

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



'LOOOP LAPETA' TRAILER SHOWS A THRILLING CUT TO THE CHASE

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

tered 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,



1.74 LAKH STUDENTS MENTORED

UNDER DELHI GOVT'S 'DESH KA

MENTOR' PROG, SAYS

MANISH SISODIA

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-



from Jan 31, Union Budget on Feb 1

Om Birla inspected the Parlia- cers and staff of the Lok Sabha

Birla visited the Covid-19 Generals of both the Houses

testing facility set up in Parlia- to suggest measures for the

and Rajya Sabha Secretariats

and reviewed the prepara-

safe conduct of the upcoming

Indian Army, replacing his

British predecessor in 1949.

tions there. The Rajya Sabha generals to review adequacy of

Chairman and the Lok Sabha the Covid protocol followed

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 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

6 states report crop damage due to excess rains, rabi sowing on track elsewhere NEW DELHI: Data from Agri-

culture 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,

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.

the area coverage reported under oilseeds is 100.27 lakh ha area against

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 Parliament's Budget Session begins 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

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, ed amid Covid protocol. On ment House Annexe for the 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. AGENCIES

PM lauds Army on Army Day

ment House Complex (PHC)

to take stock of the health

safety related measures in

light of the recent spike in



Tuesday, Lok Sabha Speaker Members of Parliament, offi-

NEW DELHI: On the occasion of Army Day on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the Indian January 15 to mark Field Army, saying it is known for bravery and professionalism,

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

should follow "the guidance

NEW DELHI: The CCPA-

Cabinet Committee on Par-

liamentary Affairs has recom-

mended the commencement of

the Budget Session of Parlia-

ment on January 31, sources

said on Friday.The Budget is

to be presented on February 1.

January 31 and the same day the economic survey will be

tabled in the House. The ses-

sion 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

The session will be conduct-

by the EC.

The President is likely to address the joint sitting on

> 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 in-Marshall KM Cariappa takvaluable contribution of the Indian Army towards national **AGENCIES**

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

tually acceptable resolution

of the remaining issues at the

ation of Rs 3.73 lakh crore of India for the services of the financial year 2021-22. the President gave his assent on January 12. The Act to Rs 3,737,610,000,000 defraying the several

Generally, after the for grants, the government introduces the Appropriation Bill in the Lok Sabha, which when passed by the Parliament, is then sent to **AGENCIES** the President.

Appropriation Act 2021 gets **Presidential assent**

man and the Lok Sabha speak-

er have directed the secretary

sion in the current situation

and submit a proposal in this

regard at the earliest," the

sources said.



NEW DELHI: President

Ram Nath Kovind has given his nod to the Appropriation (No 5) Act 2021 that authorises payment and approprifrom the Consolidated Fund According to a gazette notification published on Friday, 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 from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India towards charges which will come in course of payment during channels and work out a muthe financial year 2021-22 in respect of the services

The two sides agreed that the next round of the com- and later voting on demand

PM Narendra Modi lauds Army on **Army Day**

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

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

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. **AGENCIES**

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 two sides

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Sector"

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were present at the meeting,

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. AGENCIES and words cannot do justice Commander-in-Chief of the

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 mutu-

ally acceptable resolution of

the remaining issues at the

earliest, according to a joint

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

statement.

along the LAC in the Western the joint statement said."The provided by the state leaders' two sides had a frank and indepth exchange of views for border meeting point on the the resolution of the relevant Chinese side on Wednesday. issues along the LAC in the Representatives from the Western Sector (Ladakh bordefence and foreign affairs der)," it mentioned.

They agreed that both sides

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.

earliest," it mentioned.

manders' 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

AGENCIES in a stalemate.

to its invaluable contribution towards national safety. Army Day is observed on

ing over as the first Indian

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

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. "We had received a total of 2,20,000 applications from Delhi government students. Of these, 1,74,000 have been men-

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 wellknown 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.Launched in October 2021, the pro-ric test, their educational 10 minutes every week gramme aims to provide background is taken care for a minimum period of



voluntary mentors to of and they are trained students from class IX to accordingly, only after XII. Those aged between which they are assigned 18 and 35 can sign up to a mentee. become mentors through Technological University. "Those who volunteered to undergo a psychomet-

We have also ensured an app developed by Delhi that mentees are only assigned mentors of the same gender." he said.Unto be mentors are made der the programme, the mentor is required to give

However, Friday's figure of

extended for four months. have answered each and 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".The Commission stated that it received a representation from one Lalit Wadher last year, who alleged that the programme allows children to get in contact with "unknown persons", and exposes them to danger.

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 he added.

every question of theirs, NCPCR has stated that no police verification is being done of mentees,' he pointed out."NCPCR has further said that there is a probability of child trafficking via phone calls and asked is there any mechanism to prevent the origin of cybercrime and child trafficking, Delhi Deputy CM tells, sharing that on the abovementioned grounds the commission has asked to "Immediately suspend the concerned scheme initia-

"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,'

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



buses will be inducted into the DTC's fleet and GPS, among others, by the second week of according to the Delhi February, and the target to admit 300 more is likely to be achieved by April, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Friday."The first prototype of the electric bus has already reached Delhi and will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday (January 17). Fifty e-buses will be inducted into DTC's fleet by the second week of February and the target to admit 300 e-buses is likely to be achieved till April," Gahlot said while inaugurating 100 new AC CNG buses in the presence of the Chief Minister at Rajghat on Friday afternoon.

The buses will run on the rural route, Kejriwal said after the inauguration ceremony.Besides being disabled-friendly, these new low-floor ernment. The Cabinet CNG AC buses are fully compliant with BS-VI emission standards and are equipped with stateof-the-art facilities like a target which is yet to be a real-time passenger completed. AGENCIES

NEWDELHI: Fifty electric information system, CCTVs, panic buttons 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, adding that during the 2010 CommonWealth Games, there were nearly 6,000 buses in the national capital. In November 2021,

the Delhi Cabinet had approved the induction of 190 low-floor AC CNG buses under its cluster scheme.With the induction of these buses, (the) total number of cluster buses has reached 3,383 and the total bus fleet in natonal capital has reached an all-time high of 7,140.Under the cluster scheme, total 3,033 non-AC and AC buses have been operated by the state govhad also said that 300 electric buses will also be inducted into the DTC fleet by the start of 2022

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, a fire department official said, adding there were no casualties. The official informed that they received a call about the fire incident at 9.36 a.m. in the factory at plot no A-171 near Shri Ram Dharam Kanta after which as many as 14 fire tenders were immediately pressed into the service. "The inferno has been brought under control now," Delhi Fire Ser-

vice chief Atul Garg told IANS. 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. The

incident comes nearly a month after a fire broke out at another shoe factory also in the Narela industrial area. No injuries or casualties were reported then as well. AGENCIES

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



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, indicating that every third sample collected for a coronavirus test returned a positive

NEW DELHI: The national 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 singleday spike since the beginning of the pandemic, when the city report in the past 24 hours. had conducted 98,832 tests. per cent.

coronavirus cases came out of 79,578 tests, with a senior government official saying the drop in cases may be due to lower testing "The low number of tests can be attributed to the change in testing guidelines. In an advisory issued earlier this week, the (central) government had said that asymptomatic patients undergoing surgical/ non-surgical invasive procedures should not be tested unless warranted or symptoms develop," the official said. The active cases in the city stand at 92,273, of which 64,831 are in home isolation. The number of containment zones is 27,531.

According to the data, the positivity rate recorded on Friday is the highest since May **AGENCIES**

NEW DELHI: Security has been tightened at the Ghazipur flower market in Delĥi, a day after an improvised explosive device (IED) stuffed with RDX and ammonium

Security tightened at Delhi's Ghazipur

nitrate was found inside an unattended bag there ahead of Republic Day, officials said on Saturday. 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 function-

ing.
"The security has been tightened in the market. The fruit and vegetable market is open as it comes under exempted category. People are requested to follow the Covid-appropriate behaviour," Additional



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. He then informed people and also alerted the Delhi Home Guards deployed there. The person then made a PCR call around 10.30 am about the unattended

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



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.

Noting that the accused ran a vilification campaign against the dignity of the women of a particular community containing derogatory material through the app affecting communal harmony of the society, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Patiala House Courts, Pankaj Sharma, denied the bail applica-

tion. The court also observed app where women journalists and celebrities of a particular community who are famous on social media are targeted bad light with an objective to insult and humiliate them.

was arrested by the IFSO (Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations unit) of the Special Cell of Delhi from its hosting platform. and other municipal bodies Police had been sent to seven days' custody.He was a student of second-year B.Tech, app was also being promoted by and employees in the miscomputer science, at Vellore Institute of Technology, Bhopal.According to police, Khalistani supporter. AGENCIES eases. The court ordered the

Bishnoi had, in October, had he wanted to defame online and cell phones. He was tracsocial media and download-1, this app, which was performing on Github's space, religion. These included journalists, social workers, students, and famous per-

It happened six months that the accused created the after the controversy of Sulli Deals.Vishal Kumar Jha, the engineering student, was one of the followers of 'Bulli Bai', which led and they are projected in a the police to him. Hosting platform Github provided space to 'Sulli Deals', and Last week, Bishnoi, who the 'Bulli Bai' too was created on it.Later, after the controversy erupted, Github removed the user 'Bulli Bai' But by then, it had sparked a nationwide controversy.The a Twitter handle with the name @ bullibai, with the display picture of a menace and dengue-like dis-

Task forces formed to tackle mosquito created a list of women whom menace, Delhi govt tells HC

on his digital devices, a laptop, NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Friday apprised ing women activists all over the Delhi High court that two task forces have been ing their photos.On January formed by the corporations -- one at the headquarter level and another at the posted photos of a number zonal level -- to control the of women of a particular mosquito infestation and spread of seasonal vectorborne diseases in the national capital, in accordance with the court's last order. A bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Jasmeet Singh had rapped the civic bodies in the national capital during a couple of hearings, saying they are doing

nothing to tackle dengue. During the course of hearing on Friday, advocate Divya Prakash Pandey, representing the corporations, said that another joint meeting of all the corporations will be held on January 21 to assign the roles of all officers sion to tackle the mosquito

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.

In another hearing, the court stated that the authorities are not bothered about the deaths, and the officials are living with the attitude that since there is a large population, the disease will come and go.The court observed that after the monsoon season, there will be mosquitoes and it has been a pattern for the last 15-20 years."Is there some rocket science involved? Is there no planning? Is there no thought process? How can it be that every year," the court had

demolition of slums in Kalkaji area



HC notice to DDA on plea against

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 Jhopri Rehabilitation and Relocation Policy, 2015. Seeking DDA's response in the matter, -- to live on the roadside Justice Rekha Palli posted the matter for further have sought temporary hearing on March 22. shelter with facilities in-The plea was filed through cluding running drinkadvocates Kaoliangpou ing water, sanitation and AGENCIES Kamei and Helen Tungoe clean hygienic surround- houses.

NEW DELHI: The Delhi 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 without any shelter. They

that they have proof of residence prior to January 2015 as required by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board Policy,

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

Plea in HC seeks regulation of protests blocking Delhi roads Delhi records cold, longest foggy day today: IMD

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. The petition, which was in the nature of a Public Interest Litigation, will be heard on January 24.

The plea, filed by advocate Ankur Bhasin, contended that the protests lead to traffic jams, cause great noise

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. It said since the petitioner's and other common citizens' fundamental right of Right to Life (Article

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. Narrating a personal ordeal he faced while he was going to the hospital after falling ill, the lawyer said he faced

hardships at Azad-

pur flyover which was choked by protestors 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 **AGENCIES** Chowk.

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. The city's minimum temperature was recorded at 6 degrees Celsius a degree below the normal.

As per IMD, there was a layer of dense fog in the morning and moderate fog during the day over Delhi NCR, and also over Punjab, Haryana, west UP, and north Rajasthan. Also, light north westerlies are blowing over



the region. These conditions 11 a.m., respectively. While led to a cold day. As per airports 1 hourly visibility data of today, Safdarjung and Palam had dense fog from till evening, IGI Palam only 4.30 and 7 a.m. till 9.30 and could reach 1,000 metres

Safdarjung visibility did not cross 400 metres and main city fog coverage remained

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 kmph 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 **AGENCIES** forecast.

BJP CEC to meet next week to finalise more VS polls candidates days, Pune tops in Omicron infections



Central Election Commit- Goa has already recomtee (CEC) will meet next week for the second time to finalise candidates for Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.In its first meeting on Thursday, the BJP CEC has finalised candidates for 172 Assembly seats of Uttar Pradesh

NEW DELHI: The BJP's in the first three phases. mended shortlisted names to the party's CEC for approval, and Uttarakhand will be sending shortlisted names in a day or two.

While several rounds of meetings for Uttar Pradesh have been held where polling will be held tional capital. On Thurs- on March 10. AGENCIES

day, the BJP CEC meeting to finalise candidates for Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls was held in hybrid mode as few of the CEC members, including party chief J.P. Nadda, have tested positive for Covid-19.Sources said that the next meeting of the BJP CEC is likely to be held mid next week to finalise more candidates of Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Punjab, and Uttarakhand. Depending on the health of CEC members, the decision to hold meetings physically or in hybrid form will be decided," a party leader Before Thursday, a lot of

discussion and deliberation took place in meetings chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday and Wednesday. In Uttar Pradesh, the Assembly polls will be held in seven phases in February-March starting from February 10, while in Punjab, Goa, and Uttarakhand elections will be held on February 14, and in Manipur, it will also be in two phases - on February 27 and March 3.Countin Lucknow and in the na- ing of votes will take place

Maha adds 1 lakh COVID cases in 2

MUMBAI: Maharashtra has added over one lakh new Covid-19 cases to the state tally which shot above 71 lakh on Friday with a stupendous 200-plus Omicron cases, with Pune overtaking Mumbai, health officials said here.After recording record high of 46,723 on Wednesday, the number of new Covid infectees in the state figures dropped to 43,211 and the fatalities also fell from 36 to 19, and the mortality rate dipped from 2 per cent to 1.98 per cent.After 207 Omicron cases on January 9, the state infections of the variant shot up to a new peak of 238, sparking fresh concerns among the health authorities.

The government is continuing the intensive surveillance of passengers arriving at the three international airports - Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur - since December 1. A total of 277,114 travellers have landed here, including 42,062 from the "high risk" countries from where 523 have tested positive and 580 from other countries, with all their reports sent for genomic sequencing to confirm if they are afflicted by Omicron.Besides, another



November 1 have been sent for genomic sequencing with the results of 83 are awaited, the officials said. Omicron has spread extensively across several districts in the state, and out of the 1,605 cases till date, 859 have recovered. Mumbai was edged out by Pune as far as the total Omicron infections are con-

Now, Pune has 677 cases of the variant, followed by 629 in Mumbai, 79 in Thane, 59 in Sangli, 51 in Nagpur, 19 in Raigad, 18 in Kolhapur, 13 in Satara, 11 in Osmanabad, nine in Amravati, six each in Palghar, Akola, and Buldhana, three each in Nanded, Aurangabad, and Gondiya, two each in Ahmednagar, Gadchiroli, Latur, Nandurbar, Nashik, and Solapur, 4,641 positive samples from and one in Jalna.Of the

HIGHLIGHT

OMICRON HAS SPREAD EXTENSIVELY ACROSS SEVERAL DISTRICTS IN
THE STATE, AND OUT
OF THE 1,605 CASES
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MUMBAI WAS EDGED
OUT BY PUNE AS
FAR AS THE TOTAL **OMICRON INFECTIONS** ARE CONCERNED

43,211 new Covid-19 cases,

the Mumbai Metropolitan

Region alone accounted for 22,037 infections, while Mumbai city remained at a high, with 11,317 new cases. The next is Pune circle's 11,421 infectees, Nashik circle's 3,182, Nagpur circle's 2,552, Kolhapur circle's 1,264, Latur circle's 1,227, Aurangabad circle's 913 and Akola circle's 615. The number of people sent to home quarantine shot up hugely from 17,95,631 on Thursday to 19,10,361 now, and another 9,286 have been shunted to institutional quarantine. **AGENCIES**

SC agrees to hear whether recording wife's phone conversation infringement of privacy

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a petition in connection with the issue whether recording a wife's telephonic conversation, in the absence of her knowledge, is violation of her privacy. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by a man challenging the single bench order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, in December last year. After hearing brief arguments in the matter on January 12, a bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and B.V. Nagarathna issued notice. The high court order had come on a plea filed by a woman, who challenged a Bathinda family court order passed in 2020, allowing her estranged husband to prove a CD in connection with the recorded conversations between them, subject to the correctness

The high court had observed that recording of wife's telephonic conversation without her knowledge is a clearcut infringement of her privacy. In 2017, the husband had moved a

and in 2019, during the hearing in the matter, he had moved an application seeking permission to bring on record the CD and transcripts of conversations recorded in memory card or chip of the mobile phone.In 2020, the family court allowed the husband to prove the CD subject to the condition of correctness. The wife moved the high court challenging

The couple's marriage was solemnised in 2009 and they had a daughter together.

this decision of the fam-

ily court.The high court

observed that it is evident

that these conversations

would necessarily have

been recorded surrepti-

tiously by one of the

'Stand up for friends', Cong slams Centre over **EC reduces notice period for** reports of Chinese construction in Bhutan



plateau.

er Rahul Gandhi on Friday slammed the Centre over reports of China constructing villages in disputed Bhutan territory, which is less than President alleged that the government has already surrendered its land, but it is not standing for 'friends' like Bhutan.

constructing villages in a stand up for your friends," disputed territory in Bhu- Rahul Gandhi tweeted.

from the trijunction Doklam and India's Sikkim. In October last year, China The revelation came after high-resolution satellite im- and Bhutan had signed a pact and reduced the notice agery surfaced with the secu- on a three-step roadmap to

30 km from the trijunction rity establishments."(The) resolve their boundary dis- to 7 days for parties Doklam plateau. The former Modi government first sur-Congress President alleged rendered our land and has had said, "It has noted the their public notice on development."Boundary ne- before 08.01.2022," an gotiations between Bhutan and China began in 1984 and all parties, including na. If you don't stand up the two sides have held 24 As per reports, China is for yourself, how will you rounds of talks and 10 rounds have already published of meeting at the expert group the public notice in less level.

registration of political parties

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission of India on Friday reduced the notice period from 30 days to seven days for registration of political parties under Section 29 A of the Repre-Act, 1951, in view of the ongoing third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The EC had announced the poll schedule for Assembly elections in five states Uttar Pradesh. Punjab, Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur on January 8.

"After considering all aspects of the matter, the Commission has given a relaxation period from 30 days EC statement said. "For of those parties which AGENCIES than 7 days prior to



08.01.2022, objections, if any, can be submitted latest by 5.30 PM on 21st January, 2022, or by the end of the originally provided 30 days' period, whichever is earlier," it added.

"As per the existing guidelines, the applicant association is inter-alia asked to publish the proposed name of the party in two national and two local dailies on objections, if any, with regard to the proposed registration of the party before the Commission within 30 days from such publication," the **AGENCIES** EC said.

Samyukt Kisan Morcha meet tomorrow at Singhu Border

NEW DELHI: The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) will hold a review meeting at their Singhu Border camp site to decide the future course of action for the agitation that was suspended after three farm laws were repealed in December first week.The SKM, a consortium of 40-odd farmers' organisations, had on December 9, 2021 declared to suspend their 15-month long agitation that was started to protest the three contentious farm laws passed by the Parliament in 2020.

The agitation had continued even after the three laws - the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and Essential Commodities (Amendment) the Parliament as the farmers' stuck to their other demands vis-a-vis legal backing for minimum support price (MSP) for all farmers being the prime demand after repeal of the three **AGENCIES**

Manjhi criticises Yogi for eating food at house of Dalit family

PATNA: The Bharatiya Janata Party may be part of the government in Bihar but its alliance partners are not letting go of any issue to criticise its leaders and policies. On Friday, Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) founder Jitan Ram Manjhi slammed Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath after

the latter uploaded a photograph on social media of eating food in the house of a Dalit family in Gorakhpur. Manjhi without taking the name of Yogi Adityanath, said people eating food in the house of a Dalit family are snatching our morsel of food.



"When elections come, many leaders of different political parties will go to the houses of Dalits and tribal families to eat food. They are responsible for taking away the development share of Dalits and tribal people of the country,' Manjhi said.Manjhi also attacked the BJP over comparing Samrat Ashoka with Aurangzeb. He said that the BJP leaders reckoned that Samrat Ashoka belonged to the backward class community and that is why they are humiliating a great ruler just because of his caste. Manjhi announced to hold demonstrations at Jantar Mantar in Delhi from January 17 Jitan Ram is a leader who claims that the Ramavan is not based on the truth. It is an imaginary book. The character of Lord Rama is also imaginary, he says.Manjhi is president of the Hindustani Awam Morcha in Bihar having 4 seats in the assembly and trying to play the role of a kingmaker in the **AGENCIES**

Maha Congress to appoint women as 'working chiefs' in 60 districts

MUMBAI: Taking a cue important positions. Takfrom party General Secre-Congress's Maharashtra unit on Friday announced that it will appoint a woman as Working President in all the party's districts in the state.

"The Congress has a progressive tradition of giving important responsibilities to women in politics at all levels. Women leaders of Congress have held top posts like Prime Minister, President, Speaker, Governors, Chief Ministers, ministers, and other Hoon".

ing ahead this glorious tary Priyanka Gandhi, the tradition, we shall now appoint a woman Working President in each of the 60 District Congress Committees (DCCs) in the state," said state Congress President Nana Patole.

now jeopardised our close

neighbours by its inac-

tion in pushing back Chi-

The move on Makar Sakaranti day follows the decision by Priyanka Gandhi to give 40 per cent representation to women candidates in the upcoming Assembly elections with her slogan "Ladki Hoon, Lad Sakti **AGENCIES**

Former minister Ramveer **Upadhyay resigns from BSP**



HATHRAS:Ramveer Upadhyay, the BSP MLA from Sadabad Assembly constituency here, has resigned from the partyUpadhyay, who held several important portfolios during the BSP government in Uttar Pradesh, was suspended from the party in 2019.He, in his resignation, has levelled many serious allegations against the party. Upadhyay has said that he has to resign as the party has deviated from the principles and ideals made by Kanshi Ram. In a letter sent to the

party chief Mayawati, he said, "I brought to your notice that the party's cadre is slipping away from us and urged you to review the party's performance. The truth I told you was neglected. I was suspended from the party. This has hurt the sentiments of my sup-**AGENCIES** porters.

villages within the disputed territory in Bhutan are likely to be used for both military and civilian purposes.

Sources said the Chinese

Doklam plateau was in limelight in 2017 when the Indian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army sentation of the People (PLA) were locked in a bitter standoff for over 70 days. The Chinese had to finally retreat from the area after the Indian troops contested the plateau. Dhoklam is an area of 100 sq km comprising a plateau and a valley at the trijunction tion between India, China and Bhutan. The plateau is circled by the Chumbi Valley in Tibet, Bhutan's Ha Valley

GOA NEWSLETTER

Goa Political parties witness resignations, jumping ships as election date draws near

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

oa is set to go to the polls for the Legislative Assembly on February 14 – a day that is celebrated as "Valentines Day" in Goa and worldwide - and the results will be declared on March 10. The last date for filing nominations is January 28, while January 31 is the last date for withdrawal of nominations.

Keeping in mind the rising numbers of covid-19 cases, the Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra has put restrictions of campaigning and election rallies while asking political parties to provide masks, hand sanitisers for people attending the rallies if they are allowed.

+Winnability+ cannot be the reason for any political party to choose candidates having criminal cases, he said while making it compulsory for political parties to publish the criminal antecedents of their candidates in newspaper, websites, and television channels. Goa Chief Minister Pramod

Sawant recently emphasized that the BJP government had fulfilled 80 percent of its promises made to the people over the decade, while incorporating public suggestions in its 2022 election manifesto.

Even as two BJP MLAs including one cabinet minister quit the

party, Sawant said that "defection by a few for their agenda of greed and personal interest" would not affect the party's prospects in the 2022 legislative assembly elections. "The BJP is a big family and

a few defections cannot deter the party's agenda of good governance," he said, adding that the Goan people had witnessed BJP's governance and development model for a decade.

Former Union Minister and All India Congress Committee (AICC) election observer P Chidambaram highlighted his party's willingness to accept support of any political party that was aiming at defeating the BJP in the forthcoming Goa legislative assembly elections. The Congress released a 21-point

+charge sheet+ highlighting the BJP government's failure to maintain law and order, protect the environment and safety to women, GPCC president Girish Chodankar said while alleging collapse of health infrastructure, damage to the State's industrial sector and cooperative sector, inadequate public bus transport and damage to heritage and tourist sites. Describing the chargesheet as +shocking+ and a "cloud hanging over the polls," Chidambaram said the Ministers named in this would have to answer in this regard. "How will tourists visit Goa if there are no proper bus transport and Internet facilities," he queried.

Meanwhile, the Goa Pradesh youth Congress committee (GPYCC) has demanded a forensic test of the answer sheets of police exams in which candidates - who scored low in the written exams for the post of police constable - scored high in exams for the post of police sub-inspector (PSI) post.

"The candidates had left the answer sheets blank which were



filled in later by the examiner, and forensic test will expose this act,' GPYCC president Varad Mardolkar said about alleged manipulation in this process while stating that the Congress will approach the court to expose the BJP's +corrupt practice of selling jobs.+

Noting that the Congress had in the past exposed manipulation for junior engineer and technical assistants posts in the Goa PWD, Mardolkar alleged that the same modus operandi was being used for the posts of police and urged the BJP to scrap the police recruitment process

Meanwhile, "Jumping Ships' continues in Goa politics during the buildup to the 2022 State legislative assembly elections as different Ministers, MLAs, party leaders and workers make their choices on what would be best for them. The BJP lost their first minister when Goa Minister for Ports and Calangute MLA Michael Lobo resigned on January 10 while seeking to join the

Congress party. BJP Goa President Sadanand Tanawade said that Lobo had sought two BJP tickets for him and his wife Delilah to contest in the elections from Calangute and Siolim. "All these resignations are due to personal reasons including not having chances of getting an election ticket or seeking too many tickets," he said, adding that the BJP was fully aware of this possibility and has an alternative plan in place.

Mormugao MLA Milind Naik resigned as Minister following his alleged involvement in a sex scandal. Mayem MLA Pravin Zantve, Alina Saldanha and Carlos Almeida were the BJP MLAs who had also quit the party ahead of the elections. Zantye had stated that with Goa's public debt reaching Rs 22,000 crores, the new government taking over after the 2022 elections should take measures to restart mining activity and attract

industries to the state. A total of 10 sitting Goa legisla-

tive assembly MLAs have resigned since September 2021 – reducing the strength of the house to 30 members. These include: Luizinho Faleiro (left Congress to join TMC), Goa Forward Jayesh Salgaonkar quit to join BJP, Congress' Ravi Naik joined BJP, NCP's Churchill Alemao merged the NCP's legislature wing with the TMC, Independent Rohan Khaunte joined BJP, Congress' Aleixo Reginaldo joined the TMC and Independent Prasad Gaonkar joined Congress.

The post-2017 Goa legislative assembly elections had witnessed several Congress MLAs +jumping ship+ to help the then minority BJP form the state government.

However, the Congress is keeping this in mind and its leader P. Chidambaram had held off from inducting Michael Lobo into the party, according to Congress ex-MLA of Calangute Agnelo Fernandes. Goa's capital Panjim is witnessing an interesting tussle as late BJP Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's son – Utpal Parrikar -- is campaigning for himself against the Panjim MLA Atanasio Monserrate, even as both are waiting to see which of them will be given the party's ticket.

Meanwhile, the aftermath of the festive celebrations in Goa witnessed garbage pileups as panchayats struggled to deal with disposal of the waste. With dumping space at a premium, some panchayats are seeking to even rent space in their own villages for garbage collection and sorting. When the sleepy hamlet of Uccassaim in

North Goa collected over a tonne of garbage over barely four days, the village panchayat Sarpanch Anand Gadekar highlighted the need for being given rental waste collection space to the village Communidade,

which owns the comunidade lands.

Lifting one of the garbage bags

with the help of his assistant. Gadekar said the village panchayat had been seeking 500 metres space - for setting up the garbage centre - from the communidade over the past seven years, because at present the collected garbage piles up for days before being hauled away to the treatment plant at Saligao village. Meanwhile, the Goa Panchayats received a +shot-in-the-arm+ following the Goa Government finally forming a three-member "Third State Finance Commission" that had been pending for over a decade. The Commission will be headed by former retired finance secretary Daulat Hawaldar and has one year to submit its report on various measures to strengthen panchayat bodies.

The measures include improving financial position of the panchayats, determining taxes, toll, duties and fees that could be implemented by the local bodies. Even as the political scenario witnessed waves of dramatic incidents, choppy seas on Goa's coastline -- on the other hand -- kept the lifeguards busy in saving the lives of those who -- uncaring about the Covid-19 scenario -- had ventured out to swim in the rough waters. The Drishti lifeguards have rescued total 42 persons since the start of 2022.



Space needs to be utilised for greater success

ndian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has got a new chairperson in S. Somanath, who heads the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) at Thiruvananthapuram. He succeeds K. Sivan, who also came to head ISRO after having led the efforts at VSSC. Somanath is the third consecutive chairperson of ISRO to have a master's degree in engineering from the Indian Institute of Science. It is to be seen if Somanath's specific expertise in leading innovations in rocket engines, the cryogenic engine, for instance, will shape future developments at ISRO. If earlier the Mars Orbiter Mission, which broke the records for expense by costing just Rs 7 per kilometre, and Chandrayaan 2, had kept anticipation high, the new chairperson will oversee the unfurling of the human space flight programme — Gaganyaan. Another long-awaited mission is Aditya-L1. This has morphed and grown into what will be India's grandest investment in space dedicated to science, specifically, solar physics. Taking a space observatory to the Lagrangian point one to study the Sun is yet another job. Somanath will also lead a transition in the stance of ISRO towards privatisation. Until a few years ago, ISRO had remained largely preoccupied with deriving socio-economic benefits from space technology, and applications that were used by the Government of India and some international collaborations. These ventures had a strong industry participation, but privatisation reforms have been pursued hard recently. In March 2019, the NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) was floated in. After that, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center was created in June 2020 - achannel through which non-governmental private enterprises can carry out space activities. The country's imagination to get up to speed with other competing nations would be put to the test under



the new leadership.

COVID POSES NEW CHALLENGE FOR EC, CLAMOUR GROWS FOR BANNING POLL RALLIES

CLAMOUR FOR BANNING RALLIES, CAMPAIGNING The clamour to ban rallies and campaigns is growing louder with every passing day. After the West Bengal Assembly Election last year, the Calcutta High Court had rapped the Election Commission for its handling of the election during the second wave of Covid-19.

PARTIES PLANNING TO GO DIGITAL THIS ELECTION SEASON From the Congress to the BJP to the Samajwadi Party, all major stakeholders in the upcoming elections are planning to go

CONGRESS'S SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY Throwing light on the Congress' plans, Rohan Gupta, the party's chairman of the social media department said, "We have our social media strategy in place for doing digital rallies, town halls. interaction programs with Priyanka Gandhi on Instagram.

PARTIES WANT ECI GUIDELINES TO AVERT COVID THREAT While some parties are preparing themselves and embracing social media as a tool to campaign, others feel the onus of making elections safe lies with the Election Commission.

ECI PREPARING FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS While the Election Commission is getting weekly updates on the Covid-19 numbers from the five poll-bound states, it is also simultaneously working at increasing manpower, getting all officials vaccinated, and increasing polling stations.

LETTERBOX

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ARUN MAIRA BELIEVES PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS MUST NOT BE OVERPOWERED BY PROPERTY RIGHTS

Liberal economics creates illiberal societies



Union — too. Economies are not doing well. The benefits of growth are being sucked up to the 1% on the top; 'trickle down' to those below has diminished. With every global crisis — the financial crisis of 2007-08 and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis - the rich get richer while millions at the bottom fall off the ladder. Inequalities of wealth have increased around the world and India is becoming one of the world's most unequal countries.

Like the COVID-19 virus, whose origins scientists are struggling to understand, another disease has been crippling the well-being of nations for 30 years. Political symptoms of the disease are the weakening of democracy and secularism. Its economic symptoms are inequities within economies and an unsustainability of economic growth. The socio-political and economic pathologies are interrelated. Economic despair is feeding the rise of authoritarianism, nationalism, and identity politics. Liberals who continue to advocate for more liberal economics must understand how their ideas have caused the rise of anti-liberal societies and governments which they lament. They can no longer have their cake and

Opening national borders to free trade became an ideology in economics in the last 30 years. Taxes of incomes and wealth at the top were also reduced. The ideological justification was that the animal spirits of 'wealth creators' must not be dampened. Otherwise, the pie will not grow and there will not be enough to share. With higher taxes until the 1970s, the U.S. and many countries in Europe had built up their public health and education infrastructure and strengthened social security systems. The rich are now being taxed much less than they were. The pie has grown larger but the rich-



est few have been eating, and hoarding, most of it themselves

Governments are hamstrung without resources to provide public goods. 'Privatisation' of everything became another ideological imperative in economics by the turn of the century. Selling off public enterprises raises resources for funds-starved governments. Another justification is efficiency in delivery of services, setting aside ethical questions of equity. When 'public' is converted to 'private', rich people can buy what they need. In fact, they can buy more with their higher incomes even if the services become more expensive — better health care as well as better education for their children at the world's best schools. The children of wealthier people with better education have greater access to opportunities in the future also. The gaps between the haves and the have-nots

With not enough in the present, and receding hopes of better conditions in the future, people lose faith in their governments. History shows that whenever hopelessness spreads in societies, they are fertile grounds for messianic saviours who whip up pride in citizens' identities to distract them from their woes. History has not ended, even though Francis Fukuyama said it had when the Soviet

Union collapsed. With it, he suggested, the idea of totalitarian governments as saviours of the people had been debunked; and the idea of public ownership of property, which the communists had taken to an extreme by abolishing all private property, had failed.

History has returned. Authoritarian governments are now being democratically elected by people seeking a way out of the morass. The U.S., the leader of the Cold War against the Soviets, built the "Washington Consensus" around a starkly "unsocialist", capitalist ideology which swept across erstwhile socialist countries of Europe and India too. Socialism seems to be back in U.S. politics now with Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and young Democrats.

Liberal economists, promoting free markets, free trade, and privatisation, are worried by nationalism and authoritarian governments. They rail against "populist" policies of governments that subsidise the poor and adopt industrial strategies for self-reliance and jobs for their citizens. Liberals must re-examine their ideas of economics, to understand their own culpability in creating authoritarian and identitarian politics

The property problem

Thomas Piketty's Capital and Ideology traces the ideology of "property" rights and its encounters with evolving ideas of "human" rights over the last three centuries. In proprietarian societies, it is just that he who owns more must have a greater say in the governance of the enterprise. In truly democratic societies, human rights must prevail, and every person, billionaire or pauper, must have an equal right to determine the rules of the game.

Democratic and capitalist principles were becoming reconciled with "socialist" ideas in Europe and the U.S. after the World Wars, and in developing countries such as India after the collapse of colonialism. The socialist era ended with the collapse of communism and the resurgence of neoliberal economics New Post-pandemic World. Views are personal

around the world afterwards.

While communism had lifted living standards, and the health and education of masses of poorer people faster than capitalism could, communism's solution to the "property" question — that there should be no private property — was a failure. It deprived people of personal liberties. Capitalism's solution to the property problem — replacing all publicly owned enterprises with privately owned ones (and reducing taxes on wealth and high incomes) has not worked either. It has denied many of their basic human needs of health, education and social security, and equal opportunities for their children.

The private property solution has also harmed the natural environment. The belief that private owners will husband natural resources sustainably for all has proven false. When natural resources, and knowledge converted into "intellectual property", become the property of business corporations, they will use them for the purpose for which a business corporation is created — which is to increase the wealth of its owners. The ecological commons are harmed, and social equity suffers.

Communism and proprietarian capitalism carried too far have both failed. Climate change and political rumblings around the world are both warnings that capitalism needs reform. Economic policies must be based on new ideas. Thought leaders and policymakers in India must lead the world out of the rut of ideas in which it seems to be trapped. Principles of human rights must not be overpowered by property rights. A new form of "Gandhian" democratic socialism, powered by cooperative economic enterprises, is required in the 21st century, to create wealth at the bottom, not only at the top, and save humanity and

Arun Maira, Former Member, Planning Commission, is the author of A Billion Fireflies: Critical Conversations to Shape a



ANURIMA EXPLORES WAYS THAT MAY HELP INDIA COUNTERBALANCE CHINA IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

New Delhi must dive deep into SAGAR to woo small powers

China's string of pearls

ninese foreign minister Wang Yi recently visited Sri Lanka to mark the completion of 65 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. On the occasion, he proposed a forum $\,$ of Indian Ocean Island countries sharing similar experiences and common needs. It had a striking resemblance to the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative launched by India in 2015.

economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbors and assist in building their maritime security capabilities. For this, India would cooperate on the exchange of information, coastal surveillance, the building of infrastructure and strengthening their capabilities.

The proposal may intensify the maritime rivalry between India and China in the Indian Ocean region.

Indian Ocean: no more a "Zone of Peace"

On December 16, 1971, Sri Lanka successfully had the United Nations General Assembly declare the Indian ocean, together with the air space and ocean floor, as a 'zone of peace' for all time. A 'zone of peace' is a soft law adopted by the United Nations general assembly. It is a geographical region of the world in which groups of States have maintained peaceful relations among themselves. The law was adopted to prevent western powers from flexing muscles into the Indian Ocean region. However, the concept remained illusionary. A glaring example of it is Diego Garcia military base of USA in Indian Ocean. To avert China from the Indian Ocean, India has continuously supported the idea of a "zone of peace" that apparently proved futile. India cannot counterbalance China if it keeps living the illusion that the Indian ocean is a zone of peace. Without Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD or QUAD), which is gradually turning into military alliance and AUKUS (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States). India cannot counterbalance China in the Indian Ocean as the Dragon already has a strong presence there.

China's advances in the Indian Ocean region

China has expanded its trade route in the Indian Ocean region decently well. For example, China-Myanmar economic

corridor starts from Kunming province of China to Kyaukphyu port in Myanmar. From there, it enters into the Indian Ocean region reaching to Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and then to Gwadar Port in Pakistan, encircling India in the maritime. Hambantota and Gwadar are well-established Chinese-sponsored potential Naval bases in the Indian Ocean region. This is how China is reaching out to the Indian ocean countries and strengthening its hold in the Indian Ocean region. India-sponsored Chabahar Port in Iran is to balance out the Chinese-sponsored Gwadar Port in Pakistan. However, a \$400 billion deal between Tehran and Beijing in March 2021 is adding more pearls to the "string of pearls" of China. Moreover, the constant surveillance by Chinese satellite networks on the Indian Ocean raises concerns for India.

Changing priorities in a realist world order In the modern world, small powers seek

economic advantages. Evidently, countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and other African countries are supporting Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) openly. Powers like India and China seek regional hegemony. China seeks hegemony through money and debt trap is its modus operandi. Keil's Institute of World Economy has estimated hat the world owed \$5 trillion to China in 2017. Beijing's economic advantages and priorities of small power fit in like a couple made for each other.

On the contrary, India seeks hegemony through soft power, which is impressive but not compatible with the rising realist world order.Way forward India needs to hit the nail at the BRI lacunae as the initiative is well known for its unaccountability. Through SAGAR, India must promote an "openness" that the BRI doesn't offer. Offering a better alternative will help India attract small powers and get their cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. Realizing the utility of QUAD in space technology advancement is crucial for India to balance out China's decade-ahead space technology. However, the Trincomalee Port in Sri Lanka is an optimistic step towards the realization of leadership by India in the Indian Ocean.

> Anurima is a student of Masters in International Relations. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

New book focuses on 4 steps to a happy job and career

"n this new normal of the to rebuild his career. pandemic era, when peoples' means of livelihood has been unprecedentedly challenged and most professionals are scrambling to secure themselves financially, the book 'When Your Job Sucks' suggests you 'Embrace Your Crazy'

The book dissects the readers' state of mind, performance levels as well as emotional and energetic index to help them soar to the next higher phase in their professional life.

The protagonist Samar Rao. who allegedly attempted suicide, finds himself alone with broken ribs and limbs in the care of an octogenarian nurse who not only heals him physically but also equips him with the tools

The book is neat and crisp at

200 pages, with short chapters divided into 3 main sections -Transition, Transformation & Transcendence.

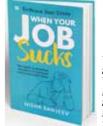
The main takeaway from the book is that a job change or a career change happens across 4 levels, with the physical move being the last stage.

Using one's intuition to check if the decision to quit or start afresh is right should be the first step, suggests the author Nisha Sanieev. She uses the 80-20 principle of the mind-intuition combination to explain why job hoppers find themselves sulking a few months into a new job.

The book also gives a revelation to all those who have tried

The main takeaway from the book is that a job change or a career change happens across 4 levels, with the physical move being the last stage. Using one's intuition to check if the decision to quit or start afresh is right should be the first step

changing careers and failed. The trick is in holding through the 'Dark Night of the Soul Phase'



When Your Job Sucks : Embrace Your Crazy By Nisha Sanjeev; Notion Press; 202 pages; Rs195

- a period when you know your destination, but you cannot see the path to walk along that will get you there.

That is when we must face our real fears, because it is those real fears that cloud our vision [pun intended]. Real fears are the demons inside us, which we know but do not acknowledge.

The self-assessment journal pages bring clarity to the reader. T hese pages help us dissect all our previous successful and un-

successful professional moves. This brings me to the other interesting question the author raises. One of the basic reasons

why people feel stuck is because they consider their professional life separate from their personal life. In fact, the idea put forth through the book is there is just one life - professional time and personal time are parts of the same. And state of being in one affects the other.

The Magical Cards are for keeps. They are thought-provoking and insightful, making us question our beliefs. For instance, Real Success is Permanent Happiness. And Success is Joy'. This challenges the commonly accepted social belief that money = success and success = happiness.

The Handbook for Success section in the book is a quick read to get the gist of the book.

Narrated in a fable, When Your Job Sucks also gives practical tips to follow before a career change. For instance, how important it is to sharpen one's Ace while transitioning to build a career in the field of one's micro niche.

ALSO READ | OMICRON COULD PUSH AIR TRAFFIC RECOVERY INTO FISCAL 2024: CRISIL * P7 | IRDAI CLOSED FY21 WITH RS 124 CR SURPLUS, M&A FEE RS 8.14 CR * P7

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 ing 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 reentry 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

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

minium Business, Indias 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 countrys 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 KtCO2e (kilo tonnes of CO2 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 ing fossil fuels with greener 2,861,700 RECs in the year. Speaking about Vedanta Alu-



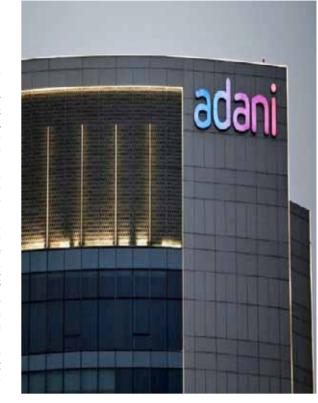
minium's ESG vision, Rahul Sharma, CEO – Aluminium Business, Vedanta Limited, said: "We are committed to our vision of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2050. To that end, we have stepped up our endeavours along key three pillars - continuously improving energy efficiency of operations, increasing the quantum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

technologies. Becoming India's largest industrial consumer of RE in 2021 reflects our persistent endeavours to increase the 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 powered by emerging green as the Term-Ahead Contracts

nology 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

Adani, Posco in pact for steel project at Mundra



Gautam Adani's group and South Korea's Posco have signed an initial pact to explore business opportunities to invest around \$5 billion on projects

that include setting up an integrated steel mill at Mundra in Gujarat, the two firms said on Thursday.

The non-binding pact, if it fructifies, will give Adani Group

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.

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 Pres-



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 aptops.

The recommerce market in India is growing at a rapid pace. However, the bishment 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 ident and Head, Corporate Indian smartphone refur- Growth Charter. AGENCIES

SC stays HC directions against OLX in cheating case regarding motorcycle

NEWDELHI: 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. marketplace, which conin the top court.The top court was hearing a plea buyers and is nothing more petitioner.



by OLX India B.V. challenging the high court order, which was passed in December last year. The high court had passed a slew of directions to OLX, in a matter where a person had used another person's identity to post an advertisement on the online platform.

The plea, against the high court order, contended that OLX is an online nects sellers with potential

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

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



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 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 opera-**AGENCIES**

IMD, POSOCO launch report on use of prior weather information

NEW DELHI: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) and national grid opera-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.

Mahindra Group. AGENCIES

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



partnership forged between the IMD and the POSOCO has come a long way and cemented through various initiatives like workshops, development of a weather portal providing a variety of information on weather operators would further inand publication of reference

proved useful for system would be required to meet operators and have enabled smoother power system operation," POSOCO Chairman generation".IMD Director

and Managing Director, K.V.S. Baba said.He said with high penetration of renewable energy resources, which are also highly dependent on weather, the challenges for system crease, and the "availability of weather information and All these initiatives have development of new tools the challenges posed by the intermittent and variable

General of Meteorology, Dr. Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said that IMD has partnered with POSOCO and equipped the system operators across the country with accurate weather forecasts, and real time weather information which enabled better power system operation of the country, and the two will further expand the cooperation for emerging needs of this vital sector of national

Amazon.in.

Traders' body moves Competition Commission against Amazon-Cloudtail deal eration 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,

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



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-

effect on competition." CAIT action, which would have a argued that complete condestabilising effect on the etrol of Amazon will result commerce market in India. in Cloudtail getting further 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

Supply side constraints dent India's auto sector Dec sales CESL to set-up 900 more EV

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, twoand-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



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

The sales of other subvehicles (UV) grew whereas vans' degrew on a year-onyear basis. As per the data, UV sales rose to 97,137 units from 94,787 units, on the oth-

were sold in the domestic er 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 categories such as utility 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' offtake representing the sales of passenger vehicles, twowheelers, 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 twowheeler 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 threewheelers continue to be a concern. Barring 2020, the sales of commercial vehicles in Q3 has been lowest in last 5 years and sales of threewheelers, 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

AGENCIES

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

bodies to create such infrastructure.One of the main requirements to set up charging infrastructure is the availability of 'land', which in most cases, is provided free of cost by most municipal bodies or firms for public chargers Currently, many automo-

bile companies and other private players, including standalone charging infrastructure developers, are also installing these facilities. Besides, the company intends to accelerate the adoption of e-vehicles in the country.Recently, it launched the 'MyEV' app a digital marketplace to enable the deployment of electric vehicles in the **AGENCIES** country

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RBI likely to hike interest rates by up to 100 basis points in 2022

ister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday chaired a meeting with chiefs of public sector banks and assessed their readiness to tackle any possible dis-ruptions due to the Omicron

The Finance Ministry said during the meeting with bank CMDs/MDs, held through virtual mode, the minister also asked lenders to support sectors, besides farm, retail and MSMEs, that face interruption due to COVID. Sitharaman also reviewed various steps taken by PSBs in implementing pandemicrelated measures initiated by the government and RBI.

"During the review meeting, Smt. Sitharaman assessed various steps taken by PSBs in implementing pandemic-related measures initiated by Government of India and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and readiness to tackle possible future disruptions that may occur due to the ongoing variant of the COVID-19 pandemic," the is not time yet to rest on our ministry said in a statement. The ongoing third wave of



the highly infectious Omi- towards supporting sectors rating agencies lowering India's growth forecast for the current fiscal.India Ratings and Research cut its forecast supporting the agriculture to 9.3 per cent, from 9.4 per cent earlier, while Brickwork Ratings has revised its estimates to 8.5-9 per cent from ing the success of ECLGS, despite the headwinds from the Finance Minister said it achievements, and that our

cron variant of coronavirus that face interruption due has led to various domestic to the continued onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sitharaman also conveyed to the bankers to continue sector, farmers, retail sector and MSMEs, according to the statement.Sitharaman noted that business outlook 10 per cent. While appreciation is progressively improving global development and Omicron spread.

The Finance Minister uncollective efforts must strive derlined that contact inten-

During the review meeting, Smt. Sitharaman assessed various steps taken by PSBs in implementing pandemic-related measures initiated by Government of India and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and readiness to tackle possible future disruptions that may occur due to the ongoing variant of the COVID-19 pandemic"

sive sectors may require more support to help them fight against the pandemic. She also said that credit demand is expected to pick up on account of growth in retail segments, improvement in overall macroeconomic prospects and improving financial health of borrowers, as per the

WB retains India's economic growth forecast at 8.3 pc for 2021-22

Bank has retained India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal at 8.3 per cent as the recovery is yet to become broad-based. As per the first advanced estimates of the national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) last week, the economy is projected to grow at 9.2 per cent in 2021-22, surpassing pre-COVID level in actual terms, mainly on account of improved performining and manufacturing "India's economy is ex-

cent in fiscal year 2021/22 (ending March 2022), unchanged from last June's forecast as the recovery is yet to become broad-based. "The economy should benefit from the resumption of contact-intensive services, and ongoing but narrowing monetary and fiscal policy support," the World Bank said in its latest Global Economic Prospects report released on Tuesday.Further, the report said that growth report said. It also noted recovered.

pected to expand by 8.3 per



for 2022-23 and 2023-24 cent, respectively. The upward revision reflects facturing, benefiting from the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, and increases in infrastructure investment.

"The growth outlook will also be supported by onand measures to resolve despite ongoing risks," the Asia, economic activity has

in the major economies of mance, especially in farm, to 8.7 per cent and 6.8 per South Asia has been above central banks' targets since late 2019.In India, easing an improving investment supply disruptions related outlook with private invest- to COVID and deficient ment, particularly manu- demand contributed to a return of inflation toward the mid-point of the 2-6 per cent target range since mid-2021. Core inflation, however, remains at the upper end of the target range.The report said going structural reforms, a better than-expected that following the ma-jor setback to health and financial sector recovery, economic activity caused by the mid-2021 second financial sector challenges wave of COVID in South

CEL privatisation put on hold after employees move court

NEW DELHI: The government has put on hold the privatisation of Central Electronics Ltd (CEL) after the employees union approached the court against the sale of the company to a little-known firm, a top official said on Wednesday. Allegations of under-valuation in the Rs 210 crore highest bid made by the city-based Nandal Finance & Leasing are being examined, said Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management, which is running the privatisation process.

The Letter of Intent (LoI) for sale of 100% government shareholding in CEL to Nandal Finance & Leasing has not been issued, as the allegations are being examined, Pandey said.The government had in November approved the sale of CEL, under the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, to Nandal Finance & Leasing for Rs 210 crore. The transaction was scheduled to be completed by March

Fintech platform Refyne raises \$82 mn to simplify personal

NEW DELHI: Fintech platform Refyne on Wednesday said it has raised \$82 million in its Series B funding led by Tiger Global. The platform enables employees to withdraw their earned salary in real time before the payment is due, thus reducing debt traps by providing instant access to earned salary. The Earned Wage Access (EWA) solution provider said the since its inception (December 2020), it has raised a total of \$106 million.Earned Wage Access provides access to a portion of their accrued (but unpaid) salary any time before payday.EWA is not a loan, therefore does not involve borrowing on the part of the employee and carries no cost to the employer.

Equities decline on Friday after five consecutive sessions of gains

NEW DELHI: The 30-scrip Sensitive Index (Sensex) and broader 50-scrip Nifty on the National Stock Exchange declined in early trade on Friday.Notably, indices had been gaining for the past five trading sessions.At 10.28 a.m., Sensex traded at 60,986 points, down 0.4 per cent from the previous close of 61,235 points. It opened at 61,040 points. Nifty traded at 18,192 points, down 0.4 per cent from the previous close of 18,257 points. It opened at 18,185 points. Aurobindo Pharma, HCI Technologies, Axis Bank, Adani Transmission, and Asian Paints were some of the top losers, NSE data showed. Top gainers during the early trade were Tata Consumers, IOCL, ACC, Ambuja Cements, and **AGENCIES** Bosch.

Indian mobility tech startup EVage raises \$28 mn

NEWDELHI: Indian all-electric commercial original equipment manufacturer (OEM) EVage on Friday said it has raised \$28 million from US-based venture capital firm RedBlue Capital. Founded in 2014, Evage in India is supplying EV trucks to major delivery fleets such as Amazon India's Delivery Service Partner.The seed-round funding will help the mobility tech startup complete its productionready factory outside of Delhi in FY2022-23 and scale up production, said **AGENCIES**

India's Dec merchandise exports up over 38 pc YoY



December merchandise exports in December exports rose to \$37.81 2021 were \$28.92 billion, billion, higher by 38.91 registering a positive per cent on a year-on- growth of 29.67 per cent year basis, official data over non-petroleum and showed on Friday.Ex- non-gems and jewellery ports during December exports of \$22.30 billion 2020 stood at \$27.22 in December 2020," the

The data by the Min-

NEW DELHI: India's non-gems and jewellery ministry said.

In comparison to De-Industry showed that in leum and non-gems and comparison to December jewellery exports in De-2019, last month's ex- cember 2021 registered a ports rose by 39.47 per positive growth of 37.31 cent. "Non-petroleum and per cent." AGENCIES

NABARD pegs Odisha's credit potential Paytm stock hits all-time low for 2022-23 at Rs 1.34 lakh crore

BHUBANESWAR: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has projected Odisha's credit potential for the financial year 2022-23 at Rs 1,34,665 crore, officials said here on Tuesday.The credit project for the year 2022-23 is 21.61 per cent higher than the previous year's Rs 1,10,735 crore. This was known from the NABARD's State Focus Paper for Odisha for the year 2022-23 released here on Tuesday.Out of the total credit potential for the priority sector, the highest amount of Rs 52,050.78 crore (38.65%) has been assessed under the

Under the agriculture sector, credit flow of Rs 48,221.10 crore (92.64%) is estimated under farm credit, which comprises both crop loans and term loans for agriculture and allied activities. Besides, credit potential under agriculture at Rs 1,824.33 crore and Rs 2,005.34 crore, respectively. Credit potential under MSME

60,001.27 crore, constituting around 44.56 per cent of the total priority sector. Other sectors consisting of export credit, education, housing, renewable energy, others and social infrastructure have around 16.79 per cent share in the total credit potential under priority sector.

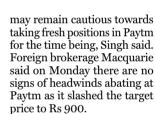
Releasing the paper, Odisha finance minister Niranjan Pujari emphasised upon bank credit for priority been pushing lot of support sector has been assessed at Rs Millet Mission, FPOs etc and

it's time for banks to increase the credit flow for private capital formation substantially. Activities such as animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc., leading to asset formation and diversification of the income basket of farmers need to be credit linked, Pujari said. Principal Secretary Finance. Vishal Kumar Dev said that the State economy could withstand the negative imthe need for increasing the pact of Covid and proved its silience Dev indicated activities has been estimated in Odisha as government has that a five year long term through various schemes like commenced for a struc-Balaram, Kalia, Samrudhi, tured development of the RIL inks MoU worth Rs 5.95L cr in

NEW DELHI: The Paytm stock hit an all-time low, trading down a further 2.16 per cent

on Tuesday at Rs 1,132 after an almost 6 per cent slide the previous day.Manoj Dalmia, Founder and Director at Proficient Equities Private Limited said Paytm Share plunged by 6 per cent and is further down 1.48 per cent making its all-

Dalmia said Paytm's payment business accounts for about 70 per cent of revenue, which will be under threat if there are anv regulatory changes. Also, its entry into insurance sectors has been rejected by regulators. The stock is trading at about 17 times FY23 sales which seems overvalued considering higher expenses and risk of attrition of senior executives, Dalmia said. Ravi Singh, Vice President & Head of Research, Share India Securities said Paytm's try into insurance was recently rejected by IRDAI, this could also impact its prospects of getting a banking licence. We expect Paytm to be more downside revenue CAGR from 26 to touch the levels of Rs 1050-



One 97 Communications or Paytm stock was down almost 5.95 per cent on Monday at Rs 1,158.Since 18 November, PayTM's stock price has fallen 40 per cent vs Sensex's flat performance, Macquarie said. Post the various business updates and results, Macquarie said, "Revenue projections, particularly on the distribution side, is at risk and hence we pare down our 1000 in near terms. Investors FY21-26E.

green energy, other projects in Gujarat

Omicron to impact auto component industry's FY22 revenue growth: ICRA

NEW DELHI: The ongoing Omicron wave will impact the growth of Indian auto component industry's FY22 revenues on a yearon-year basis, said credit ratings agency ICRA.Besides, delayed recovery in semi-conductors and muted two-wheeler demand will also impact the revenue growth of the industry in FY22, it said.

The ratings agency's growth forecast for FY2022 has been revised downward by 200 bps to 15-17 per cent the revenue stream."ICRA However, healthy demand



from domestic OEMs as well as replacement market, and robust exports will bring in some stability thr enue growth in FY2022 for agency, most domestic as well. Easing of Covid 2.0

industry, driven by domestic OEM, replacement, export volumes and pass-through of commodity prices," said Vinutaa, Assistant Vice President and Sector Head,

"The healthy volume growth would, however, come on a low base of FY2021. There could be a downward bias to our estimates in case of prolonged lockdowns or significant demand slowdown because of the Omicron from the earlier estimates. expects a 15-17 per cent rev- wave." According to the

expected to register healthy volume growth in FY2022, albeit on a low base of the last fiscal. However, certain segments like 2Ws and buses will be impacted by the Omicron wave.

"We expect delayed recovery in the 2W segment because of affordability and dampened sentiments. Also, demand for buses is expected to be impacted during the upcoming school season for the third year in a row," the agency said. "Supply-chain issues could prolong further

the Indian auto component OEMs' sub segments are related lockdown restrictions and improvement in personal mobility, healthy freight movement and pentup demand arising from deferment of purchases last year, supported replacement sales for auto components in

Q2 and Q3 FY2022." Additionally, the agency said that while there could be some impact on mobility because of the ongoing covid wave, freight movement and deferment of fresh vehicle purchases will result in healthy replacement demand in Q4 **AGENCIES**



Industries (RIL) on Thursday signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the Gujarat state for a total investment of Rs 5.955 lakh crore as part of the investment promotion activity for 'Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2022', which was supposed to be held from January 10-12 in Gandhinagar, but was postponed due to the surge in the number of Covid cases in the state. These projects will create 10 lakh employment opportunities in the state."To make Gujarat net zero and carbon free, RIL proposes to invest Rs 5 lakh crore in the state over the span of 10 to 15 years to set up 100 GW renewable energy power plant and green hydrogen eco-system development," the company said in a statement.

"RIL will develop an ecosystem for assisting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and encourage entrepreneurs to embrace new technologies and innovations, leading to

AHMEDABAD: Reliance captive use of renewable energy and green hydrogen," it added. Besides, in consultation with the state government, RIL has started the process of scouting land for 100 GW renewable energy power project in Kutch, Banaskantha and Dholera."The company has requested for 4.5 lakh acres of land in Kutch," it said. "RIL will invest another Rs 60,000 crore in setting up new energy manufacturing-integrated renewable manufacturing, solar PV module (manufacture of Polysilicon, wafer, cell and module), Electrolyzer, energy-storage battery, and fuel cells," the company

> A total of Rs 25,000 crore investments will be made by RIL in the existing projects and new ventures over the next 3 to 5 years."RIL has also proposed to invest Rs 7,500 crore over 3 to 5 years for Jio Network upgradation to 5G and another Rs 3,000 crore over 5 years in Reliance Retail," it **AGENCIES**

Over Rs 72 cr of Kudos Finance attached by ED in PMLA case

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday said that they have issued a Provisional Attachment Order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), attaching Rs 72,32,42,045 lying in various bank accounts and payment gateway accounts of Indian NBFC company Kudos Finance and Investments Private Ltd and its various fintech partner companies.The ED official said that the agency was conducting money laundering investigations against a number of Indian NBFC companies and their fintech partner Mobile Applications (APPs).Initially, Telangana Police lodged FIRs against them for illegal lending and



to recover exorbitant rates of Kong created MoUs with deinterest from their customers, and the ED started its PMLA probe on the basis of the Telangana Police's FIRs.

funct NBFCs and gave security deposits in the name of 'performance guarantees'. The NBFCs opened separate Merchant IDs Its investigation revealed (MIDs) with Payment Gateways like Paytm, Razorpay, etc, that various Indian companies and against RBI guidelines, alwhich were flush with investfor using extortionist means ments from China, and Hong lowed these fintech companies and abusive language was used. time.

their names.Mobile APPs of the fintech companies were providing unsecured instant micro personal loans for terms ranging from 7 days to 14 days. They used to deduct 15-25 per cent of the loan at the time of disbursement itself in the name of processing fee. The rate of interest charged was also exorbitant. Their APPs would also cap-

ture customers' mobile data by getting various access privileges etc. In order to obtain more profits, they resorted to harsh recovery measures via call centres.Personal data of the customers was misused and calls were made to their friends and relatives of the customers

to piggyback on their license and do full-scale lending in made against the defaulters to shame them. Unable to bear the level of harassment, certain people have committed suicide. These APPs managed to

have a recovery rate of more than 90 per cent and earned huge profits.Kudos Finance and Investment Private Ltd was one such NBFC company that signed MOUs with 39 fintech companies, illegally accepted 'security deposits' from them and allowed them to do lending activity. Despite not having net-owned funds of more than Rs 10 crore, in complete violation of RBI guidelines, this NBFC, or actually its partner Mobile APPs, did lending of Rs 2,224 crore in a short span of

Union Labour Minister interacts with HR heads of industry

NEW DELHI: In a first of its kind initiative, Union Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Wednesday interacted with the human resource heads of the industry representing various sectors, including manufacturing, staffing agency, automobile, construction, hotel etc. The interaction was facilitated by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Yadav mentioned that evidence-based policy making and last-mile delivery are pillars of good governance, and effective and targeted delivery of services. For this purpose, his Ministry has launched new surveys for migrant and domestic workers.Further, with the objective to create a comprehensive database in both for informal and formal sectors, besides an All India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (AQEES) for organised sector, an area-based area-frame establishment survey has also been decided for es-

The Union Minister said that in order to have collaborative approach involving employers and employees in the last meeting of Central Board of Trustees of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and Corporation of Employees' State Insurance, he has constituted committees for improving grievance redressal of 6.5 crore members of EPFO, strengthening technological interventions, capacity building, effective monitoring of ongoing projects and enhancing coverage under

tablishments having nine

or less workers

India's Dec wholesale price inflation sequentially eases to 13.56 per cent

MUMBAI: Lower prices of for December. "The month manufactured goods and fuel over month change in WPI slightly eased India's December 2021 wholesale inflation 2021 stood at (-) 0.35 per cent on a sequential basis. Accordingly, the annual rate of inflation, based on wholesale prices, rose to 13.56 per cent from 14.23 per cent reported on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, (WPI) data furnished by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has risen exponentially over December 2020, when it stood at 1.95 per cent. "The high rate of inflation in December 2021 is primarily due to rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum and natural gas, chemicals and chemical products, food products, textile and paper and paper products etc., as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the ministry said in

for the month of December, as compared to November, 2021," it added. As per the data, the pri-

mary articles segment, which has one of the highest weightfor November 2021. However, ages in the WPI, increased at a faster rate of 13.38 per the Wholesale Price Index cent in December 2021 as compared to 10.34 per cent reported for November 2021. In the fuel and power segment, which has a weightage of 13.15 per cent, the rise in inflation was recorded at 32.30 per cent, as compared to 39.81 per cent in November 2021. Similarly, cost of manufactured products, which has a weightage of 64.23 per cent, increased at a slower rate of 10.62 per cent from 11.92 per cent in November 2021. However, the growth rate of WPI food index consisting of its review of 'Index Numbers food articles from the priof Wholesale Price in India' mary articles group and food



products from the manufactured products group rose to 9.24 per cent from 6.70 per cent in the previous month. "The WPI inflation printed in double digits for the ninth consecutive month, easing only modestly in December 2021 from November's high, with a jump in primary food and non-food inflation absorbing a part of the correction in other item," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist,

has spiked from the marginal 0.1 per cent in October 2021 to an unpleasant 23-month high of 9.6 per cent in December 2021, reflecting the unfavourable base, particularly for vegetables," Navar added. According to Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer, Acuite Ratings & Research: "The data indicates that the incremental price pressures in the primary article and the fuel segments have eased

"The primary food inflation

in the previous month, although a fresh rise in global crude prices can make such a relief temporary."As expected, there is a moderation in the wholesale food category driven by the seasonal drop in vegetable prices, including a sharp drop in onion and potato prices. While the pass through of higher input costs to manufactured products has continued in December 2021, the sequential growth is low at 0.22 per cent for that category due to the loss of momentum in demand recovery.

D.R.E Reddy, CEO and Managing Partner at CRCL LLP, said: "The WPI has fallen month on month, mainly due to a high base."The wholesale inflation is expected to weaken as we move ahead in 2022, largely due to falling commodity and primary article prices. High food and vegetable prices remain **AGENCIES**

Budget FY23: Realty seeks incentives on home loans, rental income, GST cut on inputs

NEW DELHI: With the Union Budget for FY23 round the corner, real estate developers have started making their suggestions and recommendations to the Centre for including them in the Budget document. The Budget will be tabled in the Parliament on February 1.After facing strong headwinds during the initial days of the pandemic, the real estate sector has largely managed to come out of the turbulent clouds in 2021.

To keep the momentum intact in the high-growth potential realty sector, several developers have requested the government to provide incentives on taxes (both principal and interest) for home loans, on the rental housing segment, and extend some concessions on income from renting of housing properties. Also, some urged the government to remove taxation on notional rental income in order to further boost demand for new properties, besides reducing GST on raw

materials."Housing demand did bounce back strongly after the first as well as the second wave of the Covid pandemic, driven mainly by historical low interest rates on home loans. However, the sector is still plagued with two perennial problems unsold inventories and stalled projects. The third wave has emerged as a challenge for the sector and the economy," said Dhruv Agarwala, Group CEO at Housing.com, Makaan.com and Proptiger.com."The corpus of the government-backed stress fund 'SWAMIH' should be hiked to at least Rs 1 lakh crore. The current corpus of Rs 25,000 crore has already been committed."In November 2019, the Centre launched the 'SWAMIH Investment Fund' to help complete over 1,500 stalled housing projects, including those that have been declared non-performing assets (NPAs) or had been admitted for insolvency pro-

Omicron could push air traffic recovery into fiscal 2024: Crisil

MUMBAI: The ongoing third top four private airports -pandemic wave led by Omicron could pose fresh turbulence for air traffic, pushing its full recovery into fiscal 2024, ratings agency Crisil said on Thursday. The agency had earlier expected the full recovery to happen in fiscal 2023.

It said that a material impact on the credit quality of airport operators, however, is unlikely as the dip in revenue is expected to be limited by a likely strong rebound, and the operators have adequate debt servicing cushions, liquidity buffers and financial flexibility to absorb the blip per cent from the highs of De-in traffic.An analysis of the cember 2021 in the first week from May to November

Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad -- which accounted for 90 per cent of air passenger traffic handled by private airports and 50 per cent of all passenger traffic last fiscal, indicates as much, the agency said.

The high infection rate of Omicron has resulted in several state governments and local authorities, such as Delhi and Mumbai, announcing restrictions on movement," said Manish Gupta, Senior Director, Crisil Ratings."In fact, domestic traffic is down by 25 personal and business travel will take a hit in January and February, leading to air traffic plunging an estimated 30 per cent sequentially in the fourth quarter of this fiscal."

This spill-over impact, the agency said, is likely to delay recovery of air traffic from "our earlier expectation of it happening in fiscal 2023". However, recovery is expected to be achieved within the early part of fiscal 2024. This is because air traffic is likely to rebound faster this time around, compared to the

deal.Observing that the UK

is a major trade partner of

India with substantial bi-

lateral volume of trade in

goods and services, Goyal

said that with the coopera-

of January 2022 itself. Both 2021 to recover from 16 per cent to 85 per cent of the fiscal 2020 traffic," the agency said.

The rebound confidence is underpinned by higher proportion of vaccinated populace -- over 71 per cent now vis-a-vis only 5 per cent as of end May 2021 -- as well as learnings of governments and authorities from the past waves in implementing Covid-19 protocols for safe travel. The case load, too, is expected to peak in February and return to the December 2021 level by the end of March 2022," it **AGENCIES**

Commerce Minister interacts with industry leaders

NEW DELHI: Minister of Commerce and Industry Pivush Goyal has interacted with the leaders of the major industry bodies to seek their suggestions and inputs to ensure continuation of fast rebound high growth rates, officials said on Wednesday.He congratulated the Indian industry for bouncing back after taking a hit due to the pandemic and for the resilience displayed while grappling with the pandemic, especially in the field of exports.The Minister said that the growth in services exports, in-spite of travel and tourism restrictions was truly commendable and said that we must aim to reach \$250 billion services exports. He added that Indian professionals had demonstrated great success in working from home and therefore the nation had succeeded in meeting every single one of its international commitments, even

during the pandemic,

earning it the title of being

a trusted partner to the

IRDAI closed FY21 with Rs 124 cr surplus, M&A fee Rs 8.14 cr



CHENNAI: The Insurance closed FY21 with total fee Regulatory and Development income of about Rs 194 crore. Authority of India (IRDAI) According to IRDAI's an-

Last fiscal, IRDAI earned Rs 8.14 crore as fees for processing of amalgamation of insurers, up from Rs 7.19 crore earned under the head the previous fiscal.During FY21, IRDAI had earned a surplus of income over expenditure of about Rs 124 crore on a total income of about Rs 269 crore, up from about Rs 102 crore on a total income of Rs 268 crore earned

nual report, the total fee

income of the insurance

regulator last fiscal was

about Rs 194 crore,

up from about Rs 180

crore earned in FY20.

The primary revenue for

IRDAI is annual licence re-

newal fee from the insurers

- life/non-life/reinsurers/

agents/brokers/penalties

and others

during FY20.

Bag full of gold, fake currency valued at Rs 18L seized

KOLKATA: The Customs officials at the Indira Gandhi International airport here have seized a trolley bag and arrested two persons for smuggling gold and fake currency, officials said on Friday. As the case is related to FICN (Fake Indian Currency Notes), the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was also informed to investigate any possible terror funding links. As per the Customs department, an Indian passenger arrived at Terminal-3 of IGI airport from Ras AI Khanimah International Airport, UAE on January 12.

While scanning his luggage, the customs officials found gold valued at Rs 7,65,000, and 2,000 fake Indian currency notes of Rs 500 denomination, worth



Rs 10 lakh.The customs officials also arrested one Section 110 of the Customs person from the arrival gate Act, 1962, on January 12. of IGI Airport who came to The passenger and his rereceive this passenger, to take the delivery of these goods.

"The gold weighing 175 grams and FICN of face value Rs 10,00,000 were fice of the commissioner of concealed by the passen- customs, IGI Airport, said ger in his trolley bags and in a statement. **AGENCIES**

the same were seized under ceiver have been placed under arrest in terms of Section 104 of the Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation is under progress," the of-

India-UK launch crucial free trade negotiations

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, on Thursday launched the negotiations between India and the UK for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries in the presence of British International Trade Secretary, Annenegotiations in New Delhi are expected to facilitate the target of doubling bilateral trade between India and the UK by 2030, set by the Prime Ministers of both the nations, Narendra Modi and Boris Johnson, in May 2021. Speaking on the occasion, Goyal said that both India and the UK are vibrant democracies, with a partnership build on the shared history and rich culture of the two nations. The diverse Indian dias-

pora in the UK, who act as a Living Bridge', adds further dynamism to the relations between the two countries, he said.The FTA with the UK is expected to provide certainty, predictability and transparency and will create a more liberal, facilitative and competitive services regime, the minister noted. "The FTA negotiations with tial for increasing exports



crease our exports in leather, textile, jewellery and processed agri products. India is also expected to register a quantum jump in the export of marine products through the recognition of 56 marine units in India. "The mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) on pharma could provide additional market access. There is also great poten-

ITES, nursing, education and healthcare, including AYUSH and audio-visual services. India would also be seeking special arrangements for movement of its people," Goyal said.

subsequent to the unveiling of the FTA, the two nations would proactively and regularly engage with each other, for deliberating on the scope and coverage of the trade

The minister assured that

tion extended across areas like tourism, technology, startups, education, climate change etc,. the two nations tually beneficial trade deal with balanced concessions and market access package in a wide range of sectors. Calling for the enhancement of sectoral cooperation by addressing market access issues and removing trade restrictions, Goyal said that it would help generate direct and indirect employment in both the nations. Earlier, Trevelyan had stated before leaving Lon-

don: "We want to unlock this huge new market (offered by India) for our great British producers and manufacturers across numerous industries from food and drink to services and automotive."India marks the start of our ambitious 5-star year of UK trade and will show how the deals we negotiate will boost

the economies across all

AGENCIES

FTA golden opportunity to put UK businesses at the forefront: British Trade Secretary

NEW DELHI: After the formal launch of the negotiations between India and the UK for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two nations here on Thursday, **British International Trade** Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said that the UK is broadening its economic horizons and forging stronger partnerships with the fastest-growing economies of the world.

"As an independent, dealmaking nation, the UK is broadening its economic horizons and forging stronger partnerships with the fastest-growing economies of the world. India marks the start of our ambitious 5-star year for UK trade and will show how the deals we ne-



gotiate boost the economies across all nations and help level up all regions of the UK, Trevelyan said.

Trevelyan is on a two-day visit to India to officially launch negotiations on a new, ambitious FTA, which is supposed to create huge benefits for both the countries and could boost India-UK bilateral trade by up to 28

billion pounds a year by 2035. The first round of negotiations is expected to start next week -- making it the UK's quickest start of formal talks between negotiating teams the same trajectory during this following a launch, a demonstration of the strength of the UK-India relationship. The UK-India economic relationship is already strong and bilateral trade totalled over tic product (GDP) at 9 per 23 billion pounds in 2019, cent last year and forecast it supporting nearly half-amillion jobs in each other's

In May 2021, the Prime Ministers of the two nations had set the ambition to double the value of UK-India trade over the next decade through the '2030 Roadmap' plan, Trevelyan AGENCIES

'India's recovery is on a solid path', is world's top economic performer: UN report

UNITED NATIONS: "India's recovery is on a solid path", the UN said on Thursday reporting that the country recorded the highest estimated growth rate among the major economies last year and is set to be on year and the next.The UN's annual World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report estimated the growth rate of India's gross domesto moderate to 6.7 per cent this year and 6.1 per cent next year but still retain the highest growth rates among the large economies.

In 2020, the year Covid-19 pandemic struck the world, India's economy had shrunk by 7.1 per cent - a negative growth rate - according to the report. China, which came next among



the large economies, was estimated to have grown by 7.8 per cent last year and forecast to grow by 5.2 per cent this year and 5.5 per cent next year. Overall, the global economy's growth was estimated to be 5.5 per cent last year, bouncing back from a shrinkage of 3.4 per cent in 2020. The growth projections are 4 per cent this year and 3.5

per cent in 2023. The report said: "India's economic recovery is on a solid path, amid rapid vaccination progress, less stringent social restrictions and still supportive fiscal and monetary stances."

The WESP raised India's growth estimate for last year by 1.7 per cent and the growth projection for this year by 0.8 per cent from the expecta-

tions in its report a year ago. however, due to unpredict-It ascribed slowing down of growth from 9 per cent last year to 6.7 per cent this year to waning base effects.While "robust export growth and public investments underpin economic activity", the WESP warned that "high oil prices and coal shortages could put the brakes on economic activity in the near term"."It will remain crucial to encourage private investment to support inclusive growth beyond the recovery," it advised. "Inflation is expected to de-

celerate throughout 2022, continuing a trend observed since the second half of 2021 when relatively restrained food prices compensated for higher oil prices," the report said while attaching a note of caution: "A sudden and renewed rise in food inflation,

able weather, broader supply disruptions and higher agricultural prices, could undermine food security, reduce real incomes and increase hunger across the South Asia) region."The report estimated India's consumer price inflation at 5.9 per cent last year and projected to go down to 5.6 per cent this year and 5.3 per cent next year. The WESP said that it expected the Reserve Bank to raise interest rates throughout this year. In its snapshot of the

world economy, the report said: "The global economic recovery is facing significant headwinds amid new waves of Covid-19 infections, persistent labour market challenges, lingering supply-chain challenges and rising inflationary **AGENCIES**



"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."

riyanka 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 oth-

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 **AGENCIES**



'Looop Lapeta' trailer shows a thrilling cut to the chase

comedy-thriller 'Looop 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, "'Looop 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!

ne trailer of Taapsee Pannu The film is about the choices that the couple's wild choices." and Tahir Raj Bhasin's Savi makes and how her decisions carve out her journey with the one she loves. A perfect combination of comedy and thriller, 'Looop 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 Maheshwari, will premiere on Feb-

Talking about his debut venture, director Aakash Bhatia said, "I am enthralled to share a peek into the world of 'Looop 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.'

'Looop Lapeta' produced by Sony Pictures Films India and Ellipsis Entertainment along with Aayush edge through the consequences of ruary 4, on Netflix. AGENCIES

N.Korea warns of 'stronger' reaction after US imposes

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.

Diokovic, 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

"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.**'

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 Games medallist for her out-**NEW DELHI:** One of the most

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 experienced midfielders in 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 constanding 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 gratulated the two-time Asian said in a release. AGENCIES

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

new sanctions

SEOUL: North Korea on

Friday warned that it will

missile was an "exercise of right to self-defence".

"If the US adopts such a DPRK will be forced to take stronger and certain reaction Tuesday, the second such test to it," Yonhap News Agency in less than a week.

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 the reclusive regime's weapons of mass destruction and countries."



opment of new-type weapon was just part of its efforts for modernizing its national defence capability," the KCNA

"It did not target any specific country or force and it North Koreans involved in did not do any harm to the security of neighbouring

statement said.

Rights of Afghan women, girls under attack: UN a gathering of women activ-

KABUL: The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has said that the rights of Afghan 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

that since the Taliban took over Afghanistan last August everyone's rights have been protected, including AGENCIES women.

ists in Kabul on Wednesday

stayed awake all night and "lit

statement, Taliban spokes-

man Zabihullah Mujahid said

the allegations were baseless

In a tweet, Mujahid said

and "false information".

candles for freedom".

Africa's 4th Covid wave flattening: WHO



ADDIS ABABA: After a sixweek 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 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

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

Across the continent, though, deaths rose by 64 per cent in the seven days ending 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

"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.

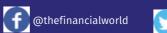
While the continent appears to be weathering the latest pandemic wave, vaccinations still remain low.

Just around 10 per cent of Africa's population has been fully vaccinated, noted **AGENCIES**



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