

CITY TALKS

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**1.74 LAKH STUDENTS MENTORED UNDER DELHI GOVT'S 'DESH KA MENTOR' PROG, SAYS MANISH SISODIA**

BANKING & FINANCE

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**RESERVE BANK OF INDIA LIKELY TO HIKE INTEREST RATES BY UP TO 100 BASIS POINTS IN 2022**

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**'LOOP LAPETA' TRAILER SHOWS A THRILLING CUT TO THE CHASE**

# India logs 2.69 lakh Covid cases, 402 deaths in a day

**NEW DELHI:** India registered 2,68,833 new Covid infections in a day taking the tally to 3,68,50,962, which includes 6,041 omicron variant cases, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Saturday. With 402 more deaths, the number of people who have succumbed to the viral disease has risen to 4,85,752.

The case fatality rate was 1.32 per cent. A total of 6,041 Omicron cases have been detected so far, an increase of 5.01 per cent since Friday, the data updated at 8 am showed. The daily positivity rate was 16.66 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was 12.84 per cent. Active cases have increased to 14,17,820,



the highest in around 223 days, and comprise 3.85 per cent of the total infections. The national Covid recovery rate has decreased to 94.83 per cent, the Health Minis-



try said. In a day, the active caseload in the country has increased by 1,45,747.

The total number of people who have recuperated from the disease so far has increased to 3,49,47,390. The cumulative Covid vaccine doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide inoculation drive has exceeded 156.02 crore. The 402 new fatalities include 199 from Kerala and 34 from Delhi. Of the total deaths reported so far in the country, 1,41,756 are from Maharashtra, 50,568 from Kerala, 38,411 from Karnataka, 36,956 from Tamil Nadu, 25,305 from Delhi, 22,949 from Uttar Pradesh and 20,013 from West Bengal.

## 6 states report crop damage due to excess rains, rabi sowing on track elsewhere

**NEW DELHI:** Data from Agriculture Ministry on Friday showed that overall trend of Rabi crop sowing progress is progressing satisfactorily owing to the fact that major growing states have received recent winter rainfall, beneficial for Rabi crops, even as some states have reported crop damage due to excess rains.

Rabi crops have been affected in Madhya Pradesh (48,871 ha), Rajasthan (69,375 ha), Uttar Pradesh (1,11,700 ha), Haryana (97,676 ha), Maharashtra (5,276 ha) and Tripura (13,542 ha), according to data as updated by the respective states after a video conference on January 11.

The total sown area under Rabi crops as on Friday is 664.59 lakh ha against 656.44 lakh ha area during the corresponding period of last year, thus recording an increase by 8.15 lakh.

Sowing reported under wheat is 336.48 lakh ha against 340.74 lakh ha last year, while rice sowing is over 19.82 lakh ha against 24.33 lakh ha area of last year, according to the data. The area coverage under pulses is 160.20 lakh ha against 160.13 lakh ha area of last year and for coarse cereals at 47.82 lakh ha against 48.91 lakh ha area of last year. However, the area coverage reported under oilseeds is 100.27 lakh ha area against 82.34 lakh ha area of last year, thus showing a significant increase.

In oilseeds, mainly significant increased area coverage has been recorded under rapeseed and mustard at 90.45 lakh ha compared to corresponding period of last year of 72.93 lakh ha.

As per the Central Water Commission statistics, as on January 13, the live water storage available in 137 reservoirs in the country is 101 per cent of live storage of corresponding period of last year and 122 per cent of average of last ten years.

That is because of widespread rainfall across the country. Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and some North-Eastern states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland received rainfall during this period.

Most of the states are still expected to achieve the targeted area of pulses within this month while sowing/transplanting of Rabi rice will be carried out in the southern and eastern region till end of January to first week of February," said an official.



## Rajdhani Express train hits cement pillar placed on track in suspected derailment bid in Gujarat

**VALSAD:** The Mumbai-Delhi Rajdhani Express train hit a cement pillar, which some miscreants had allegedly placed on the railway track near Valsad in south Gujarat, although no passenger was injured, police officials said on Saturday. The police suspect that the incident, which took place around 7.10 pm on Friday, was an attempt to derail the Delhi-bound train.

"They have registered a case." The Mumbai-Hazrat Nizamuddin August Kranti Rajdhani Express train hit the cement pillar placed on the railway track close to Atul station near Valsad. After being hit by the train, the pillar got pushed off the track. The incident did not affect the train as it moved on and no passenger was hurt. The loco pilot immediately informed the Atul railway station personnel," an official of Valsad rural police station said. On being alerted, senior police and railway officials rushed to the spot. "Some miscreants had placed the cement pillar on the track.

The train hit the pillar, after which the train manager immediately informed the local station master," Rajkumar Pandian, Range, IG of Surat, told reporters. It appeared to be a case of an attempt to derail the train, he said, adding that the police are conducting an investigation. An FIR was lodged against unidentified miscreants at Valsad rural police station, and efforts are on to nab the culprit using technical surveillance and human intelligence, the Valsad rural police official said.

## Parliament's Budget Session begins from Jan 31, Union Budget on Feb 1

**NEW DELHI:** The CCPA-Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs has recommended the commencement of the Budget Session of Parliament on January 31, sources said on Friday. The Budget is to be presented on February 1.

The President is likely to address the joint sitting on January 31 and the same day the economic survey will be tabled in the House. The session will be conducted in two parts -- the first part will end on February 11 and after that the House will resume again on March 14 after a break. The session proceedings will fall in between the elections in five states, and the notification for the first phase of polls in Uttar Pradesh has been issued by the EC.

The session will be conducted amid Covid protocol. On Tuesday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inspected the Parliament House Complex (PHC) to take stock of the health safety related measures in light of the recent spike in Covid-19 cases in the country. Birla visited the Covid-19 testing facility set up in Parliament House Annexe for the Members of Parliament, officers and staff of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats and reviewed the preparations there. The Rajya Sabha Chairman and the Lok Sabha Speaker directed Secretaries-Generals of both the Houses to suggest measures for the safe conduct of the upcoming Budget Session.

Both the Rajya Sabha chairman and the Lok Sabha speaker have directed the secretary generals to review adequacy of the Covid protocol followed during last the Winter Session in the current situation and submit a proposal in this regard at the earliest," the sources said.



## India improves global passport rank, Japan-Singapore top list, Pak among worst

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian passport now ranks at 83rd position on the Henley Passport Index, climbing seven places from the 90th rank last year, the London-based global citizenship and residence advisory firm, said.

It released the rankings for the year 2022, based on exclusive data provided by the International Air Transport Association. As per the report, Japan and Singapore top the list of being the most powerful passports in the world for the year 2022. The visa-free score of both countries is at 192.

Afghanistan (rank 111) and Iraq (rank 110) continue to be in the 'worst passports to hold' category having a visa-free score of 26 and 28 respectively. Pakistan's passport is fourth among the worst or least powerful passports. The index includes 199 different passports and 227 different destinations. Updated quarterly, the Henley Passport Index is considered the standard reference tool for the global citizen and sovereign states for assessing passport rank on the global mobility spectrum.



## PM lauds Army on Army Day

**NEW DELHI:** On the occasion of Army Day on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the Indian Army, saying it is known for bravery and professionalism, and words cannot do justice to its invaluable contribution towards national safety.

Army Day is observed on January 15 to mark Field Marshal KM Cariappa taking over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the

Indian Army, replacing his British predecessor in 1949.

Indian Army personnel serve in hostile terrains and are at the forefront of helping fellow citizens during humanitarian crisis, including natural disasters. India is proud of the stellar contribution of the Army in Peacekeeping Missions overseas as well," the prime minister said.

He added, "Best wishes on the occasion of Army Day, especially to our courageous soldiers, respected veterans and their families. The Indian Army is known for its bravery and professionalism. Words cannot do justice to the invaluable contribution of the Indian Army towards national safety."

## Appropriation Act 2021 gets Presidential assent

**NEW DELHI:** President Ram Nath Kovind has given his nod to the Appropriation (No 5) Act 2021 that authorises payment and appropriation of Rs 3.73 lakh crore from the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of the financial year 2021-22.

According to a gazette notification published on Friday, the President gave his assent on January 12. The Act authorises the expenditure of Rs 3,737,035,100,000 as voted by the Parliament, Rs 574,900,000 charged on the Consolidated Fund totalling to Rs 3,737,610,000,000 from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India towards defraying the several charges which will come in course of payment during the financial year 2021-22 in respect of the services specified.

Generally, after the budget proposal discussions and later voting on demand for grants, the government introduces the Appropriation Bill in the Lok Sabha, which when passed by the Parliament, is then sent to the President.



## HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

- 1 PM Narendra Modi lauds Army on Army Day
- 2 Parliament's Budget Session begins from Jan 31, Union Budget on February 1
- 3 No breakthrough in 14th round of India-China border talks: Joint statement

## FAKE CURRENCY RACKET: NIA files second supplementary charge sheet



**NEW DELHI:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday said that they have filed a supplementary charge sheet against Sariful Islam who was pumping counterfeit Indian currency in the nation. The charge sheet was filed before the special NIA court in Lucknow, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The case was initially lodged by ATS Lucknow. Acting on a tip-off, they recovered fake Indian notes of the face value of Rs 2,49,500 from Ghaziabad. Since this case was related to the cross-border crime, the NIA took over the investigation. In 2020, the case was re-registered by the NIA and a team was formed to look into the matter.

The NIA, after completing the probe, filed a charge sheet in this connection in June 2020. It filed supplementary charge sheet in the matter in March 2021. Investigation revealed that the earlier charge-sheeted accused persons had received high quality Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) from accused Sariful Islam.

It was also revealed that Islam was in contact with Bangladesh-based smugglers and conspirators involved in illicit trafficking of FICN. An NIA official said that they have collected a lot of evidence to prove that a cross-border conspiracy is going on to pump fake Indian notes across the nation. Various modules are working into this, and the conspiracy is larger that it appears, the official said.

## No breakthrough in 14th round of India-China border talks: Joint statement

**NEW DELHI:** There was no breakthrough in the 14th round of talks between the militaries of India and China and the two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue to work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest, according to a joint statement.

Indian Army Chief General M M Naravane had said on Wednesday that India was hopeful of resolving issues related to disengagement at Patrolling Point 15 (Hot Springs) in eastern Ladakh in the 14th round of talks. The 14th round India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo



border meeting point on the Chinese side on Wednesday. Representatives from the defence and foreign affairs establishments of the two sides were present at the meeting,

The two sides had a frank and in-depth exchange of views for the resolution of the relevant issues along the LAC in the Western Sector (Ladakh border)," it mentioned.

They agreed that both sides should follow "the guidance provided by the state leaders" and work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest, it stated. "It was noted that this would help in restoration of peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the Western Sector and enable progress in bilateral relations," it mentioned.

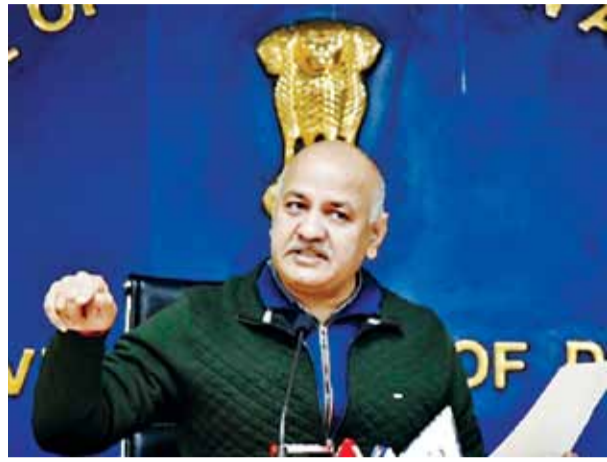
The two sides also agreed to consolidate on the previous outcomes and take effective efforts to maintain the security and stability on the ground in the Western Sector including during winter, it said. "The two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue via military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest," it mentioned.

The two sides agreed that the next round of the commanders' talks should be held at the earliest, the statement said. The 13th round of talks had taken place on October 10 last year and it had ended in a stalemate.

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1.74 lakh students mentored under Delhi govt's 'Desh ka Mentor' prog: Sisodia

NEW DELHI: A total of 1,74,000 Delhi government school students, also called mentees, have been taught by 44,000 mentors under the state government's 'Desh ke Mentor' programme, Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia said on Friday.



As for the mentors, of the 44,000 mentors, nearly 500 each are from IIT and IIM, 15,600 are either doing their graduation or Ph.D from a well-known education institute and 7,500 have completed their studies and are currently working at a good post," Sisodia said during a press conference this afternoon.

voluntary mentors to students from class IX to XII. Those aged between 18 and 35 can sign up to become mentors through an app developed by Delhi Technological University.

of and they are trained accordingly, only after which they are assigned a mentee. We have also ensured that mentees are only assigned mentors of the same gender," he said.

two months, which can be extended for four months. The programme recently came under the scrutiny of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), which has recommended that it be suspended until the safety "loopholes" are "overhauled".

AAP senior leader Sisodia and MLA Atishi have blamed BJP of playing politics over the matter by involving the commission. "A BJP activist from Chhattisgarh has filed a complaint with NCPCR, who in return asked us about the steps we have taken to ensure

children's safety. After we have answered each and every question of theirs, NCPCR has stated that no police verification is being done of mentees," he pointed out.

"We have seen the status of education infrastructure in the BJP-led states, the party should work in their respective states and not intervene in the progress of those who are actually working to make a change," he added. AGENCIES

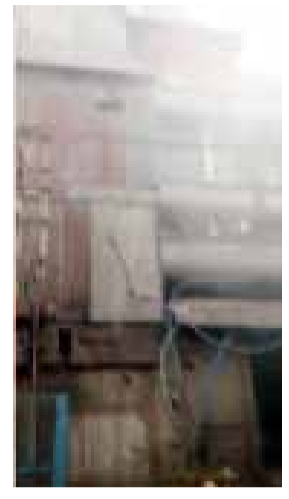
Delhi to get 50 e-buses in Feb, 300 by April: Kailash Gahlot



NEWDELHI: Fifty electric buses will be inducted into the DTC's fleet by the second week of February, and the target to admit 300 more is likely to be achieved by April, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Friday.

information system, CCTVs, panic buttons and GPS, among others, according to the Delhi government. "With the induction of these 100 buses, Delhi now has nearly 6,900 buses -- a figure that has never been obtained before," Kejriwal said.

Fire breaks in Delhi shoe factory, no casualty



NEW DELHI: A major fire broke out at a shoe manufacturing factory in the national capital's Narela industrial area on Saturday.

The official confirmed that there have been no casualties or injuries in the incident, however, there was a massive loss of property. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

Delhi sees decline in COVID-19 cases as it records 24,383 infections; positivity rate above 30 pc



However, Friday's figure of 24,383 Covid-19 cases, with a senior government official saying the drop in cases may be due to lower testing.

NEW DELHI: The national capital on Friday recorded 24,383 Covid-19 cases, a 15.5 per cent decline from a day earlier, even as the positivity rate mounted to 30.64 per cent.

Thirty-four fatalities were also reported on Friday, according to data shared by the Delhi health department. On Thursday, 28,867 Covid-19 cases were reported, which was the sharpest single-day spike since the beginning of the pandemic.

According to the data, the positivity rate recorded on Friday is the highest since May 1 last year when it was 31.61 per cent. AGENCIES

Security tightened at Delhi's Ghazipur flower market a day after IED found

NEW DELHI: Security has been tightened at the Ghazipur flower market in Delhi, a day after an improvised explosive device (IED) stuffed with RDX and ammonium nitrate was found inside an unattended bag there.



The IED was defused around 1.30 pm on Friday. According to police, while the flower market is not exempted from the Covid curbs in the national capital, fruit and vegetable market is spared and is functioning.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Vinit Kumar said. Police said that a person who had come to the market on Friday to purchase flowers spotted a suspicious unattended bag near his Scooty at an abandoned place.

Delhi court junks bail plea of 'Bulli Bai' app creator Neeraj Bishnoi



Bishnoi had, in October, had created a list of women whom he wanted to defame online on his digital devices, a laptop, and cell phones.

NEW DELHI: A court here on Friday refused to grant bail to engineering student and 'Bulli Bai' app creator Neeraj Bishnoi, who was arrested by the Delhi Police from Assam for creating a platform for defaming women of a particular community.

The court also observed that the accused created the app where women journalists and celebrities of a particular community who are famous on social media are targeted and they are projected in a bad light with an objective to insult and humiliate them.

It happened six months after the controversy of Sulli Deals. Vishal Kumar Jha, the engineering student, was one of the followers of 'Bulli Bai', which led the police to him. The app was also being promoted by a Twitter handle with the name @bullibai.

Task forces formed to tackle mosquito menace, Delhi govt tells HC

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Friday apprised the Delhi High court that two task forces have been formed by the corporations -- one at the headquarter level and another at the zonal level -- to control the mosquito infestation and spread of seasonal vector-borne diseases in the national capital.

municipal corporations and local bodies to examine and identify adequate steps for incorporating a 'common protocol' to be followed by all the authorities for dealing with the situation. Last month, the court had asked the civic bodies to file an affidavit disclosing the steps taken on the ground in order to contain rising vector-borne diseases and dengue deaths.

HC notice to DDA on plea against demolition of slums in Kalkaji area



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday issued notice to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on a plea challenging removal of slums on the Lotus Temple Road in Kalkaji without prior notice and seeking rehabilitation of the slum dwellers under the Delhi Slum and Jhuggi Hopri Rehabilitation and Relocation Policy, 2015.

for petitioners Santosh Giri and other residents of the jhuggi clusters in the area. It is contended that the slums were demolished by the DDA on December 15, 2021. The petitioners said the slums were removed during the ongoing pandemic, forcing the residents mostly daily wage labourers, rickshaw pullers and domestic workers -- to live on the roadside without any shelter.

The residents claimed that they have proof of residence prior to January 2015 as required by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board Policy, 2015. They also urged the Delhi High Court to issue direction to DUSIB to conduct a survey of the affected residents and rehabilitate them in accordance with the Delhi JJ Slum Rehabilitation and Relocation Policy, 2015. The Lotus Temple Road Jhuggi clusters have been in existence at least since 1990 and comprise more than 23 houses. AGENCIES

Plea in HC seeks regulation of protests blocking Delhi roads

NEW DELHI: A petition has been filed in the Delhi High Court seeking regulation of protests by various political parties, blocking roads and causing inconvenience to the commuters and general public.

and air pollution, and are a form of public nuisance which needs to be curbed by the relevant authorities. The genre of protest referred to the present writ petition, if left unregulated, would render nation's loss and leave an irreparable adverse impact upon the global image of the nation," the plea stated.

21) has been violated, and as such the present petition is filed before the court to secure the roads from being blocked for the purposes of protest since this not only cause hardships to the general public but also to emergency services such as ambulance and fire fighters.

pur flyover which was choked by protesters of a political party that caused traffic jams in the locality. He also described police's helplessness in mass blockade situations in the national capital. The plea also sought an independent inquiry under the supervision of a retired judge against political groups blocking roads under the garb of protests in Delhi, particularly at Azadpur Chowk. AGENCIES

Delhi records cold, longest foggy day today: IMD

NEW DELHI: With a maximum temperature dipping to 15.4 degrees Celsius -- five notches below normal, Delhi recorded a cold and long foggy day on Friday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.



at 3.30 pm. It is the longest foggy day over Delhi for this season. "Today was the longest foggy day over Delhi for this season. It also caused a cold day due to the absence of sunlight in the day and also a little windy from northwest of 8-12 mph towards noon," IMD said. This week, the national capital will continue to have foggy mornings and a maximum and minimum temperature that will hover around 16 and 6 degrees Celsius, as per the IMD forecast. AGENCIES





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## NEWSBRIEF

## TVS Motor moped domestic sales down, exports up

CHENNAI: HS India's only moped maker TVS Motor Company Ltd sold 33,395 mopeds last month in India, said Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). According to SIAM, the two and three wheeler maker TVS Motor last month had sold 33,395 mopeds, down from 59,923 units sold in December 2020. For the period April-December 2021, TVS Motor had sold 363,868 mopeds in India, down from 462,107 units sold during the same period the previous year. The company, however, logged growth in moped exports during April-December 2021 shipping out 8,464 units up from 6,539 units registered during the previous year corresponding period. **AGENCIES**

## Two-wheeler maker Yezdi back in Indian market after 26 years, launches 3 models

NEW DELHI: Motorcycle company Yezdi on Thursday announced it was making a comeback in the Indian market with three new motorcycles. The re-entry into the Indian market comes after a gap of 26 years. The motorcycles include 'Yezdi Adventure', 'Scrambler' and 'Roadster'. The company aims to target riders looking for regular commute as well as those willing to take off-beat roads. Price for Adventure model starts at Rs 209,900, Scrambler at Rs 2,04,900 and Roadster at Rs 1,98,142 all prices ex-showroom in Delhi. "The new range of Yezdi motorcycles will be available across Classic Legends' dealership network, which already retails Jawa Motorcycles, in India for viewing, test rides, bookings and deliveries starting today," it said in a statement. Yezdi is reportedly the third brand revived by Classic Legends, a unit owned by Mahindra Group. **AGENCIES**

## IMD, POSOCO launch report on use of prior weather information

NEW DELHI: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) and national grid operator Power System Operation Corporation Ltd (POSOCO) on Friday jointly launched a report which lists out the advantages of prior weather information for reliable, secure and economic operation of the power system. The report 'Use of weather information for secure, reliable and economic operation of the Indian grid', which brings out the fact that the energy sector is among the most pivotal spheres of human activity which is highly dependent on weather conditions, was released by the Union Science and Technology Minister, Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday during the IMD's 147th Foundation Day function.

A dedicated weather portal for the power sector has been developed jointly by POSOCO and IMD and contains information related to weather forecast, real time weather scenario and past data of various locations across the country. "The

## Vedanta Aluminium becomes India's largest industrial consumer of renewable energy

NEW DELHI: Vedanta Aluminium Business, India's largest producer of aluminium and value-added products, has become the biggest industrial consumer of renewable energy (RE) in 2021, leading renewable energy procurement on the country's power exchanges - Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) and Power Exchange India Limited (PXIL). The company has procured about 2 billion units of RE power in the year 2021 for consumption at its Aluminium Smelter in Jharsuguda, Odisha, thereby reducing GHG emissions intensity at the smelter by more than 1540 KtCO<sub>2</sub>e (kilo tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) in the year.

Vedanta Aluminium's Jharsuguda unit is India's largest renewable energy buyer on Green Term Ahead Market (G-TAM) platform at IEX. Vedanta's subsidiary Bharat Aluminium Company (BALCO) has led the renewable energy trading session, procuring 59 per cent of the traded RE certificates (RECs) in November 2021 alone, and a total of over 2,861,700 RECs in the year. Speaking about Vedanta Alu-



minium's ESG vision, Rahul Sharma, CEO - Aluminium Business, Vedanta Limited, said: "We are committed to our vision of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2050. To that end, we have stepped up our endeavours along key three pillars - continuously improving energy efficiency of operations, increasing the quantum of renewable energy in our energy mix, and replacing fossil fuels with greener and cleaner alternatives - all powered by emerging green

technologies. Becoming India's largest industrial consumer of RE in 2021 reflects our persistent endeavours to increase our share of green power in our energy mix and accelerate our transition into low-carbon operations."

Rohit Bajaj, Senior Vice President and Head - Business Development, IEX, added: "Indian Energy Exchange's (IEX) Green Market comprising the Day-ahead collective auction market as well as the Term-Ahead Contracts

leverages innovation and technology to offer market participants an opportunity to trade in solar and non-solar renewable energy at the most competitive prices, and in a flexible manner. As the leading industry participant in the Green Market, Vedanta Aluminium Business has indeed set a very strong precedence for the Indian manufacturing industry to step up green energy consumption towards reducing their carbon footprint. We greatly appreciate Vedanta Aluminium's focused endeavour towards building India's sustainable tomorrow." Prabhajit Kumar Sarkar, MD & CEO - Power Exchange India Ltd. (PXIL), said: "We congratulate BALCO for being the leading buyer in the November 2021 REC trading session. Focused RE adoption strategy by industry leaders such as Vedanta Aluminium shall inspire the industry at large to accelerate the pace of energy transition. Power Exchange India Ltd. (PXIL) is helping industries achieve their ESG goals through integration of renewables in the power markets. **AGENCIES**

## Flipkart acquires electronics recommerce platform Yaantra

BENGALURU: Flipkart Group on Thursday said it has acquired electronics recommerce company Yaantra for an undisclosed sum. The acquisition, said Flipkart, will augment its existing refurbishment business in the smartphone category.

"Through the acquisition of Yaantra, we are enhancing our capabilities in a domain that is critical for the growth of the digital economy in India, as well as developing a comprehensive service ecosystem to support its expansion," said Ravi Iyer, Senior Vice President and Head, Corporate



Development, Flipkart. Founded in 2013 by Jayant Jha, Ankit Saraf and Anmol Gupta, Yaantra repairs and sells refurbished consumer tech products such as smartphones and laptops.

The recommerce market in India is growing at a rapid pace. However, the Indian smartphone refurb-

ishment market is largely unorganised and fragmented, which has posed trust and convenience issues for end consumers. With the acquisition of Yaantra, Flipkart said it will enable greater access to affordable refurbished smartphones, offering value and convenience for the end consumers.

The Yaantra team will help Flipkart build capabilities in this domain and accelerate its recommerce scale-up plans. The business will report to Prakash Sikaria, Senior Vice President and Head of Flipkart's Growth Charter. **AGENCIES**

## SC stays HC directions against OLX in cheating case regarding motorcycle

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has stayed the Punjab and Haryana High Court direction to OLX India to adopt a screening mechanism in connection with sellers, who could post an advertisement on the online platform.

A bench of Justices U.U. Lalit, S. Ravindra Bhat, and Bela. M. Trivedi said: "Liberty to serve the learned standing counsel for the State. Pending further consideration, the effect and operation of the order under challenge to the extent it issued certain directions against and in relation to the petitioner shall remain stayed." Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra represented OLX India B.V. in the top court. The top court was hearing a plea



than a passive conduit between a buyer and a seller similar to the classifieds column in a newspaper. The plea added that the platform qualifies as an "intermediary" as defined under Section 2(1)(w) of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

The matter before the high court was that a police official had gone to the petitioner's house and handed him a notice that a person identified as Umar Ali, had used the petitioner's Aadhaar card to post an advertisement for sale of a motorcycle. The petitioner was informed that the impersonator had cheated a person in connection with sale of the motorcycle, and an FIR has been registered against the petitioner. **AGENCIES**

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## Traders' body moves Competition Commission against Amazon-Cloudtail deal

NEW DELHI: The Confederation of All Indian Traders (CAIT) has moved the Competition Commission of India (CCI), seeking a direction to block the acquisition of Cloudtail India by Amazon. Cloudtail is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Prione Business Services, a joint venture of Amazon and Catamaran Ventures and is also presently the largest seller on Amazon's e-commerce platform, Amazon.in.

Citing the proposed structure of stake in Cloudtail, the plea said: "Amazon would have 100 per cent stake in Cloudtail, post the proposed combination. It is submitted that if the proposed combination is allowed, then it would cause an appreciable adverse



effect on competition." CAIT argued that complete control of Amazon will result in Cloudtail getting further preference on its platform. In a statement, CAIT, providing instances wherein Amazon gives preference to Cloudtail, said such preference will only become more pronounced after this trans-

action, which would have a destabilising effect on the e-commerce market in India. The traders' body petition said: "Another evidence showing that Amazon has given preference to Cloudtail on its platform is the fact that Cloudtail's revenue has increased significantly over the years. **AGENCIES**

## CESL to set-up 900 more EV charging stations in 2022

NEW DELHI: State-run Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) plans to install at least 900 more electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in the country in 2022. CESL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) - an entity under the Ministry of Power. In a conversation with IANS, CESL's MD Mahua Acharya informed that 396 charging stations have already been installed across India.

"As on date, 396 charging stations have been installed across the country, out of which 166 are commissioned," she said. "When we see a projection for 2022, we are doing all we can to expand the



number of charging stations in the country - including install or enable the installation of another 900 more." At present, the state-run firm has tied up with various private and public companies to set up public charging infrastructure. It has also partnered with urban local

## HIGHLIGHTS

THE NON-BINDING PACT, IF IT FRUCTIFIES, WILL GIVE ADANI GROUP AN ENTRY INTO STEEL MANUFACTURING. FOR POSCO, IT WILL FULFIL ITS LONG-HELD AMBITION OF HAVING A LARGE STEEL UNIT IN INDIA TO CASH IN ON GROWING DEMAND IN THE COUNTRY.

an entry into steel manufacturing. For Posco, it will fulfil its long-held ambition of having a large steel unit in India to cash in on growing demand in the country. South Korea's largest steelmaker had a few years ago dropped plans for a \$12-billion steel plant project with an annual capacity of 12 million tonnes in Odisha due to inordinate delays in land acquisition. **AGENCIES**

## Tata Teleservices stocks hit 5 pc lower circuit for 2nd straight session



NEW DELHI: Shares of Tata Teleservices have hit the five per cent lower circuit for the second consecutive session on Thursday as the company on Tuesday decided to opt for conversion of the interest from adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues into equity. Post conversion of dues into equity, the Centre is expected to hold a 9.5 per cent stake in the company, it said in a regulatory filing on Tuesday. The conversion, however, will be subject to a mutual agreement on the terms and conditions, including the governance of the company post-conversion of the interest amount into equity shares, it added in the same filing. The company's shares settled five per cent down on Thursday at Rs 261.9. Tata Teleservices deals in broadband, telecommunications and cloud services. On the same day Tuesday, Vodafone Idea too approved the conversion of its adjusted gross revenue (AGR) and spectrum liabilities into equity, and said that the Centre would hold around 35.8 per cent stake in the company. Following the announcement, its shares declined nearly 20 per cent on Tuesday, while subsequently they rebounded sharply on Wednesday as the telecom company clarified that the Centre would not participate in the management of the company as well as not take over the operations. **AGENCIES**

## Supply side constraints dent India's auto sector Dec sales

MUMBAI: Supply as well as demand constraints impacted India's auto sector sales in December 2021 on a year-on-year basis. Similarly, the sector's current off-take of passenger vehicles, two-and-three wheelers, were far behind the 2019 sales levels. In terms of PVs, challenges pertaining to electronic components' availability dragged sales lower on a year-on-year basis in December. Sales of passenger vehicles fell to 219,421 units in December as compared to 252,998 units sold during the corresponding month of 2020.

The data furnished by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) does not include sales figures from some key players such as Tata Motors. Segment-wise, a total of 112,873 passenger cars



were sold in the domestic market in December, down from 146,864 units sold in the like period of 2020.

The sales of other sub-categories such as utility vehicles (UV) grew whereas vans' degrew on a year-on-year basis. As per the data, UV sales rose to 97,137 units from 94,787 units, on the other

hand, the off-take of vans declined to 9,411 units from 11,347 units in the year-ago period. Besides, two-wheelers' sales were lower in December 2021 at 1,006,062 units from 1,127,917 units sold in the like month of 2020. However, three-wheelers' sales during the month under review rose to 28,111 units from 22,476

units sold during December 2020. Overall, the domestic automobile sectors' off-take representing the sales of passenger vehicles, two-wheelers, three-wheelers and quadricycle fell to 1,253,604 units from 1,403,391 units sold during the same period of last year. Furthermore, the data showed that exports were flat on a YoY basis.

The overall exports, including PVs, two and three-wheelers and quadricycles rose to 463,176 units from 463,802 units during the same period of last year. "Demand of passenger vehicle segment was largely affected due to supply constraints while the two-wheeler segment was majorly impacted due to subdued demand. Sales of passenger vehicles in Q3 has been the

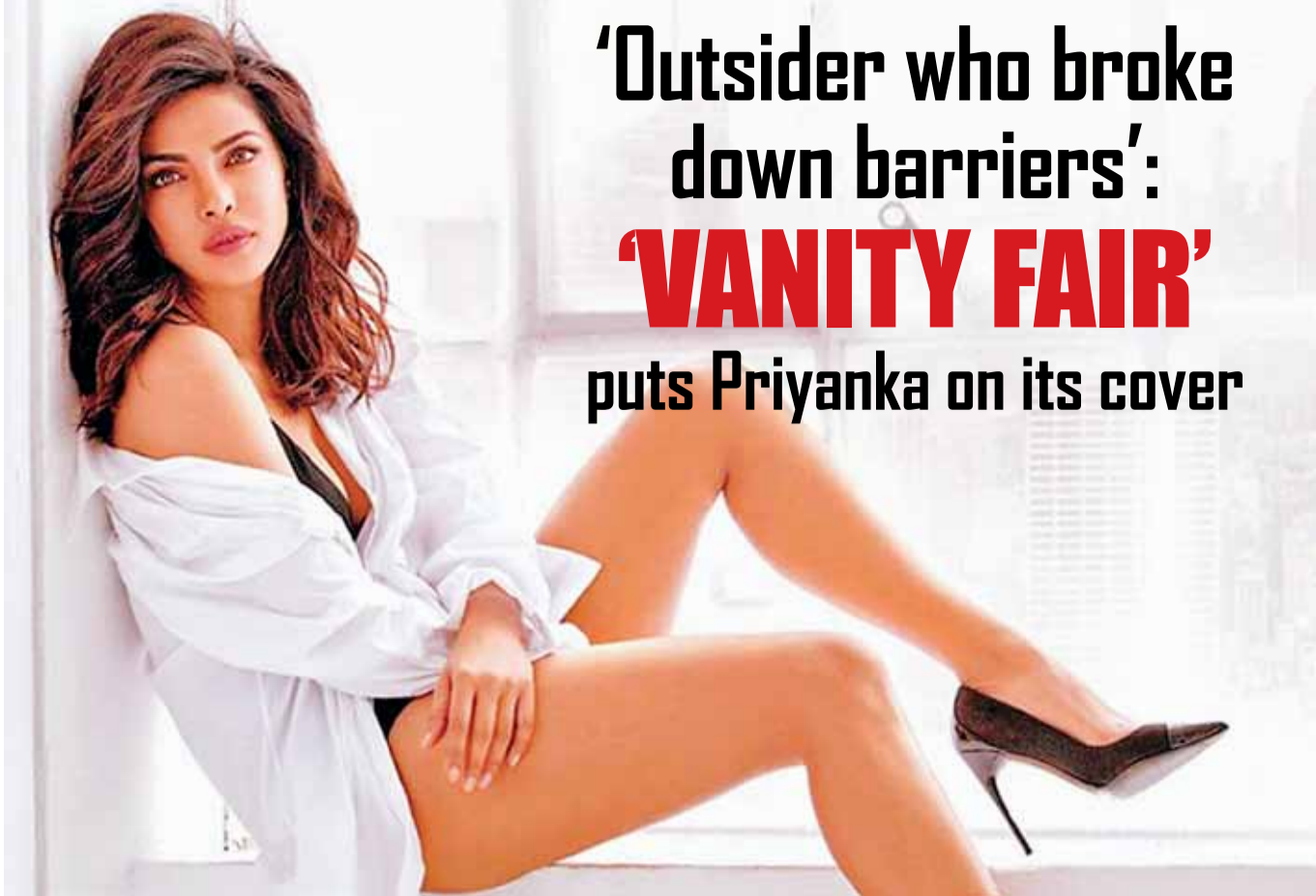
lowest in five years, while for the two-wheelers it has been the lowest in nine years," said Rajesh Menon, Director General, SIAM.

"Only the 'Heavy Goods' segment in 'Commercial Vehicles' have shown positive growth compared to Q3 of previous two years. Sales of buses and three-wheelers continue to be a concern. Barring 2020, the sales of commercial vehicles in Q3 has been lowest in last 5 years and sales of three-wheelers, barring 2020, has been the lowest in last 13 years." According to Hemal Thakkar, Director, Crisil Research on SIAM data: "... it is very clear that passenger vehicle dealers continue to have very lean inventory and demand continues to outpace supply." **AGENCIES**





# 'Outsider who broke down barriers': 'VANITY FAIR' puts Priyanka on its cover



**"IT'S TAKEN A LOT OF PAVEMENT POUNDING TO BE ABLE TO GET PEOPLE'S ATTENTION, AND TO BE ABLE TO GET AN ACCEPTANCE OF THE FACT THAT SOMEONE LIKE ME CAN BE THE LEAD OF A HOLLYWOOD FEATURE."**

Priyanka Chopra has achieved what every star anywhere in the world aspires for -- to be on the cover of 'Vanity Fair'. She's on the cover of the February 2022 edition

of the magazine celebrated internationally as much for its in-depth articles as for its cutting-edge photography. Unveiling the cover, 'Vanity Fair' tweeted: "After a journey into 'The Matrix', the actor enters 2022 with her cup overflowing -- reflecting on her storied Hindi film industry career, marriage, and creating a path for herself in Hollywood." Looking artfully messy, a sultry Priyanka appears on the cover in an off-shoulder, off-white ruffled dress from Fendi. The magazine, previously edited by celebrity journalists such as Tina Brown and Graydon Carter (who's played by

Jeff Bridges in the film 'How to Lose Friends and Alienate People'), is now helmed by Radhika Jones, an Indian American. Describing her as "a driven woman who has transcended what's previously been possible for an Indian actor in Hollywood," the 'Vanity Fair' cover story goes on to say: "She is an outsider who broke down barriers and built a place for herself within the walls of Hollywood. Now she's on a mission to welcome others in." Priyanka, notes the article that traces her life's story from her days at the Army Public School, Bareilly, will finally be

playing lead film roles as she had in India" with the rom-com 'Text for You' and Amazon's ambitious spy series 'Citadel' later this year. And about her own story, especially her rise to stardom in Hollywood, Priyanka says: "It's taken a lot of pavement pounding to be able to get people's attention, and to be able to get an acceptance of the fact that someone like me can be the lead of a Hollywood feature." She adds (and the sentiment will go down well back home): "There's very few of us from South Asia who get to do that. I hope that the part that I play in it will sort of push the envelope a little bit." **AGENCIES**



## 'Loop Lapeta' trailer shows a thrilling cut to the chase

The trailer of Taapsee Pannu and Tahir Raj Bhasin's comedy-thriller 'Loop Lapeta' was released on Thursday. It shows an exhilarating journey of Savi, essayed by Taapsee Pannu as she tries to save the life of her boyfriend Satya, played by Tahir Raj Bhasin, when he loses cash belonging to a mobster in a gambling bid. The film, which is based on the German experimental thriller 'Run Lola Run', is helmed by debutant director Aakash Bhatia. Taapsee said, "Loop Lapeta" is a film that will always be very close to my heart. I fell in love with the characters and the story the moment I read the script!

The film is about the choices that Savi makes and how her decisions carve out her journey with the one she loves. A perfect combination of comedy and thriller, 'Loop Lapeta' will keep you at the edge of your seat, while you rejoice at the comical situation that Savi and Satya have gotten into. Can't wait to bring this to audiences worldwide on Netflix." Expressing his excitement on the trailer launch, Tahir said, "I am so excited to have my second project release with Netflix within a span of a month and to now begin the adrenalin rush of Satya and Savi's rollercoaster ride against time. Their electric chemistry will make you laugh, cry and leave you on the edge through the consequences of

the couple's wild choices." Talking about his debut venture, director Aakash Bhatia said, "I am enthralled to share a peek into the world of 'Loop Lapeta'. I'm hoping that this makes for a thrilling and enjoyable ride for the viewers. My approach has been to experiment with form and style while navigating through this time twisting journey, and also to tightly hold on to the emotional core of our story and characters. Taapsee and Tahir lead an ensemble of fantastic performers in our show of sound and visuals." 'Loop Lapeta' produced by Sony Pictures Films India and Ellipsis Entertainment along with Ayush Maheshwari, will premiere on February 4, on Netflix. **AGENCIES**

## Novak Djokovic 'playing by his own rules', says Tsitsipas



MELBOURNE: World number four Stefanos Tsitsipas said on Thursday that Novak Djokovic has been 'playing by his own rules' and has put his Grand Slam at risk, adding that the Australian Open defending champion has made vaccinated tennis players 'look like fools'. The star player from Serbia was on Thursday drawn to start his campaign in the Australian Open against compatriot Miomir Kecmanovic, the World No 78. However, there is uncertainty over his participation as Djokovic's visa saga continues in Australia. Djokovic, who had reached Australia for the year's first Grand Slam with a certificate claiming exemption from vaccination as he had tested positive for Covid-19 in December, had his visa cancelled by the Australian government before a Federal Court in the country intervened to give him respite. There were still doubts over his participation in the event and there was intense speculation on Thursday when the draw ceremony for the event was delayed for some time. However, the organisers went ahead with the formalities with the Serbian's name being included in the draw. "For sure, he's been playing by his own rules and has been doing what not many players had the guts to do, especially after the ATP announced certain criteria for players to enter the country," Greece's Tsitsipas told WION. "No one really thought they could come to Australia unvaccinated and not having to follow the protocols... it takes a lot of daring to do and putting the Grand Slam at risk, which I don't think many players would do," he added. The ATP, which governs men's tennis, has said 97 of the top 100 male players are vaccinated. Notably, American world number 93 Tennys Sandgren had said earlier this month that he had pulled out of the Australian Open because of the vaccine mandate and he opted not to apply for a medical exemption. Asked if Djokovic should defend his title at Melbourne Park next week, Tsitsipas said: "There are two ways to look at it. One way is that almost every single player is vaccinated and did what they had to do in order to come and perform and play in Australia." "On the other sense, it seems not everyone is playing by the rules... a very small (minority) chose to follow their own way, which kind of makes the majority look like fools," he added. Djokovic, the nine-time Australian Open winner, is hoping to become the most successful player in the Grand Slam by claiming his 21st men's singles title in the Australian Open, which starts on January 17, breaking a tie for most titles with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. **AGENCIES**

## Hockey midfielder Lilima Minz retires at 27

NEW DELHI: One of the most experienced midfielders in hockey Lilima Minz decided to retire from the sport on Thursday. Lilima, who made her debut for the national side at the 4-Nation Women's Hockey Tournaments held in Argentina in 2011, has been part of many glorious moments with the Indian Women's Hockey Team. The midfielder, who hails from the Sundargarh district of Odisha, scored 12 goals in 156 matches for India. She was part of the bronze medal-

winning campaign at the Asian Games 2014, silver medal win at the 2018 Asian Games and the gold medal victory at the FIH Women's Series Finals at Hiroshima in 2019. Lilima was part of the squad when the Indian women qualified for the Olympics for the first time after 36 years and took part in the Rio Olympic Games in 2016. The midfielder was also part of the Indian team which booked a place in the Tokyo Olympics through the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers



2019 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Hockey India president Gyanendro Ningombam congratulated the two-time Asian

Games medalist for her outstanding contribution to Indian Hockey. "Lilima has made a huge contribution to Indian hockey during her fantastic career and we cannot thank her enough for her efforts. She has played a massive role in the growth of the Indian Women's Hockey Team in the last few years. Hockey India congratulates her on a wonderful career and wishes her all the very best for the next chapter of her life," he said in a release. **AGENCIES**

## N.Korea warns of 'stronger' reaction after US imposes new sanctions

SEOUL: North Korea on Friday warned that it will have to take "stronger and certain reaction" after the US imposed new sanctions over Pyongyang's recent missile launches. In a statement carried by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), a spokesperson for the North's Foreign Ministry said the recent launch of what it claims to be a hypersonic missile was an "exercise of right to self-defence". "If the US adopts such a confrontational stance, the DPRK will be forced to take stronger and certain reaction to it," Yonhap News Agency quoted the KCNA statement as saying. DPRK stands for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On Wednesday, the US slapped sanctions on six North Koreans involved in the secretive regime's weapons of mass destruction and



ballistic missile programs. The move came a day the North launched what it claims to be a newly developed hypersonic missile on Tuesday, the second such test in less than a week. "The DPRK's recent development of new-type weapon was just part of its efforts for modernizing its national defence capability," the KCNA statement said. "It did not target any specific country or force and it did not do any harm to the security of neighbouring countries." **AGENCIES**

## Rights of Afghan women, girls under attack: UN

KABUL: The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has said that the rights of Afghan women and girls are "under attack" and that they need the world body's support and solidarity now more than ever. In a statement on Thursday, the OCHA said that girls and women in the war-torn nation are deprived of basic rights and humanitarian organisations must aim to scale up assistance by providing food, healthcare,



education, livelihood opportunities and protection services, reports TOLO News. According to the OCHA, 11.8 million women and girls need urgent humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. The statement came after

a gathering of women activists in Kabul on Wednesday stayed awake all night and "lit candles for freedom". Reacting to the OCHA statement, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the allegations were baseless and "false information". In a tweet, Mujahid said that since the Taliban took over Afghanistan last August everyone's rights have been protected, including women. **AGENCIES**

## Africa's 4th Covid wave flattening: WHO



ADDIS ABABA: After a six-week surge, Africa's fourth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic driven primarily by the Omicron variant, is flattening, marking the shortest-lived surge to date in the continent where cumulative cases have now exceeded 10 million, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. Weekly cases having plateaued in the week ending on January 9, Xinhua news agency quoted a statement issued by the WHO's regional office for Africa as saying on Thursday. It said that Southern Africa, which saw a huge increase in infections during the pandemic wave, recorded a 14 per cent decline in infections over

the past week, with South Africa, where Omicron was first reported, recording a 9 per cent fall in weekly infections. North and West Africa, however, are witnessing a rise in cases, with North Africa reporting a 121 per cent increase

this past week compared with the previous one, warned the WHO. Across the continent, though, deaths rose by 64 per cent in the seven days ending on January 9 compared with the week before mainly due to infections among people at high-risk. Nonetheless, deaths in the fourth wave on the African continent are lower than in the previous waves. So far 30 African countries have detected the Omicron variant, while the Delta variant has been reported in 42 nations. "Early indications suggest that Africa's fourth wave has been steep and brief but no less destabilising. The crucial pandemic countermeasure badly needed in Africa still stands, and that is rapidly and significantly increasing Covid-19 vaccinations. The next wave might not be so forgiving," said Matshidiso Moeti, WHO's regional director for Africa. While the continent appears to be weathering the latest pandemic wave, vaccinations still remain low. Just around 10 per cent of Africa's population has been fully vaccinated, noted WHO. **AGENCIES**

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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