

State sets task force Abhishek of Trinity today

Bhubaneswar: As per announcement made by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the State Government has constituted the Task Force against drug trafficking and drug abuse under the Chairmanship of former DGP Abhay. The Home Department has issued a resolution for this purpose. The Department said the mandate of the Task Force will be to coordi-

"In Odisha, it is imperative to give a serious push to efforts to contain drug abuse and drug trafficking, so that the emerging problem is nipped in the bud. This can be done by a combination of demand reduction, supply reduction, and harm reduction measures," read the resolution.

As per the order, there will be a multi-departmental coordination committee headed by the Chief Secretary and co-chaired by the State Task Force's Chairman. The Task Force will also formulate a State Policy within the context of National Policy on Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic substances 2012. The Multi Departmental Committee chaired by Chief Secretary will comprise among others by Secretaries of Department of Home, Health and Family Welfare, Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department (SSEPD), Excise, School and Mass

Puri(KCN): On the occasion of Pousha Sukla Pakhsha Purnima Tithi, very Jagannath and his siblings, is being performed at the world famous Srimandir to-

special rituals at the Shrine. "On the auspicious occasion of

SJTA Chief Administrator, Dr Krishan Kumar. In the morning,



special rituals are underway at Lord Jagannath Temple here on Monday. Pushya Abhishek, an important annual ritual of Lord

Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has made elaborate arrangements for smooth and timely conduct of the

Debabhisheka Purnima; Dwar Phita Niti, Patitapaban & Neelchakra Darshan at #JagannathaPuri at 4.40 AM," tweeted

Mangala Alati, Mailam, Tadap Lagi, Abakash Niti, Gopal Ballav, Shakala Dhupa rituals were CONTINUED ON: P-7



nate, suggest action in drug demand reduction, raise community awareness, increase community participation and public cooperation, focussed intervention in schools, colleges and among youth.

Aircraft carrier Vikrant completes third sea trials, returns to Kochi harbour

KOCHI (KCN): India's first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC) Vikrant has returned to Kochi harbour after completion of its third sea trials in high seas, a defence spokesperson said here on Monday. "IAC returned from sea trials on January 16 (Sunday), wherein large number of ship systems were operated and tested with training on various equipment fitted onboard," the spokesperson said, adding that the trial data will now be analysed with mandatory inspections and balance work on the ship. The IAC had begun its sea trial on January 9 to carry out complex manoeuvres

in high seas ahead of its planned induction in August.

ence and Technological Laboratory, a DRDO facility based

around Rs 23,000 crore and its construction propelled



The 40,000-tonne aircraft carrier, the largest and most complex warship to be built in India, successfully completed a five-day maiden sea voyage in August last year and underwent 10-day sea trials in October. Several scientists from the Naval Sci-

ence and Technological Laboratory, a DRDO facility based around Rs 23,000 crore and its construction propelled

at Visakhapatnam, witnessed the third phase of sea trials of Vikrant. The warship will operate MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 helicopters, and MH-60R multi-role helicopters. The IAC has been built at a cost of

India into a select group of countries having capabilities to build state-of-the-art aircraft carriers. President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu visited the ship recently here.

UP polls: FIR against BJP's Dadri MLA for flouting Covid norms at poll campaign

NOIDA(KCN): An FIR has been lodged against BJP's Dadri MLA Tejpal Singh Nagar for allegedly flouting COVID-19 norms during a poll campaign in his constituency for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, police said on Monday. Nagar, who has been re-nominated by his party from the Dadri assembly seat, was in a group housing society in Greater Noida (West) for campaigning and according to police, it was there that norms were violated. The legislator along with five other "unknown" persons has been booked under provisions of the Epidemic Dis-

eases Act. Nagar could not be contacted immediately for his response. "The FIR has been

(disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (unlawfully or negligently spreading

scores of people around him as he went around societies seeking votes, defying Election Commission's guidelines related to COVID-19 for poll campaigning. The action comes close on heels of the police in Gautam Buddha Nagar district lodging an FIR against Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who was in Noida on Sunday to campaign for Congress' candidate Pakhuri Pathak. The election to the Dadri assembly constituency, which has 5.86 lakh voters, is scheduled on February 10. The result will be out on March 10.



lodge at the Bisrakh police station following a complaint by the local police chowki in-charge at Gaur City," a police official. "The case has been lodged under the Epidemic Diseases Act and Indian Penal Code sections 188

infection of any disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life)," the official said. Purported pictures and videos on social media showed Nagar campaigning with

Punjab minister Rana Gurjeet's son to fight independently from Sultanpur Lodhi seat

CHANDIGARH(KCN): Punjab Cabinet minister Rana Gurjeet Singh's son Rana Inder Partap Singh on Monday said he would contest as an independent candidate from the Sultanpur Lodhi assembly seat in Kapurthala district. The minister's son made the announcement after the Congress, in its first list of candidates for the Punjab assembly polls, gave the ticket to sitting MLA Navtej Singh Cheema from the Sultanpur Lodhi assembly constituency. The development comes a day after chief minister Charanjit Singh

Channi's brother Manohar Singh announced his intention to fight as an independent from the Bassi Pathana seat from where the sitting legislator

ticket but the Congress gave it to Navtej Cheema. Singh claimed that the block samiti members, the Zila Parishad chairman and the sarpanches of

"There has been corruption in this assembly constituency. Cases have been registered against Congress workers including women," he alleged. Singh further alleged that the development funds came for this constituency in the wake of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev. "But a major part of these funds were misappropriated and people of this constituency were upset over it," he alleged. Punjab Technical Education Minister Rana Gurjeet Singh is currently MLA from Kapurthala seat. The Congress has again fielded him from Kapurthala.



Gurpreet Singh GP was given the ticket. "I will be contesting as an independent from Sultanpur Lodhi," Rana Inder Partap Singh told PTI over the phone. He said he had applied for the party

the area have extended support to him and asked him to contest from the Sultanpur Lodhi assembly seat. He claimed the security deposit of Cheema would be forfeited in the polls.

UP polls: Congress to hold 'Pratigya Chaupals', plans village outreach

LUCKNOW(KCN): The Congress party on Monday said it will hold 'Pratigya Chaupals' all over Uttar Pradesh for campaigning in the state assembly elections, complying with all COVID-19 protocol. In a letter issued to candidates and office bearers of the party on Monday, UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu said in view of the current COVID wave, the Congress has postponed all its large gatherings but small programmes can be organised with caution. In such a situation, the party will hold 'Pratigya Chaupals' in villages, mohallas

and wards, he said. The UPCC president said 'Pratigya Chaupals' will be held in two-three villages every day in which state, district and

ployed and women self-help groups. The Congress party has promised to give 40 per cent of its tickets to woman candidates.

scooters to girls enrolled in the graduation courses. Awareness and precaution regarding COVID-19 too will be discussed in villages in 'Pratigya Chaupals', he said, adding that masks and medicines will also be distributed as per the requirement for holding chaupals. While announcing the poll schedule for the assembly elections in five states on January 5, the Election Commission had banned all sorts of public rallies and gatherings, allowing only door-to-door campaigning by various parties' workers in groups of five or fewer people.



block-level office bearers of the party will take part. In these 'chaupals', the party manifesto for women and Congress' pledge for farmers will be discussed, he said, adding discussions will also be held with youths, unem-

It has also promised to reserve 40 per cent of government jobs to women, besides various other benefits to them, if the party wins the UP polls. The party had also announced to give smartphones to girls enrolled in 10+2 and

Statue Inauguration of Eminent Social worker Bholanath Nayak & pious lady Bhababati Devi



Cuttack (KCN): Cuttack Sadar 42 mouza villagers Sriram Brahampur eminent social worker, Gandhibadi, Ex-Sarpanch Bholanath Nayak & pious, Sober & humble lady Bhababati Devi both husband wife statue inaugurated there village in the presence off all villages, The Bholanatha Smruti

Sansad Team and guest etc. The smruti Sabha presinding by Er. Ashok Biswal and chief speaker Sr. Journalist Arun Panda, Chief Guest OJ Cuttack District President Prafulla Mohanty, Bholanatha Smruti Sansad founder Samabayabit Mahendra Nayak, OJ Cuttack District general secretary Ajay Kumar Das, Film Director

Mitu Mohapatra (Mithun), Advocate Keshabar Kar, Honourable President of India Awarded Social Worker Gangadhar Behera, Sahitika Sukadev Parida, Social Worker Dr. Kalimulla. Other Members are Poet Rudra Narayan Das, Dayanidhi Pratibha Bikash Pratistan Secretary Narayan Chandra Mohanty,

Sahitika Chitta Ranjan Behera, Upendra Barik and others. On this Great day the Lokabhasa newspaper was inaugurated by all guests. Lastly Natyakar Ashok Kumar Pattnik gave thanks to all for their participation. Around 30 Nos of great variety personalities are felicitated with Bholanath Seva Sanman-2022.

OASME SoS For Coal

Bhubaneswar(KCN): With no respite in sight to the ongoing coal crisis that continues to affect the survival of the local industries, the Odisha Assembly of Small

of industries that form the backbone of the state's MSMEs and provide employment to lakhs. In a letter to the Chief Minister, OASME Secretary General

that despite the continuous efforts of the State Government towards industrial development, the CPP-based industries in Odisha which are heavily dependent on

ceive uninterrupted coal supplies for continued operations has brought down the industry to a standstill and left with no time to devise any mitigation plan to continue sustainable operations.



and Medium Enterprises (OASME) has sought intervention of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in averting the impending crisis within the State and helping sustain industry operations. The shortage, a result of the intermittent coal supplies to Captive Power Plants (CPPs) based industries in Odisha, threatens the viability

Satwik Swain said, "Despite the untiring efforts of the Government to support the industry, the continuing coal shortage due to stoppage/curtailment of coal supplies and rakes has threatened the very survival of local industries with the risk of loss of lakhs of livelihood and closure of thousands of MSMEs in the State." Swain highlighted

coal as their primary raw material are unable to run smoothly due to the current situation. Since August 2021, the CPPs are getting just 40-50% of the required coal supplies, creating a backlog of over 1500 coal rakes, since most of the available coal rakes are being diverted away from CPPs, he said. This struggle to re-

Due to the aforesaid reason, the association said the operational power plants are forced to operate at reduced power generation levels, creating a huge risk of closure of the plant. Highlighting the natural advantages enjoyed by the State, Swain said, "Odisha holds 25% of the total coal deposit of the country. Out of the 150 million tons of coal produced through Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCA), 65% is being transferred to other states and only 35% is reserved for Orissa industries, against the actual minimum requirement of 55% for local CPPs." Such acute shortage is creating a dangerous situation for the manufacturing sector, threatening the health and wellbeing of 0-5 year old children and their caregivers. In February 2021, Rourkela was shortlisted by an ex-

SEC seeks Panchayat poll master plan by Jan 28

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): The State Election Commission (SEC) on Saturday asked the district collectors and SPs to submit master plans on how to conduct panchayat elections in the State in view of the challenge posed by the huge spike in Covid cases by January 28. State Election Commissioner AP Padhi on Saturday held a meeting with top officials of the State government including collectors and SPs to review preparations for the panchayat elections in view of the prevailing Covid situation. Padhi told mediapersons that the meeting was held in two rounds with the Chief Secretary, the Director General of Police, senior officials of the State government and SEC. In the first round of the meeting, discussion focused on strict enforcement of the Covid guidelines at every stage of panchayat election. The SEC said that the officials discussed how to enforce the protocols during filing of nomi-

nation papers, scrutiny of papers, campaigning, polling, counting and at dispersal centres. Opinion of collectors and SPs were also sought on the issue, he added. Padhi said the SEC will issue a set of guidelines on enforcing the Covid norms during the elections. The second round of the meeting was held with DGP and ADG (Law and Order) with inputs from the collectors, SPs, range IGs, range DIGs. The SEC asked district officials to focus on strict adherence of all guidelines during the election as the process of filing the nomination papers will start from January 17. DGP Sunil Bansal told mediapersons that the panchayat polls to be conducted amidst the Covid pandemic poses a challenge before the police administration. Stating that steps have already been taken to enforce Covid guidelines at the ground level, the DGP said the collectors and SPs mostly spoke about practical difficulties faced in the course of holding the election.

Rourkela among 10 Smart Cities Nationwide under the 'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge'

Rourkela(KCN): Smart City Rourkela has won a place among Top 10 Cities of India as part of the

pert committee from 63 applicant cities across the country. Over the next 7 months, it was part of

graded two Anganwadi Centres with play spaces, nursing cum counselling stations for pregnant mothers and kitchen gardens. Envisioning holistic

Tilkanagar UPHC at Bondamunda, Basanti Colony market space and Rourkela Municipal Corporation office to support young working mothers from all sections of society



'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge' under the aegis of the Smart Cities Mission of the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India.

a cohort of 25 cities that received technical assistance and capacity building to solicit citizen participation, implement trials and pilots, and build consensus around their proposals.

The winning cities announced by MoHUA, also include

"Happy to note that Rourkela is one of the



development catering to the most vulnerable parts of the city, RSCL and RMC have jointly taken measures to create learning-based play areas for underprivileged children and the community at Malgodam and Leprosy Colony, towards strengthening health-care development in the early childhood years. Dr. Subhankar Mohapatra, Chief Executive Officer, Rourkela Smart City Limited, Commis-

to breastfeed in public spaces with ease. Rourkela is also looking forward towards scaling up early childhood-oriented improvements in health facilities, digital learning & education, and inclusion of nature in every project. Childhood is the right time for physical, mental and cognitive development including proper nutrition. This is the time when a foundation for good health is laid for the



Bengaluru, Hubballi-Dharwad, Indore, Jabalpur, Kakinada, Kochi, Kohima, Vadodara, and Warangal. The Finalists were selected after thorough evaluation of their proposed and implemented projects by a jury consisting of representatives from MoHUA, BvLF, and independent experts in urban design, early childhood development, and behavioural change. In the first stage of the challenge, the Rourkela Smart City Limited (RSCL) and Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) jointly responded to MoHUA's open call for proposals to implement neighbourhood-level pilot projects improving public spaces, streets, transport, and access to services to enhance the health and wellbeing of 0-5 year old children and their caregivers. In February 2021, Rourkela was shortlisted by an ex-

Top 10 Cities in the 'Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge'. Under the program, future plans are being made to provide children with a variety of components, a better environment, and to build better relationships between senior citizens and children in urban slums," said Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, Collector Sundar-garh. He further thanked the former ADM Rourkela, the former Commissioner RMC and the CEO of Smart City Rourkela and all the people of Rourkela. RSCL and RMC targeted interventions in the Basanti Colony and Udit Nagar neighbourhoods spreading across 7 wards. Infants and toddlers living in informal settlements on the periphery of these neighbourhoods access nearby Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. Recognising anganwadis as one of the most important ECD services, the city up-



sioner, Rourkela Municipal Corporation says: "Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge helped us to visualize and see how much we can do for infant, toddler, and caregiver communities in our city. This becomes a platform for us to work under area of early childhood education, Mother and children's health, slum development, women freedom under the umbrella of infant, toddler, caregiver-friendly and children-friendly city. Rourkela had an incredible experience working on this thematic area and we are looking forward to work more on this significant issue." Additionally, nursing cabins (breastfeeding pods) were installed in

children. The environment of a city plays an important role in this process. Keeping this in mind, various initiatives and programs have been devised to make Smart City Rourkela child friendly. The programme is being done in collaboration with the Bernard van Leer Foundation with WRI India as the technical partner. Rourkela Smart City will receive technical assistance for the next 2 years, under the initiative. Accordingly, host of initiatives had been undertaken by the Rourkela Municipal Corporation to make the city engaging, useful and fun for children i.e. to make Rourkela a Children Friendly City.

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Actor Rajan Kumar to bring to life the tableau of Ministry of Textiles for the Republic Day Parade at Rajpath

Jaipur (KCN, Dance. In 2004, his Rajan Kumar has wears the dress. belongs to Munger been selected to perform his art on Sanjay Sharma name was included fans all over the Very big turban, district of Bihar. It



Raj): Actor Rajan Kumar is very fond of art culture. This is the reason that in 1998, the Government of India gave him the National Award for Chhau in the Limca Book of World Records. In 2005, his name was entered in the Guinness Book of World Records as Charlie Chaplin II. International artist world. This time on the tableau of the Ministry of Textiles, Rajan Kumar will be seen in a Gujarati attire. He gets into the character as soon as he colorful dress, instantly bringing alive the tableau of the Ministry of Textiles, Rajan Kumar will enchant the Rajpath. Actor Rajan Kumar is a matter of happiness and inspiration for the people of Munger, the people of Bihar and the whole country that a youth of a small town has this historic day. Rajan Kumar has reached Delhi and is working day and night continuously on the Rajpath preparing for the 26 January parade.

Maara Movie Review: A grounded remake of Charlie with quite a bit of heart

If you didn't know that Maara is the remake of the Malayalam film, Charlie, the opening shot of fireflies fluttering about is a strong hint of the magic contained within the universe of this film. Shortly, you see little Paaru in rapt attention, as a nun narrates to her the story of a soldier who's travelling across seas and jungles in a quest to find his soul. This is pretty much the story of this film as well, as Paaru (Shraddha Srinath) grows up to find herself in a similar quest for her soul, well, soulmate, in Maara (Madhavan). There's another quest for a soulmate in this film, one undertaken by Vellaiyan (a wonderful Mouli), one that is later taken over by Maara. The film is a reinforcement of the power of stories, of the stories each of our lives are. This is why there are multiple characters with their own short stories, including those of Selvi (Abhirami), the sex worker, and Kani (Sshivada), the guilt-ridden doctor. The implication is that no one story is necessarily more important than another. I got the sense that Maara doesn't think of himself as a hero or a saviour, even if those around him seem to believe that. He's merely a tool, a person who breezes through life hoping to repay the extraordinary help that Vellaiyan has done to him. I loved this touch because shorn of it, Maara, the character, could have felt idealistic and unrelatable—which would have gone against the point of the film itself. This way, there's a reason for why Maara is the way he is, why he can't afford to stay at one place for too long. I quite enjoyed that Madhavan plays this character without a sanctimonious flavour—and more importantly, in a way that shows that Maara isn't above vulnerability. There's no moral superiority in that as-



into the trap of mundanity and indifference, into routine and repetition. Maara is pretty much the film equivalent of 'Follow the white rabbit'. That's perhaps why during a conversation between Maara and a thief the almost mystical beauty of existence. It's also likely that this is why the film's many shots are lit as they are, with many faces often aglow, as though in the presence of a halo. This is why the coincidences in this this notion that he's a mystical being. It's his understanding—and you will see it from his eyes when he's engaged in conversation with every single character—that each of us is magical, as are our stories. In this film with performers like Mouli's as much purpose and are able to see them for the individuals that they are, instead of simply as a crutch for a lead character. Of course, much of this credit must go to the original film, Charlie. In a world that is in a tearing hurry, at a time when films and stories are designed to be rapid for fear of making audiences impatient, films like Maara come as a welcome relief. In this film, at least two important exchanges—between Vellaiyan and Paaru, and later, between Maara and Kani—happen as wood slowly burns to ember, as tender faces are lit by the warm glow of a fireplace. It's for such moments that I'll remember this film, even if some inconsistent performances and some synthetic moments stop it from being truly great. Nevertheless, it's a film that has heart and that encourages empathy towards those around us, and if possible, to note that magic doesn't need to be thought of as an otherworldly trait, if only we cared to pay more attention to the beauty around us. film become palatable. The central idea at the heart of this film is of two lonely souls in search of each other. Take note of that inexplicable attraction little Paaru feels as she sees a speeding train from within her bus. Or take note of that instinctive smile from Maara as he steps into his room, a room that Paaru has lived in briefly. In such a film, coincidences are to be thought of as divine providence, or as one character, when speaking about Maara says, "destiny". Another likens him to a mythical character, Santa Claus, while commenting on Maara's habit of sudden appearances that usually result in joy to whoever he meets. Maara himself, as he does many times in this film, underplays

India-South Africa test series:

Final frontier still unvanquished

India is the only country where politicians try to rule till death and cricketers don't retire till removed or dropped from the team. Many of them play for money rather than for the nation. Such obsession has dampened and annihilated India's dreams of achieving a historic first-ever Test series win in South Africa. India's dream went up in smoke as the visitors chased down the 212-run target to win the decider on 14 January and clinch the three-match series 2-1.

India has never won a test series in South Africa. India faltered at the final frontier again, the Dean Elgar-led South African side triumphed over a superior on-paper Indian side led by Virat Kohli. While India had started off well by winning in Centurion, Proteas hit back in Johannesburg and completed their revival in Cape Town, to pocket series. The Indian cricket team has to wait for another three to four years to win their first-ever Test series in South Africa. The spirit and hope of cricket lovers in Indian have been shattered.

Meanwhile, the cricket fraternity was all praises for the home team and lauded them for coming back from losing the first Test and winning the series. What is disheartening for Indians is that after winning the first test, India lost the series. Cricket experts attribute various reasons for India's debacle. But the performance of senior players is mainly responsible for the series defeat. The Indian team will rue the failure of their middle order, who did well in patches. Virat Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, and Ajinkya Rahane all scored only one fifty each in the series but then failed to carry on for a huge score.

Despite poor form, the selection of Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane cost the Indian team heavily. Rahane's form was worst and he should not have been allowed to play at all. The reason is that age has affected their reflex actions so they are getting out too early. How Shreyas Iyer was not given another chance after scoring century. How Hanuma Vihari was dropped despite better technique and performing well. In the second test, Pant got out for playing a reckless shot

that cost the team heavily. In the third test, he played marvellously but did not get support from tailenders who played as if playing 20-20 matches.

In the past India was winning some matches overseas due to batting prowess, which featured Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman. The five batsmen dominated bowling attacks all around the world. But now our fast bowlers have elevated India to be able to win in all conditions. Former Legendary Australia spinner Shane Warne feels the same.

Knowing that India always prefers to bat first, the pitch has been deliberately prepared in such a way that it will be eased in 4th innings in the last two tests. Had the pitch behaved, in the same manner, all times, India might have won. However, Indian bowlers struggled in the 4th innings when the pitch was not much helpful. Indians also dropped some valuable catches.

The absence of a left-arm bowler was felt. The vulnerability of Indians against left-arm seamers was exposed and mainly responsible for India failing to score more runs. Marco Jansen, troubled Indian batsmen more than others.

During the post-match press conference, when skipper Virat Kohli was asked about Pujara and Rahane's future in the team, he said that the selectors will take a call on the senior batsmen. But selectors select the entire team not playing eleven. It is the captain who decides to play eleven. What prompted Kohli to select Pujara and Rahane especially Rahane who are failing abysmally since England tour. Even Virat Kohli's form is a matter of concern and not up to the mark. He is performing like an ordinary barman. He is equally affected by poor reflex action and losing concentration in crucial times. He played very slowly in the last test.

The statement of Kohli supporting Pujara and Rahane in future because of their talent and contribution is unwarranted unjustified. If past contribution is the criterion, then India should call back old players. With the passage of time, players lose form and they should voluntarily give way for youngsters, exactly as Rahul Dravid did after failure in Australia. Indians

Dr Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

play for money and record rather than for the nation. Kohli must bear moral responsibility for India's defeat.

Even if India had lost series with new players, still there would have been a long-term benefit as we could have known about their potentialities to play in international level as we knew Rishabh Pant. In past, It was the South African tour that unravelled the talent of Rahul Dravid, Virender Sehwag while the Australian tour unravelled the talent of VVS Laxman and the England tour had unravelled potentialities of Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly.

Indian lower-order batsmen got out for playing reckless shots as those pitches were not helpful for such stroke. They don't have the techniques to play the waiting game. They did not help Rishabh Pant to score more runs.

South African bowlers extracted awkward bounce in pitch due to height that got wickets, but Indian bowlers failed to generate such wicket-taking bounce. When the wicket is not falling, it is better not to give more runs. But our bowlers gave too many runs and eased pressure on batsmen. When the wicket did not fall, the captain lost their temper and the team lost hope.

For example, the third and final Test match between South Africa and India in Cape Town was rocked by the DRS controversy, with the visitors insinuating that everything was not fair while an LBW decision was overturned after review. South African skipper Dean Elgar rightly said the DRS controversy offered them a "window" to have a go at the target with the Virat Kohli-led Indian team getting distracted by their on-field chatter during the series-deciding third Test.

The left-handed opener's LBW decision by umpire Marais Erasmus was overturned after HawkEye showed the ball trajectory going over the stumps' led to tempers fraying in the Indian camp with skipper Kohli along with his deputy KL Rahul and senior offspinner Ravichandran Ashwin mocking the South African broadcasters 'SuperSport' on the stump microphone.

Legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar was not happy with India's tactics, loss of hope after Lunch on Day 4 of the third Test against

South Africa at the Newlands in Cape Town. South Africa had gone into lunch needing only 41 runs to win with seven wickets still in the bank. In the second session, the hosts took just 8.3 overs to score the remaining runs. India's tactics of not using Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami or Shardul Thakur surprised Gavaskar.

Selectors are also responsible for destroying team morality by creating captain controversy unnecessarily by selecting two captains- one for the test and one for the test. Even the arrogance of Kohli and Rohit Sharma is condemnable for not adjusting to the situation. India should replace Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma with new players. Even Kohli should quit the test if fail to perform well.

A left-arm fast bowler must be included in the team. Apart from Pant, other left-arm batsmen can be more helpful. For South Africa, the batting of Dean Elgar, Keegan Petersen, Temba Bavuma is praiseworthy especially Keegan Petersen not only impressed but helped the team to win the series. They are new find of this series. While India has no new find except reassertion of talent of Pant Ashwini failed as both bowler and batsman.

When good spinners struggle to get wickets, India should try Washington Sunder in foreign pitches who averages more than 60. He had helped to win a series in Australia.

India had defeated Australia with help of young and new players. South Africa defeated India by its young players in the absence of world-class players like Dale Steyn, Morn Morkel, AB De Villiers Hashim Mahomed Amla. Relatively inexperienced South African showed more courage, character, composure and calibre than the massively more experienced, star-studded Indian team. The lesson is that give chance to youngsters.

A blend of experienced and young players can win. With the passage of time, the senior players should give way to youngsters as seen in other countries. Never play for record or money but for the nation.

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Strongest evidence yet that MS is caused by Epstein-Barr virus

It has long been suspected that the common Epstein-Barr virus can trigger multiple sclerosis (MS). Now, a study of 10 million military personnel in the US has shown that virtually every case of MS is preceded by infection with the virus. The finding suggests a vaccine against the Epstein-Barr virus could greatly reduce the incidence of MS.

"This is really a turning point," says Alberto Ascherio at Harvard University. It should lead to better ways to treat MS as well as help to prevent it, he says. MS is caused by the immune system attacking the protective sheath that wraps around nerves, leading to symptoms such as difficulty walking that worsen over time.

The Epstein-Barr virus is a kind of herpes virus that spreads mainly via saliva, for instance by kissing or drinking from the same glass. It is the cause of mononucleosis, sometimes known as glandular fever. Initial infections may cause few, if any, symptoms, but once the virus gets into immune cells called B cells, it lurks in them perma-

nently. It can reactivate and cause issues later in life, including various cancers. The difficulty with demonstrating that the

Michael Le

nel, who have blood samples taken regularly and stored, allowing them to be tested later for Epstein-Barr infections. "This is pretty much unique in the world," says Ascherio.

Only 5 per cent of recruits were uninfected with the Epstein-Barr virus when their first blood sample was taken. Out of 10 million military personnel, 955 developed MS, typically around 10 years after their first sample was taken.

Yet only one of those who developed MS tested negative for antibodies against the Epstein-Barr virus. Another 34 were uninfected when their first blood sample was taken, but became infected before being diagnosed with MS.

"These findings provide compelling data that implicate Epstein-Barr virus as the trigger for the development of multiple sclerosis," write William Robinson and Lawrence Steinman at Stanford University, California, in a perspective piece about the study. "Now that the initial trigger for multiple sclerosis has been identified, perhaps multiple sclerosis could be eradicated."

Read more: Multiple sclerosis drug is first to dramatically cut brain shrinkage While there is no vaccine against the Epstein-Barr virus at present, several groups are trying to develop one. On 5 January, Moderna announced that it had begun testing a candidate mRNA vaccine in people.

"Ultimately, we can't be certain that

Epstein-Barr virus is causing multiple sclerosis until we can see what impact preventing Epstein-Barr infection has on multiple sclerosis incidence," says Clare Walton at the UK's MS Society.

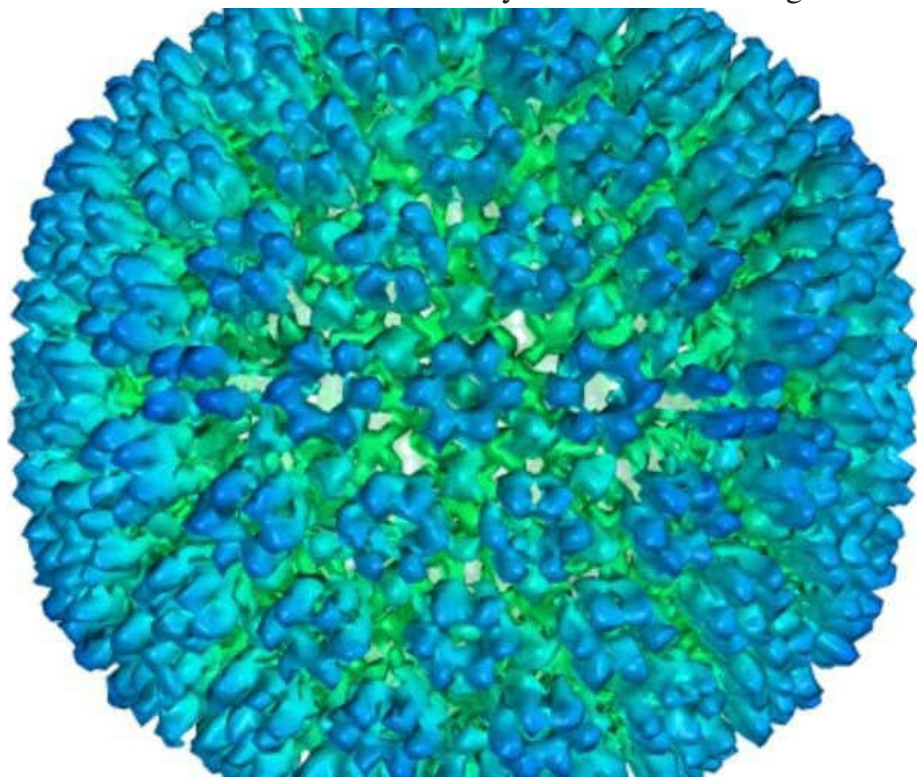
Finding ways of targeting the virus directly could also improve treatments, says Ascherio. "The presence of the virus provides persistent stimulation to the immune system," he says.

Indeed, one small trial has already shown that training immune cells called T cells to target the Epstein-Barr virus improved symptoms.

What remains unclear is why so few of those infected with the virus develop multiple sclerosis – less than one in 10,000 in the recruits. "One or more additional factors must be required to trigger multiple sclerosis," Walton says.

However, it is the norm rather than the exception that only a minority of those infected by a virus experience severe complications, says Ascherio. For instance, only a tiny fraction of those infected with the poliovirus develop the muscle weakness that can cause permanent disability, just as only a small proportion of people infected by the coronavirus end up in hospital. This could be due to genetic factors.

Michael Le Page is a reporter at New Scientist, covering everything from climate change to CRISPR. He won the MJA award for science explained in 2019, and the ABSW award for best news item in 2016.



Epstein-Barr virus is the main cause of MS is that 9 in 10 people worldwide is infected with it. This means scientists must monitor huge numbers of people to find out whether people who haven't been infected with the virus are less likely to develop MS.

Read more: MS symptoms improved by treatment that attacks glandular fever virus

Ascherio's team found the numbers they needed in the form of US military person-

People will remember handling of COVID and will vote against Yogi Adityanath: Owaisi

HYDERABAD: Taking a dig at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over his handling of COVID-19 during the second wave in that state, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Monday said the people of Gorakhpur will remember it and will cast their vote against Yogi Adityanath in the coming Assembly polls in UP. With the BJP deciding to field Yogi Adityanath from his home turf Gorakhpur (Urban) assembly seat in the February polls, Owaisi told reporters here: "The way the Yogi government went missing during COVID second wave leaving the Uttar Pradesh public on their own, dead bodies were floating in rivers in Uttar Pradesh and also in

Gorakhpur. I am hopeful the people of Gorakhpur will remember this and will take a good decision against Yogi Adityanath". Asked over his party's preparedness for the UP Assembly elections, the All India Majils-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) president and Hyderabad MP said they are completely geared up and ready to fight the polls, adding, they will hold virtual rallies by following

Reaction to criticism that AIMIM's participation will help the BJP win in Uttar Pradesh, Owaisi said "this accusation will continue to be there on me for my entire life". He said the question

is why BJP won in 2014, 2017 and 2019 in Uttar Pradesh? "No one is answering my question. Because these "secular" parties failed in defeating the BJP," Owaisi said. "It is due to frustration and foreseeing their defeat such accusations are made. They don't have capacity--ideologically and intellectually to defeat the BJP and hence accusing the AIMIM," Owaisi added.



Charge sheet against 14 in Assam's Jorhat lynching case filed

JORHAT: Charge sheet against 14 accused in the Jorhat lynching of an AASU leader in Jorhat was filed in a local court on Monday, a police official said. The charge sheet was submitted within 50 days of the incident, he said. Charge sheet was also filed against a minor accused, Jorhat superintendent of police Ankur Jain said. He said 15 people were arrested in con-

nection with the case, evidence was found against him," he said. The prime accused in the case, Neeraj Das alias 'Kola Lora' (black boy) was killed on December 1 after being reportedly hit by a trailing police vehicle when he jumped out of the police car he was travelling in and tried to escape in the outskirts of Jorhat town. Jain added that all the witnesses are covered under the Witness Protection Act and

their identities have been kept confidential. An eight-member SIT had investigated the case under the supervision and guidance of senior police officials, he said. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma tweeted on the development. "As promised @jorhatpolice has charge sheeted 14 accused persons (one has since died & one is Child in conflict with law) in the infamous Animesh Bhuyan assault and murder in 50 days. Police has been directed to have expeditious trial." Retweeting Sarma's words, Special DGP (Law and Order) GP Singh wrote, "Sir, we would ensure quick trial."

likely was severed in the eruption and repairs could take weeks. The loss of the cable leaves most Tongans unable to use the internet or make phone calls abroad. Those that have managed to get messages out described their country as looking like a moonscape as they began cleaning up from the tsunami waves and volcanic ashfall. Tsunami waves of about 80 centimeters (2.7 feet) crashed into Tonga's shoreline, and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described damage to boats and shops on Tonga's shoreline. The waves crossed the Pacific, drowning two people in Peru and causing minor damage from New Zealand to Santa Cruz, California. Scientists said they didn't think the eruption would have a significant impact on the Earth's climate. Huge volcanic eruptions can sometimes cause temporary global cooling as sulfur dioxide is pumped into the stratosphere. But in the case of the Tonga eruption, initial satellite measurements indicated the amount of sulfur dioxide released would only have a tiny effect of perhaps 0.01 Celsius (0.02 Fahrenheit) global average cooling, said Alan Robock, a professor at Rutgers University.

Flights sent to assess Tonga damage after volcanic eruption

WELLINGTON: New Zealand and Australia were able to send military surveillance flights to Tonga on Monday to assess the damage a huge undersea volcanic eruption left in the Pacific island nation. A towering ash cloud since Saturday's eruption had prevented earlier flights. New Zealand hopes to send essential supplies, including much-needed drinking water, on a military transport plane Tuesday. No casualties have been confirmed on Tonga, although a British woman was reported missing. The U.K. Foreign Office said Monday it was "supporting the family of a British woman reported missing in Tonga and are in contact with the local authorities." Relatives of Angela Glover, who ran an animal rescue center in Tonga's capital, said she has not been seen since she was swept away by a tsunami wave. Her husband, James, survived by clinging on to a tree. Glover's brother Nick Eleini told The Guardian, "I don't think this is going to have a happy ending." Communications with Tonga remained extremely limited. The company that owns the single underwater fiber-optic cable that connects the island nation to the rest of the world said it

Lakhs take holy dip in Ganga at Prayagraj on Magh Purnima amid Covid surge

PRAYAGRAJ: An estimated three lakh devotees Monday took a holy dip in the Ganga and the Sangam here on the

a dip. He said that 25 'Covid Help Desk' have been set up in the Mela area through which devotees and others visitors are be-

They are also expected to mandatorily carry certificates of both doses of vaccination and maintain Covid-appropriate

bathing ghats in the Mela area. Two 50-bed hospitals, named Ganga and Triveni, 12 health camps and 10 treatment centres



Magh Purnima, braving a surge in coronavirus cases in Uttar Pradesh and other parts of the country. A Mela official said devotees started arriving on the banks of the river from early morning, and by evening about three lakh people had taken

ing encouraged to follow all health protocols in view of the surge in coronavirus cases. The Prayagraj district administration has already announced that it will be mandatory for visitors to carry a negative RT-PCR report, not older than 48 hours.

behaviour. The mela administration has divided the fair area into five sectors. Five pontoon bridges have been erected so that devotees staying in more than 3,200 institutions and camps in all these sectors can have an easy access to 12

have also been set up in the Mela area. Uttar Pradesh on Monday reported 15,622 fresh coronavirus cases, pushing the active infection tally to 1,06,616, as nine more people died of Covid, raising the toll to 22,972, an official statement said.

China anti-virus measures in full force after Beijing reports positive case

BEIJING: Beijing's first reported case of the omicron variant has prompted stepped-up measures in the nation's capital, just weeks before it

day reported the capital, with its 20 million residents, was considering stronger restrictions on travel. All transit links with Tianjin have already

without outside contact and undergo daily testing. Beijing Daily reported Sunday that the capital will require travellers to

The economic, logistical and psychological stresses resulting from that policy have become increasingly apparent, creating tension over how



hosts the Winter Olympic Games. Following the positive test announced Saturday, more than 13,000 people and all places visited by the patient over the previous days have been tested, according to state media. The person's apartment complex and workplace have been sealed off. The infected person lives and works in the city's northwestern district of Haidian and had no travel history outside of Beijing for the past two weeks, according to state media. State media on Mon-

been severed. International flights have been sharply reduced and domestic travellers have been barred if they transferred to a second location before arriving in Beijing. No new cases were reported in Beijing on Monday, although the nearby city of Tianjin saw another 80 cases recorded over the previous 24 hours. The Olympics open on Feb. 4, just days after the start of Lunar New Year celebrations. Athletes, officials, staff and journalists are required to enter a closed-loop bubble

take nucleic acid tests within 72 hours of entry starting Jan. 22. Some schools in Beijing have also closed early and moved classes online ahead of the winter holidays. Officials across the country also urged residents to stay in their cities for the new year, instead of travelling back to their hometowns. Tourist sites, including sections of the Great Wall, have also closed amid China's "zero-COVID" policy that has seen millions of people placed under lockdowns.

long the restrictions must remain in place. Following three weeks of isolation, the ancient capital of Xi'an appeared to be turning a corner, with stay-at-home rules lifted on neighbourhoods determined to be virus-free. Roughly 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) southwest of Beijing, the city of Xi'an, which has a population of 13 million and counts as a major tourist site for its famed Terracotta Warriors, has reported over 2,000 infections since December last year.

Food adulterators move shop to city outskirts amid intense crackdown

CUTTACK: Amid a strong crackdown by Police and Cuttack Municipal Corporation units in the millennium city, un-



shifting their base to the outskirts, enforcement agencies. Recently, several units involved in spurious food products manufacturing have been busted on the outskirts of Cuttack city, making it evident that traders are finding safe haven in interior pockets of the district to evade action.

On Friday, an adulterated sauce manufacturing unit was busted at Tailapada near Bentakar in 42 Mauza. Ten days back, a fake cement manufacturing factory operating clandestinely at Champati village in Salepur block was unearthed.

Similarly, a fake tobacco and pan masala-making unit was busted at Sasola village in Amana panchayat under Sadar block, located around 10 km from the city. Sources said rural pockets of Tangi, Cuttack Sadar, Salepur, Mahanga and Nischintakoili blocks have become hubs for illegal manufacturing units where unscrupulous traders operate without obtaining a necessary licence and in violation of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Act. Taking advantage of lax enforcement at these locations, the traders carry out their illegal business with impunity.

Scores of adulterated snacks, bakeries, spices and sauce manufacturing units are running at various places in these blocks. While the food items are being prepared using expired products

in an unhygienic setting, the packaged products have no label and no mention of manufacturing and expiry date. These traders market their adulterated food and other products through Malgodown, the biggest wholesale mandi of the State.

In December 2020, Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani had constituted a committee comprising CMC officials, Cuttack DCP, Cuttack (Rural) SP, Health and Food Safety officers to carry out food safety enforcement activities across the district. Besides, 10 squads (six for rural and four for Cuttack city) involving Food and Civil Supplies officials were formed for the purpose.

Chayani had also instructed tehsildars to carry out food safety enforcement activities in their respective areas and even announced to install two dedicated telephone numbers to help consumers inform the administration about any food adulteration.

However, the squads have not been activated and the proposed telephone numbers are yet to be made operational. Contacted, Food Safety Officer Pratikshya Das Mohapatra said continuous crackdown is forcing the traders to leave the city. "We have received information that they are operating from the city outskirts and rural areas. We will soon go after them," the officer added.

down by ration (CMC) on Commissionerate food adulteration are increasingly beyond the jurisdiction of the

IMD predicts moderate rain over coastal areas of Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday said that the coastal Tiruvallur district would also receive heavy rain. Chennai recorded a dip in the mercury following the downpour in many parts of the city with the minimum temperature dipping to 22.7 degrees Celsius, much below the average of 29.3 degrees.

S. Balachandran, Deputy Director-General of Meteorology, Chennai, said that moderate rains may continue over a few places in the north coastal region and Puducherry.

He also said that interior areas of the state will also experience moderate rains on Tuesday. The convergence of strong easterlies at the lower level and westerly winds at the upper level of the atmosphere triggered the rain over the state, the statement said.

The North-East monsoon has still not withdrawn from the state and the IMD officials said that the spillover till January was not uncommon.

Over 24,000 children orphaned in Odisha amid pandemic

BHUBANESWAR: As many as 24,405 children aged below 18 years have lost either their mother or father or both parents due to Covid-19 and other reasons in Odisha during the pandemic so far. The number is highest in the country.

As per an affidavit submitted before the Supreme Court by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), a total of 1,47,492 children have been orphaned in the country between April 1, 2020 and January 11 this year. After Odisha, Maharashtra ranked second with 19,623 children losing either parents, followed by Gujarat (14,770), Tamil Nadu (11,014),

Uttar Pradesh (9,247), Andhra Pradesh (8,760), Madhya Pradesh (7,340), West Bengal (6,835), Delhi (6,629), Rajasthan (6,827), Karnataka (4,734) and Kerala (3,773).

Submitting the details in a suo motu matter on children in need of care and protection due to loss of parents during the Covid-19

years. While a total 1,503 children have been orphaned, 22,899 have lost their single parent and three have been abandoned by their parents.

"The data of children uploaded on the 'Baal Swaraj Portal' comprises both categories of children, where the child has lost both or either of the parent to Covid-19 disease or

were due to Covid-19, the statistics have, however, brought the Covid death controversy back to the fore in the State.

The Odisha government had announced only 8,469 deaths due to Covid-19 during the April 1, 2020 to January 11, 2022 period. Although the State had reported over 20,000 more deaths in 2021 as

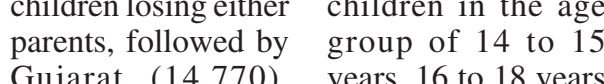
otherwise from April 2020 onwards. The Commission is taking steps to ensure that children should not be or are less adversely affected in the pandemic," the affidavit filed through advocate Swarupama Chaturvedi stated.

While NCPCR officials insisted that figures should not be viewed as all deaths

compared to 2020, the government denied attributing the excess deaths to Covid. Despite the Supreme Court directive to provide ex-gratia of `50,000 to the kin of those who succumbed to Covid, the Health and Family Welfare department is yet to figure out the exact number of Covid victims.

areas of Tamil Nadu will receive moderate rain till Wednesday. Chennai and the adjoining districts received moderate to heavy rain on Monday, while heavy also lashed several coastal areas.

IMD officials said that one or two places in



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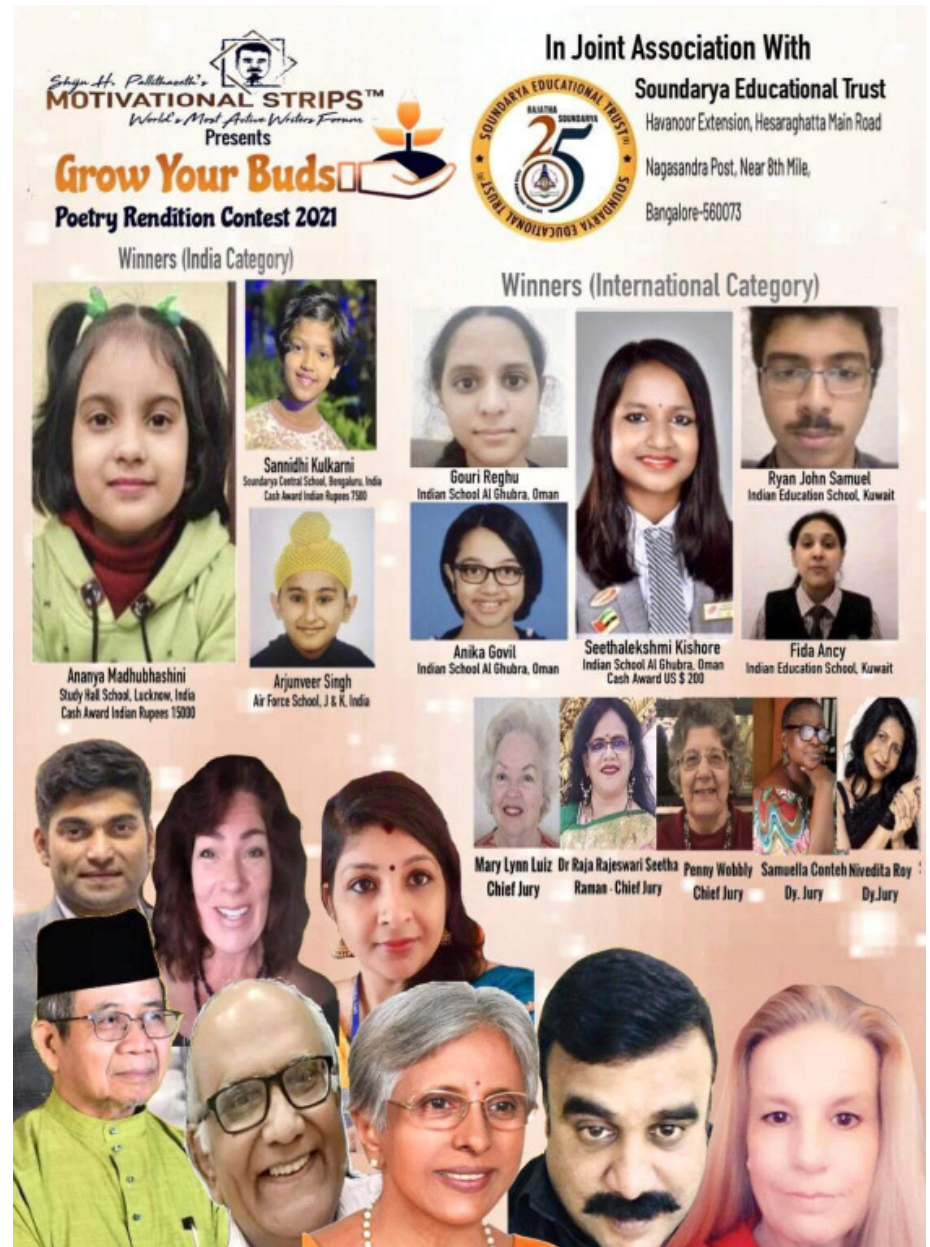
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Motivational strips declares eight winners for “grow your buds poetry rendition contest 2021”

Bengaluru (KCN): It was indeed an ambience filled with suspense and curiosity when the declaration of the winners for the greatest literary contest “GROW YOUR BUDS POETRY RENDITION CONTEST 2021” began yesterday. The contest was conducted by Motivational Strips, the worlds most active writers forum jointly with a reputed educational group of india ‘Soundarya Educational Trust’. The contest had garnered interest of worldwide children, their parents and media over the last few months. The program started with the prayer from a class 6 grader Arjunveer Singh and the welcome speech was delivered by class 5 grader Sannidhi Kulkarni. The function was felicitated with the

Kumar spoke about the happiness and interest this contest had generated across the globe and looked forward for a gradual transformation post COVID on a literary meet with everyone’s physical presence. He also vouched Soundarya Educational Trust’s full support and cooperation to Motivational Strips for conducting such productive events which could empower the students of universities, colleges and schools. The contest Convener Sreekala P Vijayan anchored the entire program smoothly and with fluidity to make sure nothing went wrong. Shiju H Pallithazheth praised her efforts while highlighting the fact that her administration acumen had smoothly steered this mammoth contest from the very start to the end. He also highlighted that Dr Vishnu Pandya had turned up for the event irrespective of the fact that he was not keeping well in the last few days.



august presence of the chief guests comprising of Head of Board of Governors for Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka (DBP), Malaysia Government’s Highest literary Institution and authority, YBhg Prof. Datuk Seri Dr Awang Sariyan, Chairman Of Gujarat Sahitya Academy, Gujarat Government’s Highest literary Institution and Authority, Padma Shree awardee Dr Vishnu Pandya and the President Of Connecting Across Borders (CAB) who is as well the editorial counselor for International Writers Journal, USA Padmaja Iyengar - Paddy. They all expressed their views on empowering the future generation with such inspiring contests. Dr Awang highlighted that the cultural values have to be highlighted in all literary presentations while respecting all other global cultures. Dr Pandya highlighted that observation becomes an important factor to be a greater writer. Paddy spoke about keeping the room open to learn more, even if it has to be from the little children. The founder of Motivational Strips founder, Shiju H Pallithazheth relayed the views of the chief guests while thanking them for having made time to attend the crucial meeting to declare the winners. He also highlighted the relevance of authentic and dedicated approach to determine greater quality in literature. The jury members of the contest comprising of Mary Lynn Luiz (USA), DrRaja Rajeswari Seetha Raman (Malaysia), Penny Wobbly (UK) and Nivedita Roy (Bahrain) spoke about their challenges and experiences while evaluating each and every participant. Jury Member Samuella Conteh (Sierra Leone) couldn’t make it to the function owing to her health. The jury members in consensus spoke that the poetry rendition videos had to be repeatedly watched before deriving at final results. They praised the efforts of the children who participated with their poems and its rendition. Chief Jury Member Dr Raja Rajeswari Seetha Raman highlighted the relevance of intonation, language accuracy and presentation of the poems while judging the contestants. The CEO of Soundarya Educational Trust Mr Keerthan

The name of winners were announced by the chief guests Dr Awang Sariyan, Padmaja Iyengar - Paddy and Shiju H Pallithazheth. The interesting fact that the number of winners had gone upto 8 from the initial plan of 6 winners was an important fact noted during the event. This had happened due tie marks in some of the winners jury marks. The winners of INDIA CATEGORY as declare is as below

- Ananya Madhubhashini (98.5/100 marks) Class Grade 2 Study Hall School, Lucknow, India
- Sannidhi Kulkarni (98.25/100 marks) Class Grade 5 Soundarya Central School, Bengaluru, India
- Arjunveer Singh (97/100 marks) Class. Grade 6 Air Force School, Jammu & Kashmir, India

The winners for International categories declared by the chief guests are as below

- 1, Seethalekshmi Kishore (98.5/100 marks) Class Grade 8 Indian school, Al Ghubra, Oman
- 2, Fida Ancy ((97.5/100 marks) Class Grade 9 Indian Education School, Kuwait
- 3, Gouri Reghu (97.5/100 marks) Class Grade 7 Indian School, Al Ghubra, Oman

- Anika Govil (97/100 marks) Class Grade 7 Indian School, Al Ghubra, Oman
- Ryan John Samuel ((97/100 marks) Class Grade 9 Indian Education School, Kuwait

Cash awards from royalty earned from best selling book ‘Katashi Tales’ was declared for top winners holding the highest marks in the contest, by Motivational Strips founder Shiju H Pallithazheth. The successful recipients of the cash awards were as below

- Ananya Madhubhashini (98.5/100 marks) She won a cash award of Indian Rupees 15000
- Seethalekshmi Kishore (98.5/100 marks) She won a cash award of US Dollors 200
- Sannidhi Kulkarni (98.25/100 marks) She won a cash award of Indian Rupees 7500

It was interesting to note that Ananya Madhubhashini who held highest marks was the daughter of popular poet Malakshmi Borthakur and famous classical vocalist Dr Biju Kumar Bhagawati. It clearly indicates the strength of DNA transfer from parents to their offsprings. The function neared conclusion with brief talks from Motivational Strips Regional Director (North & South America) Barbara Ehrentreu and Motivational Strips Chief Administrator for India Swapna Behera. It was adorned with the presence of Chief Administrator of Motivational Strips handling USA & Canada region Melissa Begley and other administration members. The relevance of Motivational Strips as the world’s most active writers forum was highlighted by Motivational Strips Regional Director heading operations, Anne Thrope while delivering the vote of thanks to the audience.

Despite government aid, Vodafone Idea woes not over

NEW DELHI: Last week telecom operator Vodafone Idea Limited (VIL) decided to convert the interest on spectrum and adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues into government equity. This means the government will become the highest stakeholder in the country’s third largest telecom company with 35.8% shares.

As the news circulated in the market, the shares of Vodafone Idea went down drastically as many believed the government will take over the company. On the bourses, the shares of Vodafone Idea plunged 21%, but it bounced back 8.5% the next day when the chief executive of ficer of Vodafone Idea Ravinder Takkar rebuffed all these speculations. “The government, through a letter from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), has clarified that it does not want its nominee on the board. They have said there is no intention to nominate a person on to the board, we don’t expect it either,” informed Takkar. Overall, the decision of Vodafone Idea received a mixed response from the telecom and market experts.

Many are of the view Vodafone Idea got a lifeline that would save it from bankruptcy or shutting down. A few believe it would help the cash-strapped telco to ease its cash flow so that it could use that money to improve its network and spend on 5G spectrum. The presence of the government as a stakeholder will help the company to invite a few investors. However, others differ. They say it is a short-term relief for the telecom operator, and what if it is not able to pay the amount on time. AGR dues and relief package

The telecommunication industry is said to be very capital intensive as it requires an extensive network infrastructure to provide fixed line and wireless services. The industry needs regular investment to upgrade its technology. For instance, this year, the 5G spectrum auction is round the corner and the telecom operators need a hefty sum of money to bid for it. Then comes Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR), which is the usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). At the same time, the telecom operators in India are claiming that it has the lowest Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) in the world. All these things are making these telecom operators difficult to thrive and debts are piling year on year. To give a lifeline to the ailing industry, the government in October 2021 came up with a telecom relief package.

The package includes a four-year moratorium to repay dues it owed to the government, onetime opportunity to exercise the option of paying interest for the four years of deferment of spectrum and AGR dues by converting the net present. Subsequently, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices decided to convert the interest from AGR dues to government equity. Vodafone Idea had past AGR dues worth Rs 58,254 crore, of which it has already paid Rs 7,854 crore.

Abhishek of Trinity today

Continued from page-1 conducted following which Jala Lagi and Sarbanga were performed. The deities of the 12th century shrine are adorned with gold jewellery embellished with diamond and gems for the special ‘Raja Rajeswar Vasha’ or ‘Suna Basha’. It is believed that a glimpse of the divine siblings on the Ratna Sinhasan today brings prosperity and goodwill. However, the temple has remained closed down for the devotees since January 10 in view of resurge in Covid-19 infection in India and also in the State. According to temple tradition, the deities are adorned with gold ornaments five times in a year. While four such events take place inside the temple, only one ritual is held outside the 12th century temple when the deities are on their respective chariots during the car festival. This ‘Suna Basha’ is performed inside the temple during ‘Pushya Abhishek’. As per tradition, the canopy is installed on the Bhoga mandap after observing many rituals according to the temple rules. According to Hindu mythology, on Pousha Purnima, Lord Ram was coronated upon his return to Ayodhya after staying in exile for 14 years. The Deities along with other Gods, Devas and Saints assembled near the sea at Puri. Therefore the sea is also worshiped on the day. Samudra Aarti is observed to offer prayer to all Gods in the earth. It is also believed that it is a rare opportunity in a calendar year to pray to all the gods at a single holy spot. Likewise, ‘Pushya-bhisek’ rituals were also conducted at Alarnath in Brahmagiri. The deity in the Alarnath temple was made to bath in 108 pitchers of water, and adorned in ‘Rajadhi Raj Vasha’. The water for the bath ritual was collected from ‘Pancha Tirtha’ earlier. Meanwhile in Western Odisha, people celebrated the agrarian festival ‘Pushpuni’ today. The festival also has significance in the farming community as the farmers celebrate their paddy harvest. Almost all the households were filled with the aroma of sweets, peethas and non-vegetarian dishes on Pushpuni. There is also an age-old tradition of youths going around the villages in groups dancing, singing folk songs and asking for ‘Chher Chhera’.

As per the company estimates, the net present value (NPV) of this interest is Rs 16,000 crore and the issue price would be `10 per share. Tata Teleservices owes `850 crore to the government as in AGR dues, thus enabling the government to own 9.5% stake in the company. However, Bharti Airtel, which owes around Rs 43,980 crore in AGR dues, of which Rs 18,004 crore had been paid, decided not to opt for converting its interest dues into government equity.

Its impact? Vodafone is the third largest telco in India with a subscriber base of 27 crore till August 2021. Now the moot question is what the latest move will cost to the company? Prashanth Tapse, vice-president (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said it is just a structural rescue plan to keep Vodafone under survival mode helping the company to breathe in the competitive space and stave off the risk of bankruptcy, which was a concern for equity investors.

“I believe, in the current bleeding environment, it would be very hard to get new investors into IDEA as going forward they will need huge money for capex to expand and upgrade technology and if money doesn’t come in, peers would take undue advantage and lead to loss of opportunity to Vodafone Idea,” said Prashant Tapse. The Motilal Oswal Financial Services said Vodafone Idea will have to increase their tariff to have higher ARPU to be in the game and avoid any major market loss. “Large-scale capital support is needed to meet the liabilities of Rs 1,94,500 crore. It would also need to invest in the network to arrest the ongoing market share churn. The numbers are startling; therefore, VIL would need to take a tariff hike - leading to an ARPU increase of ~1.9x - to reach a self-sustainable level over the next four years,” said the financial firm. It also mentioned that it may need to grow its revenue approximately three times from current levels and containing the rate of churn should be a priority. “Until VIL has sufficient funds to invest in the network and compete in the market, the subscriber churn may continue to dilute earnings,” said the firm. However, Kotak Institutional Equities believes the step by Vodafone Idea highlights the lack of confidence on capital raise or cash flow improvement. The firm said the government may end up increasing its stake in VIL further. “In our view, the government may end up increasing its stake in VIL further, as and when the cumulative deferred amount of ~Rs 92,000 crore pertaining to AGR dues and spectrum liabilities becomes payable post the end of the moratorium period. “It is unlikely that VIL will be in any position to service the deferred liabilities in about four years as it continues to lose subscribers and falls short of desirable investments in the network infrastructure to keep up with competition, which is already well ahead in terms of service capabilities,” said the firm.

State sets task force

Continued from page-1 Education, Higher Education, Information and Public Relation and Information Technology. Chairman can constitute smaller sub-committees of the Task Force to study any aspect in detail and make recommendations. Chairman can also nominate/invite any other state/central govt. official, or expert to any of the subcommittees. Chairman can seek cooperation from agencies of the United Nations System. The Task Force will coordinate with the relevant agencies/ Ministries of the Central Government, viz. the Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry Home Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Department of Revenue of the Ministry of Finance, Drug Controller General India, Central Bureau of Narcotics and others as relevant, apart from other State Governments as necessary for a comprehensive approach to the problem with a consistent national footprint. The Task Force will coordinate, suggest policy, and suggest action in raising community awareness, increasing community participation and public cooperation, and identifying dependent populations. It will emphasize focused intervention in vulnerable sections, outreach to community, schools, colleges, and youth besides treatment Detoxification/De-addiction/Rehabilitation (by community, Government agencies, NGOs, hospitals). It will conduct the drug abuse survey to collect data about the extent, pattern, geographical spread, and demography of drug abuse. It can conduct Odisha specific study, evaluation and research. The Task Force will also focus on enforcement or supply reduction activities like the destruction of illicit crops of Ganja/Opium, seizure of drugs/contraband, investigation and prosecution of traffickers, financial investigation for confiscation, and preventive detention under NDPS Act. Odisha has over the last few years emerged as a major centre for drug trafficking with cannabis grown in erstwhile Maoist-affected areas being trafficked all over the country. As compared to the seizure of 198 quintals of cannabis in 2015, enforcement authorities seized a record 1600 quintals of cannabis in the State in 2021.

COVID-hit Jamshedpur FC's ISL match against Hyderabad FC postponed due to lack of players



BAMBOLIM: Jamshedpur FC's Indian Super League match against Hyderabad FC was postponed hours before kick-off here on Monday after the Jharkhand-based club failed to field a team due to COVID-19 cases in its ranks. The ISL said it will reschedule the match to a later date. "Hero Indian Super League (ISL) an-

nounces the postponement of Match No.63 between Hyderabad FC and Jamshedpur FC scheduled to be played today, Monday, January 17, 2022, at Athletic Stadium, Bambolim," the ISL said in a statement. "The decision has been taken in consultation with the League's medical team taking into account the inability of

Jamshedpur FC to field a team. The League will look to rearrange the fixture to a later date." A match between Kerala Blasters FC and Mumbai City FC in Vasco was also postponed on Sunday, hours before kickoff as the southern outfit did not have the requisite number of players to field. Prior to this, two more matches had

been postponed this season after the coronavirus breached the ISL's bio-bubble. Besides players from Jamshedpur FC, members of ATK Mohun Bagan, FC Goa, Bengaluru FC and Odisha FC have also contracted the virus, while SC East Bengal too isolated themselves after their hotel staff inside the bio bubble was found positive.

No hard feelings, we're good friends: South Africa pacer Jansen on heated moments with Bumrah

PAARL: South Africa pacer Marco Jansen on Monday said he has no "hard feelings" with his IPL side Mumbai Indians team-mate Jasprit Bumrah even though the duo engaged in some heated exchanges during the Proteas' 2-1 Test series triumph. Jansen and Bumrah shared some heated exchanges during the second Test at Wanderers which South Africa won by seven wickets and again during the third match at Newlands where the hosts sealed a remarkable Test series win. "I've played with Bumrah in the IPL and we're

"We have to work on our preparation and be as prepared as possible, give our all in the field. It will be very, very nice to get an ODI series win," he said. With the experienced pacer Anrich Nortje missing the ODIs as well after being left out of the Tests due to a hip injury, Jansen has got a maiden ODI call-up in the squad led by Temba Bavuma. "It wasn't a call-up I expected, but I'm very glad and honoured to be selected in the squad. I just want to learn as much as possible as it is



my first call-up to the ODI squad. If I get an opportunity, I'll hope to make the most of it and take it with both hands," Jansen said. Having made a lacklustre debut in the Centurion Test, the lanky left-arter bounced back strongly to finish with 19 wickets, just behind their top wicket-taker Kagiso Rabada (20) with an superb average of 16.47. "I've been in the Test squad previously, before this series, but obviously never expected to be selected. It was an honour. I didn't start the way I wanted to do. I was very, very nervous. It's normal to get nervous in your first Test. Just after that I was glad to come back well in the second innings and contributed to the team," Jansen, who got five wickets in his Test debut, said. The player from Potchefstroom has also a left-arm seamer identical twin in Duan, who was also part of the Mumbai Indians squad, albeit as a support player. "We grew up together, know everything about each other. He's my best friend. It is not weird, but weird in some ways that we have the same traits. Sharing the journey with him is something very special. We love each other very much. I'm a bit taller than him," Jansen said. "In the IPL, he came along as a support player and practiced with us. It was a great experience for him and for us. Our parents are very proud of us, back us all the way and are very, very supportive."

good friends. You're not going to back down when you're playing for your country and sometimes on-the-field things get heated," the 21-year-old said in a media interaction on Cricket South Africa Twitter handle. "He obviously did the same and there are no hard feelings because it was in the heat of the moment, because it was two players giving their all for their countries." Despite his fiery persona on-the-field, Jansen said he's very introverted. "I'm a bit of an introvert off the field. But I want to express myself on the field in the sport I love the most. I show the passion and love for the game. If there's one place I want to show my passion, it's got to be on the field." Next up is the three-match ODI series beginning here on Wednesday. The last time India came to South Africa in 2018, they won the six-match ODI series 5-1. It was also India's first-ever ODI series win in South Africa. "We hope to carry forward the momentum from the Test series. But we are not underestimating at all. We have to bring our A game and will be looking to take the fight to them," Jansen said.

India Open: Sindhu and Lakshya reach semifinals

BENGALURU: India men's doubles duo Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu of Bengaluru also secured their last four berths. Sen lost the first game against HS Prannoy and Ashmita Chaliha respectively in the men's and women's singles on Friday. Likewise, India's men's doubles duo NG Tze Yong of Malaysia. Also the challenge of Malvika Bansod 21-



Sen and PV Sindhu marched into the semifinals of the India Open with an impressive victory over HS Prannoy and Ashmita Chaliha respectively in the men's and women's singles on Friday. Likewise, India's

Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have also secured their last four berths. Sen lost the first game against Prannoy but came back strongly in the next two to win the quarterfinal contest 14-21, 21-9, 21-14. Sen will now meet

World champion Loh Kean Yew defeated Russia's Sergey Sirant 21-16, 21-13 to reach the semifinals. In the two other all-Indian clashes, Sindhu defeated Chaliha 21-7, 21-18 while Aakarshi Kashyap overcame

12, 21-15 in the women's singles category. When it mattered most, especially in the second game as the scores were tied at 15-15, Sindhu's experience shone through. She will now face Supanida Katethong.

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