

## Nationwide emergency declared in Kazakhstan



Kazakhstan declared a nationwide state of emergency on Wednesday. The step was taken after protests over fuel price hike erupted into clashes and even involved protesters storming government buildings. Protests spread across the nation of 19 million this week in outrage over a New Year increase in prices for liquid petroleum gas (LPG), which is widely used to fuel cars in the west of the country.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev accused the protesters of "massive attacks on law enforcement" that left several dead and wounded.

## N. Korea fires ballistic missile in first test in two months



North Korea fired a ballistic missile into the sea, the U.S. military said, its first weapons launch in about two months and a signal it isn't interested in re-joining denuclearisation talks anytime soon and would rather focus on boosting its weapons arsenal.

The launch came after North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un vowed to further strengthen his military capability without disclosing any new policies toward the United States or South Korea — at a high-profile ruling party conference last week.

## Antigua and Barbuda joins India led International Solar Alliance



The Government of Antigua and Barbuda joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) by signing the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement (ISA FA), making it the 102nd country to join this agreement. Since Antigua & Barbuda is one of the small island developing states (SIDS) in the Caribbean, it is vulnerable to climate change and its electricity generation is totally from fossil fuels.

The ISA was set up jointly by India and France on the sidelines of the COP21 Climate Conference in Paris in 2015.

## COVID-19 count jumps to six-month high



India saw a single-day rise of 58,097 COVID-19 infections, the highest in nearly 199 days, taking the tally of cases to 3,50,18,358. The active cases crossed the 2 lakh mark after around 81 days, according to the data updated at 8 a.m. on Wednesday. The cumulative Omicron tally also rose to 2,135, as reported from 24 States and Union Territories so far, out of which 828 have recovered or migrated, according to the Union Health Ministry.

## **Control room set up for trade issues**



The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has set up a control room to monitor issues related to transportation and delivery of goods and essential commodities due to curbs imposed by various States in view of the rising number of coronavirus infections. In April last year, the department had set up a similar control room. The issues reported by stakeholders will be taken up with the State/UT governments concerned.

## **Duty should not exceed 8 hours: IMA**



The Indian Medical Association (IMA) requested the Centre and the State governments to ensure that the COVID-19 duty of resident doctors does not exceed eight hours a day and seven days, after which there should be a quarantine of 10 to 14 days in the accommodation prescribed by the hospital. There should also be a provision for taking care of mental health. The IMA said that in the event of duty doctors falling ill, they should be admitted to the respective hospital at the earliest.

## Assam scholar creates a 'record' in giving lectures



An Assam-based scholar who received the 2020 Sahitya Akademi award for translation has created a 'record' for being the sole speaker in a year-long series of 100 lectures on Indian culture. Diganta Biswa Sarma, president of Guwahati Commerce College's governing body, conducted these lectures in three languages — Assamese, Bengali and English. The IIT-Guwahati too has invited him for a similar 150-session lecture series from February.

## Shillong Chamber Choir founder Neil Nongkynrih dead



Shillong Chamber Choir founder and noted music composer Neil Nongkynrih died in Mumbai after a brief illness. The 52-year-old music conductor and composer who led the SCC to national fame after a reality TV show about a decade ago. Neil was awarded the Padma Shri, in 2015.

### 'Mother Of Orphans', Padma Shri Awardee Sindhutai Sapkal Passes Away At 73



Renowned social worker and Padma Shri awardee Sindhutai Sapkal passed away due to cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Maharashtra's Pune. Popularly referred to as "Mai", Sapkal ran an orphanage in Pune where she adopted over 1,000 orphan kids. She was conferred with Padma Shri in 2021 for her immense contribution to society.

In addition to the Padma award, Sapkal has received over 750 awards and honors in her lifetime. She used the award money to further build shelters for orphans.

### Hughes, Bharti form JV for VSAT services



Hughes Communication India Private Limited (HCIPL) and Bharti Airtel announced the formation of a joint venture to provide satellite broadband services in India. Operational as HCIPL, the entity combines the Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) businesses of both companies to offer flexible and scalable enterprise networking solutions using satellite connectivity for primary transport, back-up and hybrid implementation.

## Cairn drops all lawsuits against India



Britain's Cairn Energy has dropped all lawsuits against the Indian government and its entities in courts from the U.S. to France and to Singapore, to now be entitled for about Rs. 7,900 crore in tax refunds that were collected to enforce a retrospective tax demand. As part of the settlement reached with the government in the seven-year-old dispute over the levy of back taxes, the company — which is now known as Capricorn Energy plc has withdrawn all cases that were brought to collect the tax refund ordered by an international arbitration tribunal after rescinding retrospective raising of demand.

## Growth may drop by 40 bps on Omicron



With the Omicron variant of the coronavirus fast spreading in the country, rating agency ICRA expects India's GDP growth for Q4 FY22 would be 40 basis points (bps) below its earlier projection of 5 and 5.5%. Now it is expected to be sub-5% for the quarter,"Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA, said. With this, there would be a modest downside of 10 basis points (bps) from its earlier projections of 9% in the GDP forecast of FY2022.

## South Indian Bank wins UiPath Automation award for work on robotics



Kerala-based lender South Indian Bank (SIB) has won the UiPath Automation Excellence Awards 2021 for best automation under crisis for business continuity. The award was bestowed upon the bank for its exceptional use of robotic process automation capabilities under difficult times for solving severe operational constraints, thereby ensuring business continuity.

## AI firm Fractal becomes second unicorn in 2022 with \$360 million investment from TPG



Fractal, a US-based artificial intelligence firm, becomes the second unicorn in 2022 with the latest investment of \$360 million from the private equity firm TPG Capital Asia. The funding will close by the first quarter of 2022. With the latest investment, the company's valuation has exceeded \$1 billion. Mamearth, valued at \$1.2 billion, was the first unicorn in 2022.

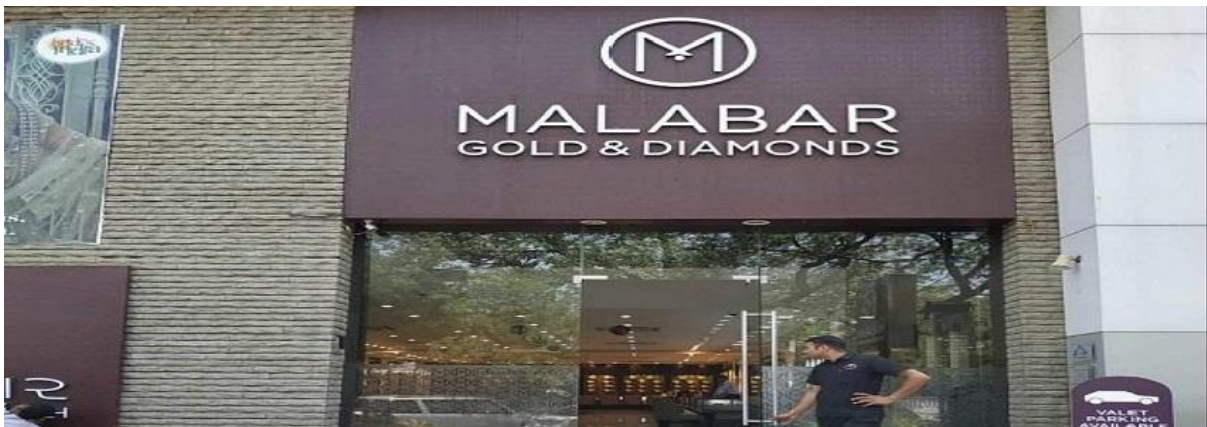
This is the second firm in India in the pure-play analytics space to reach the unicorn status.

### India women batting sensation Shafali Verma named brand ambassador of Bank of Baroda



Bank of Baroda has announced signing of Indian cricketer Shafali Verma as its brand endorser. Shafali's character resonates grit, dedication and dependability which displays the Financial institution's model ideologies," stated Sanjiv Chadha, managing director and chief government officer, Financial institution of Baroda.

### Malabar Gold eyes FY25 revenue of Rs. 75,000 crore



Leading jewellery retailer Malabar Gold & Diamonds — which has set a target of becoming the world's largest retailer with revenue growth of 2.5 times to more than Rs. 75,000 crore by FY25 — is on an aggressive expansion spree, is planning to open 33 showrooms in the next three months with an investment of Rs. 1,200 crore.

The Kozhikode-based jewellery retailer is already among the largest in the country, both in terms of revenue and footprint, with about 280 showrooms spanning 10 countries.



## **Bangladesh scripts historic triumph**



Fast bowler Ebadot Hossain took a career-best six for 46 as Bangladesh beat World Test Champion New Zealand by eight wickets in the first cricket test, capturing its first-ever win in New Zealand. Ebadot had bowled Bangladesh to the brink of a famous victory by the end of the fourth day when he had figures of four for 39. He broke down the last of New Zealand's resistance with two quick wickets as the home team was dismissed in its second innings for 169, its lowest score against Bangladesh.

## **Sri Lanka Batter Bhanuka Rajapaksa Quits International Cricket**



Sri Lanka batter Bhanuka Rajapaksa has announced his retirement from international cricket with immediate effect, citing family obligations. Rajapaksa's ODI career lasted less than six months as the 30-year-old left hander had made his debut in July 2021. Rajapaksa represented Sri Lanka in five ODIs and 18 T20Is, scoring a total of runs 409 across formats which included three fifties.