

## 1 injured and 1 died in Bomb blast

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 5:

One personnel of the Assam Rifled reportedly died and another seriously injured in a powerful bomb blast at Usoipokpi Sangomsang area under Lilong Police station in Thoubal district at around 1.40 pm today.

No individuals or groups claimed responsibility for the blast. Details awaiting.

## AICC in-Charge Manipur arrives at Imphal

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 5:

Former Union Minister & AICC in-Charge Manipur, Bhakta Charan Das arrived at Imphal today morning.

Talking to media persons at Imphal Airport, Charan Das said that India's PM Modi's visit to Manipur has not brought any new developments but only played with the sentiments of the people of Manipur with his false promises.

Charan Das also said that the entire nation is facing acute corruption, unemployment and issues of women are not met under the BJP Government.

## Poll dates for assembly elections in 5 states including Manipur likely to be announced between January 10-13: Sources

Agency  
New Delhi/Imphal, Jan 5:

Poll dates for assembly elections 2022 in 5 states including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Manipur are likely to be announced between January 10-13, sources close to the election commission have said.

According to reports, BJP

has requested the poll body to begin assembly elections from eastern Uttar Pradesh. In 2017, Uttar Pradesh assembly polls were conducted in 7 phases.

The election commission in the past few weeks had been visiting all poll-bound states to review preparedness amid concern over the third wave of Covid led by the Omicron variant.

A few days ago, an Allahabad High Court bench had urged PM Modi and the election commission to postpone polls in 5 states and also curtail crowd in election rallies as Covid cases continue to spike in the country. However, various opposition parties have urged the election commission to conduct polls on time.

## Union MoS Ramdas Athawale said that BJP supported by RPI will form govt. in Manipur after the election

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 5:

Ramdas B. Athawale, Union Minister(MoS), Ministry of Social, Justice, and Empowerment today assured to get an elected MLA of Republican Party of India (RPI) in the next Manipur Legislative Assembly.

Talking to a large gathering at Pishum Ningom Leirak ground in Keishamthong Assembly constituency, Imphal today, Union MoS Ramdas B.

Athawale said that Maheshor will contest the upcoming state Assembly election on RPI ticket from this constituency.

Interestingly Ramdas B. Athawale talks about development and sought blessing from the people in electing Maheshor Thounoajam as the representative from the Keishamthong Constituency. He never mentioned any bad thing about any political party. He instead said that the RPI will go hand in hand with the

BJP and assured that BJP supported by RPI next Manipur Legislative Assembly.

The Union Minister arrived today at Imphal Airport in the evening and attended the meeting before meeting any of the state authorities.

The Union Minister said that he will be meeting with Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and will discuss the needs of the people of the state particularly on the problems of the people of Keishamthong Assembly Constituency.

## Final Photo Electoral Rolls, 2022 published

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 5:

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Manipur Rajesh Agrawal today announced the Final Publication of Photo Electoral Rolls, 2022, at a Press Conference held at CEO Office, Lamphelpat, Imphal. As per the schedule fixed by the Election Commission of India, the process of Special Summary Revision was completed on time, he asserted.

Shri Rajesh Agrawal informed that the Final Photo Electoral Rolls of all 60 (sixty) Assembly Constituencies have been published today by the respective Electoral Registration Officers (EROs). The total number of electors as on date of Final Publication is **20, 34, 966**.

Briefing the Media, CEO Manipur informed that the General Public/Electors and representatives of Political Parties may verify the Final Photo Electoral Rolls at the offices of the EROs/AEROs and concerned Booth Level Officers (BLOs) may also be contacted for any clarification or they may also check on the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur's website <https://ceomanipur.nic.in>.

Further, 1(one) printed copy



of the Final Electoral Roll of each Assembly Constituency and another copy in DVD-ROM will be made available free of cost to the recognised National and State Political Parties. The recognised State/National Political parties may deputate one representative of their party, duly authorised (in writing) to the CEO's office for this purpose. Any additional copy can be purchased @ Rs.2/- per page and @ Rs.1/- per half page or part thereof. Interested parties may also purchase DVD-ROMs from CEO's Office, Lamphelpat @Rs. 100/- per DVD-ROM per Assembly Constituency.

Gender Ratio as on date of Final Publication with electors as per Final Roll w.r.t. 1/1/2022 as the qualifying date is **1065** with Male - **9,85,119**; Female -

**10,49,639** and Third Gender - **208**. CEO expressed that there is overwhelming participation from female electors and they are much more proactive in the participation of electoral process.

As per Final Roll 2022, **Electors to Population Ratio (EP Ratio)** is **57.70** as compared to the Draft Electoral Roll figure of **55.81**. With the increase of **65** new Polling Stations, the total number of Polling Stations is **2959**. There is **95%** increased in the marking of **Person with Disabilities (PWDs)** i.e. from **7520** to **14565**.

Additional CEO, N. Praveen Singh, Joint CEO, Manipur, Ramananda Nongmeikapam, Joint CEO (II), Manipur, Md. S. Daulat Khan, SNO, Media W. Phajatombi Devi and officials concerned were also present.

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# Rise in inflation & addiction a side effect of Covid

## Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



The Covid pandemic has not only taken away the happiness, health, wealth and employment of people around the globe, its side effects are coming out in many other forms

too. During the lockdown period, the addiction of alcohol and tobacco products increased wildly all over the world. Due to Corona, the system was disrupted on every front in most parts of the world and there was a huge rise in inflation everywhere. India's economy may have started returning back on track, but it will take many months to get everything back as before. Inflation has increased in all countries due to the pandemic restrictions. During the lockdown, the production of many things decreased, but after the lockdown was lifted, the demand for all the things suddenly increased in the market. This is the reason why inflation went up all of a sudden. For example, in many countries there is still a shortage of workers on various fronts. For this reason, there is not enough production of palm oil in Malaysia. The prices of soaps, oil, shampoo, biscuits, cosmetics, namkeen etc. have increased manifold due to the increase in palm oil prices.

With the rise in the price of crude oil, the cost of sea freight and delivery of goods has also increased. Due to this, the prices of chemical fertilisers, paints, rubber and synthetic yarn etc. have increased. Transportation of goods by sea has become expensive. Due to labour shortage in China, industrial metals like brass, copper, steel, nickel and cobalt have become expensive. This has affected the prices of products like TV, refrigerators, ACs, washing machines and other electronic gadgets. Similarly, climate change has affected the supply of agricultural products in many countries, such as the less sugarcane crop in Brazil for the same reason. As a result, the price of sugar has increased. Due to the lockdown due to Corona, the production of semiconductor or chip decreased, due to which the production of cars and many electronic products like fridges, TVs, washing machines etc. has been affected.

According to the World Health Organisation, 3 million people die annually in the world due to excessive alcohol consumption. Alcohol-borne diseases account for 5 percent of the world's expenditure on treatment of diseases. Similarly, 8 million people die every year due to tobacco consumption. These include 1.2 million people who do not use tobacco themselves, nor do they smoke cigarettes, but who live with those who smoke regularly. According to an estimate, 1.3 billion people in the world smoke or consume other tobacco products. A study conducted in Britain found that in the first lockdown itself, more than 40 percent, about 4.5 million, people started consuming alcohol. There is a ban on spitting in public places across India. Despite this, there are people who do not follow the rule and keep spitting here and there. Due to this, not only the government buildings, but the railway is also worried. The Indian Railway has to spend 1200 crore rupees every year to remove the spit stains. Water is also wasted in the process. For the convenience of those spitting after chewing gutkha, spitter kiosks are being set up at 42 stations in the country, where spittoon pouches will be available.

On 18 December 1591, a seven-month sea voyage from Africa to England ended when a ship anchored at Limehouse docks in London. Along with 150 elephants tusks and 589 sacks of pepper the ship carried 32 barrels of palm oil. It is thought to have been the first arrived into Europe of what would become perhaps the most controversial plant product that is not a drug. To say that palm oil is divisive is an understatement. To its advocates, it is a cornerstone of economic development, making efficient use of land and supporting millions of smallholders through profitable international trade. To its detractors, it's a cause of deforestation and social conflict, a direct threat to endangered species and a contributor to climate change. With demand for palm oil rising rapidly there is growing concern about its sustainability and awareness that some palm oil is "good and some is bad". The term covers various things we get from a species of tropical palm called "Elaeis guineensis". Crude palm oil is squeezed from the palm's fleshy red fruit; palm Kernel oil is extracted by crushing the fruit's hard stone. Finally many palm oil derivatives are acquired through industrial process which together for about 60% of global palm oil use.

Oil palm trees are native to West Africa but were introduced to tropical regions of South-east Asia and Latin America in the late 19th century. Oil extracted from the fruit was traditionally used in Africa for cooking but has now found a wider range of uses: as a substitute for animals fat such as butter in baked products, soaps and cosmetics or as a basis for biodiesel. Around half of the packaged products in supermarkets contain palm oil. Although palm oil is not particularly healthy (it contains higher levels of saturated fat than most other vegetable oils), it has many advantages: compared to soybean (the world's second most widely consumed vegetable oil af-

ter palm oil), and oil palm cultivation requires only one-tenth as much land, one-seventh as much fertilizers, one-fourteenth as much pesticides and one-sixth of energy to produce the same quantities of oil and is therefore very cheap. In addition, palm oil is highly resistant to oxidation, making it suitable for frying and giving it a large shelf life. As a result, consumption of palm oil has doubled over the past 15 years to nearly 8 kg per inhabitant of the global and shows no sign of slowing down. Until the 1960s, oil palm was mainly grown in Africa but since then production has shifted to south-east Asia. According to FAO statistics, Indonesia (53% of global output) and Malaysia (29%) are the leading producers followed by Thailand (4%), Nigeria (2.6%), Colombia (2.3%) and Ecuador (1%). The top importers of palm oil are India (17.5% of the global total) and China (10.8%). Overall, Asia imports 53.5% of all internationally traded palm oil, while Europe takes 24.7% and Africa imports 14.1%, other countries account for the remaining 7.7%.

Oil palm is something of a wonder crop. It yields 4-10 times more oil per hectare than other source of vegetable oil such as soybean or coconut palms. This makes it an efficient and profitable use of land. The economic value of palm translates into jobs, infrastructure and tax revenues. In Indonesia and Malaysia, some 4.5 million people earn a living from the palm oil industry. In Indonesia alone, another 25 million people depends indirectly on palm oil production for their livelihoods. This all means, palm oil could play a big role in reducing poverty-if done right. The palm oil rush of recent decades has come at considerable cost to forest and people who depend on them, so it has become so controversial. Palm oil production has been associated with corruption, forced eviction and land grabbing. It has sparked conflict with local communities, including indigenous

people. There have also been serious concern about forced labor and child labor and violations of workers right on some plantations. Oil palm now covers a combined area about the size of Syria and an estimated 60% of this land was previously covered with forest. Much of the deforestation has been in Indonesia and Malaysia destroying the habitat of rare creatures such as Orangutans, tigers, rhino and elephants. Greenpeace estimates that in Indonesia alone, rainforest cover corresponding to the size of around five football fields disappears every single minute. A study reports that a booming small palm oil production is largely to blame for it. Group such as Greenpeace; have documented how rainforest are being eroded at a rapid pace to make way for oil palm plantations. That makes oil palm a major climate killer. Peat land believes to be reservoir for huge amounts of carbon, is also being burned and cleared for oil palm plantations. That makes the carbon footprint of a liter of biodiesel up to 2000 times worse than a liter of conventional fossil-based fuels. According to a recent study, replacing rain forest with oil palm plantations release 61% of the carbon stored in the forest mostly into the atmosphere. Each hectare of rain forest converted release 174 tons of carbon. The ubiquity of palm oil and the growing demand for it highlight the scale of the challenge. Between 2000 and 2015, the global average amount of palm oil consumed per person each year doubled to 7.7 kg. Demand for palm oil is set to triple from 2015 levels by 2050, with much of the growth coming from market with low sustainability requirements.

A steadily growing oil palm monoculture is also destroying biodiversity and contaminating the Earth with large amount of pesticides and manure. Environmental experts say that certifying oil palm amounts to nothing more than "green washing" because large

agriculture companies and local corruption have an easy time dodging the sustainable standard laid down by the certification. They point out that oil palm plantation aren't just causing environmental problems but also social upheaval. They documented hundreds of conflict between local communities and palm oil producers in the Island of Sumatra in Indonesia. In Colombia, tens of thousands of people are said to have been forcibly removed from their land to make way for large scale oil palm plantations. International human rights groups as well as organizations in Colombia say the palm oil industry is closely linked with paramilitary and drug baron in Colombia. They say that drug money is laundered by investing in the plantations. On one hand PM Modi said that agriculture scientists and agro economist have pointed out the potential of N.E farmers to take up oil palm plantations. He further said, oil palm cultivation in N.E would be a big help to the country and farmers community of N.E. He even mentioned about the policy of oil palm cultivation in his speech at Hapta Kangjeibung yesterday (4/01/2022). Accordingly Government of Manipur constituted the oil palm Mission Manipur on 20th August 2021 to start cultivation of oil palm in the hilly regions of Manipur to control jhum cultivation and eradicate poppy plantation. However, according to experts, oil palm cultivation is not suitable in high altitudes like hilly regions of Manipur. They opined that it is not advisable to practice oil palm cultivation in far flung areas. Oil palm cultivation in a bio-diversity hotspot area like Manipur will be more damaging to the environment than poppy plantation. Besides the disadvantages of monoculture, chemicals used in oil palm cultivation will have a bearing on the ecosystem of Manipur.

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# Tribal youth unemployed need vocational education

There is a need to introduce vocational education in remote forested areas of India where most of the youth are facing the brunt of unemployment. In fact, the foundation of self-reliance of the students rests on the basis of vocational education. Unlike traditional education, vocational education based innovation can achieve desired results in this direction.

The land of India has been closely related to the tribes spread in about seventeen provinces of the country. Their share in the total population is about eight and a half percent. It must have been the intention of Mahatma Gandhi to associate them with the name of Girijan so that they can be included as a living part of the greater cultural-social heritage of the Indian land. Six hundred and ninety nine Scheduled Tribes across the country have their own rich heritage. But

these tribes, who have been away from education, sources of livelihood and entrepreneurship, remain cut off from the mainstream. In the changing times, their association with vocational education other than traditional education has become not only relevant, but also necessary. The cornerstone of holistic development of tribal students can be envisaged only by keeping professional education at the centre.

Anyway, vocational education is at the core of earning a living. The demand for vocational education other than knowledge based education has increased rapidly in recent times. To secure the future through livelihood based education with diversity of knowledge, then the basic mantra of vocational education has to be understood. Undoubtedly, objective or informative knowledge provides the highest options for the

future of common man's life. But without employable and professional education, the path of earning income is difficult. Emphasis is urgently needed on employable education for all sections of the society, especially the deprived or the tribals, so that a strong and self-supporting tribal generation can stand on their feet and join the mainstream of development.

But it is a matter of concern that in the remote forest dwelling areas of the country, no other equivalent professional education other than traditional education has been given the desired importance. Even today, more than seventy percent of the colleges and universities in the large tribal areas of the country do not have a proper system of elective or compulsory courses like vocational education. Vocational education differs from academic education in many ways. There is a close link between knowledge and skills, practical challenges and working conditions of the economy. It should be seen separately from skill and skill development. This type of education involves an integrated form of knowledge and skill attitude. In a rapidly changing working world, through vocational education, tribals can be imparted not only the skills but also the technical skills required for a profession along with the theoretical knowledge, aptitude and mindset.

The country has a large number of tribal youth unemployed, most of



By: Vijay Garg

whom are daydreaming of securing their future by relying only on basic education. They have no option of alternative education. And even if the opportunity becomes available, the acute shortage of resources becomes a hindrance. In such a situation, providing employment to the vast tribal

population only through traditional education is a nightmare. Although government efforts have been made in the past for vocational education, there have been many obstacles in their successful implementation. The hierarchy of social status of the professions has created problems in higher education in many ways. It has also affected to a great extent the public's understanding of vocational education and consequently the choices made by students in higher education. There are many factors that have influenced people's thinking about vocational education. The separation of vocational education from academic and professional education and the generally poor quality of vocational education institutions has clearly played its part. This situation requires immediate change.

Vocational education needs to be made an attractive option for the tribal students so that more and more students can be oriented towards it. Improving its implementation would be a major fundamental step. In addition, there will be a need for improvement in teacher development and placement, curriculum, infrastructure etc. It has to be completely integrated

with the mainstream education, not separated from the mainstream education, so that all the students can know about vocational education and have the option to choose its specific branch. This will help to broaden vocational education, increase social acceptance and provide opportunities to all students to pursue vocational education alone or vocational education and study professional and academic subjects jointly.

Skill analysis for promotion of vocational education, locating local opportunities, financial support for vocational education integration with all educational institutions, infrastructure and recruitment, preparation and collaboration of people for effective implementation of vocational education. There is a need to take steps like adequate investment, encouragement of apprentices for this. It is quite possible that this will open new avenues for the students. Apart from this, inclusion of twenty five percent vocational courses in the curriculum by all educational institutions can prove to be an important link in this direction. Nevertheless, much remains to be done in the direction of making the students self-reliant and self-reliant. However, taking a positive initiative in this direction, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has increased its budget provision from Rs.5329.32 crore to Rs.5957.18 crore. Along with this, efforts are also being made to connect seventy seven thousand one hundred and forty five tribal students enrolled in various Eklavya model residential schools across the country with vocational education during the current academic year.

But only that is not going to work. There is a need to sensitize this further by adding some specialized courses in skill development programmes. Planning and management including various business functions such as office management, solar and electricity, aesthetics, handicrafts, skills required for everyday construction tasks (such as plumbers, masons, fitters, welders, carpenters etc.), refrigeration and AC repair, mobile repairs. There are thousands of programs like nutrition, Ayurvedic and tribal medicine, IT, data entry, fabrication, training of paramedics and nurses at home, driving etc.

Apart from this, the old and vocational training programs of multi-technical education centers which are already running and through which three-year diploma courses are provided to the students in traditional subjects like engineering and computer science, will also have to be revived. In this episode, projects like National Urban Life Mission project and 'Livelihood' mission can be facilitated by connecting tribal students to providing employment, supplementary knowledge, equipment, skill sets and financial assistance to start their own business. There is a need to introduce vocational education in remote forested areas of India where most of the youth are facing the brunt of unemployment. In fact, the foundation of self-reliance of the students rests on the basis of vocational education. Unlike traditional education, vocational education based innovation can achieve desired results in this direction. If tribal students are to be financially empowered, then the importance of vocational education has to be understood.

# Need of Collective Awakening

By: Sanasam Darius  
Gauhati University, Jalahkari

It is very unfortunate to witness the downfall of Civil Responsibility and the advent of what can be called as the 'dark days' of Manipur's Political & Social scenario. Have we really lost our true ideology in search of a relevant Political ideology that fits to participate in the Indian Democratic System? What Lacked? Or is there a bigger conspiracy at play? For the youths, it is high time to adopt the idea of "be the Change."

How many times will we sing "anoubajukki, anoubaasha"? I call upon all, leaving ethnicity & religion aside to conceptualize an ideology of peace, equality and inclusivity with respect to our unique and diverse People which we can proudly claim as ours. It is survival that matters more than mere political ideology or identity.

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# Five Omicron cases detected in Meghalaya

Agency  
Shillong, Jan 5:

At least five cases of Omicron variant of COVID-19 have been detected in Meghalaya.

Three cases have been detected in East Khasi Hills district.

One of the three cases detected in East Khasi Hills district, has been reported from Laitumkhrah area of Shillong. Two cases have been detected in RiBhoi district.

A tourist from Assam is also among the five Omicron cases detected in Meghalaya. While one of the patients recently had returned from the United States, another had returned from New Delhi.

The New Delhi returnee is a 44-year-old nurse working at the Nazareth Hospital in Shillong.

The two cases detected in RiBhoi district have no travel history.

Contact tracing of the five



cases is underway.

All the five Omicron patients in Meghalaya are in home isolation.

Earlier, in view of the spurt in Omicron cases in the country, the Meghalaya government decided to impose fresh restrictions in the state with effect from Wednesday.

Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma on Monday

had said that the government has decided to impose restrictions on mass gatherings in the state.

Sangma said restrictions will be imposed on the movement of private vehicles in Shillong city.

He said vehicles will be allowed to ply based on odd and even numbers in Shillong city.

Sangma further said that the night curfew will be re-imposed from 10 pm in Shillong city and in all the other districts.

Earlier, Manipur reported the first Omicron case of the Northeast.

A Tanzania returned 52-year-old man had tested positive for Omicron variant of COVID-19.

# Omicron surge: States across India impose restrictions, curfews to contain infection spread

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 5:

Amid surge in infections of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, several states across the country have imposed stricter curbs to contain the spread of the virus.

On Wednesday, India's active caseload crossed the 2-lakh mark, with a single-day spike of 58,097 Covid-19 cases. According to the head of the Covid working group of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI), Dr N K Arora, India is already witnessing the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The rise in cases has been spurred by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus — of which India currently has 2,135 cases, according to the Union Ministry of Health.

Here's a look at the restrictions across India:

## Delhi

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Tuesday decided to impose a weekend curfew in the national capital. Only essential movement will be allowed during the curfew. It also decided to implement work from home in all government offices, while private offices will be permitted to function at 50 per cent capacity. Also, the Delhi metro and buses will now allow 100 per cent seat occupancy to avoid crowding at bus stops and stations.

## Maharashtra

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has issued modified guidelines for international travellers arriving at the Mumbai Airport. Now, all international passengers will have to undergo rapid RT-PCR tests at the airport. The guidelines came into effect from Monday.

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar has said if the daily covid-19 cases cross the 20,000 mark, a lockdown will be imposed in the city as per the Union government's rules. Talking to reporters, Pednekar suggested that citizens wear triple-layer masks while travelling in public buses and local trains. She also appealed to them to get vaccinated at the earliest and follow all Covid-19-related standard operating procedures (SOPs).

In Pune, schools will remain closed for classes 1 to 8 till January 30, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced. He further added that online classes will continue.

**Karnataka**  
Karnataka will be placed under a weekend lockdown for a period of two weeks, minister R Ashoka said on Tuesday. According to a statement issued by the state government, weekend curfew will be in force from 10 pm on Friday to 5 am on following Monday. Revising the existing Covid guidelines, the order stated that night curfew in the state will continue from 10 pm to 5 am. Pubs, clubs, restaurants, bars, hotels, cinema halls, multiplexes, theatres and auditoriums will be allowed to operate with 50 per cent seating capacity.

## Punjab

The Punjab government, meanwhile, has imposed a night curfew in the state from 10 pm to 5 am, excluding essential services. All educational institutes shall remain closed, while online classes will continue. Moreover, bars, cinemas halls, malls, restaurants and spas will be allowed to operate at 50 per cent capacity, subject to staff being fully vaccinated.

Among other restrictions, the notification urges people to follow the 'no mask, no service' principle — no service shall be provided in government and private offices to the person not wearing proper mask.

## Kerala

Kerala, which has been playing a major part in contributing to the Covid-19 caseload of the country, has decided to impose restrictions on the number of participants in public events. In case of events held at closed premises, the attendees would be limited to 75, while the same for open spaces would be 150. The restrictions would be applicable to all events. The decision was taken in a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan which observed that 80 per cent of the eligible population in Kerala have got the second dose of vaccine. The meeting also decided to strengthen the screening of passengers arriving at all.

## Chhattisgarh

In case of Chhattisgarh, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Tuesday ordered a ban on

rallies, processions and other kind of public events across the state, an official release said. Baghel also ordered a "night clamp-down" from 10 pm to 6 am in the districts where the case positivity rate is 4 per cent and above. The directives to district collectors and superintendents of police (SPs) were issued in the light of a sharp spike in Covid-19 cases in the last one week.

## Bihar

Bihar on Tuesday imposed fresh curbs as active Covid cases in the state reached 2222 with over 800 cases reported in the last 24 hours. Patna and Gaya are the worst-affected. A statement released by the government said a night curfew will be in force from 10 pm to 5 am. Pre-schools and classes 1 to 8 will remain closed. However, online classes will continue. Educational institutions for classes 9 to 12 will function with 50 per cent capacity. Religious places, malls, cinemas, clubs, swimming pools, stadiums, gyms, parks will also remain closed. These latest restrictions will remain in effect from January 6 to 21.

## Haryana

The Haryana government Tuesday restricted the attendance at government offices, boards and corporations to 50 per cent of the total strength. The rest of the employees will work from home, according to a government notification. The fresh set of instructions were issued by the office of Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal.

# PPFA insists on India's diplomatic preferences in Commonwealth nations

IT Correspondent  
Guwahati, Jan 5:

Reacting to a viral social media post insisting on India's diplomatic liberty out of the Commonwealth of Nations, Patriotic People's Front Assam (PPFA) bats for appointing ambassadors (instead of high commissioners) in most of the 53 Commonwealth countries, so that the Union Government in New Delhi can pursue diplomatic relationships with these nations without any prejudice.

One can observe from the list of ambassadors/high commissioners (of India) in various Commonwealth countries across the world that there is no Indian ambassador (but high commissioners). The question that arises is, why New Delhi is not interested to appoint ambassadors in neighbouring Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka along with Asian nations like Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore.

Because of reasons unknown to the people of India, New Delhi is yet to appoint any ambassador in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, etc. Similarly, India

has only high commissioners in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Canada, Dominica, Jamaica, Cyprus, Malta, United Kingdom, etc.

By the recognised definition, an ambassador serves as primary means of confidential communication with other governments. In fact, the ambassador is the highest-ranking diplomatic representative of a particular country in another nation-state. The host country typically allows the ambassador control of a specific territory called an embassy, whose territory, staff, and vehicles are generally afforded diplomatic immunity in that country.

Responsibilities of an ambassador, who is the head of an embassy, include primarily to protect the citizens of his/her home country in the host country. When two nations make a deal, it is usually advantageous to both the countries to have ambassadors along with a group of staff.

On the other hand, a high commissioner is the head of high commission and he/she is regarded as a senior diplomat in charge of the diplomatic mission in Commonwealth nations. The high commissioner normally keeps the interest of locals as well as their own citizens ahead.

"The understood policy is that any nation which was a part of British colonies normally appoints a high commissioner only (not an ambassador) in Commonwealth countries. Actually, in the British empire, high commissioners were envoys of the imperial government appointed to manage various territories which were not fully under sovereignty of the British Crown," said the forum of nationalists.

It strongly opposes such a policy linked to the colonial legacy and urges the Centre to appoint the diplomatic representatives according to the interest of Indians only. PPFA argues that there is no reason to follow the British legacy anymore. As a sovereign nation, India must establish its diplomatic independence (no matter what other Commonwealth countries would prefer to do), asserted the forum.

Finally, the PPFA opines that there is an urgent need to revisit the existence of the Commonwealth in its present form. The organisational structure of the Commonwealth has far outlived its usefulness, asserted the forum, adding that it should be transformed with an aim to cater the needs, aspirations and values of various democratic nations in the globe.

# India crosses 1 crore vaccination milestone for children aged 15-18



Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 5:

India has achieved one crore vaccination milestone for people between the 15-18 age group against coronavirus disease (Covid-19), Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced on Wednesday. The milestone was achieved on the third day of the vaccination drive for children, which opened up on January 3. Laud-

ing the "superb enthusiasm" among youngsters for vaccination, Mandaviya urged all eligible children to get vaccinated at the earliest.

"Superb enthusiasm among Young India for Vaccination," the health minister wrote on Twitter.

"Over 1 crore youngsters between 15-18 age group have received 1st dose of #COVID19 vaccine that too on the 3rd day of vaccination drive for chil-

dren. I appeal to all eligible young friends to get vaccinated at the earliest," he added.

The vaccination drive was expanded amid the rapid spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant of coronavirus. Healthcare, frontline workers and senior citizens will be eligible for the booster shot from January 10.

On Wednesday, India's cumulative Covid-19 vaccination coverage exceeded 147.72 crore which has been achieved through 1,58,21,510 sessions.

Meanwhile, India has reported at least 2,135 cases of Omicron, with Maharashtra leading the tally with 653 infections. Of all the confirmed Omicron cases, Delhi has reported 464 infections, followed by Kerala (185), Rajasthan (174), Gujarat (154), Tamil Nadu (121), Telangana (84), Karnataka (77), Haryana (71), Odisha (37), Uttar Pradesh (31), Andhra Pradesh (24), West Bengal (20), and Madhya Pradesh (9).

India's active caseload currently stands at 2,14,004, with a daily positivity rate at 4.18%.

# Father-son duo held by CGST officials in Rs 22 crore GST fraud

By Raju Vernekar  
Mumbai, Jan 5:

The officers of the Thane Central Goods & Services Tax (CGST) Commissionerate of Mumbai Zone busted a fake Input Tax Credit (ITC) racket involving GST of Rs 22 crore and arrested a father-son duo in the case on Tuesday.

The accused who were arrested under sections 69, 132(1)(b) and (c) of the CGST Act 2017, were remanded to judicial custody for 14 days by the metropolitan Magistrate,

Mumbai.

According to the CGST officials, acting on a tip-off from Central Intelligence Unit (CIU), Mumbai CGST Zone, the officers arrested two businessmen who happened to be father and son duo, from their firms located at Kandivali West in North Mumbai.

The firms-M/s. Shah Enterprises and M/s. US Enterprises, registered with GST for trading in Ferrous Waste and Scrap etc, were indulging in fraudulent availment and passing of Input Tax Credit (ITC)

to the tune of Rs 11.80 crore and Rs 10.23 crore respectively without receiving the goods or services in violation of the provisions of CGST Act 2017," said a CGST official.

Both these firms were availing fake ITC from the fake entities and passing on the same to other entities of this vicious network. This operation had been a part of a large-scale operation launched by the CGST Mumbai Zone to stamp out the fake ITC network which had been causing unhealthy competition with honest taxpayers and defrauding the government exchequer of its rightful taxes. The department is going to intensify the drive against the fraudsters and tax evaders in the days to come," the official added.

During the 2020-21 financial year, the CGST zones and the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) had booked about 8,000 cases involving fake ITC of over Rs 35,000 crore. With raids continuing through out 2021, the number of cases are expected to rise in multiples.

# Third wave of Covid has hit Delhi; city may report 10,000 COVID cases today: Satyendar Jain

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 5:

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Wednesday predicted that the national capital would report around 10,000 COVID-19 cases, with the daily positivity rate rising to nearly 10 per cent. Jain stressed that the third wave of coronavirus pandemic has hit Delhi and the surge in COVID cases is driven by Omicron. Jain informed that the Delhi

government has instructed private hospitals to increase the number of reserved beds for COVID patients to 40 per cent from 10 per cent of their capacity.

Currently, nearly 2 per cent of beds are occupied in the government hospitals, the Delhi Health Minister said.

Giving details of the COVID testing capacities in the city, the health minister informed that coronavirus testing has been increased and

around 90,000 tests were conducted on January 4. He, however, said that genome sequencing of all Covid samples is not possible at present and only 300-400 samples are being sequenced.

In view of the steep rise in COVID infections, Delhi on Tuesday announced to impose weekend curfew starting January 8. Earlier, the Delhi government had imposed a night curfew to curb the pandemic which is underway.

# India's daily Covid tally rises by 58,097 cases, Omicron count touches 2,135

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 5:

India's cumulative Covid-19 tally saw yet another massive surge after as many as 58,097 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours, according to the morning bulletin shared by the Union health ministry. The latest figures are a massive 20,718 more from yesterday when 37,379 new infections were recorded in the country. The overall Covid-19 tally of India has now climbed to 3,501,835, the health ministry data showed.

The single-day death count also saw a huge jump after 534 patients succumbed

to the virus on Wednesday as opposed to 124 on the preceding day. With this, India's Covid-19 death toll has gone up to 482,551.

Further, active case count in the country has surpassed the 2 lakh mark, accounting for 0.61% of the overall tally. India's daily case positivity has touched 4.18%.

Fresh recoveries maintain the hope amid the grim scenario as 15,389 people recuperated from the virus, up from 11,007 on Tuesday. The total number of individuals who have successfully battled the virus has now reached 3,432,180.

Meanwhile, the Omicron

count of the country exceeded the 2,000 mark after multiple states, including Maharashtra, confirmed fresh cases in the previous 24 hours. According to the Union health ministry, a total of 2,135 Omicron cases have so far been detected in the country, of which, as many as 828 have recovered.

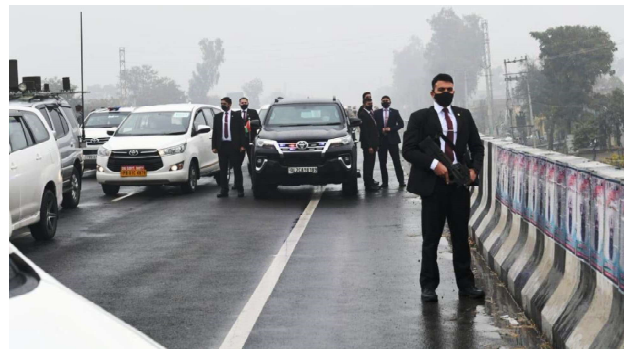
Maharashtra and Delhi remain the leaders in the chart with 653 and 464 Omicron cases, respectively. Kerala, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu - all of which feature in the top 10 most-affected states by Omicron, have confirmed more than 100 cases till now.

As per the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR),

India's total number of Covid-19 tests' coverage has reached 68,24,28,595, with 11,54,302 conducted in the past 24 hours.

As far as vaccination coverage is concerned, as many as 96,43,238 eligible beneficiaries, including individuals aged 15-18, were inoculated with doses in the last 24 hours. Over 40 lakh teenagers got jabbed with the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine across the country on the second day after the drive was launched on Monday. Notably, India has so far vaccinated more than 147 crore of its citizens, according to the Union health ministry data.

# 'PM Modi stuck on flyover for 15-20 minutes': Major security breach forces cancellation of PM's Punjab visit



Agency  
Chandigarh, Jan 5:

In a big development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday cancelled his scheduled visit to Punjab's Ferozepur due to a major security breach. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced from the stage at the site of the event in Ferozepur that the PM would not be able to address the rally "due to some reasons".

The PM was scheduled to visit Ferozepur to lay foundation stones for several development projects and address the people on the occasion. The PM had landed in Bathinda earlier today and then headed for the Ferozepur district which is located along the Indo-Pak border.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has released a detailed statement on the security breach during PM Modi's Punjab visit. The MHA said PM Modi was due to visit Na-

tional Martyrs Memorial at Hussainiwalla in a helicopter after landing in Bathinda. However, bad weather led to a change in plan and the PM proceeded via road.

During the road journey, the convoy got stuck on a flyover where the road had been blocked by some protesters. The convoy remained stuck on the flyover for 15-20 minutes before Punjab Police officials arrived.

Following the security lapse, a decision was taken to cancel the PM's events and head back to Bathinda airport.

Here is the full MHA statement:

"Today morning PM landed at Bathinda from where he was to go to National Martyrs Memorial at Hussainiwalla by helicopter. Due to rain and poor visibility, PM waited for about 20 minutes for the weather to clear out. When the weather didn't improve, it was decided that he would visit the National Martyrs Memorial via

road, which would take more than 2 hours. He proceeded to travel by road after necessary confirmation of necessary security arrangements by the DGP Punjab Police.

"Around 30 kms away from National Martyrs Memorial in Hussainiwalla, when the PM's convoy reached a flyover, it was found that the road was blocked by some protesters. The PM was stuck on a flyover for 15-20 minutes. This was a major lapse in the security of PM.

"The PM's schedule and travel plan was communicated well in advance to Punjab Government. As per procedure, they have to make necessary arrangements for logistics, security as well as keep a contingency plan ready. Also in view of the contingency plan Punjab Government has to deploy additional security to secure any movement by road, which were clearly not deployed. After this security lapse, it was decided to head back to Bathinda airport.

# Former MLA D Korunthang and Francis Ngajokpa join NPF

Imphal, Jan 5:

Former Congress MLA D Korunthang from Tengnoupal Assembly constituency, who resigned as party legislator on Tuesday, joined the Naga People's Front, Manipur unit on Wednesday, ahead of the

state Assembly elections to be held soon.

Earlier former BJP member Francis Ngajokpa also joined the NPF, Manipur unit. Before joining the BJP, Ngajokpa was a member of the Manipur Legislative Assembly from Senapati's Tadubi constituency

as an Indian National Congress.

Korunthang too was elected from Tengnoupal assembly constituency in 2017 as an Indian National Congress member.

Welcoming D Korunthang into the party fold, the Manipur

Naga People's Front held a warm reception programme for him in Tengnoupal on Wednesday.

Following the resignation of Korunthang, K Meghaji, secretary of Manipur Legislative Assembly, declared the 42 Tengnoupal Assembly seat vacant.

# COVID-19: Who are eligible for home isolation? When to seek medical attention? - read govt's revised guidelines

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 5:

The Union Health Ministry on Tuesday issued revised guidelines for home isolation of mild/asymptomatic COVID-19 patients.

In accordance with the new guidelines, patients in home isolation will stand discharged and end their isolation after a period

of at least seven days has passed from testing positive and without fever for three consecutive days. Retesting is not necessary after the period of home isolation has ended.

Also, patients must stay in contact with a treating Medical Officer and report any deterioration promptly.

After consulting the treating Medical Officer, patients must

continue taking medication for other co-morbidities or illnesses. A patient may utilise tele-consultation platforms made available by the district/state administration, including e-Sanjeevani tele-consultation platform available at <https://esanjeevaniopd.in/>.

A person should seek immediate medical attention if serious symptoms develop. These symptoms may include:

- Unresolved high-grade fever (more than 100° F for more than 3 days)
- Difficulty in breathing.
- A dip in oxygen saturation (SpO2 d'93% on room air at least 3 readings within 1 hour) or
- Persistent pain/pressure in the chest
- Mental confusion
- Severe fatigue and myalgia

## Sports

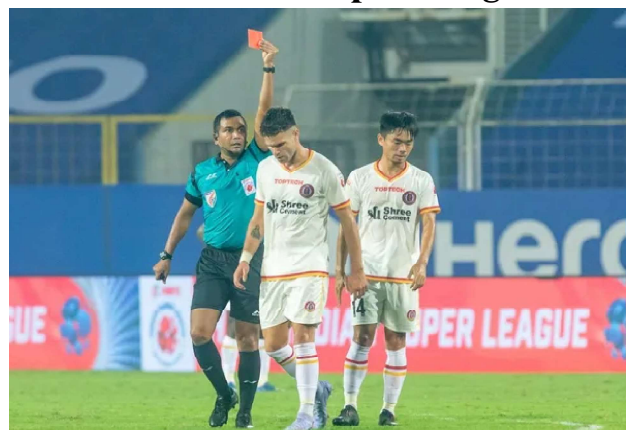
# ISL : Bengaluru, SC East Bengal share points after 1-1 draw in Indian Super League

Agency  
Kolkata, Jan 5:

Bengaluru FC's hopes of securing playoffs qualification suffered another blow as they were held to a 1-1 draw by a resilient SC East Bengal in the Indian Super League here on Tuesday. The result also extended SCEB's winless run to nine matches. Semboi Haokip (28th) opened the scoring with a diving header until Sourav Das (OG 55th) handed the equaliser to the opposition with an own goal at the Athletic Stadium.

In a nervy start, SC East Bengal's goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharja was shown an early yellow card for fouling Prince Ibara. On the other end, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu also had a rusty start as he misjudged a free-kick from deep that went unpunished.

It took the 18th minute for either side to create a meaningful scoring opportunity when Lalrinliana Hnamte's shot from the edge of the box was blocked by the BFC defence. Roshan Naorem was shown a yellow card for a shirt pull and the subsequent free-kick led to Semboi Haokip breaking the deadlock just before the half-hour mark. He scored with a diving header which gave no chance to the



keeper.

Alan Costa nearly scored the equaliser from Cleiton Silva's free-kick a few moments later but his header went slightly over the bar. Marco Pezzaioli's men kept pressing for an equaliser but went into the halftime break trailing. The restart saw the tactician send Sunil Chhetri to change the complexion of the match.

The equaliser finally came after a period of sustained pressure by the Blues in the second half. A cross from the right flank by Roshan was met by

Sourav Das whose miscued header went past his own goalkeeper on the near post. Ibara was a constant threat and had the chance to give BFC the advantage after the hour mark but his header went over the crossbar.

BFC was again denied the lead at the 71st-minute mark after Chhetri's strike from 10-yards out was cleared on the line by Hira Mondal. The Blues piled on more pressure as substitute Ankit Mukherjee picked up a yellow card for a bad foul on Ashique Kuruniyan in the

late stages of the match.

Udanta Singh also took an attempt at goal but he sliced across the ball which swerved away from the target. Five minutes were added for stoppages but neither side was able to find the winning goal as they settled for a point each. SC East Bengal will be next in action against leaders Mumbai City FC at the Tilak Maidan Stadium on Friday, while Bengaluru FC also plays the Islanders in their next assignment at the PJN Stadium on Monday.

# Joao Moutinho's late winner propels Wolves to 1-0 victory against hapless Man United

Agency  
London, Jan 5:

Wolves ended Ralf Rangnick's unbeaten start as Manchester United interim manager on Monday as Joao Moutinho's strike earned a deserved 1-0 win at Old Trafford.

A first home defeat to Wolves in 42 years leaves United still seventh in the Premier League table, four points adrift of the top four.

But it was another lacklustre performance that was just as concerning as the result for Rangnick as the Red Devils were thoroughly outplayed.

"We didn't play well at all, neither individually or collectively," said Rangnick, who had taken 10 points from his first four games in charge.

"We didn't press at all. We tried but after 10 or 15 minutes we were not able to get into those pressing situations.

"The games show we still have a lot of work to do. Especially against the ball, but also in the first half when we had the ball, we had too many unforced giveaways."

An injury crisis at centre-back with captain Harry Maguire, Victor Lindelof and Eric Bailly all missing, forced

Rangnick to hand Phil Jones his first Premier League appearance in two years.

But the former England international was one of few United players to emerge with any credit from a ragged display that raises questions over their chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League.

Cristiano Ronaldo was named United captain for just the second time in the absence of Maguire.

In his new year message on social media, Ronaldo said he was "not happy" with the state of affairs at United and that "we have to work harder, play better and deliver way more than we are delivering right now."

However, there was no sign of improvement as Ronaldo was kept quiet against a number of his Portuguese international teammates.

David De Gea was the difference between the sides when United won 1-0 at Molineux in August and the Spaniard was again his side's saviour with a finger tip save to turn Ruben Neves' volley over early on.

Wolves managed more shots in the first half than they had in their previous three matches combined.

But Bruno Lage's men

have scored just 14 goals in 19 league games and again failed to make their control of the game show in the scoreline.

"It is one more victory," said Lage. "Lovely stadium, a place with a lot of history, but the most important thing is how we played."

"We played in our way, we controlled the first half and missed a lot of chances. We win three points but again we have more chances than goals."

Rangnick left Bruno Fernandes on the bench after the Portugal midfielder missed Thursday's 3-1 win over Burnley due to suspension.

However, it was not until his introduction on the hour mark that the home side even began to threaten a breakthrough.

Fernandes should have opened the scoring when he rattled the crossbar with the best chance of the match from Nemanja Matic's cross 23 minutes from time.

Moments later his free-kick was headed home by Ronaldo, but clearly from an offside position.

United's attacking flurry quickly fizzled out and Romain Saiss hit the bar from a free-kick as Wolves continued to pose a threat.