

## Thousands throng Jagannath Temple day before doors close amid rising COVID cases

PURI(KCN): In view of the rising Covid-19 cases in the district, the administration on Sat-

The residents of the district will have to produce self-identification documents and specify



urday imposed restrictions on cremation of bodies at Swargadwar by people from outside Puri. This will come into force from January 10. Sub-Collector Bhabataran Sahu said the decision was taken after several staff of the crematorium got infected with the virus. "Cremation of bodies from outside Puri district has been banned for now. Only non-Covid bodies from the district will be allowed for cremation in Swargadwar," added Sahu.

the cause of death for cremation. Similar restrictions were imposed in the district during the second wave of Covid-19 in April last year after surge in infections. The ban was subsequently lifted in August, 2021 after decline in number of new coronavirus cases.

On Saturday, Puri recorded 100 new Covid-19 cases, almost double than that detected a day before (54 cases), **CONTINUED ON: P-7**

## 11 corporators of Congress 'resign' from Ahmedabad civic body due to differences over appointment of opposition leader

AHMEDABAD(KCN): A total of 11 corporators of Congress resigned from the

post, said on Sunday. However, a Gujarat Congress spokesperson said that these

Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM had won seven seats of corporators in February last year.

"Eleven corporators, including myself, have resigned from the party and have given our letters to the state president expressing our disagreement over the name of the leader of the opposition. We are not happy with the decision to appoint Shehzad Pathan as the leader of the opposition in the AMC," said Kamla Chavda. She claimed to enjoy

the support of many corporators for the post of LoP.

The 11 corporators, who submitted their resignations to state Congress president Jagdish Thakor, are not happy with the proposal to appoint Shehzad Pathan as the leader of the opposition, Chavda said. Pathan is the national secretary of the Youth Congress. He had been arrested in connection with CAA/NCR protests in the Muslim-dominated Shah-e-Alam locality of

**CONTINUED ON: P-7**



Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) in Gujarat due to the disagreement over the appointment of the opposition leader, a corporator, who had staked claim to the

corporators have not resigned but only presented their views on the issue.

The Congress had 24 corporators in the 192-member AMC, which is ruled by the BJP.

## Saudi princess freed after nearly three years in jail

Saudi authorities have released a princess detained in the

disappeared in March 2019 and landed in a notorious Saudi

influence. But it marked the latest case against a royal family

sion to the throne in 2015, he has prosecuted critics, activists and rival royals, and has locked up and shaken down princes in an anti-corruption purge.

The 58-year-old Princess Basmah and her 30-year-old daughter Suhoud al-Sharif left al-Ha'ir Prison on the outskirts of the Saudi capital, Riyadh, last week and returned home to the port city of Jiddah Thursday, said her legal advisor Henri Estramant. Princess Basmah suffers from health problems including osteoporosis and is now focused on



kingdom under mysterious circumstances for nearly three years, her supporters said on Sunday.

The princess, Basmah bint Saud, a daughter of Saudi Arabia's second king,

prison without charge, she wrote on social media at the time.

The reason for her arrest along with her daughter was not clear, as she never wielded significant

member as the head-strong Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman consolidated power as the kingdom's de facto leader.

Following his father King Salman's ascen-

## BJD lays stone for six projects in Kalahandi ahead of Odisha rural polls



BHAWANIPATNA (KCN): With panchayat elections in State approaching, the ruling BJD seems to be upping its campaign game by laying foundation stone of projects on a war-footing. Sources said, various projects, big and small, are being launched in almost all blocks of Kalahandi district.

On January 6, Health Minister Naba Kishore Das and Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra laid foundation of five roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and one small bridge over a nullah at Patharla village.

The guests hurriedly unveiled the foundation stones at one

place in Patharla but could not attend a meeting nearby for the occasion. The launched projects include Kukti - Matia road, Karla khunta - Talbrahmani road, Kikia - Sikerpada road, Masani bundh - Balbaspur road and Nasigaon - Tentulikhunti roads under Kesinga, Narla and

Bhawanipatna Sadar blocks besides a small bridge over a nullah near Patharla to connect with Boria.

BJP activists raised objections to the plaques that mentioned opposition leader Pradipta Kumar Naik as MLA and that too below the State Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra's name.

## Delhi govt looking at minimum restrictions so that livelihoods are protected: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI(KCN): The Delhi government on Sunday assuaged fears of mi-

lockdown. The national capital in the past few days has seen a massive

Covid waves, could further dent their earnings, landing them into a severe fi-

hospitalisation rate is low and that there will be no need of a lockdown if everyone wears a mask.

"Rising Covid cases are a matter of concern but there is no need to panic. Very few people are getting hospitalised. Wearing mask is very important. There will be no lockdown if you continue to wear mask. There is no plan to impose a lockdown as of now," he said.

The Delhi government has already announced night and weekend curfews, **CONTINUED ON: P-7**



grant workers and businessmen, saying to protect livelihoods, its attempt is to impose minimum Covid restrictions and not a

spike in daily cases, with migrants workers fearing a lockdown, like those imposed during the 2020 and last year

financial crisis. Addressing a virtual press conference, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal stressed that the

## China's Chang'e 5 lunar probe finds first on-site evidence of water on moon's surface

BEIJING(KCN): China's Chang'e 5 lunar lander has found the first-ever on-site evidence of water on the surface of the moon, lending new evidence to the dryness of the satellite. The study published on Saturday in the peer-reviewed journal Science Advances revealed that the lunar soil at the landing site contains less than 120 parts-per-million (ppm) water or 120 grams water per ton,

and a light, vesicular rock carries 180 ppm,

ter had been confirmed by remote ob-

in rocks and soil. A device on-board



which are much drier than that on Earth. The presence of wa-

ter had been confirmed by remote ob-

the lunar lander measured the spectral re- **CONTINUED ON: P-7**



## 50th Foundation Day of Vivekananda Kendra Celebrated by Paschimanga Prant, Vivekananda Rock Memorial & Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari

Kolkata (KCN): Every problem has a solution, every obstacle is an opportunity,"

Sh. Shubho Bagdi and Sarita Sehgal's rashtasangeet. Su. Debdutta Das read

Vivekananda Kendra man , Bikash Sushri. Soma Manna Chakraborty,



recited one of the important Karma Yoga slokas from the Geeta and explained the meaning. Speaking on the significance of the

Goutam Deb, Ila Das, Jayahari Jana, Jaydeep Das Gupta, Sanatan Mahakud, Kartik Kr. Das, K a t h a m r i t a B h a t t a c h a r y a ,

said Eknath Ranade, who established Vivekananda Kendra- the nation wide Spirituality Oriented Service Mission that started its journey on 7th January 1972.

out from the book of Vivekananda Rock Memorial on the mission and vision of Ma. Eknath Ranade. Sh. Arnab Maji iterated 'Tin Satya' presented by Swami Vivekananda, Rishi Arabinda and Mahatma Gandhi from a part of the letter of

Paschimanga pranta celebrated on this very day i.e. on 7th



January, 2022 its glorious 50th Foundation day. The programme was attended by eminent personalities and karyakartas of Paschimanga, Assam and Tripura. The celebration started with mangalacharan by

Ma. Padmashree Nivedita Didi. The distinguished speaker Adaraniya Niharendu Dhar, Barak Vibhag Pramukh- Assam prant, Asst. Registrar Assam University spoke about the initiation, history, importance of

Foundation day, Mananiya Vishwas Lapalkar sketched how Vivekananda Kendra worked on S w a m i Vivekananda's philosophy and the Karma Yogi Mananiya Eknath Ranade's mission and vision i.e; "one life one mission". Along with Adarniya N i r m a l y a Bhattacharyya prant saha sanchalak and Aadaraniya Malavika Chatterjee prant saha pramukh , Abhijit Paul, Anuradha Das, Arnab Maji, Asha Basak , Balaram Kundu, Balaram Das, Bijan Saha, Bijaya Laxmi Bar-

Malabika Chatterjee, Manika Singha, Manjari Das, Nemai Chand Guin, Nirmal Das, Partha Deb, Pradeep Jaiswal, Pralaya Dhali, R a b i n d r a n a t h Mondal, Ramesh Chakraborty, Sampa Das, Sandeep Day. Soma Bhattacharya, Soma Manna, Soma Raha, Sonu Jaiswal, Soumitra Kishore Sarkar, Subha Bagdi, Sujit Jaiswal, Susmit Saha and other dayitwavaan karyakartas from P a s c h i m a n g a , Assam, Tripura were present in this programme. The programme was conducted by Sushri Narayani Bharati.

## Bike Ambulance Service Inaugurated in DHH Khordha

Khordha (KCN) In association with "Samarpan Foundation Trust "bike ambulance service was inaugurated today in the campus of District Head Quatre

ern facility to reach remote areas which will help us bring patients to the hospital timely and save their life". Chairman Samarpan Foundation Trust Beleswar

traffic and fail to reach on time thereby increasing the response time. During medical emergency every second is important for the well being of

7 0 0 8 0 9 2 8 7 8 , 6371086916. Among others ADMO (PH)Dr. Raghunath Nayak, DPHO, Pradyumna Mishra, Khordha District BAR, Association



Hospital (DHH) Khordha. Chief guest of the occasions MLA, Khordha, Joytrindra Nath Mitra inaugurated the service and said that "Bike Ambulance will play an important role in the ambulance service of the district. It is mod-

Sahoo said "In order to extend health care facilities to the people bike ambulance can easily go to remote areas and accident spot to take the patients nearby hospital during emergency. The four Wheeler ambulance often get stuck in the



a patients. The bike ambulance can zip through the traffic and save significant time during an emergency. The bike ambulance service is provided the people to free of cost. For avail the bike ambulance service contact the Mobile number -

President Ajit Kumar Pattnaik, Kishore Baral, Prasanta Kumar Behera were present on the occasions. Pradeep Swain, Lalit Mohan Mohapatra, Chandan Sahoo, Saroj Paltasingh assist the programme.

## Child Odissi Dancer Srusti Das Mohapatra felicitated by SKP



Cuttack(KCN): Child Odissi Dancer Srusti Das Mohapatra from Villagers Of Patana Bentakar 42 Mouza Saraswati Kala Parisad(SKP). In this felicitating & cultural program Presided by Secretary Natyakar Guru Ashok Kumarr Pattnik, Poet Pratibha

cuttack sadar based leading cultural organization Saraswati Kala Warriors Aviram Sahoo, Social Worker Pralopa Moahaparta & SKP team with grand success. In this cultural program some emi-

SAtapathy, Senior Artist Daitari Pradhan, Corona Sahoo, Social Worker Pralopa Moahaparta & SKP team with grand success. In this cultural program some emi-

ment personalities were felicitated for their extraordinary activities with child artist Sayad Arman, Child Artist Lalit Narayan swain, Child sports racer Gyanaranjan Jena also felicitated.

## MLA, Khordha Distributes Financial Assistance to Beneficiaries of Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana

Khordha (KCN) Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Pattnaik Inaugurated financial

MLA, Khordha, Joytrindra Nath Mitra distributed the financial assistance of Rs-

arpur, Lendu, Dia GP under Tangi Block. On this Occasions

programme President Zilla Parishad Khordha Prafulla Kumar Dalei, Chair-



assistance of Rs-3000 to each beneficiary's under the state rural housing scheme Biju

3000 to each beneficiaries of Kuradhamal, Bajpur, Nandapur GP, under

Khordha, Joytrindra Nath Mitra said " Odisha is the only state where the hous-

man Tangi Block Bijaya Jena, Sarapanchas and Panchayat Samiti



Pucca Ghar Yojana for repair work and maintenance of the house constructed under the schemes.

Khordha Block and Olasingh, Achyutpur, Sarapari, Tankola, Chhanagiri, Rameswar, Nirak-

ing scheme beneficiaries are being provided with financial assistance for home repairs. " In this

Members of all the GP, all the Panchayat BJD President and others present on this occasions.

## A loaded truck get fired at Bara banki ,driver & helper escaped

Barbil.8th Dec(KCN) The driver and helper of a iron-laden truck had a narrow escape after the vehicle caught fire on National Highway at Barabanki area under Rugudi police station in Keonjhar district. According to reports, the driver got a smell of burning while going to it's destination at Barabanki. However, the driver and helper of the truck managed to come out in time and save themselves. They saw the Lower party of the truck is blazed and they too tried to control the fire. But because of some oily substance present ,the fire could not be controlled by means of water spray. Local fire brigades was informed and they rushed to the spot brought the flames under control by using AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foams) the Foam

Fire Extinguishers. But meanwhile the major portion of the truck was burnt. Local police



too reached the spot and started investigation into the mishap.



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# Jacqueline Fernandez requests media to respect privacy after picture with alleged conman surfaces



MUMBAI: Actor Jacqueline Fernandez has requested the media to not circulate pictures that intrude on her privacy after a new image of her with alleged conman Suresh Chandrashekhar went viral. Fernandez has previously appeared before the Enforcement

Directorate in connection with a money-laundering investigation involving Chandrashekhar and others. On late Saturday evening, an intimate picture of the 36-year-old actor with Chandrashekhar surfaced on the Internet. Fernandez, whose

mother reportedly suffered a heart stroke earlier this week in Bahrain, shared a statement on Instagram, writing that she is going through a tough time and would appreciate people drawing a boundary. "This country and its people have always

given me tremendous love and respect. This includes my friends from the media, from whom I have learned a lot. I'm currently going through a rough patch but I'm sure that my friends and fans will see me through it. "It is with this trust that I would request my media

friends to not circulate images of a nature that intrude my privacy and personal space. You would not do this to your own loved ones, am sure you would not do this to me either. Hoping that justice and good sense prevails. Thank you," the Sri Lankan actor said in the state-

ment. Last year, Fernandez was grilled by the ED multiple times as the agency suspects she is a "beneficiary" of the proceeds of crime allegedly generated by Chandrashekhar after conning and extorting money from some high-profile people.

## 'My mother advised me to discuss politics and religion only at home': Danish Sait

Danish Sait is back as Nograj, albeit on a different platform. The anchor, presenter, stand-up comedian, television host, radio jockey, actor, and writer is someone who needs no introduction, and the same holds good for one of his most iconic characters Nograj.

The character, which was first introduced by Danish through a radio show, had a hugely successful run in cinema too. The first film, Humble Politician Nograj, which was released in 2018, enjoys almost cult status. There is an equal expectation in the upcoming socio-political satire web series, which will stream on Voot Select. The 10-episode series produced by Applause Entertainment and Firstaction Studios marks the digital debut of Danish and director Saad Khan. The actor and director speak to CE, ahead of the release of this original web series, which will be out on January 6. Danish admits that he is tired, even if in a good way, with bringing to life the role of Nograj. "I am glad that I got an opportunity to use Nograj to entertain audiences for many years, but on the flip side, I feel, with age and experience, my interest is getting changed, and so have been my career goals. I haven't figured out the future of Nograj yet," explains Danish, who also revealed to us that during this year's IPL season, when he had to get into Mr Nag's character on the field, he did discuss with the team whether he wanted to play this character next year as well. "I feel it is tiring, and at the same time I can't give a final answer," he adds.

What is it about Nograj that made the character such a people's favourite? Is it the magic of the character or Danish's exemplary performance? "I feel it is Nograj that catches all the attention. I am funny on screen and in front of the camera. Otherwise, I am a simple boring boy. So it is the character 'Nograj'. The look, the moustache, the craziness in the eyes, the roller coaster ride that he takes to become an MLA, and his dreams to become the CM, it is all this and much more that people like about the character," he says.

Danish, the actor, has also written the script of Humble Politician Nograj along with director Saad Khan. Does the multifaceted per-

sonality who has worked in different mediums, find the process of making a web series more liberating? "No. It has the same process as what we do with cinema. You have SMPs and lawyers sitting and watching the show. I don't think there are many liberties except for the fact that one can tell a story by taking as



much time as we want. Unlike cinema, the time constraints are a lot more flexible, and as long as the content is tight, we can work around the time factors," he explains, and further clarifies that there are no separate set of audiences for OTT and theatres, and the basic requirement for all audiences is the expectations of entertainment.

Apart from Danish, who plays the titular role, the series also has Vijay Chendror as Manjunath, Prakash Belawadi, Disha Madan, Varun Thakur, Shalini Narayan, and Geetanjali Kulkarni in pivotal roles. The political satire traces the life and times of MLA Nograj who harbours ambitions of becoming the CM. It deals with the power play involved, and re-stor politics.

There is a buzz that the film's topic touches upon coalition governments, and Danish quickly says, "Humble Politician is fictional, and it has got nothing to do with actual political scenarios. Of course, the situations and the central incident could have taken place in some other places. But it is important to un-

derstand that it is just a comedy show, where a lot of things are products of our creativity. Danish is honest when he says that his knowledge about politics is minimal. "Even if I have an opinion, I discuss it with my wife, and life moves on. As a child, my mother had advised me that politics and religion should be dis-

cussed only at home, and I have always followed that" he says.

Danish Sait and Saad Khan have travelled together for almost eight years, and are associated with various creative works. Coming to Humble Politician Nograj, the director sheds more light on the kind of equation he share with Danish. "We have been friends for many years, and we have managed to maintain a good rapport. With Danish's popularity whatever he is doing in the lockdown has helped this webseries come out so well. We did get a good response for our film, which was out in 2018, and I hope we get the response for this web series. There is a positivity that comes from Danish, and he has delivered his signature style as Nograj. With an ensemble cast to boot, this web series will definitely be a powerhouse for entertainment. Saad had observed people in different situations to help the director craft the story and the various characters. "I have never taken any influence from any politician, and my inspirations are from the common people," he signs off.



## Should India stand up to SAARC about removing Pakistan?

It is a matter of utter bafflement that Pakistan is extending an invite to India to attend the long-pending summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, recently said that if India does not want to participate in the meeting in person, it can participate in the summit virtually. Before inviting India to participate in the SAARC summit, Pakistan should have recalled the cold, lifeless, and disrespectful welcome it offered our then Union Home Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh.

When Mr. Rajnath Singh went to Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan, to attend the conference of the Home Ministers of SAARC countries, he was received very poorly. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, Pakistan failed to be accommodative of other religions that its neighbors' practice. Pakistan has continuously committed such atrocities one after the other. Thus, proving that it does not know how to follow or respect the religions of its neighboring nations. The handiwork of Pakistan has completely disrupted the SAARC movement.

Now, out of the blue, they have come up with the brilliant idea of organizing the SAARC summit. Could Pakistan kindly clarify, why has it not punished the culprits of the Mumbai terror attacks yet? Why is the ongoing case against those criminals lying frozen in its tracks? India has been telling it time and again that the terrorist Hafiz Saeed, the mastermind terrorist behind the Mumbai terror attacks, should be put in jail immediately. However, Pakistan not only ignored such requests but also in doing so, proved its lack of will to fight

selected KVPY Fellows up to the pre PhD level or five years, whichever is earlier. National Children's Science Congress National Children's Science Congress (NCSC), also referred to as Children's Science Congress (CSC) at the district and state levels, is a nationwide Science Communication programme of the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), DST, Government of India.

Children's Science Congress forum, available to children in the age group between 10- 17 years, prompts Engage with Science has been planned to make learning relevant and foster scientific spirit amongst the country's youth. It would address the school students directly who need more knowledge outside the classroom and provide insights into an interactive way of learning. More details are available at [www.engagewithscience.in](http://www.engagewithscience.in). Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan Programme Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (WM) is a national programme for popularising science among school students of standard VI to XI, conceptualised to identify the bright minds with a scientific aptitude among the student community. VVM is being organised by Vijnana Bharati in collaboration with Vigyan Prasar and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

With objectives to create an interest among students in science, WM programme educates school children about India's contributions, from traditional to modern, to the world of science and technology, and provides hands-on training to students through workshops and other events. WM also provides mentors for preparing students to carry forward their education in the field of science and conducts competitive tests to identify students who have a scientific bent of mind.

Students participating in WM undergo multi-level testing procedures which include- objective type questions' answering, comprehensive writing, presentation and group children to think of some significant societal problems, ponder over its causes, and subsequently try and solve the same using the scientific process. This in-

terrorism. They never showed interest in ending terrorism in South Asian countries. They have never deterred from nurturing and funding the anti-national forces in Kashmir or Punjab. The 19th SAARC Summit was to be held in Islamabad in November 2016. But, that year the terrorist attack was carried out in Uri, India by Pakistani terrorists in which 17 Indian soldiers were martyred. After this attack, India had refused to participate in the SAARC summit. India's stand was absolutely right. What to do with a country which has become

R.K.Sinha

for which it was established? Will answers to such questions be provided by Mr. Qureshi? The SAARC was established on 8 December 1985 by Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan. After this, in April 2007, Afghanistan also got a place as its 8th member. Despite this, SAARC did not promote any kind of economic cooperation among the member countries. If Pakistan is left out, then all the SAARC countries want to work together. On one hand, Pakistan is inviting India to the

the global pandemic Covid-19. The way India fought to defeat the Coronavirus, was witnessed by the world including SAARC member nations

Scholars working on India's diplomacy must have understood very well that SAARC has no future. SAARC has also completely lost its usefulness. Now this organization has remained only on paper. So what are the options available to India? India's path is quite clear. India will have to strengthen its relations with all the countries other than Pakistan which are members of SAARC. India is constantly striving in that direction too. India

has solid and cordial relations with all these countries. Another option is before the SAARC countries. By removing Pakistan from the SAARC summit, it can create a new productive organization. They have already seen the extent to which

Pakistan has derailed SAARC. Everyone is aware of the background of Pakistan's conflict with India and Bangladesh. While Pakistan itself was a part of India before 1947, Bangladesh was part of Pakistan before 1972. Today, India-Bangladesh's constant opposition is a vital part of Pakistan's foreign policy. So how can India or SAARC expect a cooperative relationship with a country like this? That is why now at least India has to think seriously about the situation ahead, in terms of its relations with other nations and the SAARC movement.

(The writer is a senior editor, columnist, and former MP)



a factory of terrorism? Those who know Mr. Rajnath Singh closely know that he never shied away from telling the truth. Referring to Hizbul terrorist Burhan Wani, who was killed in Kashmir in Islamabad, he said that glorification of terrorism should stop and terrorists should not be given martyr status. Terrorism is not good or bad. Rajnath Singh was pointing towards Pakistan only while stating the same.

Pakistan was furious by this direct attack of Mr. Rajnath Singh. But, no one could stop Rajnath Singh from speaking the truth. Now Shah Mehmood Qureshi is claiming that SAARC is an "important forum". India has never denied this, but, when did Pakistan ever allow SAARC to grow and fulfill the purpose

SAARC summit and on the other hand, it never deters from trying to pass a resolution against India from the Organization of Islamic Nations. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, had taken a strong initiative to revive a dying organization by inviting leaders of 7 states to his swearing-in ceremony in the year 2014.

It was assumed then that SAARC would emerge as a powerful platform and would usher in a new era of development and cooperation in South Asia. But, Pakistan did not live up to India's expectations. After Imran Khan became the Prime Minister there, the opposition to India became more intense and vocal. India had also promised all possible cooperation of SAARC countries in fighting

## Science Education

volves close and keen observation, raising pertinent questions, building models, predicting solutions on the basis of a model, trying out various possible alternatives, and arriving at an optimum solution using experimentation, fieldwork, research, and innovative ideas. The Children's Science Congress encourages a sense of discovery. It emboldens the participants to question many aspects of our progress and development, and express their findings.

Nimish Kapoor

or are going to be established, and are willing to work for science communication, to strengthen The programme is expected to connect 1,151 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1,000 teachers annually. To register, visit [www.vigyanprasar.gov.in](http://www.vigyanprasar.gov.in) or [vipnet.org](http://vipnet.org). JIGYASA Programme The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has launched a student-scientist connect

and their teachers. The programme is expected to connect 1,151 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR the popular science movement in the country with far-reaching implications for the development of society.

An active and fully functional science club working in any part of the country can be a part of VIPNET by simply registering with VIPNET for affiliation. VIPNET clubs work as local activity centers of the network to disseminate information on S&T at grassroots level with the objectives to reach out to fellow citizens, especially in remote areas to popularise science, stimulate a spirit of curiosity, inquiry, innovation, and creativity to supplement conventional education and foster scientific temper.

YOJANA October 2021 targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1,000 teachers annually. For more information on JIGYASA, reach to [csirjigyasa.niscair.res.in](mailto:csirjigyasa.niscair.res.in). Along with these innovative programmes, the Govt of India has launched Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) to create and promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the country to adopt a holistic approach, encompassing schools, universities, research institutions, industry etc. With many student-centric programmes on S&T



It is a group activity on a local specific problem using simple methods of science. More information is available on [www.ncsc-india.in](http://www.ncsc-india.in).

Science Clubs VIPNET, an acronym for Vigyan Prasar NETWORK of Science Clubs, weaves all science clubs, societies, organisations which are already established,

programme JIGYASA, in collaboration with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), with the primary objectives of extending the classroom education and focusing on well-planned research laboratory based learning. JIGYASA is planned to inculcate the culture of inquisitiveness, along with the scientific temper amongst the school students

the launch of NEP will develop a scientific attitude in children and pave the way for the creation of New India. (Concluded)

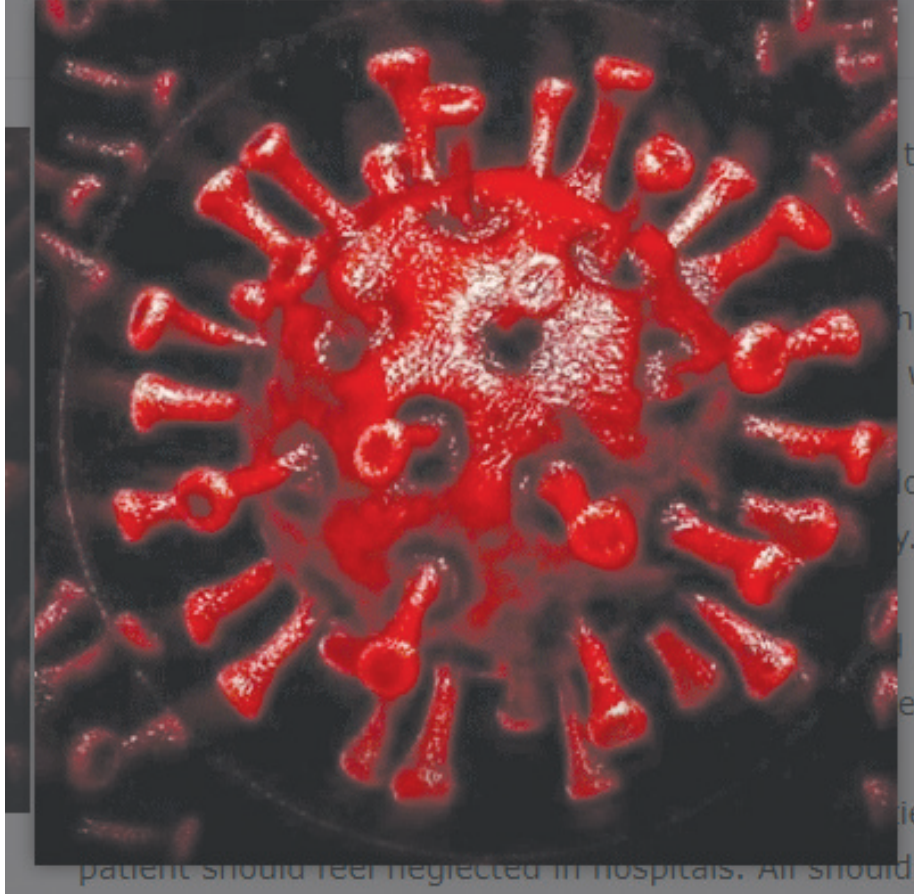
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## State on Omicron Combat Mode

Bhubaneswar: Districts across the State are all set to combat the omicron situation and provide proper treatment to the infected people. The Collectors appraised the Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra at a review meeting about their ground level preparedness for the third wave of Covid-19. The Chief Secretary directed them to insulate

with full force. He also asked the Collectors to recruit the retired doctors and nurses locally as per the requirement. The CDMOs and Public Health officers were asked to go ahead with booster dose vaccination with the already available vaccines in all districts.



the doctors, nurses and health workers detailed for covid duty with booster dose on priority. Mahapatra also directed that all covid hospitals and covid care centers should put in place a help desk system for communication with family members and relatives of the patients. Emphasizing upon empathetic treatment to the patients, the Chief Secretary directed that no patient should feel neglected in hospitals. All should be attended with much care, and love. The family members also should be communicated about the condition of the patients regularly, he said.

Additional Chief Secretary Health & Family Welfare Raj Kumar Sharma said that all facilities and provisions put in place for combating the second wave should be reactivated. **Odisha: Repair of National Highway stretch on Bangiriposi ghat soon**  
**BARIPADA:** The widening and repair work on a damaged 9-km stretch of NH-49 on Bangiriposi ghat will be carried out within the next five months. This was announced by Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti Bishweswar Tudu on Saturday at a meeting between district administration and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) officials in Bangiriposi.

## Naveen Patnaik announces sops for anganwadi workers ahead of Odisha rural polls

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Continuing with announcement of sops ahead of the panchayat elections in the State expected to be held before March 15, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday doubled the one time retirement benefit for anganwadi workers and announced



a package for Mission Shakti community resource persons.

Announcing the packages, Naveen said that one time incentive for retired anganwadi workers will be enhanced to Rs 40,000 from Rs 20,000.

Similarly, the incentives for mini-anganwadi workers and anganwadi assistants have been doubled from Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000 and Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 respectively.

The package, which will be implemented with retrospective effect from January 1, 2019, will benefit over 1.30 lakh anganwadi workers in the State, according to a statement released by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

Anganwadi workers, mini-anganwadi workers and anganwadi assistant workers will also be eligible for paid medical leave if anyone falls sick and gets hospitalised.

Similarly, the Chief Minister announced a separate package for community resource persons working with the Mission Shakti.

The financial package will benefit about 50,000 resource persons working at the panchayat-level to make the Mission Shakti a success.

The package includes a financial assistance of Rs 1,000 to each resource persons. Stating that all resource persons will be given identity cards, the Chief Minister said Rs 5,000 will be provided to them for purchase of smart phones.

Moreover, Community Mobiliser (CRP-CM) will draw a monthly remuneration of Rs 3,000 and Rs 350 travelling allowance per month apart from Rs 150 for telephone expenses.

The Chief Minister said that the resource persons have played a key role in strengthening the Mission Shakti movement in the State.

The resource persons working for the Mission Shakti SHGs include master bookkeepers, 'bank mitra', 'krushi mitra' and 'prani mitra'.

Development Commissioner Paradeep Jena assured of all sorts of cooperation among the State and Central PSUs and Covid hospitals. The Collectors were asked to go ahead with tripartite agreements like first and second wave.

The Chief Secretary asked the Collectors about any additional requirements and directed the health and family welfare department to provide those on priority basis.

He also directed the Collectors to visit all covid hospitals personally and look to the arrangements like availability of medicine, man power, instruments, pathological test facilities, oxygen, seamless admission of the patients, proper treatment, trained doctors, nurse and health workers communication with family members of the patients etc.

Discussions in the meeting showed that a total number of 7181 oxygen supported beds, around 1000 pediatric beds, 2024 ICUs and HDUs, and 874 ventilators were already made available in all districts. As of now, 16,117 active positive cases are there out of whom 15,640 patients are being treated in home isolation. They are being managed by the rapid response team members. They have not needed hospitalization. The present trend shows that around 97% of the patients can be managed without actual hospitalization. Only around 3% of the available beds, 11% of the ICUs and 3% of the ventilators are being used.

The Chief Secretary directed the keep additional facilities in all readiness to be made available as and when required. Director National Health Mission Shalini Pandit, Director Public Health Dr Niranjana Mishra, Additional Director Dr Umakanta Satpathy along with senior officers of concerned departments participated in the deliberations.

## IMD Issues Heavy Rain Alert

Bhubaneswar: It has been warned that heavy rain and thunderstorms, accompanied by hail, are likely to lash Odisha for three days since

places over the districts of Odisha during the 11-14 January," the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said in a bulletin.

heavy rain in some areas in Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Nayagarh and

harvested and shifted to a safer place, IMD reported. IMD asked for arrangements should be made to cover vegetables like on-



11 January. IMD Bulletin has issued alert and asked farmers to shift their harvest to a safer place.

There will be some impact on agriculture as it is expected during the period due to a western disturbance approaching towards eastern India and strong moisture incursion from the Bay Bengal, IMD said.

"Light to moderate rainfall activity is very likely at many

It issued a "Yellow Warning (Be updated)" of thunderstorms and hail likely in seven districts - Bargarh, Bolangir, Sonepur, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh and Deogarh - on Tuesday.

Thunderstorms and heavy rain may occur in Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Boudh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Cuttack and Nayagarh districts on Wednesday.

The IMD forecasts

Kandhamal districts on Thursday.

"The rainfall may commence from 10 January at some districts of Western Odisha," the Weatherman said.

IMD advised farmers to shift the harvested paddy to a safer place within Monday and postpone sowing of Rabi pulses and oilseeds for a few days. Matured vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, bean, green pea, carrot, and radish also may be

ion, tomato, chilly and cauliflower, which are at a seedling stage, with hail nets, plastic cover or polythene sheet. Proper drainage channels should be ensured to drain out excess water in the nursery, as well as the main field.

Watering activities should be stopped for groundnut and mustard crops as most of them are at a flowering stage and the rain will be helpful, IMD pointed out.

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## Blood Donation Camp Organized. 146 Unit of Blood Collected

Khordha (KCN): Continuing its self-



less social service aimed the Covid-19 pandemic Odisha Mo-Parivar has collected 146 units of blood through its Jeevan Bindu Programme. The Biju Janta Dal Social Service wing has been Organized blood donation camps as per the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Pattnaik to meet the shortage of blood in covid-19 pandemic. The blood donation camp was inaugurated by the MLA & Chairman Khordha District Planning Committee Rajendra Kumar Sahoo. The blood donation camp organized at Dalei Sahi, Arikama and Patapur Sasana GP. Block Development Officer Dhobei

Nayak, Subhakanta Mohapatra, Joyti



Ranjan Khadnga, Prakash Sahoo, Durjyadhan Swain encourage the blood



donors. 36 unit blood collect from Dalei Sahi, 69 units blood from Arikama and 41 unit blood collect from Patapur Sasana. Biju Yuva Janta Dal State General Secretary Abyakta Hari Hara Khadnga Co-ordinated the blood donation camp. Due to relentless efforts of

the Co-ordinator during this pandemic a total of 146 units



blood were collected from those camp. Pramod Routray,



Susanta Paikaraya, Dinabandhu Sahoo, Ashok Kumar Sahoo, Sarojini Paikaraya, Tazar Alli Khan, Prasanta Swain, Rashid Alli Khan, Rama Dei, Bidulata Parida, Gopal Chandra Behera, Sarat Hota, Ratnakar Mohapatra, Anita Behera were attend as

guest. Till today 3981 units blood collected from Begunia Assem-



bly Constituency. The Jeevan Bindu programme which is now being held under the aegis of Odisha Mo-Parivar has become a lifeline for millions of people in the state who are in need of blood. MLA, Begunia & Chairman Khordha District Planning Committee Rajendra Kumar Sahoo while speaking to media stated that during this covid-19 pandemic blood is required to the patients which lacking. He thanks to CM, Naveen Pattnaik for this 'Odisha Mo-Parivar' drive. Even he thanked all the leaders, party members, youth leaders, blood donors who helped for the novel cause.

## Bonanza For Mission Shakti

Bhubaneswar(KCN): At the urging of the Mission Shakti movement and at the request of group support staff, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday announced a financial package for 50,000 group support workers in various panchayats in the state.

All group support staff will receive an annual clothing allowance of Rs 1,000, a release from the chief Minister's Office said.

It said that all the group support workers will also be provided with IDs.

As per the announcement, the Group Assistants will be given a one-time stipend of Rs 5,000 to buy their preferred smartphone while all Community Resource Person - C o m m u n i t y Mobilisers (CRP-CM) will be paid Rs 3,000 a month.

Besides, all CRP-CMs will be paid Rs 350 per month for travel expenses and Rs 150 per month for telephone allowance. It will subsequently be increased to Rs 250.

The Chief Minister also announced that the state government has made the necessary financial arrangements to implement the package im-

mediately. Mr. Patnaik complimented these workers for their important role in supporting the Mission Shakti movement at



the panchayat level in furthering the Mission Shakti movement.

He also hoped that this financial package will encourage them to work harder towards building a transformed Odisha. Notably, the Mission Shakti movement has changed the lives of 70 lakh women in the State.

This year, Mission Shakti women were given a record bank loan of Rs 6,000 crore.

In addition, Rs 200 crore has been deposited in their bank ac-

counts for interest rebates.

As per the decision of the State Government, Mission Shakti workers have been provided with vari-

ous government jobs ranging from paddy procurement to supplying patients to hospitals, feeding center management, fish farming and so on.

The state government has set up a special department called Mission Shakti to provide more energy and speed to the Mission Shakti program and to better coordinate.

At present, all self-help group federations are working on the same platform. Gram panchayat level federations are

grassroots organizations of self-help groups. These federations have been instrumental in helping self-help groups in their decision-mak-

ing processes, including financial inclusion, livelihood and skills development, and their formal skills development. These gram panchayat level federations are supported by Master Bookkeeper, Bank Mitras, Krishi Mitras, Prani Mitras, Community Resource Person - Community Mobiliser (CRP-CM). These auxiliaries have an important role to play in strengthening the Mission Shakti movement in the State.

## MLA, Khordha inaugurates New Development Project



Khordha (KCN) MLA, Khordha inaugurated new development projects of Kalyan Mandap and Facility center of Olasingh GP, under Tangi Block Khordha. MLA,

Joytrindra Nath Mitra said "Special focus was being laid on time bound completion of the remaining ongoing development works." In this Inauguration pro-

gramme Block Development Officer, Tangi, Sushree Aiswarya Samantaray, Tangi Block Chairman Bijaya Kumar Jena, Zilla Parishad Member Mamata Jena,

Rishna Mandhata, Olasingh GP Sarapancha Premananda Parida, former Zilla Parishad member Sukanta Mangaraj among others were also present.

## Problem of Plenty

Bhubaneswar: As the New Year has arrived, people talk about the challenges in store for Odisha. Severely hit by COVID-19 pandemic's second wave all along 2021, people are apprehensive of the new year. How will the year fare for Odisha and its people? With natural calamities becoming a routine affair and the state developing resilience against disasters, nobody these days is worried about cyclones or floods. The perennial problem of Left-Wing Extremism is almost under control, though organized crimes and cyber offenses have emerged as a new challenge for the state. However, what is the real challenge for Odisha in 2022. Is it the back-to-back elections like rural, urban or cooperative polls throughout the year 2022? Yes, it is certainly a challenge. But what has come as a fresh as well as the future challenge is from the economic front. This challenge is certainly new for the state and the people at the helm.

The state which was facing problems to meet its daily expenses and going for overdraft for 364 out of the 365 days in a year when Naveen Patnaik government took over in 2000, has witnessed a sea change in the situation. The state has also seen days when its Chief Ministers used to rush to Delhi with begging bowls and sometimes were to be rebuffed with sardonic remarks such as "money does not grow on trees." Calamities claim at least Rs 10,000 crore every year, which certainly has broken the state's financial backbone. Notwithstanding all odds, the state has overcome all difficulties, thanks to Naveen for providing a stable government in the state.

Odisha is no more a poor state, depending on others for its food security. Rather, it has emerged as the third from the top in the list of states in India contributing to the Central food basket. Thanks to the farmers' resilience against calamities and government schemes, the scenario has changed. Though opposition political parties criticize the BJD government for failing the state on all fronts, all must now admit that Odisha is not in the situation as it was in the 1980s and 90s. The state is now surplus in food and power. Odisha's revenue generation has increased manifold and so also its budget size. If it is so, what is the problem then?

The problem actually lies in the plenty of resources which have come to the state through several means. Though not a rich state, Odisha has generated enough revenue to undertake developmental works and make provision for long-term income. While the State Government has set a target to collect both Tax and Non-Tax Revenue to the tune of Rs.57,500 Crore during the Financial Year of 2021-22, it has crossed the target.

As far as mining revenue is concerned, Odisha aimed for Rs.13,700 Crore during the Financial Year 2021-22. But the State has already collected more than Rs.30,000 Crore by Mid-December. Due to the mining boom, the mineral-rich Odisha has been collecting 'bumper revenue' and the State is now having abundant resources to use. So, now it has to deal with the 'problem of plenty'. Odisha, in fact, is facing a unique situation like a 'poor man getting a lot

of money' in his pocket. The man often loses sight and goes on a spending spree, making no plans. This exactly is the situation of the state where money is flowing and it needs to be properly utilised. Odisha can make a lot of progress; let it give a thought on how the public money is to be spent. Now comes the issue of utilization of the resources for the long-term benefit of the State. Else, the Government will be facing the 'resource curse' by spending on short-term programs, meant to appease people. Odisha will be facing three elections back-to-back. Rural, Urban and Cooperative Polls are to be held this year. The past one month has seen mind boggling spending on populist programs. It seems that such a spurge is ever on the rise and will continue for more years. The trend looks like that. Only in a month's time, the Odisha Government has announced such populist programs costing the State Exchequer over Rs.3000 crore. On the last day of the 2021, the State Cabinet announced implementation of the seventh pay commission recommendations for school and college teachers, free-of-cost homestead land for the slum dwellers in five municipal corporations. All these are intended to appease certain categories of people.

It may be a wise decision to invest in teachers, but there is no logic for the free of cost land for the slum dwellers. The inhabitants of the slums in cities are not the people living in dense forests or PVTGs. They are, in fact, an earning class, maybe in small amounts. But, the 1.90 lakh households are being provided with free land. Can't they contribute Rs 1,000 each to get a plot in the cities? If they pay at least a thousand rupees, the state can generate at least Rs 19 crore. If the amount increases, resource size will also rise. This amount can then be invested in various income-generating projects for the very slum dwellers. This apart, the government has been providing Re 1 a kg rice to the BPL families across the state and it costs State Exchequer hugely. The instance of free of cost land under Jaga Mission of the state is just one case. There are several ways in which people are appeased. The people are constantly pampered and the decision makers at the helm are planning more and more schemes before elections.

It is high time the state thought and acted judiciously and utilized the public money in the proper way to make Odisha strong. More investment should come in capital expenditure and there is no harm if the government goes for austerity at this point of time. Austerity measures should be undertaken not only when the state is facing a financial crisis but also at a time when there is a good amount of revenue coming to the coffers. It would be prudent to channelize the resources properly. If the BJD government succeeds in money management in 2022, Naveen can certainly write another page in the history book.

The Reserve Bank of India, which is keeping constant watch on spending of the State Government, has advised the policy makers to go for more spending on 'Capital Account', which seems sadly missing in the State.



## Reliance buys New York's premium luxury hotel Mandarin Oriental for USD 98.15 million

NEW DELHI: Mandarin Oriental New York, the premium luxury hotel a subsidiary of Reliance Industries is acquiring, is known for its much-in-demand ballroom, five-star spa and eating and drinking venues, including MO Lounge. Liam Neeson and Lucy Liu are among regular guests.



Set up in 2003, 248-rooms-and-suites hotel towering over Central Park is an iconic luxury hotel located at 80 Columbus Circle, directly adjacent to the pristine Central Park and Columbus Circle.

Mandarin Oriental New York occupies floors 35-54 and is known for its much-in-demand ballroom, five-star spa and eating and drinking venues, including MO Lounge.

Liam Neeson and Lucy Liu are among regular guests.

"Reliance Industrial Investments and Holdings Limited (RIIHL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited ("RIL"), has today, entered into an agreement to acquire the entire issued share capital of Columbus Centre Corporation (Cayman), a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands and the indirect owner of a 73.37 per cent stake in Mandarin Oriental New York, one of the premium luxury hotels in New York City for an equity consideration of approximately USD 98.15 million," the firm said in a stock exchange filing late on Saturday.

This is the second acquisition of an iconic hotel by Reliance in less than a year.

In April last year, Reliance acquired Stoke Park Ltd in the UK - an iconic locale that's been the setting for two James Bond films.

The two iconic locales add to its current stake in Oberoi hotels and hotel/managed residences in Mumbai that it's developing.

The latest marquee acquisition for the oil-to-

### China's Chang'e 5 lunar probe finds first on-site evidence of water on moon's surface

Continued from page-1

flectance of the regolith and the rock and detected water on the spot for the first time. The water content can be estimated since the water molecule or hydroxyl absorbs at a frequency of about three micrometers, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

It was the solar wind that contributed to the most humidity of lunar soil as it brought hydrogen that makes up the water, the researchers said.

The additional 60 ppm water in the rock may originate from the lunar interior, according to the researchers. Therefore, the rock is estimated to hail from an older, more humid basaltic unit before being ejected onto the landing site to be picked up by the lunar lander. The study revealed that the moon had turned drier within a certain period, owing probably to the degassing of its mantle reservoir.

The Chang'e-5 spacecraft landed on one of the youngest mare basalts located at a mid-high latitude on the moon. It measured water on the spot and retrieved samples weighing 1,731 grams.

"The returned samples are a mixture of granules both on the surface and beneath. But an in-situ probe can measure the outermost layer of the lunar surface," Lin Honglei, a researcher with the Institute of Geology and Geophysics under CAS, told Xinhua.

Lin also said that to simulate authentic lunar surface conditions on Earth is challenging, thus making the in-situ measurement so essential. The results are consistent with a preliminary analysis of the returned Chang'e-5 samples, according to the study.

The findings provide more clues to China's Chang'e-6 and Chang'e-7 missions.

The investigations of lunar water reserves come into the limelight as the building of manned lunar stations are in the pipeline in the next decades, the report said.

telecom and retail conglomerate marks its pivot toward consumer offerings. Flush with Rs 2.6 lakh crore in cash, Ambani is helming a transformation as he seeks to build the digital and retail business into equal-sized pillars for Reliance, paring dependence on profits from its traditional oil refining business.

Over the past five years, Reliance has announced USD 5.7 billion in acquisitions with 45 per cent in TMT and 23.6 per cent in new energy.

Mandarin Oriental New York has global recognition and has won several influential awards, including AAA Five Diamond Hotel, Forbes Five Star Hotel, and Forbes Five Star Spa, among others.

It had revenues of USD 115 million in 2018, USD 113 million in 2019 and USD 15 million in 2020, according to the Reliance filing.

"This acquisition will add to the consumer and hospitality footprint of the group. The group

### Thousands throng Jagannath Temple day before doors close amid rising COVID cases

Continued from page-1

including 67 from municipality limits and 25 from Pipili block.

Meanwhile, a portion of the district judiciary complex was declared micro-containment zone from Friday after some officers and staff tested positive for Covid-19.

Earlier, a hotel in the town was declared micro-containment zone post detection of three Omicron cases.

On the day, Srimandir witnessed a mad rush of devotees, who thronged the shrine on Saturday, a day before the temple is set to go off limits for the public due to the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the district.

The decision for the closure (till January 31) was taken on Friday by district administration and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) after several officials and servitors tested Covid positive in the last couple of days.

Since the temple remains closed every Sunday for sanitisation, Saturday was the last day for devotees to have darshan of the Trinity. Temple gates were opened at 4.30 am after observance of daily rituals and devotees allowed inside at 5.30 am.

Serpentine queues were seen since the wee hours of the day as people waited to catch a glimpse of the Trinity before the scheduled closure of doors at 8.30 pm.

Security officials ensured strict adherence to Covid protocol including RT-PCR negative report obtained within 96 hours or complete vaccination certificate for those wishing to enter the temple premises.

However, devotees will be allowed to offer prayers to Patitapaban with Covid appropriate behaviour and arrangements have also been made for devotees to get Mahaprasad outside the temple during the closure.

Footfall

74,844 Total visitors to Srimandir.

70,521 Entry through Singhadwara. Rise in Covid cases in Kalahandi

Kalahandi is witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases, with 53 new infections recorded on Saturday. The district now has 103 active cases.

District administration is gearing up to meet any exigency and ensure enforcement drive for strict adherence to Covid protocol.

Ganjam shuts religious places till January 31 Following massive spike in Covid-19 cases, all religious places in Ganjam will remain closed for devotees till January 31.

The district, which recorded cases in single digits just four days before, witnessed a sudden rise and reported 42 positive cases on Saturday.

With Makar Sankranti drawing near, the administration is gearing up to ensure strict imposition of Covid norms.

"This sudden spike is a result of religious celebrations leading to large congregation of people. Hence, it was decided to impose this restriction and only allow daily rituals to be carried out by the staff following precautionary measures," said Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange.

already has investments in EIH Ltd (Oberoi Hotels), Stoke Park Limited in the UK and is developing a state-of-the-art convention centre, hotel and managed residences in BKC Mumbai," it said.

The closing of the transaction is anticipated to occur by the end of March 2022 and is subject to certain customary regulatory and other approvals and the satisfaction of certain other conditions.

"In the event that the other owners of the hotel elect to participate in the sale transaction, RIIHL would acquire the remaining 26.63 per cent, based on the same valuation used for the acquisition of the indirect 73.37 per cent stake," it added.

RIIHL had in April last year announced the acquisition of the entire issued share capital of Stoke Park, which owns and manages a 49 luxury bedroom and suites hotel, 27-hotel championship golf course, 13 tennis courts and 14 acres of private gardens in Buckinghamshire, for 57 million pounds.

Since James Bond played a game with Auric Goldfinger there in the 1964 blockbuster, the estate with the Georgian-era mansion set in the midst of 300 acres of parkland has been a backdrop in productions like 'Bridget Jones's Diary' and Netflix's British Royal Family drama 'The Crown'.

Reliance currently has investments in EIH Ltd apart from developing convention centre, hotel and managed residences in Mumbai.

Although the Mandarin Oriental reopened on April 1 last year, it's been staggered like other leading hotels by the lack of high-spending visitors and business travellers from abroad.

### Saudi princess freed after nearly three years in jail

Continued from page-1 and spending

time with family, he added.

Saudi Arabia's Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Saudi government has not commented publicly on the case. But in 2020, the Saudi Mission to the United Nations in Geneva told the working group on arbitrary detentions that Princess Basmah stood "accused of criminal offenses involving attempting to travel outside the Kingdom illegally." There was no trial, it added.

Estramant said security agents scooped up the princess and her daughter as they were preparing to travel to Switzerland for regular medical care.

Princess Basmah's health deteriorated significantly during detention, said her London-based advocates at Grant Liberty, which petitioned the U.N. and campaigned for months to secure her release.

"For months we didn't even know if she was actually alive or not," said Grant Liberty's legal officer Rhianna Dorrian, citing the princess' inability to make direct contact with her family or supporters since last May. "We also know she was denied basic medication."

Princess Basmah's advocates hailed her release as a victory while also saying that she remains under surveillance and some details were still unclear.

"It's a good sign from the royal court that they're working on improving legal conditions," said Estramant. "Saudi Arabia is trying to modernize and develop and it's important not to have people in arbitrary detention."

### 11 corporators of Congress 'resign' from Ahmedabad civic body due to differences over appointment of opposition leader

Continued from page-1

Ahmedabad in 2020.

However, Gujarat Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said that these corporators have not resigned but presented their views over the names of the leader of the opposition before the state president.

He said the name of the LoP is not finalised yet.

Doshi said that Congress had undertaken a "consultation exercise" for the appointment of Leader of Opposition in the AMC.

He said Congress leader Naresh Rawal and MLA CJ Chavda, appointed as observers for the purpose, have discussed the matter with all the corporators, Ahmedabad MLAs, and the state president.

"The consultation process is over but the name of the LoP is not yet finalised. It can be decided at any time. Congress corporators are united against the government's failure to provide basic amenities like drinking water and roads in many areas of Ahmedabad," he said.

### Delhi govt looking at minimum restrictions so that livelihoods are protected: Kejriwal

Continued from page-1

among other restrictions, to check the spread of the coronavirus.

Kejriwal said that he along with Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal and the Centre is keeping a close eye on the Covid situation.

"Our attempt is to impose minimum restrictions so livelihoods are not affected," he said. ALSO READ | Migrants once again leave for home fearing lockdown

Delhi on Saturday, recorded seven fatalities due to Covid and 20,181 cases as the positivity rate rose to 19.60 per cent, while on Friday, the city recorded 17,335 cases, the highest single-day rise since May 8, and nine deaths, with a positivity rate of 17.73 per cent. The figures on Thursday, stood at 15,097 fresh cases, six deaths and a positivity rate of 15.34 per cent.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain has repeatedly stressed that most Covid cases, this time, are mild or asymptomatic, not requiring hospitalisation.

Delhi has reported six times lower hospital admissions due to the coronavirus this time as compared to the first wave of infections, he had said on Friday.

There are a total of 48,178 active cases in the city, but only 1,480 Covid patients are in hospitals. Only 27 of them are on ventilator support, according to government data.

Chamber of Trade and Industry chairman Brijesh Goyal and president Subhash Khandelwal said that businessmen are worried about a lockdown.

The Omicron (a variant of Covid) is not that dangerous. Many patients are recovering in home isolation, they claimed, adding that additional restrictions on markets will lead to financial losses to businessmen and their employees.

Migrant workers said the situation so far has been manageable. "(Arvind) Kejriwal has said there will be no lockdown. A weekend curfew is manageable. I hope the situation doesn't worsen," Sudhan Mandal, 33, said.

Working at a government construction project in Central Delhi, Mandal said he had returned home in West Bengal's Malda district during the 2020 lockdown. "It had become really difficult to arrange food during the first lockdown. It instilled fear among migrant workers. In 2021, I was so scared that I left for home before the lockdown started," he said.

Swapan Jadhav, 35, a rickshaw puller from Jharkhand's Sahebganj district, said families on the breadline would never want a lockdown. "I have six members in my family, including four children. I went back to my village during the two lockdowns, but I could hardly find enough work there too. I can still manage with a weekend curfew, but a complete lockdown will break our back," he said. If a lockdown becomes inevitable, the government should take care of lodging and food, Jadhav said.

Raj Kumar, 33, working at a government housing project site in Sewa Nagar, said that he and his co-workers were badly beaten up by police at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border when they were walking home during the first lockdown in 2020.

"Once I reached home, the situation became worse. There was no work for days. I did odd jobs to eke out a living," Kumar, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district, said.

"I stayed in Delhi for the entire lockdown duration last year. There was no point in being beaten up by police again and remaining jobless at home. The situation is not that bad this time. I survived the second lockdown, I can survive this too," he added.

Mohammad Saleem, 53, said he has realised there is no point returning home again and again.

"Earlier, people did not know much about coronavirus. Now, we have experienced it," the rickshaw puller said. "I will sleep in my rickshaw if a lockdown is imposed again. My only request is that the government make arrangements for our food at least," he added.

The Maharashtra government has also said most of the cases in Mumbai are asymptomatic and the bed occupancy rate is low, asking people not to panic.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday tweeted: "I reiterate that we want to curtail unnecessary crowding but not impose any lockdown. The fact is that no restrictions will be effective unless we all adhere to Covid protocols."



# Will he stay or will he go? Djokovic's hearing looms large

After four nights in an Australian immigration detention hotel, Novak Djokovic will get his day in court Monday in a deportation case that has polarized opinions and elicited heartfelt support for the top-ranked tennis star in his native Serbia.

Djokovic had his visa canceled after arriving at Melbourne airport last week when Australian border officials ruled that he didn't meet the criteria for an exemption to an entry requirement that all non-citizens be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. His lawyers have since filed court papers in his challenge against deportation from Australia that show Djokovic tested positive for COVID-19 last month and recovered. He used that as grounds in applying for a medical exemption to Australia's strict vaccination rules.

The case is scheduled for a virtual hearing to appeal the visa cancellation. It will take place at 10 a.m. local time in Melbourne (2300 GMT Sunday) in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

On Sunday, Australian media reported that a federal government bid for extra time to prepare its case against Djokovic was denied. The application, made

## Borussia Dortmund chief argues slams move to restart Bundesliga without spectators

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke has

empty terraces after a two-week winter break, but Watzke ar-

on behalf of Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews during the weekend, sought to adjourn the final hearing by two days — just five days from the start of the Australian Open.

Federal Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly refused the application and the case will resume on Monday as planned.

In Serbia on Saturday, Djokovic's family held a rally in support of him in Belgrade for the third successive day, and Prime Minister Ana Brnabic assured him of her government's support over his visa battle to ensure he can enter Australia and defend his Australian Open title. The tournament begins Jan. 17 — just a week from his court date.

"We've managed to make sure gluten-free food is delivered to him, as well as exercising tools, a laptop and a SIM card so that he is able to be in contact with his family," Brnabic said. It comes as Australian media reported that immigration officials denied a request to have Djokovic's personal chef cook meals for him in the immigration hotel.

Djokovic is nine-time Australian Open champion. He has 20 Grand Slam singles titles, a men's record

"Eight thousand spectators could be distributed in such a way that

man football clubs may be forced out of business unless fans are allowed to return soon. "This will kill off an entire industry.

In addition, the connection between the club and its fans will be destroyed to a large extent. Some of the spectators will not come back. As a result, we will have even bigger problems in five or 10 years," said Watzke, the new chairman of the German Football League (DFL) supervisory board. Watzke also echoed the sentiments of Union Berlin president Dirk Zingler by suggesting "football is being used for symbolic politics" in the fight against the virus.

"Explain to me why music halls can be filled twice a day with 750 people, at 45 per cent capacity, but no spectators are allowed in big open-air stadiums. It does make you feel a bit let down," he said.

they have virtually nothing to do with each other physically. With 8,000 spectators at our stadium, the risk of infection would be low, and to be honest, everyone knows that," Watzke said.

Watzke says each Dortmund home game behind closed doors costs the club four million euros (\$4.5 million) in lost matchday revenue, calling it "hardly economically viable". He warns that some Ger-

criticised the decision to put Bundesliga matches back behind closed doors due to high numbers of COVID-19 in Germany. Last month, the government ordered Bundesliga games to be played without spectators to try to curb the spread of the virus. Dortmund are second in the Bundesliga table behind Bayern Munich. Matches in Germany's top flight resume on Friday in front of

gued for allowing small numbers of fans to return. "I am not interested in now filling up stadiums, that would be completely the wrong signal to send. But I think 10 per cent of the stadium capacity would be appropriate," Watzke told magazine Der Spiegel. Dortmund's impressive Signal Iduna Park stadium can hold 80,000 and Watzke wants to see it "even 10 per cent" full.

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Instead, he's been confined to his room in a modest immigration hotel in downtown Melbourne, with guards in the corridor.

The case has become a complex one. Djokovic was given a medical exemption backed by the Victoria state government and Australian Open organizers on Jan. 1, based on information he supplied to two independent medical panels. He was approved for a visa electronically.

But it has since emerged that the Victoria state medical exemption, allowed for people who tested positive for the coronavirus within the last six months, was deemed invalid by the federal border authorities.

It would have been valid to enter the tournament, but it wasn't enough to satisfy the Australian Border Force.

Australian media have reported details of the court documents expected to be entered into testimony on Monday. It showed Djokovic received a letter from Tennis Australia's chief medical officer on Dec. 30 "recording that he had been provided with a 'medical exemption from COVID vaccination' on the grounds that he had recently recovered from COVID."

It said Djokovic's first positive test was Dec. 16 and, on the date of issue, the exemption said the 34-year-old player "had not had a fever or respiratory symptoms in the past 72 hours."

Djokovic attended a Dec. 17 event in Belgrade honoring young tennis players. The event was covered by local media, and parents posted photos on social media showing Djokovic and the children not wearing masks. It's not clear if Djokovic knew the results of his test at the time.

On Dec. 14, Djokovic had attended a Euroleague basketball game between Red Star and Barcelona in a packed sports hall in Belgrade. He was photographed hugging several players of both teams, including some who soon later tested positive.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who said "rules are rules" and that incoming passengers were

responsible for meeting border regulations, has been accused of taking advantage of Djokovic's case to improve his battered standings in popularity polls ahead of a looming election.

Djokovic's plight has prompted claims from Serbia that Djokovic is being treated like a prisoner. The player himself appears to have become a standard-bearer for anti-vaccine groups, including some people who've gathered outside for support outside his immigration hotel.

Australian Open organizers have been taking some heat over the Djokovic situation, and with apparent good reason.

Tennis Australia, which runs the tournament and organizes the logistics for more than 2,000 incoming players, staff and officials, reportedly gave incorrect interpretations to players about the acceptable grounds for an exemption. That included the interpretation that having had a coronavirus infection within the previous six months would qualify. Organizers have blamed the federal government for its mixed messages on the policy.

Tournament director Craig Tiley has continued working in the background with Djokovic, or so it seems.

Tiley's video message to Australian Open staff about the tournament's "difficult time in the public arena" was published in News Corp. newspapers Saturday.

"There's been a circumstance that relates to a couple of players, Novak particularly... in a situation that is very difficult," Tiley said in the video. "We're a player-first event. We're working closely with Novak and his team, and others and their team, that are in this situation."

Djokovic was one of two players put into detention in the hotel that also houses refugees and asylum seekers. A third person, reported to be an official, left the country voluntarily after border force investigations.

The other player was 38-year-old doubles specialist Renata Voráčová, who had already been in Australia for a week before an investigation by the border officials. The Czech foreign ministry said Voráčová voluntarily left Australia after deciding not to appeal the decision.

The court hearing on Monday will determine whether Djokovic is not far behind her.



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dramatic finish to the fourth test that saw the tourists cling on for a draw at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday that Buttler has a "fractured left index

took that knock shows how much he cares," said captain Joe Root after the fourth test. "It shows how much it means to him to play in this test team and how much

nings, which meant Ollie Pope was drafted in for the tourists as a substitute fielder.

Pope lost his spot in the batting order to Bairstow and wasn't

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