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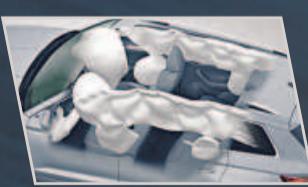
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# Hindustan Times

## 1st S-400 unit to be ready by April, 4 others by 2023

Shishir Gupta

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** India has begun work on deploying the S-400 Triumf advanced surface-to-air missile defence system, with the first unit to be made operational in April, HT learns.

While the Narendra Modi government remains tight-lipped about the entire project, officials with direct knowledge of the matter have told Hindustan Times that all five units will be deployed in depth areas to tackle the threat from China.

All the five units of the S-400 system, which can take down a hostile aircraft or missile at a range between 40km and 400km, are expected to be operational by next year.

The S-400 system was purchased from Russia through a \$5-billion deal signed in October 2018.

The Indian Army and the Chinese PLA are locked in a stand-off across the 597km-long Ladakh LAC since May 2020, with Beijing reluctant to restore the April 2020 status quo ante in Gogra-Hot Springs and restore India's unhindered



Indian Navy's indigenously designed and built guided missile destroyer, INS Kochi, exercised with Russian Federation Navy's RFS Admiral Tributs on January 14 in the Arabian Sea. PTI

patrolling rights in Dapsang Bulge in Daule Beg Oldi (DBO) sector and Charding Nullah Junction (CNJ) in Demchok sector.

PLA has already deployed two S-400 systems across LAC in Ngari Gar Gunsa (opposite Demchok) and Nyingchi (across Arunachal Pradesh) with the remaining three deployed to

tackle the threat from the Indo-Pacific.

James O'Brien, President Joe Biden's nominee for the US State Department's coordinator for sanctions policy, told the Senate Foreign Committee last Wednesday during his confirmation hearing that while the US has discouraged India from

acquiring the S-400 systems from Russia, Washington's decision on whether to sanction India under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (or CAATSA; a law that aims to penalise Russia, North Korea and Iran and countries dealing with them, by

continued on →16

## Ex-BJP minister Chauhan, Apna Dal MLA now join SP

**LUCKNOW:** Former Uttar Pradesh minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Dara Singh Chauhan on Sunday joined the Samajwadi Party days after resigning from the Yogi Adityanath cabinet ahead of the crucial state assembly elections beginning February 10.

MLA RK Verma of the Apna Dal (Sonelal), an ally of the BJP, also joined the SP along with Chauhan on Sunday.

Welcoming the two leaders in the party at an event in Lucknow, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said, "I congratulate both of you for having joined the fight to defeat and oust the BJP. Let us fight in a manner that BJP candidates' poll deposits are forfeited." Chauhan is the third former minister after Swami Prasad Maurya and Dhaman Singh Saini to join the SP from BJP. On Friday, Maurya, Saini, five BJP legislators and MLA Chaudhary Amar Singh from the Apna Dal (Sonelal) had crossed over to the SP. →P8

### KCR may campaign for SP

**HYDERABAD:** The Samajwadi Party has requested Telangana Rashtra Samithi president and chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) to join its campaign for the upcoming assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, said senior TRS leader and state

planning board vice-chairman B Vinod Kumar, a close aide of KCR, on Sunday.

KCR also held a meeting with his party leaders in this regard. "The party is discussing the same and the chief minister will take a call," Kumar said. →P8

### BAGHEL BOOKED FOR FLOTTING COVID GUIDELINES

**NOIDA:** The Uttar Pradesh police lodged an FIR against Chhattisgarh chief minister and Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday for allegedly flouting Covid-19 norms while campaigning for a Congress candidate in Noida for the upcoming assembly polls, officials said. →P16

SP GIVING TICKETS TO CRIMINALS IN WESTERN UP: YOGI

**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday slammed the main opposition Samajwadi Party over its first list of candidates for the upcoming state assembly elections, claiming that the list comprises criminals and anti-social elements. →P8

## NARSINGHANAND BOOKED IN CASE OF ASSAULT ON 3 REPORTERS: COPS

**DEHRADUN:** A day after he was arrested for alleged hate speeches at a Haridwar event last month, seer Yati Narsinghanand was on Sunday booked for allegedly assaulting a group of journalists, the Uttarakhand Police said on Sunday.

"The seer was booked on the basis of a complaint by a Delhi-based journalist, Vineet Khare, who alleged that he and two of his colleagues were assaulted by the seer and his followers during an interview on Saturday", inspector Rakendra Kathait, station house officer of Haridwar Kotwali police station, said. →P11

### LATA TO REMAIN IN OBSERVATION FOR A FEW DAYS

**MUMBAI:** Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, 92, continues to be under treatment in the intensive care unit of a city hospital after testing positive for coronavirus infection last week, the doctor treating her said on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said the health condition of the singer was "improving". →P11

### KEJRIWAL UNVEILS 13-POINT AGENDA FOR EVERY GOAN

**PANAJI:** Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday unveiled a 13-point agenda for Goa, which promises free electricity of up to 300 units, resumption of mining activities, jobs for all and allowance for the unemployed, if his party is voted to power in the state, which goes to polls February 14. Kejriwal, who is in Goa on a two-day visit, said, "I hope that every Goan will want to change Goa." →P8

## Disappointed Djokovic leaves Australia after losing appeal

**MELBOURNE:** A Federal Court in Australia on Sunday upheld a government decision to cancel tennis player Novak Djokovic's visa on the grounds that his decision not to be vaccinated against Covid-19 posed a risk to the country, dealing a final blow to Djokovic's hopes of chasing a record 21st Grand Slam win at the Australian Open after a rollercoaster ride.

Djokovic flew out of Australia soon after the court ruling, and said he would comply with the court's decision. "I cannot stay in Australia and participate in the Australian Open," he said.

Back in his home country Serbia, the decision sparked outrage



Novak Djokovic arrives at Melbourne airport on Sunday. REUTERS

among the player's family, political leaders and sports bodies with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic saying that Australia had "humiliated themselves", while the country's Olympic Committee called the move a "scandalous" decision. →P18

had "humiliated themselves", while the country's Olympic Committee called the move a "scandalous" decision. →P18

### { TENSE SITUATION }

## Texas synagogue hostages freed, gunman killed after 10-hr standoff



FBI personnel at the synagogue in Colleyville on Saturday. AP

**Agencies**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**COLLEYVILLE, US:** All four hostages were safely released and their captor was dead after a 10-hour-long standoff that began late Saturday when the man took over services at a synagogue in United States' Texas where he could be heard ranting on a livestream and demanding the release of a Pakistani neuroscientist who

was convicted of trying to kill US Army officers in Afghanistan.

Authorities said the hostages were unharmed and do not require medical attention, while the crime scene is being processed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which conducted the rescue operation at the Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, said the gunman was identified

continued on →16

## NUMBER THEORY

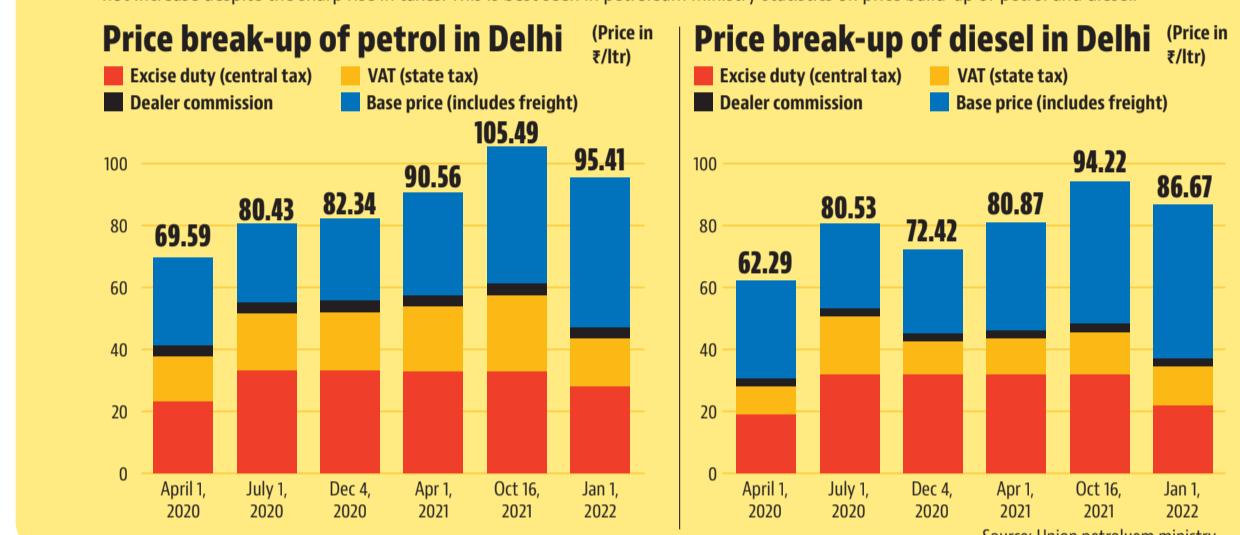
## Oil, Union Budget and the economic sentiment

By Roshan Kishore and Vineet Sachdev

There is some merit in the argument that inflation is a bigger dampener on economic sentiment in India than low growth rates. Traditionally, Union budgets have mattered for people at large because of two reasons: prices of goods and income tax rates. With the roll-out of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017, the Budget has lost its importance as a determinant of prices. The GST has subsumed central and state indirect taxes on most domestically produced goods and rates are decided in the GST Council. However, the budget still has a major influence on the price of an important commodity: fossil fuels such as petrol and diesel. What the forthcoming budget does regarding prices of petrol and diesel will have important implications for the economy. Here are four charts which explain this in detail.

## 1 Petrol-diesel taxes were increased post-pandemic

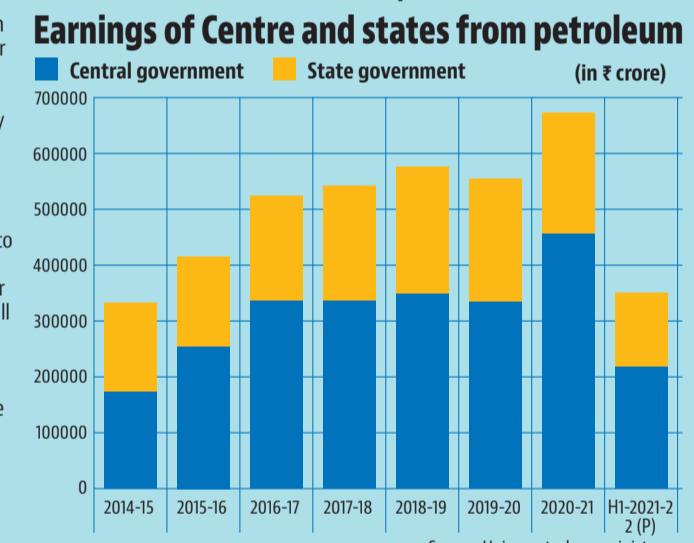
As the world came to a standstill after the pandemic, consumption of petroleum products crashed. This led to a sharp fall in petroleum prices as well. Brent crude – the international benchmark for crude oil prices – fell to \$31.2 per barrel on April 21, 2020, the lowest level in 21 years. The price of India's Crude Oil Basket (COB) fell to \$19.90 in the month of April 2020, the lowest level in 18 years. The government saw an opportunity in this development and significantly increased taxes on petrol and diesel. Because the base price was very low, retail prices did not increase despite the sharp rise in taxes. This is best seen in petroleum ministry statistics on price build-up of petrol and diesel.



Source: Union petroleum ministry

## 2 High taxes brought a fiscal windfall, but mostly for the Centre

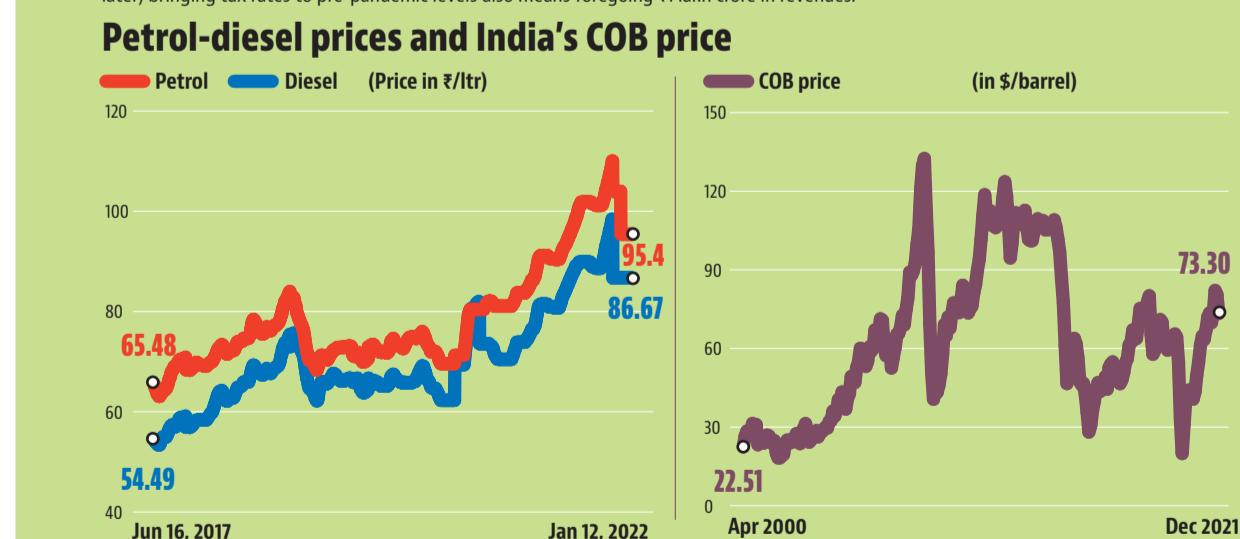
Numbers speak for themselves. Data from the petroleum ministry shows that contribution of the petroleum sector to the exchequer increased from ₹5.55 lakh crore in 2019-20 to ₹6.73 lakh crore in 2020-21. It needs to be underlined that this happened when overall GDP actually saw a contraction in India. Provisional estimates for the first half of 2021-22 put this number at ₹3.5 lakh crore. However, it was the Centre which enjoyed most of these windfall gains from petroleum taxes. While the Centre's earnings from the petroleum sector increased from ₹3.3 to ₹4.5 lakh crore between 2019-20 and 2020-21, the states actually saw a minor fall in their earnings from the sector from ₹2.21 lakh crore to ₹2.17 lakh crore. To be sure, the fall in headline numbers for states' earnings should not be used to infer that the states did not raise taxes. It needs to be remembered that consumption of petroleum products itself saw a large fall in 2020-21, and barring the rise in taxes by states, the overall earnings would have fallen even more. One reason why the Centre's gains in petroleum taxes did not accrue to states is that the additional taxes were kept in the category of cess, not included in the divisible pool of taxes.



Source: Union petroleum ministry

## 3 But retail prices started rising as crude prices recovered and taxes were not lowered

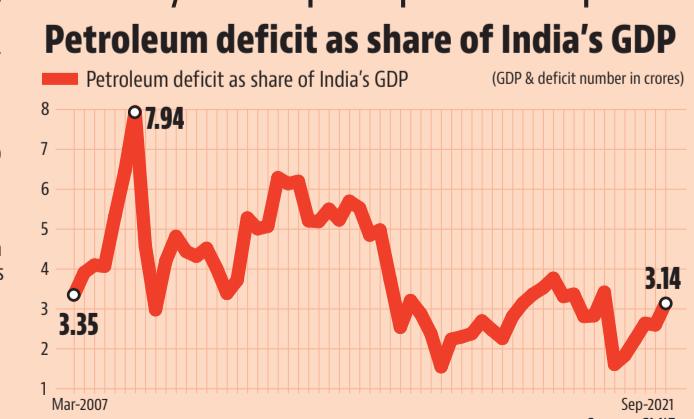
Monthly average of petrol-diesel prices reached a record high in Delhi – prices vary across most districts – in October 2021. India's COB was priced at \$82.11 in that month. This is significantly lower than the price of India's COB between February 2011 and August 2014 when it was hovering above the \$100 mark. However, retail prices of both petrol and diesel were significantly lower back then, largely because of the difference in tax burden. While indirect taxes on petrol-diesel were reduced in November 2021, the tax burden is still significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. It remains to be seen whether finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a further reduction in union excise duty on petrol and diesel or keeps them at current levels. While cutting taxes is likely to give a boost to economic sentiment (more on this later) bringing tax rates to pre-pandemic levels also means foregoing ₹1 lakh crore in revenues.



Source: Union petroleum ministry

## 4 Oil prices have shown large volatility in the post-pandemic phase

Brent crude experienced one of its sharpest-ever rallies to reach \$85.76 per barrel in October 2021 from its 21-year low of \$9.12 during April 2020 when the pandemic broke out. It has shown an almost V-shaped trajectory in the last three-four months. Brent prices were at \$84 per barrel in the beginning of November 2021 and they fell to around \$71 in the beginning of December 2021 and are once again close to the \$84 mark now. Whether crude oil prices stay at these levels, increase further or actually come back to pre-Covid levels matter a lot for the Indian economy. This is not just relevant for the amount of taxes the government can levy without fuelling inflation – fuel inflation is one of the most important contributors to retail inflation at the moment – but also determines the net impact on trade and therefore GDP. As oil prices have increased India's petroleum deficit as a share of GDP has been rising gradually.



Source: CME

It is very likely that the question of whether or not to reduce petroleum taxes will come up many times when the finance minister and her colleagues are finalising the 2021-22 budget. While concerns of boosting economic sentiment demand that the taxes are lowered – contrary to popular belief the poor consume a large amount of petrol and diesel in India – the budget will have to find ways to at least partially compensate the revenue loss from such a move.



# Hindustan Times

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## 1 year on, 70% adults fully vaccinated: Govt

Rhythma Kaul

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**NEW DELHI:** India's national Covid-19 immunisation programme on Sunday completed its first year, with 70% of the country's adult population having been administered two doses, and 93% covered with at least one shot of coronavirus vaccines.

Marking the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the "exceptional" role of health care workers for a year of hard work.

In India, the first shot of a Covid-19 vaccine administered outside of a trial setting was on January 16, 2021. Since then, a total of around 1.565 billion doses has been administered across the country to nearly 908 million people, according to government data.

"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," the Prime Minister tweeted on Sunday. "At the same time, the role of our doctors, nurses and healthcare workers is exceptional. When we see glimpses of people being vaccinated in remote areas, or our health care workers taking the vaccines there, our hearts and minds are filled with pride."

continued on →P16



## Capital adds 18,286 cases as infection curve begins to dip

**NEW DELHI:** The Covid-19 test positivity rate in Delhi fell for the first time in nearly four weeks on Sunday, as fresh infections in the city dipped for the third straight day, showed data released by the state government.

Delhi on Sunday added 18,286 cases of Covid-19, down from 20,718 the previous day, and the fewest in a day since January 7, when the city recorded 17,335 infections.

The data showed that 28 peo-

ple also died of the infection. The case spike on Sunday came on the back of just over 65,000 tests, of which 27.87% samples returned positive results. This number, known as the test positivity rate, dipped from 30.6% on Friday and Saturday, and, on a day-to-day basis, fell for the first time since December 23 last year. Since then, this number has either increased or remained the same every day.

→P3

### Delhi virus tracker

On Sunday (change from Saturday)  
Daily cases **18,286** (-2,432)  
New Covid-19 deaths **28** (-2)

### HOSPITALISATION STATUS

Total beds **15,499** (+5)  
Occupied **2,711** (+91)  
On Oz support **835** (-52)  
On ventilator **123** (+10)

## 'Ghazipur haul part of a 24-bomb Pak shipment'

**Shishir Gupta**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police's investigations into the improvised explosive device (IED) recovered from the Ghazipur flower market on Friday have revealed that it was part of a 24-bomb consignment sent from across the border either through land or via a sea route by the Pakistani deep state to local terrorists. Other devices, recently recovered in Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab are believed to be part of the same consignment and it is also believed that

some devices may have been smuggled into Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

According to top Delhi Police investigators who asked not to be named, the Ghazipur device was a tiffi bomb with three kilograms of RDX as the core charge and ammonium nitrate as a secondary charge. The device was packed in a steel tiffi with nails and ball bearings and could be detonated remotely.

HT learns that these IEDs were smuggled from across the border to existing sleeper modules in India as well as to some

criminal gangs. A terror module busted by Delhi Police in September 2021 with arrests in Mumbai, Lucknow, Allahabad, and Delhi itself has been linked with this IED recovery. Delhi Police investigators believe that the IED consignment came to India around last Independence Day. While the Delhi Police and security agencies are trying to recover other IEDs from the consignment, HT learns that a number of these IEDs have also made their way into Gujarat through the sea route and in UP

continued on →P16

RELATED REPORT →P5

## Delhi continues to reel under cold weather



A thick layer of fog engulfs Rajpath on Sunday. The Capital recorded a maximum of 17.2 degrees Celsius on Sunday – three degrees below normal.

Related story on page 3

ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTO

### LAKSHYA SEN DEFEATS WORLD CHAMPION AT INDIA OPEN

**NEW DELHI:** Lakshya Sen beat reigning men's world champion Loh Keen Yew to salvage some home side glory at the India Open after a tournament plagued by a Covid outbreak.

Third seed Sen triumphed 24-22, 21-17 in less than an hour after breaking ahead of the Singaporean early in the second game, played without spectators in New Delhi.

Both men benefitted from walkovers earlier in the tournament, with Loh's semi-finals opponent Brian Yang out due to a sore throat and headache, despite testing negative for the virus.

→P7

### { CAPTAINCY SAGA }

## Asked Kohli to lead India in his 100th Test in Bengaluru but he declined, says board official



**Rasesh Mandani**

rasesh.mandani@htlive.com

**MUMBAI:** If Virat Kohli had wanted, he could have quit as Test captain amid fanfare, after celebrating his 100th Test in Bengaluru, his IPL home, against Sri Lanka in late February. A senior BCCI official offered a farewell match as captain to Kohli and a gala in Bengaluru during a phone call on Friday when he conveyed the decision to step down. Kohli refused. "One

match makes no difference. That's not how I am," he is known to have said. That meant Kohli's highly successful stint as Test skipper ended with defeat, which has also resulted in a series loss. His predecessor, MS Dhoni, called an end to Test captaincy and career after a draw in the 2014 Melbourne Test, after playing 90 matches.

Kohli who scored two blazing hundreds on debut as Test captain in Adelaide seven years back, was searching for form in his final match as captain. →P16

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## PAGE ONE PLUS

{ MY INDIA } HOOCH TRAGEDY

**Toll rises to 13, two lose vision in Bihar**

The death toll in the Nalanda hooch tragedy rose to 13, officials said on Sunday, prompting the Bihar government to form a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the matter. While six people are undergoing treatment at various hospitals, two of them have reportedly lost their eyesight. More than 30 people have been arrested so far, the officials said. Nalanda superintendent of police Ashok Mishra confirmed that 13 people have so far died in the incident which took place on Friday evening. All the deceased are residents of Chhoti Palari and Pahar Tali under Soharsai police station, he said. "An SIT led by Sadar deputy superintendent of police and comprising Soharsai police station in-charge and circle inspector has been constituted to search for those responsible for the tragedy," Mishra said. "The postmortem reports of all the deceased are awaited to know the exact cause of the deaths," he said. →PI1

{ MY INDIA } SECUNDERABAD CLUB

**144-year-old club gutted in blaze**

A massive fire broke out at Secunderabad Gymkhana Club's main building in Hyderabad early on Sunday, officials said, adding that there were no casualties. The fire broke out at the club at around 3am and a call was received by the Fire Control Room at 03:15am, said a statement from the Telangana State Disaster Response and Fire Services Department. Visuals on social media showed the heritage building engulfed in flames. The building was built mostly with wood and the blaze spread rapidly, so a multi-purpose tender was rushed to the scene, firefighters said. The fire was contained after a three-hour battle and the flames were extinguished by 8:40am. The cause of the blaze, that destroyed the in 144-year-old edifice completely, is under investigation, the officials said.

{ OPINION } CHILDREN AFFECTED THE MOST

**Perils of the digital divide in the Covid pandemic era**

In recent years, several cross-currents impacted by the communications revolution, the mushrooming of social media platforms and the spread of the pandemic in its various manifestations, have affected lifestyles at all levels. During the ongoing pandemic, online activity allows for an alternative way of living, working and providing goods and services. While we extol the virtues of digital platforms, we lose sight of the India that is deprived and is feeling isolated, writes Kapil Sibal, former Union cabinet minister. Connectivity is largely for those already connected and far removed from those who feel disconnected. The digital divide has affected our children the most. Education in the digital mode poses several challenges. In this context, it is important to understand what a classroom space means for a child. It is not meant only to test the child's memory or performance in exams, but has a far more pivotal role to play in the child's upbringing. →PI2

{ WORLD } 'HYBRID WAR'

**Russia led cyber attack, says Ukraine**

Ukraine said Sunday that Russia was behind a cyberattack that defaced government websites and alleged that Russia is engaged in a "hybrid war" against its neighbour. The statement came a day after Microsoft said dozens of computer systems at an unspecified number of Ukrainian government agencies had been infected with malware disguised as ransomware. That disclosure suggested the defacement attack on official websites last week was a diversion. "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," a government statement said. The attack comes as the threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine looms and diplomatic talks to resolve the standoff appear stalled. →PI4

{ MY INDIA } PENCH TIGER RESERVE

**Tigress, who gave birth to 29, dies**

T15 or Collarwalli, the legendary tigress of Madhya Pradesh's Pench Tiger Reserve in Chhindwara district who earned the title of "super mom" after giving birth to 29 cubs, died after prolonged illness, officials said on Sunday. The tigress was 16. Also known as Mataram, she had given birth to 29 cubs in eight litters during 11 years - between 2008 and 2018 - the officials said, adding that 25 of the 29 cubs survived. "The tiger was ill due to old age. She was last spotted near Bhura Dev Nullah on January 14. She was spotted lying down. She was under the observation of veterinary doctors and was unable to walk. She passed away at 6:15pm on Saturday," Allok Mishra, field director, Pench Tiger Reserve, said. "The exact cause of the death will be known after a post mortem but prima facie it appears to be due to multi-organ failure caused by old-age," he added. →PI4

**Prince Harry seeks right to pay for UK police protection**

**LONDON:** Britain's Prince Harry is challenging a government decision that he should not receive police protection when on British soil even if he covers the cost himself, his legal representatives said.

Harry, Queen Elizabeth's grandson, and his wife Meghan quit royal duties in 2020 to forge new careers in Los Angeles. The couple have relied upon a private security team.

However, his legal representatives said that these arrangements did not give the prince the level of protection he needed while visiting Britain.

"In the absence of such protection, Prince Harry and his family are unable to return to his home," the statement said. It cited an incident in July 2021 where they said his security had been compromised whilst leaving a charity event due to the lack of police protection.

Harry's mother Princess

Diana died in a 1997 car crash while trying to escape paparazzi.

The government has previously dismissed two offers to pay for police protection, the prince's lawyers said. A spokesperson said the process behind those decisions had been opaque and inconsistent and failed to consider the full risks.

Asked about the statement a government spokesperson said that the UK government's protective security system was "rigorous and proportionate", and that it was its long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on any arrangements as this could compromise individuals' security.

Harry sought a judicial review - a legal challenge to the lawfulness of decisions taken by a public body - in September 2021, the statement said. His lawyers said they had decided to make that information public due to a leak in the British press. →REUTERS

{ RAHUL GANDHI } CONGRESS LEADER



Consent is amongst the most underrated concepts... has to be foregrounded to ensure safety for women.

As the Delhi high court hears petitions on criminalisation of marital rape

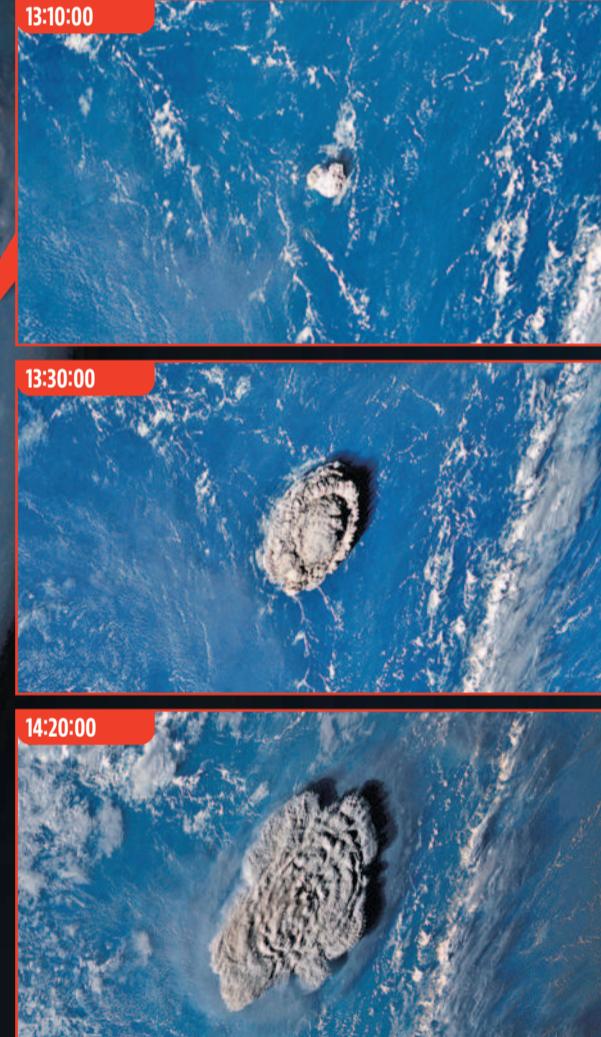


{ PACIFIC OCEAN } ISLAND'S COMMUNICATIONS DOWN

**Volcano erupts in Tonga: Tsunami damage feared**

Tonga remained largely uncontactable on Sunday with telephone and internet links severed after tsunamis caused by a massive underwater volcano hammered the Pacific island nation, with casualty reports yet to come through.

1hr, 10mins of an eruption

**WHAT HAPPENED?**

A massive underwater volcano erupted off Tonga on Saturday. Satellite images captured the volcanic eruption as the explosion sent plumes of smoke into the air and about 12 miles above the sea level. The sky over Tonga was darkened by the ash.

It triggered warnings of 12-metre tsunami waves and evacuation orders on the shores of Tonga as well as several South Pacific islands, where footage on social media showed waves crashing into coastal homes.

**WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?**

Tonga is tiny island nation with around 105,000 residents. It is located around 2,383 km northeast of New Zealand in the Pacific Ocean.

**COMMUNICATIONS DOWN: EXTENT OF DAMAGE UNKNOWN**

Internet and phone lines went down at about 6.40 pm local time in Tonga on Saturday, leaving the island almost completely uncontactable. Experts believe that the main undersea communications cable has been impacted.

Due to lack of communication, there are no official reports of injuries or deaths, however initial reports suggest the island is smothered in ash.

**MASSIVE FALLOUT FEARED**

The Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcano has erupted regularly over the past few decades but Saturday's eruption was so loud that residents in parts of faraway Fiji and New Zealand said they heard it. Experts said the ash fallout could contaminate drinking water and cause respiratory issues.



Floods from the tidal waves were also reported in Chile, some 10,000km away.

The eight-minute eruption triggered tsunami warnings and evacuations in several countries. The eruption caused flooding in regions as far as Alaska and California. Massive waves were seen in regions like California on Sunday.

**Amid another wave, Kandhamal grapples with a learning gap**

Debrajata Mohanty

letters@hindustantimes.com

**KANDHAMAL:** It is 11 am on December 7, and there are lines of worry etched across headmaster RK Sahoo's face. There are 40 students in front of him, sitting on wooden desks, all distantly quiet. Bholeswar Vidya Path in Phirningia block of Kandhamal is ramshackle; the paint on the walls is peeling off, and there is barely any sunlight in the dark room. Even at the best of times, education in Kandhamal, one of Odisha's most backward districts is difficult. He asks the question again, his voice echoing in the silence. "What is plus b whole square?" The heads in front of him remain bowed, almost in embarrassment. A board on the crumpling door outside the room says standard 10. The question is elementary, but there is no answer still. There rarely has been over the past few weeks.

Like the rest of the country, and therefore Odisha, the Bholeswar Vidya Path in Ratang village shut down in March 2020, as India began dealing with its first Covid wave. For a year and a half, schools in Odisha remained closed as the pandemic went from strength to strength, ravaging health systems and the economy, and causing immeasurable hardship. In that year and a half, students across India lost access to their schools, with online learning a last resort. As the second deadly Delta wave abated somewhat, India gingerly opened its classrooms. Odisha finally opened

physical instruction on July 26 for Class 10 and 12, and then August 16 for Class 9. Physical classes for Class 8 and II began on October 25 while for Class 6 and 7, they resumed from November 15.

Bholeswar Vidya Path opened its doors on July 26. And when it did, confronted perhaps the biggest challenge that the pandemic has bequeathed to the Indian education system. A deep learning loss. "I don't know how they will write the papers in January 2022 if they can't remember basic algebra. I shudder to think how that will perform," said Sahoo.

But this challenge isn't just a limited question of performance in examinations. As Omicron looms, and more uncertainty confronts schools (many have been shut in response) in a five-part series from across the country, HT looks at the vast ramifications of the pandemic on India's schools and children: from learning loss to increasing susceptibility to child marriages and trafficking; the closure of low-cost public schools; the linkages between migration and education; even the vulnerability of children to recruitment by Maoist organizations.

**Learning loss**

10 kilometres away from Bholeswar Vidya Path, Subhashree Mishra, a teacher at Phirningia village's "Upgraded high school" is in the midst of a similar, exasperating exercise. The Class 8 teacher has 42 students in front of her, and the response is a similar silence. The question is even more elementary. Speak out loud the limitations to the digital push

numbers between 10 and 99. Of the 42, only two are able to complete the exercise. "There are many who have even forgotten how to sign their names," said Mishra.

A study by Azim Premji Foundation conducted in 2021 among 16,067 children across 1,137 public schools and covering 44 districts of Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal revealed that 92% of children on average have lost at least one specific language ability from the previous year across all classes. Similarly, 82% of children on average have lost at least one specific mathematical ability.

Anurag Behar, CEO, Azim Premji Foundation, believes that learning loss is clearly the biggest challenge that the country faces in the near future. "Roughly 210 to 220 million children have had virtually no education for two years. They have not learnt what they should have and they've forgotten much of what they knew. This has never happened in the history of education," said Behar.

To map the extent of learning losses, the education ministry is conducting a National Achievement Survey among 3.8 million students in 123,000 schools in 733 districts across 36 states and Union territories for students of Classes 3, 5, 8 and 10 in which the abilities of students in language, mathematics, science, social science and English will be tested.

**Limitations to the digital push**

In April 2020, Odisha's school and

mass education department started online classes for Class X students, providing learning materials to primary, upper primary and elementary students through WhatsApp. In May, the Scheduled Tribe & Scheduled Caste development department started an "Alternative Learning and Mentorship Programme" to teach students through mobile applications, YouTube channels or a doorstep visit by teachers.

The practice continued till January 8, 2021 when offline classes resumed for students from Class 10 and 12. But with the second wave spreading its tentacles through the country beginning April 2021, classes were suspended again.

This has meant that schools across the state were effectively shut for anything between 13 to 19 months for students of Class 6-12. Students from Class 1 to 5 have yet to see the insides of their classrooms for over 21 months. In the interim, the only option has been online education. But across various parts of Odisha, that term is悬.

Odisha school and mass education minister Samir Dash told the state assembly on December 8 that during the pandemic, at least 49,098 higher secondary students including 15,792 tribal and 11,045 Dalit students dropped out of schools. "We have asked the District Education Officers to implement different schemes under the Samagra Siksha Abhiyan to bring back the dropouts to educational institutions," he said.

In terms of mobile penetration,

an October 2021 report from Telecom Regulatory Authority of India puts the national average at 88% with Delhi being the highest and Odisha at 79%.

But the Odisha Economic Survey 2018-19 states that at least 20% of the 51,311 villages in the state did not have mobile connectivity while the penetration of the internet was 28.22% to the national average of 38.02%. When schools were closed last year, the digital divide grew ever more stark. After all, these numbers refer to households; it is rare for children in lower middle-class households to have their own digital devices or a doorstep visit by teachers.

Dash told the state assembly in the last session that only 28.87% of students studying in classes I to 10 had access to smartphones. In Kandhamal, just about 13.38% of students had access to smartphones while mobile connectivity was available in 30% of the 2,587 villages of the district.

**Real world implications**

In March 2020, 13-year-old year old Kamandha Kanhar was a class five student of the Phirningia government high school, run by the state SC/ST department. The year ending examinations were yet to be held, and suddenly, his hostel was shut. Without a test, Kanhar was promoted to class 6. In the next year and a half, he had no access to online education. A resident of Patlipilia village, his parents Bharat Kanhar and Jagmati Kanhar, are illiterate, and labourers. He was the first in the family to go to school, his two sisters are younger than him.

In terms of mobile penetration,

Nobody in the family has smartphones, and the village has no mobile connectivity. With nothing else to do, Kanhar began going to work with his parents, tilling farmlands someone else owned. "There was no one in the village who could teach us. Though a teacher sometimes visited our village during the pandemic, no one in the village was willing to study," Kanhar said. On November 15, 2021, when schools reopened, Kanhar returned to his hostel, 20 kilometres from his village. He found he could not read English. "I could before, there was a sense of practice. Now, I don't understand anything," he said.

Smritirekha Nayak, a teacher in Retang upper primary school said that the biggest hurdle that faces them, is how to make children "re-learn". "As they were absent from schools, they have difficulties in concentrating. To recoup learning losses we have to work extra hard. But where is the time for it? Earlier children in upper primary classes could do addition using numbers in their notebooks. But now they have forgotten how to do that. Many have simply forgotten how to write in their notebooks. We are forced to start everything from scratch. It is frustrating at times," she said.

**The way forward**

Kandhamal's district education officer Pramod Sarangi admits that learning loss is a major issue for students of Kandhamal considering its poor mobile connectivity. "As most children did not have much writing practice, we have asked schools to focus on it and undertake learning recovery programmes. Teachers have been asked to teach important parts of the syllabus that the students missed out last year. But it is a difficult task."

Anil Pradhan, a Right to Education activist in Odisha said, "While the long absence of students from schools has affected learning processes, students in districts such as Kandhamal, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur or Malkangiri with poor network connectivity have lost out the most. Nobody in the family has smartphones, and the village has no mobile connectivity. With nothing else to do, Kanhar began going to work with his parents, tilling farmlands someone else owned. "There was no one in the village who could teach us. Though a teacher sometimes visited our village during the pandemic, no one in the village was willing to study," Kanhar said. On November 15, 2021, when schools reopened, Kanhar returned to his hostel, 20 kilometres from his village. He found he could not read English. "I could before, there was a sense of practice. Now, I don't understand anything," he said.

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"Behar of Azim Premji Foundation says both the Centre and the states must act. "States should take all possible measures to recover lost learning. Most importantly, teachers should be given adequate time to help the students recover the lost learning. Let's say a kid is in 7th grade now. He left school when he was in the 5th. You can't start with 7th grade syllabus right away as the kid has

(Reporting for the story was done in December)

## MY DELHI

# Teams fan out to enforce Covid norms amid surge

Alok KN Mishra

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi government has intensified enforcement against violations of Covid-appropriate behaviour amid the city's fifth wave of infections, with 466 teams collecting over ₹1 crore across 11 districts on Saturday alone, showed data accessed by HT.

Each team comprises an executive magistrate and four civil defence volunteers, and are split between stationary and mobile units.

Only around 150 enforcement teams were deployed across the city before the Omicron-fuelled surge hit Delhi in mid-December last year.

On Saturday, these teams imposed fines worth over ₹1.02 crore, after issuing 5,210 challans for violations of Covid-appropriate behaviour (including flouting mask norms, spitting in public, among others).

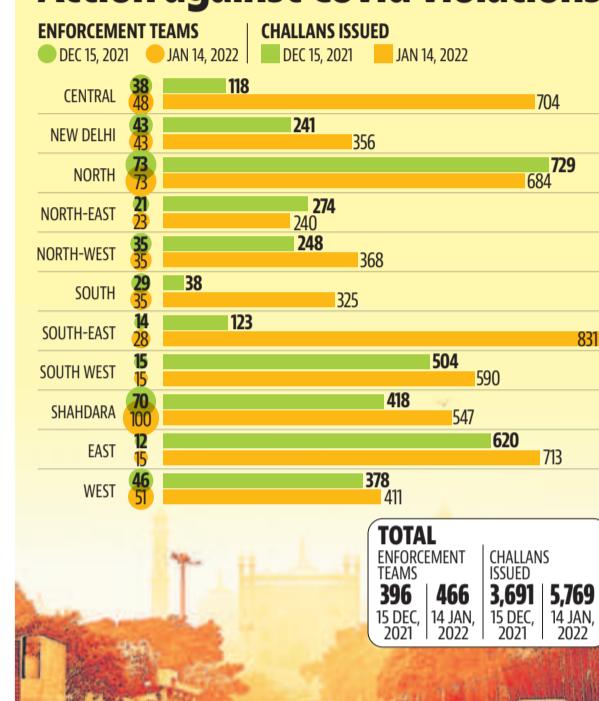
Most of these fines were imposed in East district (₹14.4 lakh), followed by South-East district (₹13.4 lakh), North (₹12.9 lakh), and Central district (₹12.3 lakh).

According to a government document seen by HT, there were 396 such enforcement teams in the city on December 15, 10 days after the Capital reported its first confirmed Omicron case. On that day, the 11 districts together issued around 3,500 challans for violations of mandated Covid mitigation norms.

The number of enforcement team increased to 425 by January 1, when cases were increasing rapidly. This number further increased to 466 by January 14, and the number of daily challans increased to 5,769.

A revenue department official said district magistrates are empowered to designate any official, including teachers, as

### Action against Covid violations



an executive magistrate. "Many teachers, tehsildars and other revenue department officials have been designated as executive magistrates," said the official who asked not to be named.

Another district official said regular meetings are being held with all stakeholders, including the police, civic bodies, market groups and resident welfare associations, among others.

"There is a sharp focus on enforcing Covid-appropriate behaviour at public places, especially during peak gathering hours. Further, awareness material has been placed near the enforcement teams' pickets and prominently displayed at places of mass assemblage," said Dr Jugal Kishore, head of the department of community medicine at Safdarjung hospital.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday said the state's enforcement norms have proved to be beneficial. "People should continue to follow all Covid protocols and take necessary precautions like wearing masks for safety and to maintain social distance when entering public places," he said in a briefing.

However, enforcement officials on the ground said people

discipline," said a district official, who also asked not to be named.

Mobile teams fan out across a district, with a focus on areas prone to crowding, like inter-state bus terminals, markets and railway stations.

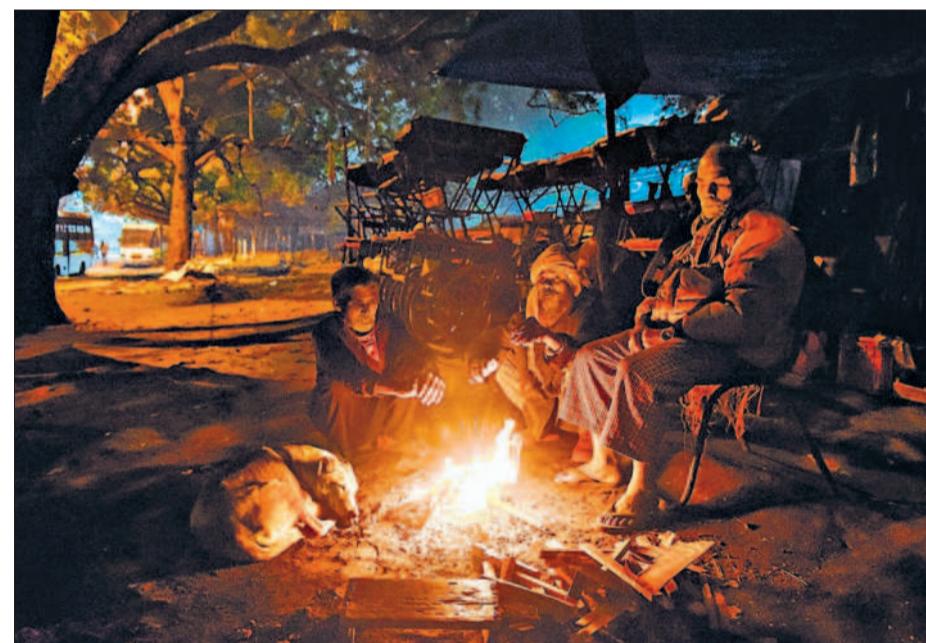
Stationary teams, meanwhile, are deployed in crowd-prone locations like some of the city's popular markets.

"The need for more teams was necessitated in the days before New Year, when markets started swelling with crowds and it was getting difficult to maintain distancing and mask norms.

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challans increased to 5,769.

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People sit around bonfire on a cold winter evening in Delhi.

### AFTER SC CENSURE, MUMBAI-BASED FIRM TO DEMOLISH SUPERTECH'S TWIN TOWERS IN NOIDA

HT Correspondent

hreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NOIDA:** Four days after the Supreme Court pulled up SuperTech for not demolishing its Emerald Twin Towers in Sector 93A and warned its directors of jail time, the realtor on Sunday said it has appointed Mumbai-based Edifice Engineering to undertake the task.

"As per the Noida authority instructions via a letter, we have issued letter of award to Edifice Mumbai to carry out demolition of twin towers in compliance of the Supreme Court order. Demolition agency Edifice is technically sound to carry out the work safely as per analysis done by Noida as well as the Central Building Research Institute. The agency has asked for the certain NOC, which we have forwarded to the Noida authority to arrange at earliest to start work at site," said RK Arora chairman of SuperTech.

The two towers were declared illegal by the Supreme Court on August 31, 2021, and the apex court had given three months to the company to demolish the two towers.

The IMD classifies fog as 'shallow' when the visibility is between 500 and 1,000 metres, as 'moderate' when it is between 200 and 500 metres, and 'dense' when it is below 200 metres.

IMD has forecast that the mercury will hover between 8°C and 10°C on Monday.

Delhi's air quality meanwhile remained in the 'poor' category, with an air quality index (AQI) of 264 recorded as per Central Pollution Control Board's 4pm bulletin – a slight increase from Saturday's reading of 258.

According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (Safar), a government forecasting body, Delhi's air quality is likely to remain in the 'poor' category over the next two days, with further deterioration expected from January 19, as wind speed drops.

"Prevailing foggy conditions and a gradual increase in wind speed is likely to keep air quality in the 'poor' category for the next two days. From (January) 19 onwards, wind speed is likely to decrease, leading to low ventilation of pollutants," said the Safar spokesperson.

With more than four months having elapsed since the order and more than 250 homebuyers yet to get their refund with interest, on Wednesday, a Supreme Court bench took a strict view against SuperTech and said, "We are going to send your directors to jail. You are playing truant with the Supreme Court."

least 4.5°C below the normal.

The Capital recorded its lowest maximum temperature for Sunday, despite a 'fog hole' over the city allowing in some sunlight and pushing up the maximum temperature from the season's lowest, recorded a day ago.

While Safdarjung, Delhi's base station, recorded a maximum temperature of 17.2 degrees Celsius (°C) on Sunday, three notches below normal, some parts of the city still recorded 'cold day' conditions, with the mercury increasing only marginally, to 12.8°C, at outer Delhi's Narela.

Naveed Dahiya, an amateur weatherman who runs 'Live Weather of India', said satellite imagery showed dense fog and low clouds looming over the entire northern plains, but a fog hole led to some relief in parts of Narela.

"This is the fourth consecutive day in Delhi now where cold day conditions have been seen. Some parts saw sunlight due to a clearance occurring in the low clouds due to winds," said Jenamani.

Jenamani said both the Safdarjung and Palam stations recorded shallow fog on Sunday. The IMD had issued an Orange alert for Sunday, forecasting both dense fog and cold day conditions.

"The Supertech has been directed to issue work order to them and the Noida authority will supervise the demolition process with help of the CBR as per SC orders," said Ritu Maheshwari chief executive officer of the Noida authority.

While officials said Edifice will soon start the work at the site, the firm requires NOCs from pollution, water, sewage and other departments before beginning the demolition work.

"We will start the work soon after the required approvals will be in place," said an Edifice spokesperson.

"Prevailing foggy conditions and a gradual increase in wind speed is likely to keep air quality in the 'poor' category for the next two days. From (January) 19 onwards, wind speed is likely to decrease, leading to low ventilation of pollutants," said the Safar forecast.

"The visibility was around 800 metres at Palam between 7.30am and 9.30am. It was

as well.

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are often less than cooperative.

A member of an enforcement team recently deployed at Lajpat Nagar market said the unit faced several difficulties in enforcing the norms, and were rebuffed when they tried to fine people.

"At times, people refuse to pay on the spot, saying they don't have cash on hand. Occasionally, defaulters get aggressive if we try to penalise them and give us excuses for not adhering to protocols. Some people also refuse to provide identification proof," said the official, adding that they often need police personnel to help them out.

Experts said people should not discontinue Covid-appropriate behaviour, even when the case curve flattens.

"The number of cases has dipped for the last three days... The peak of the curve has already been hit and further restrictions may not be beneficial. The government should now start lifting restrictions imposed on business activities and individuals' movement after watching the trend for a couple of more days. People, however, must be encouraged to continue to follow appropriate behaviour like wearing masks in public places and maintaining social distancing. Authorities should continue to ensure that people do not violate such standards," said Dr Jugal Kishore, head of the department of community medicine at Safdarjung hospital.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday said the state's enforcement norms have proved to be beneficial. "People should continue to follow all Covid protocols and take necessary precautions like wearing masks for safety and to maintain social distance when entering public places," he said in a briefing.

However, enforcement officials on the ground said people

{ POSITIVITY DIPS FOR FIRST TIME IN 4 WEEKS }

## Daily tally dips to 10-day low of 18k, positivity at 27.9%

HT Correspondent

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**NEW DELHI:** The Covid-19 test positivity rate in Delhi fell for the first time in nearly four weeks on Sunday, as fresh infections in the city dipped for the third straight day, showed data released by the state government.

Delhi on Sunday added 18,286 cases of Covid-19, down from 20,718 the previous day, and the fewest in a day since January 7, when the city recorded 17,335 infections.

The data showed that 28 people also died of the infection.

The case spike on Sunday came on the back of just over 65,000 tests, of which 27.87% samples returned positive results. This number, known as the test positivity rate, dipped from 30.6% on Friday and Saturday, and, on a day-to-day basis, fell for the first time since December 23 last year. Since then, this number has either increased or remained the same every day.

To be sure, testing has also dipped in Delhi over the past few days, dipping from over 105,000 tests on January 12, to 98,832 tests the day after that, then 79,758 on Friday, 67,624 on Saturday, and finally 65,621 on Sunday. State health minister Satyendar Jain, however, said that everyone in the city who needs to get a test is being tested.

These numbers come even as hospitalisation numbers in the Capital remain a fraction of all infections, with over 82% of all beds free in the city's medical facilities.

According to the government's Sunday bulletin, just over 2,700 Covid-19 patients are

hospitalised, leaving 12,788 of the city's 15,499 beds free.

Of those in hospital, 738 are in intensive care units and 835 others need medical oxygen support, of whom 123 are on ventilators.

Jain said most hospitalised Covid-19 patients are either unvaccinated, or have comorbidities.

"The trend indicates that the number of cases in Delhi is decreasing, but the government is still keeping a close eye on the Covid cases, and it will take some time to understand the trend. Most of those affected by Covid and admitted in the hospital are either unvaccinated or have comorbid conditions," said Jain in a media briefing.

The minister said Delhi government is prepared to operationalise a total of 37,000 Covid-19 beds. "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 look like arising," he said.

### JAMNALAL BAJAJ FOUNDATION

Nominations Invited

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National Award for Constructive Work

For contribution in any of or all the development areas of Mahatma Gandhi's Constructive Programmes, to create a self-reliant community in rural India.



National Award for Application of Science & Technology for Rural Development

For contribution through adaptable, affordable, replicable appropriate grassroots technologies, which has resulted in economic, social and ecological development of rural people.



National Award for Development & Welfare of Women & Children

Only to a woman.  
For contribution towards education, skills training, healthcare, literacy, livelihood activities, holistic development, advocacy, etc. of women and children.



International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India

Only to a foreign national.  
For contribution, outside India in promoting Gandhian principles like vision for peace, non-violence, harmony of human life with nature and moral conscience.

National & International Awards: 31st January, 2022

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Email: [nominations@jamnalalbajajfoundation.org](mailto:nominations@jamnalalbajajfoundation.org)

For more details contact: Secretary, Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, 2nd flr., Bajaj Bhawan, Jamnalal Bajaj Marg, 226 Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021 India  
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ZERO PROCESSING FEE

YONO SBI

The banker to every Indian

TCS

Amul The Taste of India

Amul Butter Milk

Amul अमूल

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



**Wear a mask properly**  
Wear your mask before  
stepping out of the house.



**Wash your hands frequently**  
Wash your hands regularly with  
soap or use sanitizer for atleast  
20 seconds.



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

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

- Arvind Kejriwal



TWO HELD FOR  
DUPING SEVERAL  
PEOPLE BY  
OFFERING THEM  
FAKE LOANS

HT Correspondent

htreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** A 27-year-old woman and her associate were arrested for allegedly duping people from across the country by offering them loans from different financial institutions, police said on Sunday. The woman's husband and another accomplice were arrested last year for the same fraud.

While police did not disclose the total number of people duped, they said the accused cheated "several people" from "areas in Delhi-NCR, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Kerala".

Additional commissioner of police (crime) Shibesh Singh said that they landed on the accused's trail while investigating a cheating case involving a printing press owner, Pannik Kumar from north Delhi's Sabzi Mandi, who alleged that he was duped of ₹3.50 lakh after promising a loan of ₹45 lakh from a private company last year.

Kumar had called the suspects after seeing an advertisement for a loan -- "without any delay or much paperwork" -- on the web. Police said when Kumar called, the person on the other end, who claimed to be an executive with a leading finance company, assured him a business loan of ₹45 lakh. He also asked Kumar to pay 1% of the loan amount as processing fee.

Two days later, Kumar received a call from a woman who claimed that the loan had been sanctioned. Later, the accused claimed that they were unable to transfer the money due to some technical issues and asked Kumar to send more money to resolve the problem. "However, after tricking Kumar into paying ₹3.50 lakh in total, the suspects disabled all their phone numbers," said Singh.

The police on October 25 last year arrested one Pushpendra Singh Chauhan from Uttar Pradesh's Khurja. His associate Harish Bhagel was arrested on November 24. "Our investigation revealed that Chauhan's wife Geeta was the mastermind of the racket. But she was absconding with another associate. Our team members continued the raids and arrested both now."

Karn Pratap Singh

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**NEW DELHI:** Mujahideen Ghazwat-ul-Hind (MGH), an al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group active in Kashmir, has claimed responsibility for planting an improvised explosive device (IED) at the Ghazipur flower market last week, said Delhi Police officers associated with the investigation, even as no arrests were made till late Sunday.

Although the authenticity of the claim could not be established, agencies said they were taking the matter seriously and have sounded an alert in Delhi-National Capital Region (Delhi-NCR) and other states, including those that are headed for elections, the officers said.

A Delhi Police officer associated with the probe and who asked not to be named said the group made the claim on a Telegram group, where it also claimed that "the IED did not explode due to technical glitches".

According to the officer, the Telegram message was found during social media monitoring by intelligence gathering agencies. The same message was shared with the special cell that is investigating the IED recovery case.

"In the same message on the platform, the alleged terrorist outfit mentioned that the IED not going off does not mean their (the outfit's) plan failed. Through the message, the outfit also warned agencies to prepare themselves for more such attempted terror strikes," the officer said.

The development has left central agencies as well as the top brass of the Delhi Police concerned, said the officer quoted above, since it could mean the possible entry of Kashmir-based terrorists into the national capital, especially since the attempted attack comes even as preparations for Republic Day celebrations are underway, and the dates for elections in five states -- Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur -- have been declared.

Musa became the commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen after the killing of its top commander Burhan Wani in July 2016. However, in 2017, Musa left the terrorist outfit and formed Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind in Kashmir. After Musa's killing, AGuH was led by Burhan Koka, a terrorist of Shopian district who was killed in April 2020, and some terrorists of Tral area in Pulwama district.



The bomb disposal squad of the NSG on Friday destroyed the IED through a controlled explosion.

RAJ K RAJ/HT PHOTO

made through an encrypted platform, investigating agencies have found it difficult to ascertain the source of the message.

When contacted, Vijay Kumar, inspector general (IG) of the Jammu & Kashmir Police, said MGH has been in prominence recently and was reportedly started by a person named Khitab Kashmiri, who fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan and is reportedly living in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Some senior Delhi Police officers working on terror-related cases said that they have reasons to believe that MGH is a front for the terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has been given a facade of The Resistance Front (TRF) and The People's Anti-Fascist Force (PAFF), or Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) of the Kashmir Tiger Force, the MGH may also be an attempt to give a facade to AGuH."

At 10.16am on January 14, the city police received a call that the owner of a scooter spotted an unclaimed black bag containing an iron box with white powder, tapes and wires around

it on a pavement near Gate 1 of Delhi's largest flower market.

Around 1.30 pm, the bomb detection and disposal squad of the National Security Guard (NSG) destroyed the IED through a controlled explosion that was carried out in an 8-foot pit hurriedly dug up with the help of an earthmover 100m from the spot where the bag was found.

The NSG later said the IED weighed roughly 3kg and likely consisted of powerful chemicals such as RDX and ammonium nitrate, while shrapnel was also seen in the device, which could have led to significant harm if detonated. The NSG's bomb experts collected samples of the explosive items from both the places -- where it was found and where it was destroyed -- for further findings, a report of which is likely to be shared with the Delhi Police on Monday.

The special cell registered a case under the Explosive Act and took up the probe, primarily from the terror angle since

the use of the RDX hinted the involvement of a terrorist outfit and the fact that the explosive substance was sourced from Pakistan.

The investigating team has so far collected the footage over 200 CCTV cameras installed in the radius of nearly one kilometre from the spot where the IED was spotted.

"The cameras are installed on the routes leading to the flower market from the eastern part of Delhi and from Ghaziabad and Noida. The place where the IED bag was kept was not covered by any of the cameras installed at the market's entry and exit gates.

Moreover, nobody has come forward to claim that he or she had seen anyone keeping that bag. We are trying to identify the suspect or suspects through other video footage," said an investigator, who did not wish to be named.

Risha Chitlangia  
risha.chitlangia@htlive.com

**NEW DELHI:** As the wedding season begins, associations of banquet halls and tent houses have written to the Delhi government seeking relaxation in the restrictions on social gatherings in the national capital, as they feel the current ban on such events and uncertainty over future norms has led to cancellation of events planned in February.

A government spokesperson said the restrictions will be eased "as and when the situation improves".

Amid a spike in Covid-19 cases, the Delhi government ordered banquet halls to shut last month. As per the Delhi Disaster Management Authority's order, only 20 people are allowed at wedding functions.

Noting that neighbouring states don't have such stringent norms, the associations requested the Delhi government to allow them to operate at 50% capacity or cap the number of guests at around 50-100.

A Delhi government spokesman said, "Imposing Covid-related restrictions is a very painful step for the government. Livelihoods are hit when curbs are imposed, but their absence poses a threat to public health. When the situation improves, the government will reduce the quantum of the restrictions."

Faridabad etc, where the norms are much relaxed. We have written to the government to allow at least 50-100 people or 50% of the venue capacity."

Dang added, "Our industry has suffered a lot in the past two years due to the Covid pandemic. We have somehow managed to stay afloat as there were strict restrictions imposed on social gatherings in the past two years. If the ban is not lifted, it will impact lakhs of people associated with the industry."

The wedding season has just started after Makar Sankranti and will continue till mid-March. But due to uncertainty over the current ban on social gathering, tent houses and hotel owners say that they have started getting cancellation requests.

In the past one week, Pankaj Shokeen, owner of a tent house in west Delhi and general secretary of Delhi Tent Federation, said that he has got 11 cancellation requests for wedding functions planned in February.

A Delhi government spokesman said, "Imposing Covid-related restrictions is a very painful step for the government. Livelihoods are hit when curbs are imposed, but their absence poses a threat to public health. When the situation improves, the government will reduce the quantum of the restrictions."

## Delhiwale

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## Meet the chairmen

Three brothers and their art of chair weaving

**PUBLIC INTEREST** They are sitting on the floor, not on chairs, even though they are professional chair makers. The three gents are weaving cane chairs this icy afternoon in a central Delhi neighbourhood. Commissioned by an adjacent household, they have been at work since morning.

"We have been tasked with making six chairs," says one of them.

Occasional passersby throw curious glances. Maybe because it's not common to see chairs being woven by hand."

True," agrees the same man. "These days, people buy ready-made kursi."

The men are brothers. At 41, Janak Singh is the youngest (and quietest), and Nathi Lal (60) is the eldest. Adal Singh (56) is doing all the talking. Exuding a friendly, easy-going temperament, his smile is endearing. The chair he is working on is almost finished.

"The bunai (weaving) has to be strong and maheen (delicate)," Adal Singh says, his eyes contracting behind his glasses as he concentrates on the "cane" of the slip seat.

The brothers live in the same locality (Kalyan-

puri), but in separate houses. They mostly work as a team and commute to the site of the day in their respective bicycles. Each one's wife packs a lunch box for each. "But we eat together, sharing one another's subzi."

The brothers inherited the career from their father, the late Jyoti Prasad, who arrived in Delhi some 60 years back. A farmer's son in Uttar Pradesh, he grabbed the first job he found in the city -- as a chair weaver in a furniture shop in Lajpat Nagar. His young sons joined him from the village some years later. "We learned (the art of) bunai from our father," says Adal Singh.

Today, the brothers have 10 children in all. The new generation will not carry forward the legacy. "Our children are studying, they want to do office jobs. They haven't learned 'bunai'." Pausing momentarily, Adal Singh explains: "Office work is simpler. You leave home at a fixed time in the evening; our line is full of hard work, and every day we have to go to different places, wherever the work is."

The next day the men are sighted at work on the same spot. "We will finish all the chairs today," says Adal Singh, as he poses for a portrait with his two brothers. The eldest -- "bhai saheb" -- is made to sit on a completed chair out of reverence for his seniority.



**READ:**  
For more stories by Mayank Austen Soofi, scan the QR code

## Project highlights

**₹1,168.54 cr | 25.47 hectare**

Total project cost | Total area

June 2021 - When the project started | Oct 2024 - Tentative completion date

**6,518 dwelling units, including 1,992 EWS units, planned**

**1,524 dwelling units in phase 1**

**WHAT IS TOD?**  
Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a high-density, mixed land use development near a mass rapid transit system such as Metro. The idea is to encourage the use of public transport by maximising residential, commercial and recreational spaces within walking distance of a mass transit facility.

Spread over 37.42 hectares, the ₹1168-crore project will have residential, commercial green spaces.

The flagship project of DDA will comprise high-rise residential complexes, commercial and office spaces, public utilities and multi-modal public transport facilities.

DDA officials said that the mixed-use development project will have office complexes at walking distance and will be connected to Karkardooma Metro station, which is an interchange between the Blue Line (Vaishali to Dwarka) and Pink line (Shiv Vihar to Majlis park).

It will also house one of the biggest residential complexes in the densely populated east Delhi with 6,518 flats, including 1,992 for economically weaker sections.

way of seamless coordination and follow up with Agencies including Delhi Jal Board, BSES, Forest and Fire Department for necessary clearance. It was

decided to meet fortnightly to resolve outstanding inter agency issues for smooth and timely implementation of the project as per laid down timelines."

## AFTER L&DO TRANSFER }

## South corp nod for amalgamation of shops in 38 markets

Paras Singh

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** In a major relief to the traders of many key south Delhi markets, the South corporation has smoothed the process of amalgamating or dividing shops in 38 markets, which once came under the Land and Development Office (L&DO) and was recently transferred to the civic body. The civic body has also reduced the damage charges for unauthorised constructions, paving the way for the shop owners to regularise their buildings.

According to the order issued by South Delhi Municipal Corporation's (SDMC) land and estate department on Wednesday, division or amalgamation of properties will entail a fee of ₹5 lakh each and in cases where amalgamation is being carried out in more than two shops, the charges will be ₹10 lakh per merger.

A senior official from the land and estate department said that the shopkeepers will have to submit a structural safety certificate for all such amalgamations and a common ownership proof for the shops being merged. "The shops in markets transferred from L&DO (coming under Union Home ministry) needed to undergo a lengthy and complex process, based on lease documents, due to which such amalgamations or divisions could not practically take place. Many such amalgamated shops were also sealed due to violations by the monitoring committee. The simplified procedure with fixed amalgamation rates will help to expedite the process," the official added.

The SDMC order will be applicable in 38 L&DO markets, which include many important shopping centres like Defence Colony, Sunder Nagar, Mehrauli market and Jangpura.

## DERC ASKS FOR REALLOCATION OF POWER FROM 3 NTPC PLANTS

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) has written to the power department of the Delhi government, informing them of the need to reallocate power from the surrendered National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) stations of Anta and Auraiya to other states, while continuing to source power from comparatively cheaper gas plants in Unchahar-I, Farakka (I&II) and Kahalganj. In its letter to the additional chief secretary of power from the Delhi government, DERC states it had informed the Union ministry of power that the power purchase agreements (PPA) for these plants will lapse in 25 years' time. While the matter of surrender of power from the Dadri plant was sub-judge and its PPA will end on March 31, agreements for Anta and Auraiya have already expired. "In view of higher generation cost... they may be considered for permanent reallocation to other states," the letter said.

"In view of higher generation cost... they may be considered for permanent reallocation to other states," the letter said.

# Zamrudpur is cooking up a revolution in cloud kitchens

Manoj Sharma

manoj.sharma@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Md Shamim, a delivery executive with an online food aggregator, says that since the Delhi government banned dine-in at restaurants last week, the number of deliveries he makes every day has almost doubled. While he delivers to multiple locations in south Delhi, the pickup destination is almost always Zamrudpur, a village near Greater Kailash 1. "It is because this village is the biggest hub of cloud kitchens," says Shamim, as he waits to pick up an order, a pizza, from a cloud kitchen located in a nondescript building in the auto market of the village.

With restaurants in Delhi shutting dine-in facilities frequently due to pandemic restrictions in the past two years, cloud kitchens -- delivery-only outlets -- have mushroomed across the Capital. The epicentre of this revolution is Zamrudpur, a south Delhi village, currently home to about 100 cloud kitchens, including Layla's, Ah So Yum, Burgerama, Madam Curry, Kougan and Rutbah, among others that promise fine dining at home.

Throughout the day, one can see food aggregators' delivery partners zipping in and out of the village on motorcycles, cycles and electric bikes. Most cloud kitchens here have no signboard-- the only sign of their presence are delivery men receiving orders through a small opening in the doors of the buildings.

Ashwani Basantani, who runs Cloud Kitchen Exchange, an online platform that helps buy, sell and rent cloud kitchens, says the village is a favourite with cloud kitchen enterprises because of low rentals, a south Delhi address, and its proximity to posh south Delhi colonies, which generate a bulk of the high-value orders.

Ishaan Kapoor, who runs Madam Curry, a cloud kitchen, agrees. His kitchen, along with several others, is situated in the village's dusty auto market, dominated by a motor mechanic and auto-parts shops. "It may



A delivery person waits for an order in front of a cloud kitchen at Zamrudpur village. HT PHOTO

look like an unlikely place for a kitchen hub, but this market is already one. The cloud kitchen model allows us to operate in any location; what matters is the quality of the kitchen infrastructure and food," says Kapoor, who ran a catering business before he started Madam Curry in 2020.

The cloud kitchen, he says, has been a success, and has since opened one more in Gurugram and is in the process of opening another one in Punjab Bagh. "Setting up cloud kitchens allows you to move away from pricey retail locations and focus on just food," he adds.

A 200sqft space in Zamrudpur costs about ₹20,000 a month.

Jahan Khurana, who owns 15 cloud kitchen brands such as Dana Pan, Balli Bawarchi, Roji Roti and Shanghai Chilli's, says the pandemic has led to the rebirth of the cloud kitchen concept in the country, with over 3,000 cloud kitchens opening in Delhi alone during the pandemic. "The first cloud kitchens arrived on the scene a few years ago, but the model got a big boost during the pandemic. Now, new cloud kitchens are opening almost every day. Half the people opening them have no background in the food business," says Wadhawan.

He says the cloud kitchen revolution was fuelled by the work-from-home culture during the pandemic, which brought in a

business through the FOCO Model (Franchise Owned Company Operated). "Individuals in the US have invested in our business through this model. The cloud kitchen concept is here to stay," he says.

Many cloud kitchen enterprises in the country are raking in huge investments; a report by RedSeer Management Consulting predicts that cloud kitchens are set to be a \$2 billion industry in India by 2024.

In fact, among those opening cloud kitchens are top chefs who quit their jobs during the pandemic to start their own ventures. Anuj Wadhawan, who worked with a five-star hotel as an executive chef, started Ah So Yum in June 2020. The kitchen in Zamrudpur makes about 50 deliveries per day on an average -- of sushi, dimsum, bao, among other Pan Asian cuisine -- to south Delhi localities. "I always wanted to start my own venture, but the disruption caused by the pandemic made me finally take the plunge," says Wadhawan, who runs three cloud kitchens today in Gurugram, Zamrudpur in Delhi, and more recently, in Lucknow. He says that while he misses interacting with hotel guests, he enjoys the creative freedom. "In a hotel, we would change the menu once a year; here, I do so every couple of months," says Wadhawan, whose kitchen is also located in the auto market. "It is a closed

kitchen, so the location does not matter. I would be paying ten times more if I had space in the neighbouring GK and would have shut down by now. This place has given me access to sophisticated customers."

The ground floor of his facility in the village serves as the kitchen, the first floor as storage and the second floor as the office. He says that in the past few months the competition has intensified with top brick-and-mortar restaurants and even five-star hotels entering the cloud kitchen space. "But they won't be able to beat us as they cannot match the economics of our model," says Wadhawan.

Rajiv Goyal, a chef, who works as a consultant with many cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurugram and runs India Food Tourism Organisation, which promotes food tourism in the country, says that several top chefs are not only opening their own kitchens, but many are also joining cloud kitchen ventures full-time. "They see a lot of potential; the cloud kitchen is a highly scalable model, and is raking in massive investments. Cloud kitchens are offering them better salaries than hotels, whose revenues have been hit due to the pandemic," says Goyal.

He says the cloud kitchen revolution was fuelled by the work-from-home culture during the pandemic, which brought in a

shift from eating out to ordering in. "People have been working from home and many have had no time to cook and are not comfortable having a maid at home because of fear of infection. They regularly order food from these kitchens," says Goyal.

Besides, he adds, many home chefs, a lot of them women, who earlier took orders on phone and catered to their neighbourhood clients, are now operating cloud kitchens. They offer everything from diabetes meals to high-protein and no-carb meals. "Before the pandemic, I ordered meals from a few well-known brick-and-mortar restaurants, but now I end up ordering from cloud kitchens. Their food is interesting as their packaging, but yes, there are concerns about the obscure locations of these kitchens and their hygiene standards.

After all, a kitchen is not a warehouse," says Adesh Gupta, a software engineer who lives in South Extension.

Ishaan Kapoor says that online branding and packaging is important to the success of a cloud kitchen. "We are trying to create a gourmet fine-dining experience at home. Our brand name is inspired by Marie Curie. Because we are into experimental food, our food is served in glasses, injections and test tube-shaped packages," says Kapoor.

Most Zamrudpur kitchens have 10-20 staff members,

including a chef and manager, working in shifts. Some kitchens are open until 4am. A manager at a well-known cloud kitchen in Zamrudpur, says working in a cloud kitchen is pretty tedious.

"Earlier I was working in a Khan Market restaurant, but lost my job, so I joined a cloud kitchen here. Interacting with the guests was one of the most rewarding parts of the dine-in restaurant, now I just deal with delivery partners. I am not used to sitting in the kitchen for so long," he says.

But the villagers are not complaining. "I have no idea what they cook, and where the food goes, but they are offering good rent," says Ramvir Singh, a resident. "Here they get a GK address at a Zamrudpur price."

"In the first phase, 10 major water bodies were identified, but we are already working on the second phase, for which Khasra num-

# 10 water bodies may be labelled city's first wetlands this March

## A conservation effort

**1,043**  
water bodies  
in Delhi

**50** Wetlands  
to be identified under phase 2

**10** Wetlands to be identified by March 2022. These are: Sanjay Lake, Hauz Khas Lake, Bhalwa Lake, Welcome Jheel, Nafajgarh Jheel, Sultanpur Dabas water body, Daryapur Kalan water body, Smiti Van (Kondli), Smiti Van (Vasant Kunj), and Pooth Kalan lake.

**WHAT CHANGES AFTER BEING DECLARED A 'WETLAND'?**  
Each water body will have legal protection and its geo-coordinates and total area will be demarcated, allowing the Delhi state wetland authority (SWA) to take action against future encroachments.

The water body will get an integrated management plan, and receive funds from the Centre

bers (land survey number that is assigned to a specific plot or property) for 50 more wetlands are being identified. If a water body is notified as a wetland, the wetland conservation rules allow for an IMP to be prepared, which is a long-term action plan. We will also be applying for funding from the Centre for each of these wetlands," said Jayachandran.

While nine water bodies are currently being considered for notification through the Delhi government, SWA officials say Nafajgarh Jheel could be notified as a wetland by the Centre, as it forms part of a National Green Tribunal (NGT) judgment.

In September 2020, the NGT asked the Delhi and Haryana governments to jointly prepare an environment action plan for the lake, which falls in both the states. In their report, the two states said that it will be notified as a trans-boundary wetland by the Centre as it requires management from both the states.

The notification will detail the geo-coordinates of each water body demarcated as a wetland and the area over which it is spread. These officials said, will ensure the water body is not encroached in the future.

"In the first phase, 10 major water bodies were identified, but we are already working on the second phase, for which Khasra num-

technical committee formed by the Delhi SWA to notify wetlands, said the long-term plans for each water body will be detailed and can plug existing problems such as sewage in-flow and poor maintenance. "Currently, for most water body projects, STPs are being used to provide cleaner water, but there are no action plans on how the water body will be revived and then maintained over a period of time. The IMPs will help do that and also ensure there is legal sanctity for the wetland," he says.

Manu Bhattacharjee from Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), who is also part of the Delhi SWA, states most water bodies that are set to be notified as wetlands in Delhi are currently without an adequate catchment area, or a source of water supply, a problem that will be addressed once they are notified. "We will look at plans for each of them," he said.

Diwan Singh, an environmentalist and convener of the Natural Heritage First, says, "Funding is often not an issue for the smaller water bodies, but once we know exactly how many there are, they can be systematically tracked and revived. Most require efforts where they can be connected to a storm water drain or a source of water that sustains them through the year."

## HT Homage

In memory of our dearest

Shri I. K. Chanana  
15th Aug 1944 - 17th Jan 2017

You are being missed every single moment.  
You will always live in our hearts.  
Guiding & Blessing us.  
Fondly remembered by:  
Geeta Chanana Ruchi & Rajeev  
Seema & Sanjeev Arti & Gautam Loomba  
Kanika, Shireen, Shaheen & Kimaya

In loving memory of  
Monika Sharma  
(03.02.1980-17.01.2016)

Your life was a blessing.  
Your memory a treasure.  
You are loved beyond words and...  
...missed beyond measures.

Fondly Remembered:  
Subhash Chandra & Sneha Prabha Sharma  
Naresh Chander & Poonam Sharma  
Nidhi & Amrinder Singh  
Vidhi & Pankul Punj  
Rishabh & Akansha Sharma

## HT Unforgettable

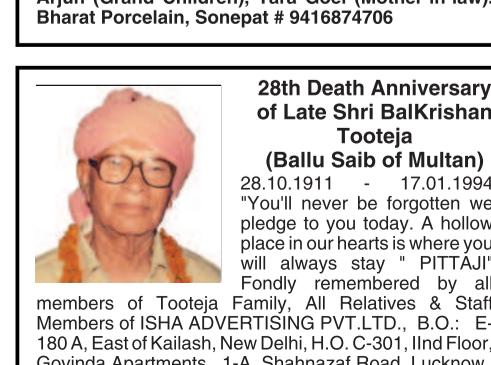


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ओर आज... विशेष रूप से  
डॉ अरुणा चोदारा

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सामाजिकीय, तथा स्वेच्छा योगी।  
खेल और अंदूलीजी का परिजन की  
ओर से जिन्हें तुम्हें आजना था।  
e-mail : drsialok@gmail.com #  
9891357663

In Loving Memory of  
Mrs Archana Goel  
09.04.1955 - 17.01.2015

We all love and remember you with every breath we take, unseen, unheard but always with us in our hearts & thoughts. Your presence is felt each & every moment passes by. May God rest your soul in Peace. Deeply missed by: Ravindra Nath Goel (Husband), Rahul-Viveka, Tarun-Manjari (Sons-Daughter-in-Laws), Rudra, Anika, Arjun (Grand Children), Tara Goel (Mother-In-Law), Bharat Porcelain, Sonepat # 9416874706



28th Death Anniversary  
of Late Shri BalKrishan  
Tooteja

(Baloo Saib of Multan)  
28.10.1911 - 17.01.1994  
"You'll never be forgotten we pledge to you today. A hollow place in our hearts is where you will always stay." PITTAJAI  
Fondly remembered by all  
members of Tooteja Family, All Relatives & Staff  
Members of ISHA ADVERTISING PVT LTD, B.O.: E-180 A, East of Kailash, New Delhi, H.O.C-301, 1Ind Floor, Govinda Apartments, 1-A, Shahnazaf Road, Lucknow

**DELHI JAL BOARD**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SDW)-VI**  
WEST SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT (WSTP), KESHOPUR, OUTER RING ROAD, NEW DELHI- 110018  
Email: esdw06@gmail.com

**PRESS NIT. NO. 16 (2021-22)/EE (SDW) VI**  
(Re-invited)

S. No.	Name of work	Estimate cost	E/Money	Tender Fee	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1.	Deployment of 300 Nos of Septage Cleaning Machines (combination of 150 big and 150 small) from 150 Nos of bidders for Collection, Transportation and Disposal of Septage from unsewered, unauthorised Colonies at designated SPSS/STPs/ISPs of the Delhi Jal Board for a period of 05 years.	1,49,70,78,400/-	310000/-	1500/-	2021-DJB 214839-1 Dt. 16.01.2022	31.01.2022 at 3:00 P.M.

Further details in this regard can be seen at (<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>)  
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)  
Advt. No. J.S.V. 1010(2021-22)

Stop Corona: Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing and Maintain Hygiene

(J.C. Garg  
EE (SDW)VI

**Government of Jammu & Kashmir**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR**  
(Tele-fax No.: 019-2496089, e-mail Id: [xenmhchdk@yahoo.in](mailto:xenmhchdk@yahoo.in))

**(Short-term)**  
**Gist of e-NIT NO.: MHCHD/TS/2021-22/290/e-tendering**  
Dated:- 15.01.2022

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

Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T.Doc. (In rupees)	Time of completion (in days)	AAA	TS. NO.	Ernest Money (in Rs.)
1. Fitting of Radiators with allied works at Central Heating System of District Hospital, Budgam.	2.04	200	10	DHB-1816-19, Dt: 03.01.2022	MHCHD/TS/22, Dt: 01/22	4100

1. The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from 15.01.2022 (1800 hrs).
  2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 16.01.2022 (1000 hrs) to 21.01.2022 (1500 hrs) in two (02) cover.
  3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on 21.01.2022 (17.00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.
- No: MHCHD/TS/9592-98 Dated: 15.01.2022  
DIPK-16797-21
- Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
MHCHD, Srinagar

**The Jammu and Kashmir Bank**  
Supervision, Controls & Audit Department  
Corporate Headquarters  
M.A.Road, Srinagar, Kashmir

**NOTIFICATION**

Due to limited response received, on-line application process for empanelment as Stock Auditors for 3 Financial Years i.e., from FY 2022-23 to FY 2024-25 from intended Chartered / Cost Accountant firms who are interested in conducting the Stock Audit of Inventories, Trade Receivables and Trade creditors of Borrower Accounts maintained with various Business Units of the Bank located in states / UT's across the country, is hereby reopened for a further period of 10 days from January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The application format along with the eligibility criteria for empanelment are available on Bank's Website [www.jkbank.com](http://www.jkbank.com). Applicants can register online by or before January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Hard Copy of registered online application along with the necessary enclosures should reach In-charge, Supervision, Controls & Audit Department, The Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Corporate Headquarters, M. A. Road, Srinagar, Kashmir by or before February 06<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Auditors/Auditing Firms who have successfully registered for empanelment (in response to our notification dated December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021) need not apply afresh. Bank reserves the right not to empanel any firm etc. without assigning any reasons thereof.

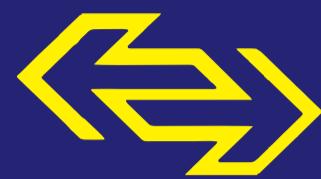
Sd/-  
Vice President  
(Supervision, Control & Audit)  
CHQ

## WESTERN RAILWAY-AHMEDABAD

### CONSTRUCTION OF TWO LANE ROAD OVER BRIDGE (ROB) AND OTHER VARIOUS WORKS

**Dy.Chief Engineer (Construction) II,** Western Railway, Ahmedabad for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites E-Tender for the following work:-  
E-Tender Notice No.: CE/CW/DIV/ROB-48-01. (1) Name of work with its location: Construction of two lane, Road Over Bridge (ROB) between Surendranagar-Chamrali at Km 6266-7 including Road diversion work, approaches etc., dismantling of existing ROB and other misc. works for removal of infringement for Electrification and running of double stack container as MM to Surendranagar-Rajkot doubling project. (2) Approximate Cost of the Work: ₹ 36,79,72,462.00 (3) Earnest money to be deposited: ₹ 19,89,900.00 (4) Competitive period: 12 (Twelve) Months (5) Date & time for submission of bid: Opening of Technical bid: Submission: 10.02.2022 upto 15:00 Hrs. Opening of Tender: 10-02-2022 at 15:30 Hrs. (6) System of Tender: Two Packet System. A Certificate must be submitted by all tenderers as given in Annexure-V Based on which eligibility of tenderers will be evaluated. (7) Website particulars: Notice Board location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office: Office of Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction)

# FOR THE FIRST TIME ON DELHI'S ROADS 100% ELECTRIC & ZERO EMISSION BUSES



**Delhi Government's Pioneering Initiative  
To Combat Air Pollution In Delhi**



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Bus kneeling with ramp for  
differently-abled



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Buttons enabled to ensure  
women's safety



Pink Seats for Ladies

## FLAG-OFF CEREMONY

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



DIP/Shabdardh/D/018/7/21-22



# Avoid needless appeals on arbitration awards: Govt

**Rajeev Jayaswal**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**THE GOVERNMENT DIRECTION TO ITS ARMS AIMS AT AVOIDING PROJECT DELAYS AND COST OVERRUNS IN TERMS OF PENALTY AND INTEREST**

**NEW DELHI:** The government has directed its arms, including state-run firms, not to unnecessarily appeal against every arbitration award without realistic probability of success in order to avoid project delays and cost overruns as often such appeals are lost and the government ends up paying more in terms of interest and penalty, two people aware of the development said.

This is part of the Centre's recent guidelines to implement projects expeditiously and efficiently because public expenditure is key to accelerating growth and creating jobs, they said, requesting anonymity. Like the previous year, the forthcoming budget on February 1 will bank on infrastructure projects to boost the pandemic-hit economy, said one of them working in the finance ministry.

Budget 2021-22 enhanced capital expenditure by 5.4% at ₹5.54 lakh crore. The government is also expecting its ₹11 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) to boost growth. The Covid-19 outbreak

in March 2020, followed by a 68-day nationwide lockdown, saw India's gross domestic product (GDP) shrank 24.4% in the first fiscal quarter ended June 2020, followed by a 7.4% contraction in the next quarter. It, however, saw a V-shaped recovery on the back of a ₹20.97 trillion stimulus package and policy reforms announced since March 2020. A positive 0.5% growth was reported in the third quarter, followed by a 1.6% expansion in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021. The latest official estimates project India's GDP growth at 9.2% in 2021-22.

A second person, working in a public sector company, said the latest guidelines issued earlier this month removed several hurdles in project management

right from conceptualisation of a project to land acquisition and award of a contract. Guidelines allow award of a contract even on the basis of a single bid, provided the process is objective, non-restrictive and price quotes reflect the market value.

"These guidelines are general in nature and framed after about two years of deliberations with various departments and agencies, including CVC (Central Vigilance Commission) and CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India). It aims to execute public projects within the approved cost and time frame, without getting involved in unnecessary legal disputes," the first official said.

There are disputes and litigation with contractors while implementing projects. Instead of resorting to legal recourse, either in a court or an arbitration tribunal, both the parties should resolve disputes through discussion and mediation. Arbitration should be evoked only as the last recourse. And unless sure to win, a routine appeal against the arbitration award should be avoided, the official said.

"It is perceived that at times

appeals are resorted to postpone the issue and shift personal accountability. Such a casual approach has caused more harm to the exchequer because of huge compensation and interest costs in addition to tarnishing the image of the government," the official added.

India's success rate in arbitration under bilateral investment treaty is abysmal, said Prabhakar Ranjan, professor and vice-chairman of Jindal Global Law School, OP Jindal Global University, in an article on "India's poor compliance with investment awards", published in HT on January 13.

"Since 2011, approximately 20 BIT arbitrations have been initiated against India... From the data publicly available, an award has been rendered in nine cases. India has prevailed in three of these cases while losing six," he said, adding that most of the disputes arose because of India's "capricious behaviour" symptomatic of bad governance.

The country's global reputation, belief in rule of law and assets of India's PSUs abroad are all too precious to be sacrificed at the altar of a few million dollars," he said.

**WOMAN TORTURED WITH CIGARETTES, RAPED; HUSBAND AMONG 5 HELD**

**Press Trust of India**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**INDORE:** A 32-year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped and tortured by her husband and four of his friends in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, police said on Sunday, adding that five accused were arrested.

The woman claimed that she was brutalised by her husband and others who performed unnatural sex and also singed her private parts with cigarettes. They also threatened to kill her when she resisted the sexual assault, a police official said quoting the FIR.

The alleged gang-rape occurred at a farmhouse under the Shipra police station area of Indore between November 2019 and October 2021, the officer added.

He said the woman, hailing from Chhattisgarh, got married to an Indore-based man after meeting him on a matrimonial site. However, the man is already married, the police sub-inspector said.

The complainant told the police she escaped from the farmhouse and travelled to her parent's home in Chhattisgarh. But one of the accused men followed her there intending to harm her, the officer added.

Five men, including the victim's husband, were booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and were arrested from various areas of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the officer said, adding further probe is on.

**THE GANG RAPE TOOK PLACE IN INDORE BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2019 AND OCTOBER 2021, SAID POLICE**

{ INTERVIEW } BHUPENDER YADAV AND ILA PATNAIK

## 'BJP has worked towards ending vote bank politics'

**Smriti Kak Ramachandran**

letters@hindustantimes.com

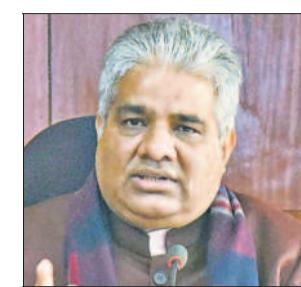
**NEW DELHI:** A Union minister and an economist have co-authored a book tracing the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party. In The Rise of the BJP, The Making of the Largest Political Party, Bhupender Yadav, Union minister for environment, forests and climate change and labour and employment along with Ila Patnaik, professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy document the origins of the party, its journey from having two MPs to becoming the single largest party that won back-to-back elections. In an interview, the authors speak about the growth of the party that boasts of the largest membership base and its governance model. Edited excerpts:

**What brought the two of you together to author a book about the BJP?**

BY: In 2019, the two of us had a chat about the curiosity among people regarding the BJP and the need to document the party's journey. We also discussed how it would be interesting to look at it both from the political and economic philosophy points of view. When a party is in power its governance model also reflects its economic policy. So we decided to write the book together.

IP: After the 2019 polls I had many questions about the role the party and the government policies had played and what was the interaction. He was quite open in discussing how the party and the government had worked together to win the elections. I suggested he write a book and he agreed.

**Your book details the BJP's social engineering in Uttar Pradesh in 2017. The recent exit of OBC leaders on the**



cusp of elections has created a perception that the BJP might have to work harder to retain the support of the castes that form the basis of this social engineering.

BY: A few incidents of people exiting the party fold during a larger political exercise do not indicate that the whole movement is under a cloud. If you look at the ticket distribution for the first few phases, the party has given preference to candidates who come from SC and OBC communities. BJP's social justice formula does not pit one community against the other. It is genuinely the most inclusive system. We believe in empowering each individual to empower India. We work hard for all sections.

**Will the Dalits, traditionally considered a vote bank of the BSP, vote for the BJP?**

BY: We will cross our tally of 2017. CM Yogji Adityanath has served all sections of society during the last five years. The way Yogji has worked to give shape to PM Narendra Modi's vision for UP's growth by ensuring efficient delivery of people-centric schemes, especially the non-discriminatory way in which money reached the targeted beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer and a corruption-free administration, will make sure people repose their faith in the party. I feel the

BJP will greatly benefit from giving transparent governance, fair distribution and equal treatment. The BJP government has worked towards ending vote bank politics by ensuring development for all.

There has been criticism of some of the statements of the UP CM and there is a feeling that the party is increasingly opting for a narrative based on religious polarisation. Is the party unsure of how it will be measured on governance?

BY: There is a tendency in some sections to brand the BJP as communal. We have been accused of it since the Jana Sangh days. The same sections don't tell you that both Jana Sangh and BJP ran governments that worked for all sections. We continue to work for cultural nationalism. If you read the book many of these biases will be broken.

**What about the delay in action in the Dharm Sandas case and the allegation that the party is fostering Hindutva?**

BY: I don't respond to allegations. India is a functional democracy. The government works in a lawful manner for the benefit of all. Our institutions offer enough checks and balances to ensure nobody can take the law into their hands.

## 144-year-old Secunderabad Club gutted in massive fire

**Srinivasa Rao Apparasu**

letters@hindustantimes.com



The blaze at the Secunderabad Gymkhana Club. ANI

### BENGAL FAKE NOTE CASE: ABSCONDING TRAFFICKER HELD

**MALDA:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested an absconding person who was allegedly involved in a case of smuggling fake Indian currency notes from Bangladesh, an official said on Sunday.

In a joint operation with the Border Security Force (BSF), NIA arrested one Aladu from his native place in West Bengal's Malda district.

The case was registered in September 2019 by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) unit in Malda following the seizure of high-quality fake Indian currency notes (FICNs), with a face value ₹1,99,000, from an accused, an official of the investigation agency said.

Subsequently, the NIA re-registered the case and took up the probe in October 2019. PTI

gas cylinders are learnt to have exploded. "The club was closed on Saturday... The fire accident might have happened due to short circuit," the official said.

Anuradha Reddy, a member of the Secunderabad Club, told HT

that she heard a deafening sound in the early hours. "The club is very close to my residence. I thought there was some accident," Reddy, who is also convenor of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, said.

### 8-year-old girl raped, strangled to death in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri by neighbour

**SHIVPURI:** An eight-year-old girl was raped and strangled to death allegedly by her neighbour in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district, police said on Sunday. "The girl's went missing from a fair. Her body was found in a wheat container. The accused has been charged under IPC and POCSO Act provisions and efforts are on to nab him, he said.

### Kashmir Press Club locked down; Editors Guild condemns 'coup', slams J&K administration

**SRINAGAR:** The Editors Guild of India (EGI) and Mumbai Press Club (MPC) on Sunday came out in support of the elected management of Kashmir Press Club (KPC), which was locked down, a day after a small group of media persons flanked by police took over the club. The EGI termed it a "coup" and slammed the Jammu & Kashmir administration.

### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER P.W.D., Division Budni, Distt. - SEHORE (M.P.)

Main ROAD Budni, Distt - SEHORE, Tel.No. : 07564-235305

Date 10.01.2022

#### Notice Invite Tender

Online Tenders for below-mentioned work have been processed on E-Procurement system of Public Works Department on the Portal <https://mptenders.gov.in>. Tenders details are as below :-

System Tender ID	Name of the work	PAC (In Rs. lacs)	Earnest money deposit (In Rs.)	Time Allowed	Call	EMD & Tender Related Other Document
1	2	3	4	6	7	8
2022_PWDRB_177715_1	Construction of Tiladiya to Borkhedi Road Length 3.80 Km.	301.30	301300.00	10 Month Including rainy season	II	
2022_PWDRB_177734_1	Construction of Rala Cheech Road to Borkhedi Road Length 2.30 Km.	274.74	274740.00	10 Month Including rainy season	II	
2022_PWDRB_177742_1	Construction of Beejia to Avas Colony Including Upto Main Road Beejia (Sehore - Nasrullaganj Road) Road Length 2.00 Km.	270.35	270350.00	09 Month Including rainy season	I	
2022_PWDRB_177951_1	Construction of Kalyakhedi to Nayagaon Road Length 2.80 Km.	438.20	438200.00	12 Month Including rainy season	II	All Tender related documents and E.M.D. will be accepted online only
2022_PWDRB_177952_1	Construction of Ranipura Main Road to Bajrang Mandir Road Length 2.00 Km.	360.90	360900.00	10 Month Including rainy season	II	
2022_PWDRB_177956_1	Construction of Cheech Approach Road Length 2.00 Km.	239.57	239570.00	09 Month Including rainy season	II	
2022_PWDRB_177961_1	Construction of Nasrullaganj Kabristan to Sothiya (Old Village) Road Length 2.30 Km.	273.97	273970.00	09 Month Including rainy season	II	
2022_PWDRB_177983_1	Construction of Internal Road In Village Mohai Tehsil Nasrullaganj Road Length 1.60 Km.	126.85	126850.00	08 Month Including rainy season	II	
2022_PWDRB_177991_1	Construction of Nipaniya to Pipalkota Road Length 1.60 Km.	212.35	212350.00	08 Month Including rainy season	II	
<b>Maximum Amount</b>						<b>491.58 Lakhs</b>

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment. The last date & time for purchase of Document (**Document Download/Sale End Date**) on line is Dated 27-01-2022 up to (17:30). Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

With Reference to the order of Engineer-in-Chief PWD Bhopal vide Letter No. 401/SA/E-tendering/09/1088/Bhopal, Dated 05/11/2020 in which All Tender related documents and E.M.D. will be accepted online only.

Executive Engineer  
P.W.D. Division Budni (M.P.)  
07564-235305

G-21456/21 टीका के दो रुपए पूर्ण, कोरिड से सुरक्षा सम्पूर्ण

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HOW CONCERNED  
SHOULD WE BE ABOUT  
INDIA'S WEALTH DRAIN?**

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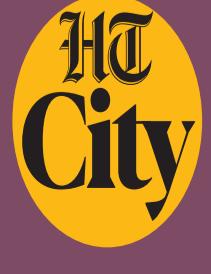
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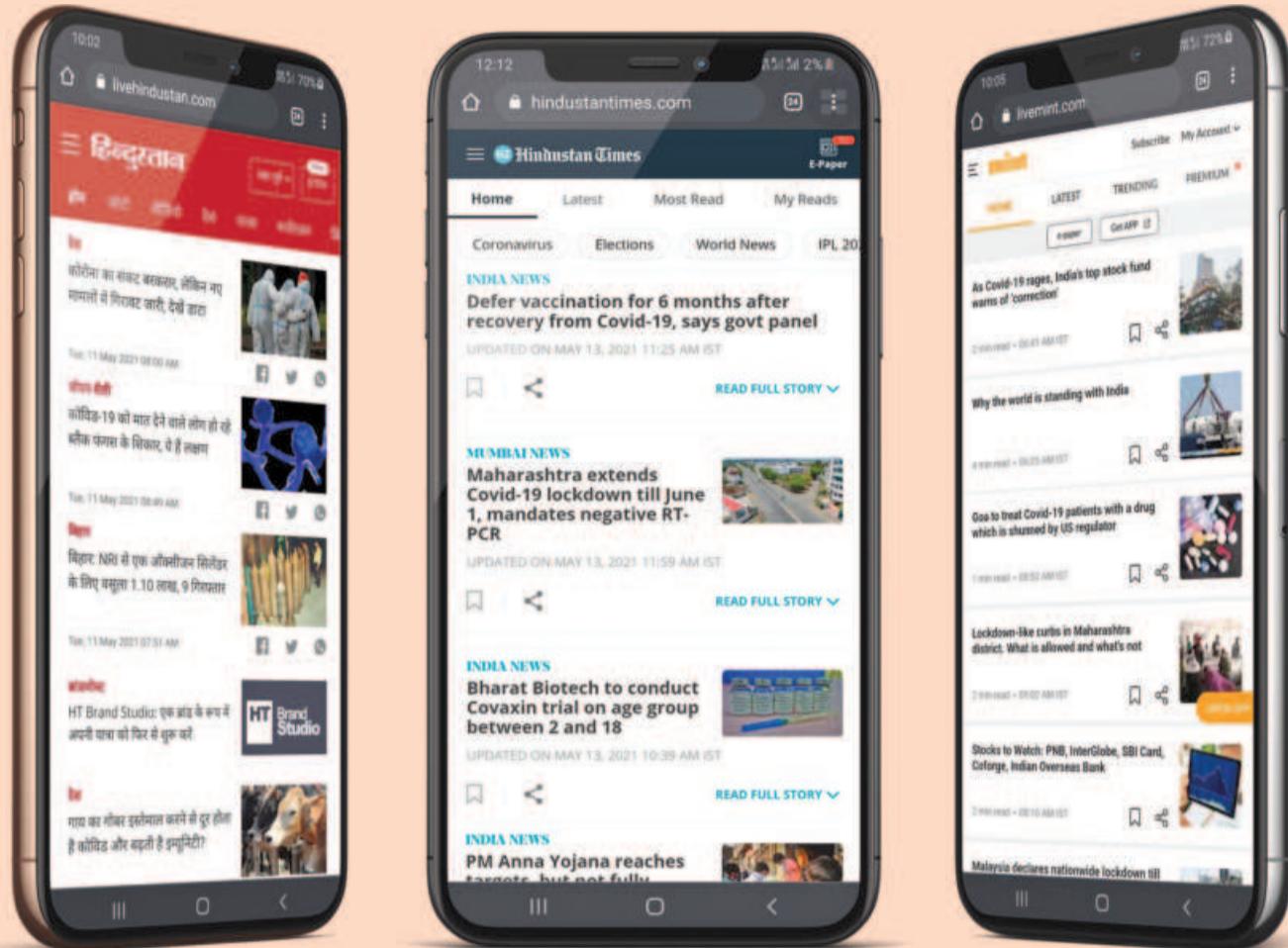
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Radio - RAM (Avg. Week 16-21 2021), IRS Q4 2019 (Non-RAM Markets)  
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# Vaccination added strength to India's Covid battle: Modi

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** India's vaccination drive against Covid-19 has added great strength to the fight against the pandemic and has resulted in saving lives and protecting livelihoods, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, as the programme completed one year.

A total of a total of around 1.57 billion doses have been administered across the country to nearly 908 million people during this period, according to government data.

Lauding the exceptional role of doctors, nurses and healthcare workers, Modi said: "I salute each and every individual who is associated with the vaccination drive."

"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," he said.

Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in a tweet, said that India crossed the landmark milestone of administering 100 million vaccine doses on April 1 last year.

"As a result of the country's solidarity and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment during the Corona crisis that the country not only manufactured a vaccine but also inoculated a large part of the population in a very short time. This one year of vaccination campaign shows India's resolve," he said in another tweet.

Union minister Amit Shah also lauded the leadership and determination of the Prime Minister and the continuous efforts of the people in the country.

"Leadership and determination of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the continuous efforts of the people in India have proved that if the government and the people of a country unite to achieve a common goal, then the country can conquer every challenge and make the impossible possible," he tweeted.

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said: "Earlier, about 30-40% people needed to be admitted when they got infected, but now, only 3-4% people need to be admitted, this has been possible only through vaccination... I'm proud that over 107.2 million Covid-19 doses were inoculated in the state till

Centre launches stamp to mark vaccination anniv

**NEW DELHI:** India released a commemorative postal stamp on Covid-19 vaccination on Sunday to mark the first anniversary of the country's national immunization programme against the virus. The stamp shows a health worker inoculating a senior citizen with Covaxin.

"This stamp signifies the remarkable work done by our front line health care workers and scientific community across the country in protecting the people against the Covid pandemic," health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said while releasing the stamp. "This is a historic occasion for us. Within a span of one year, we have administered more than 156 crore doses. Our vaccination programme is a role model for the global community." India has encountered various challenges along the journey, but it is the resolve and dedication of more than 156 crore people that we could overcome every challenge," he said. HT

## COVID TRACKER

37,376,320

TOTAL COVID CASES

259,695 NEW CASES ON SUNDAY

1,567,615,454

TOTAL DOSES ADMINISTERED

1,305,344 ON SUNDAY

251,703,260 People who have got one dose

655,796,458 People who have got both doses

4,319,278 People who have received precautionary dose



Health care workers administer the third dose of Covid-19 vaccine to frontline workers at Government JP Hospital, Bhopal on Sunday.

## 83.5% of hospital beds vacant: Data

A tally compiled by HT covering 12 regions across the country show that on an average, 83.5% Covid hospital beds are currently lying vacant.

	OCCUPIED	TOTAL CAPACITY	% BEDS VACANT
Rajasthan	296	50,000	99.40%
Madhya Pradesh	900	68,309	98.70%
Uttarakhand	215	7,037	96.90%
Haryana	625	19,855	96.90%
Karnataka	1,676	44,457	96.20%
Himachal Pradesh	134	3,341	96.00%
Goa	83	1,250	93.40%
Jammu and Kashmir	337	4,794	93.00%
Tamil Nadu	8,018	75,742	89.40%
Delhi	2,711	15,499	82.50%
Mumbai	6,789	38,127	82.20%
Kerala	45,442	78,213	41.90%

## Daytime temp plunge to persist in northwest

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Bitter cold continued to affect several parts of northwest India on Sunday with most parts of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, parts of Madhya Pradesh, east and northwest Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh recording cold day to severe cold day conditions, when day temperatures are significantly low.

Cold day to severe cold day conditions in some isolated pockets are likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan over the next two days and over East Uttar Pradesh during the next three days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

Most parts of northwest India recorded significantly low day temperatures (see box) but above normal night or minimum temperatures on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

"This is mainly happening because an intense western disturbance had passed last week from over northwest India. After a western disturbance passes, cold northerly winds bring extremely cold air from the Himalayas to this region. These chilly winds bring down day temperatures. These conditions will continue till Monday at least," said M Mohapatra, director general, IMD.

Dense to very dense fog also prevailed in some pockets over Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and east Uttar Pradesh and isolated pockets over Jammu, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Assam.

On Sunday early morning, Bikaner recorded zero visibility; Churu, Ajmer and Sagar 25 m each; Udaipur 50 m; Lucknow 100m; Kota, Ratlam, Damoh, Nowrang and Dhubri 200 m each; in Delhi Palam and Safdarjung reported 1,000 m and 500 m.

A cyclonic circulation is lying over east and central Arabian Sea and adjoining Konkan coast in lower tropospheric levels. A relatively feeble western disturbance

is presently affecting the Jammu and Kashmir region. A fresh western disturbance is likely to affect the Western Himalayan region from Tuesday and another Western Disturbance is likely to affect northwest India from January 21. The western disturbance affecting on January 21 is expected to bring scattered rainfall to northwestern plains also.

Scattered light to moderate rainfall is likely over Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on Sunday and Monday and over Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe in the next three days.

## Tracking mercury dip

Place	Max temp	Deviation from normal	Min temp
Amritsar	13.8°C	4°C below	8.4°C
Bhatinda	12.2°C	8°C below	6.2°C
Chandigarh	13.6°C	7°C below	8.2°C
Rohtak	11.9°C	8°C below	7.8°C
Hisar	13.6°C	7°C below	6.8°C
Lucknow	15.6°C	6°C below	6.2°C
Kanpur	17.8°C	5°C below	4.8°C

\*Temperatures recorded on Saturday

## Experts laud vaccination pace, say hesitancy must be targeted

Rhythma Kaul

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** In the one year that India started its immunisation drive against Covid-19, the rate of inoculation has been quite satisfactory as the country has administered 1.57 billion doses to nearly 908 million people, experts said.

"It is a great achievement that the number of vaccine doses that India has already administered is more than the population of several countries in the world," said VK Paul, member (health), Niti Aayog. "It has been achieved within a year of having started the national Covid immunisation drive, and that too powered by two made-in-India vaccines."

India's world's largest vaccine maker, has crossed several milestones in its campaign to fully inoculate its population. For instance, on September 17 last year, close to 2.5 crore vaccine doses were administered across the country, highlighting the single-day vaccine administration capacity of states when there is adequate supply of vaccines.

"It is commendable that Covid immunisation picked up speed from August," said K Srinath Reddy, founder of the Public Health Foundation of India.

The technological backbone of the Covid vaccine delivery system has been CoWIN, which was created by upgrading an earlier digital platform used for India's universal immunization program based on an electronic vaccine intelligence network (eVIN).

"CoWIN is one of the robust

IT systems that is capable of large-scale implementation of the programme, and has been working successfully," said RS Sharma, chief executive officer at the National Health Authority, an autonomous body that supervises the functioning of CoWIN.

India's focus will now be on covering the last mile, and also on providing vaccines to other countries in need, experts said.

"Last mile of the target is always most difficult to achieve, especially when it comes to immunisation, as those that are left could not be coming forward due to vaccine hesitancy," said Dilip Mavalankar, director, Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar.

"The government will have to aggressively scale up the vaccination drive."

IT systems that is capable of large-scale implementation of the programme, and has been working successfully," said RS Sharma, chief executive officer at the National Health Authority, an autonomous body that supervises the functioning of CoWIN.

Experts noted that while there has been a clear drop in infections and positivity rate in the city over the past week, they warned that there may be other factors at play such as the role of home-testing kits that may be underplaying the real numbers of the country.

"It is too soon to tell if the peak has passed," said Dr Harish Chafle, senior consultant, pulmonology and critical care at Global Hospitals.

"The lower number of cases can also be attributed to too many people taking tests at home, and not reporting it to the civic body."

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TOLL IN NALANDA HOOCH TRAGEDY RISES TO 13, TWO LOSE EYESIGHT

Subhash Pathak

letters@hindustantimes.com

**PATNA:** The death toll in the Nalanda hooch tragedy on Sunday rose to 13, prompting the Bihar government to form a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the matter, officials said.

While six people are undergoing treatment at various government and private hospitals, two of them appeared to have lost their eyesight. More than 30 people have been arrested so far, the officials said.

According to Patna inspector general Rakesh Rath, the station house officer (SHO) of Soharsai police station, under whose jurisdiction the incident occurred, has been suspended.

Nalanda superintendent of police Ashok Mishra confirmed that 13 people have so far died in the incident which took place on Friday evening. All the deceased are residents of Chhoti Palar and Pahar Tali under Soharsai police station, he said.

"To probe the incident, an SIT led by Sadar deputy superintendent of police and comprising Soharsai police station in-charge and circle inspector, has been constituted to search for those responsible for the tragedy," Mishra said.

"The postmortem reports of all the deceased are awaited to know the exact cause of the deaths," he added.

The bodies of eight of the deceased were handed over to family members after post mortem, police said.

Nalanda district magistrate Shashank Subhankar said: "On the basis of the doctors' report, it seems all the deaths were attributed to the consumption of spurious liquor. Thirty-four people, who are related to the tragedy, have been arrested so far."

This is the seventh incident of hooch tragedy in Bihar in the past six months, claiming lives of more than 40 people, even as the state has been under total prohibition since April 2016.

{ MAMATA BANERJEE } WEST BENGAL CM

Profoundly shocked and hurt by the decision of the Government of India to abruptly exclude the proposed tableau of Bengal from the ensuing Jan 26 parade.

H



Yati Narsinghanand

**DEHRADUN:** A day after he was arrested for alleged hate speeches at a Haridwar event last month, seer Yati Narsinghanand was on Sunday booked for allegedly assaulting a group of journalists on Saturday, Uttarakhand Police said on Sunday.

According to the police, the seer and his followers were threatening the journalists during an interview. The journalist also alleged that he and his colleagues were threatened with dire consequences, inspector Rakendra Kathait said.

The seer, meanwhile, was sent to 14-day judicial custody in connection with the hate speeches he made at a three-day-long Dharm Sansad on December 19.

Narsinghanand is the sect chief of the influential Juna Akhada, and one of the five accused named in the FIR.

Besides him, Jitendra Narayan Tyagi, former Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board chairman who until last month went by the name



## OPINION

The  
**Hindustan Times**  
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

{ OUR TAKE }

## ECI extends the moratorium

This is a welcome move. Safeguarding public health must be prioritised over campaigning

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has extended by a week the moratorium on events, rallies and roadshows by political parties in five poll-bound states. The poll watchdog has, however, made a concession to the parties, allowing indoor meetings with a maximum of 300 people or 50% of the capacity of the hall, as per guidelines prescribed by the disaster management authorities of the respective states. ECI put the onus of following Covid-19 norms and the code of conduct on political parties, and said fresh instructions on campaigning will be issued after a review on January 22. The decision was taken after ECI held separate virtual meetings with the health ministry, and the chief secretaries, health secretaries and chief electoral officers of the five states.

With Covid cases surging across the country, this is a welcome move. Elections in politically crucial Uttar Pradesh are less than a month away and politicians are eager to canvas for votes. Political activity has also picked up, with parties starting to declare candidates and leaders hurling jibes at each other. But this cannot be prioritised over the urgent need to safeguard public health. The second wave of infections last year, and the five-state elections that coincided with it, taught the country that unmasked rallies and cramped political meetings can quickly become superspreader events. Both ECI and political parties have been more responsible this time around, but continued vigil is required to ensure that the Omicron variant doesn't wreak havoc on the countryside and burden medical infrastructure.

As India enters the home stretch of the election season, the focus must be on prompt and uniform action against any violator regardless of political consideration. Indoor meetings can be risky, and, therefore, authorities should monitor such events to ensure Covid norms are strictly followed, the audience and speakers masked, the premises sanitised and adequate distance maintained. If outdoor rallies are allowed at some point — and large gatherings should only be permitted once Covid-19 cases are under control — they need to adhere to the protocols as well. For any decision on relaxing campaign restrictions, ECI needs hard data and scientific expertise. The five states, therefore, cannot let up on testing and Covid-19 control measures. An event by the Samajwadi Party last week showed that monitoring by local authorities can be far more effective. No slackening can be permitted in the fight to overcome the third wave.

## Forests: The good news and bad news

Last week, the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change released the *India State of Forest Report 2021* (ISFR-2021), by the Forest Survey of India. According to ISFR-2021, the total forest and tree cover is 80.9 million hectares — 24.62% of the geographical area of India. Compared to the 2019 assessment, there has been an increase of 2,261 sq km in the total forest area and tree cover.

While this is welcome news, there are some points of concern. One, India is not adding to the dense forest (with tree canopy density of 70% or above) and the country has more forest cover with tree canopy density in the range of 10% to 40%. Two, the Northeastern states have lost 1,020 sq km of forest in the last two years and there has been a decadal decline in forest cover across the 52 tiger reserves and the lion conservation area (Gir). Three, there has been an increase in forest loss in the Himalayan states. Four, India reported 345,989 forest fires (November 2020-June 2021), the highest recorded for this period. For the first time, ISFR maps the impact of the climate crisis on forests and estimates that by 2030, 45%-64% of Indian forests will be affected by it.

Forests are the biggest terrestrial carbon reservoirs, but become a source of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases if they are destroyed. As India mulls changes to the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, to accommodate development projects, the report provides a picture of the challenges, and what could be the impact of destroying pristine forests that are critical to meet India's Nationally Determined Contributions on creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

## Covid-19: The perils of the digital divide

Digital education poses many challenges, which are psychological, socio-economic, and gendered. To ensure inclusive and wholesome education, schools must reopen

In recent years, several cross-currents impacted by the communications revolution, the mushrooming of social media platforms and the spread of the pandemic in its various manifestations, have affected lifestyles at all levels. During the ongoing pandemic, online activity allows for an alternative way of living, working and providing goods and services. While we extol the virtues of digital platforms, we lose sight of the India that is deprived and is feeling isolated. Connectivity is largely for those already connected and far removed from those who feel disconnected.

The digital divide has affected our children the most. Education in the digital mode poses several challenges. In this context, it is important to understand what a classroom space means for a child. It is not meant only to test the child's memory or performance in examinations, but has a far more pivotal role to play in the child's upbringing.

That space allows for opportunities and dialogue to appreciate the wealth of diversity the classroom represents.

The values of life, important to the child's onward journey, are to be learned through discourses in that social space where the teacher guides. An absence of such interactions creates loneliness and even depression.

Learning away from the classroom deprives the child of the space needed for his essential development needs. A class is not just a space for transmission of knowledge, but is transformational in ways other than the accumulation of knowledge. It allows for bonding and learning from others.

These bonds, if nurtured, have societal implications. It is a space where the student questions and articulates freely. It allows the students to share knowledge fundamental to the learning process. All these are absent in the virtual space.

Literacy and education are two different concepts. Literacy involves the basic skills to learn. Education requires the wherewithal to become responsible members of society. Digital education may make us literate but may not ensure that our children grow up educated.

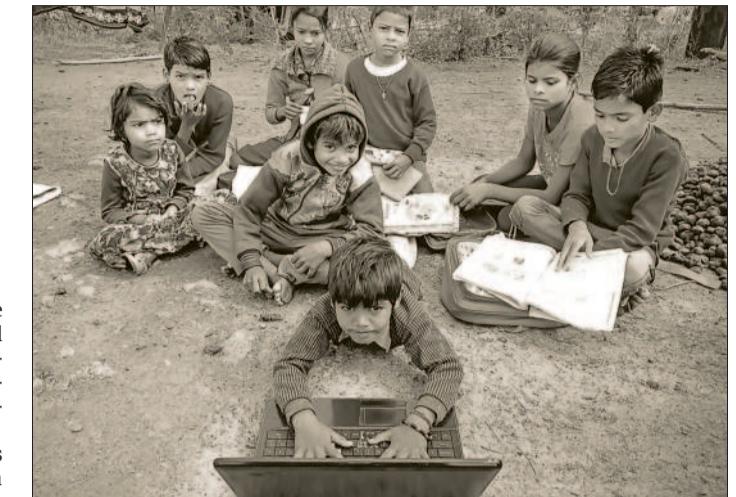
Most of our children have lost years of schooling, deprived of interactions in the classroom, and missed out on the guidance of their teachers. A large majority had little access to the internet, and without smartphones, could neither access data nor connect with their schools. Schools and colleges across the country have been shut since the end of March 2020 with the imposition of the

nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Many schools and colleges are yet to reopen fully. Meanwhile, online classes and examinations have become increasingly common.

The push towards online classes and the use of digital technology in primary, secondary and higher education predates the pandemic. But it has garnered greater attention due to pandemic-induced curbs on physical meetings and classes. While the National Education Policy (July, 2020) projected digital learning as the game changer and encouraged its adoption, the policy unwittingly fuels the digital divide because of a lack of digital infrastructure and access to technology devices (the internet): 27% of children do not have access to smartphones and laptops to attend classes in virtual mode (NCERT 2020); 84% of teachers reported facing challenges in delivering education digitally with close to

half of them facing issues related to the internet (Oxfam, 2020). This digital divide leaves around 80% of our children outside the digital learning process.

This digital divide has also impacted our girl students adversely, although this gender discrimination has not been fully assessed. This can lead to higher risk of girls permanently dropping out of school. Considering our traditional biases, families possessing a single smartphone are likely to prefer their sons to access



The complexity of access to education must be understood in the context of its impact on the marginalised

SHUTTERSTOCK

digital classes.

The complexity of access to education must also be understood in the context of its impact on the marginalised.

For example, only 12% of Scheduled Tribes, 16% of Scheduled Castes, 22% of Other Backward Classes have access to the internet. The figure for general category students is 39% (NSSO Education Survey 2017-18).

This reflects the inequality in distribution of digital technology across social groups. According to the U-DISE (Unified District Information System for Education), only 35.1% government schools have access to functional computers (2016-17).

Overall, the percentage of schools with functional computers is, in fact, down from 42.1% (2012-13) to 36.8% (2016-17).

Obviously, the government has failed to digitally equip the new schools established. So much for its digital revolution.

Oversubscription on technology and online programmes is both impractical and unproductive. That 80% of children from marginalised backgrounds would even be excluded from the limited benefits of learning

through digital mode is evident from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Knowledge, not skills, can be acquired digitally. Experiments in the lab are needed for physics and chemistry. We can't produce engineers with knowledge about machines, without the skill to design and operate them. Knowledge can be delivered and learned. Skill needs experimentation and experience, which cannot be delivered online. Online education producing graduates without skills impacts employability, which is why only one-fourth of engineers in India are truly employable.

We need to restore the classrooms as soon as possible. Online learning can never be a substitute. It can enable students to access information. While online learning should not be discarded altogether, its benefits should be availed within the environment of the classroom. That is where children blossom and discover themselves.

Kapil Sibal is a former Union Cabinet minister  
The views expressed are personal

{ STRAIGHTFORWARD }

Shashi Shekhar



## In UP 2022, it's back to Mandal vs Kamandal

The battle for Uttar Pradesh (UP) has thrown up unforeseen twists and turns. The coalition led by Samajwadi Party (SP) leader, Akhilesh Yadav, has now taken on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) head on, and brings back to mind the old Mandal versus Kamandal battle.

Chief minister (CM), Yogi Adityanath, contesting from Gorakhpur, is trying to propagate the message that the saffron party should be given credit for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Earlier, deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya added to the BJP's religio-political mix by raising the issue of Mathura. Later, the CM joined in asking whether Mathura could be left out if a grand temple could be built in Ayodhya and the Vishwanath corridor in Kashi was opened by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi himself.

The message is clear, the BJP is going into the election on a plank largely comprising religion and development.

Official figures show that to date 4.3 million poor people have been given houses in UP; 150 million are getting five kg extra foodgrain per unit per month. The BJP has promised 450,000 full-time jobs and 350,000 contractual jobs; 2.5 million people have also been given jobs under the One District One Product scheme. Under the Saubhagya scheme, 14.1 million houses have been given free electricity connections and 16.7 million have got free gas connections. The state government claims that arrears of ₹1.5 lakh crore have been paid to sugarcane farmers so far.

But is this enough?

The farmers' movement is a new factor in the political mix. When the PM announced the repeal of the three farm laws, the farmers and the Opposition felt that they could take advantage of related issues like inflation and unemployment. The Opposition has been stressing that the employment figures given by the government are inaccurate. This has led to a new electoral narrative taking shape.



The farm movement and the defections have changed the political narrative. If the backward castes weigh in with Akhilesh, he has a fighting chance to win

ANI

No one should make the mistake of assuming that the BJP will not be able to form the next government. With the CM's clean reputation, the backing of the PM, a well-oiled organisational machine and abundant resources, the party is in a fairly advantageous position. But, it has to work to keep its house in order.

The renowned poet Jigar Moradabadi once wrote about *Ishq* (love). *Ik aag ka daria hai aur doob ke jana hai* (it is a river of fire and you have to drown to find it). Politicians know this only too well come election time.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan Times  
The views expressed are personal

{ SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN } CHIEF SCIENTIST, WHO



COVAX was formulated as the solution for equitable vaccine distribution globally. We have to work hard in the coming months to vaccinate populations everywhere.



WHO

SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN

CHIEF SCIENTIST, WHO

WHO

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RAJASTHAN GOVT  
TO RECOMMEND  
CBI PROBE INTO  
ALWAR GIRL'S CASE

Sachin Saini

letters@hindustantimes.com

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan government on Sunday decided to recommend handing over probe into the case of a mentally disabled girl, who was found bleeding and in a distressed state on a bridge in Rajasthan's Alwar district, to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The decision was taken following a high-level meeting chaired by chief minister Ashok Gehlot, the release issued by the CM's office said, adding that the government will send the recommendation to the Centre for a CBI probe into the case at the earliest. On Saturday, Gehlot said the state government was open to getting the matter probed by a police officer from outside Alwar, Crime Branch, Special Operations Group or CBI according to the wish of the girl's family.

The 14-year-old girl was found in a distressed state with injuries to her private parts on a bridge near Tijara Fatah on the night of January 11 in Alwar.

The police on Friday said the girl's medical report ruled out apprehensions of rape, but they are yet to receive the FSL report for confirmation. "The medical report has already clarified that the minor was not raped, now the FSL report will lead to the final conclusion."

## MP plans public safety law to give more power to police

Shruti Tomar

letters@hindustantimes.com

**BHOPAL:** The Madhya Pradesh government will introduce in the upcoming budget session of the assembly a legislation that makes licences mandatory for any private establishment visited by 100 or more people every day to ensure that it is following prescribed safety norms, officials from the state's home department said.

According to the draft of the Public Safety Bill, the onus of safety of visitors will lie with the management of such commercial, industrial, religious, medical, and educational establishments. The bill also gives police right to enter such establishments at any time to inspect if safety norms are being adhered to.

"The private establishment will have to take the licence of public safety from local municipal corporations and municipalities. The licence will be mandatory for the establishments visited by a large number of people daily. The licence will be given after ensuring that all safety measures have been implemented," said an official involved with preparing the draft. The bill lists out several safety measures.

"In the measures, the establishment has to install hand-held metal detectors, door frame metal detectors, and high-reso-

### THE BILL MANDATES LICENCES FOR PVT ESTABLISHMENTS VISITED BY 100 OR MORE PEOPLE TO ENSURE THEY ARE FOLLOWING SAFETY NORMS

lution cameras. It has to keep the recording of closed-circuit television surveillance cameras for 30 days," said a second official.

The bill also gives power to the police to access CCTV footage in case of a crime at such establishments.

"MP Police can inspect the establishment at any time and can ask for recordings for the investigation of a case. Under this bill, the establishment can't refuse to share the video footages," said the first official.

It will have a provision of fines for violation of safety norms, and also for failing to procure a licence.

Rajesh Rajora, additional chief secretary, MP home department, said, "The state government's priority is to strengthen the security of people and to make the public place safer. The draft of Public Security bill is ready and after approval of cabinet, it will be tabled in the budget session of the assembly." The budget ses-

sion of the state's legislature will begin next month.

Once enacted, Madhya Pradesh will become the second state in the country after Andhra Pradesh to have such a law, Rajora added. The Andhra Pradesh Public Safety (Measures) Enforcement Act came into force in August 2013 and has a provision of fine up to ₹10,000 for non-compliance of rules.

Last year, Bhopal Police launched an app to get access recorded footage from CCTVs installed at private hospitals, petrol pumps, and malls. However, police are yet to evaluate the success of this app.

Experts said the implementation of the new legislation will be key to get the desired outcome.

"MP has so many laws from fire safety to environment clearances but the implementation is very bad. With introduction of new law, the implementation and monitoring are also necessary," said Praveen Bhagat, an expert of urban development programmes.

Bhopal Sarfa Association president Naresh Agrawal said, "Instead of asking for certification or license from establishment, the state should involve different business associations or market association. To give access of footfall and regular visitor of business like jewellery shops can create trouble for people."

## India-Russia naval exercise in Arabian Sea



The Indian Navy's indigenously designed and built guided missile destroyer, INS Kochi, in an exercise with Russian Federation Navy's RFS Admiral Tributs in the Arabian Sea.

## SULLI DEALS APP CREATOR'S BAIL PLEA REJECTED

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi court has dismissed the bail plea of Sulli Deals app creator Aumkareshwar Thakur, saying that granting him relief at this juncture will prejudice a fair investigation.

In July 2021, the app was made on GitHub platform to auction Muslim women and the matter came to light when the Delhi Police took suo motu cognisance.

Metropolitan Magistrate Vasundhra Chhaunkar passed the order on Saturday. The police told the court that the accused is a member of 'Trade Mahasabha' and created the app on GitHub.

"...the arguments of the counsel for the accused do not hold water as certainly the women of Muslim community only have been targeted by posting their pictures for auction," the court held.

## GAIL marketing director arrested in graft case

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested ES Ranganathan, director (marketing) of state-run gas corporation GAIL, in a bribery case of over ₹50 lakh for allegedly giving discounts to private companies buying petrochemical products marketed by the firm, the agency said on Sunday.

The agency has busted an

### RANGANATHAN WAS COLLECTING BRIBES FROM PROSPECTIVE BENEFICIARIES OF DISCOUNTS TO PVT FIRMS, SAYS CBI

people in the case on Saturday. During the searches conducted at eight locations in Delhi-NCR, including Ranganathan's office at Bhikaji Kama Place in Delhi and his residence in Sector 62, Noida, the agency recovered ₹1.29 crore in cash, gold jewellery and other valuables (with an approximate value of ₹1.25 crore), CBI spokesperson RC Joshi said.

So far, ₹2.13 crore in cash has been recovered in the case.

The agency said Ranganathan

Uttarakhand Public Financial Management Strengthening Project 91 Race Course, Near Police Line, Dehradun Pin 248001, Uttarakhand Tel: 0135- 4079338 (O), Mob: 9358119541, E-mail: ukpfrmwb@gmail.com			
Corrigendum-1 Extension of Date, REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST, (Consulting Services-Firm Selection)			
Uttarakhand Public Financial Management Strengthening Project (UKPFMS) has published the advertised dated 27.12.2021 in Hindustan Times and Economics times for inviting the EOI for the following Consultancies under this project:			
S. N. Consultancy Services Earlier Date and Time of Submission Extended Date and Time for Submission			
1	Consultancy service for Financial Management Support to Urban Local Bodies for providing human resources in the field of accounting with expertise in training and accounting software for preparation of opening and closing of accounts for three years including preparation of annual financial statements as defined in UMAAM -21, training and handholding support and support in implementing Municipal Accounting Software (MAS) Package 1 to 7	17 January 2022 by 17:00 Hrs	31 January 2022 by 17:00 Hrs
2	Consultancy Services for Developing Business plan and financial structuring package for Garhwali Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd (GMVN) (IN-CTRAFA- 269278 -CS-QCRs).	17 January 2022 by 17:00 Hrs	31 January 2022 by 17:00 Hrs
Other terms and conditions will same. PROJECT DIRECTOR UKPFMS			

OFFICE OF THE ADDL. CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD ZONE-I JODHPUR No. 7931 Dated : 07-01-2022		
NIT Corrigendum No.15/2021-22		
Tender invited by this office vide NIT No.15/2021-22 for the work "Change of alignment of NH-15 from Km 123/410 to Km 144/500 between Jaisalmer - Barmer section in view of mining area beneath NH-15 where power plant installation is planned in Barmer District on EPC Mode" the previous online bid submission date from 10.12.2021 to 10.01.2022 is hereby extended from 10.12.2021 to 17.01.2022 and same will be opened on 19.01.2022 at 2.00 PM.		
NIB code : PWD2122A2338 UBN PWD2122WLOB11524		
(MOOKESH BHATI) ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD ZONE-I, JODHPUR Email:acepwdju@rediffmail.com DIPR/C/481/2022		

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e-Procurement Tender Notice eProcurement Portal : <a href="https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in">https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in</a> (1st Call)		
SYSTEM TENDER NO. 90004/NOTICE INVITING TENDER NO. 08/SAC/2021-22 Dated : 04.01.2022		
Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 25.01.2022 (17.30 hours IST).		
System Tender No. Name of Work Probable amount of contract		
90004	RENOVATION OF WEIR, AND CONSTRUCTION OF CC CHANNEL FROM RD 0 M TO 5700M IN MAIN CANAL OF ODARI DIVERSION SCHEME (With Maintenance up to 10 Years from the date of Completion).	Rs. 238.08 Lakhs
The details can be viewed & downloaded online directly from the Govt. of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement portal ( <a href="https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in">https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in</a> ) from dated 11-01-2022 at 17.31 hours (IST) onwards.		
Note : All eligible/interested contractors / bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the integrated e-Procurement portal ( <a href="https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in">https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in</a> ) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under centralized contractor/supplier registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.		
(S.K. DUBEY) EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WATER RESOURCES DIVISION BAIKUNTHPUR, KORIA (C.G.) For, Chief Engineer, Hasdeo Ganga Basin, W.R. Deptt. Ambikapur, Sarguja (C.G.) G-66852/6		

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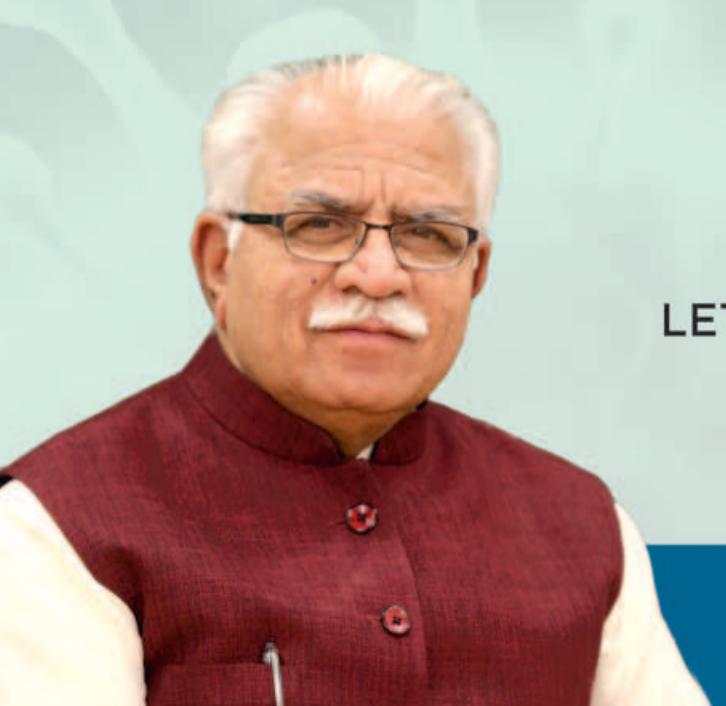
In Haryana, 3.8 Crore vaccines administered so far.

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.

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TOGETHER LET US DEFEAT COVID-19, GET YOURSELF VACCINATED



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# Company bond sales witness a sharp drop on rising yields

State governments' bonds offering higher returns edge out corporates

Gopika Gopakumar

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**MUMBAI:** India Inc. may have to offer higher returns on fresh domestic bond issuances to investors as they compete with state government bonds offering higher yields, experts said.

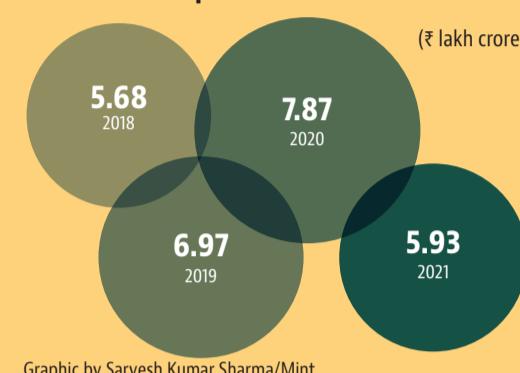
Rising yields are already causing a decline in corporate bond issuances. Since last November, the yield on three-year AAA-rated corporate paper has increased by 43 basis points to 5.74%, and that on five-year AAA paper by 36 basis points to 6.35%. As a result, market participants saw a sharp drop in corporate bond issuances while state development loans have increased in past few months.

Data provided by Prime Database showed that the volume of corporate bond issuances dropped to ₹5.93 lakh crore in 2021 from ₹7.87 lakh crore in 2020. To be sure, the government's borrowing costs have risen despite surplus liquidity in the banking system, with the yield on the benchmark 10-year government bond increasing

## Squeezed out

The value of corporate bond issuances dropped to ₹5.93 lakh crore in 2021 from ₹7.87 lakh crore in 2020, while the yields climbed by up to 43 basis points

### Volume of corporate bond issuances



Graphic by Sarvesh Kumar Sharma/Mint

### Yield on corporate bond papers (in %)



Source: Prime Database

from about 6.1% in April to 6.58% in January.

"Corporate bonds issuances have seen a drop amid rising G-sec rates. Investors are looking for higher yields, and they feel yields will go up further from here. There is also a larger quantum of state development loans (SDLs) available at higher yields. Investors, therefore, prefer a higher yield instrument," said Ajay Manglunia, managing director and head, institutional fixed income, JM Financial.

In December, the cost of debt

funds for the states touched the highest level so far this fiscal with the weighted average cut-off crossing 7.16 percentage points at the latest auctions, reflecting hardening yields even for government securities, the Press Trust of India reported on January 5.

The hardening of rates at the first auction of the quarter comes in the wake of an expected large supply of debt from states, estimated at ₹3.2 trillion in the fiscal fourth-quarter, an increase of ₹10,000 crore.

Meanwhile, companies are

tapping cheaper funding sources, such as external commercial borrowings, or ECBs.

Recently, Reliance Industries raised \$4 billion in the largest foreign bond issuance. It raised \$1.5 billion at a coupon rate of 2.875%; \$1.75 billion at 3.625%; and \$750 million at 3.75%. The sale was considered the tightest ever implied credit spread over the respective US Treasury across each of three tranches by an Indian corporate.

For the past couple of years, corporate borrowing from

banks has been muted, with companies repaying an estimated ₹2 lakh crore of debt in the period. However, lenders are hopeful that lending to companies will recover as capital expenditure plans stabilize over the next few quarters.

In addition, borrowers who turned to the commercial paper market due to abundant liquidity would return once interest rates rise, the lenders said.

"The costs of funds for larger and higher-rated companies have declined with the spread between AAA corporate bond and G-Sec at multi-year lows. While the fiscal deficit inched up during the pandemic in 2021, most large corporations benefited from market-share gains, better pricing and lower costs, which led to improved profitability and cash flows. The credit spread for low credit rating borrowers, however, continued to rise through 2021," Nomura said in an 11 January note to clients.

The brokerage expects interest rates in India to trend higher this year. "Our rates team expects the 10-year government bond yield to rise to 6.75% by end-2022 and further to 7% by 2023, up from 6.5% currently. The yields are likely to move higher on the back of global liquidity tightening, higher rates and higher government deficit," it said.

"Indian HRC steel price dou-

# Indian cos weigh price hikes on higher costs

Kalpana Pathak

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**MUMBAI:** Rising raw material costs are crimping corporate profitability as many companies are unable to hike prices to fully offset costs, especially because of sharp increases in metal and energy prices.

While consumer durables and packaged goods companies expect to pass on costs to customers through calibrated price increases between 5% and 10%

in the next few months, not all companies can wield such pricing power. "We will wait till the end of the fourth quarter to see how demand pans out. We have hiked prices over the past year. We are also expecting metal prices to cool," a senior executive at a manufacturer said on the condition of anonymity as the company is in the so-called silent period ahead of its quarterly earnings announcement.

Global commodity prices rose sharply through most of the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021 as the strong post-Covid recovery in China fuelled demand for metals and fuels.

India's corporate sector is facing margin pressure for the first time in 12 quarters as companies cannot entirely pass on the rise in input costs to consumers, rating agency Crisil said. Corporate profitability, as defined by the earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Ebitda) margin, also doubled in this period.

However, after a year-long rally, global steel and aluminium prices have softened on China demand concerns.

"Indian HRC steel price dou-



Consumer durables and packaged goods companies are expected to increase prices by 5% to 10%.

bled from June 2020 to October 2021 but is down 12% since then to ₹64,000. Coking coal, conversely, almost doubled in the second half of 2021, pushing up costs. We believe Indian steel margins have peaked in the first half of fiscal 2022 and will fall sharply by FY23, albeit settle above historical levels," said Jefferies India in a January 10 note that assumes FY23 steel price of ₹58,000 and coking coal price of \$230 per tonne. Aluminium rose 60% in the 10 months to October but is down 7% since then to \$2,913.

"Companies were unable to fully pass on soaring input costs, especially key metals and energy prices. Flat steel prices were 48% higher on-year in the third quarter, while aluminium was up 41%. The price of Brent crude surged nearly 79%, while those of spot gas and coking coal rocketed almost 5.4 times and 2.4 times, respectively, on-year," said Hetal Gandhi, director, Crisil Research.

For the first nine months of this fiscal, the Ebitda margin widened 80-100 bps from a year ago to 22-24%, aided by the low base of last year. Ebitda profit growth must moderate to 10-12%, against 47% clocked in the first half of this fiscal, Crisil said. It added, corporate revenue is likely to rise 16-17% to ₹9.1 lakh crore is the first nine months FY23, driven by prices.

## Open-source e-com platform in works, says DPIIT's Jain

Rituparna Baruah

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**NEW DELHI:** The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), an open-source e-commerce platform that all online retailers can use, is expected to be launched soon, according to Anurag Jain, secretary of the department for the promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT).

Work is in progress on the concept, the secretary noted in an interview on Saturday. He, however, refrained from giving a timeline for the launch. It "will come out hopefully soon, as and when the preparations are complete, and approvals are received," Jain said.

Several suggestions were made for the structure of ONDC at a panel discussion during the Startup India Innovation Week, held from January 10-16, and the department will consider these, the secretary said.

All seller and buyer platforms will work through one open protocol and can connect through ONDC

sellers, Jain said. "If such an open network comes, it ends the monopoly of big closed-loop platforms," he said.

ONDC is also expected to result in cost savings for sellers and provide better prices to consumers. The department received several suggestions from stakeholders in the ecosystem, including from global venture capital funds, during the roundtable chaired by Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal, held as part of the just-concluded Startup India Innovation Week, Jain said. The government will discuss these suggestions, he said.

"Lot of good ideas have come. We also got a lot of good suggestions during the global roundtable of venture capital funds. We will get those examined in consultation with the ministry on how to take the system further," he said. The secretary exuded confidence over the growing startup fraternity in the country and their contribution to the economy and said that startups would be the key to the country's prosperity. "I see the biggest energy coming from startups. They are the companies of the future, and this is the movement that will take India towards the top of the world in the next 25 years," Jain said.

The open network will empower both consumers and

## Omicron-led third wave may hit airlines' expansion plans

Neha LM Tripathi

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**DELHI:** Business recovery and expansion plans of airline firms have plunged into uncertainty as passenger traffic is again hit badly in the wake of another pandemic wave across India.

Air travel was on the path to recovery in November 2021, according to the Air Transport Association, a lobby group, but

the exponential increase coronavirus cases due to the Omicron variant since then is expected to impact air passenger traffic significantly, at least in the short term till March, experts said. This will weigh heavily on the expansion plans of carriers in 2022, they said.

"By June, domestic airlines will be fighting for business. Countries which are last in the queue to be infected will take

time for international traffic to reach pre-pandemic levels," a former airline executive said on condition of anonymity. "International traffic is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels around January 2023. Any network expansion by the airlines will only be in 2023. However, that too will depend on any further mutations."

Although India's IT and finance sectors are doing well

despite the pandemic, executives at these firms have stopped travelling altogether, another airline official pointed out. "The problem is two-fold; crew are testing positive and passengers are not willing to travel," he said, declining to be named. "Hardly any improvement is expected in 30 days."

IndiGo, India's largest airline by market share, on Sunday announced withdrawing 20% of

their flights from service, attributing the move to reduced demand. The airline also said it won't charge passengers if they wish to change journey dates on booking made up to January 31 for flights till March 31.

"Since India has started witnessing a third wave and infections are rising at an exponential rate, demand for mobility, especially air travel, is likely to take a hit in the near-term," said

Shamsher Dewan, vice president at ICRA, a ratings agency. "The recovery process and timeline will clearly be a function of the span of the third wave."

The decline in domestic and international air travel will be sharp and immediate due to the rapid progression of the third wave of Covid-19, according to Kapil Kaul, chief executive officer of CAPA, an airline advisory firm.

## Procedural delays hold back Jet's revival plans

Rhik Kundu

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**NEW DELHI:** A delay in regulatory approvals has emerged as a major challenge to the planned revival of Jet Airways Ltd., under its new promoters, a consortium of UAE-based entrepreneur Murari Lal Jalan and UK-based Kalrock Capital.

As things stand, the airline's air operator's permit (AOP), which is required to start commercial operations, is yet to be revalidated.

The exit of a few key executives in charge of the revival plans in the past months has added to the challenges of the airline.

condition of anonymity.

"In comparison, the Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed Akasa Air, which has got a no-objection certificate and aircraft order in place, is likely to enter the market before Jet Airways," the executive added.

Meanwhile, the Jalan-Kalrock consortium will have to infuse funds within six months from the 'effective date' of fulfilling all the conditions as stated in the resolution plan approved by the insolvency court last June, said a person

as per the insolvency plan, the person added.

with direct knowledge of the matter.

In this case, the 'effective date' is 270 days from June 22, 2021, when the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved the insolvency resolution plan submitted by Kalrock Capital and Jalan, said this person, who also spoke on condition of anonymity.

Upon reaching the 'effective date', the consortium will have up to 180 days to pay creditors as per the insolvency plan, the person added.

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## SPORT

{ NO AGENDA }

Sanjay Manjrekar



# Virat realised the scenario around him was changing

Virat Kohli's announcement resigning from Test captaincy must have come as a shock to all. He had a better claim to continue as India Test captain than he had as RCB captain or captain of the Indian T20 team. What's interesting about all these big decisions from Virat is how they have quickly followed each other, in a matter of months. It's not that difficult to imagine what may have prompted these calls.

Virat the cricketer is now going through the toughest phase of his career; he is finding batting more difficult than he has done before. His strike rate as batter has been falling off the cliff in the last 18 months or so. It was 20 in the last innings of the SA Test series after having faced 143 balls, on a pitch where young Keegan Peterson showed how easy it was to not just survive but score runs. Virat in his pomp has scored more freely against better attacks on trickier pitches.

This is the second time that he has been afflicted by the famous bad patch that spares no one. The first one of note was against England in 2014 when Jimmy Anderson troubled him outside off and he averaged just 13 in that series. He immediately bounced back, in the next overseas series, by getting four hundreds in Australia, confirming his status as a modern day great. This time, he is finding getting back into form a little more arduous.

What really surprised me this IPL was seeing him bat, how getting an IPL 50 had become so important for him. He seemed to be losing sight of the team's needs just to reach that landmark to demonstrate that he was back in form and at his best. Virat had never once shown this trait in all these years, even when he was struggling for runs. Clearly, this man was feeling the heat like never before.

Another thing that may have got Virat to feel that the walls were closing in on him was Rohit Sharma's success as a Test batter overseas. Virat now had serious competition for the post. Ajinkya Rahane with his woeful batting form had fallen off the race for Indian Test captaincy, plus Rohit also had great credentials as T20 captain because of



## Turbulence, a timeline

India had begun 2021 with a euphoric series victory over Australia, but just a year later, Indian cricket is left confronting a phase of big transition. Virat Kohli is now no longer captain in any format while coach Rahul Dravid has only recently taken charge from Ravi Shastri. Here's the sequence of events that led to this.

JUNE, 2021

**23:** Virat Kohli faces criticism after India's loss to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final as his search for ICC silverware as captain continues.

SEPTEMBER

**16:** Kohli announces that he will step down as captain of the India T20 side after the T20 World Cup in November. He says in his statement that he would like to continue leading the Test and ODI teams.

**19:** Three days later, he decides to step down as captain of IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore too.

NOVEMBER

**03:** With Ravi Shastri announcing that he won't continue as coach after the T20 World Cup, the BCCI names Rahul Dravid as the new head coach. Shastri was a strong ally for Kohli right through the latter's captaincy tenure.

**08:** Kohli's last assignment as India T20 captain ends on a disastrous note as India fail to make the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup. The search for an ICC trophy remains elusive and Kohli's ODI captaincy is considered to be under threat.

DECEMBER

**08:** In just a line at the end of a press release announcing the Test squad for South Africa, the BCCI names Rohit Sharma as the new ODI and T20 skipper, without even referring to the removal of Kohli as ODI captain.

**09:** BCCI president Sourav Ganguly says he had asked Kohli to continue as T20I captain and

January 15, 2022 Kohli announces his resignation from the Test captaincy.

MI's success, the heights Virat could never reach as IPL captain in nine years.

It's not easy being captain in three formats but Virat's superb fitness, his zest for the game and to lead too, saw him doing this job pretty well. But it seems like he wasn't one for whom leadership mattered more than getting runs. If the strain of remaining captain was going to come in the way of his coming back into form as a batter, it was an easy choice for him to make.

The other factor that I believe came into play was Virat realising that the scenario around him was now set to change. Ravi Shastri, whose only job was to keep Virat happy in the head, is out. Remember how the Anil Kumble and Virat partnership had become untenable?

Virat wants to do his thing, however bizarre it may seem to others. Also, now there was a different leadership in the BCCI, and I am guessing that, along with new coach Rahul Dravid, who was never going to be a Ravi Shastri, Virat knew that those good old days of unconditional support from all quarters was gone. After the last Test in SA which ended in a bad defeat for India, I say bad defeat because this South African team was by far the weakest it's ever been, and certainly the most 'easy to beat' team that any Indian team had encountered before in SA.

It was a great opportunity for Virat the captain to conquer this final frontier for Indian cricket.

Virat would have known that India's great win in Australia against a full-strength Australian team came more under Rahane's captaincy than his, although Virat's unflinching supporter Ravi Shastri made it a point to remind us even then in the winning moments there that this was Virat's team even if Rahane was marshalling it.

So, the dream of the 'final frontier' came crashing down and we got ample evidence of Virat's desperation as captain when he did that stump mic thing, a serious misdemeanour I thought.

What's also been curious to me is how he tends to announce his resignation as captain when he gets the slightest inkling that his position as captain was becoming vulnerable. With his long-standing poor ICC and IPL records, he knew it was not going to be easy to remain in the

leadership position. Announcing his resignation from Indian T20 captaincy before the World Cup was an attempt, I thought, by Virat to relieve pressure off himself.

It was win-win now for Virat the captain, whichever way the campaign went. Virat likes to remain 'un-sackable'. He is not like a Sunil Gavaskar who, when he was under threat as captain, announced his resignation only after they had won the mini World Cup in Australia in 1985.

Virat the captain is nothing like Virat the batter. When it comes to batting, he is a real fighter and hence a true batting great.

Will India miss Virat the captain and will this be a setback to the team? As long as Virat the batter is around, no, not really.

## S-400

extension) or grant a waiver will be done only after weighing important geostrategic considerations in relations to China. He said that it was difficult to compare India with Turkey (which has been sanctioned by the US for buying the S-400 system from Russia) as the latter was a NATO ally that broke with legacy deals on defence procurement systems. In contrast, India is a partner of growing importance, and one with legacy defence relations with Russia.

HT learns that India has made clear to its close ally US through top diplomatic and security channels that the acquisition of Russian S-400 system was in its national interest as it is faced with a belligerent PLA all along the 3,488-km LAC.

While India has offered technical solutions so that the S-400 system does not share details on US manufactured military aircraft and helicopters with Russia, it has also decided that all five systems would be deployed to protect India from the mounting military threat from Beijing.

Already, advance consignments of two S-400 systems have arrived in India from Moscow and work is on to assemble the systems and the radars by Indian teams trained in Russia.

Analysts say that the fact that the systems will be deployed against China may well weigh in on the US decision; China, at this point, is the US's primary concern.

The S-400 system is one of a kind with a powerful radar at the heart of the offensive air defence system.

It can track multiple targets at multiple ranges and neutralise them before the adversary's fighter, bomber or missile, pose a threat, using anti-missiles with varying range.

## { FROM PAGE 1 }

anyone who intends to spread hate -- we will stand against anti-Semitism and against the rise of extremism in this country," Biden said in a statement after the standoff.

Vice-president Kamala Harris said that the US stands in solidarity with the Congregation Beth Israel community and the entire Jewish community on the incident. She also thanked the "brave men and women" in federal, state, and local law enforcement and said, "We stand in solidarity with the Congregation Beth Israel community and the entire Jewish community".

### 70% ADULTS

he added.

Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that the manner in which the vaccination drive has commenced demonstrates the country's willpower. "It is a result of joint effort of the entire country and PM Narendra Modi's commitment that in times of the crisis, India not only developed and manufactured Covid vaccines, but also vaccinated a large chunk of its population within a year. The first year of the vaccination demonstrates India's willpower," he wrote in Hindi and London." he added.

A US official briefed on the matter told ABC News the hostage-taker had claimed to be the brother of Pakistani neuroscientist Aafia Siddiqui, who is serving an 86-year sentence in a Texas federal prison for her 2010 conviction for shooting at soldiers and FBI agents, and that he demanded she be freed. However, John Floyd, board chair for the Houston chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, denied the claim.

India's vaccination drive officially kicked off in January last year, with the initial recipients being millions of health care and frontline workers who were directly dealing with Covid-19 patients. Later, the drive was opened up for the general public in a phased manner -- from March 1 for people aged 60 and above; from April 1, for everyone above the age of 45 years; for all adults from May 1; and for teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 starting January 3, 2022.

Till Sunday evening, about 1,565 billion doses were administered across the country, as

per government data, with 907.5 million of these shots being first doses, 655.8 being second doses, and another 4.3 million being precautionary, or booster, jabs.

In total, 873.6 million adults (93% of the country's population above 18) have received at least one shot of the vaccine, with 655.8 million (69.8% of adults) being fully vaccinated. About 218 million (23.2%) people have received only one dose so far. Furthermore, another 33.9 million shots have been administered among the roughly 74 million children in the country between the ages of 15 and 18 years, covering 45.7% of the age group.

In the global context, India's coverage of 65.2% of its entire population (not just adults) having been administered at least one shot places it ahead of the global average of 59.9%. However, India's two-dose coverage of 46.9% of the population lags the global average of 50%, according to Our World In Data. While India's coverage comfortably exceeds nations such as Pakistan (45% population given a shot), Russia and Bangladesh (51%), it lags several other nations such as Iran (71%), United States (75%), United Kingdom (76%) and Brazil (77%).

The drive was put in motion on January 3, 2021, when national drugs regulator, Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), VG Somani, granted approval for restricted use in emergency situation to two vaccines: Covaxin and Covishield.

While Bharat Biotech, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), developed and manufactured Covaxin, the vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca is being locally manufactured by the Serum Institute of India under the brand name Covishield.

Together, these two account for more than 99.7% of all shots administered in the country, with the latter alone accounting for 86.3% of the overall figure.

Six more vaccines -- Gamaleya's Sputnik V, Moderna's mRNA shot, Zydus Cadila's Zycov-D, Johnson & Johnson's Ad26.COV2.S, Novavax's Covaxom, and Biological E's Covaxin -- have also been granted emergency use authorisation. Among these, however, only Sputnik V has been rolled out in a limited manner in a handful of private hospitals across the country, while the remaining five are yet to be made a part of the vaccination drive.

To be sure, the first year of the drive has not been without challenges.

One of the largest issues has been the patchy rate of vaccination. At times, it has soared to averaging more than 10 million doses a day, and at other times, it has dropped to under 1.4 million shots a day. By the end of September, when India was averaging 10 million shots a day, it looked like the country was set to hit its target of fully vaccinating everyone by the end of 2021. But then, by early October, this pace dropped to under 3 million (government officials attributed the festive season for the drop).

One of the reasons for this patchy pace (at least in the initial weeks) was supply. In the initial months of the drive being thrown open to all adults, several states complained to the Centre about the supplies of shots being handed to them.

Both these issues, however, appear to have been ironed out now. Average vaccination pace has been promising in recent weeks (around 7.4 million/day), while supply issues have been sorted to a large extent (as on Sunday, states have with them a surplus of 141 million doses, as per government data).

"The Union government is committed to accelerating the pace and expanding the scope of Covid-19 vaccination throughout the country... The vaccination drive has been ramped up through availability of more vaccines, advance visibility of vaccine availability to states and UTs for enabling better planning by them, and streamlining the vaccine supply chain," the Union health ministry said.

Experts say vaccination is key in reducing the risk of deaths due to Covid-19 considerably.

"Vaccination is an important tool; as it has been established that vaccines significantly prevent the risk of getting severe form of the disease and death. Those who are yet to take the shot must take it as soon as possible," said Dr GC Khilnani, former head, department of pulmonary medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi.

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## Kohli said no to farewell match as captain: Board

Rakesh Mandani

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**MUMBAI:** If Virat Kohli had wanted, he could have quit as Test captain amid fanfare, after celebrating his 100th Test in Bengaluru, his IPL home, against Sri Lanka in late February. A senior BCCI official offered a farewell match as captain to Kohli and a gala in Bengaluru during a phone call on Friday when he conveyed the decision to step down. Kohli refused. "One match makes no difference. That's not how I am," he is known to have said.

That means Kohli's highly successful stint as Test skipper ended with defeat, which has also resulted in a series loss. His predecessor, MS Dhoni, called an end to Test captaincy and career after a draw in the 2014 Melbourne Test, after playing 90 matches.

Dhoni is one of the two people Kohli thanked in Saturday's tweet announcing his resignation. "A big thank you to MS Dhoni who believed in me as a Captain and found me to be an able individual who could take Indian Cricket forward," he said.

Before making his decision public, Kohli spoke with head coach Rahul Dravid, his team mates in the dressing room at Newlands cricket ground, and then to BCCI. Kohli is known to be bitterly disappointed with the lost opportunity of beating South Africa despite taking the series lead. While BCCI was happy to offer another series for Kohli to lead, it is learnt he reconsidered stepping down from the T20I captaincy.

**DECEMBER**

**08:** In just a line at the end of a press release announcing the Test squad for South Africa, the BCCI names Rohit Sharma as the new ODI and T20I skipper, without even referring to the removal of Kohli as ODI captain.

**JANUARY, 2022**

**14:** India's quest to conquer the final frontier in SA ends in heartbreak with a 1-2 series loss. It is Kohli's second successive series defeat in SA as captain.

**09:** BCCI president Sourav Ganguly says he had asked Kohli to continue as T20I captain and

{ SHANE WARNE } EX-AUSTRALIA SPINNER

Congrats (Virat) on what you and your team has achieved under your leadership and thank you for supporting Tests so passionately.

# Sen sheds 'rising' tag with win over world champion for title

Sandip Sikdar

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**NEW DELHI:** It was five years ago that Lakshya Sen, a shy, lanky teenager, first made headlines. A third generation badminton player from Almora in Uttarakhand, he had become junior world No.1.

Since then, Sen has regularly made news—first by winning junior titles and then at the senior level. However, most of the senior titles were at lower-tier events where not many top names usually played. Yes, the 20-year-old did win bronze at the World Championships in Spain last month.

That changed as Sen dropped the 'rising star' tag on Sunday by announcing his arrival at the big stage, clinching the \$400,000 India Open—Super 500 event—on debut at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex here.

The victory was all the more special as he defeated new world champion Loh Kean Yew 24-22, 21-17, becoming only the second Indian men's singles player to win his home Open since it was elevated to Superseries/Super 500 level in 2011, after Kidambi Srikanth in 2015. "It feels good. Towards the closing stages I was a bit nervous and anxious but managed to pull out the points in the end," said the third seed after his 54-minute battle. "I gave away a couple of easy points towards the end, trying to finish it off quickly, but at match point I took it calmly. It gives me a lot of confidence to start the season by winning a Super 500 event."

Though not always at the highest level, Sen has shown remarkable consistency in finals—he has now won six of the last seven he has contested with his lone defeat coming against fifth seed Loh.

Having faced each other four times previously, the two knew each other's game. One main reason Loh won the world title was his sharp net game, which helped him draw level from 14-19 down in the first game. It caused Sen problems, especially when the Singaporean had two game points.

"His net play was better than



Lakshya Sen in action during his win in the final on Sunday.

how they were felicitated in their home countries on return from Spain last month. Apart from improving significantly on the tour in 2021, they also trained together in September along with Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen. "On court we are rivals, but off it we are friends. He is fun to be around. After the World Championships we discussed what we're going to do because it had been a long season and everyone needed rest. We're in constant touch and plan to go back to Dubai," said Sen.

**Chirag-Satwik triumph**  
Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy pulled off one of the biggest wins of their career when the world No.10 upset top seeds and three-time world champions Hendra Setiawan and Mohammad Ahsan 21-16, 26-24. The second seeds saved five game points and converted their only championship point to earn their second victory in five meetings over the Indonesian

world No.2. "We knew they were tired. We kept things tight," Rankireddy said. They are the first Indian pair to win a doubles title here since the event gained Superseries/Super 500 status. It was their second Super 500 title. It is the second time that Indians have won two titles at India Open after Srikanth and Saina Nehwal in 2015.

**Final results:** Men's singles: 3-Lakshya Sen beat 5-Loh Kean Yew (SGP) 24-22, 21-17; Women's singles: 2-Busanan Ongbamrungphan (THA) beat 6-Supanida Katethong (THA) 22-20, 19-21, 21-13; Men's doubles: 2-Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty beat 1-Mohammad Ahsan/Hendra Setiawan (INA) 21-16, 26-24; Women's doubles: 4-Benyaya Aimsaard/Nuntakkarn Aimsaard (THA) beat 3-Anastasija Akhurina/Olga Morozova (RUS) 21-13, 21-5; Mixed doubles: Hee Yong Kai/Terry Tan Wei Han (SGP) beat 3-Chen Tang Jie/Peck Yen Wei (MAS) 21-15, 21-18.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (R) and Chirag Shetty take a picture with runners-up Hendra Setiawan and Mohammad Ahsan (L).

me in the first game but I didn't allow him to come close to the net in the second. I was confident and maintained better control by pushing the shuttle to the back," said Sen, who leads 3-2 in career meetings against Loh.

"My attack worked well. I scored some good winners from loose lifts and when the shuttle was behind (me) I was more patient, used variation in drops. I was patient and went for the attack when needed. The small

breaks also helped me stay calm."

**Friendly rivalry**  
Sen shares a close friendship with Loh, 24. They have a similar career graph. They are ranked close (Sen is 15, Loh 17), have won multiple titles in the lower tiers with major recognition coming at the 2021 World Championships. The two were in touch, exchanged messages on Instagram and even discussed

## Boxing high performance coach retained till '24 Paris Olympics

Avishek Roy

avishek.roy@htlive.com

**NEW DELHI:** The high performance director of the Indian men's boxing team, Santiago Nieve, has been given a contract extension till the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The Sports Authority of India's foreign coach selection committee cleared the Boxing Federation of India's (BFI) recommendation to retain him, ending months of uncertainty.

The Swede had returned home last month after being left out of the two-week national camp as his contract had expired.

Nieve's tenure ended with the Tokyo Olympics but he was given an extension till the world championships that ended in the first week of November.

His counterpart in the women's team, Raffaele Bergamasco, who trained Lovlina Borgohain to bronze in Tokyo, left as he was not happy with the arrangement.



Santiago Nieve. HT FILE

with Nieve, whose tactical and technical knowhow has immensely benefited the boxers.

"We cannot afford too many changes in the coaching structure in a year with big events lined up. The Paris Olympics is also not far off, so we have decided to continue with him," said a senior BFI official.

### Immediate focus on CWG and Asian Games

The federation has already made changes in the coaching staff. It has replaced the men's chief coach CA Kuttappa with Asian Sports Institute coach Narendra Rana and roped in young coaches like Suranjoy Singh and Devendro Singh.

Nieve's immediate challenge will be to prepare the team for the two major events this year—Commonwealth Games and Asian Games—before the Olympics. Nieve was also involved in training Indian coaches and will continue to develop the coaches' programme.

## AUSSIES COMPLETE 4-0 SERIES WIN AS ENGLAND BATTERS STRUGGLE AGAIN

Agence France-Presse

sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**HOBART:** Australia's fast bowlers ran through the English batting line-up to claim a comprehensive 146-run win in the final Ashes Test at Hobart on Sunday, sealing a one-sided series 4-0.

After a bright 68-run opening stand chasing 271 for victory, England collapsed once again to hand the Test to the rampant Australian outfit, losing 10 wickets for 56 runs in 137 balls.

England had no answers once more in Hobart to the pace barrage of Paul Cummins, Cameron Green, Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc, who shared the wickets between them and took nine English wickets in the night session. Joe Root admitted his side were simply not good enough.

**Brief scores:** Australia 303 and 155 (A Carey 49; M Wood 6/37) bt England 188 and 124 (S Boland 3/18) by 146 runs.

Liverpool ease past Brentford in EPL

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool kept their slim hopes of reeling in Manchester City at the top of the Premier League alive by seeing off Brentford 3-0 at Anfield to move up to second in the table on Sunday. Fabinho, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Takumi Minamino scored the goals as they coped with the absence of Mo Salah and Sadio Mane.

On Saturday, Philippe Coutinho came off the bench on debut to score a late goal for Aston Villa

and help them draw Manchester United 2-2.

### Blasters-Mumbai game postponed

**PANAJI:** The Indian Super League (ISL) match between Kerala Blasters FC and Mumbai City FC in Vasco was postponed on Sunday, hours before their kickoff as the southern outfit did not have the requisite number of players—13 outfield and one goalkeeper—available.

### Benitez sacked as Everton manager

**LONDON:** Rafael Benitez was sacked as Everton manager on Sunday after just 200 days in charge of the struggling Premier League club. The Spaniard paid the price for a dismal run of nine defeats in Everton's last 13 league matches, culminating in a 2-1 loss at lowly Norwich on Saturday. Meanwhile, the Arsenal-Tottenham derby on Sunday was postponed. The decision was reached because Arsenal have fewer than the required number of players—13 outfield and one goalkeeper—available.

**Office of the Director General, Medical Health & F.W.**  
Danda Lakhoud, Sahastradhara Road, P.O. Gujara, Dehradun,  
Uttarakhand e-mail: dghealth.uttarakhand@gmail.com,  
Ph.: 0135-2608763, Fax: 0135-2608746

Dated 15.01.2022

### Government of Uttarakhand Term Re-tender Notice

- Name of Work-Build Operate and Transfer Cardiac Care Unit District Hospital Coronation Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- Date and time of e-publishing of tender – 18.01.2022 till 14:00 PM
- Closing date of online submission of Tender – 31.01.2022, till 14:00 (IST)
- Opening date of Tender – 31.01.2022, till 15:00 (IST)
- Pre Bid Meeting – 15:00 PM on 21.01.2022
- Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website <https://uktenders.gov.in>.
- Portal Registration: The bidder intending to participate in the bid is Required to register in the portal using his/her active personal/ official email id as his/her Login id and attach his/her valid digital signature certificate (DSC) to his/her unique login.

Pre Bid meeting shall be held in the office of Director General, Medical Health & Family welfare, Danda Lakhoud, P.O. Gujara, Sahastradhara road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

For further queries, the bidders may contact through email- [mhvuttarakhand@yahoo.com](mailto:mhvuttarakhand@yahoo.com) Mobile No. 9927570008 and at Room No 52, Office of the Director General, Medical Health & Family welfare, Danda Lakhoud, P.O. Gujara, Sahastradhara road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

**Director General**  
Medical Health & F.W. Dehradun, Uttarakhand

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No.: 48/EE (CM)/UPCL/A-2 Dated: 15.01.2022

### E-TENDER DATE EXTENSION NOTICE

E-tender Specification No. CCP-I/55/2021-2022 invited by this office for Repair and comprehensive maintenance contract of capacitor banks installed at various 33/11KV Sub-Stations of UPCL on turnkey basis are hereby extended due to unavoidable reasons. The prebid meeting of the e-tender shall be held on 21.1.2022 at 11:30hrs in online mode. The e-tender can be purchased and submitted upto 17:00hrs of 7.2.2022. Part-I of the e-tender shall be opened on 8.2.2022 at 15:30hrs.

Other terms & conditions will remain same as per original tender notice. For further details, please visit our website [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in).

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**Government of Jammu and Kashmir**

**Office of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti PHE, Ground Water Division, Sgr**

### Gist of e-Tender

e-NIT No.: PHE/GWDS/72 of 01/2022

For and on behalf of lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, e-tenders are invited in two cover system from registered Water Well Drillers/Contractors as per the details given in tender document.

S. No.	Name of work	No. of Hand Pump Wells	Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs	Earnest money	Cost of Tender Document	Time of completion	Class of Contract	Technical Sanction	Programme
01	Construction of (01 No.) 125 mm machine drilled hand Pump wells at Vail Nagbal in District Anantnag.	01 No.	Rs. 4.45 Lacs	9000/-	Rs. 200/-	07 days	Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells	PHE/GWD/107 of 01/2022	PRI Grants (District Capex Budget 2021-22)

### Critical Dates/Information:

1. Publishing Date	14.01.2022 (02.00 PM)
2. Period of Downloading of Bids	14.01.2022 (02.00 PM) to upto 28.01.2022 (02.00 PM)
3. Period of Submission of bids	14.01.2022 (02.00 PM) to upto 28.01.2022 (02.00 PM)
4. Date of opening of Tender	29.01.2022 (02.00 PM)
5. Tender Receiving Authority: Executive Engineer, (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Srinagar/Kashmir-190011	
6. Document Cost: Non-Refundable in the shape of Treasury Challan/receipt deposited to Account Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar (at Saddr Treasury Srinagar) (The firm shall specify the name of work for which apply)	
7. Bid Validity Period: 180 Days	
8. The bids can be downloaded or uploaded on <a href="http://www.jktenders.gov.in">www.jktenders.gov.in</a>	
9. The bids of only those agencies shall be accepted who posses valid registration certificate of Registered for Automobile work shop holders.	
10. Note:- The tenders uploaded without Scan copy of CDR and T.R shall be out rightly rejected.	

No.: PHE/GWDS/6570 Dated: 13.01.2022

DIPK-16776-21

Executive Engineer

Jal Shakti PHE Ground Water Division, Sgr

**J&K Bank** Finance Department Corporate Headquarters M.A.Road, Srinagar, 190 001 J&K

### e-Request for Proposal (e-RFP) for Appointment TAX Consultant for Income TAX Matters

Tender Notice along with Complete tender document outlining the minimum requirements can be downloaded from and BIDS can be submitted on the Banks' e-Tendering Portal <https://jkbank.abcprocure.com> w.e.f. January 17, 2022, 16.00 Hrs. Tender Document can also be downloaded from Bank's Official Website [www.jkbank.com](http://www.jkbank.com). Last date for submission of Bids is February 07, 2022, 17.00 Hrs.

e-RFP Ref. No. JKBF/TAX-Consultant/2022-194

Dated: 15-01-2022

**Hindustan Times**

CAPTAIN KOHLI BOWS OUT: CELEBS HAIL HIS GREAT RUN

**HT City**

CHECK OUT TODAY'S EDITION

# Deported Djokovic misses chance to defend Aus Open

Rutwick Mehta

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**MUMBAI:** In what seems to be ages ago, Novak Djokovic's ouster from the 2020 US Open—defaulted from the fourth round after accidentally hitting a line judge with the ball—was, in the unanimous opinion of tennis experts, the most bizarre way for a world No 1 player to exit a tournament. It took all of 16 months for that to be topped.

Djokovic, still ranked No 1, was forced to pack his bags and fly out of Australia on Sunday, deported less than 24 hours before he was to play his first-round match at the Rod Laver Arena to kickstart his Australian Open title defence. A three-judge bench of the country's Federal Court in Melbourne unanimously rejected the Serb's plea to overturn the Australian immigration minister's decision to revoke his visa again for being unvaccinated.

For the second time in 10 days Djokovic had gone to the court in his bid to remain in Australia after his visa was initially revoked upon landing in Melbourne for not having enough merit to support his medical exemption to enter the country.

While his legal team managed to successfully get that decision quashed, Immigration Minister Alex Hawke's execution of his special powers under the country's Migration Act left little room to be overturned unless it was deemed "irrational or legally unreasonable". "It is no part of the function of the court to decide upon the merits or wisdom of the decision," Chief Justice James Allsop said while delivering the ruling. Game, set and match. Mr. Djokovic had no challenges remaining. He was out of the Australian Open. He was out of Australia.

In a statement issued minutes after the verdict, Djokovic said he was "extremely disappointed" with the court ruling but respected it. Within the next few hours, he was seen at the Melbourne airport ready to leave the country. It was a dramatic departure after an equally dramatic arrival. Announcing on social media that he had received exemption to play in



## In and out: Djoker's short stay Down Under

**JAN 4** An unvaccinated Novak Djokovic announces that he is heading to Australia after receiving an "exemption" from tournament organisers.

**JAN 5-6** Djokovic is detained at Melbourne airport by Australia's Border Force officials, who question him overnight and cancel his visa.

**JAN 6-10** Djokovic spends four nights locked up in an immigration detention hotel even as his legal team challenges the revocation in court.

**JAN 10** Djokovic is freed from detention after a judge quashes the government's decision on the grounds that it was unreasonable.

**JAN 11-13** More contradictions and clarifications emerge about Djokovic's travel declaration form and public appearances after testing Covid positive. He continues to train.

**JAN 14** Immigration Minister Alex Hawke uses his discretionary powers to cancel Djokovic's visa for a second time.

**JAN 15** Djokovic returns to the immigration detention hotel while his legal team prepares for another challenge.

**JAN 16** A Federal Court three-judge panel dismisses the appeal to overturn the minister's decision. Djokovic accepts it and leaves Australia.

the season-opening Grand Slam that mandated vaccination, Djokovic landed in Australia only to be stopped by the Australian Border Force at the airport on Jan 6. His visa revoked, he was shifted to an immigration detention hotel where he spent four nights before a Federal Circuit Court judge on Jan 10 termed the decision as "unreasonable" and allowed Djokovic to stay in the country.

He was back on court for his training sessions, but he continued to face the heat. It emerged that Djokovic's travel declaration form contained false information about whether he had travelled 14 days prior to arriving in Australia. Images of his public appearances around the time of his Covid positive result, which formed the basis of his medical exemption, began springing up. It forced him to issue a set of clarifications.

The minister announced his decision on Friday evening. It brought Djokovic back into detention to eventually be sent out of the country, capping a nightmarish trip for the nine-time Australian Open champion. It not only halted, at least for the time being, his bid for a record-

Time for some tennis now, at long last.

breaking 21st Grand Slam title, but led to an uproar among Australians. The deportation carries the threat of Djokovic not being granted a visa for three years.

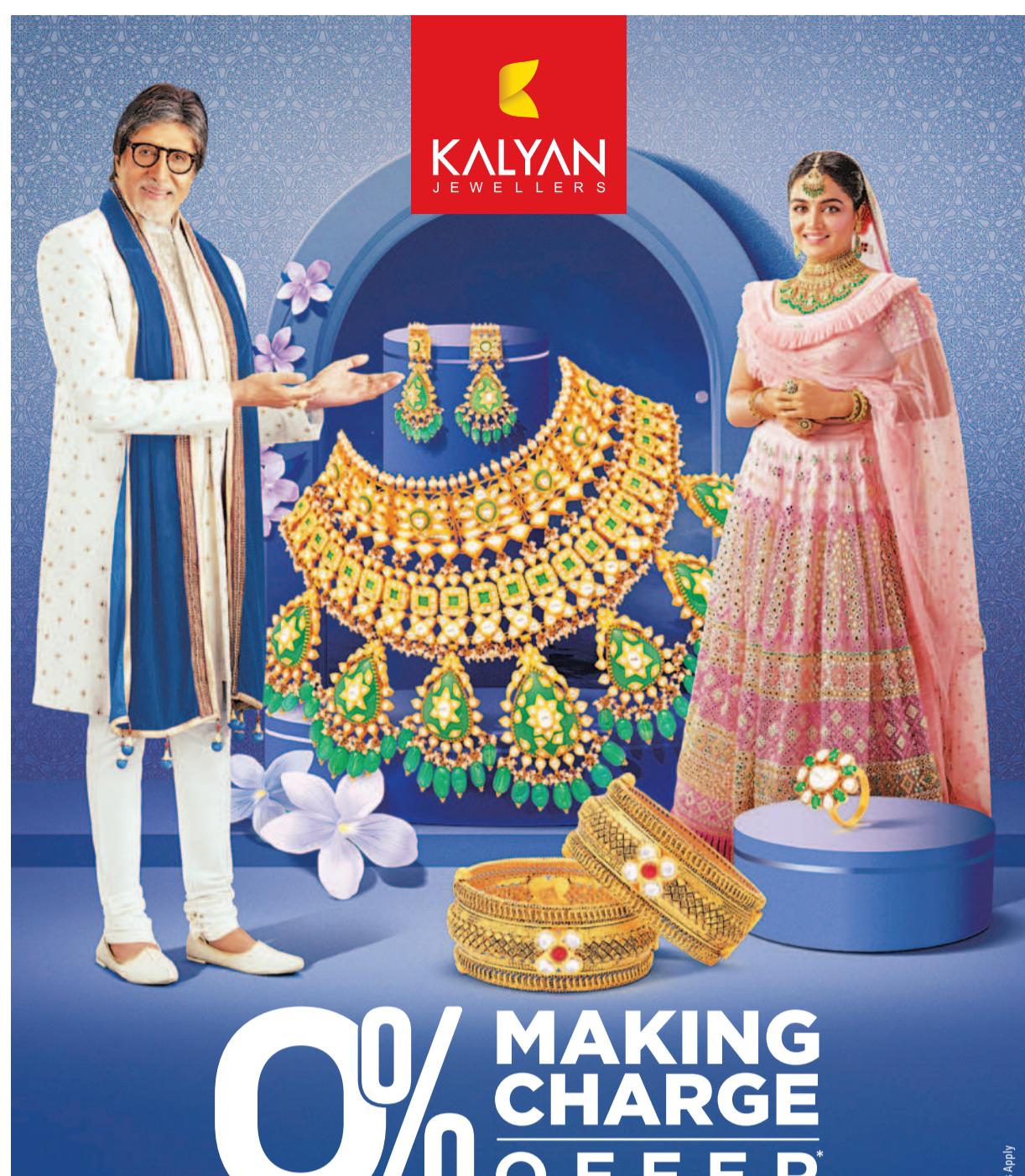
Djokovic said in his statement that he "will now be taking some time to rest and to recuperate". Other statements flew thick and fast. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison described the verdict as a victory in keeping "our borders strong and Australians safe" while Serbia Prime Minister Ana Brnabic labelled it "scandalous". ATP, the governing body of men's tennis, said the "decision to uphold Djokovic's Australian visa cancellation marks the end of a deeply regrettable series of events". It added that it would take the "learnings from this situation", which, evidently, wasn't helped by the miscommunication between the event organisers and the state and federal governments. ATP also "strongly recommend vaccination to all players".

A few players spoke out on social media in support of Djokovic. Canada's Vasek Pospisil, who along with Djokovic co-founded the Professional Tennis Players Association, said there was "political agenda at play here". "Novak would never have gone to Australia if he had not been given an exemption to enter the country," he tweeted. Australia's Nick Kyrgios also supported Djokovic and said he was personally thanked by the world No 1.

The organisers had to rejig Monday's order of play, having scheduled Djokovic's opener with fellow Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic on the showpiece court. Instead, Alexander Zverev's match was shifted there, while Kecmanovic will play in a smaller arena against Italian Salvatore Caruso, the "lucky loser" who became the beneficiary of Djokovic's withdrawal.

Top players had vented their frustration at the saga overshadowing the buildup to the tournament. Djokovic agreed. "I am uncomfortable that the focus of the past weeks has been on me, and I hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love," he said in the statement.

Time for some tennis now, at long last.



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# Captain Kohli bows out: Celebs hail his great run

Juhu Chakraborty and Titas Chowdhury

**O**n Saturday evening, cricket fans got quite a shock when Virat Kohli announced that he is stepping down as the Test captain after his seven-year-long run. During the period, he also became India's most successful Test captain. Kohli was earlier removed as ODI captain and had himself decided to leave T20 captaincy. Here's what a few celebs, who are cricket aficionados or have played the game at some point, have to say about Kohli's decision.



**Anushka pens a note on Insta**

I remember the day in 2014 when you told me that you have been made the captain as MS (Dhoni; former captain) had decided to retire from test cricket... Since that day, I've seen more than just your beard turning grey. I've seen growth. And yes, I am proud of your growth as the captain of the Indian National Cricket team... You led by example. What you did was to always stand up for doing the right thing, the harder thing. You held on to nothing with greed, not even this position. Because when one holds on to something so tightly they limit themselves & you, my love, are limitless. Our daughter will see the learning of these 7 years in the father that you are to her.

**RAHUL DEV**  
He's been a big success, an aggressive captain and I have great respect for him. He has been tremendous as a leader. Some people drive a team with their own personality, and that is what Virat has been as a captain. He is a loyalist and team player, and that is such a rare quality. It is unfortunate that he has stepped down.



**B'wood will miss the skipper!**

**VIVEK ANAND OBEROI**

It's been a phenomenal journey... being the world's number one Test team and making winning series overseas a wonderful habit. But as they say, all good things come to an end. Here's to you Captain King Kohli, take a bow and now unleash your bat without the extra weight and fly.



**TANUJ VIRWANI**

I am taken aback. Honestly, I didn't mind him relinquishing the limited overs captaincy as much, but when you think of Test cricket, there is no better ambassador for the format than Virat Kohli. I hope it's a well-thought-out decision and not a knee-jerk reaction with all that's going on, both on and off the field.



**AAHANA S KUMRA**

Virat Kohli has had a great term as a captain. He has changed the way Test cricket looks like, it's more stately today. Players are now more driven. What I've seen in the last few years is that as a team, India played really well. He has been a great leader. His kind of aggression is needed in the sport.



**ANGAD BEDI**

Thank you Virat Kohli for being such a wonderful captain and phenomenal player. He's brought so many laurels to Indian cricket. Every cricket captain brings in something different. He brought in aggression and strength. Look at the fitness level he brought to the team. He has been a true leader. We'll miss him as a skipper. I'd love to see him break records and let his bat do the talking.



## 'Confident to headline films on my own now'

Titas Chowdhury

Actor Yami Gautam Dhar has a lot to look forward to this year. What particularly excites her is shouldering two films, A Thursday and Lost, for the first time. "I feel confident to headline films on my own now, but the nervousness will always be there. It also comes from the fact that I love these scripts and the filmmakers helming them," she says.

In 2021, Dhar finished shooting for six projects. And while it was tough, thanks to the second wave of the pandemic, she believes it has been one of the most significant years for her. "2021 went by really fast. It was a disappointing and harsh year for everyone. But, at the same time, a lot of things changed in my life, personally and professionally," says Dhar, who tied the knot with filmmaker Aditya Dhar in June, last year.

With the number of Covid-19 cases soaring again, the 33-year-old feels it's time for production units to be more responsible. "We have crew members travelling by public transport. We need to think of their safety. A film set entailing even a tiny

**2021 went by fast. A lot of things changed in my life, personally and professionally.**  
**YAMI GAUTAM DHAR, Actor**

room has a lot of people. Keeping that in mind, we need to take calls and follow the norms," she says. Having suffered staggering losses in the

past two years, Dhar says the film industry is more prepared now. "When we started shooting after the second wave, I was in the middle of my third film and it was scary. Now, we feel more prepared. We have been taking precautions. We won't panic now, as the medical supplies are also in place," she concludes.



- 68** Kohli holds the record for most appearances as Test captain
- 40** He created record for most Test wins by an Indian skipper
- 4** Kohli is the only Indian captain to lead India to win four overseas Test series



PHOTO: FACEBOOK



**STOP PRESS**

After the sudden death of TV actor Bob Saget on January 9, his wife, Kelly Rizzo, wrote a note on social media remembering him: "I'm trying to not think I was robbed of time. But instead think: How lucky I was to be married to the most incredible man on earth..."

PHOTO: YOGEN SHAH



(From left) The filming of many movies featuring actors Vijay Deverakonda, Katrina Kaif and Salman Khan has been stalled; (above) Jersey and Radhe Shyam; (top) RRR

# BOLLYWOOD STARES AT BIG LOSSES AMID COVID-19 SURGE

Experts on how the box-office collection has nosedived and why things continue to look bleak

**Sugandha Rawal**

sugandha.rawal@hindustantimes.com

**F**rom film releases to shoot plans — the surge in Covid-19 cases has forced Bollywood to press the pause button on multiple things again. The entertainment industry is now staring at mounting financial losses, running in hundreds of crores. "Every quarter, at least ₹1,500 crore is being lost in terms of box-office revenue. Typically, in a year, more than ₹4,000 crore comes from the box office. We are losing money every month," says trade expert

"In terms of box-office numbers, we are looking at over ₹1,500 crore losses in the first quarter itself. Due to the crisis, the festive weekends of the first month of the year are lost," says producer and trade expert

**Girish Johar**

Actor Shahid Kapoor's Jersey was the first film to get delayed due to the rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in December, 2021. Since then, films like RRR, Radhe Shyam and Prithviraj have been pushed. Outdoor schedules of films such as Merry Christmas, Pathan, Tiger 3, Liger and Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani, have also been affected.

Shibasish Sarkar, producer and former CEO, Reliance Entertainment, says, "Back in 2019, we used to look at business worth hundreds of crores, but those numbers have lost relevance now. The numbers have nosedived in the last two years. So, we try to look at it from a period basis, and the first quarter has gone. We have to hope that things start rolling from April."

The restrictions in Mumbai and across most parts of India are

hurting the production as well as distribution of the film business. "Most films which were currently shooting have had to cancel and postpone their schedules, resulting in cost escalation. It's going to be a herculean task for these films to deliver in the given timelines," rues producer Amar Butala, who is backing the film, Mission Majnu.

Director Anees Bazmee shares, "We have seen huge losses till now our agar aise chalega, toh aur (losses) honge. It's been happening continuously, bahut zyada bada setback hai."

Jehil Thakkar, leader at media and entertainment, Deloitte India, mentions, "There's a big loss in terms of working capital cash flows. Also, the major outdoor schedules are cancelled, and they are the high cost ones. The loss would be hundreds of crores. But nobody has an exact figure."

**JOGINDER TUTEJA**

**Trade expert**  
Typically, in a year, more than ₹4,000 crore come from the box office. We are losing money every month.

**SHIBASISH SARKAR**

**Former CEO, Reliance Entertainment**  
Back in 2019, we would look at business worth hundreds of crores, but those numbers have lost relevance now.

**AMAR BUTALA**  
**Producer**  
Most films which were currently shooting have had to cancel and postpone their schedules, resulting in cost escalation.

**I do feel the void, says Sahil Khattar post breakup with singer Shruti Pathak**



**Vinay MR Mishra**

vinay.mishra@htdigital.in

**A**ctor Sahil Khattar, recently seen in 83 (2021), has been doing well professionally. But, all is not well in his personal life. We have learnt that Khattar and singer Shruti Pathak, who were in a relationship, have parted ways.

"Let's not talk about that chapter," says Khattar, when asked about the breakup. He goes on, "I wouldn't comment on what (kind of) association it was, what is happening there, or where it will go. We've respected each other too much. Even now, we are going to. We both have come to a phase where it's fine... life is beautiful and it will go on. Right now, we are headed to different places, professionally."

While he doesn't wish to talk about Pathak, he opens up about being single. "I don't have a personal life, and sadly, I don't (even) care. Professionally, I've been so driven that my personal life has taken a back seat. I do feel the void. I feel there should be a companion, who at least gives me a shoulder when I'm sad. I'm single and I want somebody who is sharp and intelligent," the 30-year-old signs off.



## I will take the booster shot and recommend everyone to do so: Boman

**Juhu Chakraborty**

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**T**he administration of the booster shot of the Covid-19 vaccine has begun in India for senior citizens and healthcare workers, and actor Boman Irani says that as a senior citizen, he'll make sure he gets it soon. The actor, who has been shooting continuously, says, "I am a senior citizen. I will be taking the booster shot as soon as possible and I recommend everyone to do so. The very reason why the virus has become weaker is simply because a good number of people have been vaccinated. This is going to be part and parcel of our lives and we have to be careful and live."

While the 62-year-old worries about the worsening situation currently, he feels there is no need to panic, as we are in a far better place compared to the last two years. "Covid is a dreaded word, but thankfully people are getting well in three-four days now. Most of us have been affected by this, but let's look at the nicer side. Hopefully, the virus becomes weaker with each outing. We are prepared now," he tells us.

The theatrical run of his recent film, 83 (2021), had to face the brunt of Covid-19, with cinemas shutting down in most cities across the country. But the actor says he is happy with how his role in the film was received. "Yes, the theatrical run would have been much better, but a film is eventually remembered by how much it earned. It will be remembered as a landmark film," he ends.



**Covid is a dreaded word, but thankfully people are getting well in three-four days now.**

**BOMAN IRANI, Actor**

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# 'LIVING AND WORKING IN THIS UNCERTAINTY IS DIFFICULT'

Rasika Dugal says that she spends most of her day rescheduling her work commitments amid the pandemic

**Sugandha Rawal**

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**A**ctor Rasika Dugal had to hit the pause button on her shooting schedule in Ooty because of the rising Covid-19 cases. Dugal shares that she is now spending every day realigning everything in her work schedule, but the continued uncertainty is adding to her woes.

"It's funny right now because I spend a significant amount of time on the phone with my manager every day, realigning dates. And then we find out the next day that we have to start from scratch [due to changing circumstances as a result of Covid-19 cases]," shares the actor, who was supposed to go to Palampur for another shoot, which also got pushed.

"Living and working in this uncertainty is difficult," rues the *Lootcase* (2020) actor, adding, "It is something that all of us deal with every day to varying degrees. It is all very unsettling."

Dugal goes on, "Everybody is trying to cope, trying to figure out what the best and most responsible thing to do is. I hope things settle down soon, but it is a hope that we have had for the past two years now."

The actor, who has made a name for herself with OTT projects such as

*Mirzapur* and *Out of Love*, further notes that "the hesitation to go out to work is there" as "you are always wondering if everybody's health has been accounted for or not".

She continues, "Also, it is never clear... You never know whether you are unnecessarily stopping work, or whether you've stretched yourself too much and it has become unsafe. Unfortunately, it is not clear to anybody."

On a personal note, the actor turns 37 today, and she always aspires to spend her birthday working. Dugal says, "We shoot through a lot of things, and birthdays are no reason to take a holiday from filming. So mostly, it's always been a working birthday for me. I had an off on my birthday last year, and I liked it that way, too."

**Everybody is trying to cope and figure out the best and most responsible thing to do at the moment.**

**RASIKA DUGAL, Actor**



## Talks to revive CID are on: Shivaji Satam

**Vinay MR Mishra**

**V**eteran actor Shivaji Satam may have made the character ACP Pradyuman from the cult TV series *CID* immortal, but he has been sitting idle at home for quite some time now. "I won't say that I am getting many offers. Nahin hai toh nahin hai. There are one or two offers, but they are not interesting. I come from a Marathi theatre background. I have always done projects that I liked," admits Satam.

Ask him if he is ready to play ACP Pradyuman once again, and he says, "Tomorrow (if) CID starts again, I'll be right in the front to do the project. I'm not tired of playing that character, but tired of being at home."

There have been several rumours that the cop drama may be revived with the same.

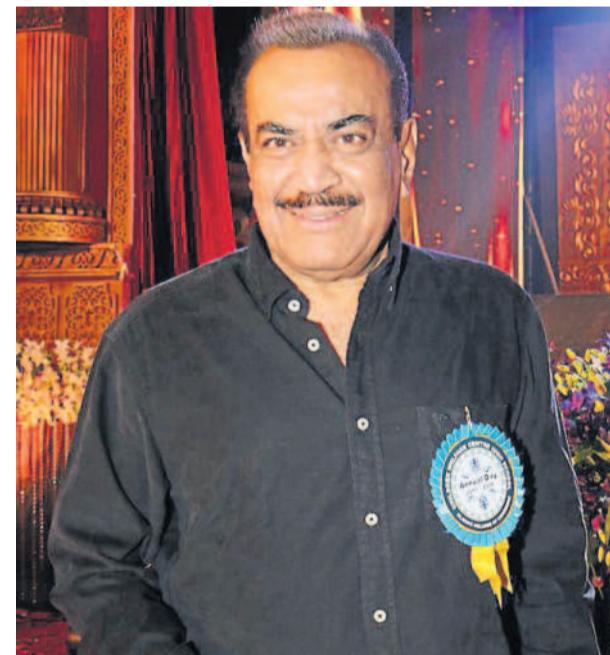


PHOTO: FOTOCORP

## Vaishalee Thakkar: Ageing gracefully is best thing for yourself

**Kavita Awaasthi**

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**V**aishalee Thakkar considers herself fortunate that "some beautiful roles" are being written for actors, and age has nothing to do with it.

"So many genres are being tapped in today's times, and it makes actors from all age groups thrilled to be performing those substantial roles," says the 48-year-old, best known for her comic role as Praveena in *Baa Bahoo Aur Baby*.

She adds, "Ageing gracefully is the best thing you can do for yourself. If you see (actor) Neena Gupta, she is wonderfully ageing and doing some of her best works, as are other actors such as Ratnaji (Pathak Shah) and Supriya Pilgaonkar."

Thakkar recalls an incident, when one of her co-actors called her aunty sarcastically. She shares, "I've never shied away from playing characters older than my real age. In one of my shows, my young co-star would call me aunty off camera. But once the show took a leap, that actor became an aunty in it, and she soon quit."

## Jay Soni has 'no ego in giving auditions'

**Vinay MR Mishra**

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**A**ctor Jay Soni, a well-known face on television, is currently exploring opportunities in the digital space. And he shares that he has no reservations about auditioning for roles despite being a noted figure: "I still give auditions for films and web. There are many friends who ask, 'Why do you need to give auditions?' But I feel auditions keep me on my toes. I ask people to call me for auditions. Main toh dukaan khol ke baitha hoon. There's no ego in it."

Soni, who returned to acting, with *Sasural Genda Phool 2*, admits to being nervous about facing the camera again. "There were questions in my mind, 'Will I be able to pull it off?' And more than insecurity, the question was 'What if things don't work out,'" he shares.

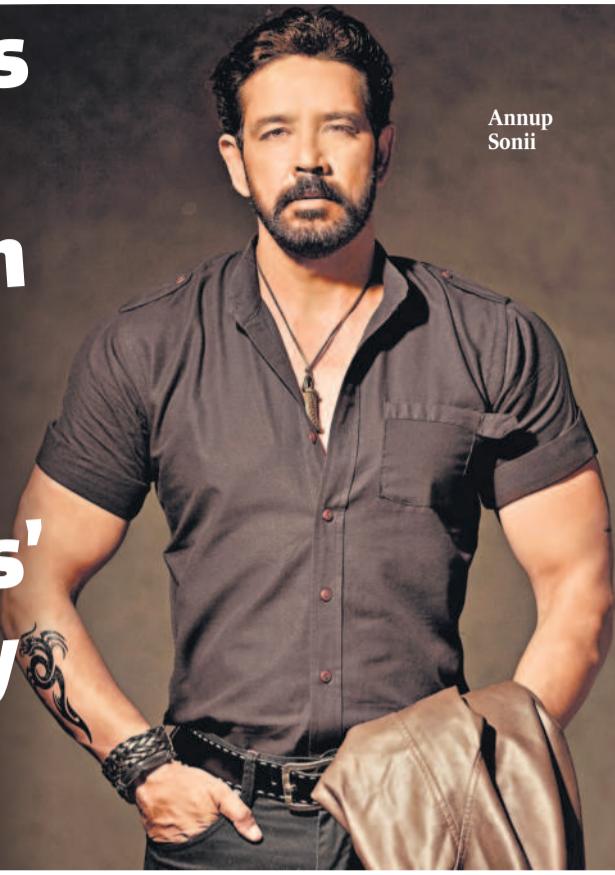
Though Soni has been acting in TV shows for almost two decades, he found the last five years without work, idle at home, quite taxing. "There is a lot of uncertainty in the industry," says Soni, who is also a father of one.

But he didn't give up hope and he pursued different avenues: "I tried my hand in the hospitality business. I started a cafe but things didn't work out the way I wanted them to. I launched my YouTube channel as well."



**Annup says it's unfair to question the 'relevance of cinemas' with every wave**

Annup Sonii



**Juhu Chakraborty**

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**E**very time there is a surge in Covid-19 cases and curbs are put into place, discussions about the relevance of cinemas in the OTT age begin. Actor Annup Sonii, on the other hand, claims that cinemas will continue to have a stronghold.

He says, "It is not fair to question the relevance of cinemas. We are a big country,

and we have a huge number of viewers with different tastes. It is not that people won't go and watch films [ever in the future]."

According to Sonii, these pandemic-induced roadblocks will never impact the cinema-going culture: "Cinemas offer a different spectrum. When you go to see a movie in a theatre, sitting in a dark room and watching this larger-than-life content, that [charm] will always be there." But he

quickly adds, "There will always be a balance. People aren't going to stop watching movies because they're too preoccupied with OTT. Neither of them will be shunned."

The 46-year-old has dabbled in TV as well as films and is now working in the streaming space. He calls this the "best phase" so far in his career and adds that "market value of an actor goes up with time with good work". "That's happening slowly to me," Sonii ends.



{ DAILY HOROSCOPE }  
**Monday, January 17, 2022**

**PREMASTROLOGER**

**ASKPREMASTROLOGER**

**ARIES**  
 MAR 21-APR 20

**Expenditure is likely to expand. Investing in some place, attempts at mastering a skill or subject on the professional or academic front will not be difficult, as you make your mark.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Singles can find love and will heal from past experiences.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 17 LUCKY COLOUR: Light Blue**

**LEO**  
 JUL 23-AUG 23

**Your relationship with your family will become better. It is advised to be more attentive and should not hurry to invest in any funds or property.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Understanding will increase between you and your partner due to past conflicts.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 7 LUCKY COLOUR: Cherry**

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 NOV 23-DEC 21

**You will be able to control your budget, making your financial position more stable. Be expressive about what you want. Your desire to achieve something on the academic front may not be a cakewalk.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Your love life will get better today.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 4 LUCKY COLOUR: Dark Grey**

**TAURUS**  
 APR 21-MAY 20

**Financial position will increase and dealing with different investments will be beneficial. Do not rush into things, your hard work will pay off and you will learn new skills.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** The time you spend together now will be memorable for all your life.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 17 LUCKY COLOUR: Light Red**

**VIRGO**  
 AUG 24-SEP 23

**Do not rush into important decisions. You will get great spontaneous opportunities and things will start to fall in place. Take care of people around you, especially kids as they are at high risk of falling sick.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** You may face some ups and downs in your relationship.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 17 LUCKY COLOUR: White**

**CAPRICORN**  
 DEC 22-JAN 21

**You should increase your self-esteem. You should not get distracted due to your personal issues and continue to work on your goals. You should analyse and buy property.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** There can be some issues in the relationship, but your nature will keep your issues in control.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 15 LUCKY COLOUR: Dark Brown**

**GEMINI**  
 MAY 21-JUN 21

**Financially, this could be a hard time for you but being patient can be a game-changer. Those who are seeking a job will find job opportunities according to their will.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Getting close to your partners will improve your love life.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 1 LUCKY COLOUR: White**

**LIBRA**  
 SEP 24-OCT 23

**Seek advice from the elders before buying or selling any property. An invitation to a party may find you in your element.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Couples in long term relationships have a chance of tying the knot soon.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 11 LUCKY COLOUR: Lavender**

**AQUARIUS**  
 JAN 22-FEB 19

**You can have great benefits from the past investments. You are likely to sway the opinion of those who matter in your favour regarding your performance.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** This is a good time for romance.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 7 LUCKY COLOUR: Crimson**

**CANCER**  
 JUN 22-JUL 22

**This is the time to get indulged in hard work which will result in great things in the near future.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** You should be careful as there can be disloyalty.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 22 LUCKY COLOUR: Brown**

**SCORPIO**  
 OCT 24-NOV 22

**Spend your money carefully this week. Do not overestimate your talents and skills as it could backfire this time. Work on removing the stress from work.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Singles might find it difficult to find new love, and people in relationships could be away from their loved ones for a little while.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 22 LUCKY COLOUR: Blue**

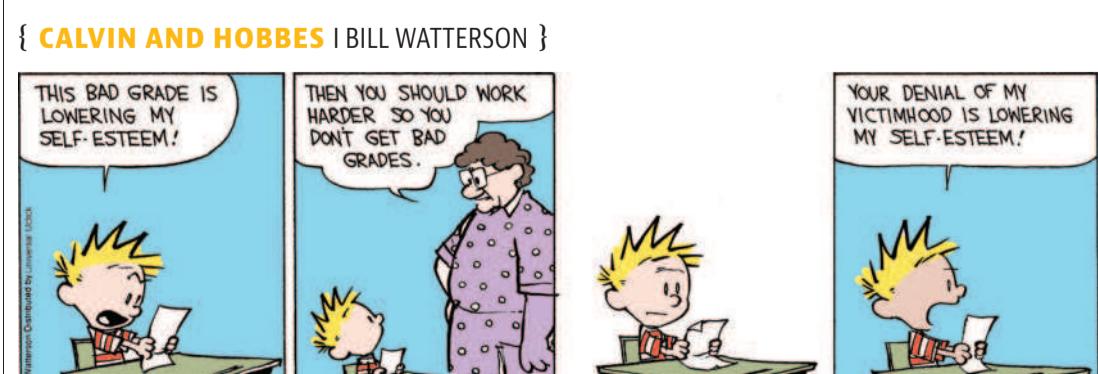
**PISCES**  
 FEB 20-MAR 20

**You will earn money from various sources today. Try a different approach towards everything happening around you. You will need a lot of encouragement and motivation to make you work.**

**LOVE FOCUS:** Start taking initiatives in the relationship.

**LUCKY NUMBER: 3 LUCKY COLOUR: Brown**

{ CALVIN AND HOBBES } BILL WATTERSON }





## It is just the start: Under-19 World No. 1 Tasnim Mir

Aprajita Sharad

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**S**he is all of 16, but Tasnim Mir has accomplished a feat that seasoned badminton players like Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu weren't able to. This young shuttler, hailing from Mehsana, Gujarat, has become the first Indian to claim the world No. 1 ranking in the under-19 girls singles category, according to the latest Badminton World Federation junior rankings.

To bag the top spot is no small feat, but for Mir, this is 'just the start.' She tells us, 'Mummy ne bola tha that I've become number one, but I wasn't overwhelmed by the news. My goal is to win an Olympic gold medal for India and perform well on a senior level.' While she may not be celebrating her achievement, her family is elated, to say the least. 'My parents are

overwhelmed and proud of me. Main apne hard work se number one bani hun. Mujhe bahut mushkil lagta tha yeh sab, I toiled for it,' she says.

Her love for badminton dates back to her early years, when she would trot along with her father, Irfan Mir, a badminton coach himself. 'When I was seven, I'd accompany him to the stadium just to watch the sport. Initially, I started playing badminton for fun, but because I was good at it, I gradually began training with my father. I played professionally after participating in and winning state tournaments. My first badminton partner and my first match ever was with my father!' shares Mir, whose brother, Mohd Ali Mir, is a Gujarat state junior champion in badminton.

Training, undoubtedly, took up a large chunk of her life. And as a result, her teenage years weren't spent in the same manner as any regular girl would. 'Kuch bhi fun

karne ko mila hi nahin. Toh normal life kaafi miss ho gayi. Kaafi cheezien badminton ki vajah se choot gayi,' says Mir.

Ask this young champ what she misses the most, and she is quick to say, 'Ghoomma miss karti hun. A stress-free vacation is what I want. I do travel for my tournaments, but always with a mindset of playing a match. I would love to visit Ladakh, Kashmir or even the Himalayas with my family.'

Over the last four years, Mir has shifted base to Guwahati, Assam and is training under the expertise of Edwin Iriawan from Indonesia, who has coached the likes of Nehwal and Sindhu in the past. What's next on her agenda? 'Next month, I have international matches in Iran and Uganda and I am preparing for those. My resolution for 2022 is to improve my rank while playing on a senior level,' she signs off.

### { SPOTTED }

## Keepin' it casual

A thleisure met chic as these celebs were spotted in Mumbai at their comfy best. Karishma Tanna wore a black-on-grey co-ord activewear set, while Neha Sharma was papped in a black co-ord set with a white crop shirt to break the monotony. Tamannaah Bhatia chose a classy belted black dress with red pumps, while Puja Banerjee and Kunal Verma were clicked in casual attires.



PHOTOS: YOGEN SHAH



PHOTOS: YOGEN SHAH



Neha Sharma recently returned from Chicago, US



Kunal Verma and Puja Banerjee got remarried in a traditional Bengali setup



Karisma Kapoor

Head to celebs' gram for some good vibes and pretty skies. Karisma Kapoor posted a selfie flaunting red lips and captioned it, 'Go with the flow', while Sunny Leone struck a pose in front of a beautiful sunset backdrop.



Sunny Leone

PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM

## Food Samaritans step up to make meals for Covid patients



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK (FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY)

Sanchita Kalra

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**S**everal states across India are presently witnessing a steep surge in Covid-19 cases. Doing their bit to lend a helping hand are a host of good Samaritans who've taken the onus of ensuring that those in isolation have access to fresh food. A number of Delhi-NCR residents are preparing and delivering nutritious and hygienic home-cooked meals to those recuperating from the virus.

Mother-daughter duo Aatika and Neelam Kapoor from Naraina Vihar have halted the operation of their catering business as they are inundated with orders for Covid-19 patients. "From December 16, we started getting orders again for tiffins and thalis. And by January first week, we were flooded with calls," says Aatika.

The Kapoors, who have recovered from the virus themselves, consult a doctor to prepare healthy meals at nominal prices. "My family had tested positive, so we had consulted a doctor for the diet. We have been preparing food accordingly, to provide a tasty, wholesome meal at ₹90," adds Aatika.

Some are even going the extra mile to personally deliver food at patients' doorstep. Seema Verma, an entrepreneur from DLF Phase I Gurugram, says: "I also got Covid-19 and realised how difficult it is. While taking an order, I ask people about their taste preferences and if they're allergic to anything. And if it's nearby, I personally deliver the order, because sometimes, delivery apps take time."

And for some, it's the act of kindness that is above all. Noida-based Madhu Verma, who's supplying meals across



Many Delhi-NCR residents are helping get nutritious, home-cooked food delivered to those who've contracted Covid-19



We've lowered membership prices by more than half.

ANKUR SEHGAL,  
From a gym in  
Tilak Nagar

we are negotiating membership prices and also refunding money for the time they can't come to the gym," says Kapil Chand from Health 2 Offer Gym in Ashok Vihar, hoping the refund clause will help bring customers. "Paise vapade ke promise karenge toh farak toh zaroor padega, plus humein bhi acha lagega. Humein customer ka nuksaan nahi karana," he adds.

And that's not all. Gym owners are coming up with a wide variety of virtual workout options for their customers to choose from. "To enhance sales, we have started an online group course twice a day, wherein we give aerobics and Bhangra workout sessions for one hour," shares Singh.

With curbs being imposed on an industry that's already struggling to make ends meet, the situation is now worse than ever. "We have no funds left. Aisi situation ho gayi hai ki now, after two waves, we have no capacity to survive. Kisi ko bandh nai karna apna kaam, lekin ab kya karen nahi samajh a raha. We are even open to having discussions with people where

PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)  
• WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)  
• JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543  
• NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP  
• LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

### #gramit



A befitting tribute to frontline warriors

Healthcare workers have been the backbone of our battle against Covid-19 since day one, and they are certainly worthy of praise for their sheer dedication and commitment. Seen here is an artist giving final touches to a wall mural that pays tribute to our frontline workers, during the weekend curfew imposed by the Delhi government in order to curb the spread of the virus.

PHOTO: SHAHZAB KHAN/PTI

## Lockdown refunds is the new clause for gym memberships

Anjuri Nayar Singh

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**T**he surge in Covid-19 cases has forced gyms to shut shop yet again, with many fitness centres struggling to survive in this bleak period. In an attempt to break even, gym owners are putting forth a host of offers to gain membership, one such being a refund clause, in case of imposition of any curbs or a lockdown.

"We've got no bookings at all this new year, virtual or physical. We are requesting people to book memberships and assuring them that we will refund the money for the period of the lockdown, when they couldn't visit the gym. We are also giving major discounts so that we get some bookings at least and can pay our fixed expenses," says Tavdeep Singh from Deep Gym in South Extension I.

Ankur Sehgal from Strength Gym in Tilak Nagar also has a set of similar offers in place. "We've lowered prices by more than half and have promised to refund the money during the lockdown, when we would be holding virtual classes," he says.

With curbs being imposed on an industry that's already struggling to make ends meet, the situation is now worse than ever. "We have no funds left. Aisi situation ho gayi hai ki now, after two waves, we have no capacity to survive. Kisi ko bandh nai karna apna kaam, lekin ab kya karen nahi samajh a raha. We are even open to having discussions with people where



PHOTO: MOHD ZAKIR/HT  
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# VEGANUARY: ALL ABOUT GUILT-FREE INDULGENCE

The month-long movement encourages people to choose a plant-based diet for the sake of a better

planet and to adopt a mindful lifestyle

Ruchika Garg

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**S**etting the momentum for the months to come, it's essential to talk about healthy eating right at the very beginning of the year. And a portmanteau of January and vegan, Veganuary, a global pledge to adopt a plant-based lifestyle for 31 days, does the same. This global movement is an initiative of the UK-based charity organisation of the same name to promote vegan diets for a better planet. Officially launched in India in December 2019, the movement garnered massive interest from people across the country. A recent survey by YouGov, a market research and data analytics firm, showed that 65% of Indians are keen to replace meat with plant-based options in 2022.

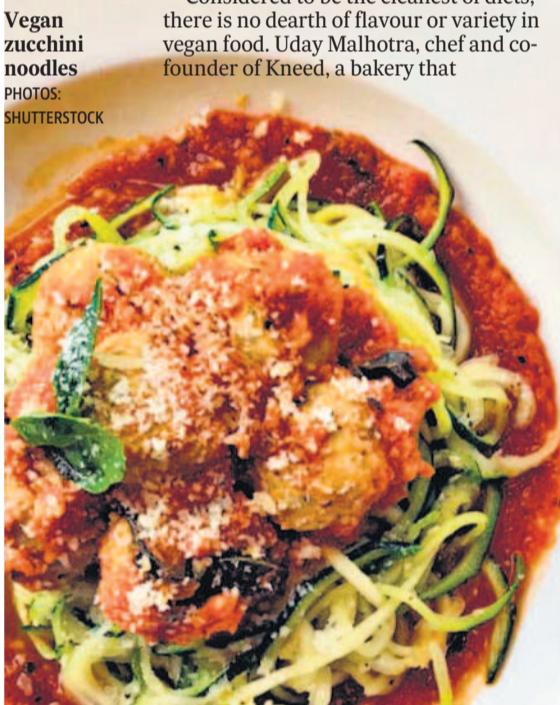
Several brands have launched vegan-based menus to meet the demands. "There is no denying that the pandemic has led to people becoming aware of the consequences of their lifestyle choices on their immunity, health, mental and physical well-being. Veganism is a long-term lifestyle and cannot be confined to just one just January. To cater to this new trend, we have launched a plant-based chicken biryani," says Mohammed Bhol, chef and co-founder of Charcoal Eats. Created from ingredients such as vegetable protein, soy or wheat, vegan meats have the taste and texture of real meat. "Plant-based keema is made with soy. We make kofta balls from the keema. And these mock meat balls are used in the biryani," adds Bhol.

Considered to be the cleanest of diets, there is no dearth of flavour or variety in vegan food. Uday Malhotra, chef and co-founder of Knead, a bakery at

operates on a cloud kitchen-based model, says, "We make artisanal bread, buns, granolas, nut butter, dips, hummus and energy bars with 100% plant-based products. Veganism is one of the ruling trends of 2022." However, vegan baking is time-consuming and technical in terms of temperature and the ingredients used. "Since vegan products don't use dairy or eggs, the recipes formulated are sensitive to time and temperature," adds Malhotra, who suggests using dark Belgian chocolate for chocolate bread and banneton baskets to shape gluten-free breads.

Cakes are another category of food that are much in demand for vegan variants. To make vegan cakes, one can replace eggs with flax seeds, ripe bananas or aquafaba. Instead of milk, use almond milk, coconut milk or oat milk. "I suggest using just one substitute, as too many of them will ruin the final product," says Atifa Nazir Ahanger from The Boho Baker that offers vegan cakes, cupcakes, breads and cookies. For those trying their hand at vegan diets for the first time, starting with substitutes such as plant-based milk, nut butters like peanut butter, cashew butter and cheese substitutes are easier options.

This movement has also led to a rise in the popularity of vegan restaurants. "As a trend, Veganuary helps us help people switch to a vegan diet. The right taste is the first step. Vegan food can be made equally flavoursome by appropriate swaps. For our cream-based recipes, we use coconut cream. For Japanese soba noodles, we use gluten-free soba noodles, home-made peanut butter sauce, button mushrooms, shiitake mushrooms, spring onions, zucchini, galangal, soy sauce and coconut milk," says Rajender Chabotra, chef from Getafix Café. The restaurant also offers buckwheat pancakes, barley and bok choy bowl meal among other vegan variants.



## CAULIFLOWER MOILEE

### Ingredients

- Cauliflower: 1
- Carrot: 1
- Coconut oil: 2 tbsp
- Mustard seeds: 1 tsp
- Curry leaves: 10-14
- Onion: 2
- Ginger: 1 inch
- Garlic: 12-15 pieces
- Tomatoes: 3
- Beans: 8-10
- Green chillies: 3 to 4

### Method

- Heat coconut oil, add mustard seeds, curry leaf and let it splutter.
- Grind onions, ginger and garlic in a mixer and add the paste to the oil. Sauté this for five to seven minutes.
- Once the onion paste is light golden, add puree tomatoes which

is grinded in a mixer, add whole green chillies, dry spices turmeric powder, red chilli powder and cumin powder and salt to taste.

● Cook this mixture till you see the oil being separated.

● Add tamarind pulp, coconut milk and coconut cream and stir.

● Blanch the carrot, cauliflower and beans to add in the gravy.

● Cook till it reaches a boil and serve hot with some steam rice or millets.

Recipe by chef Natasha Gandhi

## #theburningquestion

### How to make sure your baati is soft yet well-cooked?

Baati is a traditional Rajasthani dish, which is served with dal and churma usually. To cook it perfectly with good taste and texture, follow these tips:

- Instead of using baking soda, unlike most people nowadays, knead the flour with lots of ghee to give it a smooth and soft appearance. Baati, being a traditional delicacy, tastes better with ghee.
- Knead a tight dough with salt, carom seeds and more ghee so that it doesn't get flimsy while baking.
- Bake the baati for 20-25 minutes on a slow flame and check it after every five minutes to avoid a burnt taste. Once the raw smell is gone and it's dark brown in colour, your baatis are cooked.
- Break the cooked baati into tiny pieces and put some more ghee on top while serving.

Disclaimer: The views expressed above are the author's personal.



Abhijeet Singh Rathore, Chef in charge, Sona, New York

Frozen in time: Photo of spaghetti mid-air goes viral



8-metre tall champagne glass tower breaks record

The Guinness World Records' Instagram page is home to numerous videos showcasing bizarre records set. In a recent reel posted on the page, a record of making a glass pyramid with 54,740 champagne glasses was shown. "The 54,740 champagne glass pyramid was over 8.23 metres (27 ft) tall. It took a team of people 55 hours, spread over five days, to create the structure and celebrate the New Year at Atlantis, The Palm in Dubai," the account wrote in the comment section.



Finish this giant thali to win ₹8 lakh

Shared by food blogger Rajneesh Gyani on his YouTube handle 'Are You Hungry', this giant Baahubali Thali from Delhi has caught people's attention. The video which gained more than two million views, shows the extensive thali which has magnanimous portions of a large variety of dishes. Anyone who finishes this scrumptious thali in 40 minutes will be rewarded ₹8 lakh as prize money.



Lightning-fast service

Karne Garibaldi, a popular restaurant in Guadalajara, Mexico, is known to serve orders much faster than you can imagine. They made it to the Guinness World Records in 1996 for fastest service in 13.5 seconds. And 26 years later, the restaurant is still reported to serve food in less than a minute with their lightning-fast service.



Compiled by Ruchika Garg