

BRIEF NEWS

Light rain, snow forecast in J&K for 3 days

Minimum temperatures improved marginally in J&K and Ladakh on Sunday as the weather office forecast light rain and snow for three days. A statement by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, "Under the influence of a feeble Western Disturbance, weather is most likely to remain generally cloudy with possibility of very light to Light rain/snow in plains of J&K during January 16th to 19th and light to moderate snowfall over higher reaches. "As of today, there is no forecast of any major rain/snow till ending January."

■Turn to page 2

Two Brothers Killed After Earthmover Plunges Into Gorge In J&K's Doda

Two brothers were killed and a person injured when an earthmover skidded off a road and plunged into a 100-feet-deep gorge in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday. The incident occurred at Shahlala around 11.30 pm Saturday when the brothers along with an acquaintance

■Turn to page 2

Two held with 397 kg poppy straw in Udhampur

Two alleged interstate narcotic smugglers were arrested after 397 kg poppy straw was recovered from a truck in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Sunday. The contraband was found hidden in a specially fabricated chamber in the Haryana-bound truck during inspection at Jakhon on the

■Turn to page 2

COVID-19: Ladakh reports 130 fresh cases

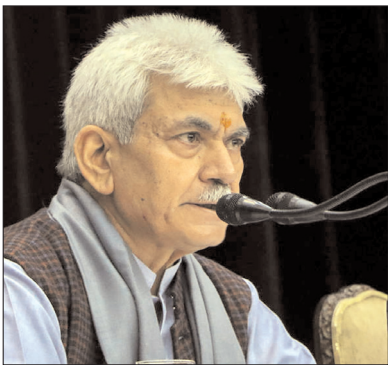
Ladakh's coronavirus caseload increased to 23,209 on Sunday as 130 more people tested positive for the virus, officials said. Ninety of the new cases were reported from Leh district and 40 from Kargil district, they said. According to the officials, the COVID-19 death toll in the Union territory stands at 222 with 164 fatalities in Leh and 58 in Kargil. The number of active COVID-19 cases in Ladakh has gone up to 741 with 635 in Leh and 106 in Kargil, the officials said. Fifty-eight patients were discharged from hospitals in Leh during the past 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries in Ladakh to 22,246, they said. The officials said the total positivity rate of Ladakh stands at 3.8 per cent.

## LG Sinha enlists breakthrough steps and initiatives for economic growth and equitable development of J&K

### Positive initiatives must for improving living standards of all sections J&K LG

JAMMU RISING  
JAMMU, JAN 16

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha highlighted the success stories, and



voiced invaluable suggestions and insights received from citizens in the monthly "Awaam ki Awaaz" radio programme aired today on all local & primary channels of All India Radio (AIR) in the UT and broadcast on DD Kashir. During the first episode of the programme in 2022, the Lt Governor also

Highlights success stories, invaluable suggestions & insights from citizens

Positive initiatives in economic sector imperative for improving the standard of living of all sections and creating a society free from discrimination: LG

We have to empower every person by providing opportunities to meet the pace of development in this era of globalization and to effectively meet the challenges of future, says the LG

People have biggest role in stopping Corona, I urge everyone to follow Covid Appropriate Behaviour and "Say no to third wave": LG

J&K's First Real Estate Summit witnessed investment agreements to the tune of Rs 18,300 crores

Investment proposals worth Rs 17,000 crores signed between the J&K Government and well-known business groups at the Dubai Expo

Government jobs announced for J&K's sportspersons who excel at international level

enlisted various breakthrough steps and initiatives that the administration has been taking for furthering the economic growth and equitable development of J&K UT, bringing investment and creating a host of new opportunities for the people of Jammu Kashmir.

The Lt Governor outlined that positive initiatives in the economic sector are imperative for improving the stan-

dard of living of all sections and creating a society free from any discrimination. He said that the first and historic Real Estate Summit organised with the broader goals of ensuring economic prosperity, employment opportunities and financial strengthening of the local business groups, witnessed investment

■Turn to page 2

### Indian, Russian navies conduct passing exercise in Arabian Sea

JAMMU RISING  
JAMMU, JAN 16

Indian Navy and Russian Federation Navy conducted a passing exercise in the Arabian Sea. Indian Navy's indigenously designed and built guided missile destroyer INS Kochi and Russian Federation Navy's destroyer Admiral Tributs were involved in the exercise that showcased cohesiveness and interoperability, Navy said on Sunday. "#IndianNavy's indigenously designed & built guided missile destroyer, #INSKochi, exercised with Russian Federation Navy (RuFN) ship

■Turn to page 2

### 275 doctors, paramedics tested Covid positive in Kashmir

JAMMU RISING  
SRINAGAR, JAN 16

A total of 275 doctors and paramedics of various hospitals in Kashmir have tested positive for COVID-19 since January 1 this year, officials said on Sunday. Professor and Head of Department, Community Medicine, GMC Srinagar, Dr Salim Khan said 145 doctors, 130 MBBS students and 130 paramedics have tested positive for COVID-19 in GMC Srinagar and associated hospitals since January 1. He said most of the infected have

mild symptoms. "No one among them has been hospitalised, but, they are in isolation. Hopefully, they will report back in a week's time," Khan said. Khan appealed to the people to avoid visiting hospitals unnecessarily. "Hospitals are most frequented places by infected people. Visit hospitals only in case of emergency. No need to visit your near and dear ones admitted to hospitals or isolated/ quarantined at homes. Please follow

■Turn to page 2

### Director of Health Services says Kashmir ready to fight pandemic, appeals people to follow COVID protocols

JAMMU RISING  
JAMMU, JAN 16

As the COVID-19 cases surged in Jammu and Kashmir, Director of Health Services, Kashmir Dr Mushtaq Ahmad said that the union territory is ready to fight against the virus and appealed to the people to adhere to COVID protocols and get vaccinated. Dr Mushtaq said, "We are

■Turn to page 2

## J&K Reports 3499 Fresh Covid-19 Cases, 6 Deaths

JAMMU RISING  
JAMMU, JAN 16

Covid-19 cases continued to skyrocket in Jammu and Kashmir as 3499 new cases have been reported while six persons succumbed to the virus in the last 24 hours, officials said on Sunday. They said that 1210 of the cases were reported from Jammu Division and 2289 from Kashmir Valley, taking the overall tally to 359373. There were also six deaths in the last 24 hours, three each from Jammu division and Kashmir Valley. So far 4567 people have succumbed to the virus and include 2221 in Jammu and 2346 in Kashmir.

Giving the district wise details of the fresh cases confirmed in J&K, the officials said that Srinagar reported 614, Baramulla 463, Budgam 404, Pulwama 94, Kupwara 157, Anantnag

230, Bandipora 166, Ganderbal 27, Kulgam 127, Shopian 7, Jammu 556, Udhampur 126, Rajouri 39, Doda 20, Kathua 163, Samba 112, Kishtwar 20, Poonch 67, Ramban 18 and Reasi 89. A number these cases were confirmed at diagnostic laboratory of GMC Srinagar and GMC Anantnag. Female (30) (NA) from Kalamabad mawar, male (45) (NA) from Tutigund, male (30) (NA) from Rajwar, male (32) (NA) from Handwara, female (18) (NA) from Zachaldara, male (32) (NA) from Zachaldara, female (27) (NA) from Wudipora, male (65) (NA) from Dingree, male (55) (NA) from Dohama, male (23) (NA) from Punzwa, male (55) (NA) from Vilgam, male (75) (NA) from Pazipora, male (47) (NA) from Rajpora pulwama,

male (30) (NA) from Bannoo pulwama, male (42) (NA) from Bellow pulwama, male (31) (NA) from Bellow pulwama, male (40) (NA) from Ratsuna, male (32) (NA) from Tral, female (21) (NA) from Saimoh, female (25) (NA) from Dadsara, male (38) (NA) from Tral, female (28) (NA) from Tral, female (23) (NA) from Tral, male (30) (NA) from Panzoo, male (35) (NA) from Tral, female (35) (NA) from Marsari, male (35) (NA) from Sontipora, female (40) (NA) from Warsun, male (24) (NA) from Warsun, female (24) (NA) from Shamnag, male (20) (NA) from Aloosa, female (38) (NA) from Dardpora, male (50) (NA) from Aloosa, female (19) (NA) from Dardsun, female (50) (NA) from Dardpora, male

■Turn to page 2

## ‘Purple Revolution’ is J&K’s gift to ‘StartUp India’: Dr Jitendra



Mission launched by the Union Ministry of Science & Technology through the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), which has led to the well known "Purple Revolution" in India, the Minister informed that the CSIR had, to

begin with introduced high-value essential oil bearing lavender crop through its Jammu based laboratory, Indian Institute of Integrative Medicines (IIIM) for cultivation in districts Doda, Kishtwar, Rajouri and later also in the other districts including Ramban, Pulwama, etc. In a brief span of time, aroma/lavender cultivation has become a popular option in farming for agricultural StartUps, he said. Sharing a lesser known fact, Dr Jitendra Singh disclosed that a youth called Bharat Bhushan hailing from

■Turn to page 2

## J&K Police, CRPF carry out patrolling in Samba to prevent infiltration

JAMMU RISING  
JAMMU, JAN 16

To upgrade security and prevent infiltration from the other side, Jammu and Kashmir Police along with CRPF personnel are carrying out patrolling in Samba since today morning. "To upgrade security and prevent infiltration from the other side, short-range patrolling including night patrolling is always underway," said Guru Ram Bhardwaj, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)



Operation. "In this search

■Turn to page 2

## Jammu, Srinagar likely to have genome sequencing labs soon

JAMMU RISING  
JAMMU, JAN 16

Just like other parts of the country, Jammu and Kashmir is also witnessing a huge surge in Covid-19 cases, two genome sequencing laboratories are likely to be installed soon in twin capital cities Jammu and Srinagar of the Union Territory. Notably, during the second wave of Covid-19, Jammu

and Kashmir administration had initiated the process of setting up two genome sequencing labs one each in Srinagar and Jammu, but the installation of expected labs could not take off. Thus, owing to the lack of labs, the samples are being sent to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Delhi for genome sequencing.

?Proposed in the second wave, Jammu and Kashmir is likely to have two genome sequencing labs very soon,? Health Department sources told UNI. As of now, J&K due to lack of labs, Covid tests are being sent to NCDC, Delhi but with an installation of the proposed labs, the samples

■Turn to page 2



Light rain, snow forecast in J&K for 3 days

Due to cloud cover, the night temperatures improved marginally on Sunday.

The 40-day long period of harsh winter cold known locally as the ‘Chillai Kalan’, which started on December 21, will end on January 31.

Srinagar had minus 1.2, Pahalgam minus 5.4 and Gulmarg minus 7.0 degrees Celsius as the minimum temperature.

In the Ladakh region, Drass town had minus 17.4, Leh minus 14.3 and Kargil minus 18.6 as the night’s lowest temperature.

Jammu city had 8.4, Katra 5.4, Batote 4.5, Banihal 4.0 and Bhandarwah 0.5 as the minimum temperature.

Two Brothers Killed After Earthmover Plunges Into Gorge In J&K’s Doda

were on their way to Bhatays from Bharti, they said.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Doda, Abdul Qayoom said a preliminary probe suggests that the earthmover was being driven at high speed by Mushtaq Ahmad (22) on the frozen road causing the accident.

A rescue operation was launched immediately. Ahmad was found dead at the spot while his brother Ishtiaq Ahmad and Fareed Ahmad Gujjar were rushed to a hospital.

Ishtiaq (19) succumbed to injuries while Gujjar was referred to Government Medical College Hospital Doda for specialised treatment, the SSP said.

He said the bodies of the brothers were handed over to their family after the completion of all legal formalities. A case has been registered at Gandhoh police station, the police officer said.

Two Brothers Killed After Earthmover Plunges Into Gorge In J&K’s Doda

Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Saturday evening, a police official said. It was packed in 19 bags and was being transported from Kashmir, he said. The truck driver Nand Kishore and his accomplice Niti Nain, both residents of Rohtak, were arrested and booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, he mentioned. During preliminary investigation, the official said, the accused revealed that they had brought the consignment from south Kashmir’s Kulgam district in order to sell it outside the union territory.

LG Sinha enlists breakthrough steps and initiatives for economic growth and equitable development of J&K

agreements to the tune of Rs 18,300 crores.

Highlighting the recent investment proposals worth Rs 17,000 crores signed between the J&K Government and well-known business groups at the Dubai Expo at the beginning this year, the Lt Governor noted that these initiatives are essential to accelerate the pace of economic and social change, thereby improving the lives of the common man.

He cited the example of growth story of Gurgaon- where a cluster of few villages was transformed into a vibrant industrial ecosystem, today housing offices of 250 of the world’s largest multinational companies bringing in massive investment, opportunities and prosperity for common citizens.

“Not only ideas but belief in development creates revolution in the society. All positive changes that have taken place in the society have been achieved by supporting and not opposing development”, the Lt Governor observed.Listing his administration’s "breakthrough steps" for economic growth and equitable development, Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday said positive initiatives in the economic sector are imperative for improving the standard of living of all sections and creating a discrimination-free society. He said the people have the biggest role in stopping the coronavirus and urged them to follow COVID Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) and say "no to third wave". Sinha highlighted the success stories, and voiced invaluable suggestions and insights received from citizens in the monthly "Awaam Ki Awaaz" radio programme aired on all local and primary channels of All India Radio (AIR) in the Union Territory and broadcast on Doordarshan Kashir. During the first episode of the programme in 2022, the Lt Governor listed various breakthrough steps and initiatives that the administration has been taking for furthering the economic growth and equitable development of the Union Territory, bringing investment and creating a host of new opportunities for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. "The positive initiatives in the economic sector are imperative for improving the standard of living of all sections and creating a society free from any discrimination," he said. Sinha said the first and historic real estate summit organised with the broader goals of ensuring economic prosperity, employment opportunities and financial strengthening of the local business groups, witnessed investment agreements to the tune of Rs 18,300 crore. Highlighting the recent investment proposals worth Rs 17,000 crore signed between the J&K government and well-known business groups at the Dubai Expo at the beginning of this year, the Lt Governor noted that these initiatives are essential to accelerate the pace of economic and social change, thereby improving the lives of the common man. He cited the example of growth story of Gurgaon- where a cluster of few villages was transformed into a vibrant industrial ecosystem, today housing offices of 250 of the world’s largest multinational companies bringing in massive investment, opportunities and prosperity for common citizens. "Not only ideas but belief in development creates revolution in the society. All positive changes that have taken place in the society have been achieved by supporting and not opposing development", Sinha said. The Lt Governor shared several success stories and the suggestions sent by the citizens from across the Union Territory. He also congratulated the Sahitya Akademi Award-2021 awardees Raj Rahi, Khalid Hussain, and Wali Mohd Aseer Kashtwari, from the region. Sinha made special mention of success stories of young innovator, Tauseef Ali Malik who has converted the traditional bukhari into a portable room heater and has been awarded the National Innovation Foundation Award; and Masrat Farooq, a 27-year-old girl who is one of the youngest entrepreneurs in Srinagar. "By successful cultivation of Saffron, Vishal Chandra Sharma of Kotedhara panchayat of Rajouri has scripted history by bringing in new areas on the Saffron map of J&K", he noted. Commending the efforts of employees, especially the field staff of the Power Department, the Lt Governor said that despite heavy snowfall on January 8, KPDCL repaired 500 feeders of 11KV’s in just 7-8 hours, adding that, efforts are being made on a war footing to ensure better provision of electricity than the preceding years.

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The Lt Governor noted that promises made in the last episode have been fulfilled. A proposal has been sanctioned for the appointment of J&K’s sportspersons at gazetted and non-gazetted posts. Now, players from UT who win International Awards in 44 sports disciplines will get government jobs. Out of turn promotion will also be given to such players for winning medals in Olympics, Commonwealth, and Asian Games, he added.

Referring to the suggestion of Sheikh Ashiq Ahmad from Srinagar, who shared a detailed roadmap for the promotion of Cottage Industry, the Lt Governor said that our weavers, craftsmen weave the fabric of the prosperity of the society and keep the traditions, customs alive with full dedication. He also enlisted a host of focused steps taken for the welfare of artisans and revival of their craft.

Responding to the letter of Prof. Geer Mohammad Ishaq in which he stressed the importance of inculcating and promoting the culture of innovation amongst the youth, the Lt Governor said that through Innovation and Incubation Centre at Jammu University, Research and Innovation Centre at Kashmir University, started last year, the administration is constantly trying to provide the right platforms to the youth.

On the suggestion of Gourav Sharma regarding strengthening the working model of the District Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Lt Governor observed that the suggestion is in line with the government’s commitment to 3R- Respond, Rescue and Rehabilitate the animals in distress.

The Lt Governor also shared the suggestions of Abrar Kazmi from Baramulla, Fayaz Ahmad Baba from Kulgam, Mohamad Lateef from Baramulla, Randhir Kumar, Rajeshwar Jamwal from Jammu, Mir Adil Farooq of Srinagar, on the introduction of app-based taxi service in Jammu & Srinagar, rationalization of the school education landscape, starting a YouTube channel of the Education Department, online process of attestation for obtaining the Life Certificates, incorporating technology for traffic management and implementing a housing policy in the semi-urban areas, respectively.

Commending the efforts of employees, especially the field staff of the Power Department, the Lt Governor said that despite heavy snowfall on the 8th of January, KPDCL repaired 500 feeders of 11KV’s in just 7-8 hours, adding that, efforts are being made on a war footing to ensure better provision of electricity than the preceding years.

Concluding his address, the Lt Governor underlined that people have an important role in stopping Corona. He urged everyone to follow Covid protocol properly amidst the increased risk of omicron variant.

He also extended his greetings in advance to the citizens regarding the upcoming 73rd Republic Day of the country.

“It is our responsibility that each and every step is beneficial for the society and the nation. Together we have to keep both the diversity and unity of the nation intact. With this determination, I wish you all the very best”, the Lt Governor said.

J&K Police, CRPF carry out patrolling in Samba to prevent infiltration

operation that started in the morning, the personnel searched the entire area so that there could no disturbance on coming Republic Day," he added. The search operation by the jawans started from the area around Basantar river at Pangdhour and ended in the Regal village. The searches were also conducted in many border villages including Bainglad, Chak Fakira, Sinki Chhapri, Mawa.

‘Purple Revolution’ is J&K’s gift to ‘StartUp India’: Dr Jitendra

remote village Khillani in district Doda has become a role model success story. Bhushan started lavender cultivation in just about 0.1 hectare of land with the support of CSIR-IIIM but as profits started showing, he converted a larger area of maize plantation around his house also into lavender plantation. Today, he has 20 others working on his lavender fields and Nursery while around 500 farmers from his district have also followed him by switching over from maize to perennial flowering lavender plant, he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, unfortunately it was never reported in the local media that IIIM Jammu was helping the StartUps in aroma and lavender farming to sell their produce. Prominent companies like Mumbai based Ajmal Biotech Private Limited, Aditi International and Navnaitri Gamika, etc., are the primary buyers.

In commemoration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, Dr Jitendra Singh announced that CSIR has launched Phase-II of Aroma Mission after the completion of Phase-I. In addition to IIIM, CSIR-IHBT, CSIR-CIMAP, CSIR-NBRI and CSIR-NEIST are also now participating in the Aroma Mission,

Pertinent to mention that Aroma Mission is attracting StartUps and agriculturists from across the country, and during Phase-I CSIR helped cultivation on 6000 hectares of land and covered 46 Aspirational districts across the country. More than 44,000 persons have been trained and several crores of farmers’ revenue generated. In the second Phase of Aroma Mission, it is proposed to engage over 45,000 skilled human resources with the aim of benefitting more than 75,000 farming families across the country .

Jammu, Srinagar likely to have genome sequencing labs soon

will be tested in the region.

?The Omicron variant threat is looming large, so authorities have no option other than to send all samples to NCDC for genome sequencing to keep check on its spread,? they said.

?During second wave, authorities decided to set up one lab each in GMC Jammu and in GMC Srinagar/SKIMS Soura following which all details were shared with Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (JKMSCL) for procurement of the machines needed for installing of labs,? they said.

?The tenders to procure machinery for installation of labs were floated thrice but every time a single bid was received,? said Dr Yashpal Sharma, MD, Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation Limited.

He said that rate accessibility exercise is being conducted and the Department of microbiology, GMC Srinagar is on job, adding, "once it is done and rates issue be settled, order will be placed soon and the machines be procured and installed."

Pertinently, the government of India has already asked all States and Union Territories to send samples of every Covid positive patient for genome sequencing.

Pak Mercenaries Tricking J&K Youth Into Terrorism, Using Them As ‘Terror Mules’: Officials

terrorist.

Even though Mir’s stint as an active terrorist was short, he had a long list of acts of terror attributed to him, including the Zewan attack in which three police personnel were killed and 11 others were injured on December 13 last year, the officials said.

They said it was probably his involvement in a long list of terror-related incidents that prevented him from re-joining the mainstream and eventually when he was given an opportunity by the security forces to save his own life, he did not stand a chance at the hands of the very companions for whom he was working as the “terror mule”.

He said as it would have exposed the facade of the so-called local freedom movement and also shown the great human tragedy that the valley has been subjected to for the last three decades by Pakistan-based terror groups.

“As far as Kashmir is concerned, Pakistan’s modus operandi continues to remain the same over the years — infiltrate Pakistani terrorists into the valley in numbers, sizable enough to create and operate cellular groups of 3-4 terrorists, comprising at least one local boy,” he said.

The official said Pakistan’s strategic aim remains to mislead the global community and portray terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir as the result of a local uprising and an insurgent movement led by the local youth. They do it by creation of pseudo terror groups, namely Kashmir Tigers and The Resistance Front (TRF), which are only shadow outfits of banned terror groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashker-e-Taiba respectively.

The shadow groups were created by ISI coupled with the tactical aim of ensuring that these local Kashmiri recruits provide the much-needed logistical support to the foreign terrorists and act as a conduit to keep terrorism in the valley alive.

“But in reality, over the years these local recruits have been reduced to nothing but ‘terror mules’, acting as guides for the Pakistani terrorists, carrying the burden of Pakistan’s misinformation campaign and exploited to keep its terror factory up and running in the valley,” the official said.

He said the local Kashmiri recruit lies at the heart of this vicious terror cycle, carefully planned and surgically executed by ISI-backed terror groups, including JeM and LeT.

On recruitment of the local youth into terrorism, the official said it all begins with “talent” spotting, where radicalised mind and religious leaning form the virtues of a potential recruit.

“After being employed initially for logistical errands, transportation of arms and ammunition and reconnaissance of potential targets, the local Kashmiri boys are tasked to carry out random acts of terror which include grenade throwing, planting IED and stand-off attacks against security forces,” the official said.

“Once the routes back to a normal civil life are severed, the next step is to recruit them into the terror folds, followed with deliberate circulation of their photographs carrying arms, swearing allegiance to proscribed terror groups.

“If the persistence to surrender does not end there, they are intimidated by threatening the life of their loved ones by the same recruiters who forced them into terrorism,” the official said, adding “no matter how hard one tries to give up arms and go back to their home and live a normal life, they just fail to come out of this vicious quicksand of Pakistan’s terror cycle.” (

J&K Reports 3499 Fresh Covid-19 Cases, 6 Deaths

(62)(NA) from Bategam, female (67)(NA) from Kalaroos, male (30)(NA) from Herril mawar, female (55)(NA) from Lalpora, female (63)(NA) from Ganipora Handwara, male (25)(NA) from Langate, male (14)(NA) from Brairipora, male (38)(NA) from Batagund mawar, male (44)(NA) from Kalamabad mawar, male (25)(NA) from Pungroo mawar, female (70)(NA) from Tarkpora Handwara, female (35)(NA) from Vilgam, male (37)(NA) from Trehgam, male (57)(NA) from 184Bn BSF Trehgam, male (55)(NA) from 184Bn BSF Trehgam, female (70)(NA) from Gushi kupwara, male (35)(NA) from Tral, female (28)(NA) from Chattabal, male (24)(NA) from Athwajan, female (33)(NA) from Haft chinar, male (36)(NA) from Batamaloo, male (24)(NA) from Budgam, male (28)(NA) from Kulgam, male (25)(NA) from Chattabal, male (21)(NA) from Natipora, male (25)(NA) from Kargil, male (45)(NA) from Qazigund, female (25)(NA) from Qazigund, female (25)(NA) from Batamaloo, female (27)(NA) from Rawalpura, male (24)(NA) from Bagi mehtab, male (43)(NA) from Sgr, female (50)(NA) from Nowpora, male (65)(NA) from Rainawari, male (18)(NA) from Sanatnagar, male (55)(NA) from Nishat, female (45)(NA) from Batamaloo, male (47)(NA) from Hyderpora, male (31)(NA) from Lalbazar, male (70)(NA) from Alochibagh, male (23)(NA) from Kulgam, male (75)(NA) from Brain, female (29)(NA) from Mehjoomagar, female (35)(NA) from Shopian, female (21)(NA) from Brain, female (38)(NA) from Elahibagh, male (26)(NA) from Indranagar, female (57)(NA) from Safakadal, male (51)(NA) from Sgr and male (33)(NA) from Tral.

The GMC Anantnag cases include male (42) from Bamboo Pul, male (39) from Awneera, male (25) from Dachu, male (30) from Kujjar, four females (26, 21, 28, 21) and male (35) from New Colony, two males (26, 29) from Janglat Mandi, male (30) from Tahjiwara, male (28) from Tailwani, female (32) from Hardpora, male (35) from H Pora, male (58) from Achabal, female (28) from Warden, male (62) from Tailwani, female (60) from H Tooru, male (38) from Deethu, two males (70, 35) and four females (66, 34, 31, 37) from Moominabad, male (63) from Kokernag, male (50) from Dupatyar Bij, male (45) from Adlash Bij, male (42) from Uranhall 90BN CRPF, male (30) from PS Kokernag, male (30) from Adigam Kokernag, male (40) from Irkumoo Kokernag, four males (33, 38, 45, 42) from PHC Mattan, female (30) from Veersiram Anantnag, female (50) and male (50) from Pahalgam Ang, male (55) from Salia Ang, female (50) from Bumri Ang, male (50) from Aino Ang, male (20) from Pahalgam Ang, male (40) from Hangalpora Ang, male (55) from Aamad Ang, male (45) from Vail Nagbal Ang, female (50) from Salia Ang, male (60) from Lehend Ang, female (30) from Pahalgam Ang, female (26) from Aishmuqam ang, male (40) from Warden Ang, male (50) from Malikgund Ang, female (7) from Aino Ang, male (30) from Manigam Ang, female (50) from Ledru Ang, female (50) from Akad Ang, male (59) from Vail Nagbal Ang, two males (4, 50) from Seer Ang, male (9) from Nagbal Ang, female (30) from Khanyar Ang, male (59) from Chandrigam Ang, male (39) from RC Pora Ang, male (40) from Gopripura Ang, male (65) and two females (30, 60) from Pehru Ang, male (50) and two females (42, 60) from Mattan Ang, male (34) from Samal Ang, male (23) from Rakhy Brah Ang, three females (21, 42, 14) from Iqbalabad Samal, female (40) from Tulhaad Aishmuqam, male (10) from Aishmuqam PGM, male (65) from Jajbal PGM, female (22) from Ainoo Aishmuqam, male (25) from Aamad Aishmuqam, male (60) from Aishmuqam PGM, female (19) from Kullar Pahalgam, male (23) from Bij Ang, male (30) from Mumbai India, male (38) from Gujrat India, male (49) from Srg, male (30) and female (14) from Pune, male (25) from Uttar Pradesh, two females (26, 26) from Bangalore, female (32) from Lucknow, male (25) from Bangalore, male (30) from Chennai, female (75) from Utreso, female (24) from Seer, male (50) from Samal Bala, male (32) from Krangsoo and male

(40) from Damhall.

Besides, they said, 470 Covid-19 patients recovered during the time—308 from Jammu Division and 162 from Kashmir. So far 338923 people have recovered, leaving active case tally at 15883 — 6589 in Jammu and 9294 in Kashmir.

They said there was no new confirmed case of mucormycosis (black fungus) reported today. So far 51 black fungus cases have been confirmed in J&K, the officials said.

They also informed that 33419 doses of covid-19 vaccine were administered during the time in J&K.

275 doctors, paramedics tested Covid positive in Kashmir

Covid-appropriate behaviour and all standard operating procedures," he said. Jammu Divisional Commissioner Raghav Langer on Sunday urged the business community to support the administration in the fight against COVID-19 amid the third wave. Langer was interacting with the representatives of traders' associations here at a virtual meeting as "complete restriction on non-essential movement" during weekends brought life to a standstill across Jammu and Kashmir. The Union Territory on Sunday recorded 3,499 fresh COVID-19 cases, its highest single-day spike in infections so far this year, taking the virus tally to 3,59,373, while six related deaths during the past 24 hours pushed the death toll to 4,567. During the interaction, a healthy discussion was held on issues like enforcement of coronavirus guidelines and Covid-appropriate behaviour (CAB) in the public places and business establishments with joint efforts of administration and traders, an official spokesman said. The traders apprised the divisional commissioner about the issues which need to be resolved at the government level. The divisional commissioner urged the associations to strictly follow Covid guidelines like wearing of face masks, maintaining social distancing and hand hygiene during their business activities. He also asked them to ensure that the customers enter their shops with face masks and follow CAB. The traders demanded deployment of more testing teams in market areas and other prominent locations of bazar, engaging volunteers for better enforcement of Covid guidelines, and regular sanitization of market areas, the spokesman said. They also demanded that like previous year the triage centres of districts be activated timely and there should be no unnecessary referrals to Jammu. The traders requested that clarity should be given by the government regarding essential and non-essential services, the spokesman said. The traders said they support strict enforcement of CAB and representatives of market associations should also be made the part of enforcement teams, flying squads for assisting better implementation of the SOPs. The associations also suggested activating tele-consultation for patients in home isolation. They also suggested facilitating the tourists coming to tourist destinations of Jammu division and be allowed only after testing and checking of vaccination status, the spokesman said. Regarding imposition of restrictions which the government intends to place, the traders demanded that they may be timely informed. They also advised that the government offices should also operate with 50 per cent capacity to break the chain of transmission, the spokesman said. He said the divisional commissioner gave a patient hearing to the traders and assured that all their demands and suggestions would be taken into consideration. The associations assured to extend their full cooperation to the administration in implementing Covid guidelines for containment of the virus, the spokesman said. Jammu and Kashmir recorded 3,499 fresh coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the infection count to 3,59,373, while six deaths were also reported in the past 24 hours, officials said. Out of the fresh cases, 1,210 were from the Jammu division and 2,289 from the Kashmir division of the Union Territory, the officials said. They said Srinagar district recorded a maximum of 614 new cases, followed by 556 cases in Jammu district. There are 15,883 active coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir, while the number of recoveries stands at 3,38,923, the officials said. The new fatalities raised the death toll from the pandemic to 4,567 in the Union Territory, they said.

MEIL completes 5-km tunnelling work as part of Zojila project

long all-weather Zojila Tunnel in a record time of 14 months. The company in a statement said the project of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL), being executed by the MEIL, is envisaged to ensure connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh throughout the year without any interruptions. The Zojilla Tunnel – Nilgaur 1, 2 & Zojila main tunnel - is being expeditiously executed, despite unfavourable weather conditions like snowfall, and blizzard at a high altitude of 3,528 metres above mean sea level, MEIL said. The statement noted that Zojila project, Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel, is a challenging development project in India for strategic reasons too. It added that the current winter witnessed the highest-ever snowfall in the history of Jammu and Kashmir with temperatures dropping to -30 degree celsius.

Indian, Russian navies conduct passing exercise in Arabian Sea

Admiral Tributs in #ArabianSea. The exercise showcased cohesiveness & #interoperability b/n the two navies. #Bridge-soffriendship @mod\_russia," tweeted spokesperson of the Indian Navy. Indian Navy's exercises with Admiral Tributs in Arabian Sea is a continuation of growing Indo-Russian strategic co-operation as envisaged during Russian President Putin's visit to India last December.

2 injured in grenade attack by terrorists in J&K’s Srinagar

chest and left leg.

The civilian has been identified as Sartaj Ahmed Bhat (27) son of Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat of Saraf Kadal. He has injuries in both legs and upper chest of left side.

Dr. Kanwaljeet Singh, Medical Superintendent SMHS hospital said both persons have been admitted to hospital.

Meanwhile whole area has been cordoned off to nab the fleeing militants, they said.

Director of Health Services says Kashmir ready to fight pandemic, appeals people to follow COVID protocols

COVID-19 cases rising and Omicron variant being reported in the union territory, all the unvaccinated people should get vaccinated.

“The cases of COVID are increasing for the last 1-2 weeks. The Omicron variant is also reported. We should follow the SOPs and vaccinate ourselves as soon as possible. The children should get vaccinated. It is also important for elderly people more than 60 years of age and the frontline workers to get vaccinated. We have to take precautions at every level,” he said.

Read more at: [http://www.jammulinksnews.com/newsdetail/273293/Jammu-Links-News-Positive\\_initiatives\\_must\\_for\\_improving\\_living\\_standards\\_of\\_all\\_sections\\_J&K\\_LG](http://www.jammulinksnews.com/newsdetail/273293/Jammu-Links-News-Positive_initiatives_must_for_improving_living_standards_of_all_sections_J&K_LG)

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During the address, the Lt Governor shared several success stories



# DC Kupwara for implementation of Covid norms

JAMMU RISING

JAMMU, JAN 16

In compliance with the order issued by District Magistrate Kupwara yesterday, weekend lockdown has been strictly imposed across the district. Restrictions have been put in place to avoid unnecessary movement of the people to break the chain of Covid cases.

To ensure successful implementation of the lockdown, duty magistrates and police contingents have been deployed in various tehsil headquarters including Kupwara, Trehgam, Sogam, Handwara, Kralpora, Tangdar and other places.

Only essential and emergency services are being allowed in the markets.

Earlier, District Magistrate, Kupwara issued an order wherein complete restrictions have been or-



dered on non-essential movement during weekends besides, the imposition of daily night curfew from 9PM to 6AM.

The order further reads

that all colleges, schools, polytechnics, ITIs, coaching centers for Civil Services, Engineering and NEET shall adopt online medium of teaching and there shall

be no in person teaching.

It also says that there shall be strict adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour and defaulter shall be firmly dealt as per laws.

# Jan seeks restoration of utility service in snow hit Poonch, upper reaches

JAMMU RISING

JAMMU, JAN 16

Jammu and Kashmir Youth National Conference Provincial President and Former MLA Poonch Haveli Mr Aijaz Jan today urged the Lieutenant Governor's administration to take expeditious measures in restoration of key utility services in the snow-hit Poonch, saying the life in far-flung areas of the district continues to be haywire.

During his interaction with the suffering people, Mr Jan shared the condition about no steps taken on the snow clearance front that has aggravated the sufferings of the residents, especially on road connectivity, power and drinking water fronts. These utility services needed to be attended on war footing keeping in view the accumulation of snow, he added.

He said the grievances redressal mechanism too needs to be strengthened, especially at the local levels, for people voicing their problems for effective disposal by the concerned government agencies.

The Provincial Youth NC



President, who undertook extensive visit of the far flung areas, said the status of snow clearance and restoration measures by line departments including Mechanical Engineering Department, Roads and Building Department, Urban Local Bodies, Jal Shakhti Department, JPDCL is far from satisfactory, especially in the upper reaches of the Mandi, and Lohran areas. He stressed the need for mitigating the grievances of the people.

Mr Jan urged the LG administration to issue necessary directions to the con-

cerned departments to put in place all necessary measures to minimize the sufferings of the people. He sought formation of teams for taking stock of supply of various essentials to the consumers including rations, kerosine oil and sugar in the upper reaches of the district and oversee that the supply chain is not disrupted at any cost.

Expressing concern over the unavailability of medicines and drugs in the local PHCs, TB centers and other health centers, he impressed upon the administration to ensure accountability of medics

and paramedics at all the health centers in the district. He also asked the administration to ensure the availability of drugs at all health centers.

Those accompanying Mr Jan during his visit include Gourav Kapoor, Provincial Vice President YNC, Rafiq Diku Sarpanch, Gulla Fiku, Shunulla Sheikh, Ab Aziz, Abdul Ahad Kamrate, Hamid Dar, Rahman Najjar, Manda Najjar, Mohd Rafeeq Mir, Bashir Mir, Gani Mir, Sharif Awan, Gulam Mohd Diku, Majid Nanda, Shaffi Nanda, Mohd Shafi, Jalal Khawaja and others..

# DC Rajouri flags off 4 Advance Life Saving Ambulances

JAMMU RISING

JAMMU, JAN 16

To ensure prompt emergency services to the patients during the tough time of pandemic and any other eventuality, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Vikas Kundal today flagged off the 04 Advance Life-Saving Ambulances funded by World Bank through National Health Mission Jammu and Kashmir.

Among the others, SSP Rajouri, Mohd Aslam; Deputy CMO, Dr Anees Altaf Nabi, DSEO, Bilal Mir, Asif Mir DPM and Media persons were present.

Speaking to media persons, the Deputy Commissioner said that all these ALS Ambulances are fully equipped with life-saving equipment such as Ventila-



tors, Defibrillators, Multi-Para Patient Monitor, Suction Machine, Nebulizers etc and are of great help while shifting the critical care, trauma and accident victims.

He said that there are presently 9 ALS which have already been deputed at

Strategic places and are connected with '108' Call Centre. He said these ambulances would prove of great help in saving the life of the patients in case of a medical emergency. He said that the administration was ensuring that the Emergency Ambulances reach the place of

medical emergency within the shortest possible time.

The Deputy Commissioner also expressed gratitude towards Medical Supplies Corporation, NHM JK and World Bank for the augmentation of Health Infrastructure at this hour of Medical emergency.

# Gandhinagar women college celebrates National Youth Festival

JAMMU RISING

JAMMU, JAN 16

2 J&K Girls Bn.NCC wing of Padma Shri Padma Sachdev Government PG College for Women Gandhinagar celebrated National Youth Festival from January 12 to Jan 16, 2022 under the patronage of Dr. Sangita Nagari, the Principal of the College to pay tribute to Swami Vivekananda, his thoughts and ideas to lead a simple life with high thinking.

83 Cadets paid homage through various activities organised during this 5 day



programme. Activities like Poster-making, digital Post-card Making, Yoga and Meditation, Essay Writing competition and Symposium were held to provide students an opportunity to express their views about the contribution of youth in making a nation. The thoughts and ideas of the Colossal figure of India formed the core of celebrations. The programme was Coordinated by the 2nd & 3rd year Cadets under the guidance of Lt. Suman Bala, Associate NCC Officer of the College.

# DM Rajouri designates Health facilities as Category 2 Covid Centres

JAMMU RISING

JAMMU, JAN 16

With fresh surge in Coronavirus, the District Magistrate, Vikas Kundal has designated Government/private hospitals and clinical establishments as Category 2 Covid Health centres and asked the management to keep their beds in readiness to meet out any emergency.

The District Magistrate has asked the seven private hospitals and clinical es-

tablishments Orthomaxx Multispeciality Hospital Rajouri, Matrix Hospital Jawhar Nagar Rajouri, Rajouri Medicity Hospital Rajouri, Navjeevan Nursing Near GMC Rajouri, Dr Nissar Surgical Hospital Rajouri, Smt Shanti Devi Trust Hospital Sunderbani and KRS Nursing Home Sunderbani to reserve 21 beds for treatment of COVID-19 patients.

"Keeping in view the emerging situations due to Covid 19 and the recent

spike in number it is imperative to designate Government/Private Hospitals and clinical establishments to designate them as Category 2 Covid Health centres so that these establishments remain in readiness to meet any emergency," the order reads.

The Chief Medical Officer and Medical Superintendent have been directed to ascertain the availability of men, machinery and infrastructure as per SoP.

# 976 vaccinated, 3730 samples collected in Ramban

JAMMU RISING

JAMMU, JAN 16

As per report issued by District Immunization Officer, Ramban, Dr. Suresh, the Health Department administered the vaccination to 976 people including 289 children in 15-17 years age group which includes 120 in Medical Block Banihal, 22 in Batote, 62 in Ukhral and 86 in Gool.

Continuing the enforcement drive to

implement Covid protocol across the district Ramban, the Enforcement teams today fined scores of violators for roaming without wearing face masks and not maintaining physical distance.

The enforcement teams, during the inspection in their respective jurisdictions, recovered a fine of Rs. 54,800 taking the total amount fined since April 1, 2021 to Rs. 81,61,700. The Enforcement officers urged the people to wear

face masks and maintain physical distance besides taking Covid vaccination doses at their nearest CVC.

As per daily bulletin issued by the Chief Medical Officer, Ramban, Dr. Mohammad Fareed Bhat, the Health Department has collected 3730 samples including 649 RT-PCR and 3081 RAT samples besides administering Covid vaccine to 976 persons at various dedicated Vaccination Centres in the district.

# Prince Harry takes legal action over family protection in UK

LONDON, JANUARY 16:

Britain's Prince Harry, now based in the US with wife Meghan Markle and children Archie and Lilibet, is taking legal action over a Home Office decision to prevent him from paying for police protection for himself and his family during visits to the UK.

The 37-year-old Duke of Sussex, who stepped back from frontline royal duties in 2020, wants to fund the security for his family himself during a future visit to his home country. He reportedly does not want to ask British taxpayers to foot the bill, having stepped back as a senior member of the royal family.

"The UK will always be Prince Harry's home and a country he wants his wife and children to be safe in," Harry's legal representative said in a statement.

"With the lack of police protection comes too great a personal risk. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex personally fund a private security team for their family, yet that secu-



city cannot replicate the necessary police protection needed whilst in the UK. In the absence of such protection, Prince Harry and his family are unable to return to his home," it noted.

Queen Elizabeth II's grandson and sixth in line to the British throne is believed to be arguing that his private protection team in the US does not have access to UK intelligence information, which is needed to keep his wife and children safe when they visit Britain. Now based in California, Harry hopes to visit the UK with wife Meghan and seven-month-old daughter and

two-year-old son. He has only travelled solo last year, to attend his grandfather Prince Philip's funeral in April and then to unveil a statue in memory of his late mother Diana, Princess of Wales, in July.

The application for a judicial review – a legal challenge in the High Court in England against the decision of a public body or government department – follows a security incident in London in July 2021 when Harry's car was chased by photographers as he left a charity event.

His legal representative's statement added: "Prince Harry inherited a

security risk at birth, for life. He remains sixth in line to the throne, served two tours of combat duty in Afghanistan, and in recent years his family has been subjected to well-documented neo-Nazi and extremist threats.

"While his role within the institution has changed, his profile as a member of the royal family has not. Nor has the threat to him and his family," Prince Harry has spoken in the past about his security concerns ever since his mother, Princess Diana, died in a Paris car crash as her vehicle was chased by paparazzi photographers in August 1997.

A UK government spokesperson told the BBC that the country's "protective security system is rigorous and proportionate".

The spokesperson said: "It is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on those arrangements. To do so could compromise their integrity and affect individuals' security."

# Microsoft says it observed destructive malware in systems belonging to several Ukraine govt agencies

UKRAINE, JANUARY 16: Microsoft Corp said in a blog post on Saturday it observed destructive malware in systems belonging to several Ukrainian government agencies and organisations that work closely with the Ukrainian government.

The victims of the malware include Ukrainian government agencies that provide critical executive branch or emergency response functions, Microsoft said.

Also affected was an information technology firm that manages websites for public and private sector clients, including government agencies whose websites were recently de-



faced. Microsoft did not identify the IT firm involved.

The US software giant, which first detected the malware on Thursday, said the malware attacks did not make use of any vulnerability in Microsoft products

and services.

A massive cyberattack splashed on government websites on Thursday night, warning Ukrainians to "be afraid and expect the worst" hit, leaving some websites inaccessible on Friday morning and

prompting Ukraine to open an investigation.

Reuters reported on Saturday that Ukraine had suspected a hacker group linked to Belarus intelligence carried out a cyber-attack, and that it used malware similar to that used by a group tied to Russian intelligence, according to a senior Ukrainian security official.

The malware, which is disguised as ransomware, would render the infected computer system inoperable if activated by the attacker, Microsoft said, adding the company will continue to work with the cybersecurity community to identify and assist targets and victims.



# FBI storms Texas synagogue to release hostages; gunman dead after hours-long standoff

**COLLEYVILLE, TEXAS, JANUARY 16:** An FBI Hostage Rescue Team stormed a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas on Saturday night to free three remaining hostages of a gunman who had disrupted a religious service and began a standoff with police more than 10 hours earlier.

All the hostages were safely released on Saturday night and the gunman was dead, Colleyville Police Chief Michael Miller said at a news conference. The gunman had initially taken four people hostage, including the rabbi, at the Congregation Beth Israel, officials said. One hostage was released unharmed six hours later.

Local reporters said they heard the sound of explosions, possibly flashbangs, and the sound of gunfire shortly before Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced the crisis was

over.

“Prayers answered. All hostages are out alive and safe,” Abbott said on Twitter. The FBI said they have confirmed the identity of the gunman but said they would not yet disclose it.

The FBI declined to confirm the cause of his death, saying it was still under investigation.

The Colleyville Police Department said it first responded to the synagogue with SWAT teams in response to emergency calls beginning at about 10:41 a.m. during the Shabbat service, which was being broadcast online. FBI negotiators soon opened contact with the man, who said he wanted to speak to a woman held in a federal prison. No injuries were reported among the hostages.

In the first few hours, the man could be heard having a



one-sided conversation in what appeared to be a phone call during a Facebook livestream of the service of the Reform Jewish synagogue in

Colleyville, which is about 16 miles (26 km) northeast of Fort Worth. The livestream cut off around 3 p.m.

Before the livestream was

ended, the man could be heard ranting and talking about religion and his sister, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported. The man could be heard re-

peatedly saying he didn’t want to see anyone hurt and that he believed he was going to die, the newspaper said.

President Joe Biden was briefed on the crisis, and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Twitter he was praying for the safety of the hostages.

Barry Klompus, a member of the congregation since it opened in 1999, said he tuned into the livestream.

“It was horrible listening and watching,” Klompus said in a telephone interview.

A U.S. official briefed on the matter told ABC News the hostage-taker had claimed to be the brother of Pakistani neuroscientist Aafia Siddiqui, who is serving an 86-year U.S. prison sentence for her 2010 conviction for shooting at soldiers and FBI agents, and that he is demanding she be freed.

Siddiqui is being held at a federal prison in the Fort Worth area. A lawyer representing Siddiqui, Marwa Elbially, told CNN in a statement the man was not Siddiqui’s brother. He implored the man to release the hostages, saying Siddiqui’s family condemned his “heinous” actions. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a U.S. Muslim advocacy group, condemned the man’s actions.

“This latest antisemitic attack on Jewish Americans worshipping at a synagogue is an act of pure evil,” CAIR said in a statement. Klompus said he did not know of any significant previous threats to the congregation.

“We don’t have a security officer on staff but we have what I would say is a very good relationship with the local police,” he said.

## Don’t discriminate against the unvaccinated, Amnesty International tells Italy

**MILAN, JANUARY 16:** Human rights group Amnesty International urged Italy to change tough anti-Covid restrictions to avoid discrimination against unvaccinated people.

In a recent decree, Mario Draghi’s government made vaccination mandatory for everyone over the age of 50 and for use of public transport and a range of other services, one of very few countries to take similar steps, in an attempt to ease pressure on Italian health services and reduce fatalities. Amnesty International asked for the provision of alternative measures, includ-



ing the use of masks and Covid-19 testing, to allow the unvaccinated population to continue to go to work and to use public transport “without discrimination”, the group said in a statement

issued late on Saturday. Under current rules, which will run until June 15, wearing a mask and having a negative Covid-19 test is not sufficient to access public transportation or, for people

over the age of 50, to their workplaces.

Amnesty International Italia, the local chapter of the human rights group, said that mandatory vaccination could be justified but needed to be limited in time and “proportionate” to a legitimate aim of public health protection.

“The government must continue to ensure that the entire population can enjoy its fundamental rights, such as the right to education, work and medial treatment, with particular regard to non-Covid patients who need urgent surgery,” it said.

## Philippines says 'indispensable' Suu Kyi must be involved in Myanmar peace process

**MANILA, JANUARY 16:** Deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi is “indispensable” in restoring democracy to the military-ruled country and must be included in any peace talks, regardless of her conviction, the Philippines’ foreign minister said on Sunday.

In a strong rebuke of the Myanmar junta that overthrew Suu Kyi’s elected government last year, Teodoro Locsin condemned last week’s sentencing of the Nobel laureate and accused the military of using the judicial system to crush its opponents.

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

“I am deeply concerned about the suffering of the civilian population,” Locsin said in a statement. “We also call on the military leadership to participate in an inclusive dialogue and resume the democratic transition process.” His statement comes as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)



members turn up the heat on the Myanmar military after a turbulent end to 2021, during which junta boss Min Aung Hlaing was excluded from a leaders’ summit for failure to honour commitments to an ASEAN-led peace plan.

Myanmar says its efforts are being derailed by “terrorists” seeking to destroy the country.

Locsin said dialogue would be meaningless without Suu Kyi.

She has been sentenced to six years so far in an ongoing trial featuring more than a dozen cases, from corruption to official secrets violations, which she denies.

“Aung San Suu Kyi must be there, de-

spite her conviction. The armed forces of Myanmar have nothing to fear, and much to gain, from the democracy it introduced to Myanmar,” he said.

“Suu Kyi is indispensable in a democratic restoration that will pose no threat of anarchy, dissolution and civil conflict.” Locsin also pledged “whole-hearted support” for Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, the new ASEAN chair, for visiting Aung Hlaing in Myanmar earlier this month, a controversial trip that some members were concerned could indicate ASEAN recognition of the junta, according to Malaysia’s top diplomat.

Locsin said the Philippines will push for progress in ASEAN’s five-point consensus on the crisis in Myanmar, an agreement that includes peace talks, ceasing hostilities, and allowing humanitarian aid.

He stressed that accord be the only plan, and not be tied to any roadmap, referring to the five-stage process to restore democracy that the junta announced when it seized power.

## Narasimhanand picked up from Haridwar in Dharma Sansad case

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16:** The Uttarakhand police on Saturday picked up Yati Narasimhanand from his dharma site in Haridwar in connection with the case of Dharma Sansad where alleged hate speeches against Muslims were delivered.

Yati Narasimhanand has been brought to a police station, Haridwar superintendent of police (city) Swatantra Kumar told PTI.

However, the officer said, it was technically not an arrest.

Narasimhanand, the controversial priest of Dasna temple in Ghaziabad, had organised the event in Haridwar from December 17-19.

He was picked up from where he was sitting on a dharma in protest against the recent arrest of another ac-



cused in the case, Jitendra Narayan Tyagi.

Tyagi was formerly known as Waseem Rizvi and changed his name after converting to Hinduism.

Tyagi who headed the Uttar

Pradesh Shia Waqf Board before converting to Hinduism was the first person to have been arrested in connection with the case a couple of days back.

Further action will depend

on how the investigation progresses, the official said.

Both Tyagi and Narasimhanand are among those named accused in the FIRs lodged in connection with the event.

## Netanyahu negotiating plea deal in corruption trial



**TEL AVIV, JANUARY 16 :** Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is negotiating a plea deal in his corruption case, a person involved in the talks said Sunday.

The deal, which could be signed as early as this week, could usher Netanyahu off the Israeli political stage for years, paving the way for a leadership race in his Likud party and shaking up Israel’s political map.

Any deal would also absolve Netanyahu of an embarrassing and protracted trial that has gripped the nation and risks tarnishing his legacy.

A spokesman for Ne-

tanyahu declined to comment.

Netanyahu is on trial for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. The former premier, now opposition leader, denies wrongdoing.

The person involved in the negotiations said the plea deal would drop the bribery and fraud charges and scrap one case entirely.

The person asked for anonymity because he wasn’t authorised to discuss the details of the talks.

He said a plea deal would likely be announced in the coming days.

The person said a number of elements remained unresolved, including the inclusion of the charge of “moral turpitude,” which under Israeli law would ban Netanyahu from politics for seven years.

They were also deliberating whether Netanyahu would be forced to do community service under

the deal.

Including “moral turpitude” would challenge Netanyahu’s vows to return to lead the country after his 12-year reign was ended last year by a coalition of ideologically disparate parties with little in common other than its opposition to his leadership.

But Netanyahu, dubbed a political wizard for his ability to survive repeated attempts at ending his rule, could make a comeback when the ban expires. He would be nearly 80.

His departure from the political scene would set off a leadership race in the Likud party, with several lawmakers already promising to run.

Likud isn’t expected to remain as dominant without Netanyahu, but would still be a major force under a new leader.

With Netanyahu gone,

the more nationalist elements of the coalition could decide to break off from the fragile union and opt to join forces with their ideological brethren.

Netanyahu is charged in three separate cases. The first alleges that Netanyahu received gifts worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from wealthy associates.

In the second case, Netanyahu is accused of orchestrating positive coverage in a major Israeli paper in exchange for promoting legislation that would have harmed the news outlet’s chief rival, a free pro-Netanyahu daily.

The third, nicknamed Case 4000, alleges that Netanyahu promoted legislation worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the owner of Israeli telecom giant Bezeq in exchange for positive coverage on its Walla news site.

## Omicron ‘deviant’ from Covid pandemic progression script: Virologist

**NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16:** Omicron is a “deviant” from the Covid-19 pandemic progression script and so it must be postulated that two pandemics are going on side by side, one by the Delta and close relatives and the other by the latest variant of concern, said noted virologist Dr T Jacob John.

Speaking to PTI on how the pandemic can now be expected to progress, he pointed out that Omicron is not “fathered, or mothered, by Wuhan-D614G, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Kappa or Mu and that much is for sure”.



“So in my opinion, this is a variant of unknown proximal parentage but great, great grandparent was Wuhan-D614G... We shall see as the pandemic progresses,” John, a former director of the ICMR’s Centre of Advanced Research in Virology, said.

D614G refers to an amino acid mutation in this protein that has become increasingly common in SARS-CoV-2 viruses from around the world.

“Since Omicron is illegitimate or ‘deviant’ from Covid-19 pandemic progression script, we must think of two pandemics go-

ing on side by side—Delta and close relatives, and Omicron and its variants in the future.”

“Diseases caused by them are also different. One is Pneumonia-hypoxia-multiorgan damage disease but the other an upper/middle respiratory disease that pushes pre-existing chronic disease or old age beyond the wall,” he said.

Asked if the peak of the third wave has been reached since cases have started plateauing in some

places, John said metro cities started first and will finish first.

“All put together, this is a national epidemic,” he said.

On whether the upcoming Covid-19 variants would be more infectious but less lethal, John said generally new pathogens get adapted to human hosts and in the process tend to become more infectious and less pathogenic, within limits.

“Time frame is long, not one or two years... Re-

member, Delta came late but was both faster-spreading and more pathogenic,” he said.

Omicron, the highly infectious variant of coronavirus, is driving the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic in India.

The country registered 2,71,202 new coronavirus infections, taking the tally of Covid-19 cases to 3,71,22,164, including 7,743 cases of the Omicron variant, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Sunday.



# India's R-value drops to 2.2 between Jan 7 and 13, shows IIT Madras analysis

**NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16:** India's 'R-value', which indicates how rapidly Covid-19 is spreading, was recorded at 2.2 between January 7 and 13, a drop from the previous two weeks, according to a preliminary analysis by IIT Madras.

The R value of Mumbai was 1.3, Delhi 2.5, Chennai 2.4 and Kolkata 1.6, according to the analysis by IIT Madras' Department of Mathematics and Centre of Excellence for Computational Mathematics and Data Science headed by Prof Neelesh S Upadhye and Prof S Sundar.

It was close to 2.9 nationally from December 25 to December 31 while it was 4 between January 1 and 6.

The R value is the number of people that an infected person can in turn infect. A pandemic is considered to



end if this value goes below 1. Dr Jayant Jha, an assistant professor in the department of mathematics at IIT Madras, said the R value depends on transmissibility probability, contact rate and expected time interval in which infection can happen.

India added 2,71,202 new coronavirus infections to the Covid case tally that reached 3,71,22,164 on Sunday, including 7,743 cases of the Omicron variant.

The country saw 1,702 new cases of Omicron vari-

ant, the highest in a day so far, and an increase of 28.17 per cent since Saturday.

Experts said it is not possible to undertake genome sequencing of each and every sample, but stressed that this wave is largely being driven by Omicron.

# Less than one-third of people get flight cancellation refund amid pandemic: Report

**MUMBAI, JANUARY 16:** Less than one-third of the people who cancelled their flights owing to the emergence of the Omicron variant-led third pandemic wave were able to receive refunds, according to an online survey.

For those who were forced to cancel their hotel bookings on account of the same reason, 34 per cent of people could get the refunds, online community platform LocalCircles said in the survey.

The survey received more than 20,000 responses from citizens residing in 332 districts of India.

The rapid rise in the Omicron variant-led Covid cases in India have prompted many citizens—who had travel booked during January-March—to revisit their plans, and a subset of them have also approached airlines and hotels for cancellations.

The first question in the

survey on airlines asked citizens, "For the flight travel that you had booked for January-March 2022, how did the cancellation process work?" In response, 29 per cent said, "Travel agent and/or airline accepted cancellation and refunded full amount", while 14 per cent said they received partial amount.

At the same time, 29 per cent of respondents said "travel agent and/or airline accepted cancellation and refunded a very small amount".

About 14 per cent of people surveyed said, "travel agent and/or airline did not refund anything but re-booked the ticket for a later date," and 14 per cent couldn't say anything, as per the survey.

On an aggregate basis, of those who cancelled flight tickets due to the third Covid wave, only 29 per cent were able to get a full

refund from airlines/travel agents, it added.

In comparison to the second wave, over twice as many citizens were able to get a flight ticket refund due to third-wave related cancellation. However, the majority still ended up losing money to airlines, the survey said.

The survey found out that of those who cancelled hotel booking due to the third Covid wave, only 34 per cent were able to get a full refund from hotels/travel agents.

On hotel bookings during January-March 2022, 34 per cent said "travel agent and/or hotel accepted cancellation and refunded full amount", 13 per cent of respondents received a partial refund and 13 per cent got a very small amount.

Besides, 27 per cent of people surveyed said "travel agent and/or hotel did not

refund anything, and...lost the entire booking amount".

When compared to the second wave, over 2.5 times as many citizens were able to get a hotel booking refund due to third-wave related cancellation. However, the majority still ended up losing money to hotels, the survey said.

"Citizens on the LocalCircles platform have been suggesting that the Government should come up with a special policy for travel booking refunds till the Covid pandemic is going on, especially for airlines and hotels.

"Due to lack of uniformity in cancellation charges by different airlines and hotel operators, the majority don't approve of the existing travel booking refund policies during the pandemic," said Sachin Taparia, founder, LocalCircles.

# 70 pc adults fully vaccinated: Mandaviya at stamp launch to mark 1 year of Covid vaccination drive



**NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16:** Seventy per cent of India's adults have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19 while 93 per cent received the first jab, said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya while launching a postage stamp on indige-

nously developed vaccine Covaxin to mark one year of the inoculation drive.

The drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers getting inoculated in the first phase.

Addressing the commemorative postage stamp release

event through a video link, Mandaviya said it is a proud moment for Indians and the entire world is amazed by the country's Covid inoculation drive.

"India has been able to achieve the milestone of administering over 156 crore

doses despite such a huge population and diversity," he said.

"On the occasion of completion of one year of the Covid vaccination drive, a postage stamp has been released on the vaccine indigenously developed jointly by the ICMR and Bharat Biotech, realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's dream of self-reliant India," the minister said.

He also congratulated all scientists on the occasion.

"Our prime minister encouraged scientists to carry out research and develop an indigenous Covid vaccine and held discussions with vaccine manufacturing companies and offered them support. "There was no dearth of manpower or brainpower. What was needed was the ability to identify the potential in the country for coming up with vaccines," he said.

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16:**

The total passenger vehicle (PV) exports stood at 4,24,037 units in April-December 2021-22 as compared with 2,91,170 units in the same period a year ago.

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) led the segment during the period, followed by Hyundai Motor India and Kia India at the second and third positions, respectively.

Passenger vehicle exports from India increased 46 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, with Maruti Suzuki India leading the segment with dispatches of around 1.68 lakh units, as per the latest data by SIAM. The total passenger vehicle (PV) exports stood at 4,24,037 units in April-December 2021-22 as compared with 2,91,170 units in the same period a year ago.

Passenger car shipments saw 45 per cent growth at 2,75,728 units while utility vehicle exports rose 47 per cent at 1,46,688 units during the period under review, the data by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers showed.

Export of vans nearly doubled to 1,621 units in April-December 2021-22 as compared with 877 units in the same period last fiscal year.



Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) led the segment during the period, followed by Hyundai Motor India and Kia India at the second and third positions, respectively.

MSI, the country's largest carmaker exported 1,67,964 PVs in the period under review, almost triple as compared with 59,821 units in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Besides, the company shipped out 1,958 Super Carry (LCV) units during the nine-month period.

MSI's top PV export markets include Latin America, ASEAN, Africa, the Middle East and neighbouring regions while its top five export models comprise Baleno, Dzire, Swift, S-Presso and Brezza.

When contacted, MSI Executive Director (Corporate Affairs) Rahul Bharti told PTI that about two years ago, the company decided to mount a strong effort towards a quantum increase in exports.

"Our ambition was also inspired by a two-pronged strategy of the Commerce & Industry Ministry to deepen localisation and multiply exports as part of the overall Make in India vision. With the strong support of our parent, Suzuki Motor Corporation, we worked on all fronts - expanding the export product portfolio, reaching out to more geographies/markets and expanding distributor network," he noted.

With this, during April-December 2021-22, the au-

tomaker was able to export 1,69,922 vehicles (PV plus LCV), the highest ever in a nine-month period, Bharti stated.

"Not only this, in the calendar year 2021, Maruti Suzuki exported 2,05,450 vehicles, the highest ever in a calendar year. These numbers show the confidence of customers around the world in the quality, technology, reliability, performance and cost-effectiveness of our cars," he noted.

Hyundai Motor India's foreign dispatches stood at 1,00,059 units during April-December 2021-22, up 35 per cent from the year-ago period.

Similarly, Kia India exported 34,341 units across global markets in the period under review as compared with 28,538 units in the last fiscal year.

Volkswagen India exported 29,796 units in the April-December period.

In the third quarter (October-December), total PV exports rose to 1,39,363 units as compared with 1,36,016 units in the same period of 2020-21. However, in December, total overseas PV shipments declined to 54,846 units as against 57,050 units in December 2020.

# Mesmerising satellite images show Tonga undersea volcanic eruption

**CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 15:** Satellite images of the Tonga undersea volcanic eruption that have flooded social media since it struck on Saturday evening are mesmerizing and terrifying in equal measure.

Tonga volcano eruption triggers evacuation advisories, metre-high waves in Japan Images showed the spectacular eruption that took place Saturday evening, with a plume of ash, steam, and gas rising like a mushroom above the blue Pacific waters. A sonic boom could be heard as far away as Alaska. The event triggered tsunami warnings across the



Pacific, from the coast of the United States to Japan. Though the tsunami threat began to recede by Sunday, the extent of damage caused to the archipelago of Tonga is

still unclear.

New Zealand said it was watching the situation closely. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said New Zealand was unable to send

a surveillance flight over Tonga on Sunday because the ash cloud was 63,000 feet (19,000 metres) high but promised to try again on Monday.

# Biting cold sweeps Punjab, Haryana; Chandigarh shivers at 8.2 degrees Celsius

**CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 16:** Severe cold weather conditions prevailed in many parts of Punjab and Haryana on Sunday with Chandigarh, the common Capital of the two states, recording a low of 8.2 degrees Celsius.

The maximum temperatures in the two states have also registered a sharp fall and have been hovering in the range of 11 degrees Celsius to 14 degrees Celsius.

In Punjab, Gurdaspur recorded a minimum temperature of 5.6 degrees Celsius while Bathinda saw the mercury settle at 6.2 degrees Celsius, according to the meteorological department.

Patiala experienced a cold night at 7.5 degrees Celsius. Jalandhar recorded a low of 8.6 degrees Celsius while Moga registered a low of 6.3 degrees Celsius. Ludhiana's minimum



settled at 8.7 degrees Celsius while Amritsar recorded a low of 8.4 degrees Celsius.

Hisar in Haryana reeled under intense cold, recording a mini-

mum temperature of 6.8 degrees Celsius while Ambala recorded a low of 7.7 degrees Celsius.

Sirsa also experienced a cold night recording a low of 6.1 de-

grees Celsius while Gurgaon's minimum settled at 7.2 degrees Celsius.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**MECHANICAL IRRIGATION DIVISION, AKHNOOR/NOWSHERA**  
*Tele/Fax :01924-253998/E-Mail – ifcjmidakhnoor@gmail.com*

**Notice Inviting Tender**  
**e-NIT No.:- 138/MID/AN. Dated:-10/01/2022**

For and on behalf of The President of India, Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division Akhnoor/Nowshera invites e-tenders from approved contractors/ Registered firms /Authorized dealers/ Workshop owners having experience in Electromechanical Works.

S. N o.	Name of the work	Quantity	Earnest Money (Rs. in lacs)	Cost of tender document	Period of completion	Class of contractor
01.	Repairs to Electro-mechanical machinery with allied works at LIS Nazlachak	<b>01 Job</b>	<b>2% of the estimated cost</b>	<b>Rs. 200</b>	<b>08 days</b>	Registered firms / Reputed firms / Workshop owners having experience in Electromechanical Works

**1.** The bidding documents can be seen and downloaded from the website <http://www.jktenders.gov.in> from **10/01/2022(04:00PM) to 17/01/2022 (02:00 PM)**. Bidding document contains instruction for bidders, bill of quantities, general terms and condition and other details.

a) The Bids shall be uploaded in electronic format on the website <http://www.jktenders.gov.in> from **11/01/2022 (10:00AM) to 17/01/2022 (2:00 PM)**.

b) The complete bidding process will be through electronic mode.

c) A pre-bid meeting will be held on **12/01/2022 (12:00 PM)** in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division Akhnoor / Nowshera to address any queries from the firms.

d) Cover-I of the bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on **18/01/2022 (11:00AM)** in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division Akhnoor / Nowshera in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

**DIP/J-11803/21 Dt: 15-1-2022**

No:- MID/AN/1836-40  
 Dated :-10-01-2022

-Sd-  
**Executive Engineer**  
**Mechanical Irrigation Division**  
**Akhnoor/Nowshera.**



EDITORIAL

Intensify cold conditions in J& K

Intense cold conditions continued in J&K and Ladakh as Srinagar recorded a low of minus 3.6°C on Wednesday.

A meteorological department official here told that the minimum temperature in Srinagar, the summer capital of J&K, dropped from previous night’s 0.2°C and was 1.5°C below the normal for this time of the year.

Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir’s Baramulla district, recorded a drop of nearly 1°C as mercury settled at minus 11.5°C against minus 10.6°C on the previous night, he said.

Pahalgam, the famous resort in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 11.6°C against minus 10.4°C last night, he said.

Kashmir is presently under the grip of 40-day long harshest period of winter, known locally as ‘Chillai Kalan, which started from December 21. It is followed by a 20-day long ‘Chillai Khurd’ and a 10-day-long ‘Chilla Bachha’.

Qazigund, the gateway town of Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 5.3°C against minus 0.6°C on the previous night, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 7.2°C against minus 1.7°C on the previous night, the official said.

Kupwara town in north Kashmir recorded a minimum of minus 5.5°C against minus 3.0°C on the previous night, the official said.

Jammu recorded a low of 5.8°C against previous night’s 6.2°C which is minus 1.2°C below normal for the J&K’s winter capital during this time of the year, he said.

Banihal recorded a low of minus 3.1°C, Katra minus 0.8°C and Baderwah saw a minimum of minus 5.3°C, the official said.

Ladakh’s Leh recorded a low of minus 13.9°C against last night’s minus 12.9°C while mercury at automatic station in Kargil settled at minus 14.7°C. Drass, the second coldest place in the world after Siberia, recorded a low of minus 27.2°C, almost three times lower than the last night’s minus 24.2°C, official said.

The weatherman has forecast dry weather at most places in Jammu and Kashmir till January 16.

He said there would be gradual rise in day temperature and fall in night mercury. The MeT also urged people putting up in snowbound areas to be wary of avalanches.

**Tavleen Singh**  
Last week an SMS from the COWIN portal informed me that I was eligible for my booster shot. Why it is called a ‘precautionary’ shot only in India beats me. Anyway, off I went and got my precautionary whatever and can report that everything went off perfectly. Within minutes of the needle being removed from my arm, I got a message telling me that the COWIN app had recorded the new jab. I have to say that I was impressed by both the efficiency and speed. And, admit to being impressed with the mature way the Prime Minister is handling the Omicron wave. It is reassuring that he appears regularly on TV to advise people not to panic.

He has come a long way from that time two years ago when he thoughtlessly ordered the most brutal lockdown in the world. And fuelled the innate superstitions of Indians by asking us to beat thalis and light diyas to drive Covid away. Those were bad ideas. They encouraged voodoo doctors and covidiot who believed that bathing in

cow dung would save them. He is doing much better this time. May he now desist from plastering public places with ‘thank you Modi’ posters.

My booster shot caused a robust reaction from my immune system and laid me low and it is that has put me in a reflective mood. It is in said reflective mood laced with strong paracetamol that I write this week’s column. Indulge me as I reflect on Indian democracy. I have said more than once in this column that I believe that the greatest advantage we have over our old enemy China is democracy. But I also agree with Winston Churchill that, ‘The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.’ It is my misfortune to need to have conversations with the ‘average voter’ daily on Twitter. They are usually unpleasant exchanges, but I am obliged to have them because in these isolated times I need to hear virtual chatter from the public square.

So, I dedicate some amount of time every day to trawling through the tweets of twitters

who appear to believe that it is their primary purpose in life to attack those who write in the much reviled ‘mainstream media’. The tweets I read every day range from vicious, abusive and ugly, to idiotic, ignorant and insane. They come from both sides of the divide in these politically polarized times.

Let me say here that the Gandhi Dynasty’s more passionate supporters sound as unhinged in their tweets as Modi bhakts and the point they both make most often is that I ‘hate’ Modi or that I ‘hate’ Sonia Gandhi. As a veteran political analyst, I feel it is my duty to educate them while I am in current reflective mood. A political columnist has no choice but to critique what politicians say and do, just as a film critic’s job is to critique films and a book reviewer’s job is to review books. Only the clinically insane would accuse film critics or book reviewers of hatred being their prime motivation. So why should political analysts be charged with hatred?

The other point made often in the attacks on me is that I criti-

cise Modi because I am a ‘leftie’ and a ‘libtard’. I am certainly a liberal. I despise autocrats and autocracies. But leftie I am not. I blame Nehruvian socialism for most of our economic problems and have in this column always opposed the licence raj. It might surprise Modi’s devotees to know that I believe he is nearly as socialist and statist as Nehru and this worries me. When I supported him in the first couple of years of his first tenure, it was in the hope that he would move away from welfarism towards free markets. When demonetisation happened, I realised that he had not outgrown the RSS school of economic thought. It is not one that produces economic thinkers or economists. So, seven years on, we are still on the statist path laid out by Nehru, and this means it will take a very, very long time for India to become an economic superpower.

From the political chatter I pick up daily in the public square of social media, I gather that Hindutva is extremely popular. Expressing hatred of Muslims is now absolutely acceptable. And religiosity is celebrated. Every

time Modi allows TV cameras to follow him into the sanctum sanctorum of temples to record every moment of the ceremonies he performs, there are ecstatic tweets about how he has made us ‘proud to be Hindus for the first time’.

There is no question that he has changed the political discourse and made religion more important than anything else. And he is being faithfully emulated by formerly ‘secular’ political leaders. They also make sure that cameras record their visits to temples. The one thing that unites devotees of Modi and the Dynasty is a deep hatred for criticism of their political heroes.

The Congress party has, since Nehruvian times, done its best to crush critics but where they were once circumspect, they no longer are. In my reflective, paracetamol-induced mood I find myself reflecting on why our revered political leaders have not yet noticed the damage their followers are doing them on social media. They do more harm to their political heroes than any critic could.

Motherhood question: No, I’d rather not

**Pooja Pillai**  
Early into the New Year, Pope Francis took a swipe at those who prefer to raise pets instead of children: “Today... we see a form of selfishness. We see that some people do not want to have a child. Sometimes they have one, and that’s it, but they have dogs and cats that take the place of children.” To be fair, the Holy Father isn’t the first to lob the word “selfish” at the child-free. The S-word is the most-hurled epithet at those who choose not to have children, even when they are physically capable of birthing and/ or nurturing them. This is especially so if the person making that choice is a woman — because how can she deprive her partner of the joys of fatherhood and her parents and in-laws of the delights of grandparenthood? That the decision to be child-free, due to the complex burden of internalised social expectations, may weigh heavy on a woman even when she is convinced of her

decision is, apparently, not deserving of sympathy.

It’s much easier for a woman these days to make that decision, though: she has greater financial — and, therefore, real — independence, there is little stigma attached to putting off marriage till later (but not to choosing to stay unmarried), she is recognised for achievements beyond the maternal, and it’s accepted that she will find meaning in things that have nothing to do with the raising of small humans (all of this, of course, only applies to women from the privileged sections of society).

And, yet, the motherhood question looms large, primarily because a child-free woman over a certain age remains an object of curiosity in our society. Everyone and their uncle thinks nothing of asking such a woman why she doesn’t have a child, the implication being that she would better have another almost-as-good justification for her existence. How many men have had to

answer this question, one wonders (I suspect we can all make a reasonable guess).

In fact, there are many reasons why women, including myself, decide — sooner or later — not to have kids. Yes, some of these reasons would traditionally be considered “selfish”: we value our independence and the ability to just up and leave when we want to, we don’t want to spend a good chunk of our hard-earned money on childcare for a minimum of 18 years, we don’t want to bear the awful pain of childbirth and the still greater pain of navigating a world that is simply not designed for women with children (can we talk about free childcare and creches at the office, liberal maternity benefits including legal protection from employers who prefer to lay off pregnant women than having to sanction maternity leave?).

Then there are the reasons that, because they are transmitted from the moral high ground, are deemed

more acceptable: we’re already feeling the effects of a planet that is hurtling towards ecological disaster, so do we really want our children to suffer the very near future of regular heat and cold waves, forest fires and devastating floods?

Or, coming at the same climate and environmental anxiety from a different angle — having a child adds massively to one’s carbon footprint, so isn’t it a bad idea to have one? And a new one: The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that we could be just one pathogen away from annihilation — is that the kind of world into which we want to bring children?

Personally, though, I believe women shouldn’t even attempt to explain. What we choose to do with our bodies, our time and our resources is nobody’s business but our own. In this, I take as my model the central character in Herman Melville’s story Bartleby, the Scrivener, and tell anyone who asks, “I would prefer not to”.

Inside Track: Star pavilion?

**Coomi Kapoor**  
The sudden stepping down of Dilip Chenoy as Secretary General of FICCI in October last year appears to have been due to differences between him and the Commerce Ministry over the Indian pavilion at the Dubai Expo 2021. FICCI was in charge of the Indian display. Although the pavilion had in fact one of the highest footfalls at the Expo — probably because of the large Indian population in Dubai — it lacked the sophistication, high tech and imagination of some of the other countries’ pavilions. The Indian enclosure showcased its themes, Ayodhya, Yoga and Ayurvedic medicine, in a humdrum conventional fashion. Chenoy’s defence that FICCI’s hands were tied since it had to refer every small decision to the PMO — even formulating the logo took months — hardly helped his case. His deputy Arun Chawla was appointed Secretary General with immediate effect.

Fast Back-Track  
Within 10 days of refusing to renew the FCRA licence of Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity because of “adverse inputs”, the Home Ministry restored the same. “We never thought it would happen so fast,” an MoC staffer admitted. Prominent NGOs such as Commonwealth Human Rights Watch and Oxfam appear to have been permanently denied access to foreign funding, while even organisations like the



Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam, Shirdi Saibaba Sansthan and Ramakrishna Mission, are still waiting for their clearances. The speed with which the MoC matter was overturned appears to be linked to Pope Francis’s visit to India. During his meeting with Prime Minister Modi at the Vatican in November, the Pope expressed a desire to visit India soon. (The last time a pope visited India was in 1999.) The government hoped it could squeeze in the Pope’s visit before the Goa Assembly elections in February. Unfortunately, the upsurge in Covid cases in Goa makes an early papal visit unlikely.

Meeting Deadline  
Despite the scepticism, the first

phase of the Central Vista Project, the re-modelling of the India Gate lawns, will meet the January 26 deadline. The grass has been replanted, even if the lush carpet effect will be visible only after winter end. Bridges have been constructed over the water channels. The jungle of wires which obtrude at every Republic Day parade will move underground through special manholes. The new light poles will have CCTV cameras, flags and other paraphernalia unobtrusively clamped on. Collapsible bleachers will replace the old wooden stands for onlookers.

Joint collaboration  
It is an unusual partnership. BJP politician and Central minister

Bhupender Yadav has co-authored his book The Rise of the BJP with Ila Patnaik, an economist and academic in the social sciences. Patnaik, who worked earlier for the Finance Ministry, says she came in touch with Yadav initially when he was on the parliamentary standing committee which cleared the draft of the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, and she has remained in regular touch ever since. After the 2019 electoral win, both felt it was a great idea to explore the possibility of collaborating on a book on the BJP. For Patnaik, a big bonus was that she had access to the party’s extensive archival sources. For a younger generation, it may come as a revelation that politics was not as

sharply polarised in the last century as it is today. Several founders of the Hindutva movement were originally from the Congress stock. The founder of the RSS, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, was a member of the Congress Seva Dal. The second Jana Sangh president, Mauli Chandra Sharma, also started his career in the Congress and embarrassed his new party by switching back to his old one when Pandit Nehru offered him a plum post. The third Jana Sangh president, Raghu Vira, was a Congress Rajya Sabha member earlier.

Undiplomatic tweet  
Did veteran diplomat Atul Keshap quit the US Foreign Service because he had an inkling he would be appointed president of the US India Business Council (USIBC) or had he earlier fallen out of favour with Washington? In September last year, Keshap, as stop-gap US ambassador to India, had tweeted that he had met RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to discuss its social welfare schemes. Within days, Keshap was transferred back to Washington and another charge d’affaires appointed. He was not involved in preparations for Prime Minister Modi’s visit to the US later that month. As earlier US envoys have met RSS sarsangchhalaks without any censure, the Biden government’s displeasure could have been because Keshap did not maintain a discrete silence, but felt it necessary to tweet the news.



# With Kohli stepping down, Dravid faces tricky task of transition

# AB de Villiers, Viv reserve ultimate praise for Kohli

**NEW DELHI**

India's most successful skipper in the longest format of the game, Virat Kohli dropped a bombshell on Saturday by quitting Test captaincy following his team's series defeat to South Africa.

Kohli, who had already relinquished the leadership role in T20Is earlier and was succeeded by Rohit Sharma as captain in ODIs, led the Indian team for the final time in the longest format of the game in the series against South Africa, which ended earlier this week.

Now, head coach Rahul Dravid has much work to do in order to create a solid unit which can win on both at home and overseas conditions.

The 33-year-old Kohli holds the record for most Test appearances as India Test captain (68) and he also holds the record for most Test wins by an Indian captain (40). Only Graeme Smith, Ricky Ponting, and Steve Waugh have won more matches than Kohli as captain in Test cricket.

Kohli had first led the side in Test cricket in 2014 against Australia. His last game as captain was the Cape Town Test in South Africa, which India lost by seven wickets. Now, Kohli has departed as skipper so it needs to be asked if not Virat, then who as the skipper of the Test side?

It is safe to say that Rohit Sharma is the frontrunner to be the Test captain as he was named the vice-captain for the South Africa Tests, but injury ruled him out and KL Rahul had to step in as the deputy. Over the past year, the right-handed batter showed great grit and determination with the bat and everyone knows about what he can bring as a captain.

However, Rohit's fitness has been an issue and it needs to be seen whether the selectors want to give a 34-year-old the reign of all three formats or do they want



to look at the future and think of a long-term prospect. The second option is KL Rahul, who recently led Team India in the second Test against South Africa in the absence of Kohli. Rahul has also shown great determination with the bat at the top of the order in overseas conditions but one thing with Rahul is that his batting can hit a rough patch all of a sudden.

And when the batter hits a lull patch, getting out of it has become tough for Rahul and this can act against Rahul. His leadership record for Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL) is not that great -- 15 losses in 27 games. Another prospect is Rishabh Pant and the selectors can look at the wicketkeeper-batter if they want to look at the future.

Pant showed a great cricketing brain while leading the Delhi Capitals and with age being on his side, the 24-year-old can emerge as a good choice. Now, this is where the role of head coach Rahul Dravid will come in as Team India looks set for a transition.

Speaking before Cape Town, Virat Kohli had said that transition cannot be forced and it tends to happen naturally.

However, with Kohli stepping down and the poor form of Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara, it is fair to say that the transition has been forced.

The era of Ravi Shastri and Virat Kohli has come to an end, and now it needs to be seen whether Dravid can create another impeccable unit that can win on both at home and overseas conditions. Pujara and Rahane's form does not make it easy for Dravid as the head coach also needs to look at probable replacements for the duo.

Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Suryakumar Yadav, and Shubman Gill are the four probable suspects that can come into the playing XI to replace Pujara and Rahane. This will make Kohli the most experienced batter in the lineup, and it is fair to say that he would have to lead the batting unit despite not being the "designated leader".

In the end, it is fair to say that Dravid's tenure coach could not have gotten to a more rocky start, and if the former India batter was known for his resilience in the field, it is the same quality, the new coach has to show in order to take the team through some testing times.

**NEW DELHI**

India's most successful skipper in the longest format of the game, Virat Kohli dropped a bombshell on Saturday by quitting Test captaincy following his team's series defeat to South Africa.

Kohli led India in 68 Test matches -- winning 40, losing 17 and drawing 11 matches -- with a win percentage of 58.82 while registering memorable wins in overseas and home conditions.

Pakistan cricketers react to Kohli's announcement

Kohli's sudden exit from the leadership role had the entire cricket fraternity erupting in disbelief. Wishes also poured in for the 33-year-old Kohli, who is the third most successful captain in the history of Test cricket after Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting.

Kohli was also congratulated by his friend and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) teammate AB de Villiers. The South African battering great took to Twitter to share an appreciation message for Kohli. '@imVkohli Well done, Virat! U most definitely raised the bar,"



he wrote.

West Indies legend Sir Vivian Richards also congratulated Kohli and hailed his contribution as a leader. The former West Indies batter also mentioned that the 33-year-old's name will always feature 'among the best leaders in world cricket.'

Spin legend Shane Warne thanked

Kohli for 'passionately' supporting Test cricket. 'Congrats @imVkohli on what you and your team has achieved under your leadership and thank you for supporting test cricket so passionately and insuring that it stays the number 1 form of the game,' Warne tweeted.

## ISL: Kerala Blasters game against Mumbai City FC postponed

**NEW DELHI**

Sunday's ISL match between Kerala Blasters FC and Mumbai City FC has been postponed over safety concerns, amid a growing surge of COVID-19 infections.

"Keeping in mind the safety of all parties involved, the League has reached a decision to postpone tonight's clash against Mumbai City FC to a later date," Kerala Blasters tweeted.

The club said it was working with the League to ensure the well-being of all involved, with more details to follow.

The match, which was due to be played at the Tilak Maidan Stadium in Vasco, was postponed after consultation with the League's



medical team, which assessed that the Kerala Blasters did not have the requisite number of players

available for the match. ON Saturday, the match between ATK Mohun Bagun against Bengaluru FC was also postponed. Players from FC Goa, Bengaluru FC and Odisha FC have tested positive so far.

# Novak Djokovic respects court ruling, to leave Australia

**NEW DELHI**

Tennis star Novak Djokovic released a statement shortly after a federal court rejected his appeal against deportation ahead of the Australian Open. The court decision meant Djokovic would miss the Australian Open, which he won last year.

Djokovic said he was "extremely disappointed with the Court ruling to dismiss my application for judicial review of the Minister's decision to cancel my visa, which means I cannot stay in Australia and participate in the Australian Open".

However, he declared that he would cooperate with the government. "I respect the Court's ruling and I will cooperate with the relevant authorities in relation to my departure from the country," he said.

Djokovic back in detention, continues to fight deportation

Novak Djokovic has long divided opinion. Now, his legacy will be complicated even further

Djokovic's Australian visa cancelled



again by immigration minister

Aus Open: Yuki loses in qualifiers, no Indian in singles main draw

He also called on people to focus on the Australian Open and leave behind the controversy over his deportation saga. "I am uncomfortable that the focus of the past weeks has been on me and I hope that we can all now focus on

the game and tournament I love. I would like to wish the players, tournament officials, staff, volunteers and fans all the best for the tournament," Djokovic said.

Meanwhile, Djokovic has been replaced in the Australian Open by Italian Salvatore Caruso. Caruso, ranked 150th on the ATP Tour, has entered the tournament as a 'lucky loser'.

# 'Stats don't lie': Cricket fraternity lauds Kohli, India's best Test captain

**NEW DELHI**

Virat Kohli's unexpected decision to quit Test captaincy stunned the cricketing world, which lauded the Indian star batter for taking his team to new heights.

Kohli ended his seven-year reign as India's most successful Test captain with memorable series wins in England and Australia being the highlight.

"Although I also am shocked by @imVkohli sudden decision, I respect his call. I can only applaud him for what he has done for world cricket & India. Easily one of the most aggressive and fittest players India has had. Hope he'd continue to shine for India as a player," tweeted former teammate Suresh Raina.

Kohli took India to the top of world rank-

ings and made them a formidable force in all conditions."When Virat took over as Test captain, India winning a test overseas was an achievement, now if India lose an overseas test series it is an upset. And that's how far he has taken Indian cricket forward, and that will be his legacy. Congratulations on successful reign," wrote former India opener Wasim Jaffer.

The great Virender Sehwag wrote: Many Congratulations #ViratKohli on an outstanding career as India's Test Captain. Stats don't lie & he was not only the most successful Indian Test Captain but one of the most successful in the world. Can be very proud @imVkohli & looking forward to watch u dominate with the bat."

"It's always an honour to lead the dynamic

Indian team. And the decision to step down is an emotional heavy moment. A journey well travelled," added former India skipper Mohammed Azharuddin.

Former India pacer Irfan Pathan wrote: "Whenever the talk of Indian cricket captains will arise in test cricket @imVkohli's name will be up there, not only for results but the kind of impact he had as a captain. Thank you #ViratKohli."

BCCI secretary Jay Shah and treasurer Arun Dhimal acknowledged Kohli's massive contribution to India's stellar run in the five-day format. "Congratulations to @imVkohli on a tremendous tenure as #TeamIndia captain. Virat turned the team into a ruthless fit unit that performed admirably both in India and away.

**NEW DELHI**

Four-time champions India dished out a clinical show to start their U-19 World Cup campaign on a winning note, thrashing South Africa by 45 runs in Georgetown.

Put in to bat at the Providence stadium on Saturday, India rode on skipper Yash Dhull's responsible 82 to post a fighting 232 all out and then bundled out the opposition for 187, with left-arm spinner Vicky Ostwal (5/28) and pacer Raj Bawa (4/47) doing bulk of the damage.

Chasing 233, South Africa colts lost opener Ethan John Cunningham (0) in the first over as he was trapped in front by pacer Rajvardhan Hangargekar (1/38).

But Valentine Kitime (25) and De-wald Brevis (65), who idolises A.B. de Villiers, then rallied the innings with a 58-run stand.

The duo played patiently and hit the loose balls away as South Africa reached 38 for 1 after 10 overs.

Kitime then took on left-arm medium pacer Ravi Kumar (0/30) in the 10th over, hitting him for a boundary and a six as South Africa amassed 10 runs off it.

Brevis and Kitime then hammered Bawa, amassing 17 runs of the 11th over. But Ostwal broke the stand after removing Kitime, who edged to stumper Dinesh Bana in the 12th over.

It soon became 83 for 3 as Ostwal struck again, this time dismissing G.J. Maree (8), who was caught by Bana in

the 21st over.

Thereafter, India did not allow any other South African batter to settle down. Bawa sent back a well-set Brevis, who was caught by rival skipper Dhull in the 36th over and that triggered a collapse for the rainbow nation.

Skipper George Van Heerden (36) tried to take the game deep, but he was devoid of partners as Bawa and Ostwal wrecked havoc on the middle and lower order.

The South African innings eventually folded in 45.4 overs.

Earlier, Dhull helped India recover from a poor start and his knock laid the cornerstone of India's fighting total.

The start of play was delayed by around 40 minutes due to rain and amid the prevailing conditions, South Africa decided to put India in to bat.

Left-arm pacer Aphiwe Mnyanda rocked the Indian top order by trapping in-form opener Harnoor Singh (1) and his partner Angriks Raghuvanshi (5) in front of the stumps.

Left-handed Harnoor, who was India's leading run getter in the Asia Cup and scored a century in the warm-up game against Australia in Georgetown, fell to a ball that nipped back in. Raghuvanshi played around Mnyanda's in-swing and was plumb in front, leaving India 11 for two.

With India in trouble, skipper Dhull and Shaik Rasheed (31) got together to resurrect the innings. They shared a 71-run stand before Rasheed missed a

sweep shot off left-arm spinner Liam Alder to be adjudged LBW.

Rasheed, who was dropped on 17 at second slip off Andile Simelane, played some impressive strokes in his 54-ball knock, including an aerial pull and an on-drive off pacer Matthew Boast to break the shackles.

Bangladesh U-19 skipper Akbar Ali battled pain of sister's death

Priyam Garg calls Bangladesh's reaction 'dirty' following U-19 triumph Bangladesh skipper Akbar calls flare-up between players 'unfortunate'

Delhi batter Dhull then shared a 44-run stand with Nishant Sindhu (25) to take the innings forward. The skipper ended up with 11 fours and it took a brilliant direct hit from Simelane to dismiss him.

Kaushal Tamble added 35 valuable runs towards the end of the innings to take the team past 200.

Boast was quick to clean up the lower-order, removing Tambe and Rajvardhan Hangargekar in successive deliveries as India were all out in 46.5 overs.

The Dhull-led side, who have also won the Asia Cup, will now take on Ireland on Wednesday.

Brief Scores India U19: 232 allout in 46.5 overs (Yash Dhull 82, Kaushal Tambe 35; Matthew Boast 3/40) beat South Africa U19 187 allout in 45.4 overs (Dewald Brevis 65, George Van Heerden 36; Vicky Ostwal 5/28) by 45 runs.



# BJP's hate politics responsible for unemployment: Rahul

**NEW DELHI**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the BJP's politics of "hate" is very harmful for the country and is also responsible for unemployment.

The former Congress chief said this a day after he attacked the BJP government by putting out an online quiz.

"I also believe that the hate politics of the BJP is very harmful for the country. And this hatred is also responsible for the unemployment," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

Time to speak up against insult of women, says Rahul Gandhi

"Domestic and foreign industries cannot run without peace in society. Will defeat this growing hatred around you everyday with brotherhood. Are you with me? #NoHate," Gandhi added.

The Congress leader had put out an



online quiz on Saturday, asking people about the "biggest shortcoming" of the BJP government. The options he gave

were "unemployment", "tax extortion", "price rise" and an "atmosphere of hatred".

# BJP Uttarakhand core election group to meet today

**NEW DELHI**

Helmed by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, the BJP Uttarakhand core group meeting will be held today in Delhi. Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be present, along with party president J.P. Nadda and others.

The political upheavals in Uttarakhand have always outstripped the size of the state, and have become only bigger in the year before the state gears up to elect its fifth government.

In July this year, Pushkar Singh Dhami became the third chief minister of the state's fourth assembly. In 2017, Dhami's party, the BJP, won an unprecedented majority—56 of the 70 assembly seats—in Uttarakhand. It had 46.51 per cent of the vote share—substantially more than that of its closest rival, the Congress, which got 33.49 per cent. This majority, however, brought no stability in a state where most chief ministers are believed to be jinxed as they do not complete their terms.

Trivendra Singh Rawat, the first chief minister of the fourth assembly, served for four years till he was removed in March 2021. Rawat maintains that he does not know the reason for his removal, but party members say he was unapproachable and that his public image was unimpressive. In



came Tirath Singh Rawat, who served four months of gaffes, relied overtly on the bureaucracy and was unable to gain the confidence of the central leadership. A choice then had to be made of a candidate who was already a member of the assembly, and had an image acceptable to the party leadership. Pushkar Singh Dhami, with his roots in student politics, was this man. He had earlier served as officer on special duty to Bhagat Singh Koshyari (second chief minister of Uttarakhand) and thus knew his way around the bureaucratic tangle of the top post.

The pleasant and affable Dhami has soothed ruffled feathers within the

party. One BJP worker described the atmosphere in the party as "very positive" after his appointment.

Dhami, however, bears a mammoth burden. He must undo the perceived failures of the first Rawat and the howlers of the second Rawat. He comes too close to the elections for major course corrections. Then there is the matter of his own image—he is not well known across the state, like say a Harish Rawat (chief minister in the previous Congress government). There are already reports of others vying for his job—among them most notably Anil Baluni, BJP national spokesperson.

# Remove officials who worked with IPS officer-turned-BJP neta, Akhilesh tells EC

**NEW DELHI**

The entry of a recently retired IPS officer to the BJP on Sunday has triggered controversy. Asim Arun was inducted into the IPS in January 1995 and had been serving as police commissioner of Kanpur.

His retirement and immediate entry to the BJP has been criticised by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. At a press conference on Sunday, Akhilesh said, "I will complain to the Election Commission to remove those officials who were on duty with Asim Arun in the past five years. Otherwise, they [such officials] will work as functionaries of the BJP [in the polls]."

Akhilesh argued if the Election Commission did not act against such officials, "Questions will arise about the body. We won't accept the claim the Election Commission is functioning impartially."

Arun joined the BJP in Lucknow in the presence of Union Minister Anurag Thakur. He had sought voluntary retirement earlier this month, which the Yogi Adityanath government approved. Arun



had previously announced he would be joining the BJP.

Assembly polls: EC extends ban on rallies, roadshows till January 22

Won't let any more BJP MLAs, ministers join SP: Akhilesh

Arun was quoted by ANI as saying on Sunday, "BJP gave me a suggestion to join politics to contribute more towards social work. There is a lot that I couldn't do during my job tenure, so I decided to enter politics. I am also impressed with

PM Modi who has given a new path of development." There is speculation that he could contest the coming polls from Kannauj.

Speaking after inducting Arun, Thakur claimed, "People joining SP do riots, people joining BJP catch rioters. SP MLAs are either in jail or on bail, that's their original game. It's clear people with clean characters join BJP, and rioters, including many with blood-covered hands, join SP."

# EC reschedules Bengal civic body polls amid Covid surge

**NEW DELHI**

The West Bengal State Election Commission on Saturday postponed polls to four municipal corporations by three weeks to February 12 in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases.

Kindly note that this image has been posted for representational purposes only. Photograph: Ashok Bhaumik/PTI Photo

According to a notification issued by the SEC, elections to Siliguri, Chan-

dannagar, Bidhannagar and Asansol municipal corporations will now be held on February 12 instead of January 22.

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Polling will be held from 7 AM to 5 PM, it said.

Earlier in the day, the state government sent a letter to the SEC, giving its consent to reschedule the election

# Vaccination drive added great strength to fight against COVID: Modi

**NEW DELHI**

Lauding India's COVID-19 vaccination drive as it completes a year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said it has added great strength to the fight against the pandemic and has resulted in saving lives and protecting livelihoods.

"When the pandemic first struck, not much was known about the virus. However, our scientists and innovators immersed themselves in developing vaccines," he noted.

"India feels proud that our nation has been able to contribute to fighting the pandemic through vaccines," Modi tweeted.

"I salute each and every individual who is associated with the vaccination drive," he said, adding that the role of doctors, nurses and health care workers was exceptional.

"When we see glimpses of people being vaccinated in remote areas, or our health care workers taking the vaccines there, our hearts and minds are filled with pride," he said.

The prime minister asserted that India's approach to fighting the pandemic will always remain science based.

All set for administering precaution



dose of COVID vaccine from Monday

Bihar man claims he got 11 COVID-19 vaccine shots, says his health greatly improved

Covaxin booster dose may grant long-term protection against COVID: Study

Health infrastructure is also being augmented to ensure that fellow citizens get proper care, he said, asking people to keep following all COVID-19-related protocols.

The countrywide vaccination drive

against COVID-19 on Sunday completed one year, during which over 156.76 crore vaccine doses were administered.

According to Health Ministry officials, over 92 per cent of the adult population have received at least one dose while over 68 per cent have been fully vaccinated.

The Centre will issue a postal stamp on Sunday afternoon to mark the completion of one year of the inoculation drive.

# Hyderabad: Iconic Secunderabad Club gutted by fire

**NEW DELHI**

The heritage building housing the historic Secunderabad Club, established in the British era, was gutted by a large fire in the wee hours of Sunday.

The Secunderabad Club was established in April 1878 and is one of the oldest in the country.

Media reports said the fire service was informed about the blaze around 2.30am. Seven fire tenders took more than four hours to control the blaze.

"The damaged main building has the reception, bar and dining area, kitchen, ball room, super market, offices of the management, store room and billiards room. The structure has a lot of wood, which, according to fire officials, is a reason for rapid spread of flames," The Times of India reported. Reports said the fire caused losses amounting to at least Rs 25 crore.

The Indian Express reported officials suspect a short circuit triggered the blaze.

Moral victory, party only alternative



to ruling TRS in Telangana: BJP on Hyderabad polls

The Secunderabad Club occupies around 22 acres and has a cricket field and other sports facilities. According to The Hindu, the club was originally known as the Secunderabad Public Rooms, before being renamed "the Secunderabad Garrison Club, the Secunderabad Gymkhana Club and the United Services Club".

The Hindu added, "Membership to the Club is extremely difficult to get these days. The Club has slowed down on granting new memberships due to a large member base. Memberships are bequeathed across generations by the members, much like family heirlooms. And for new applicants, the current waiting list is at least 15 years..."

# Beijing reports first local omicron case ahead of Olympics

**NEW DELHI**

Beijing has reported its first local omicron infection, according to state media, weeks before the Winter Olympic Games are due to start.

Is Omicron a boon or bane? That is the million dollar question, say experts

Delhi logs record 28,867 Covid cases; positivity rate rises to 29.21%

The infected person lives and works in the city's north-western district of Haidian and had no travel history outside of Beijing for the past two weeks. The individual experienced symptoms on Thursday and was tested on Friday for COVID-19, officials said in a news conference Saturday during which they confirmed the infection.

The infection comes less than three weeks before the Winter Olympic Games' opening ceremony on Feb 4, and around two weeks before the start of Lunar New Year celebrations in China.

So far, multiple cities in China have reported omicron infections, including Shanghai, the western city of Xi'an, cities in southern Guangdong province such as Zhuhai and Zhongshan, and



the city of Tianjin, which is 30 minutes from Beijing by high-speed rail.

Officials across the country have urged residents to stay in their cities for the new year, instead of traveling back to their hometowns. China has adopted a strict "zero-Covid" policy, with authorities locking down residential compounds and even

entire cities such as Xi'an when a local outbreak has been discovered in an effort to stamp out community transmission.

The Beijing patient's residential compound and workplace have been sealed off and authorities are mass-testing people linked to either location for the coronavirus. Some

2,430 people had been tested as of Saturday night, according to The Global Times, a state-owned newspaper.

China reported 119 new coronavirus infections on Saturday, of which 65 were domestic cases. The country has reported 104,864 infections since the beginning of the pandemic.



# IPO-bound India1 Payments aims to deploy 20,000 ATMs in next 4-5 yrs

**NEW DELHI**  
IPO-bound India1 Payments Ltd, which is currently rolling out 300-400 ATMs in a month, is hopeful of deploying over 20,000 such machines in the next 4-5 years to ensure cash availability to customers in semi-urban and rural areas, it's MD and CEO K Srinivas said on Sunday.

Active COVID-19 cases in the country highest in 225 days  
Denis Alipov appointed Russian envoy to India  
Sensex rallies for 4th day, climbs over 500 points to reclaim 61,000 level on earnings optimism  
"The hike in interchange fees by RBI coupled with various structural growth drivers, including an expected increase in cash withdrawal transactions, will accelerate White Label ATMs deployments in the country," he said.

The ATMs which are set up, owned, and operated by non-bank entities are known as White Label ATMs (WLAs). At present, the Bengaluru-headquartered company operates a network of 10,300 WLAs and deploys its ATMs under the brand name of "india1 ATMs". It is the second-largest ATM brand in the semi-urban and rural areas after the State Bank of India (SBI).

India1 Payments, promoted by the Banktech Group of Australia and formerly known as BTI Payments, has installed these machines mostly in semi-urban and rural areas across 14 states and union territories.

"In the calendar year, 2021 India1 has rolled out more than 3,000 ATMs and is likely to continue at the same pace in next 4-5 years given the low penetration of ATMs in semi-urban and rural India. That should put India1 in good stead to be a large ATM network with over 20,000 ATMs," Srinivas told PTI.

He further said the company will continue to focus on states like UP, Bihar, and West Bengal which have low penetration of ATMs.

The company focuses on ensuring the



availability of cash in its ATMs, especially those located in rural areas.

"We are mindful that when a customer comes to our ATMs in rural areas after traveling 8-9 km then he should be able to withdraw money," he said.

Srinivas said the company may consider deploying ATMs in the northeast region next year. Currently, the company has no presence in the area.

"We are committed to improving financial inclusion through the accessibility of our ATM services in the under-penetrated semi-urban and rural areas of the country," he said.

According to the latest data from the RBI as of September, there were 2.4 lakh ATMs in the country, of them around 28,000 are white-label machines.

The company has grown over 15 percent over last year and accounts for more than 50 percent of incremental ATMs deployed in this period.

It services over 72 million customer transactions and facilitates a gross transaction value of over Rs 13,600 crore every quarter on average.

On the company's future growth strategy, Srinivas said the company will continue to expand its ATM network in semi-urban and rural regions, improve local operational capabilities

and drive profitability through customer engagement and cost optimization. In addition, the company will focus on offering micro-ATM services in remotest areas among others, he added.

India1 Payments, promoted by Banktech Group, was incorporated in the year 2006 and subsequently invested by ICICI Ventures in 2013.

The company, which has already received Sebi's go-ahead to float initial share-sale, plans to come out with its public issue in the coming months.

The initial public offering (IPO) comprises fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 150 crore and an offer of sale (OFS) of 1.03 crore equity shares by promoters and investors.

The OFS consists of the sale of 1 lakh equity shares by the Banktech Group, up to 25.08 lakh equity shares by BTI Payments Singapore, up to 49.94 lakh equity shares by India Advantage Fund S3 I, up to 24.86 lakh equity shares by India Advantage Fund S4 I and up to 2.16 lakh equity shares by Dynamic India Fund S4 US.

Proceeds from the fresh issue will be utilized to repay debt, for funding capital expenditure requirements of the company, setting up of ATMs in India, and general corporate purposes.

# Cars that can carry 8 passengers to have at least 6 airbags: Road ministry

**NEW DELHI**  
The road transport ministry has said it will make it mandatory for carmakers to provide a minimum of six airbags in motor vehicles that can carry up to 8 passengers for enhanced safety of occupants from October this year.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in a statement said that in order to enhance the safety of occupants of the motor vehicle against lateral impact, it has been decided to enhance safety features by amending the Central Motor Vehicles Rules (CMVR), 1989.

"A draft notification has been issued on January 14, 2022, which mandates that vehicles of category M1, manufactured after October 1, 2022, shall be fitted with two side/side torso airbags, one each for the persons occupying front row outboard seating positions, and two side-curtain/tube airbags, one each for the persons occupying outboard seating positions," it said.

An airbag is a vehicle occupant-restraint system that interferes between the driver and the vehicle's dashboard during a collision, thereby preventing serious injuries.

In a series of tweets, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had said his ministry had already mandated the implementation of the fitment of the driver airbag with effect from July 1, 2019, and front co-passenger airbag with effect from January 1, 2022.

Buyers are back and carmakers are trying hard to meet the demand

"In order to enhance the safety of the occupants in motor vehicles carrying up to 8 passengers, I have now approved a Draft GSR Notification to make a minimum of 6 airbags compulsory," Gadkari had said. GSR here stands for General Statutory Rules. He had further said that to minimise the impact of frontal and lateral collisions on the occupants



seated in both front and rear compartments, it has been decided that 4 additional airbags be mandated in the M1 vehicle category.

"...i.e. two side/side torso airbags and two side curtain/tube airbags covering all outboard passengers. This is a crucial step to make motor vehicles in India safer than ever," he said.

According to Gadkari, this will ultimately ensure the safety of passengers across all segments, irrespective of the cost/variant of the vehicle.

According to the latest government data, a total of 1,16,496 road accidents occurred on national highways (NHs), including expressways, in 2020, causing 47,984 deaths. Last year, Gadkari in an interview with PTI had said small cars, mostly purchased by lower-middle-class people, should also have an adequate number of airbags and had wondered why automakers are providing eight airbags only in big cars bought by rich people.

His remarks had come against the backdrop of the automobile industry raising concerns that high taxation and stricter safety and emission norms for vehicles have made their products expensive.

Mostly, lower-middle-class people buy small economy cars and "if their car won't have airbags and when accidents happen, then it may result in deaths. So, I appeal to all car manufacturers to provide a minimum of six airbags across all variants and segments of the vehicle," he had said.

The minister had acknowledged that additional airbags in small cars will increase their cost by at least Rs 3,000-4,000.

Explaining further, the statement said side/side torso airbag means any inflatable occupant restraint device that is mounted to the seats or side structure of the vehicle interior, and that is designed to deploy in a side-impact crash to help mitigate primarily torso injury and/or occupant ejection, for the persons occupying front row outboard seating positions.

Side curtain/tube airbag means any inflatable occupant restraint device that is mounted to the side structure of the vehicle interior, and that is designed to deploy in a side-impact crash or rollover to help mitigate primarily head injury and/or occupant ejection for the persons occupying the outboard seating positions.

# Is NFT you're buying authentic?

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15:** Last month, the artist Liam R 'Sharp' Sharp posted a tweet that highlighted one of the huge problems with the shiny new non-fungible token, or NFT, market: How do you prove provenance for an NFT?

Sharp (@LiamRSharp) is a well-known graphic novel illustrator and novelist who's worked on commission for DC as lead artist on issues starring Batman, Wonder Woman and Green Lantern, besides doing his own stuff.

His tweet said, 'Sadly I'm going to have to completely shut down my entire @DeviantArt gallery as people keep stealing my art and making NFTs.'

'I can't -- and shouldn't have to -- report each one and make a case, which is consistently ignored. Sad and frustrating.'

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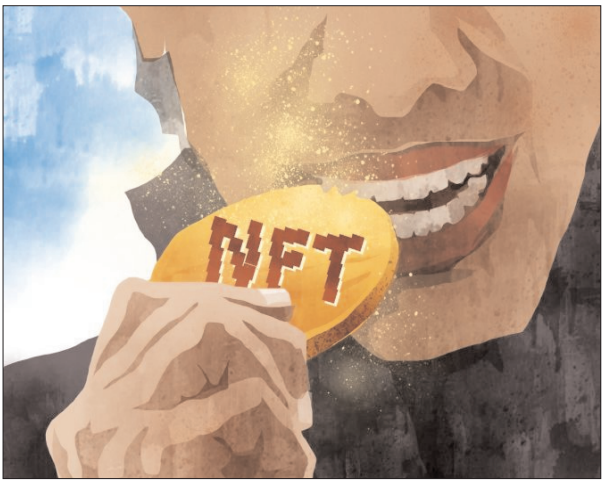
"This NFT is located on a public blockchain outside of DeviantArt and may be listed for sale in one or more NFT marketplaces.

'If your art's being used without permission, we suggest contacting those marketplaces to have it delisted.'

Details of the NFT location followed.

Sharp may be able to get redress since he is well-known and much of his work is public and his style, etc, can be verified with major publishing houses.

However, what is to stop some unscrupulous 'entre-



preneur' from harvesting interesting stuff off the Web and then selling it as NFTs?

This is not only a copyright problem which affects creators of digital work that could be stolen.

It is also a situation where buyers of NFTs have to be aware of picking up and paying for some pirated content.

Since all NFT transactions happen on blockchains using cryptocurrency, it may also be difficult to ever find the pirate and get that entity to disgorge payments or be punished.

When they wish to identify an image or establish its provenance, most people use publicly available tools like Google Lens and reverse image search, which will throw up an image if it's indexed by the search engine.

Image Match and Visual Search perform similar functions on Bing.

Picsearch is another specialised reverse image search tool.

There are other less popu-

lar tools that look at specific websites or archives.

DeviantArt, which has a reputation for hosting adult graphic content and a lot of morphs of popular celebs, etc, has its own search tool as mentioned above.

Apart from that, Getty Images has a reverse search tool, which will throw up images in the archives.

Pinterest has a similar visual search tool and a Pinterest Lens -- using the lens in addition to Pinterest reverse image is useful (as with Google Lens) because it may also throw up locations where that image is being sold.

TinEye is another tool that tends to be recommended highly by professional photographers -- this can be set up to send alerts if an image appears on a new location.

Pre Post SEO is often used by academics and writers to search for verbal plagiarism, but it also has a reverse image search -- this may be useful as well.

If you are buying an NFT,

you should run the relevant image or images through all of the above and any other image search tools you can think of.

Even if none of them throws up a match, there are no guarantees that the NFT is not plagiarised.

Well over two-thirds of the Web is not indexed by any search engine and it is entirely possible that a content creator, or Web site owner, may be asking the search engines not to index content.

If content is copied from any such location, it might not show up on any reverse image search.

So, while a positive reverse image result is a red flag, a negative result is no guarantee of clean provenance.

There are further complications, of course.

An NFT, which alters or morphs an existing image, or several images, could be entirely legitimate.

You might entirely change the impact of an image by simply superimposing a caption, for instance, or by swapping the head of a donkey (lifted from one copyrighted image) onto the body of a well-known politician (from another copyrighted image) to create a third image that is entirely new.

Figuring out these nuances in the NFT market will mean opening and examining multiple new cans of worms.

Dabblers in the NFT market will have to watch out for this angle.

The age-old principles of Buyer Beware apply.

**NEW DELHI**

For years, it remained a dream, seemingly unattainable. Finally this year, India seems to be within striking distance of attaining its oft-set, yet missed, goal of hitting \$400 billion of merchandise exports in one year.

Data released Friday afternoon by the commerce ministry showed that India's exports remained on a steady trajectory, come Third Wave or not. Income from overall trade, combining both merchandise and services exports last month stood at a healthy \$57.87 billion, a year-on-year increase of 25 per cent.

"Stellar rise in exports!," exulted union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal. "In line with the government's vision of 'Make in India' for the world, India's exports display a remarkable momentum," he added.

Taking merchandise alone, the export figure of \$37.81 billion not only shows healthy growth but takes the total from April till now to \$301.38 billion—within striking distance of the \$400 billion target originally set for March (the end of FY22).

"Looking at the current trend, we are on course to achieving the \$400 billion merchandise exports target for the fiscal," said A. Sakthivel, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisation (FIEO), adding that

clined. Expressing their optimism about the Indian economy, 53% of the CEOs said it would grow by more than 8.5 per cent, while 30% felt it would not grow to that level. The rest were non-committal.

"While everybody talks about 8.5% and 9.5% GDP growth, in my view, it may not grow beyond 7%-7.5% by real measurement criteria," says A M Naik, executive chairman of construction major, L&T.

"GDP may show 8% growth because the base went down due to covid. But the real growth is only 3.5%



"spectacular exports growth coupled with orders in hand will help in pushing India's exports further during the next fiscal thereby aiming for exports in the vicinity of \$530 billion in FY23". The numbers were pushed up by the impressive export performance of engineering goods, petroleum products, gems & jewellery, chemicals, drugs, electronic goods, cotton yarn and rice. "Out of these, many of them were labour-intensive sectors contributing majorly to the exports basket, which itself is a good sign, further helping job creation in the country," pointed out Sakthivel.

Export momentum has been strong

ever since the dip in 2020, the pandemic year. For example, while merchandise exports fell from \$238 billion in April-Dec 2019 to just above \$200 billion in the same period in 2020, the resurgence was better than expected in 2021, going up beyond \$300 billion.

However, the high trade deficit remains a worry—despite the boom in exports, India still imports more than it exports. Overall imports grew 33 per cent last month to \$72.35 billion, the amount and growth percentage both remaining higher than the indices of exports. "[That] is a point of concern and should be analysed," said Sakthivel.

# India Inc Expects 2022 To Be Growth Year

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15:** Most CEOs of top Indian companies expect the economy to make a sharp turnaround in the new year even as they plan to increase capacity and step up hiring.

A survey of 40 CEOs carried out in December shows that companies are expecting the economy to bounce back during the year.

As many as 90 per cent of the CEOs polled expect consumer spending, especially in rural areas, to shoot up in 2022 after a dismal 2021, when the sales of cars and two-wheelers de-

clined. Expressing their optimism about the Indian economy, 53% of the CEOs said it would grow by more than 8.5 per cent, while 30% felt it would not grow to that level. The rest were non-committal.

"While everybody talks about 8.5% and 9.5% GDP growth, in my view, it may not grow beyond 7%-7.5% by real measurement criteria," says A M Naik, executive chairman of construction major, L&T.

"GDP may show 8% growth because the base went down due to covid. But the real growth is only 3.5%

strongly surpassing their pre-COVID levels, the RBI added.

Most of the CEOs shared that positive outlook for the economy, and 83% of them said that they planned to hire more in the new year.

As many as 88% also said that they did not lay off any staff in 2021.

Though the workforce demand hasn't touched the pre-pandemic mark as yet, the continuous quarter-on-quarter increase in 2021 shows that companies will continue to hire more in the new year, especially in retail sales and infotech-related jobs, the CEOs said.

# This decade is being called as 'techade' of India: PM Modi at startup meet

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15:** In an interaction with startups, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that this decade is being called as 'techade' of India adding that programmes like Startup India and Standup India will further the efforts of the government in strengthening India's title of 'Techade'.

Emphasizing that the startup ecosystem liberate entrepreneurs, innovation from government processes, bureaucratic silos, the Prime Minister said, "This decade is being called as 'techade' of India."

Highlighting the massive changes that the government is making in this decade to

strengthen the innovation, entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem, the Prime Minister said that it has three important aspects.

"First, to liberate entrepreneurship, innovation from the web of government processes, bureaucratic silos. Second, creating an institutional mechanism to promote innovation.

And third, handholding of young innovators, youth enterprise," the Prime Minister said during his virtual interaction with startups of different sectors across the country.

PM Modi also said that Startup India and Standup India programmes will further our efforts in strengthening India's title of 'Techade'.



credit in several Indian languages. In her over a seven-decade career, she has sung various memorable tracks such as Ajeeb dastan hai ye, Pyar kiya to darna kya, Neela asman so gaya, and Tere liye, among others. The singer, known as Nightingale of India, has been lauded with numerous awards and honours including the Padma Bhushan, the Padma Vibhushan and the Dada Saheb Phalke Award, and multiple National Film Awards. She is also a recipient of the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.



Signs of diabetes in your mouth and breath

Soaring Covid-19 cases renew US debate over mask mandates

The health burden of diabetes is increasing worldwide. It is among the leading causes of mortality as it involves all organs of the body. The lifestyle disorder has also been listed as a key comorbidity that makes one prone to a more serious COVID illness. While diabetes management is extremely crucial, a lot of times it goes undiscovered and leads to complications. Thus, it's crucial to identify the signs and seek medical help immediately.

Can insomnia lead to diabetes?

According to the Mayo Clinic, if your blood sugar level is too high, you may experience some symptoms around your mouth. Dr. Dheeraj Kapoor, Chief - Endocrinology, Artemis Hospital, Gurugram explains, "Diabetes is a systemic disease which means it involves all organs of the body and the mouth obviously is not exempted from it. So once we talk about diabetes, we talk about kidneys, the nerves, and so forth. But there is one body part we don't talk about often in relation to diabetes - and that is the mouth." One must understand that infections of the mouth are very common and more so in diabetics. "It is a dictum that if someone has well-controlled diabetes and suddenly the control goes haywire even with a good diet and exercise, one must check for urine infections and for dental and



oral infections."

Diabetes: These three recurrent infections can be a sign of high blood sugar. It is important to examine the mouth for foul breath, what we call Halitosis. "If you find that sugar level is bad, there is foul breath and if you see some infections in the oral cavity or in the teeth, then one must refer the patient to the dental surgeon."

Diabetic ketoacidosis, this is an acute emergency of diabetes wherein because of the formation of the ketone, there is a foul odor or fruity odor is common in patients with diabetic ketoacidosis.

In patients with more than 250/300 sugar levels, foul order can be a good marker or pointer towards diabetic ketoacidosis. The patient needs to get a urine check to check if the ketones are present. Diabetes ketoacidosis and halitosis, what we call foul breath, are the worrying conditions that may occur in diabetics, shares Dr Kapoor.

Diabetes, if left untreated can cause heart disease, stroke, kidney disorders, neuropathy, can lead to leg amputation and even blindness. This is a big stress on the Indian healthcare system and prevention and timely diagnosis is critical.

Website for free virus tests is coming. How will it work?

Under criticism after weeks of shortages, President Joe Biden's administration is working to make Covid-19 rapid test kits more available and accessible to Americans by boosting supply and lowering costs. A new federal website to request free test kits launches Wednesday, with the first shipments going out to Americans by the end of the month. In addition, most Americans will be able to get reimbursed for tests that they purchase starting Saturday.

Key details about the new programs: HOW CAN I REQUEST A FREE TEST?

Starting Wednesday, Jan. 19, free tests can be ordered at covidtests.gov. The first tests will ship by the end of January. The White House says "tests will typically ship within 7-12 days of ordering" through the U.S. Postal Service. USPS reports shipping times of 1-3 days for its first-class package service in the continental United States. Shipments to Alaska, Hawaii, Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO) and Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) addresses will be sent through Priority Mail.

Importantly, given the shipping and process times, Americans will need to request the tests well before they meet federal guidelines for requiring a test.

WHEN SHOULD I TEST?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at-home testing when people experience Covid-19 symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat, respiratory symptoms and muscle aches; five days after a potential Covid-19 exposure; or as part of test-to-stay protocols in schools and workplaces.

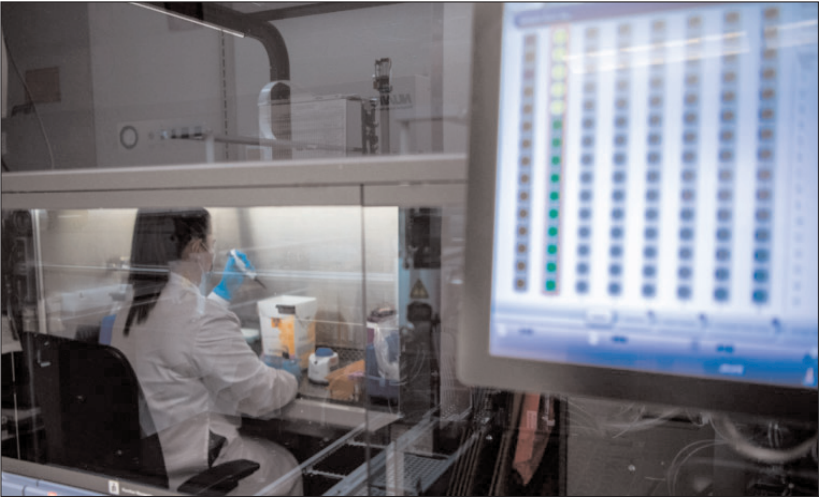
HOW MANY TESTS CAN I ORDER FROM THE WEBSITE?

The White House says that "to promote broad access," shipments from covidtests.gov will initially be limited to four rapid tests per residential address, no matter the number of occupants.

IS THERE ANOTHER WAY TO GET A TEST KIT FOR FREE?

Starting Saturday, private insurers will be required to cover the cost of up to eight at-home rapid tests per month per insured person, according to a new Biden administration rule.

People will have the option of buying tests at a store or online, then seeking reimbursement from their health insurance provider. Insurers are being incentivized to work with pharmacies and retailers to develop plans to cover the cost



of the tests with no out-of-pocket cost to customers, but those programs will not be immediately widespread.

Those with public health insurance through Medicare, or without insurance, will be directed to covidtests.gov to order tests or to community health centers in their area offering free testing.

HOW WILL I BE REIMBURSED?

The Biden administration says the procedures will differ from insurer to insurer, and it is encouraging Americans to save receipts from rapid test purchases for later reimbursement and to reach out to their insurance providers for information.

Critically, the requirement only covers purchases on or after Saturday. Insurers are not expected to retroactively reimburse the cost of tests purchased earlier.

WHAT ARE OTHER TESTING OPTIONS?

The Biden administration is emphasizing that the website is just one tool for Americans to access Covid-19 testing. Millions of free tests are available at participating pharmacy locations, community health centers and Federal Emergency Management Agency-backed sites in some parts of the country experiencing a surge in cases.

WHICH HOME TEST WILL I GET?

That will vary. The federal government has secured more than 420 million tests for distribution through covidtests.gov already, with plans to increase the order to 1 billion tests in the coming weeks. All of the tests supplied will be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration and are capable of detecting the more-transmissible omicron variant of Covid-19, which is the dominant strain in the U.S. While they are packaged differently and may use slightly different

procedures, officials said, the test mechanisms of detection and effectiveness are generally the same. All tests will come with detailed instructions.

WHY IS BIDEN BUYING THESE TEST KITS?

It represents an acknowledgement by the president that the administration needs to do more to increase access to Covid-19 testing, which is an important tool to help slow the spread of the coronavirus.

In cases where infected people show symptoms or not, testing is the only way to find out if they have the virus so they can avoid being out and about and potentially spreading disease.

Demand for test kits soared as the holidays neared and people grew eager to test themselves and their families before traveling and as the omicron variant spread rapidly in just a few weeks to become the dominant strain in the U.S.

Biden's promise of 1 billion test kits is in addition to the administration's earlier pledge to send 50 million rapid tests to community health centers across the country.

HOW MUCH WILL THE PROGRAM COST?

The White House estimates the cost of purchasing and distributing the first 500 million tests at about \$4 billion. That will be paid for with money from the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill Biden signed into law in March.

WILL THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM MAKE IT HARDER FOR ME TO FIND A TEST AT THE DRUGSTORE?

White House officials say the covidtests.gov tests are coming from new manufacturing capacity and should not interfere with existing supplies that drugstores, health clinics and state governments are relying on.

Officials across the US are again weighing how and whether to impose mask mandates as Covid-19 infections soar and the American public grows ever wearier of pandemic-related restrictions.

Much of the debate centers around the nation's schools, some of which have closed due to infection-related staffing issues. In a variety of places, mask mandates are being lifted or voted down.

The changes come as the federal government assesses the supply of medical-grade respirator face coverings, such as N95 or KN95 masks. During a briefing Wednesday, White House Covid-19 Response Coordinator Jeff Zients said officials were "strongly considering options to make more high-quality masks available to all Americans," noting the government has a stockpile of more than 750 million N95 masks.

The best mask "is the one that you will wear and the one you can keep on all day long, that you can tolerate in public indoor settings," said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On Monday, officials in Wyoming's capital city voted to end a mask mandate for students and teachers that had been in place since September. The Cheyenne school district also reduced Covid-19 isolation requirements, voting to require that only people with symptoms and positive tests—not just those exposed—need to stay home for five days and mask for five days thereafter.

The University of Missouri's governing board on Tuesday rejected the university system president's request to temporarily require masks on the Columbia campus, as well as a mandate specific to classrooms and labs.

A school board meeting was canceled Monday in Wichita, Kansas, after three new members refused to wear masks for a swearing-in ceremony. Meanwhile in the Topeka area, elected officials rejected a plea to



mandate masks, urging people to be cautious but saying they were not ready for a requirement.

Some jurisdictions are making the move on their own toward more stalwart masking policies, including requiring higher-grade mask materials.

Last week, the University of Arizona announced it would require a medical-grade mask in indoor spaces where social distancing is not possible. The school said on its website that it no longer considers cloth masks to be adequate, although a cloth mask can be worn over a medical-grade mask to improve fit and increase protection.

A new indoor mask mandate takes effect Wednesday in New Orleans ahead of the Mardi Gras season. Louisiana's statewide coronavirus daily hospitalization numbers have increased sevenfold in three weeks—a spike that has strained hospitals, where emergency room waits are sometimes as long as 12 hours, according to the city's health director, Dr. Jennifer Avegno.

Health officials in Omaha, Nebraska, announced a temporary mask mandate on Tuesday, but the state has threatened to sue if the rule is imposed as planned. Omaha City Council President Pete Festersen said a majority of the council supported the move.

"This is not a decision I made lightly. This was not an easy decision at all, and I know that it's going to cre-

ate some waves," Douglas County Health Director Lindsay Huse said. "But this is a tool that we have in our toolbox. We have research, evidence, out there showing that masks decrease transmission."

Other places hesitated to bring back requirements that ended months ago. In Michigan, where state officials said record-high Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations could peak in late January or early February before beginning to drop, health leaders remained reluctant to reinstate restrictions or masking mandates. They continue to implore people to get vaccinated, get booster shots, wear well-fitting masks in public and avoid large gatherings.

Elizabeth Hertel, director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, recommended that people wear an N95 mask or two well-fitting face coverings. A parent group has called for school mask requirements, which are in place in a majority of individual districts but not at the statewide level.

In Utah, as lawmakers prepared to begin meeting for the year, GOP Gov. Spencer Cox exempted the Capitol and other state facilities from a municipal mask mandate. Jenny Wilson, Salt Lake County's Democratic mayor, said the governor did not have the authority to make exceptions to the policy, which requires N95 and KN95 or similar masks for a month in indoor spaces, including schools.

Is Omicron a boon or bane? That is the million dollar question, say experts

With a rising number of coronavirus Omicron cases reported across the globe, inducing a third wave of the pandemic in India, the chances are that it will soon replace Delta as dominant global variant. The trend was already visible in the US, where Omicron has taken over Delta as the dominant strain.

So, how should we view this data? Many have argued that the rise of Omicron is not necessarily a bad development, and it might mark the end of the pandemic. The variant is, as per the data in hand, a lot less virulent than Delta. So, the fatality rates might be reduced. On the flip side, there is a threat of hospital systems being overpowered if faced with a rush of patients. Also, the Omicron was not common cold, the Centre had stated last week, stressing the need to take the third wave seriously and to observe appropriate protocols.

What do experts say?

In an exclusive interaction with THE WEEK, Dr T. Jacob John, India's top virologist, said: "We don't know whether Omicron will end the pandemic, or if it is a detour. We are clueless as to whether Delta is going to disappear or whether Delta and Omicron will simultaneously co-circulate. So, the lucky ones will get Omicron first and have good immunity against Delta. The unlucky ones will get Delta first. These are all probabilities. We can't make any assumptions right now," added John.

Answering a query on whether Omicron is a boon for the pandemic-stricken world, John said: "In a way, Omicron is infecting a whole lot of people without too much death and

economic devastation. In African countries, Omicron will spread faster with very little consequences, except for the elderly population and those with comorbidities. Omicron will take a big toll on the vulnerable population. However, the rest of the community will be protected against Delta. Omicron induces good immunity against Delta. Meanwhile, it is a bane as it is causing devastating infections all around the world."

Omicron has far too many mutations. "It is not derived from the original coronavirus directly. Neither has it originated from Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, or any of the known variants. It raises the question how Omicron acquired so many mutations unknown to scientists. Omicron is challenging scientists. It is telling us 'you are not smart enough to figure me out'," says John.

WHO has warned that more than half of Europe's population will be infected with Omicron in the next two months. Hans Kluge, the WHO's Europe director, said the variant has been reported in 50 of the Europe region's 53 states. Omicron cases have "exploded in recent weeks" in Denmark. Omicron is nearly four to five times more infectious than Delta. "That is because of mutations in the protein which make it easier for the cells to be attacked," said virologist Dr V. Ravi.

Dr Arvind Kate, a top chest physician and pulmonologist at Zen Multispeciality Hospital, Chembur, got infected with Omicron last week.

Quarantine has been a time for reflection and introspection for the 43-year-old. "Hopefully, coronavirus strains will become milder with each change, and thus we may see the end

of this pandemic," says Kate, starting the conversation on a positive note. Kate's wife, an anesthesiologist, was the first one in the family to test positive. Their nine-year-old son soon caught the infection. "We take simple paracetamol and multivitamins," he says.

Omicron causes milder symptoms compared to Delta and other earlier variants, but we cannot afford to be complacent. The highly mutated variant hits children hard. "In the last few weeks, we have seen a massive surge of cases", says Dr Amin Kaba, consultant paediatrician, Masina Hospital, Mumbai. "Most of the children come in with low-grade or high-grade fever, pain in the throat, soreness, cough, cold, upset stomach, nausea, vomiting, fatigue and weakness."

Dr Srikanta J.T., consultant, paediatric interventional pulmonology and sleep medicine, at Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru, says: "What is more concerning is that almost all kids in contact with a positive adult are getting infected, which again re-emphasises the infectiousness of the Omicron variant. The only silver lining is that most of them have fever and fatigue, which is getting better with symptomatic treatment, and probably only a miniscule fraction requires hospitalisation and paediatric ICU stay," he adds.

As per the latest data, Maharashtra continues to be the worst hit state from Omicron.

According to Gaurav Gupta, commissioner, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, at least half of all coronavirus cases reported in Karnataka could be Omicron.

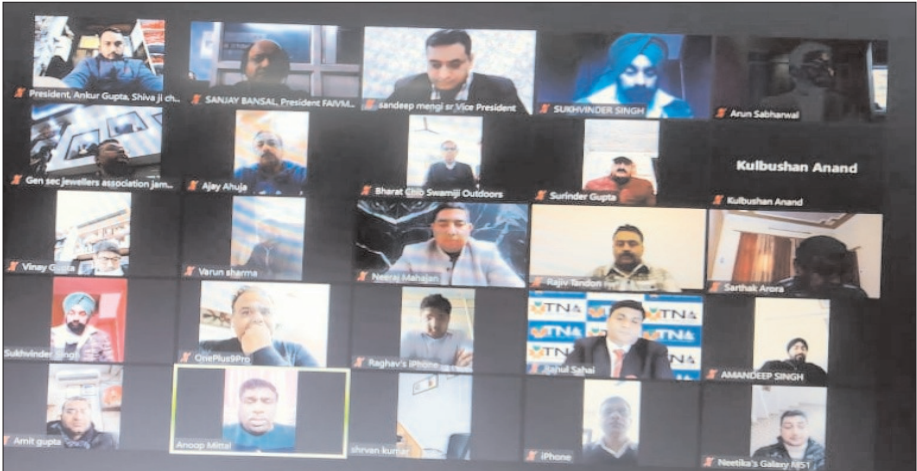


# Div Com urges traders to support the administration in enforcing Covid Appropriate Behaviour & SoPs

**JAMMU RISING**  
**JAMMU, JAN 16**  
Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Dr Raghav Langer has urged traders' federations of Jammu division to cooperate with the administration in the fight against Covid-19 amid the staggering third wave.

The Divisional commissioner was interacting with the representatives of traders' associations here at a virtual meeting.

The interaction session was hosted by the Federation of All India Vyapar Mandal Jammu chapter and was attended by President of Federation, Sanjay Bansal; presidents/ representatives of Trade federation Warehouse, Deepak Gupta; Raghunath Bazar Association, Sanjay Gupta; Kanak Mandi Association, Anoop Mital; Chairman Transport Nagar Association, Rahul Sahai; Vyapar Mandal Udhampur, Jatinder Varmani; Vyapar Mandal Poonch, Rajeev Tandon; Hardware & Paint Association, Neeraj Gupta; Swarankar Association, Amit Luthra; Spare Parts wholesale Association, Ashish Gupta; Veer marg Association Jammu, Harvinder Singh; Vyapar Mandal Kishtwar, Surinder Gupta; vyapar mandal Rajouri, Vijay Gupta, Vyapar Mandal Doda, Karamtullah; Vapar Mandal Akhnoor, Jugul Gupta; Wholesale Cloth merchants Association, Raghuveer Gupta; Mobile Association, Amandeep Singh; Bus Stand Jammu Association, Ramesh Kumar Tak; Vyapar Mandal



chenani, Manik Gupta; Shalamar Bazar Association, Dharmveer Gupta; Shivaji Chowk Nanak Nagar Association, Ankur Gupta; Bakshi Nagar Association, Amit Gupta; Kunjwani Market Association, Bharat Chib; Channi Himmat Association, Pushpinder Charak. The representatives of traders Unions from the districts of Jammu division also participated in the meeting.

The Traders apprised the Divisional Commissioner about the issues which need to be resolved on government/ administration level.

During the meeting a healthy discussion was held on issues like enforcement of Covid guidelines and Covid appropriate behavior in the public places and business establishments with joint efforts of administration and traders.

The Div Com urged the Associations to strictly follow Covid guidelines like wearing of face masks, maintaining social distancing and hand hygiene during their business activities.

He also asked them to ensure that the customers enter their shops with face masks and follow CAB.

The Traders demanded deployment of more testing teams in market areas and other prominent locations of Bazar, engaging volunteers for better enforcement of Covid guidelines, and regular sanitization of market areas.

They also demanded that like previous year the triage centers of districts be activated timely and there should be no unnecessary referrals to Jammu. The traders requested that clarity should be given by the Government regarding essential and non essential services.

The Traders also suggested that social organization, NGOs be also involved in IEC activities. The traders said they support strict enforcement of Covid appropriate behavior and representatives of Market Associations should also be made the part of enforcement teams, flying

squads for assisting better implementation of the SOPs. The Associations also suggested activating tele consultation for patients in home isolation. They also suggested facilitating the tourists coming to tourist destinations of Jammu division and be allowed only after testing and checking of vaccination status.

Regarding imposition of restrictions which the government intends to place, the traders demanded that they may be timely informed. They also advised that the government offices should also operate with 50 percent capacity to break the chain of transmission.

The Divisional Commissioner gave patient hearing to all the demands/ suggestions and assured that all their demands/ suggestions would be taken into consideration.

The Associations assured to extend their full cooperation to the administration in implementing Covid guidelines for containment of covid-19.

# Mission Youth initiative enables many Kishtwar youth to earn livelihood with dignity

**JAMMU RISING**  
**JAMMU, JAN 16**

Flagship Mission Youth initiative of Jammu and Kashmir Government has enabled many Kishtwar youth to earn their livelihood with dignity.

To facilitate the youth to secure a sustainable livelihood in the transport sector, the J&K Government has started a customized Livelihood Generation Scheme 'MUMKIN' under which the interested youth are provided financial assistance for purchase of small commercial vehicles.

The 'Mumkin' is a livelihood programme designed primarily for unemployed young people in the age bracket of 18 to 35. Under the 'Mumkin' scheme, small commercial vehicles are being provided to the youth with the banking partner extending the loan facility to the extent of 100 percent of the on-road price of the vehicle to be purchased, while "Mission Youth, J&K provides an amount of Rs 80,000 or 10 percent of the on-road price of the vehicle (whichever is lesser) as upfront subsidy and the vehicle manufacturers (scheme partner of government) provide an upfront special discount, not less than the amount of subsidy.

Under this scheme district Administration Kishtwar, headed by Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Ashok Sharma, has provided vehicles to scores of unemployed youth.

"AD DE&CC Kishtwar



has received around 300 applications till date, and about 100 cases have been approved by DLIC under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar and 41 eligible youth have been handed over the light commercial motor vehicles".

It has been fruitful on the ground level, as a number of unemployed youths of Kishtwar have been benefited, said the AD DE&CC Kishtwar.

Bhanu Badyal of Wassar Kishtwar considers him very lucky to have secured his livelihood out of this Scheme.

Sharing his ordeals Bhanu Badyal said that he was a final year student when the corona crisis shattered his hopes of a bright future by shifting his family's burden on his shoulders.

He belongs to a family with no bread earner and aspired to shoulder this responsibility after his graduation. "But due to the corona

pandemic my education was affected and I found my career on the downside with the economic crisis hitting my family badly" said Banu.

To his good luck, one day he got information about the MUMKIN scheme through the District Administration's social media facebook page and also through some local whatsapp group.

"Losing no time I rushed to the District Employment and Counseling Centre at DC Office Complex Kishtwar where I got full information about the scheme. The officials asked me to apply for registration that I did readily" narrated Banu.

Few weeks later, after the DLIC approved his case, he was called to take home Big Bolero Pick up for which he had applied under the Scheme.

"I did not pay even a single penny from my pocket, because under the scheme the vehicle was fully financed by the Bank, that too with 20% discount on

road price" he said blissfully.

"The earnings have added to my dignity in the family and society, only the MUMKIN scheme has made it possible," said Bhanu Badyal.

There are many other youth including women and girls of the age of 18-35 who have been benefited by Tejaswani and Mumkin schemes in the district under the patronage of Mission Youth.

After losing hope to get a government job, Nazir Ahmed Lone got information about the Mumkin schemes from his friend. In no time after he registered himself on the Mumkin portal and completed other formalities, he got his own small commercial vehicle and now he is earning his daily livelihood happily.

He says that Kishtwar district being a hub of the Hydro electric power Projects has a huge potential in the transport sector.

# DC Ganderbal visits Sonamarg, takes stock of availability of essential services and other facilities

## Inspects functioning of PHC Sonamarg



**JAMMU RISING**  
**JAMMU, JAN 16**

In order to have a first-hand appraisal about the availability of essential services at Sonamarg tourist destination Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Kritika Jyotsna today took whirlwind tour of Sonamarg and Inspected the facilities available there.

During the visit, the DC was accompanied by CEO, Sonamarg Development Authority (SDA), Tehsildar besides officers of various line departments.

On the occasion the DC took stock of availability of essential services including water and electricity supply, health care facilities, traffic management besides snow clearance from main road and other link roads.

CEO, SDA briefed the DC about the availability of essential services and informed that all facilities are available throughout the

Sonamarg including power and water supply.

While inspecting the snow clearance operation, the DC was informed that main road is open for vehicular movement upto Sonamarg.

DC was further informed that snow was cleared as per the laid down plan from Gagangeer to Sonamarg to ensure that road remains open while inner link roads were also cleared in a time bound manner.

The Deputy Commissioner complimented all the departments and the staff stationed there including Beacon and police who are engaged in keeping essential services available during winters in Sonamarg because of which Sonamarg remains open for the first time in the month of January. Meanwhile, the DC inspected the functioning of PHC Sonamarg and Police station Sonamarg and took

stock of facilities available there.

While inspecting the PHC, it was informed that PHC is fully functional with sufficient availability of medical and paramedical staff and essential medicines. The DC instructed the health authorities to keep a team of doctors along with medical aid stationed at the sledge and snow biking points where tourists visit so that medical help is provided in real time at these points whenever needed.

Keeping in view of a spike in Covid cases and looming threat of Covid 3rd wave, the DC directed the concerned to ensure strictly besides random Covid sampling is also done. While enquiring about the winter activities being run in Sonamarg, the CEO informed that Sledge and snow biking activities are continuously going

here besides first ever professional Ski course was also run in Sonamarg in last week carried by Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering and Winter Sports in which over 70 students participated. Interacting with the officers on the occasion, the DC said that the District Administration is committed to promote Sonamarg as one of the best winter destinations in the whole UT and instructed all officers to ensure tourists visiting Sonamarg may not face any inconvenience and every possible support shall be provided to visiting tourists. Pertinently, earlier, Sonamarg Tourist Destination remained closed during the winter due to heavy snowfall and avalanches in Gagangeer area and district administration is taking all necessary steps to ensure Sonamarg remains open for the rest part of January also.

## HOME ISOLATION GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 CASES

- Stay in a well-ventilated single-room, with an attached/separate toilet.
- Don't move out of the room and stay away from elderly people, pregnant women, children and persons with sickness within the house.
- Strictly, no visitors allowed during home isolation.
- Wear a surgical mask at all times. The mask should be changed every 6-8 hours.
- Undertake frequent hand washing or use sanitizer.
- Don't share household items e.g. dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with other people at home.
- Ensure cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat healthy, nutritious, balanced diet. Have timely regular meals with plenty of fresh, seasonal fruits and salads.
- Self monitor daily temperature.
- Self-monitor Oxygen saturation with a Pulse Oximeter.

**If at any time, there are appearance of symptoms like....Difficulty in breathing, Persistent pain/Pressure in the chest, Mental confusion, Severe fatigue & myalgia,**

**Unresolved high grade fever (more than 100°F for over 3 days) or Dip in Oxygen saturation below 92%.....Seek medical advice by calling J&K Toll free No. 104 or District Control Room numbers.**

District	Control Room No.	District	Control Room No.
Doda	01996-233542	Rajouri	01962-262640
Jammu	0191-2571912	Ramban	01998-266444
	0191-2571616		
Kathua	01922-234314	Reasi	01991-245669
			01991-245770
Kishtwar	01995-259555	Samba	6006500528
Poonch	01965-222079	Udhampur	01992-272728

**In case hospital admission is required for Home Isolation patients, Free Transportation facility is available by calling Toll free No. 108.**

HEALTH EDUCATION BUREAU  
DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES  
JAMMU

DIP/J-11802/21, Dated: 16.01.2022