 per cent national average in 2018-19; and 3.7 per cent as against 3.6 per cent national average in 2017-18.

EDUCATION SPEND*			
State	2016-17	2021-22	
Punjab	8.6	10.0	
Manipur	12.2	10.7	
UP	16.7	12.5	
Goa	14.3	13.1	
Ukd	18.4	17.3	
National avg.	14.7	13.9	

DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE**			
State	2016-17	2021-22	
Punjab	7.6	11.5	
Ukd	12.5	11.7	
UP	17.1	17.1	
Goa	21.3	17.9	
Manipur	28.2	43.7	
National avg.	12.5	13.1	

Source: RBI
Note: All data in percentage
* Education expenditure as % of aggregate expenditure.
** Development expenditure as % of GSDP

Manipur reportes higher inflation rates for all the five years: 10.1 per cent in 2016-17, 12.4 per cent in 2017-18, 8.7 per cent in 2018-19, 6.9 per cent in 2019-20, 6.7 per cent in 2020-21. Experts said there could be both demand-side and supply-side factors contributing to the rise in inflation rates in these states.

Collarwali breathes her last: Pench reserve loses its ‘Supermom’

tracked Collarwali for seven years to study breeding and cub-raising among tigers, described her as "the pride of entire Madhya Pradesh".

"She was the first one to move out, and lived with her father T-1 who was one of the most dominating tigers of Pench. Much like him, Collarwali dominated the prey-rich area of the reserve and held the distinguished record of giving birth to five cubs in a litter in October 2010. It is rare for a tigress to give birth to five cubs in one go," he said.

Majumdar says he was part of the team that collared T-15 inside Pench on March 11, 2008, when he was a researcher with



Collarwali would happily show herself to tourists.
Sanjay Tiwari

Wildlife Institute of India (WII). "On May 20, 2008, we spotted her with three cubs, her first litter, but none survived. The autopsy found her cubs had died of

pneumonia. But then, on October 25 the same year, she gave birth to four cubs and raised all of them successfully," he said.

Two years later, Collarwali surprised everyone by delivering five cubs in a litter. "There is hardly any record of a tigress giving birth to five cubs at one go. She raised all of them. Over the years, she gave birth to 29 cubs...25 survived," Majumdar said.

According to officials, it is also rare for a tigress to give birth to 29 cubs -- in eight litters -- and successfully raise 25. This, they said, earned her the title of "Supermom" among wildlife lovers.

It's a tag that Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan under-

lined in his tribute on Twitter. "Collarwali tigress, also known as the queen of Pench and a Super Mom who birthed 29 cubs, played an important role in getting MP the tag of a tiger state. Pench Tiger Reserve will keep echoing with the roars of the queen's cubs," he wrote.

But that's not the only reason why Collarwali was popular. "She would walk out on the *kaccha* road when she heard jeeps coming, as if she wanted to be seen. We called her a tourist lover," said Sanjay Tiwari, a local social activist.

On Sunday, Collarwali was cremated. But according to Majumdar, her "glory still lives on".

the proposal.

"Two weeks ago, the principals have both spoken and we have put it out that two weeks ago we made a definite offer saying in the interest of defeating the BJP it is good if we go into an understanding in Goa. They have asked for more time at the principal level and we are waiting for them to revert," Moitra said.

"Even if we win three seats in four months and get more than 10 per cent of the vote, by any stretch of the imagination that is a fabulous result. Whereas the Congress has lost 90 per cent of polls it has contested in the last 10 years. The Congress is fighting polls in five states today. Tell me where it has a 100 per cent chance of forming a government? So who has got more to lose? We are not desperate. We are rational and logical, something that the Congress should

be. We have said all the time that the Congress cannot alone defeat the BJP because if they could do they could have done it," she said.

Asked if the TMC's alliance proposal to the Congress is limited to Goa, Moitra said, "Right now, Goa is the only state that is in common between us and the Congress. We are not fighting in Punjab, Manipur, up, so it obviously is about Goa now. But based on Goa, of course coming towards 2024, this will define what will happen next."

Incidentally, on January 10, Congress general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal had rejected reports as "baseless and untrue" that talks on a possible alliance with the TMC in Goa had figured in a meeting involving Congress MP Rahul Gandhi after his return from abroad.

Lakshya

finishing stages. The confidence and momentum he carries in crunch situations make Sen the most anticipated main act of 2022 in Indian badminton. The win -- which came on a day the Indian men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, 22, and Chirag Shetty, 25, beat thrice World Champions Hendra Setiawan and Mohamad Ahsan of Indonesia -- was proof that the age of the well-honed Indian men's badminton player, who is not a one-off like Prakash Padukone and P Gopichand, was here.

Regular one-on-one conversations with Padukone have guided Sen into the most purple

of patches on the international circuit.

Sen is an interesting case study in Indian sport. An example of early scouting by Padukone, handpicked at age 8, Sen has grown in the sport in the most ideal of conditions. He was blessed with supportive parents -- with his father being a certified coach -- the best of facilities and technical expertise at the Padukone academy, where he had Vimal Kumar as coach. He was also flush with funds, thanks to sponsorship from the government and the Olympic Gold Quest micro-managing every training step he took. Years of sustained, pinpoint planning makes him a project that's gone right in the Indian ecosystem.

Padukone ensured that Sen got training spots under some of the biggest names -- from Danish legend Peter Gade in France to most recently, Olympic champ Viktor Axelsen in Dubai -- to add minor dimensions to his game, and keep chiseling it over the years.

Sen has been on the international circuit more than any men's singles player in India, and has a line-up of quality sparring in Bangalore. The last missing piece was the incoming Korean coach, Sung Yoo Yong, who was shortlisted from amongst 15 options across Malaysia, Indonesia and Korea, over long Zoom interviews with the former Olympic medalist sitting in the USA.

At travelling physio, regular nutritional consults, and sleep monitoring -- all done by experts -- complete the

package of elite performance.

It was the Korean coach who strategised along with Vimal Kumar to counter Kean Yew, a breakthrough young champion who had blitzed into fame with his shocking speed-game. But it took an incredibly sophisticated mind to pull off the classy simplicity of not going overboard and eschew fancy attacks, while the opponent was doing just that. Even when Sen led 16-12 and 20-17 on the brink of winning, he didn't ram down the gears, keeping his head to calmly win after sticking to his plan throughout. Kean Yew has a crowding attack -- flat, fast exchanges that rattle opponents. The flurry had earlier claimed Kidambi Srikanth in the World Championships finals. Sen deftly slowed the pace, and refused to feed the shuttle to Kean Yew's racquet. His ability to come back from trailing positions -- which only Saina Nehwal can be said to have -- was the hallmark of Sen's title run.

Kean Yew fought back from 17-19 in the opener to go up 20-19 and had three set points thereafter. But Sen was not to be denied. He drew howlers out of Kean Yew -- silliest of serving errors and a smash into the net, a sitter on a yawning court. Sen would take the opener 24-22 with a bold drop skimming the sidelines. In the second, he kept a 3-point distance ahead of Kean Yew from 14-11 and didn't entertain last-minute drama, playing the steadiest in the tournament sealing sets.

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e-Tender for and on behalf of Chhattisgarh East Railway Limited is invited from bidders meeting qualifying requirements for the work of Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 Kv, 50 Hz, Single Phase, OHE traction System of Feeder Routes Baroni and Durgapur in Connection with New BG Electrified Double Line Rail Corridor in the State of Chhattisgarh Over South East Central Railway Between Kharsia and Dhamraijagarh with Spur line from Gharghodia to Bhalumura.

Estimated Cost of the work : Rs. 10,61,73,526/-

Last Date & Time of Bid Submission : 07.02.2022 & 15:00 Hrs.

For further details visit website https://tenders.gov.in/e procure/app. Amendments/ Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted on the website only.

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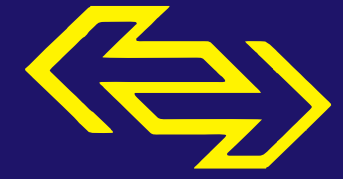
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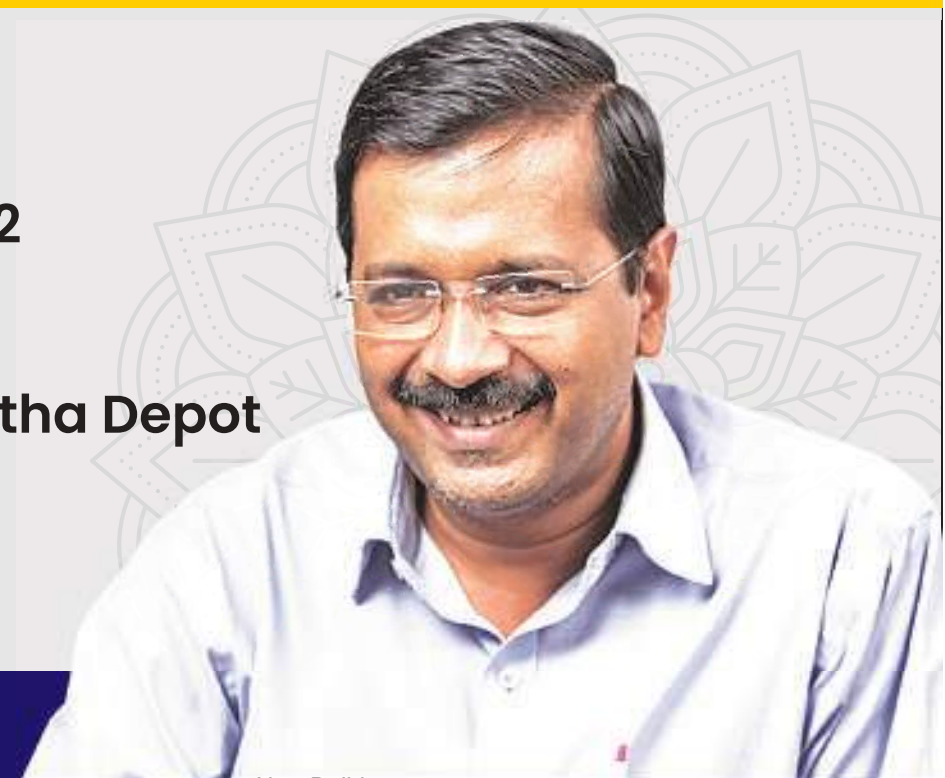
By
Shri Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Minister, Delhi

in the august presence of
Shri Kailash Gahlot
Transport Minister, Delhi

Date : 17 January 2022

Time : 12:00 Noon

Venue: DTC, Indraprastha Depot



4 THE CITY


**VACCINATIONS IN
LAST 24 HOURS**
1,65,924
**OMICRON
CASES**
549
PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: 2,711
OXYGEN SUPPORT 712
VENTILATOR SUPPORT 123
**DELHI: TOTAL
CASES**
17,09,970
HOSPITAL BEDS 4,433
ICU BEDS 3,641
**Total active cases in Delhi*
Total
15,499
Vacant
12,787
Deaths
4,433
Tests
3,641
NOIDA
Cases
1,817
Deaths
1
GURGAON
Cases
3,897
Deaths
2
Jan 15
1,498
Jan 16
0

NEXT UP, REACHING KIDS OUT OF SCHOOL NET

50% teens across capital vaccinated with first dose

Starting today, districts to identify homeless children, those at shelter homes, vaccinate them

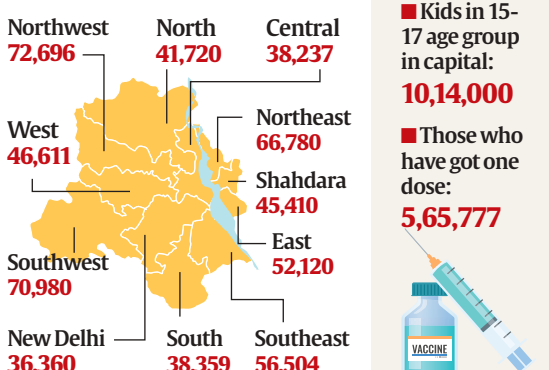
GAYATHRI MANI
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

MORE THAN 50% of children aged 15-17 years have received their first Covid vaccine dose, within two weeks of the immunisation drive opening for them.

According to officials, 500-600 government and private schools across the city have achieved 100% first dose coverage while the remaining schools will achieve 90% by next week. To cover the rest, especially school dropouts and children who are homeless or at shelter homes, district authorities will begin doorstep vaccination from Monday under the 'Har Ghar Dastak' scheme at slums, JJ clusters, and shelter homes.

A senior government official said: "Currently, districts have vaccinated more than 50% of children in Delhi. The participation of schools and the Directorate of Education in the vaccination drive has helped a lot — many schools have asked for camps to be set up on their premises while others are writing letters individually to gov-

HOW DISTRICTS FARE



MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO COVER THOSE LEFT:
Special camps, doorstep vaccination in all districts for children living on the streets, those at shelter homes

ernment dispensaries near them to set up vaccination camps... Government school principals and teachers are personally monitoring the vaccination status of each child as well."

The 11 district authorities have also tied up with several NGOs to vaccinate open school

students, children at shelter homes, and street kids. "There are several children in Delhi who have dropped out from schools during the pandemic or migrated. Now, all districts have been directed to focus on street children and those in shelter homes. An aggressive campaign



10 lakh teens are eligible for the shot. Prem Nath Pandey

has been started to cover all children (with one dose) by February 21," said the official.

Vaccination for this age group started on January 3. As per officials, the estimated teenage population in Delhi is 10,14,000, of which 5,65,777 have been inoculated with one dose of Covaxin as of January 16.

As per data shared by the Delhi government, Northwest Delhi takes the lead in vaccinating the most number of children — 72,696. It is followed by Southwest Delhi at 70,980; Northeast Delhi at 66,780; Southeast Delhi at 56,504; and East Delhi at 52,120.

New district has the lowest figures, vaccinating only 36,360 children. It is followed by Central Delhi at 38,237.

Savita Drall, Deputy Director of Education, Northwest Delhi B-II, said, "There has been a huge response from parents; several schools are even getting calls from parents of children in mid-level classes. The Directorate is closely monitoring the drive and taking vaccination status reports of children from each school. By next week, schools will achieve 80-90% vaccination. Only 10% parents are still hesitant to get their children vaccinated..."

Among schools that have vaccinated all students in the 15-17 age group is Apeejay School, Pitampura. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, principal Veena Goyal said: "We want our children to come back to school. It is not just important for academic reasons, but for their social, emotional, and mental health. Being locked up at home for almost two years now, many of them are suffering from isolation syndrome. Vaccination is going to be a big step in giving confidence to parents to send them back to school."

New strategy: Inform, sensitise public on Covid-19 protocol



An empty Sarojini Nagar market during weekend curfew on Sunday. Abhinav Saha

GAYATHRI MANI
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

IN ORDER to implement Covid-appropriate behaviour (CAB) strictly in markets, all districts have adopted a new strategy called Information, Education and Communication (IEC). Under this, authorities will not only impose fines, shut shops, and lodge FIRs, but will also educate violators about the importance of following Covid guidelines in public areas.

District authorities have increased the number of enforcement teams from 149 to 466 for stricter implementation of night and weekend curfew and to sensitise violators. These teams will now be posted at markets, malls, metro stations, ISBTs and other

public places to check the vaccination status of people. Anyone found not vaccinated, or due for the second dose, will be directed to the nearest vaccination centre.

"Due to the intensification of enforcement at public places, night curfew as well as weekend curfew is being strictly followed. Flying squads and enforcement teams are taking action against violators. A total of 3,691 challans were issued on December 15, which increased to 5,769 as on January 14," said a senior Delhi government official.

The official said enforcement teams are interacting with citizens and conducting meetings with RWAs and MTAs. "The idea behind this initiative is to tell people about the do's and don'ts of Covid guidelines. Apart from issuing challans, educating citi-

zens and creating awareness among them about the consequences of not wearing masks or following social distancing and why they should stay indoors unless there's an emergency is important."

So far, districts have made around 1.26 lakh public announcements, held 6,620 meetings with market associations, and 3,008 interactions with RWAs. Further, 466 district officials are authorised to issue challans and about 1,800 civil defence volunteers have been deployed across the city.

"LCD screens have also been set up in each district, and *nukkad natak*s and graphics films are being shown to people on vaccination and Covid-appropriate behaviour," said the official.

Cases dip below 20k, slight fall in positivity rate too

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

DELHI REPORTED 18,286 Covid cases on Sunday at a positivity rate of 27.87%, down from 30.64% reported on Saturday. This is the first time in at least a week that the positivity rate has fallen.

A slight dip in daily deaths was also reported, with 28 people succumbing to the disease on Sunday as opposed to 30 on

Saturday.

With testing in the city reducing after the new ICMR guidelines — as per which asymptomatic individuals, and contacts of Covid patients do not need to be tested unless identified as "high-risk individuals" based on age or co-morbidities — the total cases have dipped, even as the positivity rate has remained over 25%.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that the cases in Delhi have been declining for the past

three days.

"On January 14, Delhi recorded approximately 24,383 positive cases, while on January 15, it recorded 20,178 new cases... Weekend curfews have played a significant role in this decline. This trend indicates that the number of cases in Delhi is decreasing, but the government is still keeping a close eye on Covid cases, and it will take some time to understand the trend," he said.

Hospitalisation rates are still

low and around 17% of the total 15,499 beds set aside for Covid patients are occupied.

"The Delhi government is prepared to arrange a total of 37,000 beds. At the moment, 15,000 beds are operational. We can double the number of beds overnight, if necessary, but because the number of hospitalised patients is currently so low, the need to increase the number of beds doesn't seem to be arising soon. The government, on the other hand, is fully pre-

pared to deal with the most dire situations. In Delhi's hospitals, 13,000 beds remain currently vacant. Patients who are hospitalised due to Covid are either unvaccinated or have co-morbidities," Jain said.

"In Delhi, 100% of eligible people have received their first dose of vaccination, and 80% of people have received their second dose of vaccination... I would like to thank all frontline workers and all doctors for reaching this milestone," he added.

RUN UP TO MCD POLLS SLATED FOR APRIL

AIMIM to contest 70 seats, BSP to fight most wards

ABHINAV RAJPUT
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

AFTER AN unsuccessful bid to win any seats in the 2017 MCD polls, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) is set to contest around 70 seats this time and focus on areas with a sizeable Muslim and Dalit population. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which had won three seats in the last election, will also be fighting the polls from most seats.

The civic body elections are scheduled in April for 272 wards (104 each in North and South MCD and 64 in East).

AIMIM Delhi state president Kaleemul Hafeez said the party has conducted a ward-wise survey and decided that its main thrust would be on 30 seats under the East MCD, over 20 in the North Corporation, and 15 in South MCD areas.

The party, based primarily in Telangana and headed by Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, had contested nine seats in 2017 but could not open its account. After successful ventures in the Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka local bodies polls, the party is now hoping to expand its footprint in Delhi.

Hafeez said the party's main poll plank will be how unautho-

ritised colonies, jhuggi clusters, and Old Delhi areas where a majority of Muslim and Dalits live have been ignored on all parameters of development — whether it is opening health centres, quality schools, or sanitation.

"Muslims have been denied both *hissedari* (share) and *bhagidari* (participation) by the current political parties, AAP and BJP, ruling Delhi," he said.

The BJP has been ruling the MCDs since 2012, while AAP has been in power in the government for three consecutive terms.

Hafeez said besides this, the Northeast Delhi riots will be another point that the party will raise: "Whether it was the riots, or the treatment meted out to the community during the Tablighi Jamaat incident, Muslims are pained by the attitude of political parties with regard to them."

Meanwhile, BSP-in-charge in Delhi, C P Singh, said the party will work on poll exercises once the Election Commission decides the status of wards that are under the reserved category.

The party is currently ranked fourth in the civic body after the BJP, AAP, and Congress. In the 2017 polls, the Mayawati-led party had won two wards in East Delhi, Gharoli and Seelampur, and one in North Delhi, Rohini C, out of more than 200 seats it contested.

ABHINAV RAJPUT
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

ENTHUSED BY the party's success in the Chandigarh municipal corporation polls, Aam Aadmi Party leaders in Delhi are hoping to use the momentum and experiences gained in the upcoming MCD elections scheduled for April.

AAP came out as the single largest party in the Chandigarh polls, winning 14 of the 35 wards in the city. The BJP won 12, down from 20 in the previous election in 2016. However, AAP could not win the post of mayor due to one of its votes being declared invalid.

Senior leaders of the party said that advertising the Chandigarh results in the national capital, using banners, posters, and hoardings, has already begun. One such hoarding, installed by Leader of Opposition in the South MCD Prem Chauhan, sports the slogan 'Chandigarh me Bhajpa (BJP) haari Ab Dilli ki Bari'.

AAP MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said the Chandigarh result is significant because "the message was clear that people wanted AAP to rule the civic body".

He said, "We are a new party



particular cultural, linguistic and regional association".

He claimed that the issues that went against the BJP in Chandigarh were increased water charges, sewerage, parking lot rates as well as anti-incumbency: "In Delhi too, anti-incumbency is a major issue for the BJP, along with corruption in MCDs — the AAP hopes this will turn the tide in its favour. We also have a stronger base in the capital than in Chandigarh."

This message was also evident in Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's digital address to voters last week, where he said, "Go among the people to tell them how we have transformed schools, hospitals, roads, electricity and water supply; convince them that the AAP will implement the same radical changes when elected in their state."

Hitting out at the AAP, BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it must come clear on who it paid for the hoardings set up across South Delhi by its civic body leader.

The BJP has been ruling all three corporations in Delhi since 2012. It had swept the 2017 civic body elections, winning 181 out of 270 wards, while AAP came second.



Senior leaders said that advertising the Chandigarh results in the capital, using banners, posters, and hoardings, has begun

so some people may be confused if we would be able to get a proper majority... But now it is clear after Chandigarh that the AAP fights elections to win."

Drawing parallels with the two cities, a senior AAP leader said both Chandigarh and Delhi are Union Territories and multicultural in nature, which "helps the party as it does not have any

2 held for duping hundreds on pretext of giving bank loans

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

TWO PERSONS have been arrested for allegedly cheating hundreds across several states on the pretext of providing them bank loans. Police said the main accused, Geeta Chouhan and her associate Jitendra Singh, were arrested this week. Two other accused, Pushpendra Chouhan and Harish Baghel, were arrested in November last year.

According to police, Geeta and her husband Pushpendra lost their jobs during the Covid-induced lockdown in 2020 and decided to form a gang and allegedly cheat people on the pretext of providing them personal and business loans. They also posted ads through Google to lure their targets.

In May 2020, Delhi Police received a complaint from a man who runs a printing press in the city. The complainant, who wanted to set up a shop in Delhi and take a loan of Rs 45 lakh, saw one such ad on Google and contacted the phone number given.

The accused, posing as officials from a leading investment firm, promised to help the victim and asked him to pay Rs 45,000 as "processing fee".

"The victim received fake documents and was promised a loan. After receiving the initial amount, the accused said there

was some technical issue and managed to get the victim to pay Rs 13.5 lakh. Later, the man realised he was cheated," said police.

An investigation was conducted by the Crime Branch and Pushpendra and Harish were arrested from Bulandshahr last year.

Shibesh Singh, Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime), said, "Geeta Chouhan was on the run. Our team finally arrested Geeta and her associate Jitendra this week."

During questioning, Geeta said she used to run a salon while Pushpendra worked at a private company. During the first lockdown, they lost their jobs and had no savings.

Police said she operated two bank accounts in Agra for the operation. The couple hired two men, Jitendra and Harish, who posted ads on Google to target people.

Police further said Pushpendra and Geeta would speak to the victims and make them transfer Rs 40,000-Rs 50,000 in the name of processing fee for the loans. Some complainants were cheated of lakhs as the gang would lie about transactions and make them transfer more money.

A case of cheating and forgery has been registered against the gang. Police are also looking for victims across other states.

BY NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

On Republic Day, work by 500 artists to celebrate heroes of freedom struggle

VANDANA KALRA
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

ON JANUARY 26, as India celebrates its 73rd Republic Day, the festivities will also include a tribute to its freedom fighters. In an open gallery at Rajpath, the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) will showcase gigantic scrolls, each over 750 metres long, painted by over

500 artists from across India.

"We wanted to celebrate the unsung heroes, many of whom we have forgotten or don't know much about," said Adwaita Gadanayak, Director General of the NGMA, as he made the announcement over a press meet on Friday.

Largely painted during art camps held over the last month, apart from portraits and figurative narratives, the scrolls also re-

flect traditional art genres such as Pattচিত্র, Talapatra Chitra, Manjusha, Madhubani, and Patua.

"The NGMA organised these workshops with the aim of amalgamating varied forms of visual and performing arts of the country to represent the true essence of unity and diversity in India. I believe that the gigantic scrolls, when displayed at Rajpath, will garner interest of

each individual to delve deep into the history of the unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle and would also draw attention towards the unified visual aspects of modern, indigenous and contemporary arts

of India," said Gadanayak.

"We want as many people to see these works... It is probably for the first time that so many artists have worked together on an artwork under the aegis of the NGMA," he said.

The scrolls also refer to the artwork in the Constitution of India, with margins on the panels inspired by the artwork of Nandalal Bose and his associates, who illustrated the handcrafted

document.

While in Chandigarh the art camp was held on the Chitkara University campus ground, the Bhubaneswar edition saw artists come and paint at the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences and Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology ground.

Some of the artists, Gadanayak said, might travel to Delhi during the Republic Day celebrations.

SDMC school books may soon have a chapter on ‘Chhote Sahibzaade’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

SOON, STUDENTS studying in schools under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation may learn about the martyrdom of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

The ‘Chhote Sahibzaade’, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, were walled up alive on the orders of Wazir Khan, the Mughal faujdar of Sirhind, for refusing to renounce their faith and become Muslim.

SDMC education committee chairperson Nitika Sharma has requested the civic body to include a chapter in its school textbooks on the younger sons of the 10th Sikh guru.

Around 2.50 lakh children till Class V study in 568 schools under the SDMC.

In a letter to the director of the South MCD, Sharma said that the younger sons, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, were known for their bravery and courage.

“Chaar Sahibzaade is a term endearingly used for the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Taking this forward, we request you to include a chapter on the martyrdom of the Chote Sahibzaade,” read the letter.

They are “highly respected as they project unshaken patriotism and belief” in the previous era of Sikh religion, she added.

On the birth anniversary (Parkash Pura) of Guru Gobind Singh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had declared that the nation would henceforth observe December 26 as ‘Veer Baal Diwas’.

Veer Baal Diwas — a tribute to the bravery of children — is dedicated to the ‘Chhote Sahibzaade’.

OUT CAMPAIGNING FOR LOCAL CONG CANDIDATE

Chhattisgarh CM faces FIR in Noida for ‘flouting Covid norms’

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

WEEKS AHEAD of Phase 1 of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel held a door-to-door campaign in Noida’s Bahlohpur village on Sunday to drum up support for the local Congress candidate. Hours later, Noida Police lodged an FIR against Baghel and others for allegedly violating Covid protocol.

The Election Commission has banned physical rallies and gatherings till January 22 in view of a spike in Covid cases. The event was brought to the notice of the district’s returning officer, following which the FIR was filed under IPC sections 269 (acts spreading disease), 270 (spread of disease), 188 (disobedience of public order) and relevant sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act at Sector 113 police station.

Baghel kickstarted the campaign for the Congress by visiting five villages in and around Noida — he first went to Bishanpur and Chaura Raghunathpur where he conducted a door-to-door campaign, met families at Barola and Sorkha villages in the afternoon, and conducted another door-to-door drive at Bahlohpur. He also distributed pink wristbands to young girls, which had ‘Ladki Hoon Lad Sakti Hoon’ written on them.

Addressing a small rally at Bahlohpur for an hour, along with Noida candidate Pankhuri Pathak, Baghel said: “Other parties only talk about caste or religion... Nobody except the Congress talks about the common people and their problems.



Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and Congress candidate Pankhuri Pathak speak to families in Noida. Gajendra Yadav

Priyanka Gandhi ji and others believe in raising issues of women, farmers, people from backward communities. We have support from people on the ground...”

Pathak added, “I am a woman and I want other women to exercise their rights and vote. I want the girls to feel empowered. We spoke to many families and we want them to tell us their issues. We’ll help them.”

On the FIR, she said, “The Chhattisgarh CM had come here to meet people. There were only 3-4 of us. Police should have taken precautions if they are so worried about the crowd... We are not scared of FIRs. The Congress will fight this election by fair means.”

Meanwhile, families in Bahlohpur said they were “surprised” to see Baghel. Bobby Singh, a businessman from Haryana, said, “My mother and son met Baghel ji. He told us this was his first time here. He had tea at our house and asked us to

vote for the Congress... We told him we have been facing issues because of Covid-induced restrictions. He said his party workers will help us...”

Rajinder Chauhan, a shopkeeper in the area, said, “The door-to-door campaign was short... Residents met Baghel ji and he gave a small speech... and interacted with a few families. My children also took his wristbands. We thanked him for visiting us. Many leaders don’t come here...”

According to officials, candidates contesting in the first phase will begin filing their nominations on Friday. The nominations can be filed till January 21, which will then be examined by the Election Commission three days later. The last date of withdrawal of nominations is January 27.

Gautam Buddh Nagar district, under which Noida falls, will go to polls on February 10 and the results will be declared on March 10.

Court denies bail to GitHub app creator: ‘Can’t ignore ‘severity, gravity of his acts’

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16



Aumkareshwar Thakur (25)

A DELHI court Sunday denied bail to BCA graduate Aumkareshwar Thakur (25), who is accused of creating an app last year which posted pictures of Muslim women for “auction online”.

Denying him bail, Metropolitan Magistrate Vasundhara Chhaunkar observed that the court cannot ignore the “peculiar facts of the case which reflect on the severity and gravity of the alleged acts of the accused”.

“Misuse of technology and the impact of the alleged acts on the larger section of society cannot be reduced to negligible when being compared to other offences with harsher punishment,” the court said.

The case came to light in July 2021, when Muslim women were listed for “auction” on the app — hosted on US-based GitHub — with photographs sourced without permission and doctored.

This is the second bail application, in a similar case, which was dismissed by a Delhi court.

On January 14, a court denied

involved in the matter”.

The court noted that on the contrary, the investigating officer’s report stated that the accused was a part of “Trad Mahasabha and he created the app ‘Sulli Deals’ on GitHub”. “He and other persons posted pictures of various Muslim women for online auction,” it said.

The IO submitted that the term ‘Sulli’ was derogatory and aimed at insulting Muslim women.

The court said that the arguments of the defence counsel on the non-application of Section 153-(A) “does not hold any water”. It further said that the investigation is at a developing stage and the accused was arrested after a lot of time-consuming effort.

It observed that the accused concealed his identity using Tor Browser and that various complaints relating to the ‘Sulli deal’ case have come to light which are pending across India.

“Investigation is at a crucial stage, where crucial evidence and further chain of events are yet to be conclusively unearthed. Granting bail to accused at this juncture will prejudice a fair investigation,” the court said.

‘Kindness walls’ to be set up at 300 Delhi government schools

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

AMIDST A harsh winter and a fresh Covid wave, 300 government schools have been selected under a pilot project to encourage ‘Good Samaritan’ behaviour by setting up ‘Kindness Walls’.

The initiative, to “promote the spirit of anonymous giving” and “set up a model in this regard” for students, is to support people who wish to make donations in kind and need help reaching those who might need it.

The ‘Kindness Wall’ is to be a portion of the outer face of the boundary wall of the selected government school, marked with a large red poster saying that it is a ‘Neki Ki Deewar’. Multiple hooks are to be at-

The schools have been selected under a pilot project to encourage ‘Good Samaritan’ behaviour

tached to the wall, where people willing to donate any item — clothes, food, shoes — can hang it up. “Those in need” may pick them up from the wall at any time. Schools have been told that this should be “promoted as an anonymous giving and receiving initiative where the dignity of the receiver is upheld all the time”.

According to an education department official, the central position of public schools in community life as well as in relief

work during the pandemic made them ideal for this initiative.

“It is basically to encourage good samaritans to donate anything that they have in excess to those who might need it. We chose school walls as a school is usually the most prominent building in the neighbourhood and is accessible to everyone. Schools have also served many functions — as food distribution centres, vaccination centres, shelter homes — which is also why we think they are the ideal place,” said the official.

The selected schools, with boundary walls facing roads or main streets, are to set up the designated portion of the wall at a place easily accessible to the public, who are willing to take part in the activity without disturbing the school’s functioning.



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Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran

Offers e-Auction of

Residential & Commercial Special Preferential/ Preferential Sites in All Zones

and Residential & Commercial Properties in Panchkula & Faridabad Zones

On 30th January, 2022

Special Preferential/Preferential Residential properties of all Zones			
Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	No. of Plots	
1	9-A, Gurugram-I	6	
2	10, Gurugram-I	2	
3	23-23A, Gurugram-I	10	
4	31-32A, Gurugram-II	1	
5	38, Gurugram-II	4	
6	39, Gurugram-II	6	
7	45, Gurugram-II	1	
8	46, Gurugram-II	7	
9	50, Gurugram-II	2	
10	51, Gurugram-II	1	
11	52, Gurugram-II	5	
12	57, Gurugram-II	6	
13	16-Def, Rewari	4	
14	6, Dharuhera	5	
15	6 (Part-II), Dharuhera	4	
16	9-A, Mahendergarh	6	
17	21-B, Faridabad	1	
18	56-56A, Faridabad	1	
19	62, Faridabad	20	
20	12, Palwal	19	
21	21, Panchkula	3	
22	27, Panchkula	4	
23	30, Pinjore	9	
24	8, Ambala	6	
25	9, Ambala	2	
26	10, Ambala	6	
27	4, Naraingarh	1	
28	18 (Part-II), Jagadhari	5	
29	18, Kalthal	4	
30	21, Kalthal	3	
31	5, Karnal	1	
32	6, Karnal	2	
33	32-P, Karnal	1	
34	33-P, Karnal	2	
35	25, Rohtak	13	
36	27-28-26 (P-I), Rohtak	1	
37	9, Bahadurgarh	1	
38	9-A, Bahadurgarh	3	
39	13, Bahadurgarh	5	
40	JH-6, Jhajjar	1	
41	9 (Part-A), Jhajjar	9	
42	9 (Part-B), Jhajjar	1	
43	13, Panipat	3	
44	15 (P-I), Sonipat	1	
45	23, Sonipat	13	
46	7, Gohana	1	

Special Preferential/Preferential Commercial properties of all Zones			
Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	No. of Plots	
1	9, Gurugram-I	3	
2	9-A, Gurugram-I	3	
3	10, Gurugram-I	1	
4	15-I, Gurugram-I	2	
5	22, Gurugram-I	3	
6	43, Gurugram-II	4	
7	45, Gurugram-II	7	
8	46, Gurugram-II	2	
9	47, Gurugram-II	1	
10	53, Gurugram-II	4	
11	MTS Kosli	5	
12	1 (Part-I), Narnaul	7	
13	3, Faridabad	1	
14	8, Faridabad	2	
15	14, Faridabad	1	
16	16-A (P-I & II), Faridabad	9	
17	17, Faridabad	4	
18	18 (P-I & II), Faridabad	5	
19	19 (Phase-I), Faridabad	9	
20	28, Faridabad	2	
21	30, Faridabad	3	
22	46, Faridabad	1	
23	48, Faridabad	3	
24	58, Transport Nagar, Faridabad	2	
25	8, Panchkula	1	
26	9, Panchkula	1	
27	10, Panchkula	2	
28	21, Panchkula	1	
29	23, Panchkula	3	
30	26, Panchkula	2	
31	27, Panchkula	1	
32	28, Panchkula	2	
33	1, Ambala	1	
34	8, Ambala	5	
35	10, Ambala	1	
36	3, Naraingarh	1	
37	2, Kurukshetra	3	
38	Old Tehsil Complex, Karnal	3	
39	8, Karnal	1	
40	12, Karnal	1	
41	4-EXT, Rohtak	2	
42	Old ITI, Rohtak	5	
43	6, Bahadurgarh	1	
44	7, Sonipat	5	
45	23, Sonipat	4	
46	15 (P-I), Sonipat	3	

Residential properties of Panchkula Zone			
Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	No. of Plots	
1	21, Panchkula	22	
2	25, Panchkula	1	
3	26, Panchkula	1	
4	28, Panchkula	10	
5	31, Panchkula	3	
6	30, Pinjore	15	
7	15, Jagadhari	3	
8	18, Jagadhari	1	
9	18, Kalthal	6	
10	21, Kalthal	6	
11	8, Ambala	5	
12	5, Karnal	2	
13	6, Karnal	4	
14	9, Karnal	8	
15	14 (P-II), Karnal	3	
16	16, Karnal	7	
17	33-P, Karnal	19	
18	Taraori	5	

Residential properties of Faridabad Zone			
Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	No. of Plots	
1	2, Faridabad	3	
2	8, Faridabad	5	
3	62, Faridabad	36	
4	64, Faridabad	21	
5	65, Faridabad	18	
6	76, Faridabad	7	
7	56-56A, Faridabad	1	
8	2, Palwal	4	
9	12, Palwal	8	

Commercial properties of Faridabad Zone			
Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	No. of Plots	
1	2, Faridabad	2	
2	3, Faridabad	8	
3	7, Faridabad	15	
4	8, Faridabad	6	
5	18 (P-I), Faridabad	7	
6	19 (Phase-I), Faridabad	6	
7	30, Faridabad	7	
8	37, Faridabad	4	
9	2-P, Palwal	6	

Registrations will close one day before the scheduled date of e-Auction, at 5 pm.

e-Auction Portal <https://hsvphry.org.in>
e-Auction will start at 10:00 AM
Loan Facility From Lending Banks*
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* The competent authority can withdraw any site from e-auction without any notice.

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The detailed information of the sites and terms & conditions of e-auction will be available on <https://hsvphry.org.in>.

New Delhi

6 DECISION 2022

UTTAR PRADESH • UTTARAKHAND • PUNJAB • GOA • MANIPUR

HASHTAG POLITICS



● Musical dig at BJP

Bhojpuri singer Neha Singh Rathore has come up with a song targeting the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, which is going viral across social

media platforms. Titled 'UP Mein Kya Ba', the song questions the Yogi Adityanath government on its handling of the Covid crisis, the Lakhimpur Kheri case, the Hathrase case, and more.

14.3K LIKES, 4.6K RETWEETS IN 17 HOURS

● Sidhu invitation to Musk

Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu on Sunday invited Elon Musk to set up a Tesla plant in Punjab. "Punjab Model will create Ludhiana as hub for Electric Vehicles & Battery industry with time bound single window clearance for investment that brings new technology to Punjab, create green jobs, walking path of environment preservation & sustainable development," Sidhu tweeted.

6.7K LIKES, 1.3K RETWEETS IN 8 HOURS

● Ticket trolling

With the Opposition in UP taking potshots at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for 'retreating' to the safe seat of Gorakhpur, @BJP4UP Sunday targetted his prime opponents, asking where they would fight polls from. In a tweet, UP BJP said it was after 18 years that a sitting UP Chief Minister was contesting elections. Akhilesh Yadav has not yet announced which seat he would contest from, while Mayawati has made it clear she is not in the poll fray herself.

2.7K LIKES, 792 RETWEETS IN 10 HOURS

BALLOTIN

Goa: 2 cops on election duty die after being run over by car

Panaji: Two police constables on election duty were killed when a speeding car ran them over in Seraulim, South Goa, late on Saturday night. Following the incident, the driver of the sedan was arrested, South Goa Superintendent Abhishek Dhanias said. He said the medical reports of the driver had been received and it was found that he was driving while drunk. The policemen who died were identified as constable Shailesh Gaonkar of the Goa Police and constable Vishwas Deykar of IRB. They were on 'naka duty' as per the guidelines of the Election Commission of India, Dhanias said. They were tasked with screening suspicious vehicles. While investigation into the incident in ongoing, the police said that the driver had claimed he did not see the two constables. The police had lodged a case of causing death by negligence, and more sections of the IPC may be added to the FIR as the investigation progresses, police officials said. **ENS**

'WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND JOD-TOD KI RAJNEETI'

Kejriwal rules out joining Opposition alliance in Goa

MAYURA JANWALKAR PANAJI, JANUARY 16

WE DON'T understand "jod-tod ki rajneeti" (the politics of making and breaking)" and the people of Goa are not interested in it, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday, ruling out a pre-poll alliance with the Trinamool Congress that has been calling for Opposition unity to fight the BJP in the state.

"We (AAP) don't understand this jod-tod ki rajneeti. We are very simple and innocent people... this Opposition unity, 'we will come together to defeat this party'... people have nothing to do with this. People want their lives to be better, their children to get good education, if someone is sick in the family, they should get good treatment. That is what we are ready to do. I know how to bring about development. For jod-tod, they (all other political parties) are all sitting there. They do this all night," Kejriwal said at a press conference in Goa's Dona Paula.

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal campaigns in Goa's Cortalim constituency. *Twitter/AAPGoa*

VOTING ON FEBRUARY 14

When asked about the possibility of an alliance with the TMC, Kejriwal responded with a straight: "No".

However, he conceded that the party may rethink its position if the Assembly election throws up a fractured mandate.

"If people give such a (divided) mandate that a post-election coalition becomes necessary, then we can think of forming a coalition with a non-BJP party after election. I hope there will be no need for it," he said.

The Delhi Chief Minister made the statements after the TMC invited opposition parties for talks to come together to fight the ruling Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) in Goa.

Earlier, TMC's Goa in-charge Mahua Moitra said that the party was willing to walk the "last mile" to do what was necessary to defeat the BJP in Goa. "BJP is the biggest enemy and the enemy is not within us (Opposition parties). To defeat them, TMC will walk the last mile... Our ego will not stand in the way of anybody," Moitra had said.

Both AAP and TMC are looking to expand their national footprint by making inroads into Goa, which will elect its next legislative Assembly on February 14.

So far, the TMC's call for Opposition unity has met with a mixed response. Congress leaders have been sceptical over the proposal although Vijai Sardesai — the president of the Goa Forward Party, which is in a pre-poll alliance with the Congress, has publicly sought an Opposition-led 'Team Goa' to fight the BJP.

TMC leaders did not immediately respond to Kejriwal's statement on an anti-BJP front.

DARA SINGH CHAUHAN JOINS SP

Dara Singh Chauhan with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav at the party office in Lucknow on Sunday. Chauhan, a former minister in the Yogi Adityanath government, officially joined the SP on Sunday. Criticising his former party, Chauhan said the BJP had forgotten its 2017 poll slogan of "Sabka saath, sabka vikaas" (unity and development for all)".

Express

'Not desperate in Goa... we are open to an alliance with Cong just to defeat BJP'

SOURAV ROY BARMAN & MANOJ CG NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

The Trinamul Congress (TMC)'s MP and Goa in-charge Mahua Moitra speaks to *The Indian Express* ahead of the 14 February Goa Assembly elections.

You have said that it would have been better if TMC had started its Goa campaign earlier. So, realistically, is it possible for the TMC to take on well-entrenched parties like BJP and Congress in the state?

I never said TMC was late in entering Goa. I had said given the historical circumstances, we could not have entered it earlier, because we were very busy fighting the 2021 Assembly polls (in West Bengal), defeating the BJP. At that point we could not have been distracted. But there is a great necessity for us to have come here now. Because had the Congress done its job in defeating the BJP, there would not have been any need for us to be here. Because the goal is not to remove the Congress, but the BJP. Under the circumstances I think we have done the right thing.

Your tweet suggests that you have reached out to the Congress or at least there is an attempt to forge a coalition to take on the BJP. When did this happen?

Two weeks ago there was a definitive offer made. The question is that we have to defeat the BJP. The Congress alone could not do it. It is very simple. If anyone believed that the Congress on its own could get 25 seats in Goa today then there is no problem. There would not have been any need for us to be here... You must understand for anyone fighting the BJP, it is not enough to get a simple majority. You need a simple majority plus a large buffer. Two weeks ago, the principals have both spoken and we put it out that in the interest of defeating the BJP, it is good if we go into an understanding in Goa. They have asked for more time at the principal level and we are waiting



THE EXPRESS

INTERVIEW

WITH

MAHUA MOITRA

TMC'S GOA IN-CHARGE

for them to revert.

For clarity, by principals you mean West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has spoken to the Congress president?

Is Mr Chidambaram the principal of this party? No. By principal, you mean the absolute top leadership of the party. It does not mean the poll in-charge, does not mean the state in-charge, does not mean general secretary or a vice president. It means the person who is the main decision-maker of the party.

You had seemed ready to take on the BJP very aggressively. So what has changed in the last 3-4 months that you have to pick up the phone and speak to Mrs Gandhi?

We don't have to. TMC has won in Bengal, we have won the last three polls in Bengal in spite of everything thrown at us... I find it amusing that Congressmen are saying Trinamool is desperate... We are not desperate, we are rational and logical, something that the Congress should be. We have said all the time that the Congress cannot alone defeat the BJP because if they could do it they could have done it.

FULL INTERVIEW ON
www.indianexpress.com

Behind chorus seeking poll deferment a sign of growing influence of Ravidassia community

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA JALANDHAR, JANUARY 16

LESS THAN a month before the Punjab Assembly elections, Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, on Saturday, urged the Election Commission of India to defer the February 14 polls by six days in view of the birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas that falls on Feb 16.

Channi's move testifies to the growing influence of the Ravidassia community, followers of Guru Ravidas, over the politics of Punjab which accounts for about 32 per cent Dalit population, highest in the country in percentage terms.

Dalits are concentrated even more in Punjab's Doaba region, where the Ravidassia community's largest dera (religious place), Dera Sachkhand, is based in Ballan village.

Dera Sachkhand Ballan has lakhs of followers around the world. In Punjab, it has about 15 lakh followers, mostly from the Doaba region.

Although Dera Sachkhand Ballan has never come out openly in favour of any political party, no party can afford to ignore it, especially in the time of elections, in their bids to woo Ravidassia voters.

That explains why politicians from across the political spectrum make a beeline to visit the Dera and meet its head Sant Niranjana Das in the run-up to every election. And this time too, besides CM Channi, AAP supremo and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, Shiromani Akali Dal chief

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi with the head of Dera Ballan during a recent visit. *File*

BJP ALSO ASKS EC TO POSTPONE POLLS

Chandigarh: After Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and former CM Capt Amarinder asked for postponement of Punjab elections, the state unit of BJP has also written to the Election Commission saying the polls be postponed till after the Guru Ravi Dass Jayanti. **ENS**

Sukhbir Badal and senior BJP leaders have already visited the Dera ahead of the upcoming polls.

According to the 2011 Census, of Doaba's total 52.08 lakh population, 19.48 lakh (around 37%) are Dalits. Doaba comprises of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr and Kapurthala districts. Of Doaba's Dalit population, about 11.88 lakh people belong to the Ravidassia community. A key region for Dalit politics, Doaba is dotted with hundreds of deras, among which Dera Sachkhand Ballan is the largest and most influential. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com

After BJP 'snub', JD(U) to fight UP polls alone

SANTOSH SINGH PATNA, JANUARY 16

HAVING FAILED to strike an alliance with the BJP, the Janata Dal (United) has decided to contest the Uttar Pradesh polls alone. The party said its leaders will now meet in Lucknow on January 18 to take a call on its candidates.

"We waited till last moments for alliance with BJP," JD (U) national spokesperson KC Tyagi told *The Indian Express*. "Our party colleague and Union minister RCP Singh had been in talks with top BJP leaders. But it did not work out. We have now decided to go it all alone in UP."

The JD(U) had submitted to the BJP a list of 31 candidates as a proposal to fight the polls jointly, but said the ruling party had not responded to the offer. Tyagi said although the JD(U) was not adamant on contesting on a specific number of seats, it did not get any "concrete word" from BJP.

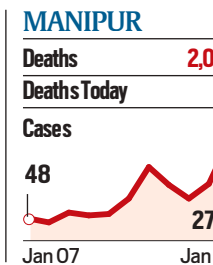
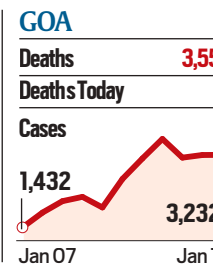
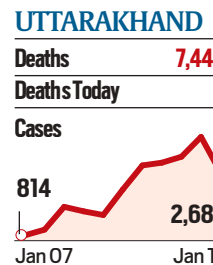
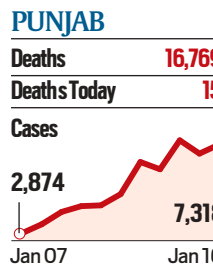
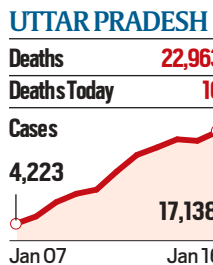
Recently, while releasing its first list of candidates, the BJP, which has an alliance with the JD(U) in neighbouring Bihar, had not named the party as its partner for the UP polls.

Tyagi, however, said the decision to go alone in UP will not affect the alliance between the two parties in Bihar.

"It should not happen as we had contested alone in Jharkhand (too). We are an independent party and would try to work towards our growth and expansion," Tyagi said.

Asked what the JD(U)'s line of attack against the BJP in the UP polls would be, Tyagi said: "We will talk about the Bihar model of governance and social empowerment. UP has not achieved the kind of social empowerment we have achieved in Bihar."

TRACKING COVID IN ELECTION-BOUND STATES



AFTER DENIAL OF TICKET

Channi's brother says will contest Punjab polls as Independent

JAGDEEP SINGH DEEP MOHALI, JANUARY 16

PUNJAB CM Charanjit Singh Channi's brother, Dr Manohar Singh, who was eyeing a Congress ticket from Bassi Pathana Assembly seat, said on Sunday that he will contest from the constituency as an Independent. He made this announcement after the ruling party fielded its sitting legislator, Gurpreet Singh GP, from the seat.

About who sabotaged his chances of getting the ticket, Dr Manohar Singh said that the state Congress president was the main culprit.

"Some people had given a negative feedback to the high command. Yes, the party president is also involved, but I will contest the elections," Dr Manohar Singh added.

Singh had in August last year resigned as a senior member of Kharar civil hospital. Singh, who is MS (Anaesthesia), also has a post-graduate degree in journalism and has done LLB.

He told *The Indian Express* that people of Bassi Pathana

VOTING ON FEBRUARY 14

wanted him to contest the elections so he had resigned from his job and decided to contest the elections.

"It is the people who want me to contest the elections, I am just doing the same," he said.

Singh said he will talk to his brother Channi and convince him about his decision to contest as an Independent. "People told me it was wrong to give the ticket to him (Gurpreet Singh GP)," said Singh, adding that the sitting legislator was "incapable and ineffective".

Dr Manohar Singh was posted as SMO in Anandpur Kalour and he alleged that he was transferred from there on the behest of sitting MLA Gurpreet Singh GP. The transfer had led to bickering between GP and Dr Singh.

Last year, Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu had inaugurated the poll office of Gurpreet Singh GP at Bassi Pathana constituency.

—WITH PTI INPUTS

POLITICS & FAMILY

After Maurya's revolt, daughter Sanghmitra braces for more challenges ahead as a BJP MP

MAULSHREE SETH LUCKNOW, JANUARY 16

WHILE PROMINENT UP OBC leader Swami Prasad Maurya joined the Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party (SP) Friday after resigning as minister from the Yogi Adityanath government, the political journey of his daughter Sanghmitra Maurya, BJP MP from Badaun, seems to have become more challenging now.

Maurya has been in the spotlight after emerging as the first UP minister who raised the banner of revolt against the ruling BJP. Joining the SP along with his son Utkrist, he vowed to work for ousting the saffron party in the upcoming UP Assembly elections.

With both her father and her brother now becoming the saffron party rebels, the 37-year-old Sanghmitra is now bracing to face some political turbulence in the rough and tumble of UP politics, even as she has decided to continue as a BJP MP.

Following in her father's footsteps, Sanghmitra had joined politics several years ago, leaving her professional career as an



Sanghmitra Maurya

MBBS doctor. She had been initially with the BSP along with her father and brother.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Sanghmitra had contested on the BSP ticket against SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav in the Mainpuri constituency and lost the polls.

She had joined Maurya and Utkrist when they switched from the BSP to the BJP in 2016.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, far from the strongholds of her father in eastern UP, Sanghmitra contested the election as a BJP candidate from Badaun, a traditional SP stronghold, and won the seat by defeating Dharmendra Yadav, a cousin of Akhilesh Yadav.

During the monsoon session of Parliament last year, Sanghmitra

had made waves by raising the demand for a caste-based census, putting the ruling BJP in a spot.

In the wake of defection of Maurya and Utkrist from the BJP, Sanghmitra admits the road ahead for her would be difficult as the BJP rank and file would continue to target them and rake up their rebellion. She, however, maintains she will continue to fulfil her responsibilities as a BJP MP.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Sanghmitra said, "You face troubles everywhere. I know how to face them. I know how to struggle."

Maurya's move might ensure an SP ticket for Utkrist, who had lost two previous Assembly polls from the Unchahar constituency to the SP. "It is up to the SP leadership to give him (Utkrist) a ticket and even if he is not, I am sure he would work with dedication. I might not be able to support him politically but would back him as his sister," said Sanghmitra, who follows Buddhism. She added, "Party alog hai, party ki baat party mein. Pariwar apni jagah. (Party politics and family are two separate things)."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

SP list full of mafia, rioters: BJP

Adityanath says those responsible for Kairana ‘exodus’ fielded by Opp party

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 16

THE BJP on Sunday targeted rival Samajwadi Party over the latter’s list of candidates, accusing the party of fielding professional criminals and “those responsible for the exodus of Hindu traders from Kairana” in west UP.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that while on one hand, the first list of BJP was a “symbol of social justice”, the Samajwadi Party’s list, on the other hand, is full of “professional history-sheeters, rioters from Muzaffarnagar and criminals who forced exodus of Hindu traders from Kairana”.

Without naming anyone, Adityanath said: “Samajwadi Party aur gathbandhan ki jo suchi aayi hai, usko sabne dekha hai... Kairana mein Hindu vyapariyon ke palayan ke liye jimmedar logon ko ticket dena, Muzaffarnagar ke dangayon ko ticket dena, Bulandshahr aur Loni mein peshewar history-sheeter aur apardhiyon ko ticket dena, ye SP aur gathbandhan ke charitra ko ujagar kar deta hai” (The list of the Samajwadi Party and its alliance partner has been seen by all... It has given tickets to those



BJP state chief Swatantra Dev Singh (left) and Union minister Anurag Thakur induct former IPS officer Asim Arun (centre) into the party in Lucknow on Sunday. Express

who forced exodus of Hindu traders in Kairana, rioters of Muzaffarnagar, professional criminals in Bulandshahr and Loni. This reflects the true character of SP and its alliance,” he said.

“In peshewar mafio ko satta mein la karke shoshan ka pratik ban, yahi inka samajik naya hai aur yahi inke ticket mein bhi spashita jhalakta hai (Bringing professional criminals in the government and then becoming the symbol of exploitation is their ‘social justice’, which is reflective in their ticket distribution as well),” Adityanath added.

He also accused the previous

Samajwadi Party government led by Akhilesh Yadav of being “hand in gloves with mafia”. “The SP has once again made its intentions clear by distributing tickets to criminals and rioters... It shows their dual character and the politics of hate,” the chief minister said.

While Adityanath did not name any SP candidate, BJP leader and Union Minister Anurag Thakur took the name of SP candidate from Kairana Nahid Hasan. “If you see MLA Nahid Hasan, he is SP’s candidate number one. He is in jail,” said Thakur.

“If you see the list of SP candidates, it starts from the one in jail,

and ends with the one on bail. The game of jail-bail is the real khel (game) of the Samajwadi Party,” Thakur said at an event where former Kanpur Police Commissioner Asim Arun joined the BJP.

Sources in the BJP said the CM was referring to Madan Bhaiya, who has been fielded by SP from Loni and has reportedly 31 cases registered against him, including murder cases.

The SP has fielded Haji Yunus from Bulandshahr.

Sitting Samajwadi Party MLA from Kairana, Nihad Hasan on Friday became the first candidate to file his nomination papers. The two-time SP MLA from Kairana constituency in Shamli district was on Saturday sent to 14-day judicial custody by a special court after being arrested in a case from February last year filed under the Gangsters Act, officials said.

Hasan and his mother,

Tabassum Hasan, who is a former MP from Kairana, were named as accused in the case along with 38 others. Tabassum Hasan had got anticipatory bail in the case. Police said Nahid, who was “absconding”, had reached the Kairana court to surrender on Saturday afternoon, and the court sent him to 14 days in judicial custody.

BKU chief extends support to SP-RLD

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

BHARTIYA KISAN Union president Naresh Tikait has extended his support to the SP-RLD alliance for the Uttar Pradesh elections.

Terming the polls a “testing time” for farmers, the BKU chief appealed to the people to support the alliance’s candidates in their respective constituencies.

In the Western UP region, Rashtriya Lok Dal will fight in 26 out of 36 seats in the first phase.

“This is a historic region. It is a matter of pride for us. I appeal to everyone to speak to their family members and others to show support for the alliance candidates. We must use all possible means, which is basically to request people to show support. This is a testing time for us and we must help the alliance,” said Tikait, while addressing farmers and local residents in Muzaffarnagar’s Sisauli town.

Tikait, the son of Mahendra Singh Tikait and elder brother of Rakesh Tikait, is an influential Jat leader in Western UP. Following the withdrawal of farm protests at Delhi’s borders, the Tikait brothers have been meeting with residents of Muzaffarnagar and other parts of Western UP to muster support against the BJP.



Naresh Tikait

In a show of strength during the Kisan Mahapanchayat in Muzaffarnagar last year, the BKU had stated that it would work to defeat BJP in the polls but would not contest elections.

RLD, too, had also held a series of mahapanchayats emphasising on the importance of farm unity against the ruling government.

With BKU now throwing its weight behind the alliance, RLD will look to capitalise on the farmer issues that have dominated the region’s narrative since the protests. Land-owning Jats make up between 12-17 per cent of the electorate in the region’s 18-odd districts.

The alliance has fielded Rajpal Baliyan from Budhana and Chandan Chauhan from Meerapur, both in Muzaffarnagar — the hometown of the Tikaits. The support also comes at a time Rakesh Tikait is looking to rekindle protests with a visit to Lakhimpur Kheri and a call for a “betrayal day” on January 31.

BJP bringing workers from Gujarat to spread rumours, hate: Akhilesh

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 16

SAMAJWADI PARTY (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday accused the BJP of “importing workers from Gujarat” to train its cadre in Uttar Pradesh to spread “hatred and rumours”. He asked the Election Commission (EC) to take cognisance of the matter and send back such workers, failing which, he claimed, elections might not remain impartial.

The former chief minister made the remarks while addressing the media after inducting into the party former state minister Dara Singh Chauhan, and Apna Dal (Sonela) MLARK Verma who represents the Vishvanathganj constituency in Pratapgarh district.

“Who does not know that people from Gujarat have already come to UP? ... I will appeal to the EC. None of my workers has come from other states following [Covid] protocols. Whoever has come from other states, they should be sent back,” Yadav said.



Akhilesh Yadav

He added, “I will release photographs proving that Gujarat people have taken training here to spread hate and lies in UP”.

A day after the polling body issued a notice to the SP’s general secretary for alleged violation of the Model Code of Conduct and Covid-19 protocols at a gathering outside the party office in Lucknow on Friday, Akhilesh appeared cautious and ensured every leader present on the stage wore masks.

Meanwhile, Dara Singh Chauhan lashed out at his former party, the BJP, saying it had forgotten its 2017 poll slogan of “Sabka saath, sabka vikaas [unity and development for all]”. Singh added, “They took the saath [association] of everyone but only a few people got prosperity.”

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that my client Smt. Gunjan Kumar, w/o Ashwani Kumar, has purchased ground floor portion of house no. A-139, pocket-8, Kalkaji Extension, New Delhi from Sh. Vipen Parwanda and Smt. Sarita Parwanda on 15.01.2010, vide sale deed duly registered with the office of the Sub-Registrar-V, Mehrauli, New Delhi. On failure of Sh. Vipen Parwanda and Smt. Sarita Parwanda to hand over peaceful vacant possession of the property, a suit for possession was filed in the competent court, which has been decreed by the Court of Ms. Geetanjali, ADJ, South East, Saket Courts, New Delhi in favour of my client Smt. Gunjan Kumar and Sh. Vipen Parwanda and Smt. Sarita Parwanda have been directed to hand over peaceful vacant possession of the said property to Smt. Gunjan Kumar vide judgment and decree dated 05.01.2022.

The public in general is cautioned not to deal with Sh. Vipen Parwanda and Smt. Sarita Parwanda or with anybody on behalf of Sh. Vipen Parwanda and Smt. Sarita Parwanda with respect to ground floor portion of house no. A-139, Pocket-8, Kalkaji Extension, New Delhi in any manner. Anyone dealing with the said property shall be illegal and in violation of the judgment dated 05.01.2022 and shall be doing so at his/her own peril and shall be a trespasser and liable for the same in the court of law.

ARVIND SHARMA & ASSOCIATES
(Advocates)
F-20, (Lower Ground Floor)
East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065
Email: aslawassociates.as@gmail.com

National Highways Authority of India
(Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Govt. of India)

PUBLIC NOTICE

User Fee Rates for Kathuwas Fee Plaza Km 22+100 (Design Chainage) on NH-11 in District Alwar for the section Rewari to Ateli Mandi of NH-11 Km. 11.780 to Rewari to Ex. Km 43.445 near Ateli Mandi as per following schedule:

Schedule of Fee (In Rupees)				
Category of vehicles	Fee for Single Journey (Rs.)	Fee for multiple (max. no of two one way Journey within a day (Rs.)	Fee for Monthly Pass valid for 50 Journey (Rs.)	Commercial Vehicles registered within the district (excluding vehicles plying under National Permit) (Rs.)
Car/ Jeep/Van or Light Motor Vehicle	35	55	1190	20
Light Commercial vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	60	85	1920	30
Bus or Truck (Two Axle)	120	180	4025	60
Three-Axle Commercial Vehicle	130	200	4390	65
Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (ME) or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV to Six Axles)	190	285	6315	95
Oversized Vehicle (Seven or more Axles)	230	345	7685	115

The rate of monthly pass for Local Non-Commercial Vehicles residing within a distance of 20 Km from the fee plaza for the FY 2021-22 shall be Rs. 285.00.

Project Director
PIU- Rewari
Plot No.-20, Sector-32, Institutional Area, Gurgaon-122003,
E-mail: piurewari@nhai.org

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS

Form No. 3 [See Regulation-15(1)(a)]/16(3)

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DELHI (DRT 3)
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

Case No.: 0A/23/2021
Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993. Exh. No.: 3830

UCO BANK
VS
DEEPAK GANJOO AND ORS.

To,
(1) **DEEPAK GANJOO AND ORS.**
DIW/O- SH ASHOK KUMAR GANJOO, B-5, G-3, GROUND FLOOR, RAM PRASTH COLONY, NEAR CITY CENTRE MARKET, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201011, **ALSO AT:** GANJOO NIWAS, H NO 420, AMBPALLA, BAJARPUR, JAMMU-180005, **ALSO AT:** TECHNICAL SERVICES SPECIALIST IBM, INDIA PVT LTD, IBM TOWER, PLOT NO 19, BLOCK-B, SEC-62, NOIDA, G B NAGAR, UP-201307

(2) **SMT DEEKSHA GANJOO**
W/O SH DEEPAK GANJOO, R/O B-5, G-3, GROUND FLOOR, RAM PRASTH COLONY, NEAR CITY CENTRE MARKET, UP, GHAZIABAD-201011 **ALSO AT:** W/O DEEPAK GANJOO, GANJOO NIWAS, H NO 420, AMBPALLA, BAJARPUR, JAMMU-180005

(3) **M/S RUDRA BUILDWELL CONSTRUCTION PVT LTD**
REGD OFFICE AT-309, PADMA TOWER-II, RAJENDRA PLACE, DELHI-110008, **ALSO AT:** CS-1, 4TH FLOOR, ANSAL PLAZA, VAISHALI, GHAZIABAD-201010

SUMMONS

WHEREAS, 0A/23/2021 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar on 16/12/2021.

WHEREAS this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of **Rs. 3532314.35/-** (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed).

In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:-

(i) to show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted;

(ii) to disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application;

(iii) you are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;

(iv) you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/ or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;




(v) you shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.

You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 10/02/2022 at 10:30A.M. failing which the application shall 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 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 the seal of this Tribunal on this date: 17/12/2021.


Signature of the Officer Authorised to issue summons



Govt. of Haryana

भारत सरकार

VACCINE FOR ALL FREE FOR ALL



In Haryana, 3.8 Crore vaccines administered so far.


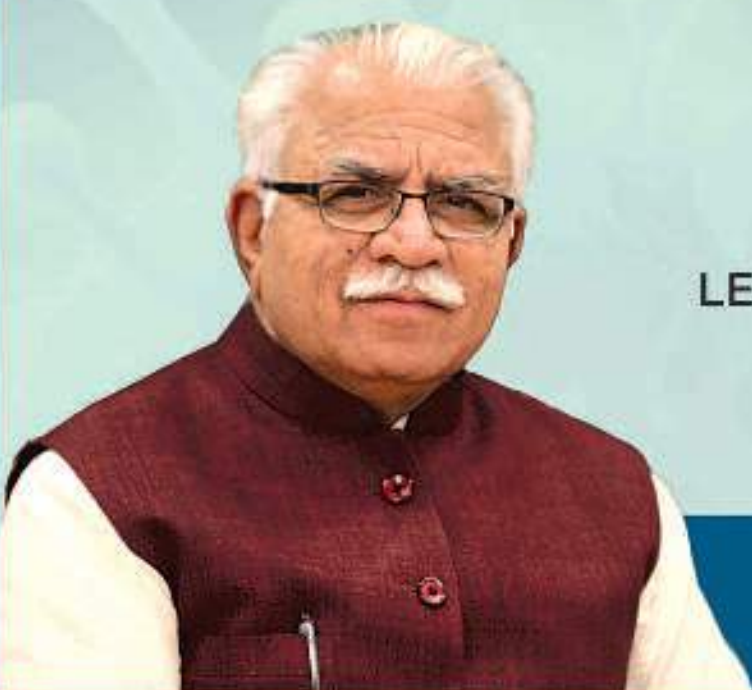
All citizens administered first dose and more than 77% both doses.

Elderly persons above 60 years of age and frontline workers are being administered precaution dose.

More than 50% adolescents in the age group of 15 to 18 years vaccinated.

Get Vaccinated, Stay Safe


Visit www.cowin.gov.in to register and get full details




TOGETHER LET US DEFEAT COVID-19, GET YOURSELF VACCINATED

Thank You PM Modi!

Corona Will Lose, India Will Win



Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana | www.prharyana.gov.in |  @DiprHaryana

BRIEFLY

KERALA
3 held for killing 71-year-old for gold ornaments

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala police on Sunday said they have arrested three people, including a mother and her son, for allegedly murdering their 71-year-old neighbour. During interrogation, the police said, it was revealed that the trio was involved also in the murder of a 14-year-old girl last year. The three – Rafeeka Beevi (50), her friend Al Ameen (26) and her son Shafeeq (23) – killed the neighbour Shanthakumari to steal her gold ornaments, police said. **PTI**

TELANGANA
Banned kite string kills man

Karimnagar: A 39-year-old man died after a “manja” string of a kite slit his throat in Telangana’s Mancherial district, police said on Sunday. The incident happened on Makar Sankranti (on Saturday), a harvest festival, of which kite-flying forms an integral part. The man was riding the two-wheeler with his wife on the pillion when the banned “manja” thread cut his throat resulting in bleeding. He was taken to a nearby hospital where he died during treatment, a police official said. A case was registered based on the complaint of his wife, the police said.**PTI**

J&K
Two killed as earthmover skids

Jammu: Two brothers were killed and another person injured when an earthmover skidded off a road and plunged into a 100-feet-deep gorge in Doda district, officials said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday when the two brothers along with an acquaintance were on their way to Bhatyas from Bharti, they said. SSP Doda, Abdul Qayoom said a preliminary probe suggests that the earthmover was being driven at high speed. **PTI**



DEFENDING THE SEAS

The Indian Navy's indigenous guided missile destroyer, INS Kochi, during a joint exercise with the Russian Navy's RFS Admiral Tributs. **PTI**

18,123 COVID CASES RECORDED ON SUNDAY

Kerala positivity rate up to 30.5%; higher in 2 districts

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 16

KERALA'S COVID test positivity rate rose to 30.55 per cent, with the situation grimmer in many districts, as the state recorded 18,123 new cases on Sunday. The state's active Covid caseload stands at 1.03 lakh.

According to official figures, the rate of growth in new cases in the state has increased by 174 per cent in the last seven days, as compared with the previous week. However, only 4 per cent of the infected persons have sought hospitalization.

The state health department has predicted a four-fold increase in the number of Covid patients by the end of January in many districts and called for extreme vigil for the next three weeks. Many district administrations are gearing up to revive health infrastructure that had been in place during the second wave of the pandemic.

On Sunday, the two districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam recorded a positivity rate of 36.87 per cent.

In Ernakulam district, 11



The health department has predicted a four-fold increase in the number of Covid patients in districts by January end. **File**

clusters have emerged, forcing the district administration to impose more restrictions. On January 1, the district had reported only 400 new cases, but the daily figure shot up to 3,204 on January 16. The number of people hospitalized in the district has also grown from 3,600 to 17,656 on Sunday.

Even though active cases have spiked in Kerala, micro-level restrictions are still limited to only five local bodies in the state, with hot spots being decided based on the weekly infection population ratio or WIPR. WIPR is the total number of Covid-19 infections reported in a week multiplied by

1,000 and divided by the total population of the panchayat or urban ward. In panchayats or urban wards with WIPR of more than 10, a stringent lockdown restriction will be imposed.

Meanwhile, the Congress-led Opposition slammed the ruling CPI(M) for conducting party events amid the Covid surge.

“CPI(M) has flouted all Covid-19 protocols. When more than 50 persons cannot be allowed for any event at present, CPI(M) conferences see attendance of at least 250 persons. The party has become merchant of death in Kerala,” Opposition leader V D Satheesan said.

Mumbai daily cases see further dip; number of deaths still high

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 16

MUMBAI RECORDED a further dip in the number of daily Covid-19 cases on Sunday, recording 7,895 cases as against the 10,661 infections it registered on Saturday. The daily positivity rate dipped to 13 per cent with 57,534 tests conducted. Officials said that the city is going through a peak and that dip in cases was expected on Sunday.

The number of deaths, however, remained high at 11 cases on Sunday. On Saturday too, Mumbai had registered as many deaths due to the Covid-19 infection.

In an interview with *The Indian Express*, Sandeep Juneja, Dean of School of Technology and Computer Science, at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), who has conducted Covid-19 data modelling projection, said, “We predict that the fatalities will peak in Mumbai by the end of January. As anticipated, fatalities are rising in the city.”

At present, the total active cases in Mumbai stand at 60,371. On Sunday, out of the new cases, 6,632 or 84 per cent were asymptomatic while 688 were hospitalised.

Yati held for Haridwar hate speech too: cops

AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 16

YATI NARSINGHANAND was arrested in connection with certain objectionable remarks he made on January 4, but when he was presented before a court, the FIR registered against him in last month's Haridwar dharma sansad case was also mentioned, police said on Sunday.

The controversial priest of Dasna temple in Ghaziabad, who was the chief organiser of the gathering from December 17-19 at which incendiary speeches were made against Muslims, was arrested in Haridwar late on Saturday evening.

Yati Narsinghanand, who is also a mahamandaleswar of the Juna Akhara, had been on a fast to protest the arrest, two days previously, of Waseem Rizvi alias Jitendra Narayan Tyagi in connection with the Haridwar hate speech case.

“An FIR was registered recently against Yati Narsinghanand on the complaint of one Ruchika that he made objectionable remarks against women of a particular community. The complainant alleged that in some social media posts Narsinghanand is seen making these derogatory remarks on January 4 while in conversation with the media. The arrest on Saturday was primarily in connection with that FIR. However, when we presented



Yati Narsinghanand

him in court on Sunday, we showed his arrest in both the objectionable remarks case as well as the Haridwar dharma sansad case.” Haridwar City Circle Officer (CO) Shekhar Suyal told *The Indian Express*.

Suyal said on Saturday another FIR had been registered against Narsinghanand and some unidentified others on a complaint by a journalist. “The journalist asked Narsinghanand some tough questions, which led to an altercation, and the journalist was allegedly manhandled,” he said.

SHO of Haridwar Kotwali police station Rakendra Kathait said the FIR on the complaint of Ruchika was registered under sections 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) and 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the IPC.

Two FIRs had been registered earlier in connection with the December 17-19 dharma sansad in Haridwar.

The first FIR was registered at the Haridwar Kotwali police sta-

Rajasthan govt says will hand Alwar girl case probe to CBI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, JANUARY 16

THE RAJASTHAN government, under fire for its handling of an alleged rape case involving a mentally challenged girl, said on Sunday that it will hand over the probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation.

The government, which took the decision after Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot chaired a high-level meeting over the issue, said in a statement that it will soon send a recommendation to the CBI in this regard.

The development comes a day after the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) attacked Alwar Police's statement that ruled out rape and demanded a CBI probe into the case.

“Questions would naturally be raised when government's ministers go to inquire about the girl's health, give an ex gratia sum of Rs 3.5 to the family, and an SIT is constituted. But before the SIT's report was received, the police and administration took a U-turn (on rape).” BJP state president Satish Poonia said on Saturday. The BJP has also planned statewide protests over the issue on Monday and Tuesday.

Poonia on Sunday welcomed the government's decision and termed it a “moral victory” for the BJP's campaign.

The 15-year-old girl, who also has speech impairment, was reported missing by her family in



Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot

Alwar on Tuesday, January 11. She was later found bleeding on a bridge in the city, and is currently undergoing medical treatment at a hospital in Jaipur. Her condition is stable.

On Friday, Alwar Superintendent of Police Tejaswani Gautam had said that although the investigation is ongoing, medical reports did not indicate that the girl was raped. On Sunday, CM Gehlot again hit out at the BJP for indulging in “malicious publicity”. “The BJP is indulging in malicious publicity for the sake of politics over the unfortunate incident... They are the least bothered about agony that the family members are going through due to such a malicious campaign. This attitude is condemnable,” he said on Twitter.

Sunday's meeting chaired by the CM was also attended by minister of state for home Rajendra Yadav, chief secretary Niranjan Arya, additional chief secretary (home) Abhay Kumar, director general of police M.L. Lather and officials of the hospital where the girl is currently admitted.

The National Commission for Minorities last week took suo motu cognisance of the case and sought a report from the government by January 24.

tion on December 23 on the complaint of one Gulbahar Khan under IPC sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups and acts prejudicial to harmony) and 295A.

Five people were named in this FIR: Narsinghanand, Tyagi, and religious leaders Dharamdas Maharaj, Maa Annapurna Bharti, and Sagar Sindhuraj Maharaj.

The latter three are yet to be arrested. One of them, Maa Annapurna Bharti, organised a “pratikar sabha” (protest meeting) in Haridwar on Sunday, accusing Uttarakhand government of coming under pressure from “jihadis”.

The second FIR was registered on January 2 on a complaint by social worker Nadeem Ali. The FIR, filed under sections 153A and 298 (uttering words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of any person), referred to alleged hate speeches at the Haridwar event and in days that followed. It named Tyagi and unidentified others.

An SIT had been formed to investigate the case, but the first arrests — of Tyagi and Narsinghanand — have come only after Supreme Court notices to Centre, Delhi Police, and Uttarakhand government on January 10. The notice was issued after a PIL was filed alleging police inaction, and seeking an investigation into alleged hate speeches delivered at the Haridwar event and, separately, at an event organised in Delhi by the Hindu Yuva Vahini.

GAIL director held by CBI in bribery case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

THE CBI has arrested E S Ranganathan, Director (Marketing) of GAIL, in a case of alleged bribery of over Rs 50 lakh, officials said on Sunday.

The CBI had unearthed the alleged bribery scam involving Ranganathan, middlemen, and businessmen and arrested five individuals on Saturday, they said.

The central agency had conducted searches at eight locations including the office and residence of Ranganathan, they said. “Cash of Rs 1.29 crore (approximately), gold jewellery and other valuables (estimated to value around Rs 1.25 crore) recovered during searches from the premises of said accused (Ranganathan),” CBI spokesperson RC Joshi said.

It is alleged that Ranganathan was collecting bribes from prospective beneficiaries of discounts to private companies buying petro chemical products marketed by the Maharatna PSU, officials said. It is alleged that Ranganathan was “indulging into corrupt and illegal activities in criminal conspiracy” with middlemen Pawan Gaur and Rajesh Kumar, who is also director of Rishabh Polychem Pvt. Ltd based at Bahudargarh Road, Delhi. Kumar and Gaur allegedly acted as Ranganathan's middlemen by obtaining bribe from the private companies buying petro chemical products marketed by the Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL), the FIR alleged.

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITHOUT ACCESS TO DIGITAL DEVICES TO GET HOME VISITS

Amid Covid, classes on DD, Web for students in Bihar

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JANUARY 16

FROM MONDAY, primary school teachers across Bihar will visit the houses of students in classes 1-5 who have no smartphones, PCs, tablets or laptops at home.

With Covid-19 cases continuing to rise, the state government has decided to start broadcasting classes on Doordarshan for classes 6-12. These students, as well as students in primary school, will also get access to on-

line learning, with the government telling principals to start classes through WhatsApp groups and other online platforms. Principals and teachers have also been told to help those students in classes 1-5 who do not have the means to access the Internet from home by conducting home visits.

Bihar has more than 75,000 government schools, in which a total of more than 3.5 crore students are enrolled.

Additional chief secretary (education) Sanjay Kumar made

The state has over 75,000 government schools with more than 3.5 crore students enrolled in them

the announcement in a letter to all district magistrates, district education officers and district programme officers in the state on Friday.

Kumar said in his letter that school principals should engage

teachers to guide and teach students through WhatsApp groups, and that other online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams could also be used.

He said principals and teachers should seek the help of around 28,000 shikshak sevaks — who create awareness about education — for holding visits to the houses of students who do not have access to devices that connect to the Internet. During such visits, teachers and shiksha sevaks have been asked to com-

ply with Covid-appropriate behaviour.

According to rough estimates, around 1 crore primary school students have no access to digital devices.

A functionary with Bihar's primary school teachers' association said: “It is nearly impossible to cover all students without digital devices in home tuition drive. But we will surely give it a try. Another area of concern is Covid cases now spreading to suburban towns and villages rapidly.”

Bihar ‘hooch deaths’ toll rises to 11; SHO removed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BIHAR SHARIF, JANUARY 16

SEVEN MORE people have died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor in Nalanda district, officials said on Sunday, raising the toll to 11.

According to Nalanda SP Ashok Mishra, the SHO of the police station concerned has been suspended and bodies of eight of the deceased were handed over to their families after post mortem. “Four people died in the early hours of Saturday while four others breathed their last in the evening. Three more died this (Sunday) morning,” he said.

“All deaths have taken place in Chhoti Pahari and Pahari Talli localities. The SHO of Soharsai has been suspended for being

lax in keeping an eye on the activities in his area,” added the SP.

Bodies of the three persons who died Sunday morning have been sent for post mortem. All bereaved family members have said that the deceased consumed liquor on Friday night.

Sale and consumption of liquor is completely banned in Bihar since April, 2016. The hooch tragedy comes barely two months after more than 40 people died after consuming spurious liquor in the state.

Meanwhile, state BJP president Sanjay Jaiswal launched a fresh attack on CM Nitish Kumar's party. “JD(U) would do well to acknowledge that the hydra-headed monster that is illicit liquor trade cannot be slain until the nexus of high officials, police personnel and liquor mafia is broken,” said Jaiswal in a statement.

‘Kisan medals’ for ‘comrades’ of farmer movement

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 16

A FORMER Food Corporation of India official who raised slogans in favour of the farmers who had been protesting against the three central farm laws that now stand repealed, a man who offered them langar, another who kept their morale high with his wit and humour, and lawyers who provided legal aid free of cost are among people who have now been honoured with ‘kisan medals’.

District president of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU)'s Karnal unit Jagdeep Singh Aulakh told *The Indian Express* that they have already honoured 800 persons with kisan medals in Karnal “while expressing our gratitude to them”.

The medals have tractor engraved on them and carry the

slogan “we support our farmers”.

Those honoured include Radhy Sham Pasricha. The 71-year-old who retired from the FCI was known for raising slogans in favour of farmers at the Bastara toll plaza (Karnal) where they were sitting on a dharna as part of the agitation against the farm laws.

Pasricha is happy with the honour that he received at a function organised at Karnal's Jat Dharamshala. “Barring 15 days, I attended the protest at Bastara toll plaza every day during the year-long agitation. As a former official of FCI, I knew that the farm laws were not in favour of the farmers at all. They should have been repealed at the early stage instead of waiting for one year. But I am happy that I remained a part of this historical movement,” said Pasricha.

Dharambir, who is from



A former Food Corporation of India official and a man who offered langar were among those honoured. **Express**

Dhanak community, is also among those who have been honoured. He offered langar to the farmers at Bastara toll plaza when they were moving to Delhi and returning to their homes via

Delhi-Ambala national highway during the agitation. “I offered my services there for one year and 17 days. It was my duty to help them in whatever form I could have done as several oth-

ers were getting martyrdom too during the agitation. I am also a farmer with two acres of land,” says Dharambir, 58, a resident of Karnal's Raipur Jatan village.

Samay Singh Sandhu, 72, a resident of Karnal's Gagsina village was honoured for keeping the morale of the farmers high with wit and humour. Rameshwar Ror, 82, who is visually impaired but remained always present at the Bastara toll plaza during the agitation too was honoured. Anju Gagsina's role was remembered for mobilising the women during the agitation.

Farmer leaders have formally expressed their gratitude to the Karnal Bar Association for extending legal aid free of cost during the agitation. Jagdeep Singh Aulakh said: “A lawyer Manish Lathar questioned the police lathicharge on farmers. He too became victim of the lathis on

August 28 last year when the farmers were protesting Karnal visit of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. Several farmers had received serious injuries. Ravinder Saroha, a dalit, had received 25 stitches on his head following injuries during the police lathicharge. Now, we have honoured them for their sacrifice and courage.”

Days after the lathicharge at Bastara toll plaza, the farmers had gheraoed Karnal Mini Secretariat seeking action against the then SDM Ayush Sinha who was caught on camera instructing policemen to “break heads” of protesters if they breach the security cordon.

Meanwhile, at a function held at village Chhoti Satrod (Hisar) Wednesday, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) honoured their supporters and volunteers with “Kisan Yodha Ratan” certificates.

The Indian **EXPRESS**

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A VIRAT CAPTAINCY

Kohli took hard decisions, set the bar high, did what he expected of others, broke an oppressive silence

THE CHAOS OVER the successor in the immediate aftermath of Virat Kohli's resignation from Test captaincy tells a story. Suddenly, no one seems to make the right fit. Rohit Sharma doesn't have the required fitness, KL Rahul seems too mute to be a leader, Ajinkya Rahane can't hold his spot, Rishabh Pant isn't tactically dependable enough, and R Ashwin might not be temperamentally suitable for the role. History will not only be kinder to Kohli but will also show that he possessed all that is missing from the candidates who could potentially replace him. A passion for fitness, a love for Test cricket, self-confidence that puts any captain of any team in the shade, strength of temperament for a fight in the middle, and an aura to drag his team, with or without their approval, along with him. He took hard decisions, set the bar high, did what he expected of others, and led from the front. He also had the courage to break an oppressive silence when his teammate, Mohammed Shami, was targeted because of his religious identity in the wake of India's loss to Pakistan in the T20 World Cup.

To appreciate Kohli's achievements, look at where India was before him. It was a far cry from the lacklustre days of the Test captaincy of MS Dhoni, whose success in white-ball created a halo but couldn't hide his weakness as a captain in the longer and tougher format of Tests. India was languishing at No 7 in Tests, had a strange reluctance to even talk about overseas goals let alone pursuing them, and displayed an alarming tendency to meander along in key moments which would unsurprisingly lead to meek surrenders. The bouncebackability and refusal to give up the fight, that has been the hallmark of Kohli's era, was conspicuous by its absence before him. Under Kohli, the team shed their defensiveness about overseas records, and actively pursued the goal to become No 1. Kohli would say that a "special madness is needed", a trait he successfully inculcated in his team. Inspired by his vision, fast bowlers started to break down self-limiting boundaries. Barring Jasprit Bumrah, the previous regime had all the other pacers at their disposal but weren't able to inspire them to heights they have achieved under Kohli. Mohammed Shami found venom, Ishant Sharma was rejuvenated to kickstart a profitable second innings, Umesh Yadav tweaked his game to constantly hover around, and though Bhuvaneshwar Kumar couldn't push his body to desired standards of the management, younger men like Mohammad Siraj and Shardul Thakur came along. Rohit Sharma discovered his true mettle as an opener, so did KL Rahul, and Ravindra Jadeja and Rishabh Pant started to spread their wings.

Kohli's way was to set the standards, draw the line on the sand, and then watch others scramble over or fall beside it. It was hard and old school but unarguably efficient in achieving results. In the process, he would at times come across as non-empathetic, but he wasn't too flustered by the criticism. A sense of ruthlessness on and off the field was Kohli's way, and no one can argue with its great success.

ON THE BRINK

A silver lining to the dark clouds gathering over Europe is the fact that the two sides have not shut the door on further talks

A SERIES OF TALKS in the last week between Russia and the West on European security in Geneva (with the US), Brussels (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and Vienna (the Organisation of Security and Cooperation that represents the entire Europe) have ended on a note of pessimism. Russian officials declared the talks a failure and Western officials say there is no question of accepting Russia's demands for an immediate and legally binding ban on NATO's expansion. Nor is the West ready to give Moscow a free hand in dominating Central Europe, especially Ukraine. The talks began amidst deepening tensions over Ukraine after Russia mobilised more than 1,00,000 soldiers on three sides of their common frontier.

Ukraine has lost part of its territory, Crimea, to Moscow's annexation in 2014. Kyiv is also angry at Moscow's establishment of "independent republics" in its eastern regions adjacent to Russia. If Ukraine, historically part of Russia, is turning to the US, NATO, and the European Union for military, political, and economic support, Moscow sees NATO's security commitment to Kyiv and Ukraine's absorption into the EU's orbit as unacceptable threats. Adding to the deep structural divergence is the fear that Russia might make good on its threat to invade Ukraine and trigger a war between Moscow and Kiev, backed by the West. Some in the West have suggested the threatened invasion of Ukraine by Russia has already begun with a cyber-attack on the government websites of Kyiv as part of hybrid warfare. Russian officials say it is Kyiv that is preparing to attack and retake Crimea. US officials have warned that Russia might be planning a false-flag operation to justify its armed aggression against Ukraine.

A silver lining to the dark clouds gathering over Europe is the fact that the two sides have not shut the door on further talks. Another positive development has been last week's discussion of steps to reduce military tensions and build mutual trust. Although the West can't give legal guarantees that they will never admit Ukraine into NATO, it has no plans to do so in the near term. Turning the de-facto moratorium into a more formal understanding should not be impossible. Ending the talks now has major downsides for both. A Russian aggression will in fact ensure what Moscow wants to prevent — Ukraine's membership of NATO. A war with Russia will be terribly costly for the West and divert its energies away from multiple other challenges confronting it, including China. If Russia has no reasons to be a perennial spoiler, the West can gain much by making Moscow a stakeholder in European security.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



TARUNIMA PRABHAKAR AND PRATEEK WAGHRE

ONGOING POLICE INVESTIGATIONS to identify the culprits behind the condemnable "Bulli Bai" and "Sulli Deals" apps, which "auctioned" several prominent and vocal Muslim women, implicate individuals born close to the turn of the century. At first glance, this indicates that digital natives are not resilient against problems such as disinformation, hate speech and the potential for radicalisation that plague our informational spaces. But placed within the broader context of decreasing levels of social cohesion in Indian society, that such apps were even created requires us to frame our understanding in a way that can point us towards the right set of long-term interventions.

To understand how we got here, we need to start by looking at the effect of new media technologies developed over the last 20 years on our collective behaviour, and identities. Technologies have changed the scale and structure of human networks; and led to abundance and virality of information. Social scientists hypothesise that these rapid transitions are altering how individuals and groups influence each other within our social systems. The pace of technological evolution coupled with the speed of diffusion of these influences has also meant that we neither fully understand the changes nor can we predict their outcomes. Others have focused on their effects on the evolution of individual, political, social, cultural identities. These identities can be shaped consciously or subconsciously by our interactions, and consequently affect how we process information and respond to events in digital and physical spaces.

Our identities ultimately bear on our cognitive processes — arguments against our defining values can activate the same neural paths as the threat of physical violence. The rise of social media has been linked to the strengthening of personal social identities at the cost of increasing inter-group divisions. Some have suggested that personalised feeds in new media technologies trap us in "echo chambers", reducing exposure to alternate views. While other empirical work shows that people on social media gravitate towards like-minded people despite frequent interaction with ideas and people with

We need to look at and address effect of new media technologies on behaviour and identities

Several have called for action by platforms to address hate speech. Content moderation should be considered a late-stage intervention. Individuals need to be stopped early in the path to radicalisation and extremist behaviour to prevent the development of apps such as Bulli Bai. This is where steps such as counterspeech — tactics to counter hate speech by presenting an alternative narrative — can play a role and need to be studied further in the Indian context. Counterspeech could take the form of messages aimed at building empathy by humanising those targeted; enforcing social norms around respect or openness; or de-escalating a dialogue. Notably, this excludes fact-checking. When people have strong ideological dispositions, contending their narratives based on accuracy alone, can have limited effectiveness.

whom they disagree. People can also self-select into groups that reinforce their beliefs and validate their actions. We still need a better understanding of the broader psychosocial effects, specifically in the Indian context. Experience, though, suggests that when these beliefs are prejudices and resentment against a specific group of people, the feedback loops of social confirmation and validation can result in violence. Even pockets of disconnected actions, when repeated and widespread, can destabilise delicate social-political relations built over decades.

Harms arising out of escalating levels of polarisation and radicalisation are primarily analysed through the lens of disinformation and hate speech which gives primacy to motives. This framing leaves room for some actors to evade responsibility since motives can be deemed subjective. And for others to be unaware of the downstream consequences of their actions — often, even those taken with good intentions can have unpredictable and adverse outcomes. The information ecosystem metaphor, proposed by Whitney Phillips and Ryan M. Milner, compares the current information dysfunction with environmental pollution. It encourages us to prioritise outcomes over motives, in that we should be concerned with how it spreads and not whether someone intended to pollute or not. It also makes us understand that the effects of pollution compound over time, and attempts to ignore, or worse, exploit this pollution only exacerbate the problem — not just for those victimised by them, but for everyone.

Our focus tends to be on those who command the largest audiences, have the loudest voices or say the most egregious things. While important, ignoring or downplaying the role of everyone else, or envisioning them as passive, malleable audiences risks overlooking the participatory nature of our current predicament. Big and small polluters feed off each other's actions and content across social media, traditional media as well as physical spaces. The distinctions between "online" and "offline" effects or harms are often neither neatly categorisable nor easily distinguishable, "online" harassment is harassment. Actors as varied as bored students, local political aspirants, content creators/in-

fluencers, national-level politicians, or someone trying to gain clout, etc. engage throughout the information ecosystem. Their underlying motivations can range from the banal (FOMO, seeking entertainment, fame) to the sinister (organised, systematic and collaborative dissemination of propaganda, hate) to the performative (virtue signalling, projection of power, capability, expertise), and so on. The interactions of these disparate sets of actors and motivations result in a complex and unpredictable system, composed of multiple intersecting self-reinforcing and self-diminishing cycles, where untested interventions can have unanticipated and unintended consequences.

Several have called for action by platforms to address hate speech. Content moderation should be considered a late-stage intervention. Individuals need to be stopped early in the path to radicalisation and extremist behaviour to prevent the development of apps such as Bulli Bai. This is where steps such as counterspeech — tactics to counter hate speech by presenting an alternative narrative — can play a role and need to be studied further in the Indian context. Counterspeech could take the form of messages aimed at building empathy by humanising those targeted; enforcing social norms around respect or openness; or de-escalating a dialogue. Notably, this excludes fact-checking. When people have strong ideological dispositions, contending their narratives based on accuracy alone, can have limited effectiveness. Since behaviours in online and physical spaces are linked, in-person community action and outreach can also help. Social norms can be imparted through families, friends and educational institutions. "Influencers" and those in positions of leadership can have a significant impact in shaping these norms. At such times, the signals that political leaders and state institutions send are particularly important.

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YOGESH GUPTA

IN RECENT TIMES, there has been a great euphoria about investing in cryptocurrencies. Let us first try to understand whether a crypto investment means an investment in a currency or an asset. For any instrument to classify as a currency, it must have the following features: One, it is a promissory note wherein the issuer is promising the bearer or the holder a value. Two, it is backed by a sovereign nation and, therefore, there is never a question of any default in executing the promise. Three, the printing of currency in either physical or digital form is always based on some tangible asset, like gold or a basket of goods.

From the above, it's clear that cryptocurrency can never be a currency.

Can crypto then be considered an asset? An asset is something that has a tangible value. Even if its immediate utility is intangible, an asset should have some tangible benefits. The cryptocurrencies being promoted currently — bitcoin, Litecoin, ethereum — are nothing but gaming points. Whenever a discussion on cryptos takes place, promoters talk of blockchain technology. This technology is just a technique to account for transactions and has nothing to do with cryptocurrencies, except that the cryptocurrencies' digital exchange is being maintained in blockchain format. In other words, the points which are earned through

IN THE GARB OF CRYPTO

It is neither a currency, nor an asset

The cryptocurrencies being promoted currently — bitcoin, Litecoin, ethereum, etc., — are nothing but gaming points. Whenever a discussion on cryptos takes place, promoters talk of blockchain technology. Blockchain technology is just a technique to account for transactions. However absurd it may seem, even the points earned in a game of ludo can be presented as cryptocurrency if they are stored and sold by blockchain technology by the persons monetising these points.

a gaming application are stored and transferred through blockchain technology. However absurd it may seem, even the points earned in a game of ludo can be presented as cryptocurrency if they are stored and sold by blockchain technology by the persons monetising these points. Therefore, cryptocurrencies have absolutely no value and cannot be considered an asset. Mining and solving the nth root of an equation are euphemisms for gaming points.

While working at the CBI and subsequently, the Enforcement Directorate, I had come across frauds like multi-marketing schemes, chit funds or deposit frauds. These schemes were disguised as timeshare schemes, gold and land investments, and promised hefty returns. These pyramid schemes were carried out over a long period to evade the law. Nevertheless, fraud could still be established, the trail of funds could be traced and the perpetrators identified.

Crypto promoters have taken fraud to another level with a little scope of their getting caught — as there is nothing that anyone is promising. One part is the persons or persons releasing the game or the equation from which bitcoins or cryptocurrencies are to be mined, the other is the exchanges through which these points — cryptocurrencies — are traded. These so-called cryptocurrencies have acceptability only as long as they are

linked to the normal currency of a country. Unfortunately, millions are falling for this fraud globally. Criminals, particularly drug syndicates, will simply use the garb of crypto to siphon and launder their illegal proceeds.

Hats off to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das for being the first among the heads of central banks to flag the issue. The alacrity of the government in bringing out a bill to ban and regulate transactions in cryptocurrencies is equally commendable. India is one democracy where both the government and the Opposition join hands on issues of national interest.

The recent aggressive promotion of cryptocurrencies on print and visual media would perhaps prove to be the undoing of their promoters. It is only a matter of time before financial fraud prevention enforcement agencies like the CBI and ED catch up with them. But millions may lose their hard-earned money by then. The advertisements and promotional activities can, in fact, be important evidence linking people with this fraud. Sensing the impending ban and investigation into crypto deals, their backers have already started developing a new jargon — non-fungible tokens or NFTs.

The writer is additional director general of police, Kerala. He is a CA and has worked as SP, CBI and Special Director, ED



JANUARY 17, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

TRADE UNION STRIKE

UNION LABOUR MINISTER Bhagwat Jha Azad has appealed to workers to desist from striking on January 19. Addressing his first press conference, Azad said he was trying to contact trade union leaders for a fresh round of talks on all pending issues, including the demands for which the strike was called for. The minister said that the government did not want a confrontation with the workers. He said the government was prepared to discuss all issues on the table and there was no need to stop the wheels of production at a time when production in farms and factories had started to pick up. Referring to the Essential Services Maintenance Act, Azad

said that the Prime Minister has clarified that it will only be an enabling measure to be used in an emergency.

EARLY POLLS

THE CONGRESS (I) leadership in Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal may be compelled to follow West Bengal in asking for early polls. The assembly elections in both these states are due in June. But West Bengal's decision to go to early polls has forced the Congress leaders to consider whether they should also go to the polls in these two states. The Congress (I) has so far not made any serious objection to West Bengal's demands.

ASSAM TALKS

TRIPARTITE TALKS ON the issue of foreigners in Assam is scheduled to begin on January 18. The leaders of the All Assam Students Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad are expected to arrive in the capital on January 17. For the first time, Opposition leaders will be involved in the negotiations.

DELHI HOTEL THEFT

TWO FOREIGNERS HAVE complained with the police of \$ 10,000 in cash being stolen from a five star hotel in the capital. The complainants are citizens of Brazil.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Punjab election opportunity

State needs to switch from supply-driven agriculture, based on wheat and rice, to demand-driven system. Poll manifestoes and campaigns could begin a much-needed conversation



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY KAVERY GANGULY
AND ASHOK GULATI

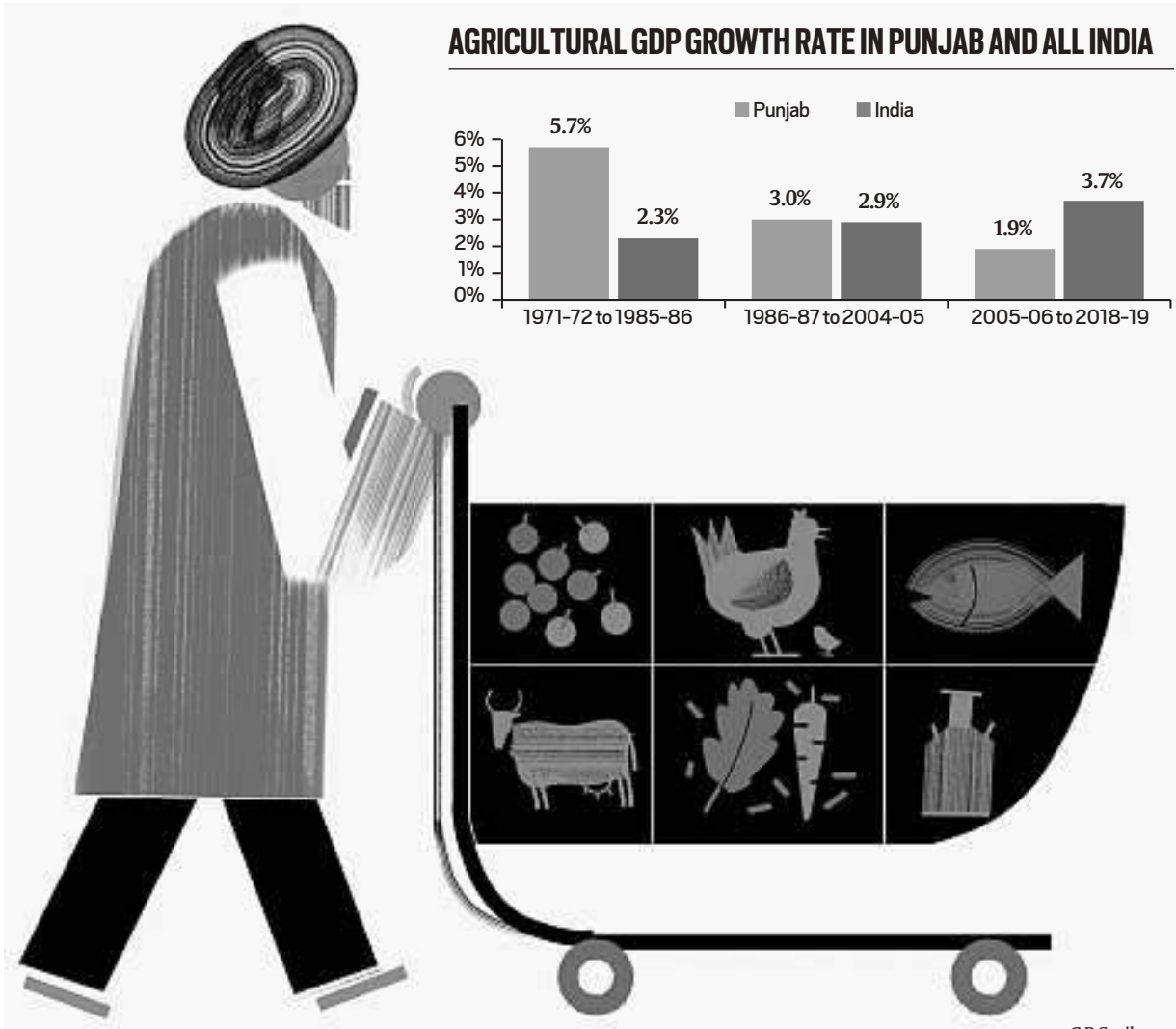
LATELY, PUNJAB POLITICS has been making headlines, not always for the right reasons. The security lapse during the prime minister's visit and the infighting within political parties signal that all is not well in the state. At the same time, all parties have made the betterment of the farming community their campaign plank in the upcoming assembly elections. The agitating farmers have launched their own party. It is no secret that Punjab, once the frontrunner of Indian agriculture, is struggling to retain its dynamism. While Punjab ranked at the top of major Indian states in terms of per capita income during 1967-68 to 2002-03, it has slipped below the 13th position and will keep falling in this ranking if business as usual continues.

Policies that once empowered farmers in Punjab to usher in the Green Revolution are fast losing relevance. Strong political will and rational policy choices with a futuristic outlook are needed, not populism, if Punjab is to retain its crowning glory — agriculture. That Punjab needs to diversify towards high-value agriculture was advised by SS Johl, the wise man of Punjab, way back in 1986. But not much seems to have moved on that front.

Punjab's agricultural growth rate, at 5.7 per cent, was more than double the country's average of 2.3 per cent during 1971-72 to 1985-86. This has reversed between 2005 and 2019 with Punjab at 1.9 per cent and India at 3.7 per cent (see graph). The latest NSSO-SAS data for 2018-19 reveals that on the criteria of agricultural household income, when normalised on a per hectare basis, Punjab ranks 11th amongst major states. And if one uses the landholding size as given in the Census of 2015-16 (3.62 hectares), Punjab slides to the 21st position.

With almost 85 per cent of the gross cropped area under wheat and rice, agriculture is least diversified in the state. Guaranteed MSP for wheat and paddy, backed by assured procurement, free power and highly subsidised fertilisers, has disincentivised diversification. Mandi transactions cost about 8.5 per cent of the MSP, the highest in the country, making Punjab wheat and rice less competitive. On the environment front, nearly 80 per cent of the blocks in the state have overexploited water reserves and in many other places, the water table is depleting at the rate of nearly a meter a year. Soils are getting degraded, and stubble burning makes it worse.

But the political economy around wheat and rice is so intense that any effort to address its distortions impact is met with fierce opposition by vested interest groups. However, there is still a glimmer of hope to recalibrate Punjab agriculture towards higher, sustainable growth. While fruits and vegetables account for 7.4 per cent of the value of the output of agriculture and allied sectors, livestock accounts for 31.5 per cent and fisheries less than 1 per cent. The state has the highest per capita availability of milk but it can process less than 20 per cent of it. This needs to be augmented. It is also a significant



CR Sasikumar

player in seed potato and with the right package of practices, traceability systems, and infrastructure, the market for Punjab seed potato can be strengthened. Alternative marketing channels for fruits and vegetables such as direct marketing, contract farming, and exports have been in place but these models need to be scaled up with the right ecosystem.

By adopting a "markets first" approach, Punjab can ensure that farmers benefit from higher sustainable net returns. Punjab needs to switch from supply-driven agriculture to demand-driven agriculture. The demand for fisheries, poultry, dairy, and fruits and vegetables is increasing way faster than the demand for wheat and rice. Time-bound incentives in the form of freight subsidies for exporters of high-value agri-produce, tax exemptions for the processing of perishable commodities for value chain players would be more rational than the overloaded subsidies of urea and free power. Rationalising mandi charges to not more than 3 per cent will attract private sector investments in building efficient value chains. Promoting mega parks for value addition in fruits and vegetables, milk, and other livestock products through medium and small enterprises will strengthen its competitiveness.

Punjab should leverage the start-up revolution that is unfolding in India, and use technology to ensure optimal utilisation of resources, expand markets, and augment farmers' income. Geo-tagging of farms can address concerns related to long-term leasing of land that is critical for large-scale investments and enable vibrant agricultural land markets. The digitalisation of markets will generate real-time information on input sales, market arrivals, transactions, and pay-

While fruits and vegetables account for 7.4 per cent of the value of the output of agriculture and allied sectors, livestock accounts for 31.5 per cent and fisheries less than 1 per cent. The state has the highest per capita availability of milk but it can process less than 20 per cent of it. This needs to be augmented. It is also a significant player in seed potato and with the right package of practices, traceability systems, and infrastructure, the market for Punjab seed potato can be strengthened. Alternative marketing channels for fruits and vegetables such as direct marketing, contract farming, and exports have been in place but these models need to be scaled up with the right ecosystem.

ments and allow transparency in marketing practices. Innovations in supply chain management, be it automated grain silos or state-of-art herd management will not only optimise the use of resources but also bring in traceability of farms and animals, early monitoring and prevention of disease outbreaks, and contain value chain losses. As value chains develop and cater to international markets, compliance with food safety standards and norms need to be adhered to. Initiatives such as Innovation Mission Punjab can nurture the local ecosystem of start-ups, farmers, other private players, and the government to create efficient value chains.

To unlock the financial resources needed to reboot agriculture in Punjab, the state government needs to take some bold steps in consultation with the Centre. It should rationalise its fertiliser subsidy regime by moving towards cash transfers on a per hectare basis and free up fertiliser prices. If that's not possible, then urea should be included in the nutrient-based subsidy scheme. Also, bring soluble fertilisers under subsidy, which will enhance fertiliser use efficiency through fertigation. This will also help reap environmental gains. Food subsidy can also be rationalised through direct cash transfers replacing PDS, as Punjab is a grain surplus state. The bottom line is that Punjab needs to almost halve its area under common paddy to promote crop diversification.

Both environmental and financial sustainability concerns related to business-as-usual farming in Punjab call for a rebooting strategy. But will any political party take up these issues in its manifesto?

Ganguly is senior research fellow and Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor at ICRIER

History and prejudice

Why we need to mute the Hindutva warriors on TV, and read again Shivaji's idea of Hindu culture



G N DEVY

AS AN AGNOSTIC, I am neither a complete believer nor entirely a non-believer. Yet, there are times when the question of faith becomes urgent. On Christmas day, I put aside the book I was reading and turned on the TV for news. A debate about the "dharam sansad" in Uttarakhand was on. One of the participants, an audacious champion of the Hindu Rashtra, yelled at the anchor: "Even Shivaji Maharaj had used the term 'Hindu Rashtra', so what is wrong if I do?"

The book that I had been reading was *Who Was Shivaji?* by Govind Pansare and I had just finished reading an AD 1657 letter from Shivaji to Aurangzeb appended to it. The main purpose of the letter was to challenge the infamous *jizya* tax, with Shivaji's anger directed towards the tax policy and not the religion of the emperor. He wrote: "The government of the Empire is running its daily administration by collecting *jizya* from Hindus. In fact, formerly, Emperor Akbar ruled with great equanimity. Therefore, apart from the Daudis and Mohammedis, the religious practices of Hindus such as Brahmins and Shevades (Shaivaites) were protected. The Emperor helped these religions. Therefore, he was hailed as a *jagatguru*." The letter goes on to say that Jahangir and Shah Jahan too allowed the undisturbed practice of all religions: "Those Emperors always had their eyes fixed on people's welfare." Shivaji contrasts the three emperors with Aurangzeb and warns him: "Under your rule, you have lost many forts and provinces. The rest are also likely to be lost. This is because you do not spare in doing everything that is base." I am aware that the present dispensation will not like Shivaji Maharaj's analysis that Akbar was called "*jagatguru*" by people because he protected all, irrespective of their religion. Those who assassinated Pansare in 2015 did not like his description of Shivaji as a ruler interested in the welfare of all, irrespective of their faith.

Shivaji even questions Aurangzeb's understanding of the Quran. He writes in the letter: "The Quran is a Heavenly Book. It is God's utterance. It commands that God belongs to all Muslims and, in fact, the entire world." And further: "In masjids, it is He who is prayed to. In temples, it is He for whom the bells are tolled." Since I had read these sentences just minutes ago, I did not know if I should laugh at the ignorance of the person on TV or feel sad for such a distortion of Shivaji's idea of Hindu culture.

Just the day before Christmas, the Karnataka Assembly brought in the anti-conversion bill, euphemistically called the Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, and on the night of December 25, an image of Jesus was desecrated by vandals in Ambala. Against this backdrop, the Hindutva propaganda machine had been spreading fake news about the rise in the

population of Christians. As per the Census data, Christians in Karnataka were 1.91 per cent of the total population in 2001. A decade later, in 2011, they were 1.87 per cent, reduced in their proportionate population. But there is another website that comes up when one looks for the Census data for Christians in Karnataka. Its masthead displays an image of the assembly building in Bangalore, making it seem like a government website. It shows the Christian population as being 3.1 per cent. An internet search shows that the website has been put up by the founder of a digital media set-up handling Narendra Modi's election campaign in 2014. As if the intimidation and assaults on Christians and the threat of genocide hurled at Muslims in the recent "*dharam sansads*" were not enough, there was, in November, the terrifying formulation by NSA Ajit Doval that the fourth-generation wars will be waged through civil society.

Recent events have left no room for doubt as to the nature of the essentials of the current Hindutva that are being promoted in thought and action. This ideology is trying hard to establish that Hinduism is not the tolerant co-existence of faiths as Shivaji had interpreted or a way of life that acknowledges Ishwar and Allah as essentially the same. Going by the articulation of violence sought to be unleashed by the "*dharam sansads*" and the semi-official theorising of civil society as weaponry plotted by the enemy, it is clear that Narendra Modi's *vishwaguru* nation fantasy is poles apart from Shivaji's idea of a *jagatguru*-ruler who professes no *dharm* but the *raj dharma*.

The RSS ideology of Hindutva, apart from being militaristic, is obsessed with tendentious historiography that sets aside all established scientific methods of reading the past and brings in untenable and wild pronouncements as historical truth. This historiography resurfaced recently in a 2022 calendar released by IIT Kharagpur on December 18. It aims to "recover the foundations of Indian knowledge systems". That sounds good on the face of it. But what it does is present an unscientific narrative of India's prehistory. It hitches together two entirely unrelated postulates. One relates to the question of the origin and spread of Sanskrit, the other relates to the Indus Valley civilisation. All available linguistic and archaeological evidence shows that there was no Sanskrit in India prior to the Vedas and our Indus Valley ancestors had no link with Sanskrit, half a millennium before its first appearance in India. The calendar also brings into the frame Adolf Hitler, without forgetting to mention that Hitler was "elected to power". It asserts that the Vedic civilisation is the alpha and omega of Indian civilisation. The concocted historical narrative and militant view of religion make this loud brand of Hindutva go against all that the Indian traditions of thought and spirituality hold precious in Buddha and Basaveshwara, in Kabir and Gandhi, in Charvaka and Ambedkar. Besides, if the ideas of Muslim genocide and harassment of Christians is any part of Hindutva, it is against the Constitution and the law of the land.

The writer is a cultural activist



ROHIT AZAD AND SHOUVIK CHAKRABORTY

An Indian Green Deal

It will solve pressing challenges — emissions and equity. Budget should make a start

WITH SUPER CYCLONES like Amphan in the east or Tauktae in the south, severe droughts in Maharashtra, incessant rains, and flooding in Chennai or Uttarakhand, and Delhi on a complete lockdown earlier because you couldn't see or breathe, threats from climate change (and pollution at the local level) for India are not in the distant future. We are right in the middle of it. To make matters worse, we are dealing with an unprecedented economic crisis, partly pandemic-induced and partly pre-pandemic.

Given the magnitude and severity of the crisis, we need to think out of the box. Minor tweaks won't work anymore. What is required is to rethink the model of development itself, to chalk out a just, inclusive, and sustainable path. A start can be made in the upcoming budget.

The Indian government had promised 10 per cent of the GDP as Aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) package for Covid recovery. We believe if this amount is spent judiciously on what we call an Indian Green Deal (IGD), India can come out on top of the crisis and stay ahead of the climate change curve.

We put forth a proposal, which can form the blueprint of a policy required for India to achieve the net zero target by 2070, as per the commitment made at COP26 in Glasgow. We pick a few sectors of the Indian economy,

some of which currently have a high carbon footprint, and propose a 10-year plan to fundamentally alter this impact even as they generate jobs.

The overall plan has three categories: Infrastructure development, care economy, and a green energy programme. The promised 10 per cent of the GDP should be split into three parts — 5 per cent for infrastructure development, especially rural infrastructure; 3 per cent for the care economy; and the remaining 2 per cent for green energy.

It helps that the employment generating capacity of these sectors is quite high. Our calculations, based on the PLFS May 2019 report on employment, tell us that not only does the IGD absorb those who are currently unemployed, it also generates extra jobs, which can certainly absorb a significant section of disguised unemployment. To contrast the IGD with a business-as-usual scenario, let us say, if the amount committed to green energy in IGD were spent on the fossil fuel sector, it would have generated only 2.4 million jobs instead of the 8 million it generates in our proposal. So, quite contrary to the common perception, the move to a green economy is a win-win proposition both on emissions (and pollution) and employment.

How would the deal impact emissions? The green energy programme would result in

curbing India's total carbon emissions by 0.8 gigatonnes by 2030 as compared to the projections based on the Stated Policies Scenario (STEP) by the International Energy Agency (IEA). Investment in this programme has two components — energy efficiency and clean renewable energy. India's use of energy per unit of GDP (energy intensity) is substantially higher than the global average, which can be significantly reduced through the first component. As a result, India would save almost one-third of the energy it would have used in the absence of the programme.

The elephant in the room, though, is how will this 10 per cent of the GDP be financed, that too for 10 years. This is indeed a huge sum, especially for a developing country. There are two ways this can be financed — a global just transition package from the greatest emitters of the world, and a tax on the Indian elite. Both, quite justifiably, put the burden of adjustment on those whose lifestyles are primarily responsible for the climate crisis. If looked at globally, India's carbon emissions stand at 3 per cent of the cumulative global emissions as compared to the US's 25 per cent. A just way to address this gross inequality could be for those countries that have contributed (currently or cumulatively) more emissions than the global average pay for the energy transition of those who have contributed less. The

extent of the payment would depend on where a country lies on the global scale of emissions. According to our calculations, such an international global carbon tax settlement process would yield an annual sum of around \$270 billion for India, a little more than what is required for IGD.

If we look at this inequality nationally, the richest 10 per cent of Indians emit five times as much as the poorest. To hold the elite responsible, IGD can be made into a revenue-neutral policy where part of the expenditure is financed through an increase in taxes on luxury items, wealth and inheritance taxes, which are either low or non-existent in India. Another part can be financed by a carbon tax, which also addresses emissions but would be regressive, unlike the other taxes. To compensate for that, a carbon dividend — in the form of free electricity, public transport, and free rations — can be built into the policy proposal.

The Indian Green Deal will simultaneously solve two of the most pressing challenges of today — emissions and equity. The problem lies not in the realm of ideas but the political will to deliver on them.

Azad teaches economics at JNU and Chakraborty is a research assistant professor at Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), University of Massachusetts, Amherst

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fix MGNREGA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Holes in the safety net' (IE 15 January). The findings of the Jharkhand MGNREGA social audit only confirm the lack of seriousness from state governments in rooting out irregularities in the scheme, as several such audits done in other states had revealed similar discrepancies. This passivity is due to the involvement of many officials and deeply entrenched vested interests in the racket, and leads to a perfunctory implementation of the scheme, besides huge leakage of funds. When allocations to such schemes are growing and local governments are acquiring more powers, it is imperative for social audits to be performed in every state and corrective action taken to plug loopholes in the system.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

INDIA'S SUCCESS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The Indo-Pacific opportunity' (IE, January 15). International diplomacy has charted undulating waters, with independent India being no stranger to the turbulence. The second half of the 20th century brought in a novel set of institutions like the UN, IMF and World Bank, which have, even until now, been skewed against the developing world. India's handling of its strategic autonomy amidst an increasingly truculent

diplomatic minefield has been impressive on certain fronts. From being able to strike digital nuclear cooperation deals with nations like the US and France despite not being a member of the NSG to not forswearing the quest for an open, safe and secure Indo-Pacific, in the face of an aggressive China, India's iridescence at attempting to living up to its potential is impressive. Moreover, the geostrategic isolation of France because of the AUKUS's creation, provides an opportunity for a strengthening of the Indo-French ties.

Vinay Saroha, Delhi

KOHLI'S EXIT

THIS REFERS TO the report, '24 hours before tweet, Kohli told team he was stepping down' (IE, January 16). The signs were there. Virat Kohli was becoming extremely frustrated with the captaincy. The manner in which he kicked the air and blew up after Dean Elgar won a review on day three of the decider indicated he was running out of patience. A day after India lost the series 2-1 to South Africa, Kohli resigned as the Test captain on Saturday. Being removed as the ODI captain hurt Kohli. And his verbal duel with the BCCI did not help matters. The writing was on the wall. One era ends and another will begin.

SS Paul, Nadia

Doctor held in Wardha hospital abortion case

JAYPRAKASH SNAIDU
ARVI (WARDHA), JANUARY 16

A GYNAECOLOGIST in Wardha district of Maharashtra was Sunday arrested over the illegal abortion of a 13-year-old girl at the hospital — run by his family — where foetal remains were unearthed.

A police officer said the arested person, Niraj Kadam, was aware about the abortion at Kadam Hospital in Arvi town but did not inform the police. "Further, he helped in destruction of evidence," this officer said.

The police had found 12 skulls and 54 bones, which they said belonged to foetuses from the hospital premises.

Earlier, Niraj Kadam's wife, Rekha Kadam, who is also a gynaecologist, was arrested by the Arvi police for allegedly carrying out the abortion.

Classifieds
PERSONAL

I, hitherto known as RAJENDRA KUMAR son of SHRI KHUM BAHADUR KHANDKA residing at HOUSE NO- 16/316, CARRIAPPA VIHAR, DELHI CANTT, NEW DELHI - 110010 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAJENDRA KHANDKA vide affidavit dated 03 Sep 2021.

0070768905-1

I Manoj Kumar Borar S/o Ranjit Borar R/o FB-106 Mansarovar Garden New Delhi 110015 have changed my name to Manoj Kumar Jain 0050190396-1

I Kusum Borar W/o Manoj Kumar Borar R/o FB-106 Mansarovar Garden New Delhi 110015 have changed my name to Kusum Jain 0050190395-1

IAkshay S/o Shri Chandra Mohan Doval R/o C-3/1 Rail Vihar Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, 201014 (U.P.), changed my name Akshay Dobhal for future purpose 0040599497-1

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0050190466-1

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to public at large that my client Surgeon Vice Admiral V K Singh (Retd) R/o 453, Rama Appt, Sector 11, Dwarka, New Delhi had issued a public notice on 17.05.2014 in Indian Express as well as Statesman Newspapers (both Delhi Edition) informing that he has severed all his relation with his younger son Dr Deepak Chauhan. Now this is to inform public at large that my client has withdrawn/rescinded said notice dated 17.05.2014 and declare that his younger son Dr Deepak Chauhan shall be treated as his lawful son.

Ritesh Agrawal, Advocate, 1st Floor, 10, Todamall Lane, Bengali Market, New Delhi 110001

MUMBAI RAILWAY VIKAS CORPORATION LTD.

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) (Two Packet System-E Bid)

Bid Notice No. MRVC/W/150/TNA-DW/ROB/2021/2 date 12.01.2022. Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd. (MRVC), invites E-bids under Two Packet system for the work of "Construction of balance work of four lane Road Over Bridge (2 X 39.62m long Open web through type Steel girder + 2x20.00m long RCC T type Beam for two lanes of ROB and 2 X 39.62m + 1 x 20.00 m RCC T type Beam for other two lanes of ROB) near Mumbra Bye Pass flyover at Km 38.88 (Highway chainage 133/ 800 of NH 4) including fabrication of balance steel girder parts, Assembling & launching of steel girders, construction of approaches including earth filling, Re-grading existing Road work, dismantling old Road Over Bridge, etc. from Km. 38.20 to Km. 39.20 and other miscellaneous works in connection with provision of 5th and 6th line between Thane and Diva Stations of Central Railway (MUTP-II)". Approximate Estimated cost of work including GST Rs. 31,53,39,626.00/- Bid Security: Rs. 17,26,700/-. Period of completion: 15 months. Cost of Bidding Documents: Rs. 11,800.00. Date of Receipt and opening of Bids: The competed Bids shall be submitted electronically line on website www.ireps.gov.in not later than 15:00 hrs on 15.02.2022 and shall be opened at 15:30hrs. On the same day in the presence of Bidders who chose to be present at the address mentioned below. Address for Communication: Interested Eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the following address Executive Director/Civil, Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd, Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd., Second Floor, Churchgate Railway Station Building, M. K. Road, Mumbai (Maharashtra) 400020.Tel. No. 022 - 22091656 Fax- (022)-22096972 E-mail: edcivil@mrvc.gov.in and dycee@mrvc.gov.in

Days after violence over steel plant, village in Odisha barricades itself

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 16

TWO DAYS after violence broke out over a proposed steel plant, Dhinkia panchayat in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district stayed calm but tense with villagers erecting barricades to prevent outsiders from entering the village.

A faceoff between villagers and police had turned violent on Friday, leading to nearly 50 villagers and 15 policemen sustaining injuries. Police also arrested five villagers.

JSW Utkal Steel Limited, led by industrialist Sajjan Jindal, has proposed to establish a 13.2 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) capacity steel plant at an estimated cost of around Rs 55,000 crore, with the administration saying that the land was transferred to JSW Steel in 2017.

A decade ago, Dhinkia was the site of major protests which eventually led to the scrapping of a steel project by South Korean steel major POSCO. "This is our land, we have protected it before, we will protect it again. We will not let any industrial set-up here on our fertile land. No amount of



Police action in Dhinkia panchayat Friday. ANI

compensation can match the generation of hard work and toil put into the land," a villager from Dhinkia, Ramesh Swain said.

The villagers alleged that since Thursday, police had been forcibly destroying their betel vines to set up the steel plant. "Those among us who resisted were put behind bars. On Friday, police used force on us as we strengthened our protest," Swain said.

Police, meanwhile, maintained that the villagers had gathered in large numbers, violating COVID norms and that they also allegedly assaulted personnel.

Additional SP of Jagatsinghpur Umesh Panda said villagers had not taken permission for the assembly. "When they were restricted at Dhinkia, the villagers misbehaved and assaulted police personnel. Razors were used to attack police personnel following which we resorted to lathicharge," Panda said. "Five persons were arrested and have been sent to judicial custody. Many of them also fled the village. Further investigation is underway," he added. Around five platoons of police continue to be deployed in the area.

UNION MINISTER, BJP MLAS MEET MATUA COMMUNITY

Will pressure Centre on CAA: BJP MLAs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JANUARY 16

DISGRUNTLED BJP MLAs belonging to the Matua community in West Bengal on Sunday met community leaders at Thakurbari in North 24 Parganas district where they decided to put renewed pressure on the Central government for implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). CAA was brought by the BJP government in 2019 to grant citizenship to re-

ligious minorities of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who had to flee facing persecution.

The meeting, attended by nearly 40 leaders of Matua community, was chaired by Union MoS Shantanu Thakur. Thakur, a Matua community leader, had recently exited from all the Bengal BJP WhatsApp groups, amid growing dissension in the party over the constitution of the party's state unit committees. At least nine BJP MLAs, most of them Matuas, had exited from the party's WhatsApp groups re-

cently. Two days ago, the BJP dissolved all its state unit committees as dissension grew.

BJP MLAs Ashok Kirtania, Subrata Thakur and Mukutmani Adhikari, all belonging to the Matua community, also attended Sunday's meeting. While most of the leaders said it was a regular monthly meet of All India Matua Mahasangha, sources said that it was convened on an urgent basis.

"We have been fighting for the CAA for over 20 years now. It is not just for the Matuas but for

"The land in question was first acquired by Posco, but the project was shelved. After almost 10 years they cannot come to us saying that a new industrial unit will be set up without consulting us. The betel vineyards are a source of income for the five villages under this panchayat. You cannot just hand over 2,000 acres of fertile land for establishing an industry without our consent," said Manorama Khatua, an activist from the Jindal Pratirodh Sangram.

"The land in question was transferred to JSW Steel in 2017 itself. The company has also charted out its compensation scheme for those who will lose their lands and livelihoods. Many villagers have also agreed to come on board but some are still reluctant," said Kanhu Charan Dhir, Additional District Magistrate of Paradip.

The village has been on tenterhooks since December after protests emerged over the demarcation of Mahala, a newly created revenue village in the panchayat. The villagers had alleged that the demarcation was done to divide the village and scatter the villagers in order to derail the movement against the proposed steel plant.

all the refugees. Obviously, we will keep appealing to the Centre for its implementation. If the implementation of CAA gets delayed further, we will have to fight for it... All the Matuas and refugees are united. We are keeping a close eye on what the Centre is doing. We have big hopes from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah," BJP MLA Mukutmani Adhikari said after the meeting.

"Till the time we don't get citizenship, we will continue this movement, maybe with more intensity if need be," Adhikari, who is also the district president of All India Matua Mahasangha (Nadia South), said. Ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal last year, BJP leaders had promised to implement the contentious citizenship law. Home Minister Amit Shah too had assured the Matua community of implementing the CAA.

The Centre, however, is yet to notify the rules of the amended law. January 9 was the third extended deadline for the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to notify the CAA, 2019, rules.

WEF summit begins today; Modi, Xi to deliver special addresses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, DAVOS, JANUARY 16

WITH ITS high-profile annual meeting getting deferred due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Economic Forum's five-day online Davos Agenda summit will begin on Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping scheduled to deliver their special addresses on 'state of the world' on the first day itself.

The Forum has been hosting its annual meeting in the Swiss town of Davos for 50 years, but it could not take place in 2021 due to the pandemic and has been deferred till early summer for this year as well. However, an online 'Davos Agenda' summit will be held for the second straight year on the dates originally scheduled for the physical annual meeting.

The week-long digital summit will begin with a special address by Jinping on Monday, followed by two virtual sessions — the first on Covid-19 and the second on technology cooperation in the fourth industrial revolution.

PM Modi will deliver his special address on Monday evening, which would be followed by the address of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio are to deliver their respective special addresses on Tuesday.

Arrested J&K journalist booked under PSA day after court grants bail

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 16

A DAY after a local court ordered his release on bail, the J&K government on Sunday booked arrested journalist Sajad Ahmed Dar, who writes by the name of Sajad Gul, under the Public Safety Act (PSA) and sent him to a jail in Jammu. A senior police officer confirmed to The Indian Express that Gul has been booked under the PSA.

On Saturday, the Bandipore court ordered that Gul be released on bail after hearing a petition filed by his counsel. The court had asked Gul to furnish a

OXFAM REPORT
In 2021, income of 84% households fell, but number of billionaires grew

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

THE INCOME of 84 per cent of households in the country declined in 2021, but at the same time the number of Indian billionaires grew from 102 to 142, an Oxfam report has said, pointing to a stark income divide worsened by the Covid pandemic.

The Oxfam report, "Inequality Kills", released on Sunday ahead of the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda, also found that as Covid continued to ravage India, the country's healthcare budget saw a 10% decline from RE (revised estimates) of 2020-21. There was a 6% cut in allocation for education, the Oxfam report says, while the budgetary allocation for social security schemes declined from 1.5% of the total Union budget to 0.6%.

The India supplement of the global report also says that in 2021, the collective wealth of India's 100 richest people hit a record high of Rs 57.3 lakh crore (USD 775 billion). In the same year, the share of the bottom 50 per cent of the population in national wealth was a mere 6 per cent.

During the pandemic (since March 2020, through to November 30, 2021), the report says, the wealth of Indian billion-

aires increased from Rs 23.14 lakh crore (USD 313 billion) to Rs 53.16 lakh crore (USD 719 billion). More than 4.6 crore Indians, meanwhile, are estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2020, nearly half of the global new poor according to the United Nations.

India has the third highest number of billionaires in the world, just behind China and the United States, says the report, with more billionaires than France, Sweden and Switzerland combined — a 39 per cent increase in the number of billionaires in India in 2021.

The report says, "this surge comes at a time when India's unemployment rate was as high as 15 per cent in urban areas and the healthcare system was on the brink of collapse."

Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar said the global briefing points to the "stark reality of inequality contributing to the death of at least 21,000 people each day, or one person every four seconds".

"The pandemic has set gender parity back from 99 years to now 135 years. Women collectively lost Rs 59.11 lakh crore (USD 800 billion) in earnings in 2020, with 1.3 crore fewer women in work now than in 2019," Behar said.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Kashmir Press Club: Journalists' groups condemn 'forcible takeover'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 16

A DAY after a group of journalists "forcibly" took over the management of the Kashmir Press Club, allegedly with police help, top journalist bodies called it an "armed takeover". They demanded the return of the previously elected body and early elections at the club.

The Editors Guild of India, Press Club of India and Mumbai Press Club also deplored the J&K administration for trying to scuttle the elections by putting its re-registration in abeyance.

"The Editors Guild of India is aghast at the manner in which the office and the management of Kashmir Press Club, the largest journalists association in the Valley, was forcibly taken over by a group of journalists with the help of armed policemen," it said in a statement Sunday.

On Saturday, a group of journalists barged inside the club of office in Srinagar and took over its management. While they entered the club, there was a heavy deployment of police and paramilitary personnel outside.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.: Elect/TRD/MB/2021-22/TN-07 Date: 15.01.2022

Department	Electrical (TRD)
Tender No./Bid No	GEM/2021/B/1777715 Dated: 15.01.2022
Name of Work	Hiring of 03 nos trucks for TRD Depots Jwalapur, Amroha and Sitapur for OHE and PSI maintenance and breakdown activities for a period of 24 months.
Tender Closing Date & Time	29.01.2022 upto 15:00 Hrs
Advertised Value (Rs.)	Rs. 55,31,175.84/- (including GST)
Earnest Money (Rs.)	Rs. 1,10,624/-
Validity of Offer (Days)	60 Days
Period of Completion	2 Years
Website particulars & Address of office	www.gem.gov.in Divisional Railway Manager's Northern Railway, Office, Moradabad

103/2022

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BESCOM invites tender for the following **Enquiry No. BESCOM/GM(M&C)/96/BM/2021-22** For Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Boundary metering cubicles (including meter) across interface points in IPDS towns of BESCOM on Total Turnkey basis under PERCENTAGE quoting on each item basis. The Tender documents can be obtained through e-procurement portal from the Website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> on or after 17.01.2022. Aspiring bidders need to register on e-procurement portal. Further, bidders can take assistance with e-procurement helpdesk at 080-25501216, 080-25501227.

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PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Vibha, R/o:** H.No. 1053, B-Block, Street No.09, Baba Colony, Sant Nagar, Burari, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 1033/14 U/s 498A/406/506/34 IPC** registered at P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Vibha** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Vibha** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding U/s 82 Cr.P.C. has been initiated in this case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Vibha** accused of **FIR No. 1033/14 U/s 498A/406/506/34 IPC** P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer said complaint on or before 21.02.2022.

By Order
Sh. Nitish Kuamr Sharma,
Metropolitan Magistrate,
Karkardooma Courts, Shahdara, Delhi

DP/1243/NE/2021



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON JAN 15

685
DAYS SINCE
PANDEMIC
BEGAN

New cases

2,71,202

Active cases

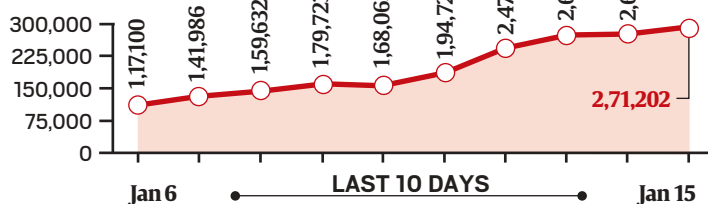
15,50,377

Deaths

314

Weekly CFR: 2.22% | Overall CFR: 1.39% | Total deaths: 4,86,066

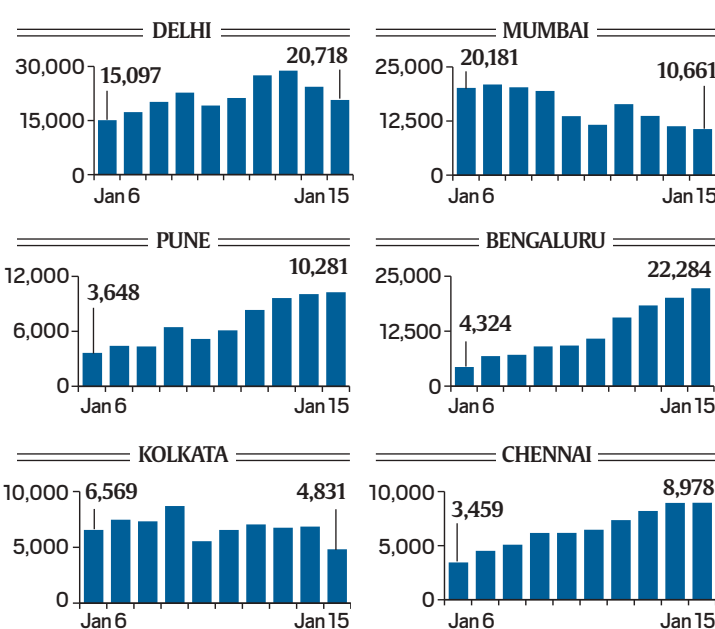
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON JANUARY 15			Weekly positivity
	New Cases	Active Cases	Deaths	
Maharashtra	46,205	2,64,441	33	20.73%
Karnataka	32,793	1,69,879	7	11.09%
Tamil Nadu	23,989	1,31,007	11	12.50%
Delhi	20,718	93,407	30	27.12%
West Bengal	19,064	1,55,376	39	32.29%

SURGE IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS



TOTAL TESTS

70,24,48,838

TESTS ON JAN 15

17,36,014

WEEKLY POSITIVITY

12.84%

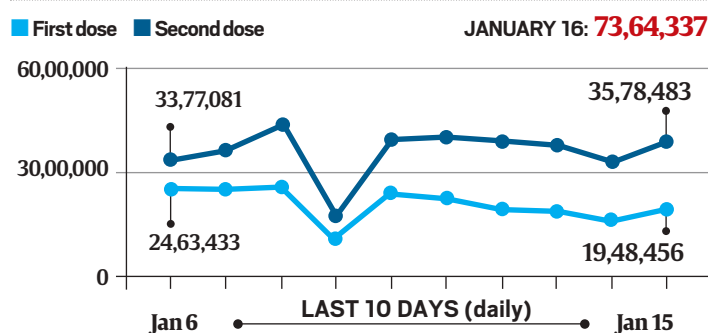
OVERALL POSITIVITY

5.28%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES

156,76,15,454

(Adults 1st dose: 87,36,48,806; adults second dose: 65,57,96,458; 15-18 age group 1st dose: 3,38,50,912; precautionary doses: 43,19,278)



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TELLING NUMBERS

The view on 'double engine'

Does it benefit the development of a state if it elects the same party as the one ruling at the Centre? CSDS survey looks at what voters think of the idea, and how far election results have reflected their opinion.

JYOTIMISHRA

THE BJP has frequently used the phrase 'double engine government' during campaigns for various state Assembly elections. The party first used the expression during the 2014 Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly elections, which took place after six months of the Lok Sabha elections: BJP leaders appealed to voters to choose the same party (BJP or NDA) in these states as the one ruling at the Centre for better development of their states. The same appeal was echoed in subsequent Assembly elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeated the need for a 'double engine government' for better development of the states during his election campaigns in Tripura, Assam, West Bengal and most recently in Uttar Pradesh and Goa, where elections are scheduled during February-March 2022.

Since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, 40 Assembly elections have taken place, and Lokniti-CSDS has conducted pre- or post-election surveys during 31 of these. In 22 surveys, voters were asked a question on 'double engine government': whether they believed that "for the development of their states, it is necessary that the ruling party at the Centre and the State should be the same". Using Lokniti-CSDS data, this article looks at voters' opinion on the subject.

Views and votes

At the time of the 22 surveys, the BJP or its allies were heading the incumbent governments in four states — Punjab, Goa, Rajasthan and Assam. But after the elections, the BJP and its allies got elected in 12 states, including Goa and Assam where the BJP was re-elected in 2017 and 2021 respectively. In two states — Punjab (2017) and Rajasthan (2018) — the BJP lost its incumbent position, and the Congress formed the government.

The states where the BJP won the elections were mainly those where net agreement ('fully agree' minus 'fully disagree') for a double engine government was higher (a difference of 20 percentage points), except for a few such as Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh, voters did not agree that for the development of their state, the same party

WILL 'DOUBLE ENGINE' GOVT HELP? HOW VOTERS RESPONDED

State	Year of election	Incumbent government	Election winner(s)	Fully agree	Fully disagree	Net agreement
Assam	2021	BJP	BJP	41	15	26
Kerala	2021	LDF	LDF	20	54	-34
Tamil Nadu	2021	AIADMK	DMK	11	40	-29
West Bengal	2021	TMC	TMC	26	33	-7
Delhi	2020	AAP	AAP	40	31	9
Tripura	2018	CPM	BJP	35	13	22
Rajasthan	2018	BJP	INC	45	11	34
Nagaland	2018	NPF	NDA	21	5	16
Meghalaya	2018	INC	NDA, NPP	15	13	2
Goa	2017	BJP	BJP	38	8	30
Himachal Pradesh	2017	INC	BJP	10	31	-21
Punjab	2017	SAD+BJP	INC	25	20	5
UP	2017	SP	BJP	24	16	8
Uttarakhand	2017	INC	BJP	40	14	26
Assam	2016	INC	BJP	46	7	39
Kerala	2016	UDF	LDF	44	19	25
Tamil Nadu	2016	AIADMK	AIADMK	39	16	23
West Bengal	2016	TMC	TMC	29	6	23
Delhi	2015	President's Rule	AAP	29	36	-7
Haryana	2014	INC	BJP	45	11	34
Jharkhand	2014	JMM	BJP	29	7	22
Maharashtra	2014	INC	BJP	41	10	31

All figures are in per cent. Other responses included 'Somewhat agree' and 'Somewhat disagree'

Source: Lokniti-CSDS surveys

should be ruling in the state and at the Centre: net agreement here was -21%. The state has followed its tradition of alternating governments. In two Northeastern states, Meghalaya and Nagaland, the net agreement was low, although the BJP went on to become part of the government in both states.

When we look at voters' opinion on a 'double engine government' in elections year by year, we find that in the very first Assembly elections after the 2014 Lok Sabha election, voters in Haryana (45%), Maharashtra (29%) and Jharkhand (41%) fully agreed with the idea that the same government should be in power

in the state and at the Centre for better development of the state, and only 11%, 10% and 7% respectively fully disagreed. In all three states, the BJP government was elected.

In 2015, voters of Delhi showed their faith in political pluralism by negating the idea of 'double engine' — 36% fully disagreed (and fewer agreed) on having the same government as at the Centre — and gave a massive victory to a new entrant, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

In 2016, elections took place in four major states: West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In Assam, the support for a 'double engine' was the highest — with 46% fully in sup-

port as against 7% against the idea — and this opinion got reflected in the BJP getting elected to government for the first time in the state. In West Bengal, 29% fully agreed while 40% did not even respond to this question. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, although voters supported the idea of a 'double engine' government, the idea did not shape voting choice as Kerala elected the LDF and Tamil Nadu voted in the DMK.

During 2017-2020, support for a 'double engine' was comparatively low in Punjab, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh, and quite high in Tripura, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttarakhand. The BJP won in Tripura and Uttarakhand, but could not win in Delhi and Rajasthan despite voters having expressed strong support for a 'double engine'. Like Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan also followed a trend of alternating governments — people voted for the Congress despite supporting the idea of a 'double engine' government.

Declining acceptance

The findings from the recently concluded elections in four states — Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal — hint at a decline in acceptance for a 'double engine' government. Net agreement on the idea was negative in three of the states, the exception being Assam. The strongest disagreement for a 'double engine' was in Kerala (54%), followed by Tamil Nadu (40%) and West Bengal (33%). The disagreement had not been so strong in the 2016 elections in these states. Even in Assam, one can see a slight decline in agreement for a 'double engine' government.

A campaign based on the idea of a 'double engine' government may be an attractive strategy, but one cannot notice any correlation between support for the idea and the results of voting. States follow their own traditional voting patterns. Support for the idea was higher among those states where the BJP has a strong electoral presence, and not as strong in states with significant regional parties — although exceptions were seen in Assam and Tripura.

Uttar Pradesh, where a 'double engine' government already exists, will be an interesting case as the BJP faces the electorate as an incumbent, rather than as a challenger.

Jyoti Mishra is with Lokniti-CSDS

2 more drugs for Covid patients: how they work

Arthritis drug barticinib and antibody sotromivar, newly recommended by WHO for treatment of Covid

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS

PUNE, JANUARY 16

THE WORLD Health Organization (WHO) last week recommended two drugs, barticinib and sotromivar, for treatment of Covid-19.

BARICITINIB, which is also used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, has been "strongly recommended" for patients with severe or critical Covid-19 in combination with corticosteroids. It is part of a class of drugs called Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors that suppress the overstimulation of the immune system. It is an oral drug, and provides an alternative to other arthritis drugs called Interleukin-6 receptor blockers, recommended by WHO in July 2021.

SOTROVIMAB, developed by GlaxoSmithKline with US partner Vir Biotechnology Inc, is an investigational monoclonal antibody for use in treating conditions caused by coronavirus. The WHO has conditionally recommended its use for treating mild or moderate Covid-19 in patients who are at high risk of hospitalisation. These include patients who are older, are immuno-

compromised, and have underlying conditions like diabetes, hypertension and obesity, and are unvaccinated. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) too has approved an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the therapy for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 in patients above 12 years.

How they work

Baricitinib, an immunomodulator, is an alternative to tocilizumab: either of these drugs is given to patients who have severe Covid-19, are clinically progressing on steroids and have high inflammatory markers.

"Basically, during the severe phase of Covid-19 there is an inflammation that triggers severe disease. This is mediated by certain inflammatory markers which are then inhibited by Baricitinib," said Dr Sanjay Pujari, member of ICMR national Covid-19 task force.

Infectious disease experts said they have been using baricitinib ever since the publication of the COV BARRIER study on the drug. During the wave of infections with Delta, there was a shortage of tocilizumab, and

baricitinib was an alternative drug. "Both have different mechanisms of action but studies have shown mortality benefit if used with steroids in patients with serious Covid-19 disease," Dr Pujari said.

Leading rheumatologist Dr Arvind Chopra said Olumiant (baricitinib) is a prescription medicine used to treat adults with moderately to severely active rheumatoid arthritis. "It is an antiviral and has shown efficacy in severe Covid-19. However it is advised that doctors should not prescribe in mild to moderate cases," he said.

The antibody cocktail casirivimab-imdevimab is not active against the Omicron variant whereas sotrovimab can be used in mild illness with patients of both Delta and Omicron at risk of high progression, said Dr Amit Dravid, infectious diseases consultant.

Availability in India

Baricitinib is cheap and widely available. It is given to control hyperinflammation, which usually starts between days 7 and 14. "The patient starts becoming breathless and that is the time we use steroids and add tocilizumab. In

case there is a spike in hospital admissions, there is an alternative, baricitinib, which is widely available," Dr Dravid said.

Sotrovimab is not available in India. However, experts said that since Omicron now forms the major proportion of infections, the currently available monoclonal antibodies should be used only if there is clear proof that the person has been infected with the Delta variant.

What recommendation means

The latest WHO recommendations form the eighth update of WHO's living guidelines on therapeutics and Covid-19. They are based on evidence from seven trials involving over 4,000 patients with non-severe, severe, and critical Covid-19.

According to Prof K Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India, the approval will be granted by the national regulator who may take into consideration the recommendation of credible national agencies like WHO.

Baricitinib has long been recommended in the US and Europe in their guidelines.

Different pattern, better material: Indian Army's new combat uniform

KRISHNKAUSHIK

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

A NEW combat uniform for the Indian Army was unveiled during the Army Day celebrations on Saturday, with soldiers of the elite parachute regiment marching in it. The uniform will be made available in a phased manner to the Army's nearly 12 lakh personnel.

How is it different?

The main changes from the uniform that has been in use since 2008 are with regard to the camouflage pattern, design, and material.

While the new, unique camouflage pattern retains the combination of the same colours — olive green and earthen shades — the pattern is digital now. It has been designed keeping in mind the many kinds of operational conditions that the soldiers function in, from deserts to high-altitude areas, jungles and plains.

The new fabric makes it lighter, sturdier, more breathable, and more suitable for the

different terrains that soldiers are posted in. The cotton-to-polyester ratio is 70:30, making it quicker to dry, more comfortable to wear in humid and hot conditions, and lightweight.

According to the Army, it is an ergonomically designed, operationally effective, new-generation camouflage combat uniform. Compared to the current uniform, the new fabric is 15% lighter, and has 23% more strength against tearing. These features allow for long-hour use and comfort, and micro features are inbuilt for the use of the wearer in field conditions.

What are its components, and how is it styled?

The new uniform adds a combat T-shirt underneath and a shirt over it. Also, unlike the previous uniform, the shirt will not be tucked in.

The "jacket", as the shirt is called, has angular top pockets, lower pockets with vertical openings, knife pleats at the back, a pocket on the left sleeve, a pen holder on the left forearm, and improved-quality buttons.



Special Forces commandos march in the new combat uniform during the Army Day Parade in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

The trousers will be adjustable at the waist with elastic and buttons, and have a double layer at the groin.

For the caps, the girth will be adjustable, and the logo of the Army will be of better quality than earlier.

For the first time, a modified version of the uniform has been developed keeping in mind the specific requirements of women officers and troops.

Who designed it, and how was it chosen for the Army?

The design process, although finalised by Army Chief Gen M M Naravane, was initiated before he took over in January 2020. However, once a few designs were short-listed, the choice was ultimately a collective decision of the Army Commanders.

Designed by a team of 12 people at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), which included seven professors, three students, and two alumni, the uniform was created through a consultative process with the Army, keeping in mind "4Cs" — comfort, climate, camouflage, and confidentiality.

The fabric was selected out of five options curated specifically for the Army by NIFT, and the finalised pattern was one of the 17 options that were specially designed.

Domain-specific experts for fabric, camouflage patterns, and designs were en-

gaged, and prototypes were prepared through a continuous consultative process.

Will it be available in markets?

One of the factors that led to the change was the easy availability of the Army's current combat pattern cloth across the country. Soldiers could get the cloth and simply have the uniform stitched.

To control random proliferation, the new uniform will come in over a dozen pre-stitched standard sizes. The uniforms will be barcoded and QR-coded to maintain their uniqueness, and will be available only through the ordnance chain or military canteens.

The Army will issue tenders for private and public companies to manufacture the uniforms, and the uniforms will be issued to personnel in a phased manner.

Are all uniforms of the Army changing?

No. Only the combat uniform has been changed. The Army has several uniforms, including the olive greens, as it is called, for peace area postings, and ceremonial uniforms.

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IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

DR ANGELIQUE COETZEE, CHAIRPERSON, SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Don't look at your positivity rate or your daily cases. Look at how many people are admitted in the ICU

Dr Angelique Coetzee talks about how she first spotted the Omicron variant, how it has replaced Delta in South Africa and whether the Omicron wave will enable herd immunity. This session was moderated by ANURADHA MASCARENHAS, Senior Editor, *The Indian Express*

Anuradha Mascarenhas: With this new variant, the majority of the symptoms are mild. So, what really caught your attention? What made you sense that something is different and how did you treat it?

I am a general practitioner and still old-school. So, even with the Beta and Delta wave, we let patients come in, and, I think, that assisted us greatly in understanding how these variants attack the body. We were out of the Delta wave for about eight weeks, and one morning a young man came with some complaints. He tested positive, and subsequently, his family did too. That day, I also saw other patients with more or less the same symptoms, which were very different from Delta. I call it musculoskeletal, mostly because of the sore body, backache, headache, chest pain, scratchy throat and a slightly runny nose, but not really fever and any oxygen needs. In the beginning, when I first saw these patients, I still followed the Delta protocol. In Delta, you have to see your patients back (after a few days), because they tend to turn around by about Day 10; between Day 7 and 10, that's when they really get bad. But within one week, I realised that out of all the patients that I'd seen, only four came back for a follow-up. The rest said they were much better.

Amitabh Sinha: One of the things that we have been hearing about the Omicron variant is that it is mild. But at the same time, scientists have also consistently been saying that the evidence is not conclusive yet. At what stage do you think the evidence would be conclusive to say that this particular variant is a milder variant, that it would not cause any serious disease?

First, you need to look at the definition of the WHO (World Health Organization) regarding mild illness of Covid-19. The definition is clear; signs of upper respiratory tract infection, no shortness of breath, dyspnea, or any abnormal chest X-ray — patients should be able to be treated at home. So, if you look at the definition, less than one per cent are getting severe illness. The majority of patients in primary healthcare are adhering to the definition of mild illness. If you're unvaccinated, if you have comorbidities, then any viral infection might lead to severe illness and that severe illness would be pneumonia. That's what we have seen with Omicron. What I can advise you is that do not look at your positivity rate or your daily cases. You need to look at how many people are admitted in the ICU and what are your death rates for patients admitted specifically for Covid-19.

Amitabh Sinha: Can you tell us a little more about what exactly happened in South Africa in that case? How many people actually ended up in the hospitals, in the ICUs? How many deaths occurred during this Omicron wave to suggest that it was nothing like what the Delta wave was?

Our data is clear that less than one-third of patients with Omicron were severe in hospitals. With Delta, on July 8, there were 19,900 in hospitals, on July 14, 17,000 in hospitals and on July 10, there were 2,597 in high-care and ICUs. With Omicron on December 17, we had 23,000 cases per day, 528 in high-care and 7,900 in hospitals. Our death rate was much lower; average was about 100. With Delta, we had seen a huge increase in death rates.

Kaunain Sherif M: WHO says that this variant is causing very high breakthrough infections. Are you seeing severe breakthrough infections in South Africa?

In the mild cases, it doesn't seem to matter whether you have been vaccinated or not. We have seen just as many mild cases in vaccinated people as in the unvaccinated. However, what we did notice was that the severity of the headache or the scratchy throat or the malaise is less intense among the vaccinated. In our ICUs, 88 per cent are unvaccinated.

Kaunain Sherif M: In the case of severe infections, we are seeing that Omicron is affecting the upper respiratory tract and the airways and not really the lungs. Are you seeing these two things, which are blood clots as well as cytokine storm, in severe patients with Omicron?

Not that much as was the case with Delta. Remember the definition of severe illness, which is lung infiltrates, so that's pneumonia. And those patients with pneu-



WHY DR ANGELIQUE COETZEE

Dr Angelique Coetzee, a general practitioner in Pretoria and chairperson of the South African Medical Association, was the first to alert the authorities in November about the Omicron variant, which has since swept the world. As the world tackles the highly transmissible variant, South Africa's experience has become important to understand the outbreak's trajectory

monia will either be in the ICU or in high care. But for the average person out there, Omicron will not affect the lower respiratory tract. In severe disease, it does affect the lower respiratory system, that's why you are admitted, because of the pneumonia...and that would cause inflammation and cytokine storm, although clinically not so severe as we have seen with Delta, especially among the vaccinated people.

Anuradha Mascarenhas: Are the majority of patients only above 60 years of age, those with comorbidities? Do you see youngsters at all in the ICUs?

We do see youngsters. From the data on January 7, we see ICU admissions among the 70-plus age group were 270 for the past two weeks, ventilations: 135, and 91 deaths. Among the 60-69 age group, hospitalisations were around 35 per cent. In the 70-plus age group, the hospitalisation was 49 per cent, 50 to 59 was 29 per cent, 40 to 49 was 17 per cent and from 18 to 39 it was 11 per cent. That was the status of hospitalisation for two weeks that was released on January 10.

Kaunain Sherif M: There are lab studies, not peer reviewed, that say that Omicron is providing some protection against Delta. There is also now epidemiological data from the UK which shows that Omicron is taking over Delta. What is your take?

In South Africa, Omicron has taken over from Delta; we don't really see Delta cases anymore. Second, regarding protection, you have to understand that this is our fourth wave. There are a lot of people in our country who have been infected before with one of these variants, and have what we call T and beta cells. So, your an-

tibodies will go down, but the moment you encounter a new variant, there will be some memory that will help protect you. For now, definitely Omicron will protect you with T and beta cells.

Kaunain Sherif M: Is it the end stage of Delta now, globally?

In South Africa, we are not seeing Delta. So, in South Africa, I think, that's the end stage of Delta, but it depends on what the variant is going to do going forward.

Kaunain Sherif M: Most of our vaccines were tested on the Wuhan strain. Our boosters were also mostly tested on that strain. How effective are the boosters for Omicron?

What we have seen is that whether you have been vaccinated or not, you still get the mild disease. I think, it's extremely important that people understand this, that the vaccines are not going to protect you against mild disease but your symptoms will be less intense. And that's what we've seen. In that case, vaccines are still good for the world. However, going forward, I don't think you're going to get your population to go every six months for a booster. I think at some stage people are going to say no, I've had enough of this.

Kaunain Sherif M: There's a lot of fatigue in this Omicron infection. A lot of frontline workers are getting infected. How is it affecting the healthcare system in South Africa?

In South Africa, unfortunately, one-third of our healthcare workers are not vaccinated for various reasons. We didn't see a huge strain on our hospitals. Maybe we have a different system than other countries because we are very much primary healthcare-orientated, with people going and seeing the doctors physically, and that also helps to explain the disease to patients. So, it's all about empowering the people out there. But there is mental fatigue everywhere. Even I get fed up, I actually had a fight with two patients who were admitted, because they didn't get vaccinated. Luckily, our

hospitals are not overwhelmed so it was easy to get a bed for them. But this could have been prevented.

Partha Biswas: Are we looking at a masked world for a very long time?

The use of masks should not be negotiable; it should be compulsory. It's interesting that one of the first things some of the first-world countries did was to close the borders with other countries, including South Africa, while they let people walk around without masks, spreading the virus. A mask should be part of your daily make-up.

Anonna Dutt: After the Delta wave, a lot of people were going back to the hospitals with breathlessness, fatigue, and a variety of symptoms, even some cases of mucormycosis. Are there any long-Covid symptoms that you've started seeing right now? Do you see Delta and Omicron probably mutating together in the future and coming up with a more virulent version?

Let's tackle the mutation. First, it's a possibility. Hopefully, that will never happen. But if it would, that would be a disaster, because then you will have a faster-spreading viral infection with a lot of severity.

I presume that there will be a few cases with long Covid with Omicron for those people who have been on the ventilator and discharged. But, so far, we haven't really had any experience with that.

Anonna Dutt: Did you see an increase in infection in children compared to Delta?

Yes, we did see that right in the beginning. That's always in any wave; children first. So for now, at this stage, even looking

at the data, there are not really anyone (children) in the hospital. We don't see children getting that sick anymore.

Amitabh Sinha: Two questions; first, some scientists have suggested that Omicron could be a blessing in disguise because everyone will get it and we would reach some sort of herd immunity. Now, here in India, during the second wave, over 70 per cent people were already estimated to have been infected. If 70, 80 or 90 per cent didn't get us herd immunity, what is the guarantee that Omicron would bring herd immunity? The other question is that Omicron is spreading this fast mainly because it is able to escape immune response. So, even if we attain herd immunity, what is the use of this herd immunity if a future variant once again develops this capability to evade

The use of masks should be compulsory...One of the first things some first-world countries did was to close the borders while they let (unmasked) people walk around, spreading the virus

not in the virus's best interest to kill us off because then the virus is going to die as well. So, it will try to survive. So, it will try to evade our immune systems as much as possible. That's where the wearing of the masks is so important so that you don't spread it.

Kaushik Das Gupta: Right now in South Africa, the cases seem to be declining. Could you tell us a little bit about the trajectory of this outbreak in South Africa?

Amitabh Sinha: Also, why is the South African trajectory different from what we are

seeing right now?

I don't know why our trajectory is different from what you see. Based on the data we have, I think, we peaked around December 17 or 18. If I look at the peaks, we didn't have the same peak. It was less than it was with Delta, but very far spreading, and just as quickly, it went down. I think, that's the nature of the virus.

Kaushik Das Gupta: For how long did you have the restrictions after the Omicron outbreak?

We have done away with our restrictions on movement (of people), closing of restaurants, sale of alcohol, but mask-wearing is still compulsory, there's still a cap on big gatherings — indoors 1,000, outdoors more. Indoor gatherings of 1,000 people are allowed because of political pressure from the churches. But we haven't really seen an uptake in the number of infections, even from indoor gatherings of churches.

Sandeep Dwivedi: The Indian cricket team is in South Africa and they've been in a bio-bubble. How safe are these bio-bubbles and should we be continuing with these kinds of tournaments in a sanitised environment? The second question is that a medical panel allowed Novak Djokovic the exemption despite him not being vaccinated. What are your views on that?

Common sense will say that the rule should be the same; it doesn't matter whether you sweep the floors in a hospital, or whether you are the president of a country. And the rules should be clearly spelled out. If you look at people coming to matches, if you are not vaccinated but you do expect people to come and pay for your performance and they must be vaccinated, then you have to go and really think about this again, and what your priorities are. Globally, there should be a unified rule. Regarding cricket in South Africa, you can be in a bio-bubble as much as you want, but if you go out to a gathering, you don't know whether those people are vaccinated. Then you would make a mockery of your bubble. The question is, where are the leaks? We are the leaks, we are the soft points. But for now in South Africa, cricket is an open event.

Monojit Majumdar: How do you like to explain the protests, which have been sometimes violent, that have been seen in cities in Europe and the US against Covid-19 curbs, masks?

What it tells me is that either the government or the medical fraternity is not speaking to the people. It comes back to not empowering the people with correct facts. Your people are not stupid; they will sit down, they will listen to what you're saying, and they will make up their own minds. So, when you try to bring out a message there, you have to be honest. You have to say 'I don't know' if you don't know, you have to take them on the journey with you and empower them.

Anuradha Mascarenhas: Scientists tracking the virus said that there is a potential link with HIV. We know South Africa has several cases of HIV. Do you think at a time when there is greater global action, this fight against HIV has been neglected in some way, because of the pandemic?

An unvaccinated person with untreated HIV or TB (tuberculosis), or any other immunocompromised disease, would lead to variants mutating because that host body can't detect the virus and that would be an excellent platform for the virus to mutate. We need to get our immune-compromised people with TB, HIV, or those who are on dialysis for kidney disease, treated. Going forward, that is extremely important, otherwise you will see mutations. Incidentally, data points out that Omicron actually started in the Netherlands. So, that's very interesting.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

TOPOF THE WORLD



Prince Harry, AP

UNITED KINGDOM Prince Harry files court claim over police security

London: Prince Harry has filed a claim for a judicial review against the British government's decision not to let him personally pay for police protection while in the UK. The Duke of Sussex's legal representative said on Saturday that Harry wants to bring his children Archie and Lilibet to visit his home country from the US but that is too risky without police protection. The representative said Harry wanted to fund the police protection himself. His private security team in the US doesn't have adequate jurisdiction abroad or access to UK intelligence information, they said. Harry and Meghan's daughter has yet to meet her great-grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, and other members of the royal family. AP

NEW ZEALAND Tsunami threat recedes from volcanic eruption

Wellington: The tsunami threat around the Pacific from a huge undersea volcanic eruption began to recede on Sunday, while the extent of damage to Tonga remained unclear. The eruption cut the internet to Tonga. Even government websites and other official sources remained without updates on Sunday afternoon. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said there had not yet been any official reports of injuries or deaths in Tonga, but cautioned that authorities hadn't yet made contact with some coastal areas and smaller islands. AP

NEPAL Govt donates 14 tonnes of aid to Afghanistan

Kathmandu: Nepal on Sunday donated over 14 tonnes of humanitarian assistance to the UN representatives based in Afghanistan which is now under the Taliban rule, the first aid to a foreign country in the Himalayan nation's modern history. A team led by Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sewa Lamsal flew to Kabul to deliver the in-kind assistance, which weighed over 14 tonnes, excluding food items. Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka led the efforts as a goodwill gesture, the ministry said. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BERLIN, JANUARY 16

THE WORLD HEALTH Organization said on Sunday that a UN-backed programme shipping coronavirus vaccines to many poor countries has now delivered 1 billion doses, but that milestone "is only a reminder of the work that remains" after hoarding and stockpiling in rich countries.

A shipment of 1.1 million Covid-19 vaccine doses to Rwanda on Saturday included the billionth dose supplied via the Covax programme, the UN health agency said.

WHO has long criticised unequal distribution of vaccines and called for manufacturers and other countries to prioritise Covax. It said that, as of Thursday, 36 of its 194 member countries had vaccinated less than 10% of



The programme has made deliveries to 144 countries so far. Reuters file

their population and 88 had vaccinated less than 40%.

The programme has made deliveries to 144 countries so far, "but the work that has gone into this milestone is only a reminder of the work that remains," WHO said in a statement.

At the end of December, WHO

Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged everyone to make a "New Year's resolution" to get behind a campaign to vaccinate 70% of countries' populations by the beginning of July.

In a newspaper interview published on Sunday, Germany's new international development minister said she wants to use her country's presidency this year of the Group of Seven industrial nations to ensure that Covax gets the resources it needs in 2022.

"Unfortunately, there are still too few countries participating in the financing of the global vaccination campaign," the minister said. "Alongside Sweden, Norway, Canada and the US, we are the ones who are giving most."

Germany has said it donated 103 million doses to poorer countries last year and plans to donate another 75 million in 2022.

Cases shoot up among sick and elderly in US

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JANUARY 16

NURSING HOMES in the United States reported a near-record of about 32,000 Covid cases among residents in the week ended January 9, an almost sevenfold increase from a month earlier, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A total of 645 Covid-related deaths among residents were recorded during the same week, a 47% increase from earlier period.

In the US, a nursing home is a public or private residential facility that provides long-term personal or nursing care for old or ill

individuals who may be unable to look after their healthcare and medical needs on their own.

Thus, while the nursing home population is naturally more vulnerable to the virus, the situation at present is still not as bad as it was in December 2020, when nursing home deaths per week topped out at about 6,200.

This, experts say, is because of the high vaccination rates among nursing home residents — about 87% of them are fully vaccinated, according to CDC data.

Nursing home officials say they are responding to the outbreak by limiting visitors to common areas, and by reinstituting social distancing.

MEANWHILE MALI EX-PRESIDENT KEITA DIES AT 76



Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the former president of Mali who took office in a landmark election held after a destabilising coup only to be ousted in another military takeover nearly seven years later, has died. He was 76. In 2013, he had emerged from a field of more than two dozen candidates to win Mali's first democratic election after a 2012 coup — a landslide victory with over 77% of the vote.

Covid landmark: Covax delivers a billion doses

VACCINATED FLYERS TO TAKE NO TEST IN UK; BOOSTER JAB FOR TEENS

London: The UK government is reportedly planning to do away with the requirement of mandatory Covid tests post-arrival into the country for fully vaccinated travellers, including India. "We are looking at removing all Covid tests for vaccinated travellers by the end of January," a source said. Meanwhile, England's health service said it will expand its Covid booster vaccination programme to include 16- and 17-year-olds from Monday. Until now, booster jabs have been limited to 16- and 17-year-olds most at risk from the virus. AGENCIES

NETHERLANDS, MALTA PROTEST AGAINST COVID-19 MEASURES

Amsterdam, Valletta: Thousands of protesters packed Amsterdam's streets on Sunday in opposition to the government-imposed Covid measures and vaccination campaign as virus infections hit a new record. Authorities were granted stop and search powers at several locations across the city and scores of riot police vans patrolled neighbourhoods where the demonstrators marched. Malta, too, saw its biggest protest on Sunday, with hundreds of people marching in the capital against new measures requiring production of a Covid certificate for entry to most venues. REUTERS

Russia issues subtle threats more far-reaching than Ukraine invasion

ANTON TROIANOVSKI & DAVIDE SANGER

VIENNA, JANUARY 16

NO ONE expected much progress from this past week's diplomatic marathon to defuse the security crisis Russia has ignited in Eastern Europe by surrounding Ukraine on three sides with 100,000 troops and then, by the White House's accounting, sending in saboteurs to create a pretext for invasion.

The Kremlin has noted that Biden sees China, not Russia, as America's most complex, long-term challenger — an economic, military and technological competitor that plays in a different league from Russia. Yet forcing the US to increase its investment in a confrontation with Russia, analysts say, would undermine Biden's greater strategic goal.

"The United States, objectively, does not want to increase its military presence in Europe," said Suslov, the analyst. "This would be done at the cost of containing China."

But as the Biden administration and NATO conduct tabletop simulations about how the next few months could unfold, they are increasingly wary of another set of options for President Vladimir V. Putin, steps that are more far-reaching than simply rolling his troops and armor over Ukraine's border. Putin wants to extend Russia's sphere of influence to Eastern Europe and se-

cure written commitments that NATO will never again enlarge. If he is frustrated in reaching that goal, some of his aides suggested on the sidelines of the negotiations last week, then he would pursue Russia's security interests with results that would be felt acutely in Europe and the United States.

There were hints, never quite spelled out, that nuclear weapons could be shifted to places — perhaps not far from the United States coastline — that would reduce warning times after a launch to as little as five minutes, potentially igniting a confrontation with echoes of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

"A hypothetical Russian invasion of Ukraine would not undermine the security of the US," said Dmitry Suslov, an analyst in Moscow. "The overall logic of Russian actions is that it is the United States and NATO that must pay a high price."

And as Ukrainians were reminded anew on Friday, as the websites of the country's ministries were defaced in a somewhat amateurish attack, Russia's army of hackers can wreak havoc in Ukraine, but also in power grids from Munich to Michigan.

It could all be bluster, part of a Kremlin campaign of intimidation, and a way of reminding President Biden that while he wants to focus US attention on competing and dealing with China, Putin is still capable of causing enormous disruption. NYT



Russian tanks took part in drills in Russia's Rostov region near the border with Ukraine this week. AP

Microsoft discloses malware attack on Ukraine networks

Washington: Microsoft warned on Saturday evening that it had detected a highly destructive form of malware in dozens of government and private computer networks in Ukraine that appeared to be waiting to be triggered by an unknown actor.

In a blog post, the company said that on Thursday — around the same time that government agencies in Ukraine found their websites had been defaced — investigators who watch over Microsoft's global networks de-

TECTED the code. "These systems span multiple government, non-profit and information technology organisations, all based in Ukraine," Microsoft said.

Microsoft said that it could not yet identify the group behind the intrusion, but that it did not appear to be an attacker that its investigators had seen before.

The code appears to have been deployed around the time that Russian diplomats declared that the diplomatic talks had essentially hit a dead end. NYT

Ukraine claims Russia behind cyberattack in 'hybrid war'

YURAS KARMANAU

KYIV, JANUARY 16

UKRAINE SAID on Sunday that Russia was behind a cyberattack that defaced its government websites and alleged that Russia is engaged in an increasing "hybrid war" against its neighbour.

The statement from the Ministry of Digital Development came a day after Microsoft said dozens of computer systems at an unspecified number of Ukrainian government agencies had been infected with destructive malware disguised as ransomware. "All evidence indicates that Russia is behind the cyberattack. Moscow continues to wage a hybrid war and is actively building up its forces in the information and cyberspaces," the ministry statement said.

A top private sector cybersecurity executive in Kyiv, Oleh Derevianko, told The Associated Press that the intruders penetrated the government networks through a shared software supplier in a supply-chain attack like the 2020 SolarWinds Russian cyberespionage campaign that targeted the US government. AP

Philippines says 'indispensable' Suu Kyi must be part of Myanmar peace process

REUTERS

MANILA, JANUARY 16

DEPOSED MYANMAR leader Aung San Suu Kyi is "indispensable" in restoring democracy to the military-ruled country and must be included in any peace talks, regardless of her conviction, the Philippines' foreign minister said on Sunday.

In a strong rebuke of the Myanmar junta that overthrew Suu Kyi's elected government last year, Teodoro Locsin condemned last week's sentencing of the Nobel laureate and accused the



Aung San Suu Kyi

military of using the judicial system to crush its opponents.

Locsin said he would "adopt" verbatim the remarks of Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt in demanding the junta free political prisoners and respect human rights.

"I am deeply concerned about the suffering of the civilian population," Locsin said in a statement. "We also call on the military lead-

ership to participate in an inclusive dialogue and resume the democratic transition process."

His statement comes as ASEAN members turn up the heat on the Myanmar military after a turbulent end to 2021, during which junta boss Min Aung Hlaing was excluded from a leaders' summit for failure to honour commitments to an ASEAN-led peace plan. Locsin said dialogue would be meaningless without Suu Kyi. "She must be there, despite her conviction. The armed forces of Myanmar have much to gain, from the democracy it introduced to Myanmar," he said.

Israel's Netanyahu negotiating plea deal in graft trial

TIA GOLDENBERG

TEL AVIV, JANUARY 16

FORMER ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is negotiating a plea deal in his corruption case, a person involved in the talks said on Sunday. AP

The deal, which could be signed as early as this week, could usher Netanyahu off the Israeli political stage for years, paving the way for a leadership race in his Likud party and shaking up Israeli politics. Any deal could spare Netanyahu a protracted trial over an issue that has gripped the nation and risks tarnishing his legacy.

Reports of a deal angered critics who said it would undermine the rule of law. "The man who worked to destroy the public's trust in the foundations of democracy for personal reasons is not eligible for deals," Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz tweeted.

Demonstrators gathered against the developing deal outside the attorney general's house on Saturday evening. Any deal will likely be challenged in court. A spokesman for Netanyahu declined to comment. Netanyahu is on trial for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. The former premier, now opposition leader, denies wrongdoing. AP



Formee Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

THE BELGIAN-BRITISH TEENAGER WANTS TO INFUSE YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS WORLDWIDE WITH THE SPIRIT OF AVIATION

Typhoons, wildfires, missiles: Teen flies solo round world

RAFCASERT

BRUSSELS, JANUARY 16

AVOID TYPHOON in the Philippines. Check.

Steer clear of massive California wildfires. Check.

Keep away from test missiles in North Korea. What? Wait.

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

"Well, they test missiles once in a while without warning,"

Rutherford said. More importantly, she was just 15 minutes from flying over one of the last places one should enter uninvited.

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

At the age of 19, she is set to land her single-seater Shark sport aircraft in Kortrijk, Belgium, on Monday, more than 150 days after setting out to become the youngest woman to circumnavi-



Zara Rutherford waves from her Shark ultralight plane prior to take off at the Kortrijk-Wevelgem airfield in Belgium. AP

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

Flying runs in her blood since both her parents are pilots and she

has been traveling in small planes since she was 6. At 14, she started flying herself and about 130 hours of solo flights prepped her for the record attempt, which she hopes

will also have a bigger meaning.

With the final touchdown in a plane that looks like a fly among the giants parked at an airport like New York's JFK, the Belgian-British teenager wants to infuse young women and girls worldwide with the spirit of aviation. Two mathematical statistic stands out for her — only 5% of commercial pilots and 15% of computer scientists are women. "The gender gap is huge," she said.

Using Visual Flight Rules, basically going on sight only, danger lurked even closer than when she would be able to use fancy navigational instruments to lead her through the night, clouds or fog. Crossing northern California

from Palo Alto towards Seattle, she headed into the huge wildfires blighting the area. The higher she climbed to avoid the smoke — up to 10,000 feet — the tougher it was to keep her eyes on the ground.

"The smoke was building up and up, to the point that the whole cabin stank of smoke and I could not see anything but a burnished orange colour," Rutherford said. She had to abort her route and make an unscheduled landing in Redding, California.

Over Siberia, the light played tricks on her vision, sometimes casting doubt whether she saw mountains or clouds. "And for me clouds are a really big deal. Especially in Russia," with its bit-

ing cold. Cutting through such clouds, too much ice might build up on her wings, paralysing control. That, or any other mishap, could have happened on a section of the route where she once saw only one village in six hours.

The wider world though, which by now has become "this small planet" to her, turned out to hold out much more than fear. She spoke dreamily of the Saudi Arabian desert with its changing colours of sand and rock, the barrenness of northern Alaska, the huge circular Apple Park in Cupertino, California, or the sight of what's been called the world's loneliest house on Iceland's deserted island of Elliöaey. AP

16 ECONOMY

SECTOR WATCH COMMERCE

Why road ahead may be bumpy for India-UK early harvest deal

KARUNJIT SINGH
& ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

INDIA AND the United Kingdom launched formal Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations on Thursday, with the aim of concluding an early harvest trade agreement over the next few months. Both countries, according to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, have agreed to avoid "sensitive issues" in the negotiations.

Commerce Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam said the interim (early harvest agreement) aims to achieve up to 65 per cent of coverage for goods and up to 40 per cent coverage for services. By the time the final agreement is inked, the coverage for goods is expected to go up to "90 plus percentage" of goods, he added. India is also negotiating a similar early harvest agreement with Australia, which is supposed to set the stage for a long-pending Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement that

TO OPEN UP TRADE

■ Early harvest agreements are used to open up bilateral trade between two countries on a restricted list of goods and services, primarily as a frontrunner to clinching a more comprehensive FTA

aim to eliminate Customs duties and other trade barriers on "substantially all the trade" between the WTO member countries that are signatories to an FTA.

Experts noted that it is often beneficial to negotiate the entire deal together, as an early harvest deal may reduce the incentive for one side to work towards a full FTA. Biswajit Dhar, professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said, "These agreements are not just about goods and services but also issues like investment. If you're trying to weigh the costs and benefits it is always better to have the larger picture in front of you," adding that in the case of the early harvest agreement inked with Thailand, automobile industry associations had complained that relaxations extended to Bangkok in the early harvest had reduced the incentive for Thailand to work towards a full FTA. Dhar noted, however, that early harvest agreements may serve the function of keeping trading partners interested as they promise some benefits without long delays, as India had become known for long drawn negotiations for FTAs.

Pradeep Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International, said the government's emphasis on interim agreements may be tactical so that a deal may be achieved with minimum commitments and would allow for contentious issues to be resolved later.

What is the status of the trade pacts under negotiation?

India currently has in place 10 FTAs and 6 PTAs (preferential trade agreements). In addition, India is negotiating 16 new and expanding 7 existing deals, including with trading partners such as Canada, the EU, the US, alongside Australia and the UK. Government officials maintain that "a majority" of FTAs under negotiations are "comprehensive" and cover goods, services, investment, IPR, etc. Unlike with the UK and Australia, there are indications that the proposed trade deal with the EU is not aiming at an early harvest and is instead looking at a full-scale comprehensive FTA.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

'TARIFFS LIKELY TO BE REASONABLE'

BBNL to soon offer satellite net in N-E, wraps up Arunachal pilot

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

STATE-OWNED BHARAT Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) has completed a pilot project offering satellite-based internet services in hilly and difficult-to-access areas in Arunachal Pradesh. The pilot project is now likely to be rolled out in other states of the northeast, a senior telecom ministry official said.

A decision on the commercial roll-out of the project and the tariffs of the packages for the customer is likely to be taken after the test project is completed in more states, the official said.

"The costs are likely to be very reasonable, keeping in mind the government's aim of extending the reach of internet to as many people as possible. The revenue shortfall for the implementing agencies, whether government or private, is likely to be met from the USOOF (universal service obligation fund)."

USOF, which is raised from a Universal Access Levy (UAL), is applicable on all telecom licence

THE COMPETITION

■ The satellite-based internet service offering by BBNL is likely to compete directly with the satellite internet offerings planned by Bharti Group's One Web, Amazon's Project Kuiper and Elon Musk's Starlink Internet Services

holders. It came into effect from April 1, 2002 and mandated that all telecom service providers must pay a percentage of their revenue into the USOOF. Of the 8 per cent adjusted gross revenue, 5 per cent goes into the USOOF, while the rest goes into the Central exchequer.

At present, the USOOF is roughly Rs 60,000 crore.

BBNL, which is the implementing agency for BharatNet, has planned to provide satellite-based internet connectivity to 7,000 gram panchayats and sites that are remote and inaccessible or where it is not feasible to lay and maintain optical fibre cables. Of these,

about 4,000 have been commissioned in various parts of the country, the official said.

In order to cover all the 7,000 sites planned for satellite-based internet service, four satellite gateways with two high throughput satellites have been planned under the BharatNet project.

The satellite-based internet service offering by BBNL is likely to compete directly with the offerings planned by Bharti Group's One Web, Amazon's Project Kuiper and Elon Musk's Starlink Internet Services.

Though these companies are yet to launch either pilot projects or commercial services in India, they have been launching a constellation of low-earth orbit satellites, which will be used to provide internet connectivity in rural and remote areas.

SpaceX founder Elon Musk had earlier this year, in a tweet, said the Starlink internet service, being offered by his company, would soon complete its set-up and start offering commercial internet services to users as early as 2022, while OneWeb also plans to launch high-speed internet services in the

country by mid-2022.

The Bharti group-backed company plans to have a constellation of 648 low-earth-orbit satellites as part of its global plan to deliver high speed internet services with low latency. "OneWeb has secured global priority spectrum rights and now successfully completed four launches and aims to offer high-speed internet from OneWeb satellites in India by mid-2022," it had said in a statement this year.

In November this year, Starlink had registered its business in India under a 100 per cent-owned subsidiary, Starlink Satellite Communications Private Limited. The SpaceX division had, in a presentation, said it aims to have 2,00,000 Starlink devices in India by December 2022, of which 80 per cent will be in rural districts. It had also started taking pre-orders for its services in India.

However, following an order of the Department of Telecommunications, the company has re-funded all pre-orders and is said to be now working on getting the requisite approvals and licences.

34% OF PEOPLE COULD GET THE REFUNDS, i.e., FOR THOSE WHO WERE FORCED TO CANCEL THEIR HOTEL BOOKINGS ON ACCOUNT OF THE SAME REASON

About 14% of people surveyed said travel agent and/or airline did not refund anything but rebooked the ticket for a later date, and 14 per cent couldn't say anything

On an aggregate basis, of those who cancelled flight tickets due to the third COVID wave, only 29 per cent were able to get a full refund from airlines/travel agents

wave, over 2.5 times as many citizens were able to get a hotel booking refund due to third-wave related cancellation. However, the majority still ended up losing money to hotels

Methodology
The survey received more than 20,000 responses from citizens residing in 332 districts

Compared to the second

Source: LocalCircles/PTI

'Around one-third got flight cancellation refund amid Covid'

About one-third people who cancelled their flights owing to the emergence of Omicron were able to receive refunds, according to a LocalCircles survey



DLI scheme: IT Min seeks applications from domestic cos

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology has invited applications from 100 domestic companies, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as startups for incentives under the design linked incentive (DLI) scheme.

In a press note, the Ministry said under the DLI scheme, domestic companies, startups as well as MSMEs will receive fiscal and design infrastructure support at various stages of development and deployment of their plans over the next five years.

The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) will act as the nodal agency for the implementation of the DLI scheme. Apart from applications from companies, the IT ministry has also sought applications and proposals from the academia, research and development organisations, startups and MSMEs for training of 85,000 "high-quality

The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing will act as the nodal agency for DLI scheme's implementation

and qualified engineers" on various aspects of semiconductor design and manufacturing.

In December last year, the IT ministry had approved a Rs 76,000 crore scheme to promote the domestic manufacturing of semiconductor and allied devices. The scheme is expected to provide a globally competitive incentive package to companies in semiconductors and display manufacturing as well as design.

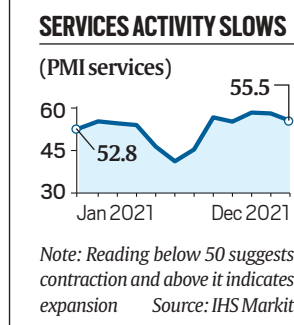
The move assumes significance at a time when there is a global shortage of semiconductor products and large chipmakers including Intel, TSMC, Texas Instruments, etc are looking to add capacity.

Growth to slow down in Q4, small cos to be hit

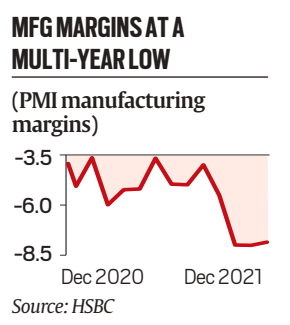
ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

WITH THE third wave of the pandemic likely to disrupt businesses and households, economists are paring their growth estimates for FY22. The anaemic growth in factory output in November may be partly the result of supply shortages and the recovery may regain momentum in March and April.

But for the moment, some re-tracing of the demand for services, high inflation could slow demand and shave off two percentage



points of growth in the March quarter. GDP in Q4 may now grow



only at around 3-3.2 per cent. The big concern is that manu-

facturing margins of small firms which have been squeezed over the last couple of years could be further hit. The larger listed companies will continue to do well as they gain market share and pass on some increase in input costs.

Despatches of two-wheelers in December were subdued, suggesting limited purchasing power with middle-income households; dull demand for tractors indicates rural incomes too may not be as robust. Demand could stay weak in next few months as 6 per cent retail inflation leaves prices high and rising crude adds to pressures. **FE**

MNC royalty payments continue to moderate

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

ROYALTY PAYMENTS by multinational corporations (MNCs) contracted by about 10 per cent in FY21 compared to a contraction in the pre-tax, pre-royalty profits of 5 per cent, a study by proxy advisory firm IiAS, of 30 firms, reveals.

In the previous year, royalty payments had contracted 9.5 per cent while the profits — pre-tax, pre-royalty — had fallen 9 per cent.

Over the past few years, royalty payments of MNCs have moderated and are now more aligned to revenues and profits. The top five MNCs account for nearly 80 per cent of the aggregate royalty paid. Pay-outs to the parent company as technical and knowhow fees, operations support and cost of expenditures are additional forms of charges levied on the Indian arm of global companies.

While these do not fall under the ambit of royalty from a regulatory perspective, IiAS typically

factors this into its assessment. Identifying the level of royalty payments as a concern and based on the Kotak Committee's recommendations, in 2019, Sebi brought in the requirement of a shareholder approval by majority of minority vote for royalty payments in excess of 5 per cent of revenues. This possibly explains the moderation in royalty payments with companies not willing to risk more regulation, IiAS analysts observe.

While many companies decided to conserve cash during the

pandemic and not make big dividend payments, several MNCs paid out extraordinarily high dividends. Covid was the 'rainy day', but MNCs put the needs of their parent companies ahead of their domestic business, IiAS notes. MNCs argue that these high dividends help non-controlling shareholders as well in the times of the crisis. While this is a legitimate argument, the global parents tend to be the biggest beneficiaries of such (timely) largesse, given their high shareholding in the Indian arm. **FE**

BRIEFLY

Oil India exit

New Delhi: Oil India Ltd has exited from a US shale oil venture, selling its 20 per cent stake to its venture partner for \$25 million.

IOC, city gas

New Delhi: Indian Oil Corporation said it will invest over Rs 7,000 crore in setting up city gas distribution networks in cities for which it has secured a licence. **PTI**

Apple payments

Amsterdam: Apple will allow developers of dating apps in the Netherlands to offer non-Apple payment options. **REUTERS**

Davos without 'Davos': Visitors, citizens caught in limbo

DAVID GELLES
NEW YORK, JANUARY 16

FOR THE second 12 months in a row, the World Financial Discussion board scrapped its annual meeting within the Alpine resort city of Davos, Switzerland, due to the pandemic.

The gathering is a vital cease on the annual circuit for the world-wide elite, a weeklong schmooze-fest, the place billionaires and autocrats mingle over canapés whereas activists protest within the frigid mountain air. Corporations make local weather pledges. Economists talk about inequality. Everybody walks on the identical slippery, slushy roads.

It was on the January 2020 annual assembly that many executives and world leaders first heard



The Congress Centre where the World Economic Forum takes place in Davos, Switzerland. AP file

concerning the coronavirus, as information experiences a few mysterious sickness started to trickle out of Wuhan, China. Final 12

months, the discussion board deserted Davos and deliberate to carry the assembly in Singapore through the summer season, how-

ever the Singapore occasion acquired cancelled, too.

This 12 months' occasion was scheduled to start on Monday and proceed kind of as ordinary. Multinational companies have been renting out suites in luxurious lodges. Banquet invitations have been being despatched. Then in December, with Omicron spreading, the organisers stated that they had determined to postpone the gathering as soon as extra, with hopes of staging it this summer season as a substitute.

"Everybody hopes that in 2022 the Covid-19 pandemic, and the crises that accompanied it, will lastly start to recede," Klaus Schwab, the patrician founder of the World Financial Discussion board, stated in a press release on Thursday. To date, nevertheless, there may be little signal that the

pandemic is starting to wane. And for a second 12 months in a row, with Davos the occasion on maintain, the city is caught in limbo. Earlier than the pandemic, "Davos" got here to connote not merely the annual assembly of the World Financial Discussion board itself, however a mind-set. Professional-capitalism, pro-democracy, globalisation, Davos is the religious dwelling of the stakeholder capitalism motion (which inspires firms to be higher company residents) and a testing floor for all variety of new win-win market-oriented options to fight local weather change, ameliorate starvation and restore frayed worldwide relations. Usually full of lanyard-wearing convention goers hustling from a meditation session led by monks to a panel dialogue about sovereign wealth funds, the

halls of the Congress Centre are, in the interim no less than, empty.

The World Financial Discussion board's annual assembly is main income for the nationwide and native economic system. The 2020 assembly, the final one held in particular person, contributed about \$120 million to the Swiss economic system, in line with a study by College of St. Gallen that was commissioned by the discussion board. The majority of that, roughly \$70 million, was spent in Davos, which has a year-round inhabitants of about 11,000 folks.

Whether or not the organisers will be capable of pull off a gathering in Davos this summer stays up within the air. Instances are skyrocketing globally. Switzerland has launched new restrictions as hospitals within the nation are as soon as once more strained. **NYT**

Political leaders invite Musk to set up shop in their states

Chandigarh/Kolkata: Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu joined ministers of West Bengal, Telangana and Maharashtra in inviting Tesla CEO Elon Musk to set up shop in their states, days after the businessman tweeted the EV firm was trying to work through some "challenges" with the Centre. Telangana Industries Minister KT Rama Rao, Maharashtra Minister Jayant Patil, West Bengal minister Md Ghulam Rabbani and Sidhu tagged a January 13 tweet by Musk and assured him of all necessary help. Musk had written on January 13, "Still working through a lot of challenges with the government." **PTI**

MARKET WATCH

FPIs INVEST ₹3,117 CR IN JAN SO FAR

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) reversed the 3-month selling streak in January, so far, by investing net Rs 3,117 crore in domestic markets. Depositories data showed they pumped Rs 1,857 crore into equities and Rs 1,743 crore into hybrid instruments. **PTI**

Riding on mkt rally, equity schemes get record inflow of ₹91,000 cr in 2021

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JANUARY 16

WITH STOCK markets witnessing a bullish phase and the Sensex gaining 22 per cent in 2021, equity mutual funds (MFs) saw record net inflows of Rs 91,000 crore during the year, as against just Rs 9,100 crore in the previous year.

In 2021, investors put a larger amount of their money in equity-oriented mutual funds, drawn by the strong gains in the underlying equity market. Passive funds got Rs 1.14 lakh crore and hybrid funds Rs 1.02 lakh crore. Passive funds and hybrid funds benefited from a spate of new fund offers, at 41 and 8 funds, respectively.

On the other hand, debt mutual funds saw net outflow of Rs 35,000 crore in 2021 as investors shied away from the category amid a fall in returns and as investors waited on the side lines, monitoring probable interest hikes by the Reserve Bank of India. The central bank, however, refrained from hiking interest rate during the year, staying more supportive of growth. The RBI stayed tolerant of high inflation given that most of it was due to supply-side factors (oil and commodity prices), according to a Crisil report.

Open-ended debt-oriented mutual funds saw inflows of Rs 2.01 lakh crore during 2020 even as equity-oriented funds saw net inflows of just Rs 9,100 crore.

The MF industry logged net inflows of Rs 1.14 lakh crore in 2021 through systematic investment plans (SIPs), crossing the Rs 1 lakh crore mark for the first time in any calendar year since AMFI started declaring this data. The last month of 2021 also saw SIP flows come in at their record monthly high of Rs 11,300 crore,



The BSE, Mumbai. File

after crossing the Rs 11,000-crore mark for the first time in November 2021.

Furthermore, the number of SIP accounts rose to 4.91 crore, accounting for Rs 5.65 lakh crore of the industry's assets as of December. ETFs become the largest MF category while liquid funds lose sheen Benefiting from the strong inflows from the EPFO and other pension trusts, together with new launches and individual investor interest, assets of exchange-traded funds (ETFs) surged to overtake liquid funds as the largest MF category in 2021. The category closed 2021 with assets of Rs 3.84 lakh crore compared with Rs 3.61 lakh crore for liquid funds, Crisil said.

The Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI will likely hike the reverse repo rate during its February review, to narrow the corridor with the repo rate to 25 basis points, and follow this up with a 25-bps hike in repo rate in March as demand-side pressures on inflation start to rise, Crisil said. The upward movement in yields is expected to reduce the sheen of long-maturity debt funds, making short-maturity debt funds such as floating rate funds and roll-down strategy funds such as target maturity debt funds better bets for investors.

Patient Sen takes pace off to beat World Champion Loh

SHIVANI NAIK
JANUARY 16

LAKSHYA SEN played with time. And he toyed around with freshly-minted World Champion Loh Kean Yew while pulling the strings of one of the most nuanced attacks to script a memorable triumph on home ground.

Winning the India Open 24-22, 21-17, Sen took the sting out of the lightning quick champion – Loh’s reputation for hopping around the court, being everywhere all at once, and a wicked hand speed had preceded him. Sen, at the outset, slowed down the pace, to a lulling lilt, from where the Singaporean who feeds off pace found himself a tad boggled.

It wasn’t a one-off phased plan though. Sen’s brilliance lay in starving Loh’s racquet of the shuttle with such control over his shots that the Huelva champion was left hacking at thin air more often than not.

A bulk of Sen’s deceptive web was spun around Loh’s forecourt forehand corner, where the Indian tumbled the shuttle real fine, forcing the lift-error from a tight returning angle. Loh pulls fast ones – pushes pace, attacks serve at closing stages, and hits his way through. As such, there’s very little variation in his wrist-game, very few to none drops or half-smashes, with seriously-calibrated wristwork on them. He would showboat and over-hit often, even as he got frustrated by Sen’s retrievals.

Economy of movement

Sen wasn’t diving around like at the World Championships. Economy of movement also extended to his attack. Only a few smashes went full throttle. He would choose the ones to kill, and add just 20 per cent of shoulder power on them. His attack was controlled – there was no need to go bonkers.

Loh’s taps at the net weren’t working as well as against Kidambi Srikanth (in the Worlds final) either. So, the shuttle would be in his vicinity – twice land to his right, but not be of a length that was hittable.

Additionally, Sen wasn’t freezing on the big points and showed steadiness well beyond his years. Even when Loh dug his heels in and threatened to take the opener at 20-20 and 22-22, Sen remained steady, mixing up the speed of his attack – in one instance giving his opponent the smashing opportunity where the shot was within his reach, but bereft of pace.

Sen wasn’t shy to toss the shuttle and bring the speed to braking levels even, in his effort to rob Loh of his speed oxygen.

Unlike Srikanth, Sen made very few errors – the senior Indian had sprayed smashes wide. Sen would break away at 12-9 in the second game, and keep Loh at bay, with a minimum three-point margin. Even



Lakshya Sen defeated world champion Loh Kean Yew 24-22, 21-17. BAI

two points and the Singaporean could have hustled around in his typical style, but such was Sen’s control that he kept his distance to finish the second on 21-17.

It was in the end game that Sen showed immense maturity. Refraining from going overboard, or hitting harder than needed, he refused to up the gears, patiently doing only the needful to finish with a smash to Loh’s rattled backhand.

Sen has been injury-free for eight months and got stronger and fitter in the last year. But it’s the brain that’s monkishly settled into such a sturdy place of solidity that he looks unbreakable – never mind the reputation of top opponents.

In both semis and finals, Sen was under the pump at the finishing stages – Loh started pushing the pace at point 16 without fail. But Sen showed tremendous grit to not botch the finishing. Not over-eager to match Loh’s baiting bravado, Sen stayed sensible. His confidence and the momentum he carries, make Lakshya Sen the most anticipated main act of 2022 in Indian badminton.

Defence is the best attack

Chirag-Satwik go outside comfort zone to defeat Indonesian pair, win India Open

SHIVANI NAIK
JANUARY 16

SWAMPED BY India’s singles results at all times, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty ensured they asserted their class on the India Open, beating three-time World Champions Hendra Setiawan and Mohamad Ahsan, ‘the Daddies’, 21-16, 26-24 in the final. Forever in the shadow of first the champion women and now the Worlds men’s singles medallists – Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen, India’s pioneering duo also gave glimpses of a game that can push them into the Top 5, higher than their current Top-10 perch.

Men’s doubles is about otherworldly fast exchanges and reaction speeds – absorbing incredible offensive onslaughts that come at record-smashing speeds. The Indian pairing have hitherto survived on cerebral takedowns of opponents by maxing their attacks. On Sunday in front of an empty stadium and a dozen lurkers, Satwik-Chirag soaked up barages, by “playing like Top 5” pairs in defence. It was admittedly out of their comfort zone – which sees canny placement and clever 1-2s as their stock reactions.

The match was supposed to be contained at the net. But the Indonesian Daddies, perhaps the smartest pairing on the circuit, at 37 and several world medals later, were always going to be a handful. Though their smashes lack the sting, the Indonesians tested the Indian duo’s patience and defence – a sort of incessant consistency is demanded in these situations. Satwik even bit into and committed himself to the idea of long rallies – he usually prefers quick exchanges.

Things were neck and neck at 7-7 and 13-13 in the opener. Chirag was sharp on the day, and even though Satwik tallied a bunch of errors, he would invariably be in position for the crunch kills, even as Ahsan refused to budge in defence despite the relentless attack. The Indians would break away at 18-13, and pick the opener with Chirag manning the backcourt adeptly and staying pinpoint in the barrage of first, second and third smashes.

Things got interesting in the second when the Indians couldn’t cross the finish line from 17-14 on a canter. The Daddies would get defiant, and start testing the younger Indians. But before that, there was a memorable point at 9-10, when Satwik sprinted out of the court to change his racquet, and the Indians ended up winning the point to draw level at a crucial juncture.

“Satwik hit two strokes, broke his strings. I knew we had to get the racquet changed because it won’t finish in a smash,” Chirag explained. After the third one, Satwik dropped it and moved to the net. “I knew I had to hit continuously.”



Rankireddy-Shetty beat Hendra Setiawan and Mohamad Ahsan 21-16, 26-24. BAI

After world championship, I cried for half an hour after losing. I wanted as many podium finishes in 2022 as we could win... I was prepared, wanted to do well in finals, we had a clear plan. No problem if we made mistakes. Kept calm when down.”

SATWIKSAIRAJ RANKIREDDY

It was one right scramble for Satwik. “I felt far from the court... racquet *nahi mil raha tha* (couldn’t find the racquet). I was thinking, *Kidhar hai, kidhar hai* (where is it). But one of the best rallies, I’d say. I knew he (Chirag) can cover me,” he would explain. In the end, Satwik would smash steep, and Chirag was at the net for the follow-up downer.

Chirag had been sharp while angling back defensive returns, but the Daddies would amp up their stubbornness at 20-20. Then nerves would puddle around all four on the court, as Hendra twice hit into the net, and both sets fumbled on serve at 24-24. Eventually, Hendra dumped one into the net to give the Indians the title.

Turning the corner

It’s been a wretched time for India’s breakthrough pair, who beat the eventual Olympic champions in Tokyo, but couldn’t get out of their group. Then the Worlds dished out another disappointing loss. “At the world championship, I cried for half an

hour after losing,” the burly big-booming Satwik would narrate. “I wanted as many podium finishes in 2022 as we could win.”

The evolving gameplan means a step forward, in stepping up to Top 5, where without a dependable defence, you are goners. So, Chirag would talk of being ready for flat serves in finishing and keeping their nerve even when trailing by 4-5 points. Most pertinently, they would need courage to lift the shuttle knowing fully well that it prompted an incoming smash at all times.

“We keep the shuttle low usually... We were lifting and being ready in defence to convert to attacking positions,” Chirag said.

Satwik tested positive in the first wave of the pandemic, and Chirag was positive till five days before the India Open but subsequently returned two negative tests. The virus was a stop-start nightmare for the duo.

“I can’t say ‘focus only on practice session’, for it’s tough to train with no tournament, no goal. But we began pushing in training sessions, enjoying in a jovial environment, and learnt to let go. Not think too much,” Chirag said about staying unfussed about uncontrollables during a title drought.

“I was prepared, wanted to do well in finals, we had a clear plan. No problem if we made mistakes. Kept calm when down,” Satwik said, while piling pressure on their opponents.

Not enough credit goes to the duo who have won top podiums at competitive arenas, though beating their idols at home, and summoning Plan B, will stay memorable. “Earlier, we stuck to things we were good at. This we won on defence,” Chirag said.

Betis vs Sevilla suspended after object hits Sevilla player

ASSOCIATEDPRESS
BARCELONA, JANUARY 16

THE UGLY side of Spanish soccer’s most heated city rivalry ruined an enthralling clash between Real Betis and Sevilla after a player was hit in the head by an object thrown from the stands.

The Copa del Rey match at Betis’ Benito Villamarín Stadium was suspended in the 39th minute with the score 1-1 after an oblong piece of PVC hurled from the stands hit Sevilla player Joan Jordán in the head.

The object impacted Jordán while Betis was celebrating Nabil Fekir’s equalizer that canceled out Papu Gómez’s opener.

Jordán went down immediately, holding his head. He was quickly back on his feet but was helped to walk off the pitch just before the teams were ordered by the referee Ricardo de Burgos to follow. Local media reports said the midfielder was taken to a local hospital for a medical check. De Burgos wrote in his referee report that the object was a “hollow 50-centimeter (20-inch) PVC bar” thrown from a zone filled with Betis fans.

After a wait of over 20 minutes, the game was officially suspended by the Spanish soccer federation. The federation said “it condemns all acts of violence on the playing field.” While that decision was being made, police officers were seen in the area of the stands where the object apparently came from.

It was too soon for a new date to continue the match, which could be restarted without a crowd. The Seville derby is notorious for being Spain’s most fiercely contested crosstown rivalry. In 2007, Sevilla coach Juanpe Ramos was knocked unconscious when he was hit in the head by a bottle thrown by a Betis fan.

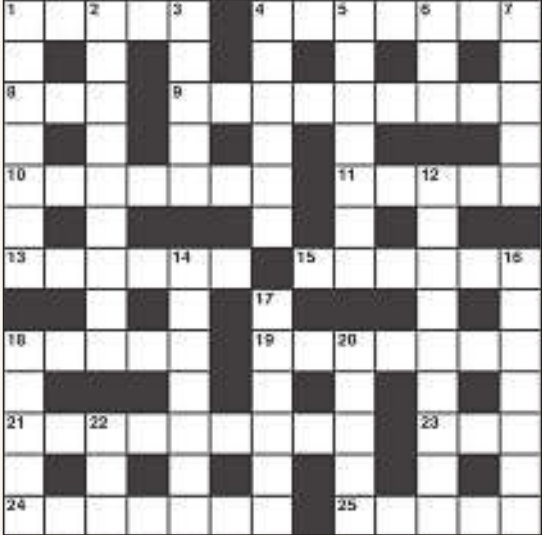
Fekir set the tone just seconds after kickoff when he stomped on the foot of Gómez, earning the Betis forward a booking.

But the incident that hurt Jordán tarnished a vibrant contest. Betis dominated the opening phase, only for Gómez to drill in a shot from the edge of the area to give the visitors the lead in the 35th. Fekir responded with an incredible goal directly from a corner kick, bending a powerful strike from the corner flag over the head of goalkeeper Alfonso Pastor, who got on the ball but could not keep it out.

Neither club commented immediately on the incident. And even condemnation of the act by a Betis player included an accusation that Sevilla coach Julien Lopetegui had tried to urge Jordán to go down.

“Shameful and unjustifiable act by someone who does not represent our fans,” Betis substitute Víctor Camarasa said on Twitter. “I hope that Joan Jordán is okay, but we all heard (even the assistant referee) his coach tell him to be dizzy and drop to the ground.”

CROSSWORD 4639



- ACROSS**
- 1 A medium iron (5)
 - 4 and 9 Across: They deceive the pupils (7,9)
 - 8 It cannot fly in the murky gloom (3)
 - 9 See 4 Across
 - 10 Issues Oriental blends (7)
 - 11 Anything that sounds obligatory (5)
 - 13 Assembling a steel plant (6)
 - 15 Rabies breaks out in the country (6)
 - 18 Located by eye and ear? (5)
 - 19 A bitter brew that might go to a priest’s head (7)
 - 21 I wondered about getting a quilt (9)
 - 23 The Roman I found among the Goths (3)
 - 24 Sort of oil possibly seen in holiday centre (7)
 - 25 Why the last two letters are convenient (5)
- DOWN**
- 1 French official with authority over the lower classes? (7)
 - 2 Untax beer perhaps, but spirits remain high (9)
 - 3 A weapon that may be attached to a rifle (5)
 - 4 Possibly low, his version of being wise and solemn (6)
 - 5 Late but not unwilling (7)
 - 6 Business at zero produces a murmur (3)
 - 7 Famous composer? Hear, hear (5)
 - 12 He approaches one side then the other (2-7)
 - 14 Approve though possibly sore after the finish (7)
 - 16 A record about which there’s some correspondence? (7)
 - 17 Sailor on the way overseas (6)
 - 18 Explosive device found on the beach (5)
 - 20 The US stock market depends on its products (5)
 - 22 The study of lions? (3)

Solutions Crossword 4638: Across: 1 Black Maria, 8 Genus, 9 Bugbear, 10 Freesia, 11 Indus, 12 Onside, 14 Meadow, 17 Lotus, 19 Wage war, 21 Furrier, 22 Aegis, 23 Eggbeaters. Down: 2 Lancers, 3 Costs, 4 Mob law, 5 Ragtime, 6 Ahead, 7 Crosswords, 8 Gift of life, 13 Dashing, 15 Dowager, 16 Swerve, 18 Three, 20 Grant.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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.

Hope is being able to see that there is ___ despite all of the ____ - Desmond Tutu (5, 8)

EAEIR



DOLMAN



ATSST



INTGHK



SOLUTION: AERIE, STATS, ALMOND, KNIGHT

SUDOKU 4717

Difficulty Level 3s
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 4716



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
Make an early start to the day, as early as you can. Also, don't be embarrassed about needing or wanting more money, but do realise that what is really important is to be as generous with others as you would like to be with yourself. That's as good a way to build a better future as any.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
Today's passionate Moon should finally make it clear that while others' misconduct or obstruction has indeed been responsible for many of your problems, you may also have played your part! That's why there's little to be gained from attributing blame. What you can change now are your attitudes.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
You have the freedom to choose between different options, and don't forget it! Right now, you're facing the sort of decisions which carry ethical or moral implications: you'll have to elect between right and wrong. Also, turn your attention to dreams of travel.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
There's a distinct mood of passion and romance in the air today. If you're foot-loose and fancy-free, this is wonderful for those of you currently on the trail of a new love, and even at work you'll be able to apply your broad imagination.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
You would be wise to concentrate as much as you possibly can on home and family affairs. It is essential to take every part of your life in order, and not to attempt any new worldly initiative unless you are personally happy. The last thing you want to do is get stuck in a set of problems which is none of your making.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
There's an almost educational feel in your chart today, so everything seems to hinge around facts and information. In other words, there could yet be something very important for you to find out. Your natural curiosity may get the better of you, so make a point of asking others what they think.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
You may be stretched to the limit today. Don't wait for others to force the pace, but extend your own possibilities by accepting invitations in the belief that you are bound to succeed. The times are on your side, so please go forward with confidence.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)
Everything in all personal departments is now looking quite exceptionally helpful. Your best shot will be to help yourself by getting the facts straight and taking family members into your confidence. What you need to do now is get other people on your team, and soon.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)
I would expect a rash of strange and energetic dreams in the wee hours of the morning, so if you should wake up feeling strangely worn out, this is the reason! Actually, one activity you can enjoy later on is day-dreaming, so you may follow your imagination wherever it leads.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
You can't really function without proper emotional support and teamwork could prove a great deal more useful than expected. So, if you're sitting on any committees, or responsible for getting group activities on line, you could soon receive a valuable boost.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
It's a perfect moment for all ambitious and professional individuals. In fact, it's going to be an extremely useful fortnight for everyone pursuing major schemes, even those of you whose principle goal is domestic and family security.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
You can't decide whether you want to be secretive and solitary or sociable and gregarious. You'll probably perform your familiar trick of keeping yourself to yourself even while surrounded by other people. Some might notice your absent air, but most won't.

ON THE TUBE

Australian Open

Live on Sony Sports Network, 5.30am onwards

Unvaccinated Djokovic deported, says he is 'extremely disappointed'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 16

Novak Djokovic was deported from Australia on Sunday after losing a bid to stay in the country to defend his Australian Open title despite not being vaccinated against Covid-19.

A masked Djokovic was photographed in a Melbourne airport lounge with two government officials in black uniforms before he left for Dubai. It's not clear where he will go from there. Among the possibilities are Spain, Monaco or his native Serbia, where he has an almost iconic status and would likely be greeted with a hero's welcome.

The No. 1-ranked tennis star has spent the past 10 days at the center of a dizzying drama over his vaccination status that has polarized opinion worldwide and struck a chord in Australia, where coronavirus cases are surging.

The 34-year-old said he was 'extremely disappointed' by a court's decision Sunday that led to his deportation. But he added that he respected the ruling and would cooperate with authorities.

The saga began when Djokovic was granted an exemption to strict vaccination rules by two medical panels and Tennis Australia in order to play in the Australian Open. That exemption, based on evidence that he recently recovered from COVID-19, apparently allowed him to receive a visa to enter Australia. But upon arrival, border officials said the exemption was not valid and moved to deport him.

The ensuing back-and-forth raised questions of whether Djokovic was unfairly given special treatment or unfairly singled out because of his celebrity status and saw many complain that the drawn-out battle at the very least made Australia look bad.

A court initially ruled on procedural

I hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love. I will now be taking some time to rest and to recuperate, before making any further comments beyond this."

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

grounds that Djokovic could stay, but Australian Immigration Minister Alex Hawke, who has wide powers, later decided to deport him. In addition to not being inoculated against the coronavirus, Djokovic is a vocal vaccine skeptic, and the government said his presence could stir up anti-vaccine sentiments.

Three Federal Court judges unanimously upheld the immigration minister's decision. Djokovic said he was 'uncomfortable' that the focus had been on him since his visa was

first canceled on Jan. 6. "I hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love," he said. "I will now be taking some time to rest and to recuperate, before making any further comments beyond this."

The decision dashes Djokovic's hopes of winning a record 21st Grand Slam title. A deportation order could also ban him from Australia for three years - keeping the player from the tournament he has won a record nine times in the coming years. Just as the case has all along, the decision to deport Djokovic split opinion.

In Serbia, where Djokovic has received overwhelming support, President Aleksandar Vucic said the hearing was 'a farce with a lot of lies.' "They think that they humiliated Djokovic with this 10-day harassment, and they actually humiliated themselves. If you said that the one who was not vaccinated has no right to enter, Novak would not come or would be vaccinated," Vucic told reporters.

French Open ready to welcome the world No. 1

Mumbai: The French National Assembly has approved the introduction of a new 'Covid-19 Vaccine Pass,' which came into effect on January 15. Essentially, the new rules declare that people aged 12 and above are no longer considered fully vaccinated if their last dose was received seven months ago. A 'fully vaccinated' person hereon will be considered as someone who has received a booster dose. Only such people will be allowed access to bars and restaurants, etc.

In addition, a negative Covid report or report declaring recent recovery from the virus no will no longer be considered as proof of the holder being virus-free, as reported by *Deutsche Welle*.

These changes were made by the

Emmanuel Macron government to dissuade unvaccinated people from their anti-vax stance. Furthermore, unvaccinated foreigners travelling to France will have to isolate for 10 days upon arrival. However, in an interview with FranceInfo radio on January 7, French Sports Minister Roxane Maracineanu claimed that Novak Djokovic will be allowed to defend his title at the French Open in May, and will not be subject to the quarantine requirements even if he is unvaccinated.

"He would not follow the same organisational arrangements as those who are vaccinated. But he will nonetheless be able to compete because the protocols, the health bubble, allows it."

SHAHID JUDGE

U-19 WC: Coach recalls Ostwal's long journey

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JANUARY 16

MOHAN JADHAV remembers the time he got a call from Manish, one of the coaches at



Vengsarkar Academy, to enrol nine-year-old Vicky Ostwal, who travelled from Lonavala with his father to play cricket in Mumbai.

"I always saw them sometimes coming late, sometimes too early. So one day I asked where they lived, and Vicky replied that he came from Lonavala. Take a train, eat there and then go back again. Most of his energy used to get spent in the journey itself but he never gave up. He always looked fresh on the ground and never showed fatigue," Jadhav recalls.

Those memories flooded Jadhav's mind after his charge took five wickets on Saturday to help India Under-19 beat South Africa for a winning start to their World Cup campaign.

Going back in time, Jadhav remembers calling Ostwal's father Kanhaiya. Lonavala is on the Mumbai-Pune route. It's famous for its ghats and a long tunnel, and a popular tourist destination. But for cricket, Ostwal had to decide whether to move to Pune or Mumbai. Hills could give him fresh air but for cricket, he had to come to ground.

"They used to play in Mumbai. He used to travel daily. Imagine a small boy, who had to travel two hours one way daily. He went to make his Mumbai Cricket Association card one day but was debarred as only players born in the city can play in MCA tournaments. So that is when I got a call to enrol the boy in Pune," Jadhav, who now coaches the youngster, said.

The coach had another piece of advice for Ostwal's father. Why not rent a place in Pune and cut the travel time? The businessman agreed and the family soon rented an apartment in the vicinity. This helped the young boy to not only save time but also energy, which helped him in his cricket.

SANDEEP DWIVEDI

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

"CAPTAINCY," THE late Richie Benaud had famously said, "is 90 percent luck and 10 percent skill... but don't try it without that 10 percent."

Unfortunately, what was once the undeniable truth has failed the test of time. Cricket's rapid corporatisation and the overwhelming influence of franchise-based T20 leagues on the game's ecosystem has forced a rewrite. Captaincy now is, '90 percent marketability and 10 percent luck... and you can try it even without 10 percent of the skill.'

Once again, it is the Indian Premier League which is the flag-bearer of this significant change that cricket could have done without. Both organically, and worryingly, this IPL trend has been mainstreamed, and has infiltrated the national team too.

Following Virat Kohli's surprise resignation, KL Rahul is now being seen as an all-format skipper. Lack of options will be a factor in case the 29-year-old is named Test captain for next month's series against Sri Lanka. Before that, India will start a full international series, 3 ODIs against South Africa, under the highly-inexperienced skipper. Before boarding the flight for the ongoing tour, Rahul had led only in one first-class game.

At Johannesburg during the second Test, Rahul, only the second time in his life, was in charge of men in cricketing whites. With Kohli reporting a dodgy back on match morning, India's reins were in the unfamiliar hands of the newly-promoted vice-captain. It would be unfair to blame the young stand-in for the loss, but there were whispers about India's lack of intensity and ideas when South Africa skipper Dean Elgar shielded everything the Indian bowlers threw at him.

Rahul is a top-quality product of the country's cricket system that appreciated and acknowledged his batting skills, but didn't see him as a leader so far. He has been a Karnataka team regular, an U19 India World Cupper, an India A old hand, but no selector



KL Rahul is tipped to succeed Virat Kohli as India's Test captain. Reuters

or coach he has played under saw shades of Mike Brearley in him. In case they had, Rahul would have been captain more often.

Finally, it was the perpetually-struggling Punjab Kings, the IPL side that has seen 10 captains and nine coaches in 14 seasons, which saw a leader in him. It didn't come as a surprise. Franchise sides aren't known to sit with The Art of Captaincy book while head-hunting for captains. Team owners regularly refer to the process of deciding their next captain as a search to find the 'face of the team'. It's a polite way of conveying that in T20 cricket, the brain-bank could well be housed in the dugout. One could always hire a bench full of former captains and unburden the skipper by out-sourcing tactics and team composition.

Eyeballs matter

Marketability is a crucial factor for IPL teams when they finalise their big-ticket buys. So, Rahul's past captaincy record wouldn't have bothered the Punjab Kings decision-makers. He was a Team India regular, an all-format batsman, had pan-India fan-following and an intimidating social media presence. He ticked all the mandatory boxes and a few more to be an IPL captain. He was also part of the Bollywood circuit. Rahul was, what the marketing suits love to say, a youth icon.

So, was his elevation to a position of responsibility in the Indian team because of the results he gave with Punjab Kings? That can't be. In his two-year stint with the franchise, Rahul didn't quite transform his team. His team won just 40 percent of their games

So far in South Africa, he hasn't come out shining as a leader. He did excel as a batsman in the first Test, but that was never in doubt. In the second Test, he didn't show spark as a skipper and in the third, the stump microphone caught him saying something utterly incongruous

and finished sixth in the eight-team competition during Rahul's reign in 2020 and 2021.

Those two forgettable seasons as captain of the underperforming Punjab Kings didn't see a fall in Rahul's stock. Once it was known that the young cricketer with several high-profile brands under his belt was ready to switch teams for the IPL 2022 season that had 10 teams and two new deep-pocket owners, the market was buzzing. Will he go to Lucknow or Ahmedabad? Both franchises' owners, reports said, were ready with a cheque book in one hand and pen in the other.

That was until reports emerged that Ahmedabad had decided to sign Mumbai Indians' non-retained star Hardik Pandya as their captain. The Benaud rewrite was proving to be true. Hardik and Rahul, who once infamously sat on the same couch for a popular television show, have a lot in common. Undoubtedly talented, they have skills to be among the best in the world. They are proven game-changers blessed with a big-match temperament.

However, the two have never been seen as captaincy material. Hardik isn't even the first-choice captain in his family. When Hardik was an all-format India star, with a Test hundred and a global reputation of being an enforcer with bat and ball in white-ball cricket, it was his brother Krunal who led Baroda. In his long stint with Mumbai Indians, Hardik was never projected as a captain-in-waiting.

Stars sell

These virtually non-existent leadership credentials of the likes of Rahul and Hardik haven't come in the way of IPL team owners taking punts on them. But that's been the cred on which IPL business works. It's a league with no relegation, fixed salary caps and guaranteed exponential rise in the teams' annual television revenue income. In IPL economics, having a sellable star in the tent is non-negotiable. If you win, it's good but losing too isn't a swim-or-sink calamity. This is a league where Kohli can go without a title for eight years even with AB de Villiers and Chris Gayle by his side. Royal Challengers Bangalore always had stars that could fill up Chinnaswamy Stadium and corporates queuing up to be associated with their iconic players. The trophy cabinet was empty but the coffers weren't.

Thankfully, it's not the same in Indian cricket yet. And that's the reason Rahul's rapid climb up the hierarchy in all three formats, without even a murmur of protest from the fans or pundits, is disconcerting. So mixed up are the minds that follow cricket's hectic calendar and so blinding is the IPL glow that cricket's gatekeepers forgot to raise the red flag.

Does Rahul have it in him to lead India? The jury is out and is looking around the room cluelessly. There's no data to answer that question emphatically. India has well and truly taken a leap of faith with Rahul.

So far in South Africa, he hasn't come out shining as a leader. He did excel as a batsman in the first Test, but that was never in doubt. In the second Test, he didn't show spark as a skipper and in the third, the stump microphone caught him saying something utterly incongruous. With Kohli expressing his displeasure about the host broadcaster's alleged bias, Rahul, with one inscrutable remark, escalated the issue to the highest possible level. 'The whole country is playing against 11 guys,' he was heard saying. The whole country?

Meanwhile, South Africa, a nation where cricket isn't even the most popular sport, was busy keeping the virus in check.

Australia romp to win as England fold meekly

REUTERS
JANUARY 16

AUSTRALIA UNDERLINED their utter Ashes supremacy by crushing England's hopes of a consolation victory and winning the day-night fifth test by 146 runs with two days to spare in Hobart on Sunday to seal a 4-0 series triumph.

Brittle English batting has been commonplace in the 11 years since the tourists last won a test on Australian soil and the collapse under the Bellerive Oval lights was remarkable only in that it came with victory a possibility.

In the ascendancy for the first time in the series when they were 68 without loss chasing 271 towards the end of the second session, England lost 10 wickets for 78 runs in little more than an hour and a half to crumble to 124 all out.

Australia's pace bowling was of the same high quality as it had been throughout the five matches, but some of the shots offered by the batsmen indicated that England had given up on any hope of even extending the contest into a fourth day.

Thumping victories in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne had secured the urn for Australia before the turn of the year and only by batting out the final day did England secure a draw in Sydney. Australia captain Pat Cummins was quick to offer thanks to Joe Root and his squad for touring despite the health protocols in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but naturally his main thoughts were for his own side. "It's incredible," captain Pat Cummins told reporters. "Everything's gone to plan, there's just so many positives to take out of it and for this team to be part of Ashes history, it's just been phenomenal."

One of the few highlights of the series for the tourists has been the bowling of paceman Mark Wood and his career best 6-37 helped dismiss the hosts for 155 early in the second session to set England up for a shot at victory. "It hurts, it was a poor display with the bat today," said Root, who said he would like to continue as England captain.

"It felt like we had a real opportunity to go and win this test match and there were some very poor dismissals in there after a very promising start," Root added. "Disappointing to be beaten as heavily as that when we felt very much in the game."

BRIEF SCORES: Australia 303 and 155 (Carey 48, Wood 6/37) beat England 188 and 124 (Boland 3/18, Green 3/21, Cummins 3/42) by 146 runs. **Australia win the series 4-0**

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