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Vol. 20

46

Friday 7 January to 14 January 2022

\$ 1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

## New York City's new mayor rides subway hours after swearing oath to office



police captain chatted with reporters and New Yorkers on the train and even called 911 to report a fight after witnessing two men tussling near the subway station. Adams, 61, faces the immense challenge of pulling the city out of the pandemic, taking office as the city is grappling with record numbers of COVID-19 cases driven by the omicron variant.

As confetti continued to drift across Times Square, Adams recited his oath of office. Hinds-Radix of the state Supreme Court's appellate division swore Adams in as he placed one hand on a family Bible and his other held a photograph of his mother, Dorothy, who died in 2020.

(Contd on page 29)

(SAI Bureau)-New York City's new mayor, Eric Adams, rode the subway to City Hall for his first day on the job, hours after being sworn into office Saturday in a Times Square ceremony as the nation's largest city rang in the new year. During his New Year's Day commute, the former New York City

## Priti Patel says borders bill will end appalling abuse of immigration



(SAI Bureau)-UK Home Secretary Priti Patel has said that the borders bill will end appalling, blatant abuse of the immigration and the asylum system. She took to microblogging platform Twitter and said, "We're changing UK laws to introduce new scientific methods for assessing the age of asylum seekers to stop these appalling abuses." In the latest crackdown against migrants, adults who pose as child asylum seekers could face X-ray age checks on borders. "The practice of single grown adult men, masquerading as children claiming asylum is an appalling abuse of our system which we will end," Patel said in a statement.

(Contd on page 30)

## Violence against women insults God, says Pope Francis in his New Year's message



(SAI Bureau)-Pope Francis used his New Year's message on Saturday to issue a clarion call for an end to violence against women, saying it was insulting to God.

Francis, 85, celebrated a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on the day the Roman Catholic Church marks both the solemnity of Holy Mary Mother

(Contd on page 30)

## ITR filing: Who don't need to pay late fee for filing tax return after due date?

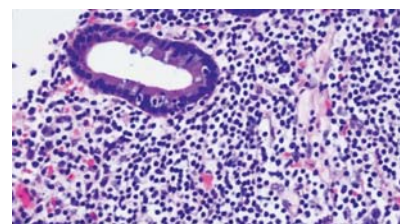


(SAI Bureau)-The due date for filing income tax returns (ITR) for FY2020-21 ended on December 31, 2021. Individuals who have not yet filed their ITR will have to pay a late fee at the time of filing a belated ITR. People with taxable income above Rs 5 lakh will have to pay a penalty of Rs 5,000

for filing ITR after the due date. The penalty amount is Rs 1,000 for those with taxable income below Rs 5,00,000. But there are some individuals who can file their income tax without a penalty even after the due date.

(Contd on page 30)

## Metabolic vulnerability of Lymphoma cells can be used to trick these cancers into starving themselves: Study



(SAI Bureau)- A new study conducted by researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell's Ithaca campus has revealed that the critical metabolic vulnerability of Lymphoma cells can be used to trick these cancers into starving themselves.

(Contd on page 29)



# Insurance

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## Man Cheats Over 150 People On Pretext Of Sending Them Abroad, Arrested: Delhi Police

(Insider Bureau)-A 25-year-old man was arrested for allegedly cheating over 150 people on the pretext of sending them abroad on work visa, police said on Tuesday.

The accused, Mohammad Mohsin alias Parvez Ahmad (25), is a resident of Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, they said.

According to police, they noticed some suspicious activities at a Laxmi Nagar-based travel agency, Focus Travels. Later, it was found that a syndicate that cheated people on the pretext of sending them abroad on work visa was running out of the premises.

Ahmad and his associate Vishal Choudhary were running the office. The office was found locked for two

to three days and some people were found wandering nearby, a senior police officer said.

They alleged that Ahmad and Choudhary took ₹ 22,000 from each of them for sending them to New Zealand, Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries on work visa. However, they were not at their office and were demanding more money to return their passports, the officer said.

During investigation, Ahmad was located in Delhi on Friday and arrested from near Laxmi Nagar metro station, Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Priyanka Kashyap said.

Ahmad revealed his real name was Mohammad Mohsin and Choudhary's was Mohammad Farhad, the police

said.

He said he and Farhad ran Focus Travels and their agents in various states used to send people interested in travelling abroad to their office. The accused used to take the victims' original passports and charge ₹ 22,000 to ₹ 35,000 from them. They were planning to close their office as they had already cheated more than 150 people, the DCP said. Ahmad worked as an electrician in Delhi's Zakir Nagar. Here he came in contact with Farhad, who led him into the crime. As many as 101 passports, seven fake air tickets etc., were recovered from Ahmad's possession, the police said. Further investigation is on to nab Choudhary, they said.

## Indian Arrested For Killing Man With Wooden Plank In Singapore: Report



An Indian has been arrested in Singapore for allegedly killing a compatriot with a wooden plank embedded with nails following a dispute on New Year's Day, a media report said on Sunday.

Paneer Vetrivel, 26, is alleged to have hit Rajendran Shanmugasundran, 37, with the plank near 20 Woodlands Industrial Park E1 between 1 AM and 1.25 AM on January 1, The Straits Times newspaper reported.

He was charged with voluntarily causing grievous hurt by a dangerous weapon at a migrant workers' dormitory in a special sitting of the Criminal Mentions Court on Sunday.

The report said Paneer faces a charge of fatally attacking the man with a wooden plank embedded with nails on New Year's Day.

If convicted of voluntarily causing grievous hurt with a dangerous weapon, he can be jailed for life and caned, or jailed for up to 15 years, caned and fined, it said.

The police said that they were involved in a dispute at the dormitory in Woodlands Industrial Park.

Officers were alerted to the fight at about 1.25 AM and found Rajendran lying motionless on the ground with head injuries. He was rushed to hospital where he later died.

Paneer was arrested and has been remanded for further investigations.

His case is expected to come up in court again on January 7.

## Number of Indian students in Germany continues to rise, shows survey

This follows a sharp decline in numbers in the number of summer enrollments in 2021 when Covid-19 travel bans imposed on several countries, including India, by the German government derailed international travel. According to the snapshot survey by DAAD, at least 330,000 international students are currently enrolled at German universities. The number of international first-semester students has also grown again despite the pandemic and, according to DAAD projections, is at least 72,000. Almost 160 German universities participated in the survey. The survey predicts the

number of international students to continue to rise. "The survey of our member universities allows us to look forward to the new year with hope: despite the pandemic, the number of international students in Germany continues to increase," said DAAD President Dr Joybrato Mukherjee in a note. "The number of first-year students from abroad has also risen again after declines in the last winter semester. Increases of around 13 per cent or more are much better than expected in the summer. These figures are a very good sign for the attractiveness of Germany as a place to study. They

also show that the joint commitment of member universities and the DAAD to attracting and supporting international students is paying off, especially during the worst pandemic in 100 years." According to the findings, the surveyed higher education institutions (HEIs) reported an increase in newly enrolled international students from India and a few other countries including Turkey, Iran, Italy and France. On the other hand, decreases in the numbers of newly enrolled students from China, Syria and Cameroon were reported. Around 29% of the institutions surveyed reported over 10% increase in

the number of fresh student enrolments from India. Overall, the number of newly enrolled international students increased from around 64,000 in the 2020-21 winter semester to around 72,000 to 80,000 students in the 2021-22 winter semester. The rise has been fuelled by a couple of factors. One, there has been a very rapid recovery in the numbers of guest and exchange students (non-degree) at most German HEIs after the significant slump in the previous year. Also, universities in particular are recording significant increases in the number of international degree-seeking students in master's programmes.





## Adityanath hits out at SP, says Akhilesh govt was worshipper of Kans

**Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath accused Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav of not doing anything for Mathura and other religious places associated with Lord Krishna, and termed the previous SP government as "the worshipper of Kans"**

In a veiled attack, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday accused Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav of not doing anything for Mathura and other religious places associated with Lord Krishna, and termed the previous SP government as "the worshipper of Kans".

He accused the previous government of creating a Kans that resulted in the Jawahar Bagh incident in which 29 people were killed in June 2016 when police forcibly tried to evict squatters who were backed by Ram Vriksh Yadav.

Adityanath's comment came a day after Akhilesh Yadav claimed that Lord Krishna comes to his dreams every night to tell him that he would form the government in the upcoming assembly polls and establish "Ram Rajya" in UP.

Addressing a public gathering here after inaugurating 660 MW Harduaganj Thermal Power plant costing Rs 7,000

crore, he said, "While I am inaugurating the power project here, some people are dreaming in Lucknow. Lord Krishna would be coming in their dreams, and tell them to shed tears over their failures. The work that they have not been able to do, the BJP government is doing it."

Adityanath said in the dreams, Lord Krishna must have told them that when they were in power, they "failed" to do anything for Mathura, Barsana, Vrindavan, Gokul and Baldev.

Akhilesh Yadav led the Samajwadi Party government in Uttar Pradesh from 2012 to 17 and in the last assembly polls, the BJP came to power in the state and Adityanath was made the chief minister.

"Nobody bothered about Lord Krishna during that time. They were worshippers of Kans and used to create Kans. And when Kans was created, the incident of Jawahar Bagh took place in which SP (city) Mukul Dwivedi attained martyrdom," Adityanath

alleged.

In the violence at Mathura's Jawahar Bagh park, 29 people, including two police officials, were killed during a drive to evict squatters.

Members of the Azad Bharat Vidhik Vaicharik Kranti Satyagrahi cult, led by Ram Vriksh Yadav, had encroached on the 270-acre Jawahar Bagh, which was government land, for two years and clashed with police when they tried to evict them. Ram Vriksh Yadav too was killed in the encounter. The BJP government has given Covid vaccines and food grains at no cost to the poor, but had the SP, BSP or Congress been in power, they would have eaten the foodgrains meant for them and swallowed the money for free vaccination, Adityanath claimed.

After doing so, these parties would have left like former Afghanistan president Ashraf Ghani, who fled his country after the Taliban took over, he alleged.

**All personnel of police outpost in Ghaziabad sent to police lines for allowing illegal buses**



All staff members including the in-charge of a police outpost in the Old Bust Stand area here have been transferred to police lines after it was found that they facilitated running of buses illegally, a senior police official said on Tuesday.

Senior Superintendent of Police Pawan Kumar said he conducted a raid in the area after receiving a complaint of buses being operated illegally in connivance of the outpost staff that comes under the jurisdiction of the Shani Gate police station.

According to Kumar, a bus that was illegally plying from Ghaziabad to other cities was impounded and the staff members at the police outpost were shunted to the police lines. "These who have been shunted out are outpost in-charge Inspector Pummy Chowdhary, Head Constables Ram Prakash, Kaushalendra Kumar, Dheeraj Kumar and Anand, and constables Naveen, Adesh and Bunt Kumar," the SSP said.

Earlier, within 15 days, over 30 buses were seized which were illegally plying in between Ghaziabad to Bareilly from Apsara-Dilshad Garden border causing a great loss to the Uttar Pradesh government, he added.

## PM Modi to lay foundation stone of projects worth Rs 42,750 crores in Ferozepur

(News Agencies)-With Punjab Assembly elections around the corner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend a big poll rally in the border district of Ferozepur on Wednesday. Besides the rally, PM Modi will also lay the foundation stone of various development projects worth Rs 42,750 crore.

These project includes a new 27 km broad gauge railway line between Mukerian and Talwara worth Rs 410 crore. This rail link will also serve as an alternative route to Jammu and Kashmir linking the existing Jalandhar-Jammu railway line at Mukerian.

PM Modi will also lay the foundation stone of a 100 bed PGI satellite centre costing Rs 490 crore which will have

ten specialities at Ferozepur. He will also lay the foundation stone of Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala medical



colleges which will have 100 seats. The foundation stone of 669 km long Delhi-Amritsar-Katra expressway costing Rs 39,500 crore is also being laid. This expressway project will halve the travel time between Delhi to Katra and Delhi to Amritsar and will

connect four Sikh shrines besides Shri Vaishno Devi shrine.

The list also includes the 77 km Amritsar-Una four lane project which is being built at a cost of Rs 1700 crore and will connect four other national highways. PM Modi can also make some announcements to attract the farmers and pilgrims. BJP's alliance partner Punjab Lok Congress chief Captain Amarinder Singh has appealed to the Union government to waive-off the Kartarpur corridor visiting charges besides simplifying the visit procedure. The Ferozepur town is also likely to witness protests as nine farmers' unions have decided to oppose the BJP rally.



# In a first, Border Roads Organisation extends access to Zojila beyond Dec 31



additional window reduces the logistic burden on the UT administration and helps the local inhabitants to stock additional rations and supplies to brave the harsh winters. In the first three days of 2022, about 178 vehicles have been able to transit through the pass by the collective assistance of the BRO and police personnel. The numbers are considered significant because with the temperatures plummeting to -20 degree centigrade, the road is subject to extreme frosting with blizzard-like conditions, which can lead to accidents. Thus, besides snow clearance, the axis is subjected to maintenance on a daily basis to keep the traffic on road going.

In a first, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) extended access to the Zojila pass, which links the Union Territory of Ladakh with the rest of the country, beyond December 31.

Zojila pass is located at an altitude of 11,649 ft. The BRO achieved this feat through its frontline projects Vijayak and Beacon. Last year, the access was extended till December 31, 2020. The BRO said it embarked

on the journey to better its own record by reorganising and adding a few more snow clearance detachments and equipment. Ladakh administration and the locals lauded the efforts that this





# Indian Navy enhances reach with new reconnaissance aircraft squadron based in Goa

*The second squadron of Boeing P-8I patrol and reconnaissance aircraft commenced operations from INS Hansa, Goa with two new aircraft*



(News Agencies)-Aimed at enhancing the reach of the Indian Navy's surveillance, the second squadron of Boeing P-8I patrol and reconnaissance aircraft commenced operations from INS Hansa, Goa with two new aircraft.

With two more aircraft expected to come in, four such aircraft will be permanently stationed in

Goa, giving a push to the Navy's reach for surveillance in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. During the Ladakh standoff with China, P-8Is were deployed to get a clear picture of Chinese activities.

"The Indian Navy's Boeing P-8I aircraft commenced operations from INS Hansa, Goa with two

aircraft arriving on 30 December 2021. The aircraft were inducted after fitment of indigenous equipment and Flight Acceptance Trials. On arrival, the aircraft were welcomed by a MiG 29K formation," the Indian Navy said.

The Indian Navy had acquired the first batch of eight P-8I aircraft in 2013 that are

stationed at INS Rajali, Arakkonam. "The second batch of four additional aircraft will be based at Indian Naval Air Squadron 316, to be commissioned at INS Hansa," the navy said. The Indian Navy needs at least 6 more of these aircraft that have been crucial in carrying out surveillance. According to Boeing, the aircraft

plays a crucial role in being the eyes of the Indian Navy and carrying out critical maritime operations. "They provide India's maritime warriors a significant edge in the strategically important Indian Ocean region. Indian Navy's fleet of P-8I has surpassed 29,000 flight-hours, since their induction in 2013," Boeing says on its website.

## Punjab likely to get third Director General of Police in 3 months: Sources

**Sources told that Punjab would be getting its third DGP in the last three months as the current working DGP, Siddharth Chattopadhyay, is not named in the new panel which has been sent to the state**

(News Agencies)-The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Tuesday held a meeting in New Delhi for the appointment of regular Director General of Police (DGP) for Punjab. Sources told India Today that Punjab would be getting its third DGP in the last three months as the current working DGP, Siddharth Chattopadhyay, is not named in the new panel which has been sent to the state.

The names doing the rounds for the post of DGP included former Punjab DGP Dinkar Gupta, VK Bhawra, and Prabodh Kumar. Both Gupta and Bhawra are 1987 Indian Police Services officers while Prabodh Kumar is from the 1988 batch.

The fuss has been stuck on the date as after Charanjit Singh Channi took charge as the chief minister of Punjab, he did

not immediately remove DGP Dinkar Gupta. Without this, on September 30 last year, the Channi government sent a list of 10 officers to the UPSC.

Although Dinkar Gupta was on leave then, he was removed by the government on October 5, 2021. This is where the issue has been stuck because Punjab raised objections over the UPSC's move to consider October 4 as the cut-off date. Punjab wants to fix September 30 as the cut-off date which UPSC did not agree as per the sources.

If UPSC prepares the panel from October 5, then the names of three senior officers are VK Bhawra, Dinkar Gupta and Prabodh Kumar. However, Dinkar and Prabodh are going on deputation to the centre. In such a situation, Bhawra can be the only contender.





# Cordelia cruise ship with 66 Covid patients docks at Mumbai port



**All 66 Covid positive patients will be isolated to Richardson and Crudas or paid hotels**

sent to Richardson and Crudas or paid hotels. 66 PASSENGERS TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID

The samples of over 2000 passengers and crew members on the cruise ship were tested and 66 were found to be Covid-19 positive.

On Sunday, a medical team in PPE kits went on board the ship at Mormugao to conduct an RT-PCR test of all 2,016 people, including passengers and crew members onboard.

After one crew member aboard the cruise ship tested positive for Covid prompting the authorities to test samples of all on board.

(News Agencies)-The Cordelia cruise ship with 66 Covid-19 infected passengers docked at Mumbai port at 6 pm on Tuesday. A team from BMC arrived at the port to conduct screening of all the passengers and crew members.

An RT-PCR test of the

remaining passengers on board will be held. Till they get a negative report, no one will be allowed to disembark.

The patients who had tested Covid positive will be taken to Richardson and Crudas or paid hotels in an ambulance. As many as five, 17-seater

ambulances have been called into service.

All 66 Covid positive patients will be isolated to Richardson and Crudas or paid hotels, today. While the other passengers will stay back on cruise. The RTPCR testing will be done by two labs. The report

is expected by 9am tomorrow.

After the reports are received, the disembarking process will be initiated. All passengers who will test negative will be asked to isolate at home for seven days. Among the remaining passengers, persons who test Covid positive will be



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## Lucknow-Kanpur expressway first to use 3D AMG technology to double construction speed

***For the first time, 3D Automated Machine Guidance (AMG) technology will be used for construction of the Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)***

(News Agencies)-For the first time, 3D Automated Machine Guidance (AMG) technology will be used for the construction of the Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

With the use of this technology, the speed of construction of the highway will be doubled, as well as through this technology, the officials and contractors of NHAI will be able to get a direct update of the speed of work on their phones and computers. Importantly, the 63 km long Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway is the first such project in which this technology will be used.

Defense Minister and MP from Lucknow, Rajnath

Singh and Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, will lay the foundation stone of this Rs 4,200 crore project on Wednesday, which will reduce travel time between the two cities to barely 40 minutes by December 2023.

The project will start from Amausi Airport and will connect to the proposed Ring Road of Kanpur via Unnao.

During the visit, Singh will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of different projects worth Rs 7,506 crore by reaching the venue directly near the Amausi metro station. Talking about the main projects, the foundation stone for the construction of a flyover from Munshipulia intersection to Polytechnic, construction

of Khurramnagar flyover and construction of flyover from Madianv to IIM crossing will be inaugurated. Apart from this, the foundation stone for the four-lane widening of Lucknow-Hardoi road will be laid and Sarvodayanagar and Birahimpur bridges will be inaugurated.

On this occasion, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will also be present.

Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway to cut travel time by 40 mins:

With the construction of the Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway, the distance between Kanpur and Lucknow will be covered in just 40 minutes.

This project is to be completed by December 2023.

## This Indian firm to deliver 8,000 agro, mapping and inspection drones to UAE, Malaysia and Panama

(News Agencies)-Apart from these drones, which will be delivered to clients in the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Panama, the company is also working on fulfilling contracts from Indian government and private entities.

Indian drone firm Garuda Aerospace is working on fulfilling orders from foreign customers for 8,000 drones that serve purposes including agriculture (pesticide spraying), industrial inspection, and mapping.

Besides these drones that will have to be delivered to clients across the UAE, Malaysia, and Panama, the company is working on fulfilling orders with Indian government-run and private entities.

WION spoke to Agnishwar Jayaprakash, the Founder and CEO of Garuda Aerospace, to understand how the company is scaling up capacity to meet the demand.

Garuda's drones recently completed mapping of over

1000 villages for Survey of India - Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh as part of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swamitva scheme, which aims to provide digital records of land ownership. When queried about the pace at which this was done and the scale of operation, Agnishwar explained that a single drone was able to map five villages (each measuring up to 3 sq km) in a day and that they had deployed a sizable fleet to map 1000 villages in a month. Their work involved not just aerial mapping, but also providing the final output of processed map data.

Their work for clients in India includes services such as pipeline inspection for Indian Oil Corporation Limited, the National Highways Authority of India Surveillance Project (to monitor highway construction) and catering to the mapping and topographical survey needs of energy companies like Reliance, Adani, Vedanta, and Tata projects, among others.

On the steep target of having to deliver 8,000 drones to foreign clients by March 2022, Agnishwar said that the company has ramped up manufacturing capacity by opening two new facilities. "Earlier, we could churn out up to 30 drones per day from our lone Chennai facility, but with the new units in Gurgaon and Hosur, we can produce up to a total of 100-150 drones a day. We had the opportunity to invest and expand this way owing to the new orders and encouraging revenue," he added.

According to Agnishwar, selling agriculture and mapping drones to foreign countries would mean that Garuda would have to setup an assembly facility and provide support services in the respective countries, as well. "They will give us the land and manpower support. We'll send a small team, parts, tools, and equipment to supervise and provide training.





# NEET-PG admissions: SC to hear plea

**The matter has been listed before the bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and A S Bopanna. It was earlier being heard by a three-judge bench headed by Justice Chandrachud**

(News Agencies)-The Supreme Court will on Wednesday hear petitions challenging the criteria for reservation of candidates from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) for NEET-PG (All India Quota) admissions.

The matter has been listed before the bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and A S Bopanna. It was earlier being heard by a three-judge bench headed by Justice Chandrachud.

On November 25, 2021, the bench had fixed it for hearing next on January 6, 2022. But with the Centre citing urgency, the matter has now been listed before the two-judge bench. The government had been

pushing for the case to be taken up at the earliest since resident doctors of several hospitals were protesting in Delhi and other parts of the country over the delay in National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-PG)

counselling.

Counselling was postponed since the Centre, in response to queries from the court, had assured that the process will remain pending while the court is seized of the matter.

As the court reopened after Christmas holidays on Monday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta urged Justice Chandrachud to list the matter on Tuesday. The bench said it will discuss the issue with Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, as it is he who constitutes benches.

With the matter not listed for hearing on Tuesday, Mehta brought it again to the CJI's notice during the day.

CJI N V Ramana said the difficulty was that the court had listed only miscellaneous matters for hearing this week, and to hear the NEET matter, the special bench that was hearing it earlier will have to be reconstituted. "I (will) have to constitute a special bench... Let me see if we can constitute a bench tomorrow (Wednesday)," the CJI said.

Mehta then cited the protests by doctors and requested the court to list the matter for hearing urgently. "It concerns EWS.... There's a statement made by us which prevents further counselling of resident doctors... Resident doctors are protesting and their concerns are genuine," he told the court. CJI Ramana assured that he will consider the request. "Let me see. If possible I will constitute a three-judge bench or it will go before a division bench tomorrow," the CJI said.

## Silver Line project: Kerala govt convenes explanatory meeting, announces compensation



(News Agencies)-Amid intense criticism by opposition parties against the implementation of its flagship Silver Line rail project, the Kerala government on Tuesday convened a meeting of stakeholders, dignitaries and representatives of various

organisations to explain various aspects of the venture and announced a rehabilitation package for those to be affected by it. Addressing the meeting held at the Jimmy George stadium here, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan continued to

rubbish the concerns by the opposition regarding the project and said it is envisaged as a complete green initiative and would implement with lesser social impact.

A compensation and relief package worth Rs 13,265 crore would be implemented for the affected persons who would lose their buildings, property and other belongings.

Making it clear that the mammoth project is inevitable for the development of the state and the government would go ahead with its implementation, he said certain people were putting up stiff resistance when they were coming ahead with such pro-

initiatives for the state.

He also alleged that certain "vested interests" were behind such opposition. Detailing about the 'green' aspect of the multi-crore project, connecting the south and north ends of the state, Vijayan said it would be a complete eco-friendly project and was designed taking into consideration the recent floods and other natural calamities that ravaged the state.

Assuring that no reserve forest or water bodies would be adversely impacted by the Silver Line project, he claimed that it would result in reducing the carbon emission.

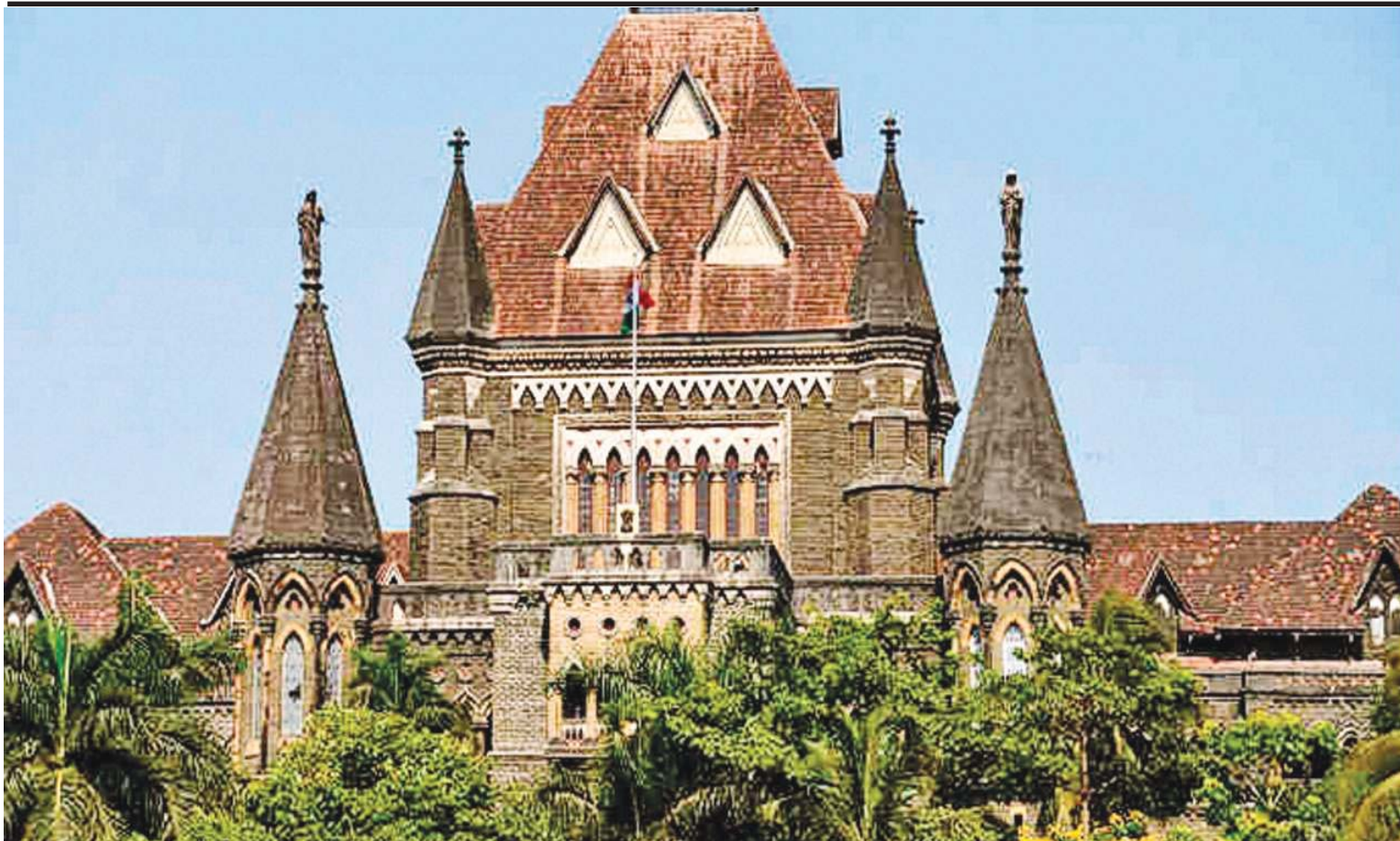
The estimated cost of the project

is Rs 63,941 crore and it is expected to be completed by 2025. Over 46,000 people are expected to use the rail service daily, he said adding that 50,000 jobs would be generated through the mega initiative.

Of this, 11,000 job openings would be created during the implementation stage itself.

"As many as 9,300 buildings are estimated to be taken over as part of the implementation of the Silver Line. An amount of Rs 13,625 crore is set aside for the compensation alone. In villages, it is planned to give upto four-fold the market price. In cities, it will be up to two fold," he said announcing the package.





**While Justices Madhav Jayajirao Jamdar, Amit Bhalchandra Borkar and Shrikant Dattatray Kulkarni were appointed permanent judges, Justice Abhay Ahuja's tenure has been extended as an additional judge by a year**

According to a statement by the Supreme Court Collegium on December 16 last year, Justices Jamdar, Borkar and Kulkarni were recommended for appointment as permanent judges with a recommendation to extend the tenure of Justice Ahuja by a year. In a rare instance of demotion of an HC judge, the collegium decided to not recommend Justice Ganediwala as permanent judge of Bombay HC after two of her verdicts were closely scrutinised for controversial interpretation of sexual assault under POCSO Act, 2012.

Justice Ganediwala's tenure is expected to end on February 13. In a separate notification, the government appointed Justice Aniruddha Roy, additional judge of Calcutta HC, as permanent judge of the HC. In January last year, the collegium had reiterated its recommendation to appoint justice Roy, as Centre had not acted on the first recommendation made in 2018.

# Bombay High Court gets three permanent judges

(News Agencies)-The Centre on Monday notified the appointment of three additional judges of Bombay High Court as permanent judges and extended tenure of another additional judge of the HC by a year.

"In exercise of the power conferred by clause (I) of Article

217 and by clause (I) of Article 224 of the Constitution of India, the President, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, is pleased to appoint the following as Judges / Additional Judge of the following High Courts, w.e.f. the date they

assume charge of their respective offices, vide notifications dated 03.01.2022..." the notification stated.

While Justices Madhav Jayajirao Jamdar, Amit Bhalchandra Borkar and Shrikant Dattatray Kulkarni were appointed permanent judges, Justice Abhay Ahuja's tenure has been

extended as an additional judge by a year.

In July last year the Bombay HC Collegium had recommended names of five additional judges - Justices Jamdar, Borkar, Kulkarni, Ahuja, and Justice Pushpa Ganediwala - to be appointed permanent judges.

## Social worker Sindhutai Sapkal, 'orphan children's mother', dies

**Renowned social worker Sindhutai Sapkal died following a heart attack at a private hospital in Pune. She was 74**

(News Agencies)-Renowned social worker Sindhutai Sapkal, fondly known as 'orphan children's mother', died following a heart attack at a private hospital here, doctors said.

Sapkal, who had received the Padma Shri last year, had completed 74 years in November.

She had been admitted to the Galaxy Care Hospital here.

"She had undergone a hernia surgery one and a half months ago and recovery was very slow. Today she died of a heart attack around 8 pm," said Dr Shailesh Puntambekar,

Medical Director of the hospital. Sapkal, who grew up in extreme poverty and had to suffer immense hardship, went on to set up institutes for orphan children.

Born on November 14, 1948, in the Wardha district of Maharashtra, Sapkal was forced to drop out of school after she had passed Std 4th.

At the tender age of 12, she was married to a 32-year-old man. After she gave birth to three children, her husband abandoned her even when she was pregnant. Her own mother and the village where she had grown up refused to help, forcing her to beg to raise

her daughters at one point. She overcame these circumstances with sheer willpower and started working for orphans.

Having raised over 1,050 orphan children, she could boast of having 207 sons-in-law and 36 daughters-in-law.

Besides the Padma award, she received more than 750 awards and honours. She used the award money to build shelters for orphans.

A well-equipped orphanage came up at Manjri in Pune district due to her efforts.

In 2010, a Marathi biopic on her, "Mee Sindhutai Sapkal"



released. It was selected for world premiere at the 54th London Film Festival.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray condoled her death.

Sapkal, who took care of thousands of children, was a veritable goddess in the form of mother, he said.

Her last rites would be conducted

with state honours on Wednesday, a tweet from the Chief Minister's Office said.

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis said that in her death, Maharashtra had lost a mother. She grew up facing adversities and dedicated her life to those who had been rejected by society, he said on Twitter.





## Fresh snowfall in Kashmir, flights cancelled, orange alert issued

Kashmir Valley Srinagar today due to poor after the snowfall. The Mughal bound areas should not the reasons to come here was witnessed a fresh spell of visibility amid rains and road from Kashmir to Jammu venture out. to witness the snow. It's snowfall on Tuesday (January snowfall. The authorities also has also been closed today. However, Tourists seem to be nothing less than a dream 4). While Srinagar, recorded said that it's unlikely that The MeT has also issued an come true. I am traveling with rain and snowfall of 7.1mm, remaining flights would be 'orange alert' across the Valley most. From Gulmarg, friends and I have never Gulmarg recorded 8.4 inches taking off from Srinagar today. as the snowfall is expected to enjoyed this much before. We (21cm) of fresh snowfall. The road connectivity has also increase in the coming 24 tourists could be seen are all loving it," said Rahul Another tourist resort, been impacted due to the fresh hours. There are chances of enjoying the snowfall and Kumar, Tourist from Rajasthan. Pahalgam, recorded 13.5 cms snowfall. The road from snow avalanches and playing with the snow. Most of While snowfall brings cheer on of snowfall. Srinagar-Kargil has been shut. landslides in vulnerable areas them say it's the reason they a lot of problems to the locals The authorities canceled The Gurez-Bandipora road has of North Kashmir. It has been living in the valley. around 34 flights to and from also been closed for traffic advised that people in snow-

## Karnataka college students wear saffron scarves protesting against hijab in classrooms



**A section of college students in Karnataka's Koppa district wore saffron scarves protesting against allowing hijab inside classrooms**

A section of college students in Karnataka's Koppa district wore saffron scarves protesting against allowing Muslim women to wear hijab inside government-run college in Balagadi village claimed that if hijab was allowed inside, then saffron scarves could be sported too. The same students had earlier asked women not to attend classes wearing hijab. A similar situation had arisen three years back when the college administration intervened to sort out the issue. A meeting has been called this week with parents and teachers to decide on the issue. The college had allowed all students to wear whatever they wish to when the hijab row broke out. "Everything was going smoothly but yesterday some students suddenly appeared in the class wearing scarves. They were objecting to the dress code of some students," Ananth Murthy, principal of college was quoted by PTI as saying. In a similar incident, Muslim girl students of state-run PU College in Karnataka's Udupi were allegedly denied entry into the classroom for wearing hijab.



## ED attaches assets linked to CPI (Maoist) member in Bihar worth Rs 28 lakh



(News Agencies)-The Enforcement Directorate has attached assets worth Rs 28 lakh belonging to the family members and associates of CPI (Maoist) member Dilip Sahni in Bihar under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), officials said.

The attached properties include three land parcels, LIC policies, fixed deposits, bank balance and a motor cycle. The ED had initiated the money laundering investigation on the basis of 12 FIRs lodged in various Police Stations of Bihar against Dilip Sahni, an active CPI (Maoist) member.

Dilip Sahni is a habitual offender and is accused of the several offences under Indian Penal Code, Arms Act, Explosive Substances Act and unlawful activities for crime related to murder, attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, use of arms and ammunition in Bihar.

"Investigation under PMLA has revealed that the accused has invested the proceeds of crime, for acquiring various immovable properties and deposits with bank in the name of his family members so as to project them as untainted," said a statement by the ED.

## Encounter breaks out between security forces and terrorists in J&K's Pulwama



(News Agencies)-An encounter broke out between the security forces and terrorists in the Chandgam area of Pulwama district in Jammu and Kashmir in the early hours of Wednesday,

according to Kashmir Zone Police. The security forces launched a cordon and search operation after specific inputs about the presence of two terrorists in area.

## Kerala BJP leader's murder: Accused used sim card registered in name of homemaker

(News Agencies)-The accused in the BJP OBC Morcha leader's killing in Kerala allegedly used a sim card of a homemaker, procured in an illegal manner, sources said.

"One of the sim cards used by the accused were in the name of a homemaker from Punnapra near here. We have questioned her. It seems like her documents were illegally acquired by some people to procure a sim card. The investigation is on,"

a senior police official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told PTI on Tuesday. The woman told the media she had gone to a mobile shop in August to purchase a new sim card and had given her Aadhaar card and photo. "Recently, when the

police came to my house and questioned me, I came to know that I was cheated. Police told



"It seems like Sulfikkar, our ward member, was behind all this. He was a friend of my late son. I treated him like a son," she said.

She said she fell unconscious during the questioning and the police took her to hospital. The BJP OBC Morcha leader Ranjith Sreenivas was hacked to death by some assailants on December 19 at his residence here, hours after K S Shan, the state secretary of SDPI, was killed by a gang, mostly

RSS workers, on the night of December 18 while he was returning home in Alappuzha. Fourteen people have been arrested in the Sreenivas murder case, while the remaining accused are on the run, according to police.



## FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

### BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure



Photograph taken April 2015

#### DESCRIPTION

**Alias:** Bhadreshkumar C. Patel

**Date(s) of Birth Used:** May 15, 1990

**Hair:** Brown

**Height:** 5'9"

**Sex:** Male

**Nationality:** Indian

**Place of Birth:** Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India

**Eyes:** Brown

**Weight:** 165 pounds

**Occupation:** Employee of donut shop

#### REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

#### REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

#### CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

#### SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

**Field Office:** Baltimore



# Is GDP data a reliable way to measure the health of the economy?

The primary yardstick analysts use to measure the economy's health is GDP. The RBI and multilateral agencies use GDP statistics to make claims about the future growth path. But how reliable is the Indian GDP data?

The NSO released the current GDP series in 2015, using 2011-12 as its base year. Since then, the new series has been embroiled in controversy. Some have argued that the problem in the new series is the real growth rate. This is debatable. Scholars have pointed to measurement problems, both in the nominal and real GDP growth rates. Yet none of those problems has been addressed. As a result, the measurement errors still persist. There are three major reasons why the GDP data, and hence any narrative of economic recovery based on it, are questionable.

First, the growth rate of real GDP is contaminated by the "double deflation problem". The new series entailed a shift from a volume-based measurement system to one based on nominal values, thereby making the deflator problem more critical. Simply put, the NSO calculates real GDP by gathering nominal GDP data in rupees and then deflating this data using various price indices. The nominal data needs to be deflated twice: Once for outputs and once for inputs. But the NSO - almost uniquely amongst G20 countries - deflates the nominal data only once. It does not deflate the value of inputs.

To see why this is a problem, consider what happens when the price of imported oil goes down. In that case, input costs will fall and the profits recorded by Indian firms will rise. This increase in profits is merely the result of a fall in input prices, so it needs to be deflated away. After all, GDP is meant to measure the amount of production in the country, which hasn't changed, at least in the first instance. But the NSO doesn't deflate away the increase in profits. Instead, it records a purely nominal increase as a real increase in GDP, thereby overstating growth. Simulations have shown that this effect can be substantial. Since the cost of inputs is measured by the WPI (wholesale price index), a crude measure of the overestimation caused by the absence of "double deflation" is given by the gap between the WPI and the CPI (consumer price index). In the 2014-2017 period, oil prices plunged, causing the WPI to fall sharply relative to the CPI. This meant that real growth was probably overstated. In the last few months, the exact opposite has been happening. WPI inflation is soaring. It reached 14 per cent in November, while CPI inflation has "only" been 5 per cent. The rapid increase in the WPI relative to the CPI is imparting an

upward bias to the deflator, which increased at the remarkable rate of 8 per cent in the second quarter of 2021-22. If this deflator is being overestimated, then real GDP growth rate could be underestimated right now. Some have

argued that the deflators were improved in the new series by shifting to the CPI, but the fact remains that in many cases the WPI is still used for deflation.

A second reason why growth might be underestimated is that the NSO has not updated the sectoral weights. When it calculates GDP, it takes a sample of activity in each sector,

then aggregates the figures by using sectoral weights. To make sure that the weights are reasonably accurate, the NSO normally updates them once a decade. It has now been more than 10 years since the weights were changed, and there are no signs of a base year revision. As a result, the sectoral weights are still based on the structure of the economy in 2010-11, when in particular the information technology sector was much smaller. In other words, the fast-growing IT sector is being underweighted, which implies that GDP growth is being underestimated.

But before we jump to conclusions, we need to take into account the third measurement problem - this works in the opposite direction. Measurement of the unorganised sector has always been difficult in India. Once in a while, the NSO undertakes a survey to measure the size of the sector. In the meantime, it simply assumes that the sector has been growing at the same rate as the organised sector. This practice was working well when the two sectors were moving in tandem. However, starting in 2016 the unorganised sector has been disproportionately impacted by a series of shocks. First came demonetisation which was a severe blow to cash-dependent firms in this sector. Next came the implementation of GST, which necessitated a particularly difficult and costly adjustment for unorganised sector enterprises. Then, in 2018, the NBFC sector reported serious problems, which in turn impacted unorganised sector firms since they were heavily dependent on NBFCs for funds. From 2020 onwards, the pandemic has impacted the unorganised sector more than the organised sector enterprises. Despite these shocks, the NSO does not seem to have made any adjustments to its methodology for estimating the growth of the unorganised sector.

**First came demonetisation which was a severe blow to cash dependent firms in this sector. Next came the implementation of GST, which necessitated a particularly difficult and costly adjustment for unorganised sector enterprises.**

## Chinese influence on the world's Lithium reserve, raises eyebrows

By Susmita Ghosh

China is aggressively asserting its dominion over the renewable energy sector. They are now the world's leader in global Lithium products and associated industries. The US is trying to play catch-up in this segment for quite a few years.

The recent policy changes have helped them bridge the gap to a good extent, occupying the second spot. The countries that are economic juggernauts tend to hanker after a lion's share in the fuel sources, be it traditional or unconventional. Authority over the source and distribution of a specific fuel makes it quite easy to

manipulate the related market. Consequently, a country can reap a major chunk of benefits, strengthening the economy manifold. Petroleum was the most effective yet economical fuel source in the past century. The Gulf countries prospered from the global petrol trade and they did not care much about any international sanctions that came their way. However, with the new age approaching, it is predicted that it would belong to Lithium instead. Starting from Smartphones, Laptops to the modern electric vehicles (EV), Lithium is the major component, as the Lithium-ion batteries power them. China is trying to capture the market, which may put the economic dominance of the petroleum countries to question. Pollution is a common concern with traditional energy sources like coal and petroleum. Several provinces in China had a very poor Air Quality Index for decades. To remedying the condition and counter pollution, the usage of renewable energy sources is being incentivized across China, resulting in very high

demand for Lithium.

The Chinese customers bought 37 percent of electric Passenger SUVs sold since 2011. Now, China can control around 50 percent of the global production of Lithium and over 60 percent of battery production. Presently, the Chinese companies have stakes in Lithium mining in South America and Australia.

They are also investing in Cobalt, another major component of

rechargeable batteries. China's deals with several South American countries have cost around US\$4bn in two years only. In Bolivia, their primary venture was thwarted by a German company. However, China soon recuperated

by gaining a majority share in another Bolivian company, along with a strong position in Chile's Lithium industries. Simultaneously, China is ever-expanding its influence in Asia.

War-torn Afghanistan is not spared from it too, which is estimated to be around US\$1 trillion. It can provide a major hand to the world's need for green energy while lifting the collapsed Afghan economy too. How much of that would happen under the Chinese influence - the question remains.

Without proper planning and framework, China's growth in the renewable energy segment will be unchecked. It may have a negative role in the global economy too, especially with their controversial work condition and payment policies to the workers. The new discoveries in Europe and several places in North America, may dampen their unhindered progress a bit. However, without prompt action and proper pricing, the race to dominance will continue. It may even result in a long-lasting global political conflict.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

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# The China hand

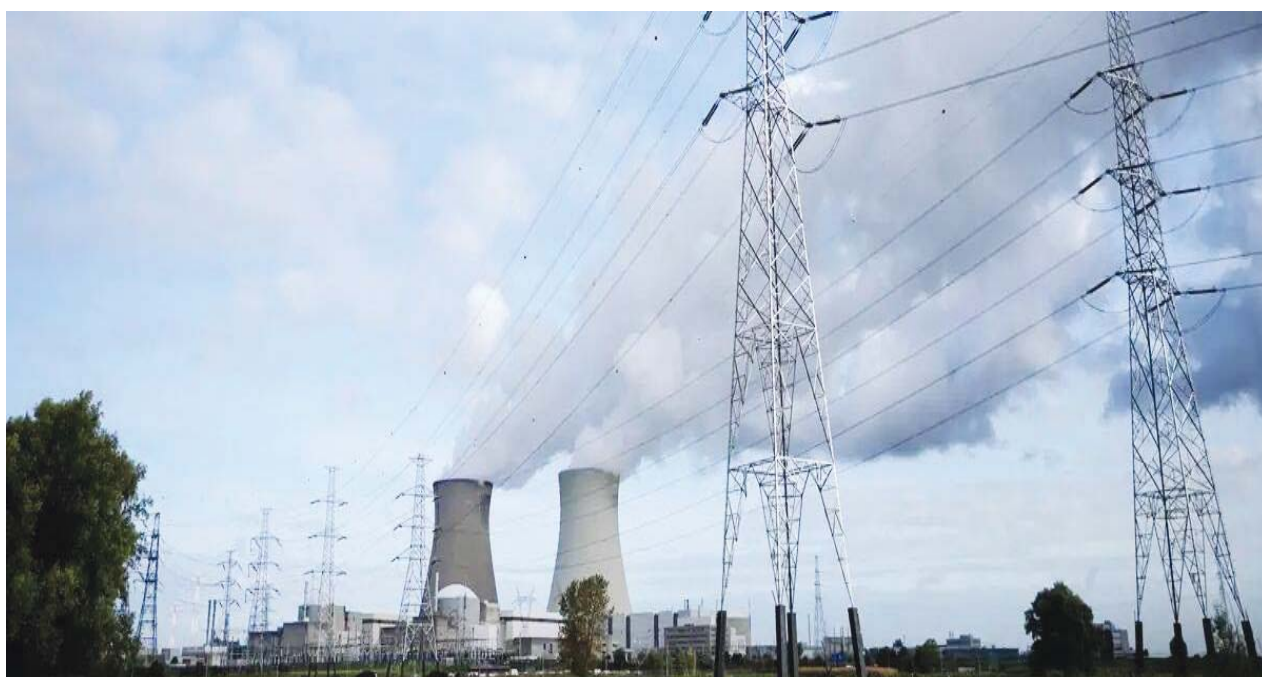


## Redressing power imbalance with Beijing remains Delhi's most important national security task in 2022 and beyond

If Delhi had forgotten by some chance that China remains an ever growing challenge for India's foreign and security policies, it was reminded by a rude missive from the Chinese embassy last week to a number of Indian parliamentarians who had attended a function of the Tibetan parliament in exile. The question is not about the appropriateness of a foreign embassy scolding the elected members of the Indian parliament. What we see is China's new hubris in dealing with the rest of the world - friend or foe. Its diplomacy was celebrated until recently as one of the most sophisticated. Today, it is widely reviled as crude and counter productive. But Beijing does not really care. China is confident that the growing hard power - economic and military - gives it the luxury to dispense with diplomatic niceties.

India can live with China's objections to anything it sees as offensive. What it can't live with is Beijing's refusal to reverse the People's Liberation Army's territorial aggression in the Ladakh frontier in the early summer of 2020. The PLA has activated the long and disputed frontier all along the Himalayas; it has recently changed the names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh; and it is building villages on the unpopulated border with India. At the political level, its efforts are relentless in trying to drive a wedge between India and its close Himalayan neighbours - Nepal and Bhutan. At the same time, it is also seeking to undermine Indian influence in Maldives and Sri Lanka and, more broadly, in the Indian Ocean. At the root of the challenges presented by China is the growing power gap with India. Redressing the power imbalance with China remains the most important national security task for India in 2022 and beyond.

The problem needs to be tackled at three levels. At the military/strategic level, India has signalled its intent to balance China by drawing closer to the US and more actively participating in the Quadrilateral Forum, along with Australia and Japan. But diplomacy is yet to be backed up by much quicker military modernisation and strategic coordination with its Quad partners. At the economic level, India will need to move rapidly to end its isolation in the global trade domain. Delhi chose to stay out of a China-dominated Asia-wide free trade agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), that came into force on January 1. India has sought to partly compensate for that decision by trying to negotiate bilateral free trade agreements with strategic partners like the United Kingdom, Australia, UAE, and Israel.



## Preparing for a green energy shift in 2022

*The 'irresistible force' for clean energy has met the 'immovable object' of an embedded fossil fuel energy system. How can policies reconcile this paradox?*

Those at the helm of energy policy in India face a challenging conundrum in the new year: To navigate the choppy waters of the "dirty" petroleum market and stay on the "green" course towards clean energy. There is an oft-quoted French phrase "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" - "the more things change, the more they stay the same". It captures well the developments of the energy market over the past year.

2021 saw tangible change in the energy sector. One hundred and thirty-three countries pledged to a "net-zero carbon emissions date" and most governments, corporates and civic entities have shown determination to "phase down" and eventually phase out fossil fuels from their energy basket. But the year also witnessed a repeat of the familiar. The petroleum market seesawed and was expectedly volatile. Natural gas prices reached stratospheric levels as demand exceeded supplies and geopolitics compounded the imbalance. Twelve months back, India could have purchased a cargo of liquefied natural gas on the spot market for around \$18/mmbtu. Today, it would be hard-pressed to get one for less than \$40/mmbtu. The year also ended with oil prices projected to hit triple digits.

Also read | A green response to natural gas price shock

Political leaders find themselves currently amid a messy reality. The seemingly "irresistible force" for clean energy has met, it would appear, the

"immovable object" of an embedded fossil fuel energy system. The question is: What should they do to reconcile this paradox? Five trends will shape the emergent energy landscape. These must be factored into any policy response.

First, the energy transition will be long and expensive. The fossil fuel-based economic system will have to be redesigned and, in parts, rebuilt for clean energy to achieve scale. The process will take decades and require massive capital infusion. There are varied estimates of the investment needed to scale up the generation of solar, wind, bio etc; decarbonise the grid; electrify mobility, and capture and sequester "carbon". The thread linking them is the cost range of hundreds of billions. No country or multilateral institution can finance this transition individually. The world will have to collaborate and if it fails to do so, the financing deficit will push back the transition even further. Second, fossil fuels will dominate the energy basket during this transition phase. As has been the case so far, its market will be defined by the "fundamentals" of demand, supply and geopolitics and the "non-fundamentals" of exchange rates and speculative trade. The price movements will be sharp, volatile and unexpected.

Third, "OPEC plus" will resurge in market influence. The low-cost, high resource petrostates (Saudi Arabia, the Gulf nations, Iraq, Iran, Russia) will, in particular, gain greater control

over the petroleum market as private companies move beyond fossils under pressure from shareholders and regulators.

Fourth, the geology of the minerals and metals required for clean energy is skewed towards the geology of petroleum reserves. The Democratic Republic of Congo controls, for instance, more than 50 per cent of the global supply of cobalt; Australia holds a comparably large share of the lithium market; and China bestrides the mining, processing and refining of rare earth minerals. It is difficult to tell how and when these countries will exercise their market power but it is clear that the "green transition" will create new centres of energy power.

Also read | Green energy: Photosynthesis may be the next source of clean energy generation  
Fifth, nationalism and political opportunism will be overriding determinants of energy policy. The US and China are currently embroiled in a "Cold War" over technology, trade, cyber issues and the South China Sea. Harvard Professor Graham Allison draws on historical analogies to suggest they may fall into what he refers to as the "Thucydides trap" and drift into hot conflict. Thucydides was a Greek historian and general who chronicled the Peloponnesian war between the city-states of Sparta and Athens in the 5th century BC. At the time, Sparta was the dominant power and Athens the emergent power.





## Covid surge: EC to hold meeting today on door-to-door campaigning, rallies ahead of assembly polls

**The EC will hold a meeting on Wednesday on door-to-door campaigning and rallies ahead of assembly polls in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases in the country**

In the wake of increasing Covid-19 cases in the country, the Election Commission will hold a meeting to discuss door-to-door campaigning and rallies on Wednesday ahead of the assembly polls.

On Tuesday, the poll body held a meeting to discuss how many polling stations should be established by increasing their numbers in view of Covid-19. They also discussed the important rules related to duty for election officers and employees.

The EC also held a discussion on a vaccination awareness campaign for voters and rules while voting, number of deployment of central forces in the five poll-bound states and rules related to Covid-19, maintenance of VVPAT and arrangement of polling in strong rooms and remote areas and protocol and rules related to Covid-19 for star campaigners of political parties along with the number of workers at the booth of political parties and distance from the polling

station.

In addition, the commission also discussed Covid compliance rules for candidates during enrollment, rules for meetings, assemblies and functions of political parties, door-to-door campaigning constraints and rules and obligations regarding rallies.

The EC will also hold a virtual meeting with the Manipur chief secretary, Director General of Police, representatives of political parties, district election

officers, SP, SSP and all other stakeholders on Wednesday.

In order to take stock of the preparations for the assembly elections in five states, the commission personally visited four states. Whereas in view of the ever-increasing cases of Covid and Omicron infection, the poll body has decided to hold a virtual meeting regarding Manipur. According to sources, the commission will hold discussions in different sessions through

video conferencing while taking inputs from administrative officers, representatives of political parties and interacting with the chief secretary, DGP and other senior bureaucrats at different times.

In view of the election preparations, the meeting with the election stakeholders of Manipur will be the last meeting in this regard. Given the low vaccination rate in Manipur, the EC will also discuss various ways to increase the same.

## India looking at FTA with UAE, UK, Australia, Canada, Israel: Trade minister Piyush Goyal

India's trade minister Piyush Goyal has said India is looking to have free trade agreement (FTA) with 5 countries - UAE, UK, Australia, Canada and Israel which are in various stages of progress, from near finalisation to the start of talks with visits.

Speaking at a presser, Piyush Goyal said, "We are looking for a free trade agreement, a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with the

United Arab Emirates, which is close to finalisation."

The pact was to happen during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to UAE this week, but the visit could not happen due to Omicron variant crisis. With Australia, he said, "We are also at a very advanced stage with Australia on concluding the interim agreement which will cover very large areas of interests, particularly labour oriented

sectors like textiles, pharma, footwear, leather products, agricultural products. So, we are working with a great focus on expanding bilateral relations with several countries." Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott and trade minister Dan Tehan had visited New Delhi last year to expedite the negotiation process. Australia, against which China had launched a trade war as part of weaponisation of trade

is looking to diversify trading ties. The Indian minister confirmed with the UK, New Delhi is "hoping to launch later this month" FTA talks and get an "interim trade agreement in place maybe by march this year". According to British newspapers, UK's international trade secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan will be travelling to India later this month for talks on a trade deal which can see the UK offering to relax visa

regulations for Indians. London is keen on a trade pact with New Delhi in a post-Brexit world, especially in the backdrop of its tilt to the Indo-Pacific. Mentioning Canada, he said, "Canadian minister has also shown interest at G20, Canadian PM had expressed desire to rapidly expand trade relations with India and we are hoping to launch negotiations with Canada in the next 2-3 months".





# Why the nature of the Capitol attack is hotly contested in US

**A year later, the ideas and values that underpinned the attack on their nation's democracy continue to have purchase among many white Americans**

January 6 will mark a year since the deadly siege of the US Capitol by a partially-armed and whimsically-dressed mob made of supporters of then President Donald Trump. The attack on the Capitol - a complex that is widely seen as a symbol of American democracy - was unprecedented. The only other forcible breach had occurred more than 200 years earlier when British troops set fire to it in August 1814. That the January 6 assault was perpetrated by flag-waving patriots instigated by a sitting president making false claims of a stolen election - and refusing to acknowledge his electoral defeat - only underscores the political danger it portends. Accepting electoral defeat is, after all, fundamental to the functioning of any democracy.

Yet what happened that day has become a matter of political and ideological contestation. Going by dictionary and legal definitions, it would be apt to call the siege and the events leading to it an insurrection. Indeed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Army found it wise to send a message to American troops that the "actions inside the Capitol building . . . were inconsistent with the rule of law" and that "the rights of freedom of speech and assembly do not give anyone the right to resort to violence, sedition and insurrection". In order not to leave any room for doubt among the

armed forces, the statement added that Joe Biden will take office on the constitutionally mandated Inauguration Day and "will become our 46th Commander in Chief".

But despite the serious nature of what occurred, attempts by the US Congress to create a bipartisan commission to investigate it - on the lines of the 9/11 Commission - failed because of objections from the Republican Party that has embraced Trump's unsubstantiated claims of a fraudulent election, partly because it wants to hold on to his loyal political base. The House of Representatives has formed a select committee to investigate the assault, but it does not have the support of most Republican members. Many Republican leaders have refused to condemn the siege; they accuse the Democrats of wildly exaggerating its gravity and of overreacting. Some lawmakers call the 727 people arrested and charged with crimes stemming from the attack, political prisoners. The most ideologically committed of the detainees describe themselves as the Patriot Wing, and they have developed a fan base outside prison.

Patriot Purge, a three-part faux documentary by Tucker Carlson, a top-rated host of the Fox News Channel, and broadcast on its subscription streaming service,

offers a revisionist account of the events. According to the fact-checking website PolitiFact, it whitewashes the facts of the insurrection and contrives "a dystopian, alternative explanation" by invoking conspiracy theories to suggest that left-wing instigators and agent provocateurs were behind

**What explains this bizarre turn of events? A demographic database of about 600 of those arrested offers an entry point to addressing the question**

it and that the insurrectionists may have fallen into a trap set by domestic intelligence agencies intent on purging American society of its best patriots.

What explains this bizarre turn of events? A demographic database of about 600 of those arrested offers an entry point to addressing the question. The data was gathered by a team of researchers at the University of Chicago led by political scientist Robert A. Pape.

The insurrectionists are overwhelmingly white, but they do not fall into the demographics of people stereotypically associated with far-right extremist violence. Only a small minority are members of right-wing militias. Very few of them are marginalised young, unemployed men. Many are

well-to-do middle-aged people in occupations including business owners, doctors, lawyers, information technology professionals and accountants. There is a significant number of women. The insurrectionists are not all from rural areas where Trump has a loyal base. Many are from big cities that voted for Biden.

They have a common denominator that is significant: They are mostly from counties - counties in the US are comparable to Indian districts - that have seen the white population shrink fast and the non-white population grow rapidly. This remains true even after controlling for travelling distance to Washington D.C., population size, unemployment rate, and the rural or urban nature of the county.

This finding is important because it points to a racialised fear, often expressed in fringe right-wing circles, that non-white immigrants and racial minorities could overwhelm and dominate the United States through immigration, high birth rates, and the control of political power. In Europe, controversial French writer Renaud Camus captures this idea in the concept of the "Great Replacement". Native white Europeans, he says in his book of the same name, are being reverse colonised by

black and brown immigrants. The "Great Replacement" phrase now appears in white nationalist manifestos in Europe, North America and Australasia. The New Zealand bomber who murdered 51 people at two mosques in March 2019, and the American gunman who killed 21 people in El Paso, Texas in August 2019 made explicit references to it. Major right-wing public figures subscribe to the idea. For instance, Carlson, the maker of Patriot Purge, accuses Democrats of trying to "flood the nation with loyal foreigners in order to retain political power, and in the process destroy America". He made this argument while criticising President Biden for not doing enough to stop Haitian refugees from entering the United States. "In political terms", said Carlson, "this policy is called the 'great replacement,' the replacement of legacy Americans with more obedient people from faraway countries". In this ideological climate, it is hardly surprising that some white Americans would view the attempt to overturn the constitutional process of electing the president as an act of high patriotism. The Republican Party's ambivalence towards the insurrection is largely because of its mainstream provenance and because the ideas and values underpinning it have purchase among many white Americans.





# What the targeting of Muslim women really means

***The targeting of Muslim women is not just a one-off thing; it is well ideated and deliberated. This is not just an attack on Muslim women alone; it's an attack on a religious identity, a normalisation of the 'othering' and dehumanisation of Muslims***

Let's just say it's not the best time to be a Muslim in India. Particularly a vocal, politically active Muslim woman. In the run-up to year 2022, Indian Muslims witnessed calls for genocide of the community. No action. Then Muslim women are being auctioned online for the second time in the past one year in a new avatar of Bulli Bai. No action as yet. It is said that morning shows the day. 2022 should have been a year of peace and amity, yet calls for genocides for minorities are happening right under the nose of the establishment. There leaves no shadow of doubt in anyone's mind that a sinister holocaust is brewing in India; you feel it in the bones. The targeting of Muslim women is not just a one-off thing; it is well ideated and deliberated. This is not just an attack on Muslim women alone; it's an attack on a religious identity, a normalisation of the 'othering' and dehumanisation of Muslims. The whole generalisation during the abolition of 'Triple Talaq' about Muslim women being weak and hapless is a warped perspective of Muslim women. Can anyone forget the resistance at 'Shaheen Bagh'? The sight of Muslim women

camping for months in biting cold fighting to safeguard their homes, territories and their nationality that was under threat of being snatched away was truly inspirational as the world watched. In 2019, the United Nations official, Adama Dieng, spoke on the dangers of hate speech and intolerance. We all have to remember that hate crimes are preceded by hate speech, he emphasised. The holocaust did not start with gas chambers; it started long before with hate speech. Words kill, words kill as bullets. Today, what we are witnessing around the world, with the rise of extremists, when we see the growing number of neo-Nazi groups, neo-fascist groups, when we see the way migrants and refugees are being vilified, we need, therefore, to make every effort to address this hate speech. December 9 was declared as the annual international day of commemoration and dignity of the victims of the crime of genocide and of the prevention of this crime in September 2015 by the United Nations. The signs of an impending genocide are omnipresent everywhere. How else can one

negate the fact that spiteful and bigoted programmes are aired repeatedly on national media with complete impunity and these destructive views are amplified further on social media leading to radicalisation of society? The Sangh umbrella for long has been engineering this hate through its foot soldiers and getting away with it. For instance, if the criminals who launched the 'Sulli Deals' online were brought to task some time ago, we would not be witnessing the horrors of the "Bulli Bai" unfurling before our eyes today. The holocaust was long pending in India when BJP won just two seats in Parliament in 1984 and began ideating a campaign of hate which saw the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 by the right-wing radicals in India. As kids we quickly got accustomed to the term 'riots'; it was commonplace to have regular riots in the Hindi heartland like Meerut where my roots are. The Army used to be called in those days for relief work when curfew used to be imposed upon the city. But these things were always kept in check as the ruling dispensation was accountable to the people. The irony is that today the erstwhile alleged rioters and

genociders of 1992 and 2002 are in power, so who does one go to when war cries of a 'Muslim genocide' is taking place at public functions with complete impunity. At times when there is a surge of Covid cases amid the fear of an impending third wave, we haven't learnt our lessons from the first and second wave. The priority of the ruling dispensation should have been a complete overhaul of the public healthcare system in preparation for the third wave. Instead, what appears as evident is that the government is least interested in that. Since its winning plank happens to be 'polarisation' and engineering a tsunami of hate for electoral benefits. A few days ago, in Haridwar, right-wing radicals openly said that the real danger is from churches and mosques. They also added that Islam is a fast poison and Christianity a slow poison and demanded that both Muslims and Christians get wiped out from the face of this earth. Recently, former Indian armed forces veterans wrote an open letter to PM Modi, criticising hate speech on minorities.

## Punjab security breach

**Duty of every govt to provide foolproof security to PM, says Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik**



Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik voiced his support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the security breach in Punjab. CM Patnaik took to Twitter and wrote: "The Prime Minister of India is an institution. It is the duty of every government to provide foolproof security and safeguard the dignity of this institution. Anything contrary should be unacceptable in our democracy." The Prime Minister of India is an institution. It is the duty of every Government to provide foolproof security and safeguard the dignity of this institution. Anything contrary should be unacceptable in our democracy.

- Naveen Patnaik (@Naveen\_Odisha) January 6, 2022

Soon after Odisha CM's tweet, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan praised Patnaik's gesture on Twitter and wrote "This is how a democracy like in India should function. We all can have differing ideologies, beliefs & opinions but that can be no ground to legitimise a breach in security for the Prime Minister. Appreciate @Naveen\_Odisha ji for his concern for PM Modi's security."

This is how a democracy like in India should function.

We all can have differing ideologies, beliefs & opinions but that can be no ground to legitimise a breach in security for the Prime Minister.

Appreciate @Naveen\_Odisha ji for his concern for PM Modi's security. <https://t.co/jQ3oPH41Mj>  
- Dharmendra Pradhan (@dpradhanbjp) January 6, 2022  
Meanwhile, Union Minister Aswini Vaishnaw visited Lingaraj temple in Odisha and prayed for long life of PM Modi.

**PM MODI SECURITY BREACH**  
On Wednesday, PM Modi's convoy was stranded on a flyover due to a blockade by protesters in Ferozepur, after which he returned from poll-bound Punjab without attending any event, including a rally.





# Trump spun 'web of lies' about 2020 election

## US President Biden on one year of January 6 Capitol riots

President Joe Biden on Thursday accused his predecessor Donald Trump of spreading a "web of lies" to undermine U.S. democracy in a speech on the anniversary of the deadly Capitol attack by Trump supporters who tried to undo his 2020 election defeat. Speaking at the white-domed building where rioters smashed windows, assaulted police and sent lawmakers fleeing for their lives on Jan. 6, 2021, Biden said Trump's false claims that the election was stolen from him through widespread voting fraud could unravel the rule of law and subvert future elections. "We must be absolutely clear about what is true and what is a lie. Here's the truth: A former president of the United States of America has created and spread a web of lies about the 2020 election. He's done so because he values power over principle," Biden said. "He can't accept he lost." Biden never actually uttered his predecessor's name during the 25-minute speech, telling reporters afterward he was trying to focus on the threats to America's political system instead of Trump himself.

The tone, including a poke at Trump's "bruised ego," was a departure for Biden, who has focused during most of his first year in office on pursuing his own agenda.

Trump's behavior over the past year, like his conduct in office, has been norm-shattering. Unlike other former U.S. presidents denied re-election, Trump has refused to accept the verdict of the voters and pressured fellow Republicans to somehow overturn the

results, without success. His false claims have provided cover for Republicans at the state level to pass new restrictions on voting that they have said are needed to fight fraud. Research shows such fraud is extremely rare in U.S. elections.

Biden's fellow Democrats, a few Republicans and many independent experts have said Trump's continued denials could make it less likely that future U.S. transfers of power will be peaceful - especially those involving closer margins than the 2020 election that Biden won by 7 million votes nationwide.

"The former president and his supporters have decided the only way for them to win is to suppress your vote and subvert our elections," Biden said.

The speech illustrated that Biden and other Democrats remain wary of Trump's political staying power. In the riot's immediate aftermath, even some Republicans thought his grip on their party had been shaken, but since then Trump has only tightened it.

There are 10 months to go until America's next federal election, with Republicans favored to retake a majority in at least one of the two chambers of Congress. That could cripple Biden's ability to advance policy and set the

stage for two years of legislative gridlock before a potential 2024 Biden-Trump rematch. According to Reuters/Ipsos polling, 55% of Republican voters believe Trump's false claims, which were rejected by dozens of courts, state election departments and members of his own administration. 'DIVIDE AMERICA' Trump issued two statements in rapid succession after

**"We must be absolutely clear about what is true and what is a lie. Here's the truth: A former president of the United States of America has created and spread a web of lies about the 2020 election. He's done so because he values power over principle," Biden said. "He can't accept he lost."**

his successor's remarks, repeating his false election claims and saying that Biden "used my name today to try to further divide America."

Four people died in the hours-long chaos after Trump urged supporters to march to the Capitol and "fight like hell." One police officer died on that day after battling rioters and four later died by suicide. Around 140 police officers were injured. U.S. prosecutors have brought criminal charges against at least 725 people linked to the riot.

Biden's remarks began a series of events that will also feature House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other legislators, mostly Democrats. Many Senate Republicans planned to be out of town for former Senator Johnny Isakson's funeral. Trump remains highly popular among Republican voters and is actively

shaping the field of Republican candidates for the Nov. 8 congressional elections. Public filings show Trump has stockpiled at least \$98 million in fundraising accounts. Most Republican officeholders have remained loyal to Trump, and some have sought to play down the riot. Biden said it was hypocritical for them to question the presidential election's outcome while accepting Republican victories in congressional and state-level races that day. Any Republicans who have called for accountability including Representatives Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger have been shunned by their colleagues. "As the American people, particularly as Republicans, I think we're almost in a worse position than we were the day after Jan. 6," Kinzinger said. The two are the only Republican members of a House committee investigating the riot, which in recent weeks has unearthed records showing Trump allies urging him to call off the rioters as the attack was unfolding. Biden on Thursday described the image of Trump "sitting in the private dining room off the Oval Office in the White House, watching it all on television and doing nothing for hours." Republicans accused Democrats of exploiting the anniversary for partisan gain. "It is especially jaw-dropping to hear some Senate Democrats invoke the mob's attempt to disrupt our country's norms, rules, and institutions as a justification to discard our norms, rules and institutions themselves," Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said.





# In UP's Lakhimpur, October 3 violence a major poll issue

**Three months after the violence, the UP Police has filed a charge sheet of 5,000 pages before Lakhimpur's Chief Judicial Magistrate court. As per the charge sheet, Ashish Misra is the prime accused. The charge sheet says Ashish Misra was present near Tikunia when the violence unfolded. The police have said it was a conspiracy to kill**

On October 3, farmers opposing the three farm reform laws (now repealed) planned to show black flags to Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Misra in Lakhimpur's Tikunia. There was a minor clash reportedly between Ajay Misra's son Ashish Misra and the farmers. Then a vehicle allegedly linked to Ajay Misra ran over some farmers, killing five. An angry mob burnt several vehicles and killed three people, taking the toll to eight. Protesting against the violence, Opposition leaders including Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav headed to Lakhimpur but the administration held them back, triggering a huge uproar. Under pressure, the Uttar Pradesh government formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case. After skipping several summonses, accused Ashish Misra appeared before the police and was arrested. While the

government kept claiming the probe was fair, India's top court questioned the investigation. Three months after the violence, the UP Police has filed a charge sheet of 5,000 pages before Lakhimpur's Chief Judicial Magistrate court. As per the charge sheet, Ashish Misra is the prime accused. The charge sheet says Ashish Misra was present near Tikunia when the violence unfolded. The police have said it was a conspiracy to kill. The violence rocked India's largest state and the rest of the country. And the politics over it continues. The Opposition is leaving no stone unturned to keep the issue alive ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election due in February-March. The Opposition has been mounting pressure on the BJP for Ajay Misra's resignation. The Minister had told India Today that if there is even an iota of evidence proving Ashish Misra's presence at the violence site, he will quit. Local journalist Nand Kumar Mishra says Ajay Misra and his

family are influential and that's why the Opposition demanded his resignation as he could influence the investigation. "The vehicle that ran over the farmers is registered in Ajay Misra's name but the police did not even call him to join the probe." Lakhimpur Kheri district has eight Assembly constituencies. Nighasan is one of them. Ajay Misra used to be MLA from the seat. Here, banners and posters of Ashish Misra alias Monu Bhaiya can be seen in the market and across walls. Locals say

there was a plan to launch him in politics. A party office for him has also been opened in the Nighasan market. Here, party supporters and workers question the charge sheet and call Ashish Misra innocent. BJP worker Nagendra Singh says Ashish Misra must contest the election from the seat. "He will soon be out of jail as he was framed." Hari Shankar Sharma shares the view. Harish Pandey says many like him were witness and told the police that Ashish wasn't at the violence site but their

statements were not recorded; instead, they were framed. But there are others who feel there can't be any justice to the victims of the violence till the Minister resigns and is booked by the police. They say the Lakhimpur violence is the only poll issue. Showing satisfaction over the charge sheet, Gurmeet Singh says the Minister must resign for a fair probe. Jameel says people do not trust the probe. Gurdeep Singh says people of Uttar Pradesh are angry over the violence.







## Lost father to Covid, mother to cancer: All about Bulli Bai mastermind Shweta Singh

An 18-year-old woman, Shweta Singh, was held by the Mumbai Police on Tuesday for being the prime suspect behind the Bulli Bai controversy in which photos of several Muslim women were posted on an app without their consent to conduct a virtual 'auction'. Another 21-year-old engineering student was also arrested as the co-accused in the case. The controversy stirred massive outrage on the

internet, and came just six months after the 'Sulli deals' which was similar to what happened now and targeted Muslim women.

### WHO IS THE PRIME ACCUSED?

Shweta has lost both her parents. She lost her father to Covid-19 last year and lost her mother to cancer before this. She has an elder sister who is a commerce graduate, while her younger sister and brother are

school students. She was preparing for engineering entrance examinations.

She was using a fake Twitter handle with the name JattKhalsa07. The handle was being used for uploading hate posts and objectionable photos and comments. People associated with her followed the same ideology.

### NEPAL CONNECTION

The prime accused was allegedly working on the

instructions of her friend based in Nepal. Sources from the investigating team said that the primary information gathered from the accused revealed that a Nepal national, identified as Giyou, was instructing her regarding the activities to be carried out on the app. Police are probing his role and that of others who were involved with her.

She was taken into custody from Udham Singh Nagar district and

**Shweta Singh, the 18-year-old main accused in the Bulli Bai row, who was arrested by the police on Tuesday, lost both parents. She has three siblings, among whom two are school students. Here's all about the accused**

then transit remand was sought till January 5 by Mumbai police officials. Her name was revealed by Vishal Kumar who was arrested earlier in Bengaluru. He said he was in touch with the woman and claimed that she was in touch with the people who were working on the posts and activities on the Bulli Bai app. Mumbai police officials are probing Vishal's role in the Sulli Deals incident as well, which came to light earlier in 2021. An average student of engineering, Vishal's role was to edit pictures of women from a particular community and then upload them on the app.

It is also being probed whether the woman created the application or was helped by someone else. She will be brought to Mumbai today and could be produced in a magistrate's court today.

## In a bid to boost defence export market, India likely to sell BrahMos missiles to Vietnam, Philippines

India is likely to sell its BrahMos cruise missiles to Vietnam and the Philippines to boost its defence export market and have an edge over China. The procurement is expected to signal a major upswing in India's ties with both nations which have been focusing on ramping up their naval prowess in the face of their lingering friction with China in the South China Sea.

Hina lays claim to most of the waters within a so-called Nine-Dash Line, which is also contested by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is going to visit Vietnam in the second week of this month for the celebration of the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic ties between New Delhi Ho Chi Minh City.

On the top of his agenda are a defence and joint collaboration including training and maintenance of defence equipment. This is Rajnath Singh's first visit to South



East Asia amid growing Chinese aggression in the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

BrahMos Aerospace, an India-Russian joint venture, produces supersonic cruise missiles that can be launched

from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms. The missile fires at a speed of 2.8 Mach or almost three times the speed of sound. It

has a range of approximately 290 kilometres.

Manila has recently allocated 2.8 billion pesos (\$55.5 million) for initial funding for the weapon system.

India and the Philippines have signed an "implementing agreement" that dictates the terms and sets the foundation for government-to-government contracts. Two "special allotment release orders" worth 1.3 billion pesos and 1.535 billion pesos were issued on December 27 to cover the initial funding requirements for the "Shore-Based Anti-Ship Missile System Acquisition Project" of the Philippine Navy as per the website of the Philippines' department of budget management.

India aims to touch the target of five billion dollars worth of defence exports by 2025.



# Thousands held on Hong Kong cruise ship for Covid testing

**Nine of the ship's passengers were close contacts of an infected patient linked to a recent Omicron cluster. As a result, all the passengers have been held on the ship, pending testing for Covid-19**

(News Agencies)-Thousands of passengers were being held on Wednesday, January 5, on a cruise ship in Hong Kong for coronavirus testing after health authorities said nine passengers were linked to a recent omicron cluster and ordered the ship to turn back. Authorities forced the Royal Caribbean's Spectrum of the Seas ship, which began sailing on Sunday on a "cruise to nowhere," to return a day early on Wednesday, according to a government statement.

The ship was ordered to return after nine passengers were identified as close contacts of an infected patient who was linked to a new omicron cluster. The ship returned to Hong Kong on Wednesday morning and passengers were being held onboard while they awaited



testing.

Royal Caribbean said in a statement that the nine guests were immediately isolated and had all tested negative, and that the company was working closely with authorities to comply with epidemic

prevention policies and regulations.

Over the past week, Hong Kong authorities have locked down several residential buildings linked to emerging omicron clusters as they seek to prevent the spread of the coronavirus

variant in the city.

The clusters emerged after several Cathay Pacific crew members broke isolation rules and dined at restaurants and bars in the city, before testing positive for the omicron variant. Royal Caribbean said guests

who were onboard the affected ship would receive a 25% refund on their cruise fare. The ship's Thursday sailing was also cancelled as the crew had to undergo mandatory tests, and those guests will receive a full refund.

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The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.





[illegible]



# Beijing meets state air quality standards for first time in 2021

**China declared war on pollution in 2014 after a series of hazardous smog build-ups in Beijing and elsewhere triggered widespread public anger**

(News Agencies)-The Chinese capital Beijing met state air quality standards for the first time last year, officials said on Tuesday, following a concerted effort to cut coal consumption, reduce transportation emissions and relocate heavy industry. China declared war on pollution in 2014 after a series of hazardous smog build-ups in Beijing and elsewhere triggered widespread public anger.

Average readings of small, hazardous airborne particles known as PM2.5 reached 33 micrograms per cubic metre in Beijing over the whole of 2021, down 13% compared to a year earlier and meeting China's interim standard of 35 micrograms for the first time on record, officials said during a briefing on Tuesday.

The annual average of 33 micrograms remains much



higher than the recommended World Health Organization level of 5 micrograms.

Yu Jianhua, deputy head of Beijing's environmental protection bureau, described the city's efforts over the last

decade, as well as the speed of its improvements, as "unprecedented".

"All regions and all departments worked together and organised to 2013, he added.

the whole society to achieve Beijing promised in 2015 that comprehensive improvements in it would use its staging of the

Winter Olympics in 2022 to help drive improvements in its environment, with Chinese President Xi Jinping vowing to host a "green" Games

As a measure of the progress made, in 2016 average PM2.5 readings stood at 71 micrograms, but frequently approached 500 micrograms during the winter months, when coal-dominated heating systems were switched on throughout the region.

Beijing and the surrounding province of Hebei have since made efforts to switch to cleaner natural gas and also planted vast numbers of trees across the region.

They have also imposed tough new fuel standards on cars and forced steel mills and other industrial facilities to install equipment aimed at controlling emissions.

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## 'Got fired at, held at gunpoint,' says Pakistan PM's ex-wife Reham Khan



**Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's ex-wife Reham Khan has alleged that she was accosted by unidentified men who opened fire at the vehicle she was travelling in on Sunday night**

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's ex-wife Reham Khan has alleged that she was accosted by unidentified men who opened fire at the vehicle she was travelling in on Sunday night.

Targeting her former husband over the attack, Reham Khan said Pakistan had become a land of "cowards, thugs and the greedy" under Imran Khan's rule.

"On the way back from my nephew's marriage my car just got fired at and two men on a motorbike held vehicle at gunpoint! I had just changed vehicles. My PS and driver were in the car. This is Imran Khan's New Pakistan? Welcome to the state of cowards, thugs and the greedy!," she tweeted.

Though unscathed, Reham Khan said the incident had left her "outraged and concerned". She also remarked that she would have preferred a duel over a "cowardly covert attempt".

A journalist of British-Pakistani origin and a former TV anchor, Reham Khan was married to Imran Khan from 2014 to October 30, 2015. The 48-year-old is known for being a vocal critic of her former husband and frequently slams him for his style of governance and remarks in the public.

Following the Pulwama attack in 2019, Reham Khan had said Imran Khan was a puppet of the country's military and had come into power by compromising on ideology and moderate policy.



## India sends 5 lakh doses of Covaxin to Afghanistan as humanitarian aid

**As part of its commitment to supply humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, India on Saturday sent 5 lakh doses of Covaxin to Kabul via air**

India on Saturday sent the second tranche of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover in August of last year. This tranche included 5 lakh doses of Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 jab - Covaxin. The humanitarian aid was flown to Kabul by a flight of Iran's Mahan air.

Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Arindam Bagchi, said in a tweet that the Covid-19 vaccines were handed over to the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul.

Afghanistan's envoy to India, Farid

Mamundzay, said in a tweet: "Another batch of additional 500,000 doses would be supplied in coming weeks. Thank you India for providing Afghan people life saving gift on the first day of 2022! I hope this year would be peaceful & prosperous for all Afghans."

"Another batch of additional 500,000 doses would be supplied in coming weeks," said a press statement by the MEA.

Last year, India announced that it would send 50,000 tonnes of wheat and medicines to Afghanistan by road through Pakistan. India and Pakistan are still in the process of

finalising the modalities for transportation. India, in December 2021, delivered 1.6 tonnes of medical assistance to Afghanistan through the World Health Organization (WHO).

On November 10, India hosted a regional dialogue on Afghanistan that was attended by the National Security Advisors of Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Like several other countries, India too is yet to recognise the Taliban as the new government in Afghanistan.

## North Korean launch: China urges caution, Japan calls it regrettable

North Korea fired a projectile presumed to be a missile at 8:10 am (2310 GMT). The suspected ballistic missile was fired from inland location over the east coast and into the sea. The first such launch by the Kim Jong-Un regime from October is being seen as the country's resolve to bolster the military to counter an unstable international situation. The latest launch is eliciting

reactions from countries South Korea

South Korean President Moon Jae-In called for dialogue between the two countries. He acknowledged that the launch raised concerns of tensions and damage to inter-Korean relations, and called for North Korea to make sincere efforts for dialogue. China

China's foreign ministry urged

caution and dialogue

Speaking at a regular news conference in Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin urged all parties to "bear in mind the bigger picture", cherish the "hard won" peace and stability on the peninsula and stick to the use of dialogue and consultation to reach political settlement.

Japan

Japanese government leaders condemned North Korea over its suspected missile launch toward the Sea of Japan.

Prime Minister Kishida Fumio told reporters that it is regrettable that such action has occurred repeatedly since last year.

He said the government will further reinforce its surveillance of the situation. Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo said the object is

estimated to have flown around 500 kilometers and dropped into the sea outside Japan's exclusive economic zone.

He said there have been no reports of damage to Japanese aircraft and ships.

Kishi added that Japan has been coordinating closely with countries such as the United States and South Korea to protect people's lives.





# China reports major drop in Covid-19 cases in locked-down Xi'an

**China reported a major drop in local Covid-19 infections in the northern city of Xi'an, which has been under a tight lockdown for the past two weeks**

China on Wednesday reported a major drop in local Covid-19 infections in the northern city of Xi'an, which has been under a tight lockdown for the past two weeks that has tested the city's ability to provide supplies for those confined to their homes. With the Beijing Olympics beginning February 4, China is doubling down on measures to prevent any new outbreak that could affect proceedings. People are being told to travel in and out of Beijing only if they absolutely need to and hotels have largely stopped taking new reservations. Athletes, officials and journalists are entering an "anti-pandemic" bubble as soon as they arrive and will remain within it until the February 4-20 Winter Games are over.

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"Staging major international sporting events such as the Winter Olympics will be an opportunity to enhance the influence of Chinese culture, the reach of news reporting and the nation's soft power," Xi was cited as saying by the official

Xinhua News Agency. Outbreak concerns add to controversies that have dogged the Games over China's human rights records, with the U.S. and

close allies announcing a diplomatic boycott. Xi is seeking to be appointed to a third five-year term as leader this year and is eager to avoid any development that could tarnish his reputation. The National Health Commission on Wednesday announced just 35 new cases in Xi'an, home to the famed Terracotta Warriors statues along with major industries, down from 95 the day before. That marks a steady decline since daily new cases topped 100, prompting officials to retain and in some cases tighten restrictions on people leaving their homes.

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That came after the city's health code system that monitors movements and vaccination statuses crashed on Dec. 20 due to high traffic as case numbers were rising, Xinhua said. Another city, Yuzhou in Henan province, was placed under

lockdown over the weekend after the discovery of just three asymptomatic cases. Only emergency vehicles are allowed on the roads, classes have been suspended and businesses catering to the public have closed for all but essential needs in the city of 1.17 million.

The province of Henan reported two new asymptomatic cases on Wednesday, although it wasn't clear if they were in Yuzhou, where officials said Wednesday they plan to have 5,000 beds at quarantine sites available within days. Several other cities in the province have ordered mass testing, shut down public venues and restricted or suspended intercity travel, despite only small numbers of cases being detected.

China has reported a total of 102,932 cases nationwide, with the death toll remaining steady at 4,636



# COVID app crash and hunger challenge China's biggest lockdown since Wuhan

Thirteen million inhabitants of central China's Xi'an were thrown into even more hardship this week when the city's COVID-19 tracking app crashed amid food and other necessary goods shortages as the country's most draconian pandemic measures since Wuhan's lockdown in 2020.

According to Bloomberg, the COVID-19 health code app, which shows individuals' current infection or risk status, collapsed in Xi'an this week, hindering the city's contact tracing operations and preventing people from accessing crucial services.

After a round of mass testing, the city's citizens were unable to obtain their COVID-19 infection status due to a system crash, preventing some of them from attending hospitals.

Following reports of food shortages across the city, many



residents were forced to share supplies or even barter for food. A negative COVID test is required for admission into hospitals, and the app crash has reportedly blocked several people from receiving crucial medical care.

The most high-profile incident allegedly involved a pregnant woman in the city who miscarried after being denied access to a hospital. Chinese officials, on the other hand, have defended the draconian curfews, claiming that

free food packages will be sent to locals.

According to data supplied by the Chinese National Health Commission, that's the number of new COVID-19 cases registered in Xi'an on

Wednesday. This is a significant decrease from the number of new illnesses recorded in the previous few days. Since the beginning of the current outbreak in Xi'an, the city has reported over 1,600 new cases.

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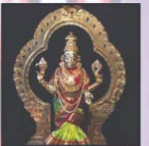
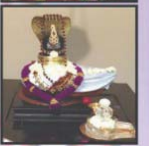


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# Water use to be restricted in California as drought prolongs in US state



**The new restrictions follow an extremely wet December that state officials warned may not continue during the winter months that normally are the state's wettest**

For the second time in a decade, Californians will face mandatory restrictions governing their outdoor water use as the state endures another drought and voluntary conservation efforts have fallen short.

The rules adopted Tuesday by the State Water Resources Control Board are fairly mild - no watering lawns for 48 hours after a rainstorm or letting sprinklers run onto the sidewalk- and could take effect as soon as the end of the month. Scofflaws could face \$500 daily fines, though regulators say they expect such fines will be rare, as they were in the last drought.

The action comes as Californians have failed to meet Gov. Gavin Newsom's call for a voluntary 15% reduction in water use compared to last year. Between July and November, the state's water usage went down just 6%. The new restrictions follow an extremely wet December that state officials warned may not continue during the winter months, which normally are the state's wettest. Weather patterns have become more unpredictable due to climate change and state climatologist Michael Anderson said forecasts show January, February and March could be drier than average.

Earlier forecasts didn't predict

such a wet December, which saw record amounts of rain and snow in many areas. In mid-December, about 80% of the state was in extreme or exceptional drought conditions. By the end of the month only about a third was experiencing those conditions, according to the US Drought Monitor that tabulates conditions. Meanwhile, the state Department of Water Resources announced Tuesday that recent storms will allow the resumption of hydropower generation at the Oroville Dam, which was halted in early August due to historically low lake levels. Despite the rain, significant parts of the state's water system are still under stress from the extremely dry conditions earlier in 2021 that dropped many of California's largest reservoirs to record and near-record lows. Conserving water and reducing water waste are critical and necessary habits for everyone to adopt as we adjust to these uncertainties and we build resilience to climate change, so adopting emergency regulations now just makes sense," said Eric Oppenheimer, chief deputy director for the state water board. "We need to be prepared for continued drought."

Northern California was wetter than Southern California in November and conserved

significantly more water.

Regions north of the San Joaquin River, including Sacramento and San Francisco, used between 17% and 26% less water than November 2020, while Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties that account for 55% of the state's population used nearly 1% more, according to state data.

Among the water uses that won't be allowed under the new rules: outdoor watering that results in excessive runoff into the street and sidewalks; using water for landscaping and irrigation during the 48 hours after storms that bring at least .25 inches (.63 centimeters) of rain; washing cars with hoses lacking shut-off nozzles; using potable water to wash driveways, sidewalks, buildings and patios and for street cleaning or to fill decorative fountains or lakes.

There are some exceptions. For example, trees in street medians can be watered, while turf cannot. The rules take effect once an administrative review is completed.

Though much of the U.S. West is in drought, no other western state has adopted statewide restrictions on residential water usage. Instead, it's local governments and water agencies in places like Denver and Las Vegas setting policies about

when people can water their lawns. For example, the Las Vegas region adopted restrictions on planting grass, including banning it in front yards, in an effort to save water.

California adopted similar restrictions during the five-year drought that ended in 2017, and some cities and local water districts made them permanent. Such restrictions were just one piece of the state's conservation approach, which also included incentives for Californians to rip up water-hungry lawns in favor of drought-resistant landscaping. Today, California's overall water use is lower than it was when the last drought began. But that makes conservation trickier this time, because some of the easiest measures have already been adopted. State water board officials were unable to say how many of California's nearly 40

million people are under such rules or exactly how much water they expect to save.

Though the regulations include an ability to fine violators up to \$500 per day, fines were rare last time around. The state has no plans to put "water cops" on the streets, Oppenheimer said, but he noted that during the last drought many local water districts beefed up staff to monitor conservation and compliance.

The state also has a website where individuals can report their neighbors or others they see violating the rules. The complaints will be directed to the relevant local water agency. During California's last drought, people engaged in so-called "drought shaming", the process of publicly outing people who are wasting water by posting videos to social media.







## US: 13 killed after fire breaks out at Philadelphia row house



## US military prepares profile of ISIS-K terrorist who attacked Kabul airport: Report

**According to a report, US intelligence officials have pieced together a profile of the ISIS-K assailant who carried out the suicide bombing outside the Kabul airport on August 26, 2021**

The US and foreign intelligence officials are focusing on an Islamic State cell responsible for the August 26 suicide blast outside the Kabul airport, in which 13 US Marine soldiers were killed among others.

According to a report in the New York Times, US intelligence officials have pieced together a profile of the Islamic State assailant who carried out the suicide bombing outside the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul on August 26, 2021.

Based on the profile of the

attacker, the US is looking to focus on the IS cell that they believe was involved in the attack. The US, which has not carried out any airstrikes in Afghanistan since August 30, might target the cell by its "armed MQ-9 Reaper drones flying missions over Afghanistan from a base in the Persian Gulf", the NYT report said.

According to the report, the suicide bomber, Abdur Rahman al-Logari, was recruited by Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K), a group that is the Taliban's nemesis.

Logari was the son of an Afghan

merchant who frequently visited India and Pakistan for business. He used to study engineering at a college in Delhi. Logari was arrested in 2017 by Indian agencies based on a tip-off from the CIA that he was going to carry out an attack in Delhi sponsored by ISIS-K.

India handed over Logari to the CIA, following which he was incarcerated at the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base. Logari remained there until he was freed amid the chaos after Kabul fell. Logari was among the several militants freed from at least two high-security prisons

after the Taliban seized control of Kabul on August 15.

On August 26, 2021, Logari carried out a suicide bomb attack at the Kabul airport, which took place when evacuation operations were ongoing. Over 180 people, including 13 US Marine soldiers, were killed in the attack.

According to the NYT report, the US intelligence analysts and military officials say they have focused on learning more about the ISIS-K strike cell following the attack to see if they may be plotting any future attacks against the West.

A tragic fire broke out early Wednesday morning in a Philadelphia row house, according to the city's fire department.

"Preliminary information indicates companies arrived at 6:40 a.m. and found heavy fire coming from the second floor of a three-story rowhouse," the Philadelphia Fire Department tweeted. "It took 50 minutes to place the fire under control."

The ages of those that died were not immediately known. According to neighbours, the house was home to a number of children.

Around 6:40 am Wednesday, a fire broke out in the 800 block of N. 23rd Street.

Heavy flames were leaping from the second storey of the three-storey row house when firefighters arrived.

The fire was brought under control in roughly 50 minutes, according to the fire department.

Multiple fire crews were seen on the site from the Action Cam and Chopper 6.

The property had been converted into two apartments, according to Philadelphia police.

The cause of the fire is still being investigated.

It's unclear whether the house had working smoke detectors.

## Pet dog leads police in US to injured owner after crash

After a car accident in New Hampshire, a dog helped save her owner's life by guiding authorities to the scene.

On Monday, state police in Lebanon, New Hampshire, responded to reports of a dog running along I-89 near the Vermont border.

When troopers got close to Tinsley, a Shiloh Shepherd, she kept running away and eventually led them to a crash scene where they discovered a crushed truck, according to troopers.



They also discovered two injured and hypothermic victims.

They were allegedly thrown from the truck, according to police.

Police say it was clear the dog, which was in the truck when it crashed, was leading police to the scene. One of the injured men in the crash was Cam Laundry, who was later identified as Tinsley's owner.

Cam Laundry was driving the overturned Ford truck when it overturned.





# As midterms and 2024 loom, Trump's political operation revs up

Donald Trump and his allies are scheduling events and raising money for initiatives intended to make the former president a central player in the midterm elections, and possibly to set the stage for another run for the White House.

He and groups allied with him are planning policy summits, more rallies and an elaborate forum next month at his Mar-a-Lago resort for candidates he has endorsed and donors who give as much as \$125,000 per person to a pro-Trump super PAC.

The efforts seem intended to reinforce the former president's grip on the Republican Party and its donors amid questions about whether Trump will seek the party's nomination again or settle into a role as a kingmaker. Taken together, the pro-Trump groups form a sort of shadow political party that could help start another presidential campaign and, if that were successful, shape his administration. They include Trump's own PACs, which amassed more than \$100 million by last summer, employ an overlapping roster of former top officials from his administration and have signalled that they intend to embrace policies and candidates supported by Trump.

The groups have also helped reinforce his properties as a center of Republican power, holding events at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, and at the Trump National Golf Club

in Bedminster, New Jersey. Trump has welcomed to the clubs a stream of Republicans seeking his political blessing, issuing nearly 100 endorsements to aligned candidates, including challengers to GOP incumbents who voted for Trump's impeachment or supported the certification of his loss to President Joe Biden in the 2020 election.

The candidate forum at Mar-a-Lago is being planned for Feb. 23 by a super PAC run by some of Trump's closest allies called Make America Great Again, Again! Inc., according to an email to donors from Roy W. Bailey, a Texas businessman and Republican fundraiser.

"There will be an all-day candidate forum with back-to-back speeches from the endorsed candidates and familiar faces in the Trump orbit," wrote Bailey, who was a leading fundraiser for Trump's campaigns and inaugural committee, then registered to lobby his administration. "We want those who attend to leave thinking that it was the best political event they have ever attended."

Donors who raise \$375,000 will be invited to a private dinner with Trump.

Bailey noted that the PAC's national finance director was Kimberly Guilfoyle, who is dating Trump's son Donald Trump Jr., and that its board included Pam Bondi, the former Florida attorney general who advised Trump during his first impeachment; Richard Grenell, who was Trump's ambassador to Germany

and acting head of national intelligence; and Matthew G. Whitaker, who was acting attorney general.

The forum is for federal candidates endorsed by Trump. It is not clear how many of them intend to attend. But some, including Harriet Hageman, who is mounting a primary challenge against Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, one of Trump's harshest Republican critics, and Kelly Tshibaka, who is running in the primary against Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, have been asked to hold the date, according to a person familiar with the planning who was not authorized to discuss it.

Still, Trump's political activities have generated some grumbling within his circle of supporters. One donor who had supported Trump's campaigns said he was leery about donating to Make America Great Again, Again! because of concerns that the money would be wasted. Citing events at the former president's properties as an example, the donor, who insisted on anonymity to avoid antagonizing Trump and his allies, said he declined invitations to the February candidate forum and to a \$125,000-a-plate fundraising dinner with Trump held by the super PAC last month at Mar-a-Lago.

Other donors and party leaders worry about the damage that could be done by Trump's backing of primary challenges to Republicans who pushed back against his false claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

Trump was impeached twice, including after his supporters stormed the Capitol seeking to disrupt the certification of Biden's victory. Since then, he has been banned from the social media accounts he had wielded so effectively to generate attention and punish enemies without spending any money.

While Trump has announced the formation of his own media company, including a new social network to reinsert himself into the conversation, it has yet to launch and its financing has come under scrutiny from securities regulators.

Trump's team also has continued fundraising voraciously online for various PACs that he directly controls, compiling a war chest of more than \$100 million last summer, and his team has continued financing campaign-style rallies. He has plans for one in Arizona this month and more to follow, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Many of Trump's rallies in 2021 were paired with private donor round tables to raise money for his super PAC. He is planning more rallies in 2022 at locations chosen to help the candidates he has endorsed, according to people familiar with the plans.

Groups allied with him have stepped up their fundraising in recent months, indicating they intend to spend funds to promote his causes and endorsements.

## Iran nuclear talks: US hopeful of building on negotiations progress this week



Despite modest progress during negotiations in Vienna, the United States hopes to build on that this week, State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Tuesday amid efforts to revive a 2015 agreement.

With that agreement, championed by former President Barack Obama, Iran was relieved from crippling sanctions in exchange for halting its nuclear programme. However, Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in 2018, a year after he took office.

Iran has since stepped up its nuclear activities, amassing a stockpile of highly enriched uranium, violating many of the nuclear restrictions in the deal and going well beyond them.

Tehran, however maintains that it has never pursued the development of nuclear weapons. Its atomic program has further escalated the stakes despite Iran's claims that it only pursues peaceful nuclear activities.

During the negotiations for the nuclear deal, the UN's nuclear watchdog revealed that Iran had begun enriching uranium up to 20 per cent purity at an underground facility at Fordo, a site that was not permitted to enrich uranium under the deal.

Under the latest round of negotiations between Tehran and Washington, Iranian diplomats are once again seeking to lift US sanctions again. "There was some modest progress in the talks last week. We hope to build on that this week," Price told reporters. "Sanctions relief and the steps that the United States would take... when it comes to sanctions together with the nuclear steps that Iran would need to take if we were to achieve a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA - that's really at the heart of the negotiations that are ongoing in Vienna right now."





## New York City's new mayor rides subway hours after swearing oath to office

He made no remarks nor took questions from reporters, but appeared on "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest" shortly after being sworn in.

He told Seacrest he had a few parties to attend but that he would "be up early in the morning, working for the city of New York." Hours later, Adams walked from his Brooklyn brownstone to ride the subway to City Hall, accompanied by a throng of reporters.

While waiting for his train, Adams saw two men fighting on the sidewalk below the train platform, with a third man trying to intervene.

The new mayor called 911 to report "an assault in progress." The fight ended and two of the men left by the time two police patrol cars arrived.

Officers spoke to the remaining man but stayed in their car, and Adams told reporters he would have investigated more had he been the officer on the scene. On New Year's Eve, shortly before he took the oath, Adams appeared briefly on the main stage in Times Square to affirm the city's resiliency.

"Even in the midst of COVID, in the midst of everything that we're going through, this is a country where hope and opportunities is always, ever present," he said earlier in the night.

"It's just great when New York shows the entire country of how we come back," he said.

"We showed the entire globe what we're made of. We're unbelievable. This is an unbelievable city and, trust me, we're ready for a major

comeback because this is New York."

Adams, the former Brooklyn borough president, has struck a more business-friendly, moderate stance than his predecessor but describes himself as a practical and progressive mayor who will "get stuff done."

He's the city's second Black mayor, after David Dinkins, who served from 1990 to 1993, and the 110th mayor of New York City.

He held his first cabinet meeting Saturday morning and planned to give a speech at noon.

Saturday afternoon, he was scheduled to visit a police precinct in Queens where he was beaten by police officers when he was a teenager.

While promising to be a man of

action in the mayor's office, Adams is at times an unconventional politician who is expected to put his own stamp on the role.

Adams said this week that he plans to keep in place many of the policies of outgoing Mayor Bill de Blasio, including vaccine mandates that are among the strictest in the nation.

The city's municipal workforce is required to be vaccinated, as is anyone trying to dine indoors, see a show, workout at a gym or attend a conference. But New York City has also newly required employees in the private sector to get their shots, the most sweeping mandate of any state or big city and a policy Adams said he will preserve.

He's also committed to keeping schools open and avoiding any

further shutdowns in the city of 8.8 million.

Even without a mandated shutdown, the city is grappling with de facto closures because of widespread COVID-19 infections.

Several subway lines were suspended because positive test results among transit workers left too few staffers to run regular trains.

Some entertainment performances have been cancelled, and restaurants and bars are crunched as workers test positive.

Adams said he and advisers are studying whether to expand vaccine mandates and plan to distribute face masks and rapid tests, as well as introduce a colour-coded system alerting New Yorkers to the current threat level.

## Metabolic vulnerability of Lymphoma cells can be used to trick these cancers into starving themselves: Study

The study, published in Blood Cancer Discovery, shows that a protein called ATF4, a genetic master-switch that controls the activities of hundreds of genes, has a key role in supporting the fast growth of diffuse large B cell lymphomas (DLBCLs).

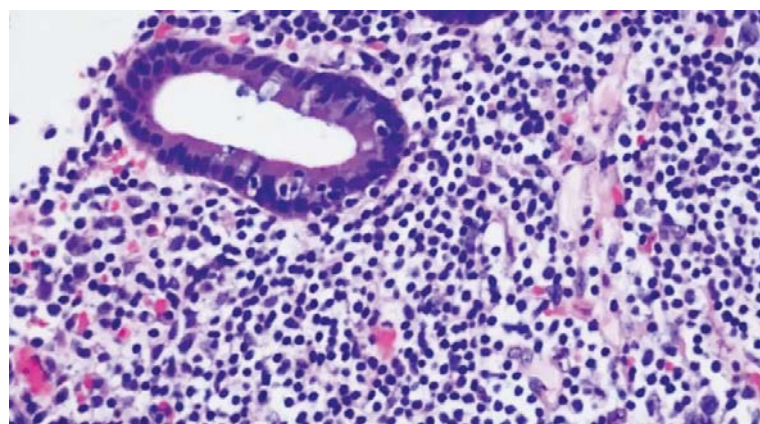
The syndrome, caused by a large, rapid release of immune substances called cytokines, may occur after treatment with some types of cancer therapies and can sometimes be severe or fatal.

It has different symptoms including fever, headache, and

troubled breathing, according to the National Cancer Institute.

"ATF4 represents a crucial and

appear to share regardless of the specific genetic mutations that trigger them," said study co-



exploitable vulnerability in senior author Ari Melnick. DLBCLs and one that they In the new study, the

researchers explored further how SIRT3 promotes DLBCL growth, and found that one of the important ways it does this is by increasing the production of another metabolism-influencing protein, ATF4.

SIRT3 resides in mitochondria, the tiny, oxygen-burning fuel reactors in our cells that are essential for powering cellular activities.

"One of the really interesting things about this study is that it shows how nutrient conditions, in principle even from patients' diets, can profoundly affect cancer-cell activity," said study

first author Dr. Meng Li, a member of the Melnick Laboratory who is also an instructor of cancer genomics in medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine.

"My lab has been working on the sirtuin family of enzymes for more than 10 years, yet this study revealed some very interesting connections among SIRT3, metabolism and nutrient or stress sensing," said Dr. Lin. "We are excited to consider the translational potential of this finding in treating lymphoma."





## Violence against women insults God, says Pope Francis in his New Year's message

of God as well as its annual World Day of Peace.

Francis appeared to be in good form on Saturday following an unexplained incident on New Year's Eve where he attended a service but at the last minute did not preside over it as he had been expected to. [read more](#)

At the start of the Mass on Saturday, he walked the entire length of the central aisle of basilica, as opposed to Friday night, when he emerged from a side entrance close to the altar and watched from the sidelines. Francis suffers from a sciatica condition that causes pain in the legs, and sometimes a flare up prevents him from standing for long periods. Francis wove his New Year's homily around the themes of motherhood and women - saying it was they who kept together the threads of life - and used it to make

one of his strongest calls yet for an end to violence against them.

"And since mothers bestow life, and women keep the world (together), let us all make greater efforts to promote mothers and to protect women," Francis said. "How much violence is directed against women! Enough! To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took on our humanity -not through an angel, not directly, but through a woman," he said, in a reference to Jesus's mother Mary.

During an Italian television programme last month, Francis told a woman who had been beaten by her ex-husband that men who commit violence against women engage in something that is "almost satanic". Since the COVID-19 pandemic began nearly two years ago, Francis has several times spoken out against domestic violence, which has increased in many countries since

lockdowns left many women trapped with their abusers.

Public participation at the Mass was lower than in some past years because of COVID restrictions. Italy, which surrounds Vatican City, reported a record 144,243 coronavirus related cases on Friday and has recently imposed new measures such as an obligation to wear masks outdoors.

In the text of his Message for the World Day of Peace, issued last month, Francis said nations should divert money spent on armaments to invest in education, and decried growing military costs at the expense of social services.

The annual peace message is sent to heads of state and international organisations, and the pope gives a signed copy to leaders who make official visits to him at the Vatican during the upcoming year.

## Priti Patel says borders bill will end appalling abuse of immigration



A new committee will look at a range of scientific methods for determining age and assess their accuracy and reliability as well as considering medical and ethical issues.

The UK government's Nationality and Borders Bill is currently before parliament, promising tougher action against people smugglers and, controversially, migrants themselves.

If passed, the bill, opposed by rights groups, will allow the return of asylum seekers who have passed through so-called "safe third countries".

According to analysis of Home Office data, last year, record numbers of more than 28,000 migrants who paid thousands of pounds to people traffickers arrived in the UK in often flimsy boats.

This was more than triple the numbers seen in 2020, with the higher numbers attributed to the smugglers' use of bigger boats to navigate one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

Tragically, 27 migrants drowned off France on November 24 after they attempted to cross in a boat likened by French officials to a children's inflatable pool. The high number of migrants crossing to Britain from mainland Europe has become a political headache for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The flow of migrants has also soured Britain's relations with France, prompting an unseemly blame game even as both sides try to disrupt the people trafficking networks.

## ITR filing: Who don't need to pay late fee for filing tax return after due date?

**WHO CAN FILE ITR AFTER DUE DATE WITHOUT LATE FEE?**

Income tax laws state that people with gross total income below the basic exemption limit will not have to pay a late fee for filing ITR beyond the due date.

The basic exemption limit applicable to an individual depends on the tax regime. Under the new regime, where there are no common exemptions, the basic exemption limit is Rs 2.5 lakh irrespective of age.

Meanwhile, under the old income tax regime, the basic exemption



limit would depend on the age of the person. It may be noted that under the old tax regime, the basic exemption limit for resident individuals below 60 years is Rs

2.5 lakh and it is Rs 3 lakh for individuals above 60 years but below 80 years. The basic exemption limit for citizens above the age of 80 years is Rs 5 lakh.

Therefore, if these terms apply to an individual, he or she will be able to file ITR without a late fee even after the due date.

### CONDITIONS APPLY

However, there are certain exceptions even for individuals who fit the basic exemption limit criteria. Certain individuals are required to mandatorily file ITR even if the gross total income is lower than the basic exemption limit. For instance, individuals who fall under the seventh proviso of Section 139(1) will have to pay a late fee even if their gross total income is lower than the basic exemption limit.

1) Those who have deposited an amount or aggregate of amounts exceeding Rs 1 crore or more in one or more accounts maintained with a bank or co-operative bank fall under the above-mentioned category. 2) Those who have incurred an expenditure of an amount or aggregate of amounts exceeding Rs 2 lakh for them or any other person for travel to a foreign country also fall under the category. 3) Those who have incurred expenditure of an amount or aggregate of amounts exceeding Rs 1 lakh towards electricity consumption fall under the category as well.



# Seriously Cyrus: The crush from college

## Cyrus Broacha gives advice on relationships, dating and more



I am a 23-year-old girl who has had a huge crush on a guy from college. Although I have never spoken to him and I don't know if he knows about my existence, but I can't seem to get over him, even though it's been a year since college ended. How do I get over my obsession? Please help. - KS

KS, what the hell did you do in college? It's like shopping in New York, after you've returned to Delhi. When in New York Shop in London, when in London

Shop in London, when in Yemen, er.....run. Okay please disregard. What I've written, we are starting again. Being in love with someone you don't interact with, is like being in love with a photograph. Of course after 27 years of marriage, many would prefer the photograph. Having squandered your college time, KS, you need a ruse to get him. Like maybe a friend needs admission to the college and would he have some influence.

Let's establish contact, see how he reacts. If he's friendly enough you stay in touch, if not, don't worry at least you got your graduation from college.

I am a 23-year-old and I have never been in a relationship till date. I was initially afraid to get into one and now, I am used to being single. Even if someone approaches me, I am not really sure of how to respond or reciprocate. I wanted to know if I'm heading right or is there

something I need to do? - PS

The Japanese agriculturist Dr HATO TAMAHARA, wrote a book on how relationships were very overrated. He had 7 failed relationships. From parents to his three wives. Finally, he found happiness with a potted plant. However, that lasted only 39 days, as the plant died after HATO overslept and forgot to water it. Being in relationships is great, but after being in one for a while, you yearn for freedom. This is called Human Nature. There is faulty winning in our 'human nature'. This is maybe because God was having an off day, or something the chimpanzee's passed on

to our ancestors in the DNA. So whatever we have after some time, we want the opposite. This explains why after Spicy Bhel-Puri we want a nice ice-cream. So don't be so gung ho on being in a relationship. It's something that's always good, bad and ugly. I am an 18-year-old girl and I am in a relationship with a guy who is 12 years elder to me. The problem is that he wants to get

married as soon as possible and I want to focus on my studies now. I have been trying to convince him for the past six months but nothing seems to work out. How do I sort this? - SK

SK, remember what the Poet Rumi wrote. 'Force is not' love.



Force is mass multiplied by acceleration. Okay, maybe it wasn't Rumi. He's 30 looking to get married. You are eighteen and at this age you should look forward to only one thing. Becoming nineteen..... Then, twenty, and so on. Just because he's older he shouldn't be allowed to steam roll you. If you needed a bull dozer, it's much cheaper to just rent one.

## The art of mood lighting: How to pull off the perfect setting for an intimate dinner

Nothing beats the romantic allure of mood lighting. A clever play of light and shadows could instantly uplift the aura of an intimate sit-down dinner at home. However, not many realise that the biggest mistake one could make when planning a cosy evening is using white light like the harsh glare of a fluorescent tube. The trick lies

in glow. You can also use a mix of dainty tea lights, scented candles, and filigreed candle holders for a play of shadow and light," shares Upasana Virmani, Category Manager - Home Décor, Art and Menswear, Jaypore.

In addition, multiple accent lights can create a beautiful effect in a room. Focal attention and

conversational pieces accentuate drama at a house party or if you have a date coming over for a quiet meal. "Choose lights that highlight your personal style. Fun options could include lamps incorporating figurines such as some of the table and



in not turning on the ceiling lights, which most builder houses have nowadays. Instead of that, work with table lamps and candles to enliven the setting. "Opt for lower watt lamps and lights, dimmers are a great idea, basically anything to mimic a soft

side-table lamps," suggests Raseel Gujral Founder, Casa Paradox.

More than investing in something which is trendy, pick something you love and improve it with light. Extrapolate lighting as both an

### Here's how you can pull off the perfect setting for an intimate dinner or when you have a date coming over



accent and mood-setter for any place under or behind the room in your home. "3000 kelvin colour is perfect to bring in the warmth one needs to create the dark romantic mood. So incandescent bulbs or halogen bring the desired result more easily," says Prateek Jain, Co-Founder klove Studio. Clear twinkle lights can be ideal to

indirect method of placement

and to reap the intimate atmosphere. Moreover, coloured twinkle lights can add to the effect of intimacy by stimulating certain moods, as mentioned above. For a romantic atmosphere, choose clear or white twinkle to boost the feelings of love and calm," adds Raseel.



# Top 5 beard care guide for this season

*Is it too hot to keep a beard? Is it too itchy? Here's an expert guide on how to keep your beard cool during summers*

If there's one question that irritates the beardsmen of today is when someone repeatedly asks them, "How can you keep a beard in summers"?

Although maintaining a beard during summertime can be tough, it's not an impossible task. We got in touch with hair experts Rod Anker and Jawed Habib and dermatologist Rajat Khandari who tell us what it takes to keep your beard cool in the scorching heat.

1)Clean thy beard: If you want your beard to be healthy, clean your beard two times a day.

The sweat, hot temperature and dampness in this weather can hamper your skin causing irritation, bad odour and dryness. Therefore, use a beard wash that contains a blend of natural oils to hydrate and replenish your skin. However, do not wash your beard in excess as it might make your beard dry and abrasive. 2)Moisturize thy beard: In summers, your beard hair tends to be coarse, which causes irritation. Use a beard moisturiser to combat beard itching. You can opt for a moisturiser that contains ingredients like aloe, chamomile,

and tea tree oil.

3)Hydrate thy beard: Dehydration is quite common in hot summers. When your beard is dehydrated, it becomes dry and brittle. Hence, for a healthy beard, adequate hydration is a necessity.

4)Soften thy beard: A soft beard is easy to maintain. Use a beard oil or conditioner to keep your beard hair soft and cool during the summer season.

5)Trim thy beard: A heavy beard can lead to an itchy skin or even acne. It would be preferable to trim the beard as a trimmed beard is easier to maintain.



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# Expert nutrition tips: When just your diet is not enough

**Fresh fruits and vegetables provide adequate nutrients if they are picked when ripe and eaten immediately. Today that is not possible as they are picked before they are ripe and then treated with chemicals to 'appear' ripe but do not have the nutritional value of ripe vegetables**

Our food production methods coupled with the burgeoning of the fast food industry and poor cooking methods play a key role in depriving our bodies of important nutrients. When nutrient deficiencies interact with high levels of stress and little or no exercise, they result in lifestyle diseases like type 2 diabetes, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, etc. It is clear from the growing incidence of lifestyle diseases that the food that we eat today does not provide us with optimum nutrients required to maintain a positive state of health.

Fresh fruits and vegetables provide adequate nutrients if they are picked when ripe and eaten immediately. Today that is not possible as they are picked before they are ripe and then treated with chemicals to 'appear' ripe but do not have the nutritional value of ripe vegetables. These 'fresh' fruits

and vegetables lose more nutrients as they travel from the farm to your kitchen.

Once in the kitchen, we overcook, deep fry, mishmash our food and even reheat the leftovers thus causing nutritional disasters. Such food has less than 25% of the original nutrient value left in it. Therefore, we cannot think of getting adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals only through food. Micronutrient deficiencies over a period of time reflect in terms of falling hair, lacklustre skin, weight gain, uncontrollable hunger, sugar cravings, low energy levels, mood swings, skin rash, etc.

The polishing of rice into 'polished white rice' and the refining of wheat into 'maida' adds to the probability of multi-nutrient deficiencies. Such food not only fails to nourish us, but also robs us of other nutrients in order to get metabolised, creating a

shortage of chromium, B-complex, magnesium and zinc in the body. As we age, our capacity to assimilate nutrients decreases due to inadequate hydrochloric acid. Frequent intake of antibiotics upset the intestinal flora creating a shortage of beneficial bacteria.

Many people don't like taking vitamin and mineral supplements, as they want to get everything from the diet. I truly wish this was possible, but this route just doesn't work in this modern world. Today, we are exposed to more environmental pollutants than ever before. Cigarette smoke, smog, chemicals in our drinking water, increased alcohol intake etc., cause more free radical generation in our body and our food does not give us enough antioxidants to defend ourselves against these toxins. Therefore, there is a need to take vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.



How to get adequate antioxidants into your body?:

The best way to get your antioxidants is to drink freshly prepared vegetable juices such as Barley grass, carrot, coriander, cucumber, mint, pomegranate, spinach, tomato and wheatgrass.

Also take supplements containing vitamin A, C, E and selenium. Choose fresh fruits over canned juices. Avoid boiling or overcooking your vegetables. You must steam, stir-fry, lightly

cook or eat them raw. Consume omega-3 supplements as they reduce the damage caused by pollutants. These fats are found in the alsi seeds, fish, soybeans, pumpkin seeds, and almonds. Avoid polyunsaturated-fatty-acids-based oils derived from sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, cottonseed, and corn which can turn rancid easily. Instead try to use mustard oil, sesame oil and olive oil that are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids.

## Wearable biosensors help wound healing process by imitating skin

**Biosensors are analytical devices that combine a biological component with a physiochemical detector to observe and analyse a chemical substance and its reaction in the body**

Researchers have developed biosensors that are structured similarly to that of the skin's microarchitecture and helps in the process of wound healing. The research was published in the Journal of Biosensors and Bioelectronics. "We eventually hope that these sensors and engineering accomplishments can help advance healthcare applications and provide a better quantitative understanding in disease progression, wound care, general health, fitness monitoring and more," said Matthew Brown, a PhD student, Binghamton University. Biosensors are analytical devices that combine a biological component with a physiochemical detector to observe and analyse a chemical substance and its reaction in the body. Conventional biosensor technology, while a great

advancement in the medical field, still has limitations to overcome and improvements to be made to enhance their functionality. Researchers developed a skin-inspired, open-mesh electromechanical sensor that is capable of monitoring lactate and oxygen on the skin. "We are focused on developing next-generation platforms that can integrate with biological tissue (e.g. skin, neural and cardiac tissue)," said Brown. This wearable sensor is equipped with gold sensor cables capable of exhibiting similar mechanics to that of skin elasticity. The researchers hope to create a new mode of sensor that will meld seamlessly with the wearer's body to maximize body analysis to help understand chemical and physiological information.

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# 'Water Is Medicine'



## How People in Iceland Use Pools, Hot Tubs to Improve Their Health

It was a frigid autumn day in northern Iceland.

I was checking into the Sigló Hótel in the tiny port of Siglufjörður, once considered the capital of the world herring fish industry.

Now it's a sleepy oceanside town.

While it was only about 3:30 p.m., darkness was upon us.

The porter lit up like it was midday as he entered my room, pointing first to the water faucet and then out the window to what sat below: an outdoor, year-round soaking spa.

"Drink it!" he said. "And soak in it! Water is our medicine."

I thought he was being clever, but I discovered otherwise during a weeklong trip through the many tiny towns of northern

Iceland, a region where it seems hot pots (the Icelandic name for hot tubs), saunas, and year-round outdoor pools are as ubiquitous as McDonald's arches are in the United States. The people I met? Lean and fit; engaged and happy.

And my own spirit, despite potential jet lag, short hours of light, and a grinding schedule? Serene.

Maybe there's something to this, I thought.

Could the key to long-term health and happiness truly be as simple as water?

Health and water

Iceland regularly tops lists of the healthiest - and happiest - countries.

The OECD Index rates it the second happiest population.

The Bloomberg Health Index rates it the second healthiest country in the world.

And then there's the organic "data."

It's hard to find someone not satisfied, in general, with their lives here. They lean toward positive. For the most part, they are also fit and active.

Water, they tell you, is a natural part of nearly every day for the Icelander. Heading to lunch? You might take 15 minutes of your lunchtime to hop into the restaurant's outdoor hot pots. Visiting another town or looking at your schedule in your own? A visit to the town's warmed outdoor pool is a must.

Morning routine of the retired? Head to the local pool or tub and soak, catch up on life, and just

breathe in the sharp, fresh air. And don't even ask for bottled water. The pure water right from their tap is cold and clean, and popular enough that it is bottled and shipped away.

The Blue Lagoon, set amid the moss-covered lava fields on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland, has long been known as a spot for healing and relaxation, not just for the warm water but for the minerals that the water holds.

The homes in Iceland are, for the most part, heated by steam from the hot water that sits just below their ground surface. Sometimes, Icelanders bury bread dough in the dirt and let the steam and heat from that water bake the bread.

But it's not just special spots

with minerals. Rather, it seems, it's a culture that embraces what I thought was a marketing line that day at the Sigló.

Water is indeed thought of as medicine.

Research backs it up

It's not like water as medicine is new to the world. President Franklin Roosevelt was perhaps the most influential American to embrace it when he visited hot springs regularly to manage his polio symptoms. Dr. Christof Leicht, PhD, a senior lecturer in exercise physiology at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom, began researching water as medicine after a graduate school visit to Japan, where, like Iceland, hot water immersion and water therapy seems to be everywhere.

## Flu Shot Isn't a Good Match for This Year's Virus: Why Experts Say Don't Worry

This year's flu vaccine isn't a great match against the dominant influenza strain circulating right now, according to a recent preprint study.

While this might sound alarming, experts say it's actually unusual for there to be a perfect match between the flu shot and the circulating strains.

One of the strains included in this year's shot - H3N2 - has picked up multiple mutations, leading to a vaccine mismatch.

The slight mismatch identified in the study doesn't mean that the shot is no longer effective, according to experts.

In fact, the flu shot will still be able to prevent many illnesses and keep many more who get sick with the flu out of the hospital, says Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious diseases specialist at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and the medical director of the National Foundation for Infectious

Diseases.

"Even if you get flu with that strain, you're very likely to have a less severe infection," Schaffner told Healthline.

What a mismatch means According to Dr. Marie-Louise Landry, the director of the Clinical Virology Laboratory and professor of laboratory medicine and medicine (infectious diseases) at Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, the influenza vaccine contains four different

influenza strains: two A and two B.

The circulating H3N2 strain has multiplied millions of times and in that process mutated to be slightly off target from the vaccine.

Even though the version of H3N2 that's included in this year's shot is an imperfect match to the H3N2 strain going around, there's still substantial overlap between the strains for the shot to provide meaningful protection, according

to Schaffner. The drift may mean that shot may be slightly less effective at preventing infections, but it should still help lessen the severity of disease, Landry told Healthline. In addition, the shot may still do a good job of targeting other A and B strains that are circulating. "Even if there is a mismatch for one, the vaccine can prevent infection with the other three, and there may be milder disease with the breakthrough virus," Landry said.



# Palace hopping in God's own country



***A visit to the palaces in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, gives an insight into the myriad opulence of the bygone eras***



Ancient forts and palaces are often considered to be portholes for travelling back in time. Standing strong since centuries, they take us on a visual expedition through the many journeys that have shaped history. During a recent trip to Kerala, we decided to explore the lesser-known palaces of the Kingdom of Travancore. These palaces do not seem massive at first sight. However, they have several sections that spread out across acres of grounds. We get to see a cluster of smaller single or double-storeyed structures with gabled and tiled roofs. The architectural brilliance of the place, is reflected through intricate carvings and functionality of layout. Several centuries old, each palace tells

the story of the kingdom and its relations with other kingdoms within and outside India.

Kuthiramalika (150+ years old) Literally meaning the horse palace, it derives its name from the 122 smiling horse heads - visible from the palace's main entrance - carved into the beams that support the roof. Built in the 1840s by the then Maharaja of Travancore, Swathi Thirunal Balarama Varma, the palace is situated near the Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Given that you have adhered to the dress code of the temple, you can club your visit to both the places. Also called Puthen Malika, the palace's architecture boasts of the use of rosewood,

teakwood, marble and granite. While visiting the interiors, you're not allowed to wear footwear. So, it is hard to miss the glossy smoothness of some sections of the floor. The reason behind it is the use of a mixture made of egg whites, charcoal, and limestone, which keeps the floor cool even on hot days. The well-trained guides here take you on a systematic journey explaining to you the many sections of the palace. It is truly a travel back in time as we see the thrones, the ivory cradles, the palanquins, the arms and other artefacts, once used by the royals. Also known as Nedumangad Valiya Koyikkal Palace, it was the royal headquarters of the Perakam

dynasty. It was built in the 16th century for Queen Umayamma of the Venad Royal Family. Currently, the Kerala State Department of Archaeology is the custodian of the palace and maintains the Folklore and Numismatic museums inside the property. The former has a huge collection of ancient artefacts that played a vital role in the day-to-day activities of common people as well as the royals. One can see the rare chandravalayam, the small percussion instrument played while reciting the ballad of Lord Rama, here. The latter has an exhaustive collection of coins and is a must-visit for those who collect them. The coins on display here reflect the ancient kingdom's trade relations with the Roman and Venetian dynasties, among others. Apart from guides, there are kiosks that tell you all about palace's history. Unlike our previous visits, the trip to Kilimanoor Palace, famous for being the birthplace of Raja Ravi Varma (RRV), was filled with surprises. To begin with, we couldn't spot a single tourist, and it was eerily quiet, except for the distant sounds of someone practising Carnatic vocals. The palace was devoid of any signs or guardsmen, too. Past the imposing gate, called padippura,

we found the source of the Carnatic music - a guru and shishya with a harmonium placed at the centre. The room turned out to be the former studio of RRV. Now, it was filled with his paintings and a lamp was lit in his honour, below a massive picture of him at the farthest end. The guru introduced himself as Rama Varma Thamburan, the sixth descendant of RRV, and apologised that he won't be able to let us in for "it was private property". However, as soon as he got to know that we had come from out of state, he showed us the palace grounds and explained the architecture. It resembled most of Kerala's residential homes from that era, adhering to the 'nalukettu', meaning beyond the imposing arch or the main gate, there were clusters of small and medium-sized houses, two ponds, wells, and sacred groves (kaavu). We were denied entry to the sacred forest, but we could witness the exterior architecture - there was a blue French-inspired building, commissioned by RRV, which clearly stood out - the ancient wooden carvings, and paintings. We also got to see one of the two ponds, which in a surreal manner seemed to reflect the stillness of time.



# Exploring Galle

## *A European city in Sri Lanka*



Dutch. Its wall enclave brims with attractions and surrounds three sides of the ocean. Here you can take in beautiful panoramic views of the peninsula and the sandy beaches.

Essentially it is a 90-hectare town that falls within a larger new city.

Architecturally, it is genius. A storm water drainage system was introduced 200 years ago to prevent flooding in the fort.

The fort itself even withstood the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, whereas a few other buildings sadly suffered losses.

Flag Rock, once the Portuguese bastion is the ultimate sunset point. It can be found at the southernmost end of the Fort. Its not uncommon to find locals here, leaping into the water off the rocks. To commemorate the Portuguese, a coat-of-arms emblem can be found on in the entrance with a rooster standing upon a rocky perch.

What to see Like any European

or Asian city, Galle has no shortage of things to do and see. Here are a few of the highlights.

**Galle Fort Hotel**

Pop past the 18th century Galle Fort Hotel. You won't be disappointed. Originally, a Dutch mansion and warehouse, today it is a sought-after hotel boasting the finest examples of Dutch Architecture of its kind. The grand Palladian colonnade and the ceremonial arch at the entrance will take your breath away. What's more, UNESCO has referred to this as a masterpiece of Cultural Heritage and conservation. By the same token, they have awarded the hotel the Asia Pacific Heritage Award of Distinction for its authenticity and historical value. Dutch Reformed Church & The Governor's House The Dutch Reformed Church built in 1754 houses houses many antiquities that when visiting will merit an hour and a half of your time. Within, you will find a hexagonal shaped orthodox pulpit, a first of its kind in Sri Lanka. Engraved tombstones line the floors, and large tablets dedicated to British settlers can be found on the walls. The organ loft once held a cumbersome Dutch organ.

If you are feeling up for a treasure hunt, explore the underground tunnels running from here to the Governor's House.

The 18-metre high Galle Lighthouse stands tall on the eastern end of the Fort. It was built in 1939 by the British. If you would like to see some spectacular views of both the ocean and the land, climb to the top. It is also the very first lighthouse ever built in Sri Lanka. Once you have explored the town's inner fortified walls, head to the fish market that can be found just outside the fort's main entrance. Rows of fishermen will be pulling in with their fresh produce from the day. The area is a delight for fish lovers. Museums and mansions Galle has a few notable museums. The Galle National Museum, found in the oldest Dutch building in the fort, displays a few interesting archaeological and anthropological objects that give insight into cultures and rituals of the Southern Region.

What's more, you can even see some of the equipment the Dutch used to build their vessels back in the day, as well as the Dutch soldiers weapons and uniforms.

### A step into Sri Lanka's past

Step back into Sri Lanka's exotic past when visiting the ancient coastal town of Galle. This European walled enclave along the South Coast of Sri Lanka will evoke within you a frozen in time nostalgia.

Artists, writers, photographers and designers alike have been seduced by Galle's ambience for centuries. Its Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial past, offers everything a historical European city will offer, amidst its genuine Sri Lankan charm.

As a matter of fact, it is a perfect example of European architectural styles mixed in with South Asian traditions. A true atmosphere of the past.

It's a world within a world. Its quaint streets are representative of a living museum, still bustling with life millennia later, thus receiving World Heritage Status by UNESCO. Ancient mosques, churches, grand mansions, meditative temples and museums are hidden away within the coral and granite walls of the 16th-century Dutch fort. Stylish cafes, quirky boutiques and impeccably restored hotels dot its narrow cobble stone streets still bearing their original names.

The Fort is the slow beating heart of Galle's history.

The Fort Galle's core is the 300 year old Fort built in 1663 by the





# SLOVENIA

## Where nature comes alive

**Slovenia is a small country that packs in a lot of delights - from a lively, picture-perfect capital city to castles and magnificent nature at every turn**

Slovenia is probably one of the most underrated countries when it comes to holiday and travel in the whole of Europe. It's a small country that packs in a lot of delights - from a lively, picture-perfect capital city to castles and magnificent nature at every turn. Thanks to the mountains, lakes, wine valleys, Slovenia was a perfect destination for rejuvenation. It is a country where the locals' joke that in May you could spend the morning skiing on the snowy peaks and the afternoon swimming in the sea. I started my journey in Slovenia from Ljubljana. Ljubljana means 'beloved,' and it did not take me long to fall under its charm. The gorgeous cobbled part of the city is sandwiched between the imposing hill-top castle and the Ljubljanica River. It's like someone decided it'd look

nice as a backdrop to the city when they built it. I set off to reach the Dragon bridge. Ljubljana's dragon is comfortably the city's most recognisable resident. Not only does it perch with teeth bared and wings spread on all four corners of the bridge, but its image also appears on the town's coat of arms, flag, manhole covers and even on the crest of the local football team. If stories are to be believed, then Mythological Greek hero Jason and his Argonaut comrades stole a Golden Fleece from the King of Colchis on the Black Sea. The Argonauts fled their pursuers and found themselves at the mouth of the River Danube instead of going back to their Greek homeland. There was no way back, so they went on, up the Danube and then along

the river Ljubljanica. They stopped at the source of the river and overwintered here. They came across a large lake with a marsh dragon that Jason killed after a heroic struggle. This monster is believed to be the Ljubljana dragon.

### Tolmin Gorge

The weather was stunning the next morning and the plan was to drive to Tolmin, located in the southern part of Triglav National Park. The drive through the winding roads of the national park was quiet and breathtaking.

The gorge is enchanting with a boardwalk running along the clear blue water and little waterfalls. The moss-covered rocks and narrow passages gave it a mysterious vibe. A little fun fact, the two turquoise rivers namely Soca and Tolminka meet along the

gorge.

### Lake Bled

I was a little heartbroken to leave Tolmin. Fortunately, the next stop was Bled — a picturesque town at the foothills of the Julian Alps. As I crossed the lake in a Pletna towards the island, which is also home to a church, I was captivated by the story of the bell that lies below the emerald green waters. It is believed that once upon a time, there lived a young widow in the castle of Bled. Robbers killed her husband and dumped his body into the lake. She was sad and visited the chapel on the island every day to offer her prayers. One day, she gathered all her gold to commission a bell for the chapel. During the transport of the bell, there was a storm, which sank the boat. On clear nights, people say we could hear the bell ringing from the deep waters of the lake.

Years later, the Pope blessed the chapel with another bell. It is to this blessing that a wish will be granted to anyone who rings the bell. A little research about the place, got me to do the Ojstrica hike. If it is the best "value" hike you're looking for (best reward per amount

of physical turmoil), then this one is your best bet. I have to admit, spotting where to begin the hike was tricky. But once I found it, I began climbing the steep uphill (611m). I walked on a dirt path surrounded by trees until I reached the signpost.





## Before slipping, Apple touches coveted \$3 trillion market cap



Apple seems to be on cloud nine as the company briefly crossed the \$3-trillion milestone in terms of the market cap on Monday. Although several companies and countries are witnessing a slump, some technology-based firms are ruling the roost. After hitting the latest milestone, the market cap dipped again slightly during the day. The Apple stock finally closed at \$182.01.

The company had surpassed the \$2-trillion mark more than a year ago. It had crossed \$1-trillion around three years ago.

To get officially designated as the first publicly-traded company to have \$3-trillion valuation, the market cap should have been above the \$3-trillion mark at the closure of the market at the end of the day's trade, reported The Verge.

The growth seems to have been witnessed due to the success of iPhones and other products despite numerous issues plagued by the coronavirus pandemic.

During an earnings call with analysts in October, Apple CEO Tim Cook had said, "We have set an all-time record for Mac and quarterly records for iPhone, iPad, Wearables, Home and Accessories representing 30 per cent year-over-year growth in products."



## India's first cryptocurrency index IC15 Launched: All you need to know

**Global cryptocurrency super app Cryptowire has launched India's first cryptocurrency index, IC15. Here is all you need to know**

Global cryptocurrency super app Cryptowire has launched a crypto index in India to monitor the performance of the 15 most traded cryptocurrencies, listed on leading exchanges in the world. The cryptocurrency index is known as IC15. Cryptowire is a special business unit of crypto statistics provided TickerPlant. In a statement, the company said the index is aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge of the cryptocurrency and blockchain ecosystem. It added that the index will help investors understand how virtual coin trading works. The development comes at a time when cryptocurrency trade has seen a massive jump in India, with more retail investors showing interest in virtual

currencies despite concerns around regulation.

### HOW WILL IC15 INDEX WORK?

It may be noted that the IC15 index comprises a governance committee (IGC) that includes domain experts, industry practitioners as well as academicians. They will be in charge of monitoring and maintaining the index, including reshuffling of the top 15 cryptos. Jigish Sonagara, Managing Director and CEO of CryptoWire, said, "Our approach is to facilitate market development and mitigate risk to a great degree by presenting all possible tools to evaluate possibilities and make decisions." "We want all participants to utilise, to the fullest, this research-oriented,

technology-powered opportunity for tracking the market," he added. For a cryptocurrency to be listed on the index, it needs to trade on at least 90 per cent of the trading days during the review period and should remain in the top 50 in terms of circulating market capitalisation during the preceding month. It should also be amongst the top 100 most liquid cryptocurrencies in terms of trading value to be eligible for listing on the IC15 index. As mentioned earlier, the index will be monitored, reviewed and rebalanced every quarter. The base value of the index is set at 10,000 and the base date is April 1, 2018. The top tokens are Bitcoin, Ethereum, Binance Coin and Solana, which occupy the four leading positions.

## India's services growth slows in December, inflation pressures persist

The new business sub-index was above 50 for a fifth month, supported by the real estate and business services sectors, although the growth rate softened to a three-month low. India's services sector expanded for a fifth straight month in December, albeit at a slower pace than in the previous month, as demand rose but concerns over another wave of COVID-19 and inflationary pressures cast a shadow over the outlook, a survey showed. Wednesday's Services Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by IHS Markit, eased to 55.5 in December from 58.1 in November, the lowest since



September but still well above the 50-mark that separates growth from contraction.

"2021 was another bumpy year for service providers and growth took a modest step back in

December. Still, the latest readings pointed to robust increases in sales and business activity compared to the survey trend," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at

IHS Markit. The new business sub-index was above 50 for a fifth month, supported by the real estate and business services sectors, although the growth rate softened to a three-month low. Export business continued to decline as travel restrictions related to the pandemic weighed on international sales. Business confidence was at a four-month high in December on robust demand, yet rising coronavirus infections kept it in check. India reported its highest number of COVID-19 cases since <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-india/india-reports-most-covid-19-cases-since-august-2021-12-06>

since September this week, approaching 40,000 cases in a day, pushing the total tally of infections to around 35 million. Higher prices for transportation, vegetables and medical equipment fueled input costs but firms passed less of that burden to customers. The Reserve Bank of India is not expected to raise interest rates until next quarter, according to a Reuters poll <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/india-cbank-hold-rates-dec-meeting-hike-early-next-year-2021-12-06> taken last month, as inflation has been within its 2%-6% target range since July.



# Once in, there's no out soon:

## Here's what happens inside Hong Kong's Covid isolation wards

It has been nearly three weeks since Darryl Chan tested positive for Covid-19 on arrival at the Hong Kong airport. Despite showing no symptoms, he still remains isolated in a hospital ward. He does not know when he will be allowed to leave.

Apart from mainland China, Hong Kong is one of the few places in the world that is pursuing a strict 'zero-Covid policy'. This means that most non-residents are not allowed to enter and those who do arrive from abroad have to undergo three weeks of quarantine, whether or not they are fully vaccinated.

Darryl Chan flew from London to Hong Kong on December 19 for his new job, CNN reported. He was fully vaccinated with a booster shot and had tested negative multiple times before he left the UK. However, on arrival in Hong Kong, he took the mandatory Covid test and was found to be positive.

More than 12 hours after he landed, he was taken to a nearby hospital for further testing. Although asymptomatic, he was found to be infected with the Omicron variant of the virus.

In Hong Kong, the minimum isolation period for those who test positive, even if asymptomatic, is around a month. They have to stay at the hospital for at least ten days and are not allowed to leave till they test negative twice, no matter how long that takes. After testing negative twice, the patients under confinement orders are taken to isolation facilities for two more weeks. Accordingly, Darryl Chan has been in an isolation ward since December 19 and is not sure when he will be able to see the world again. He spends 24 hours a day in the room and has no access to fresh air.

"I think the worst part is not knowing when I'll be able to get out. You're almost feeling like you are back at school, with controlled wake-up and bedtime and not being able to control what you can eat," he was quoted in a CNN report.

### DAILY ROUTINE IN ISOLATION WARD

In the isolation ward, Darryl Chan's daily routine must match that set by the hospital.

***In pursuance of its zero-Covid policy, Hong Kong has put in place extremely stringent quarantine rules that entail long periods of isolation. Here's an inside look at what happens in Hong Kong's Covid isolation wards***



At 8 am, he wakes up to a jingle on the public address system and an announcement that reminds him to monitor his vitals.

He is given his meals at fixed times. He spends the rest of the day watching Netflix and using social media.

"I'd say probably early or mid-afternoon are the hardest time of the day," he told CNN. "In the morning, you check your emails or social media. But by the time lunch rolls around, that's when you go, 'I don't really know what I'm going to do'."

The doctors have not been able to shed light on when he will be discharged. It all depends on when he tests negative, he said. **IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH** With its zero-Covid policy and strict quarantine measures, Hong Kong has largely succeeded in keeping its Covid case numbers and hospitalisations low. However, this comes at a cost the mental health of those undergoing long periods of isolation.

Darryl Chan said he is worried about his mental health as his isolation period stretches further and further.

"I definitely feel quite trapped and that's a scary feeling I'm trying to rationalise it, I think just going through the processes knowing that there are certain things you can and can't change ... the only thing that I can change is how I approach it and what I do with my time," he told CNN.

"I am trying to turn it into something useful, something

interesting to hopefully one day look back on and remember that time when I sat in a hospital room for X number of days," he added.

On this, psychiatrist Dr Elisabeth Wong said, "In general, there is increased sense of isolation, anxiety, and in some severe cases, even post-traumatic stress. However, there are tips to maintaining good mental health. This includes making sure you schedule your day quite clearly so you have rest times and work times. As much as you can, incorporate some kind of exercise within the day." She also suggested seeing quarantine as an act of altruism rather than a punishment.

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# Can expect Covid curve to flatten in 3 months: Top ICMR scientist

**A top ICMR scientist said that the Covid curve could begin to flatten within three months**

A top epidemiologist at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) expects that the Covid curve could begin to flatten within three months.

Dr Samiran Panda, head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, ICMR, said the coronavirus graph case could flatten only if people follow Covid norms.

"The Covid curve could flatten in the next three months, provided these four things happen. Those states that fall behind in vaccination try to ramp it up, people avoid mass gatherings, people avoid non-essential travel and maintain mask usage with vaccination," said Dr Samiran Panda.

What is the flattening of the curve?

The "curve" researchers are talking about refers to the projected number of people who will contract Covid-19 over a period of time, a Live Science report said.

The faster the infection curve rises, the quicker the local health care system gets overloaded beyond its capacity to treat people "A flatter curve, on the

other hand, assumes the same number of people ultimately get infected, but over a longer period of time. A slower infection rate means a less stressed health care system, fewer hospital visits on any given day and fewer sick people being turned away, the report said. According to a report by the World Health Organisation (WHO), a very high curve is created by a steep increase in the number of cases per day, followed by a quick decrease in the number of cases. "A flatter curve is created by a more gradual increase in the number of cases per day and a more gradual decrease. Over a long period of time, the number of people infected might be around the same, but the difference is the number of cases that occur each day," the report said.

Vaccines against Omicron

Dr Samiran Panda also spoke about some experts suggesting that Omicron being a mild infection could help end the pandemic.

He said there will be a rise in the number of infected individuals and that "vaccines will not stop the

acquisition of the infection".

"These are disease-modifying vaccines. There will be a surge of infected individuals. Exposure to the Omicron could itself be a vaccine," said Dr Samiran Panda.

As more and more people are getting infected, the infections are getting less severe," Dr Samiran Panda said.

He said, "Vaccines are able to reduce the severity of infections in the case of Omicron. However, we do not know what effect will it [Omicron] have on the elderly. Hence, we should be cautious."

Hospitalisations in India  
Hospitalisations in India could rise in a few weeks. Health experts believe Covid-19 cases are slowly beginning to surge and a proper analysis could come through only a few weeks later.

"Seventy per cent of the infections are asymptomatic and 30 per cent are mild. Some hospitalisations could be anxious, but we must not forget that India still has Delta variant," he said.

Amid the Omicron threat, the ICMR is conducting research to find out Covaxin's efficacy against

this mutant variant. The results of this experiment are awaited.

ICMR's 4 sero-surveys

The ICMR has already done four serosurveys to assess the spread of coronavirus infection in India.

The fourth round of the ICMR's national serosurvey found that seropositivity or the presence of antibodies was highest in Madhya Pradesh at 75.9 per cent and lowest in Kerala at 44.4 per cent.

As many as 67.6 per cent of the population has developed antibodies against Covid-19, the report said.

A fifth serosurvey may be able to shed light on how far we may still be from herd immunity.

India reports daily surge of 50,000

Covid-19 cases

India's daily Covid-19 cases crossed the 50,000-in-a-day mark on Tuesday with several states like Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu reporting a surge in their fresh infections.

As per the data available at the time of filing this report, cases reported in Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Goa, Punjab and Telangana, crossed the 50,000-mark.

The final tally of India's Covid-19 cases will, however, be released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoFHW) on Wednesday morning.







## Entitled to default bail since court didn't take cognisance of ED chargesheet: Anil Deshmukh

**Anil Deshmukh has filed a default bail application before a special PMLA court, stating that he is entitled to bail as the court has not taken cognisance of the chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate**

Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has filed a default bail application before the special court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Mumbai.

In his application, Anil Deshmukh stated that since the court has not taken cognisance of the chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) so he, after a period of 60 days, is entitled to be bailed out of prison. Anil Deshmukh, who is being investigated by the ED on charges of money laundering, has sought default bail or statutory bail. Default or statutory bail is a filed by an accused behind bars, regardless of the nature of the crime.

Anil Deshmukh's bail plea, filed through advocate Aniket Nikam, states that he has been behind bars since November 2, 2021 when he was first remanded to the

ED custody. Excluding the first remand, a period of 60 days has already served by him.

The bail plea states, "The remand of Deshmukh to custody beyond the period of 60 days is non est in the eyes of law, in view of the statutory embargo contained in Section 167 CrPC. That, since right to statutory bail arises only after completion of 60 days of remand, this application is now being preferred." Section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) talks about the procedure that is to be adopted for remands - police remands as well as judicial remand. The ED has already filed prosecution complaint or chargesheet against Anil Deshmukh and his two sons --

Hrishikesh and Salil. The chargesheet was filed by the investigating officer on December 29, 2021, well within the 60 days that the agency had from the time

of Deshmukh's arrest.

However, the court is yet to take cognisance of the chargesheet.

Anil Deshmukh's bail plea states that if within 60 days, cognisance is not taken by court, the remand of the accused can neither continue under Section 167(2), nor under other provision of CrPC 1.e. under Section 309(2).

"Thus, on the expiry of the said period of 60 days, if investigation is not completed and cognizance is not taken, an indefeasible right of statutory bail accrues to the accused under Section 167(2) CrPC. which is also a constitutional and fundamental right in terms of Article 21," the plea states.

It was on December 27 that Anil Deshmukh was sent to further judicial custody till January 10, 2022.

The PMLA court will be hearing his bail plea on January 5.

## China getting befitting response: MEA on Chinese flag at Galwan



**Reacting to China's unfurling of its national flag at the Galwan Valley, MoS External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi said the Indian military is handling the situation**

Reacting to China's unfurling of its national flag at the Galwan Valley, Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi on Tuesday said the Indian military is handling the situation and China is getting a "befitting response".

This is the first official response from the Ministry of External Affairs on the issue.

"Indian military is handling the situation. I do not want to speak. China is getting a befitting response," Meenakshi Lekhi said.

On January 1, China laid claim to the Galwan Valley once again by unfurling its national flag. Videos of the event were put out by various Chinese government mouthpieces.

When asked about reports of construction of a bridge by China on the Pangong Lake, Meenakshi Lekhi said, "If China does anything, we will give a befitting response."

Meenakshi Lekhi also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his tweet questioning the Centre over China's flag hoisting at Galwan Valley.

"I do not respond to such tweets. His own mother met the Chinese in Thailand. What is he talking about?" Meenakshi Lekhi said.

"Modi government is responding to the issue well. The issue is not mine. Military will respond to it," she added.

In his tweet, Rahul Gandhi had asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "break the silence" over the Chinese "incursions" in Galwan.

"Our tricolour looks good in Galwan. There should be a response to China. Modiji, break the silence," Rahul Gandhi said in the tweet.





# Bases housing US troops in Iraq, Syria come under attack

**According to an Iraqi officer, an Iraqi base housing US troops in the western Anbar province was hit with five Katyusha rockets on Wednesday evening; three other rockets fell outside the base's parameter**

Iraqi military bases hosting US troops in Iraq's western Anbar province and the capital of Baghdad were hit by Katyusha rockets Wednesday while in Syria, eight rounds of indirect fire landed inside a base with members of the US-led coalition, the Iraqi and US militaries said.

No casualties were reported in the three attacks, part of a series that began on Monday, the anniversary of a US airstrike that killed top Iranian general Qassim Soleimani in Baghdad two years ago.

According to an Iraqi officer, an Iraqi base housing US troops in the western Anbar province was hit with five Katyusha rockets on Wednesday evening; three other rockets fell outside the base's parameter. The officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said US-led coalition forces at the base were forced into shelters by the barrage. There was no immediate comment from the coalition, which is in Iraq to help fight the Islamic State group.

Later Wednesday, a previously-unheard of group in Iraq calling itself Qassem al-Jabarayn claimed responsibility for the Ain al-Asad attack. The group

vowed in an online post to keep up attacks until the full withdrawal of US forces.

Since Soleimani's death, Iran-backed militias in Iraq have become increasingly unruly and disparate, although some analysts argue the militias have splintered only to allow them to claim attacks under different names to mask their involvement.

Earlier Wednesday, the Iraqi military said a rocket launcher with one rocket was located in a residential district in western Baghdad, an area used in the past by Iran-backed militias to fire at the airport.

In eastern Syria, the rounds hit a base run by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces with a small coalition advisory presence. The coalition said in a statement there was minor damage.

Coalition forces, acting on intelligence, responded by firing six rounds of artillery towards the point of origin of the attack just outside the eastern town of Mayadeen, a stronghold of Iran-backed fighters, the statement said.

The statement said "Iran-supported malign actors fired ... from within civilian infrastructure with no regard for civilian safety." It said that hours earlier, US-led coalition

forces had observed several launch sites near the base known as Green Village. Coalition forces conducted several strikes to eliminate the threats, it added.

"The Coalition reserves the right to defend itself and partner forces against any threat, and will continue to do everything within its power to protect those forces," said Maj. Gen. John W. Brennan, Jr., commander of the joint task force.

John Kirby, Pentagon press secretary, said Wednesday that the military has been preparing for stepped-up attacks in Iraq around the end of the year.

"We're very mindful of the threat environment and it is very dynamic right now," he said. Kirby said the attacks could be related to the anniversary of Soleimani's killing or a reaction to the continuing presence of American forces in Iraq - but likely are a combination of both.

Iranian-backed militias have wanted all US troops out of the country, and many believed that would happen by the end of the year.

On Monday, two armed drones were shot down as they headed toward a facility housing US advisors at Baghdad airport. Two explosives-laden drones

targeting an Iraqi military base housing US troops in western Anbar province were destroyed on Tuesday. The 2020 US drone strike at Baghdad's airport killed Soleimani, who was the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

Pro-Iran Shiite factions in Iraq have vowed revenge for the killing and have conditioned the end of attacks against the US presence in Iraq on the full exit of American troops from the country.

The US-led coalition formally ended its combat mission supporting Iraqi forces in the ongoing fight against the Islamic State group last month. Some 2,500 troops will remain as the coalition shifts to an advisory mission to continue supporting Iraqi forces.

The top US commander for the Middle East Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie warned in an interview with The Associated Press last month that he expects increasing attacks on US and Iraqi personnel by Iranian-backed militias determined to get American forces out.

**January 6, 1982,  
Forty Years Ago:  
Vajpayee's Padyatra**



Lok Dal President Charan Singh who had earlier turned down the BJP president's offer for functional unity of the Opposition parties instead of the merger of the Lok Dal, Janata Party, Congress (S) and the BJP agreed to join Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his trip to Deoli for a padyatra from there to Sadhopur. People of Scheduled Caste communities were massacred at the two places. Singh changed his mind after a meeting with former BJP MP from Delhi, Kanwarlal Gupta.

**NSA On Assam Leaders**

The Assam situation took an intriguing turn on January 5 as the government released all the leaders of the All Assam Students Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad arrested for defying prohibitory orders a day earlier. Five so-called hardliners continue to be held under NSA. These are the AASU general secretary Bharat Nath, chief of the AASU volunteer forces Joynath Sarma, executive members Gagan Dutta and Jatin Mali and Girin Barua president of the Jatiyatabadi Dal, a constituent of the AAGSP.

**Deng Talks Peace**

Chinese Communist Party Vice President Deng Xiaopeng said that the recent Sino-Indian talks on the border issue were useful and China had always desired friendship with neighbours on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. He said he was not opposed to the Soviet initiative on disarmament but said that the two superpowers must be prepared to renounce hegemony.

**Beggars' Unity**

All the beggars of the world should unite, is the call given by beggars in Jaipur who have formed a Beggars' Federation. However, the body is facing trouble in finding an office as nobody is ready to rent their premises to it.





## With Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-3 progressing, Isro has plans for Venus

India's most ambitious undertaking in space, Gaganyaan, has entered the testing phase and the Indian Space & Research Organisation (Isro) is hopeful of launching the first unmanned mission this year. Isro chairman K Sivan in his new year message said that teams are working on testing the Vikas engine, cryogenic stage, crew escape system for the mission.

"Tests are in progress for the human-rated L110 Vikas engine, Cryogenic stage, Crew escape system motors and service module propulsion system. The S200 motor has been realised for the ground test too. Main parachute drop test has also commenced," Sivan said, adding that astronauts have completed the generic spaceflight training in

Russia and the Indian leg has commenced.

"There is a directive to launch the first unmanned mission before the 75th anniversary of India's independence and all the stakeholders are putting their best effort to meet the schedule. I am sure that we will be able to meet this target," Sivan said.

**PLANS FOR 2022** - Apart from readying Gaganyaan, Isro has several missions that will spread wings in 2022. Isro chairman said that Earth Observation Satellite (EOS) 4 and 6 will be launched on PSLV along with the maiden flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV).

Meanwhile, the hardware loop test for the Aditya L1 mission, the Indian spacecraft to the Sun, is complete, accommodation studies for XpoSat in SSLV are

done and the space agency has delivered the S-band SAR payload to NASA for the Nisar mission. "In addition, we also have Chandrayaan-03, Aditya L1, XpoSat, IRNSS and technology demonstration missions with advanced indigenously developed technologies on-board," the Sivan said. Talking about the decadal plan for the Indian space programme, Sivan said that it will foster all-around growth in operational missions, launch services, science missions, technology demonstration missions and new technology development initiatives.

**WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE?**

While Isro is working on the Gaganyaan and Aditya L1 missions, scientists have major plans in the pipeline that includes

Disha, a twin aeronomy satellite mission, the Venus mission and ISROCNES, a joint science mission TRISHNA. Sivan said that the TRISHNA mission is meant for accurate mapping of land surface temperatures. "This mission will be the benchmark for providing temperature data at best resolution and repeatability even globally," he added.

**THE YEAR GONE BY**

Reflecting on all the work conducted by Isro in 2021, Sivan said that there is a feeling that very little happened in Isro during 2021. That feeling is primarily due to the fewer number of launches. He commended all the scientists and engineers on designing and developing missions despite the raging Covid-19 and successive lockdowns.

"Last year, we had two missions in which one was a dedicated commercial mission by NSIL. GSLV F-10 mission failed due to cryogenic stage anomaly. A national-level failure analysis committee was constituted for the same and the committee has identified the root cause and given its recommendations. Necessary design changes are being incorporated to improve the robustness of concerned systems," Sivan said in his message.

He maintained that design changes on Chandrayaan-3 have been incorporated and testing has seen huge progress. The mission could be launched by the middle of next year. Meanwhile, the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan) and Astrosat remain operational.

## Alexa becomes Callisto, Amazon's voice assistant to help astronauts on the Moon

Alexa...what's the temperature outside?

It's minus 173 degrees Celsius on the Moon.

Amazon, Lockheed Martin and Cisco have joined hands to integrate a human-machine interface technology into the Nasa Orion spacecraft that will launch to the Moon as part of the Artemis mission. The system will provide AI-based voice and video support to astronauts when they return to the Moon.

Dubbed Callisto, the technology demonstration will be integrated into Nasa's Orion



spacecraft for the agency's Artemis I uncrewed mission around the Moon and back to Earth. Named after a mythological Greek goddess

and one of Artemis' hunting attendants, Callisto will be integrated to use human-machine interface technology to make their jobs simpler, safer

and more efficient.

"I can imagine a future where astronauts can access information on flight status and telemetry -- such as spacecraft orientation, water supply levels or battery voltage status, through simple voice commands," Howard Hu, deputy Orion program manager at NASA's Johnson Space Center said.

The technology will allow Alexa to work without an internet connection, and Webex to run on a tablet using NASA's Deep Space Network. The teams have been working with Nasa to build

a virtual crew experience allowing operators to interact with Callisto from the Mission Control Center. The remote interaction will test and demonstrate how voice and video collaboration technologies can help astronauts improve efficiency and situational awareness during their mission. "The Star Trek computer was part of our original inspiration for Alexa, so it's exciting and humbling to see our vision for ambient intelligence come to life onboard Orion."





# It's getting tense in space as James Webb Telescope stretches into iconic shape

**Webb team finished tensioning the first layer of the observatory's sunshield - that is, tightening it into its final, completely taut position**

Days after it launched from the tropical forests of French Guiana on a voyage to see the birth of our Universe, the James Webb Telescope is finally taking shape with its kite-like sunshield out in open. A feat of engineering and scientific marvel, the observatory is going through tensioning of the five layers to stretch them to their iconic shape.

Webb's team finished tensioning the first layer of the observatory's sunshield that is, tightening it into its final, completely taut position. This is the first of the five layers that will be tensioned to bring them into full deployed position that will protect the telescope from the heat of the Sun, Moon and the Earth as it arrives at the second Lagrange point (L2).

"This layer is the largest of the five, and the one that will experience the brunt of the heat from the Sun. The tennis-court-sized sunshield helps keep the telescope cold enough to detect the infrared light it was built to

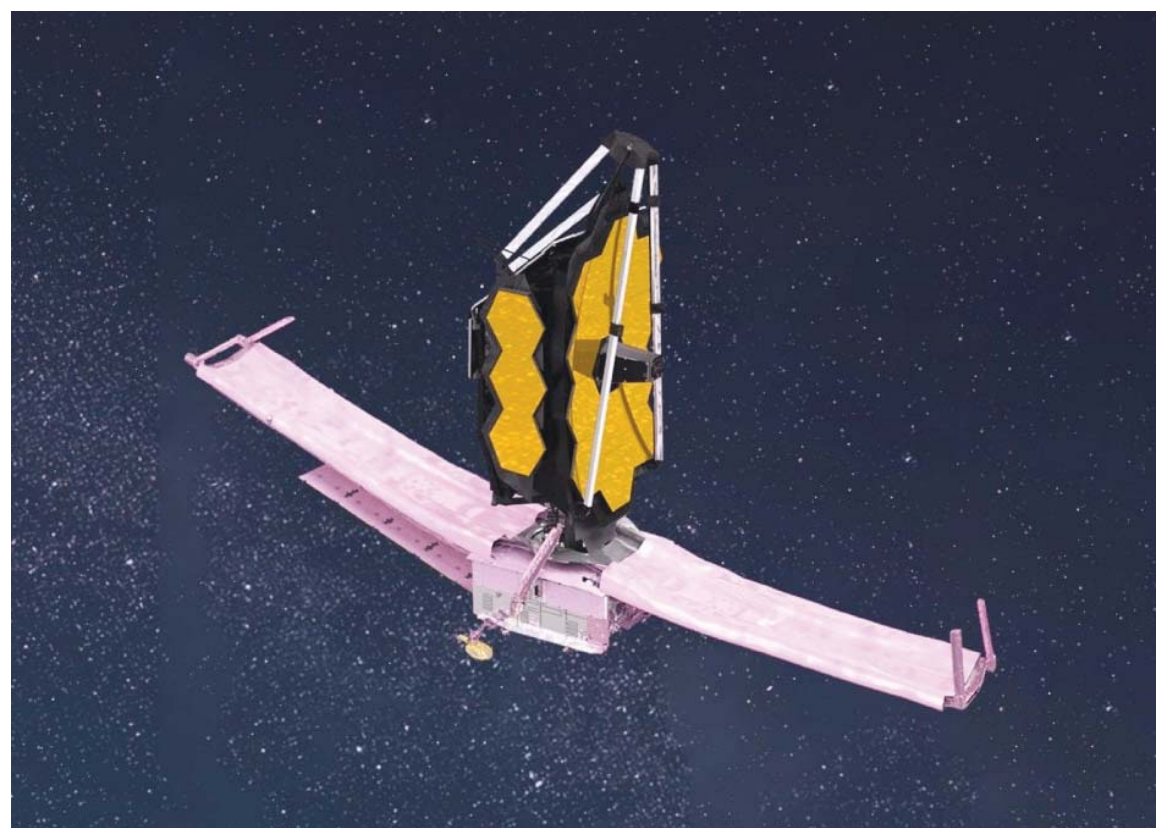
observe," Nasa said in a blog update. The American space agency has said that it will take the team two to three days to tension the five-layer sunshield. With the first layer in place, the team has already begun working on the second layer. The critical step in the observatory's complex sequence of deployments resumed after mission managers paused deployment operations on Saturday to allow for the team to rest, and then again on Sunday to make adjustments to Webb's power subsystem and to alter the observatory's attitude to lower the temperature of the motors that drive the tensioning process. The sunshield is so critical that if it isn't in place to keep the telescope and instruments extremely cold, Webb would be unable to observe the universe in the way it was designed. Made from a unique material, each of the five layers has a

specific thickness and size, and they must be precisely separated in space.

Made up of a material called Kapton, each layer is coated with aluminium, and the sun-

facing side of the two hottest layers have doped silicon to reflect the sun's heat back into space. Each layer is made up of different thicknesses, layer 1 will face the sun and is only 0.05

millimetres thick, while the other four layers are 0.025 mm in thickness. The material of the sun shield does shrink as it gets colder, and the hot layers expand.







**This asteroid can make you richer than a billionaire**



Most of us are content with the idea of becoming a millionaire. The ambitious aim for the billionaire club and perhaps only tech companies can dream of being in T-club. But what if you become a 'quintillionaire'? With 18 zeroes in your net worth, the Bezos and Musks of the world wouldn't stand a chance against you.

All you have to do is go to space, travel to the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, and mine metals from an asteroid. It is estimated that the asteroid is made of metals worth 10 quintillions! The asteroid is literally biggest floating bank in our solar system!

If you think this is crazy, obtain info on an asteroid dubbed 16 Psyche. It is located in the main asteroid belt.

The asteroid, first discovered by Italian astronomer Annibale de Gasparis in 1852 is made up of exposed metallic iron, nickel and even gold. Scientists think that the asteroid is part of remains of the core of a shattered planetesimal, that is, a clump of space rocks that was on the verge of becoming a planet but didn't.

From Earth, asteroid 16 Psyche appears hazy but by analysing the light reflected off the surface of the asteroid, scientists have been able to conclude that it is very rich in metals.

## Three asteroids to swoop past Earth in first week of 2022; 10 throughout January

**Nasa tracks over 26,000 near-Earth asteroids and over 1,000 of these are considered potentially hazardous**

Nasa has released information on three Near Earth Objects (NEO) that will swoop past Earth in the first week of January as astronomers track their movement around the Sun. The three asteroids are just the first in a series of 10 such visits by asteroids throughout January.

The asteroid movement is being tracked by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which is yet to issue any warning around these objects if they are potentially dangerous or not. Among the three visiting Earth's orbit in the first week of the month, 22021 YQ is the biggest with a size

extending between 49-110 meters wide.

Asteroids are rocky fragments left over from the formation of the solar system about 4.6 billion years ago. According to JPL, an asteroid is classified as a near-Earth object when its distance from our planet is less than 1.3 times the distance from Earth to the Sun (the Earth-Sun distance is about 93 million miles).

Nasa tracks over 26,000 near-Earth asteroids and over 1,000 of these are considered potentially hazardous.

What are the asteroids visiting Earth in first week of January? Asteroid 2021 YQ: The asteroid

will have a close approach to Earth on January 5 as it swoops past at a speed of 52,848 kilometres per hour. The asteroid last came close to Earth in 1923.

Asteroid 2014 YE15: This Near-Earth Object will swoop past our planet on January 6 at a speed of 22,932 kilometres per hour, relatively slower than the asteroid 2021 YQ. The asteroid, which is 5.8-13 meters wide will next visit us in 2024. Asteroid 2020 P1: This asteroid will zoom past our planet on January 7. Smallest among the lot of the first three asteroids to visit in 2022, it is just 3.2-7.1 meters

wide.

The other seven are: asteroid 2013 YD48, 2021 BA, 7482 1994 PC1, 2022 AB, 2018 PN22, 2018 PN22, and 2021 BZ.

This is not the first time that a series of asteroids are zooming past Earth on consecutive days. In December 2021, six Near-Earth Objects flew past the planet on the same day. Asteroids 2021 VX7, 2021 WE1, 2021 WM2, 2021 XT1, 2021 WL2, 2021 XE will make a close approach to the planet on their way to the Sun. The biggest among the six asteroids was 2021 VX7 which is between 31-70 meters in diameter.

## 'Wooden' satellite in space by 2023? Explore ambitious plans of Japanese researchers

In a first, a plan seems to be underway in Japan to launch a "wooden" satellite in 2023.

The team, which is developing it, looks to harness the environmental friendliness and low cost of wood in space development.

The team comprising of Kyoto University and Sumitomo Forestry Co will come up with the satellite. Its exterior will be made of wood, which will help it burn on re-entering the

Earth's atmosphere when its operation ends. It will put less burden on the environment.

Not just this, it will be cheaper than aluminum, which is mostly used in construction of a satellite.

As the electromagnetic waves can penetrate wood, it will contain an antenna inside.

The team is being led by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Takao Doi. It plans to attach wooden sheets with varying hardness on the

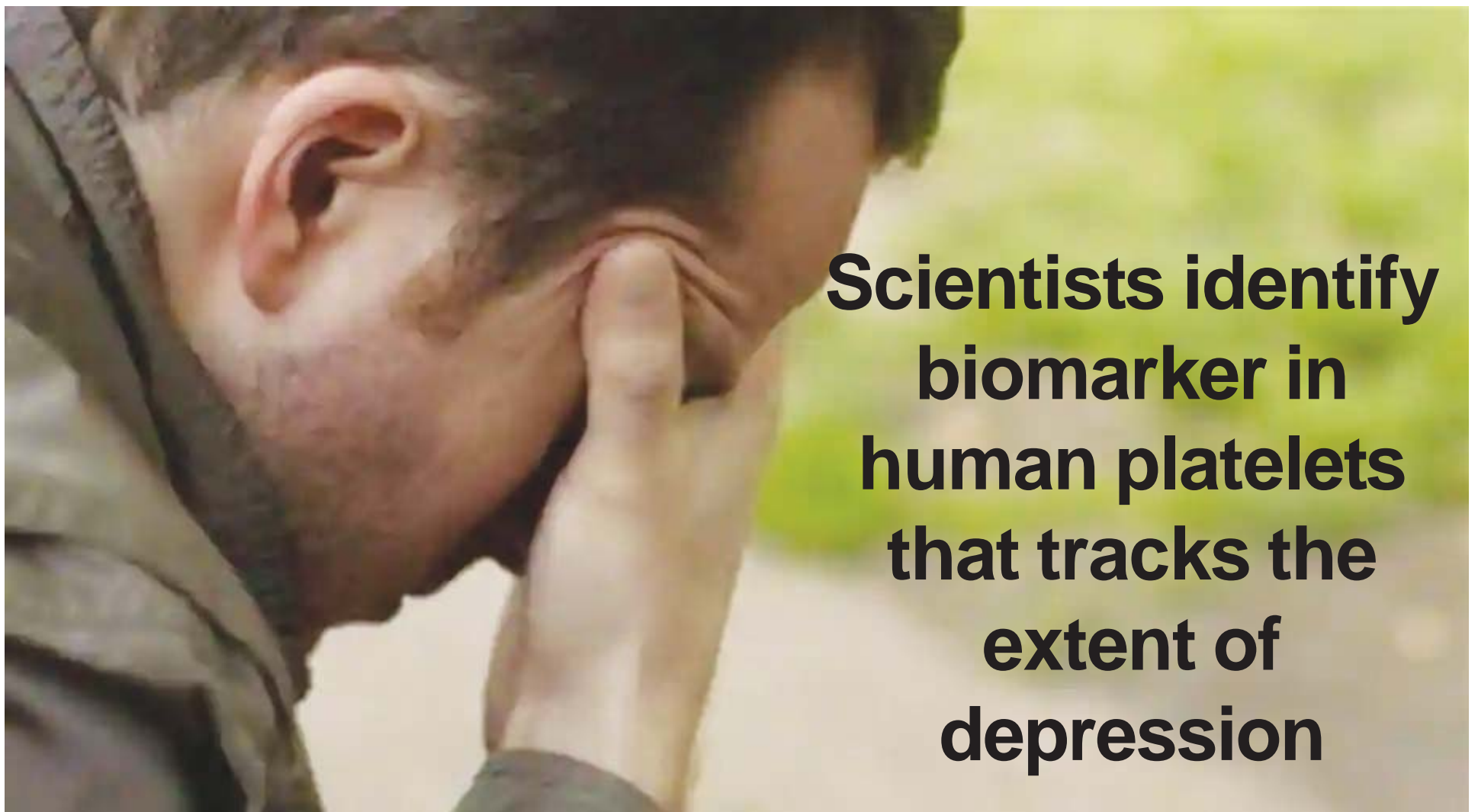
apparatus. The wood may belong to several tree species.

Doi, programme-specific professor, Kyoto University, said that if the plan succeeds, it will lead the way to "allowing even children, who are interested in space, to make a satellite."

The satellite will be a cube with around 10-centimeter-wide sides. On the outer side, there will be wood and solar cells. It will also have an electronic substrate inside.







## Scientists identify biomarker in human platelets that tracks the extent of depression

Scientists have identified a biomarker in human platelets that tracks the extent of depression in a new study. The research called "A Novel Peripheral Biomarker for Depression and Antidepressant Response," has been published in *Molecular Psychiatry*. The study aims at developing a blood test that provides a simple biochemical hallmark for depression and the efficacy of drug therapy in individual patients. A spike in suicide rates worldwide has cast fresh light on

the need for more effective treatments for major depression, with researchers saying it is a tricky development area that has largely been abandoned by big pharmaceutical companies. The new research builds off of previous studies by several investigators that have shown that depression is consistent with decreased adenylyl cyclase in humans and animal models. Adenylyl cyclase is a small molecule inside the cell that is made in response to neurotransmitters such as

serotonin and epinephrine.

According to the study's lead author Mark Rasenick from the University of Illinois Chicago, "When you are depressed, adenylyl cyclase is low. The reason adenylyl cyclase is attenuated is that the intermediary protein that allows the neurotransmitter to make the adenylyl cyclase, Gs alpha, is stuck in a cholesterol-rich matrix of the membrane, a lipid raft, where they don't work very well." "What we have developed is a test that can not only indicate

the presence of depression but it can also indicate therapeutic response with a single biomarker, and that is something that has not existed to date," said Rasenick, who is also a research career scientist at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center.

More than 4 percent of the world's population lives with depression, and women, youth and the elderly are the most prone to its disabling effects as per the World Health Organization (WHO).

Global economic losses exceed \$1 trillion a year, it said, referring to lost productivity due to apathy or lack of energy that lead to an inability to function at work or cope with daily life. Rasenick explains that "Because platelets turn over in one week, you would see a change in people who were going to get better. You'd be able to see the biomarker that should presage successful treatment." "About 30 per cent of people don't get better, their depression doesn't resolve. Perhaps, failure

## Asteroid the size of golden gate bridge to pass by earth on January 18

A huge a kilometer-sized asteroid will fly past Earth later this month, according to NASA's asteroid tracker, marking the first flyby of an asteroid of this scale in 2022. If an asteroid collided with Earth, it could cause a global disaster, but this is fortunately unlikely. This asteroid, designated 7482 (1994 PC1), is expected to have a diameter of at least 1 kilometre and a width of up to 1.3 kilometres. That's more than four times the size of the Eiffel Tower and 3.5 times the size of the Empire State Building in New York City. The asteroid is classified as an Apollo-class asteroid, which means that its orbit is broader than Earth's and that



its orbital path around the Sun may cross our planet's. Furthermore, NASA has classified

it as a potentially hazardous asteroid. An impact, on the other hand, is exceedingly unlikely.

According to NASA's projections, 7482 (1994 PC1) will approach Earth on January 18 at a distance

of roughly 1.98 million kilometres. The Earth's distance from the moon is around 384,000 kilometres, which is more than five times less. This confirms NASA's previous projections, which stated that the Earth would be safe from asteroid strikes within the next 100 years. However, if the Earth had not been so fortunate, the consequences could have been disastrous. According to a study from Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science's Davidson Institute of Science, an asteroid with a diameter of more than 140 metres would release an amount of energy a thousand times greater than the first atomic bomb if it collided with Earth.



**Atrangi Re movie review:****Sara Ali Khan, Dhanush are soul of a unique love story, Akshay Kumar adds the Midas touch**

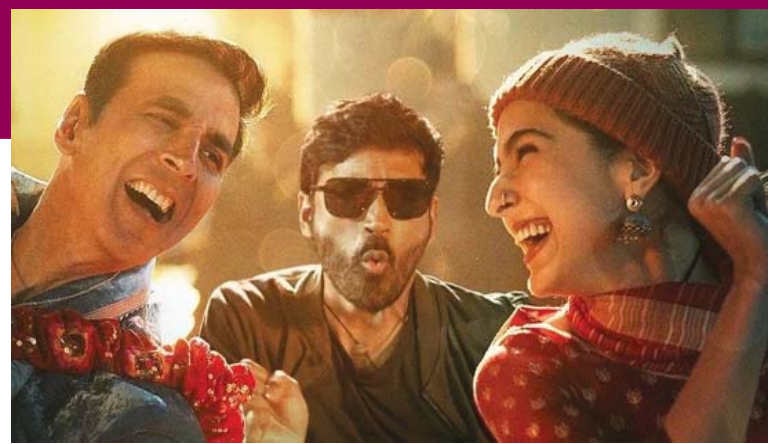
**Atrangi Re movie review: Starring Sara Ali Khan, Dhanush and Akshay Kumar in lead roles, Atrangi Re boasts of a casting coup which can just not go wrong**

Atrangi Re lives up to its title. Directed by Aanand L Rai, it's refreshingly different, unique love story that so beautifully breaks through the clutter. It's not remotely close to how we have visualised or seen romances on screen over the years. The film delves deep into relations we hold onto, emotions that are left behind, the denial we often live in and the acceptance that follows after a lot of pain. The story subtly touches upon the issue of mental health as well but at no points gets preachy. Starring Sara Ali Khan, Dhanush and Akshay Kumar in lead roles, Atrangi Re boasts of a casting coup which just cannot go wrong. Though with energetic stars like Sara and Akshay, you think the story might go a bit over-the-top, but the director maintains a balance so brilliantly that none of his characters overshadow each other. Each one of them - even the supporting actors including Vishu's best

friend (Ashish Verma) and Rinku's grandmother (Seema Biswas) - stand out in their parts. Akshay the superstar, allows Sara to take the forefront, while Dhanush complements her energy. The story revolves around Rinku Sooryavanshi (Sara) and Vishu (Dhanush) being married to each other forcefully. On their way to Vishu's hometown, they come to an understanding that they'd follow their own paths because they're not meant to be together - and also because Vishu is getting engaged in two days. Now enters Sajjad Ali (Akshay Kumar) who Rinku is in love with. How Rinku deals with the dilemma of being in love with Sajjad and also having feelings for Vishu at the same time is what Aanand L Rai tells us through this film, but in a rather unconventional way. The screenplay of Atrangi Re is perhaps one of its USPs after the music. Himanshu Sharma's writing takes you to a different world where love has a different meaning. The scenes have been

stitched in a manner that they make you cry and smile at the same time. Atrangi Re is free from any cliches of Bollywood films. It doesn't stick to the tried-and-tested formula that we usually see in love stories. It is not your usual boy meets girl kind of a story. Neither is it about a couple who got married off forcefully, deciding to give their relationship a chance. It's way beyond what you and I could think of. In the climax, you actually realise that the film deserved much more attention than what you would have given until that point. The story unfolds at quite a smooth pace without any needless subplots. Though honestly, I would have wanted to know a bit more of Vishu's background, his parents and fiancée. That, I feel, would have allowed us to relate to his character better as we do with Rinku's.

In the end credits of Atrangi Re, Sara Ali Khan features at the top of the cast members, followed by



Dhanush and then Akshay Kumar. This pretty much sums up how Sara is the soul of this film and holds her ground throughout. As Rinku, a small town girl, she's crazy, feisty, thick-skinned and quite the rebel, yet emotionally attached to her parents. This is Sara's fifth release, and you'd be mighty impressed to witness her range as an actor. The Bihari dialect that she's picked in the film is on point and she never lets it go off track. Her performance in the song Chaka Chak is definitely her best so far. And not to mention her performance in the final act, which just pierces through your heart.

Playing the calm to Rinku's

storm is Vishu, a doctor. Dhanush looks confident in his part and since his Bollywood debut with Raanjhanaa eight years ago, he has quite fitted into the Bollywood scheme of things. Assign him some dance steps, add quirk to his character or give him some funny antics to pull off, and he aces it. However, Sara and Dhanush together as an onscreen couple don't really trigger any sparks with their chemistry. It's quite bland to say the least. Then there's a dialogue in the film when Dhanush is talking and Sara says "Gaali mat do (don't swear)" to which he replies, "Tamil mein bol raha hu (I'm speaking Tamil)".

**Minnal Murali movie review:****Kerala delivers India's first great superhero film**

Up until recently, whether India could ever make Hollywood-like special effects-driven blockbusters, which also makes massive profits globally, was a big question. Telugu director SS Rajamouli answered it successfully with his Baahubali films, the quality and commercial success of which gave Indian filmmakers confidence that they, too, could roll out homegrown spectacles. Now, Kerala has delivered India's first great superhero movie. With Basil Joseph's new Malayalam film Minnal Murali, streaming on Netflix, India has finally cracked the superhero formula.

Set in a semi-rural Kerala town, Minnal Murali follows Jaison (Tovino Thomas) who develops superpowers after getting struck by lightning. All is well until Jaison finds his nemesis in Selvan (Govind Somasundaram), another man in the town who was

struck by lightning on the same night.

Before Minnal Murali, Indian excursions into the superhero genre had yielded middling results. From the embarrassingly tacky Krrish films from Bollywood to Mysskin's 2012 Tamil film Mugamoodi, the major problem with Indian superhero cinema appeared to be our directors' uneasiness in combining Indian mainstream cinema's idiom with the logic of superhero films.

In Minnal Murali, director Basil Joseph, and his writers Arun Anirudhan and Justin Mathew, bypass this problem by not attempting to make their superhero story gritty but taking a tongue-in-cheek approach to the genre. This approach was previously seen just once in Indian superhero cinema.

In Remo D'Souza's 2016 Bollywood film A Flying Jatt, Tiger Shroff may have been a

superhero, but his strict mother would also have her son occasionally bring home groceries after fighting crime. Unfortunately, D'Souza abandoned the rooted charm of the story and went full Hollywood by bringing in a White villain, concerns about environmental pollution and so on. Minnal Murali determinedly stays rooted through its 158-minute runtime. Despite having universally appealing themes for fantasy and superhero genre lovers, the Minnal Murali's milieu and characters are always strictly local, which is the highlight of contemporary Malayalam cinema that has gained countrywide appreciation.

The semi-rural setting, where nobody's aware of the concept of a superhero, gives Minnal Murali a fable-like quality. This fantasy is heightened by the absence of any clear sign of the time in which the film is set. There are no mobile

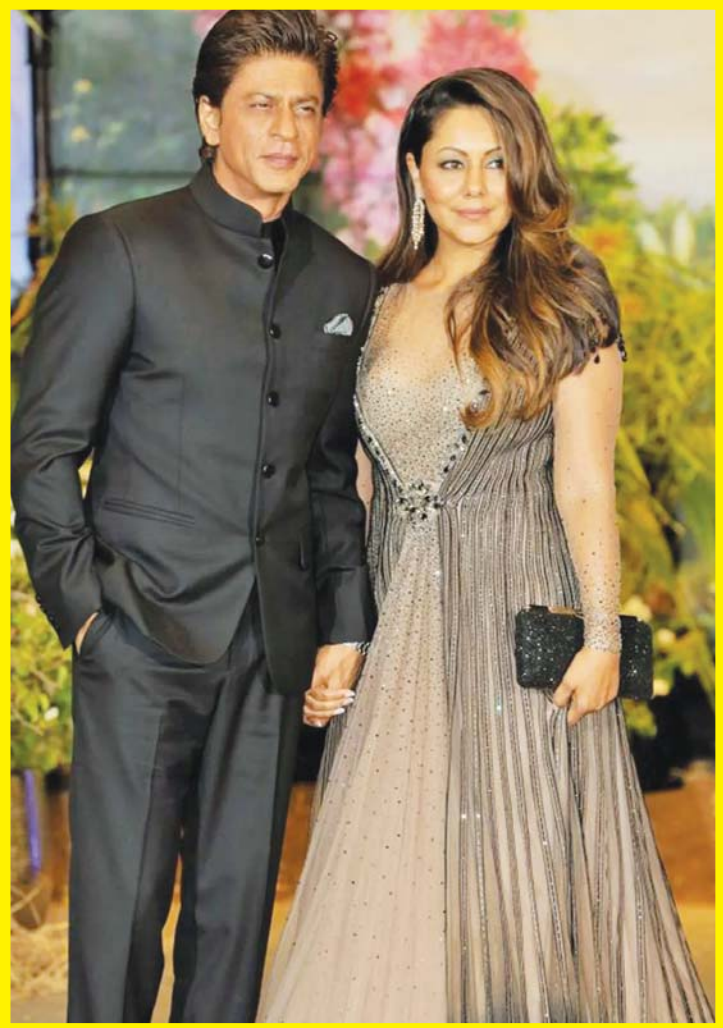


phones. A television appears early in the film to help set up the film's premise, but the broad attempt is to create a time and space enclosed from most markers of modernity, which is a superb idea.

If this is a world where nobody can comprehend what a superhero is, and nobody has any connection with the world outside, quite naturally, the superhero saga becomes the town's private, strange little

joke. The writers consistently mine comedy out of this small-town setting, its eccentric characters, and the townspeople suspecting one another of being the costumed crusader. Tovino Thomas, one of Malayalam cinema's brightest young actors, plays Jaison with a giant heart and good cheer. Guru Somasundaram is impressive as the town's social outcast who goes full Joker by the end.





## Shah Rukh Khan features in new ad with Gauri Khan, fans tag them as 'cutest couple ever'

Shah Rukh Khan's wife Gauri Khan has treated fans to a video that features her with the superstar. The video is an advertisement of a brand that the couple endorses.

As soon as she dropped the clip, fans flooded the comments section with adorable compliments. "Cutest couple ever," wrote a fan, while another expressed his happiness to see Shah Rukh Khan back on screen. "So beautiful to see you both together! Always stay this blessed and happy," read another comment.

This is the first time that the audience has seen Shah Rukh in an ad since his son Aryan Khan's

bail in the cruise ship drug-bust case. Currently, the actor is shooting for Pathan. The film is yet to be announced. It also stars Deepika

Padukone and John Abraham.

Recently, Salman teased the possibility of him and Shah Rukh Khan teaming up for another project. "We are coming together in Tiger and Pathan. Tiger 3 should be released by December 2022, before that Pathan will release.

Then maybe both of us will come together," the actor told reporters.

Pathan marks Shah Rukh Khan's first film after 2018 film Zero.

**Gauri Khan has shared a new video on her Instagram account. The video is an advertisement that features the interior designer with her husband, superstar Shah Rukh Khan**

## Shilpa Shetty shares first post with husband Raj Kundra in 2022, visits Shirdi temple to seek blessings



Actor Shilpa Shetty on Wednesday shared a video with her husband Raj Kundra as they visited the Sai Baba temple in Shirdi, Maharashtra. Taking to Instagram, Shilpa gave a glimpse as the couple sought blessings. This is her first post on Instagram with Raj this year. In the video, Shilpa Shetty is seen wearing a maroon-coloured suit, matching jewellery, a black mask and kept her hair loose. Raj Kundra opted for grey-coloured ethnic wear as he, too, had a black face mask on. Shilpa and Raj stood next to each other as they prayed. Raj was seen bowing down to touch the altar with his forehead. Shilpa, too, touched the altar with her hands.

Sharing the clip, Shilpa wrote, "Sabka Maalik Ek Shraddha aur Saboori (Go is one. Respect and patience). Om Sai Ram.....#shirdi #omsairam #faith #love #gratitude #happy # p r o t e c t i o n #shraddaaurSaboori."

Shilpa had travelled with Raj and their children--Viaan and Samisha--to Mussoorie to celebrate Christmas last year. The actor shared a few pictures and videos from her holiday getaway on her Instagram handle. In one of the videos, Shilpa could be seen having fun with her children while sitting near the Kemty waterfall and playing with the water. In the clip, her chefs were also seen preparing a special dinner

table for the family.

Sharing the clip, she wrote, "Ho ho ho. Merrrrrrrrrry Christmas to all my Instafam. An unusual Christmas.. we trekked all the way down to Kemty Fall stream to have lunch here. It's trips like these that make me realise how Incredible India really is!" She also shared a slew of pictures on her Instagram stories, one of which saw her posing in front of a Christmas tree with her family--husband Raj Kundra, son Viaan and their friends.

Shilpa and Raj made their first public appearance in November last year, post the latter's bail in a pornography case. They had visited a temple in Himachal Pradesh. Earlier last year in July, Raj was arrested and released on bail two months later, in September. Meanwhile, Shilpa is currently busy shooting for the reality show India's Got Talent as a judge with veteran actor Kirron Kher, singer Badshah and writer Manoj Muntashir. Shilpa and Badshah have replaced former judges Malaika Arora and Karan Johar.





# Malaika Arora says show stayed at #1 spot for 10 weeks, celebrates with Terence Lewis, Geeta Kapur

India's Best Dancer season 2 is approaching its 'Ultimate Finale' and the team has more than one reason to celebrate. On Thursday, Sony Entertainment Television shared a video in which the show's three judges--Malaika Arora, Geeta Kapur and Terence Lewis--came together to share some good news. In the video, the judges are all seen in black outfits. Malaika tells them that she has 'gossip' to share, which turns out to be that the show has been topping TRP charts for 10 weeks. But Malaika was most likely talking about topping the list of Hindi talent reality shows on television because Rupali Ganguly's daily soap Anupama is legions ahead as far as overall rankings are concerned. As per last week's Ormax report, Anupama is at the top with Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah



## India's Best Dancer

Chashmah and The Kapil Sharma Show in second and 10th spot and the only talent-based reality show on the list. In

the video, Malaika also told her co-judges, "You know what the TRPs are right? Last week we

touched 2, guys." Geeta exclaimed, "Oh that is amazing." The trio then asked the audience to vote heavily for the contestants ahead of the season finale.

SET wrote with the post, "Breaking records is second nature to us now which has been possible because of all the love shown to us by you guys and for that we are extremely thankful." The season finale airs on January 9. Malaika Arora, Geeta Kapur and Terence Lewis were judges on the first season of the show as well. The show brings together dancers from across the country as they compete with each other for the coveted trophy. The show also welcomes guests regularly. Recently, actor Nora Fatehi and singer Guru Randhawa visited the sets to promote their new music video, Dance Meri Rani.

## Maheep Kapoor shares pictures from Boney Kapoor's favourite restaurant in the US: 'One day we all need to go together'

Sanjay Kapoor's wife Maheep Kapoor is currently vacationing in the US. On Wednesday, Maheep shared a series of pictures of herself and her son Jahaan Kapoor from the trip. Sharing 10 pictures from the trip on Instagram, Maheep wrote, "Sunsets & Lychee martinis." The photos were taken at California's famous Japanese restaurant Nobu Malibu. Sanjay's eldest brother and Maheep's brother-in-law Boney Kapoor commented on the picture, "One of our favourite restaurant's stunning sunset view & good food." Maheep replied, "Boney Kapoor one

comments section. Many fans also reacted to the pictures. One fan wrote, "You look so pretty! Red is really your colour!" Another fan asked, "Where is Shanaya Kapoor?" In 2020, Maheep Kapoor and her

announced.

On the show, Maheep revealed a lot of things about her personal life. At one point, she even mentioned that she knows how it feels to be the "supposedly unsuccessful" part of a big family.

Anil Kapoor and Boney Kapoor are her brothers-in-law, while the late actor Sridevi was her sister-in-law. Maheep, who got married to Sanjay in 1997, also talked about Sanjay's struggles in the film industry. She told Hindustan Times, "I have a large, successful, talented film family. Sanjay has had good times, he's had bad times. But the thing about him is that he never brought it back home



day we all need to go together." Sanjay and Maheep's friend Neelam Kothari and fashion designer Nandita Mahtani dropped heart emojis in the

friends Seema Khan, Bhavana Pandey and Neelam Kothari were seen in the Netflix show Fabulous Lives Of Bollywood Wives. Last year, a sequel was

to us. Yes, it's not been easy, but I want to make it clear - success is very relative, everyone cannot be a Shah Rukh Khan, it's not possible."

## When Nawazuddin Siddiqui caught the acting bug: Actor reveals he'd often text himself 'call me, Subhash Ghai'

Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui has recalled the time in his life when to perk up his mood he would message himself on his pager pretending it to be from film director Subhash Ghai. In a new interview, he said that he did this and even showed others after he went to Mumbai to follow his dreams. Nawazuddin Siddiqui made his Bollywood debut with Patang. He then went on to feature in many films including Peepli Live, Kahaani, Gangs of Wasseypur, The Lunchbox, Bajrangi

become fascinated with acting..."

He added, "I had worked as a watchman and as a chemist, but realised that the 9-to-5 life wasn't for me. So I moved to Mumbai to pursue my dreams, but there wasn't much work to speak of. On days when I needed to perk up my mood, I'd message myself on my pager saying, 'Call me, Subhash Ghai'. I'd even show it to others to amuse my heart!"

Nawazuddin was seen recently in the Netflix film Serious Men. It was a satirical drama film based on Manu Joseph's book of the same name. He has several projects in the pipeline including Jogira Sara Ra Ra and Heropanti 2, Tiku Weds Sheru, Adbhut, and Sangeen. Tiku Weds Sheru, a comedy is being produced by actor Kangana Ranaut under her production house, Manikarnika Films. In the film, Nawazuddin will feature as Sheru and Avneet Kaur as Tiku.



In an interview with Bazaar India, Nawazuddin said, "I didn't start off wanting to be an actor. I wanted to go into the mountains after completing my education and become a monk. I even visited Dharamshala for a few days... It was only after someone took me to watch a play during my graduation that I





The South Asian

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Voice of South Asian Community

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Vol. 20

Issue 46 Friday 7 January to 14 January 2022 \$1

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