



CHANGING TRENDS

Actor Tisca Chopra says feminine roles are no longer stereotypes but are far more layered and fleshed out

LEISURE P2



POLITICS OVER SECURITY

Maha reduces security cover of ex-CM Devendra Fadnavis, former Guv Ram Naik and MNS chief Raj Thackeray among others

TWO STATES P7



RACIAL ABUSE

Six fans evicted from SCG after racially abusing fast bowler Mohammed Siraj during the India-Australia game

SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He never wore a mask. But as soon as govt approved the vaccine, he has started wearing one.

SHORT TAKES

Avian flu confirmed in seven states

New Delhi: With more states confirming cases of avian flu and many still probing the unexplained deaths of wild birds, crows, and poultry, the Central government has intensified its coordination with local authorities to contain the spread of the disease. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has sought increased monitoring of potential hot spots for the diseases spread and asked for constant communication. Besides Uttar Pradesh, six other states where bird flu has been confirmed till now are Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat. There is no confirmation yet from Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra which await test results.

Host kills guest at b'day bash

Sundargarh: A man, who was invited to a birthday party in Kadmtoli village under Hatibari police limits of this district, was murdered by the host Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Jua Surin (27). According to sources, the deceased was invited to the birthday celebrations hosted by his neighbour. There, Jua and his neighbour entered into a heated argument over an issue. The scene turned ugly when Jua's neighbour lost his cool and started beating him up with an iron rod. Jua was rescued and rushed to Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) where the doctors declared him brought dead.

WEATHER			
		BHUB	CTK
TEMP.	MAX	34.0°C	33.0°C
	MIN	18.3°C	17.8°C
Humidity	55%	60%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	
		Forecast	
		Dry weather likely	

Srimandir entry sans Covid test report

THE NEW NORM WILL BE EFFECTIVE FROM JANUARY 21 TO FEBRUARY 21

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Sunday announced that devotees need not produce their Covid-19 negative report for getting entry into the 12th century shrine in Puri from January 21.

The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting attended by SJTA chief Krishan Kumar, Puri District Magistrate-cum Collector Samarth Verma and Superintendent of Police KB Singh.

"The devotees can enter the temple without having Covid-19 negative report from January 21. The decision will remain in force till February 21," the SJTA chief told the media.

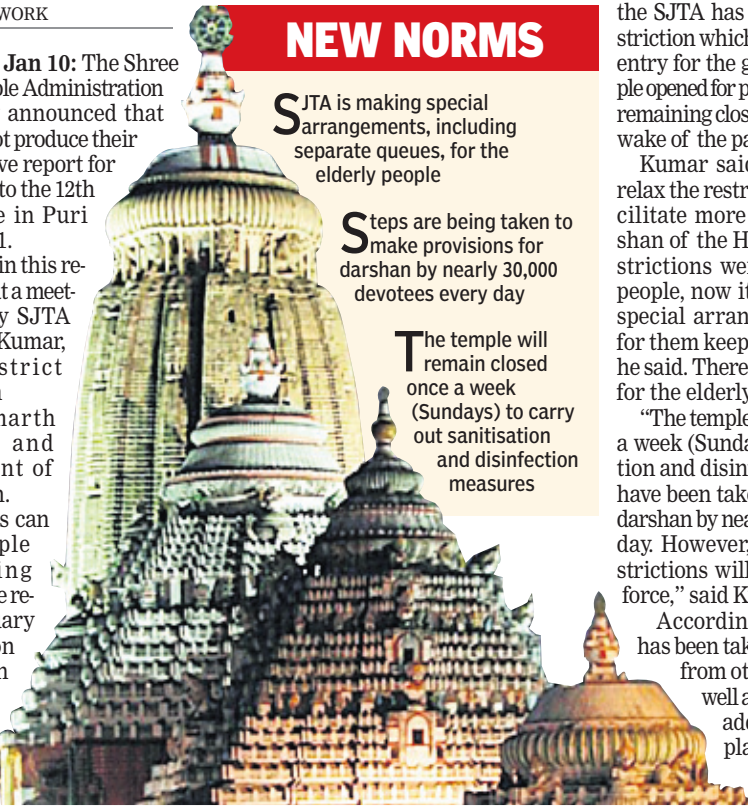
Kumar said

NEW NORMS

SJTA is making special arrangements, including separate queues, for the elderly people

Steps are being taken to make provisions for darshan by nearly 30,000 devotees every day

The temple will remain closed once a week (Sundays) to carry out sanitisation and disinfection measures



The SJTA has decided to relax the restriction which was imposed on temple entry for the general public. The temple opened for public from January 3 after remaining closed for nine months in the wake of the pandemic.

Kumar said that the decisions to relax the restrictions were taken to facilitate more devotees to get a darshan of the Holy Trinity. Though restrictions were imposed for elderly people, now it has been decided that special arrangements will be made for them keeping their need in mind, he said. There will be separate queues for the elderly

"The temple will remain closed once a week (Sundays) to carry out sanitation and disinfection measures. Steps have been taken to make provision of darshan by nearly 30,000 devotees every day. However, all other Covid-19 restrictions will continue to remain in force," said Kumar.

According to him, the decision has been taken to facilitate devotees from other parts of the state as well as outside Odisha. Kumar added that a contingency plan will be made soon to handle if the devotee turnout exceeds 30,000.

Puri Collector Samarth Varma said that special arrangements, queue system will be shortly introduced for elderly/senior citizens coming to Srimandir for darshan of the sibling deities.

The temple was opened in a phased manner from December 23, 2020. While the servitors and their family members were allowed to enter the temple from December 23 to December 25 evening, the local residents of Puri got opportunity to have darshan of the deities between December 26 and 31.

The temple was finally opened to the public for darshan of the sibling deities - Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath - from January 3, 2021 adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines.

At present, general public is being allowed after they are being screened at special counters by volunteers for any symptoms. Besides, Covid-19 negative report is also mandatory for devotees coming to the shrine for darshan of the deities.

District administration officials informed that the general Darshan will begin from 7 am from January 21. A special one-hour darshan window has been made for the residents of Puri from 6 am.

VAX DRIVE AT 160 CENTRES IN STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: The much-awaited Covid-19 vaccination drive starting from January 16 will be held at 160 session sites across the state.

Talking to the media Sunday, Dr Bijay Panigrahi, Odisha Health Director and in-charge of the vaccination programme in the state, said, "The immunization programme against Covid-19 will be held at 160 session sites covering all 30 districts of the state."

As per the SOP, as many as 100 health workers will be vaccinated at each session site on the first day of nationwide vaccination programme, January 16.



Health workers of different categories have been selected for getting vaccine in first phase of the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination drive.

"We are ready and have enough equipment for first phase of vaccination in the state," Dr Panigrahi said.

He said that medical colleges, district headquarters hospitals, sub-divisional hospitals, community health centres as well as some private hospitals will participate in the vaccination programme at the 160 session sites across the state.

According to the decision by the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry, around three crore healthcare and frontline workers as well as 27 crore population above 50 years and under-50 populations with comorbidities will be administered the vaccine in the first phase.

Of the total health workers, over 3.2 lakh have been shortlisted to get the vaccine in Odisha.

HOME-BOUND



Flamingos fly in Navi Mumbai, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

1 dead, 3 critical as Nabarangpur bridge caves in

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur/Umerkote, Jan 10: A part of the under-construction Biju Setu (bridge) across Nagi river in Talapada panchayat in this district caved in, leaving one dead and three critically injured Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Mahendra Mali of Raighar area and a Grade-IV employee of the Rural Development department. The injured were identified as Santosh Bhoi (32) and Umesh Bhoi (50) of Patrapada and Prakash Tandi (50) of Beherada.

As many as 30 labourers, including women, were working at the bridge Sunday when the mishap occurred. They were engaged in concrete roofing when a slab came crashing down. The bridge has five slabs, while work for three slabs has



been completed. The work for the fourth slab was in progress. The labourers were without safety gears or safety measures. The contractor concerned had not provided with them safety kits, it is alleged.

Junior engineer Niranjan Sahu and Grade-IV employee Mahendra were monitoring the work. All of them came crashing down with the slab. Some of the injured were taken to the Umerkote CHC where Mahendra succumbed to his injuries.

Contractor Asit Biswal was awarded the construction of the bridge at a cost of ₹2.41 crore. The work started April 4, 2018 and was to be completed by March 11, 2019. Meanwhile, Development Commissioner Pradeep Jena has directed Nabarangpur Collector to lodge criminal case against contractor, SDO and Junior Engineer.

Divers recover Indonesian plane wreckage

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jakarta, Jan 10: Authorities said they determined the location of the crash site and black boxes of a Boeing 737-500 Sunday, a day after the aircraft crashed into the Java Sea with 62 people on board shortly after taking off from Indonesia's capital.

The head of Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency, Bagus Puruhito, said officials believe they identified the location of the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder - the so-called black boxes - because emergency signals transmitted by the devices were detected by a navy ship's sonar system.

"We have determined the position of the plane's black boxes from two signals emitted by the devices," military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said. "Hopefully we can lift the black boxes in short time to determine the cause of the crash." Earlier Sunday, search and rescue operations resulted in parts of the plane being found in the sea at a depth of 23 meters, leading rescuers to continue searching the area.

"We received reports from the diver team that the visibility in the water is good and clear; allowing the discovery of some parts of the plane," Tjahjanto said in a statement. "We are sure that is the point where the plane crashed." He said the objects found included broken pieces of fuselage with aircraft registration parts. Earlier, rescuers pulled out body parts, pieces of children's clothing and scraps of metal from the surface.

PM-KISAN SCHEME

Govt paid ₹1,364cr to 20L ineligible beneficiaries: RTI data

More than half (55.58%) of these undeserving persons belong to the 'income tax payee category', while 44.41% belong to the 'ineligible farmers' category

Since the commencement of the PM-KISAN Yojana in 2019, ₹1,364.13 crore has been paid to 'ineligible' and 'income tax payee farmers' till July 31, 2020

A major chunk of these ineligible beneficiaries belongs to five states - Punjab, Assam, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, as per the data

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: The government has paid ₹1,364 crore to 20.48 lakh undeserving beneficiaries under its ambitious PM-KISAN scheme, a reply to a Right to Information (RTI) query by the Union Agriculture Ministry reveals.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) was launched by the Centre in 2019 and under the scheme, an income support of ₹6,000 per year in three equal installments is paid to small and marginal farmer families having combined land holding or ownership of up to 2 hectares.

The Union Agriculture Ministry, in response to the RTI application, identified two categories of unde-



serving beneficiaries who received PM-KISAN payouts as "ineligible farmers" and "income tax payee farmers".

RTI applicant Venkatesh Nayak of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) who received the data from the government said,

"More than half (55.58%) of these undeserving persons belong to the 'income tax payee category'."

"The remaining 44.41% belong to the 'ineligible farmers' category," he added. Nayak said according to media reports, proceedings have been initiated to recover these funds transferred to undeserving persons.

He said data obtained under RTI Act, 2005, indicated that since the commencement of the PM-KISAN Yojana in 2019, ₹1,364.13 crore (\$186.59 million) has been paid to 'ineligible persons' and 'income tax payee farmers' till July 31, 2020.

"Government's own data indicates money went into the wrong hands," he added.

A major chunk of these ineligible

beneficiaries belongs to five states - Punjab, Assam, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, as per the data.

"Punjab tops the list accounting for 23.16 per cent (4.74 lakh) of the total number of undeserving persons across the country who received payouts, followed by Assam with 16.87% (3.45 lakh beneficiaries) and Maharashtra with 13.99% (2.86 lakh beneficiaries). These three states account for more than half (54.03 per cent) of the number of undeserving persons who received payouts," Nayak said.

Gujarat is at the fourth position with 8.05 per cent (1.64 lakh beneficiaries), followed by Uttar Pradesh at fifth position with 8.01 per cent (1.64 lakh beneficiaries), he said.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

The artist in you seeks expression today. Thus, you could decide to paint your house in attractive colours, or repair a piece of old furniture in modern style. You may become sentimental about a forgotten matchbox collection, and decide to replenish it.

TAURUS

This is one of those days when you are likely to misplace and lose valuable things, particularly money. Ganesha urges you not to indulge heavy gambling or blind speculation in quest of easy money.

GEMINI

Today is an auspicious and fruitful day for you. You will become excited by every very small accomplishments. You will need to fulfill the demands made upon you by your family and friends. You will probably find yourself balancing the cheque book at home, or buying appliances for the house, says Ganesha.

CANCER

An episode could upset you; so control your anger, suggests Ganesha. A slight hurdle on the job front. You may show interest in antiques.

LEO

You will indulge in some important discussions with your family members and clarify some matters. You need to approach issues without prejudices. Do not judge without having all the facts at your disposal. You will spend the evening with your loved one, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Your creative talents will flourish today. Ganesha says you will be pleased with your possessions which you have carefully safeguarded for a long time. In the evening you may want to refurbish your house by making the necessary additions and subtractions.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that you shall find your life more meaningful and fulfilling today because you will be able to indulge the artistic streak in your personality. In the evening, you may go out shopping, possibly for buying new things for your home. On the whole, an exciting day awaits you today.

SCORPIO

Suddenly, you may become health conscious. According to Ganesha, today's resolution would be eat healthy and live a healthy life. A regular exercise regime would top the list of daily activities. Today, you realise the true meaning of the adage, 'work is worship'.

SAGITTARIUS

The day does not begin on a good note, says Ganesha. Certain circumstances at work may prove you weak. You are likely to come across hurdles in your work during the latter half of the day. However, monetary gains bring some respite to your disturbed mind.

CAPRICORN

You are very close to your family members and they will lend a helping hand whenever you need them. They will help you climb the ladder of success and making the upward movement more comfortable. Happiness will come to you, however, you may have to pay a price for it.

AQUARIUS

Fame and fortune woo you today! And along with recognitions and rewards, you receive encouragement to do even better. Your bosses are pleased, but feel that you haven't really given your 100%.

PISCES

For professionals as well as businessmen, today promises to be a progressive day. For those looking for new opportunities, interesting positions may be offered. You will have harmonious relations with your family, friends and co-workers.



HALLE BERRY ON HEARTBREAKING FACT ABOUT ACADEMY AWARD

Actress Halle Berry says it is very heartbreaking that she remains the only woman of colour to win an Oscar for Best Leading Actress in 20 years. She won the award in 2002 for her performance in *Monster's Ball*.

KARDASHIAN BEGINS 2021 WITH PLANT-BASED DIET

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian has ditched meat and dairy. She has started the New Year with a plant-based diet. Kim has also seriously gotten into spirituality. She has been attending regular Bible study classes, reported *aceshowbiz.com*.



'Feminine roles are far more layered now'

New Delhi: Actress Tisca Chopra says feminine roles are no longer generic stereotypes but people who have conflicts, dimensions and trajectories.

"When I started out, there were three types of roles; there were the three B's. The babe from age 16-25, the Bhabhi from age 25-40 and anything over 40 was Biji," Tisca said while talking about how things have changed for female stars.

"Fortunately, since then, things have moved and characters have now evolved to becoming far more layered, nuanced, lived in and fleshed out. Feminine roles are no longer generic stereotypes but people who have conflicts, dimensions and trajectories and are far more interesting to play," she added.

Tisca entered Hindi film industry with the commercial potboiler *Platform* in 1993, and worked in projects like *Gumehaar*, *Karobaar* and

Taqdeerwala. The turning point was her role of a mother in *Taare Zameen Par*, and she went on to prove her talent in projects like *Firaaq*, *Qissa: The Tale Of A Lonely Ghost* and 24 among others. **IANS**



Tisca Chopra

Priyanka wraps up Text For You

London: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas has wrapped up shooting of her upcoming Hollywood romantic movie, *Text For You*, and thanked the whole team for managing it all despite the strict lockdown measures.

The actress has been staying in London for the past few months for the shoot. Now, the actress took to Instagram to share an update of the movie, and share some behind the scene pictures. "That's a wrap! Congratulations and THANK YOU to the entire cast and crew. See you at the movies," she wrote in one post.

The film is written and directed by Jim Strouse, and the film is an English remake of the German-language film *SMS Fur Dich*, based on Sofie Cramer's novel. The film also stars Sam Heughan. Pop star and her husband Nick Jonas is expected to make a cameo in the film. **IANS**

Hrithik, Deepika come together for Fighter

Mumbai: Top stars Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone are uniting for the first time for an action adventure, *Fighter*, which will be helmed by Siddharth Anand.

After a lot of buzz, the movie was announced on the occasion of Hrithik's birthday Sunday.

Hrithik took to his social media and introduced *Fighter* with a motion poster and a sweet note introducing Siddharth Anand's production house, MARFLIX. It is slated to release in 2022.

"Thank you Sid, for believing in me & making me your co-passenger yet again. Here's to your journey towards the sky," wrote Hrithik in his social media message.

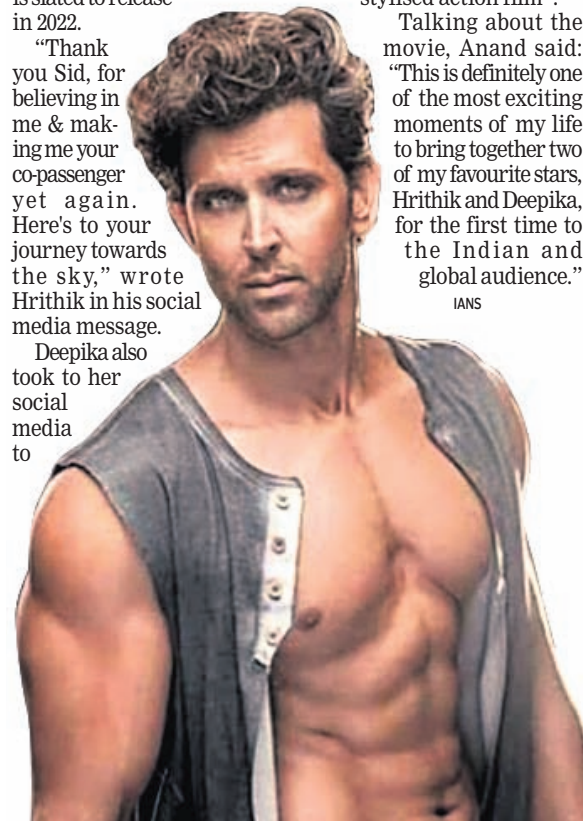
Deepika also took to her social media to



share the poster, writing: "Dreams really do come true #Fighter #SiddharthAnand @HrithikRoshan #Marflix"

It is touted as a "highly stylised action film".

Talking about the movie, Anand said: "This is definitely one of the most exciting moments of my life to bring together two of my favourite stars, Hrithik and Deepika, for the first time to the Indian and global audience." **IANS**



Virtual art camp 21 Welcome 21 kicks off

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Lalit Kala Akademi (New Delhi) secretary Ramkrishna Vedala, Saturday virtually inaugurated a three-day online art camp titled *21 Welcome 21*. Organised by Eastern Foundation of Art and Culture (EFAC), a Balasore-based organisation that promotes and preserves traditional art and culture, the camp was attended by 21 well known artists of India including Panchanan Samal (Bhubaneswar), Arun Chandra



Painters give brush strokes to their works

Burman (Bangladesh), Anupama De (Chhattishgarh), Niraja Chandana and Sudhakar Sethi (New Delhi), Shalini Singh and

Sahod Pasa (Karnataka) and Pralay Kundu (Uttar Pradesh), who will showcase their finest works.

"The nationwide lockdown has truly taken a toll on the psyche of the artist. So, the Akademi is trying to organise more such art camps, art fest in art galleries from 2021 to encourage the artists. Odisha is a land of art and culture. The temple culture, in particular, always draws the attention of the painters from across the globe," said Akademi secretary Vedala.

EFAC's President Pradeepta Kishore Das extended his best wishes to all the participants.

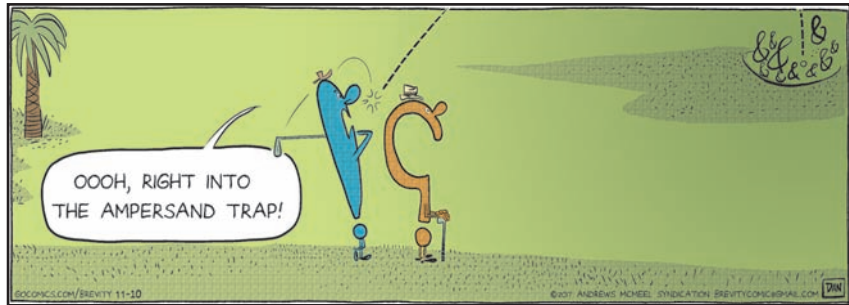
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

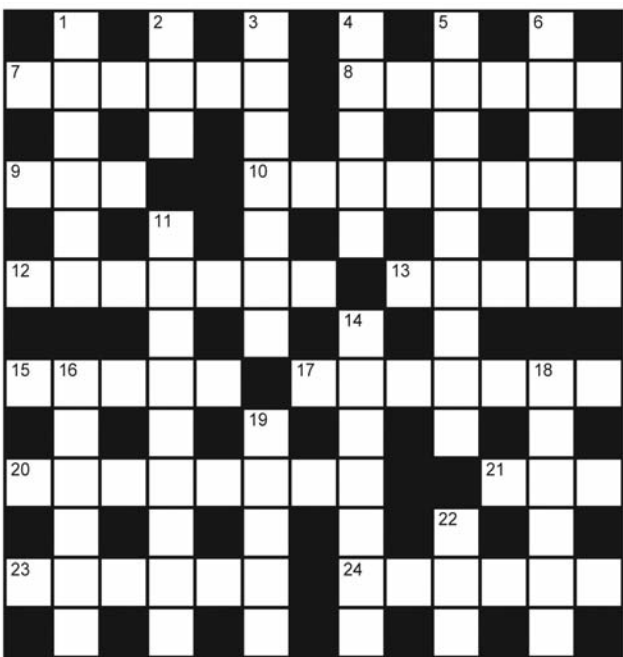


BREVITY



FUN post

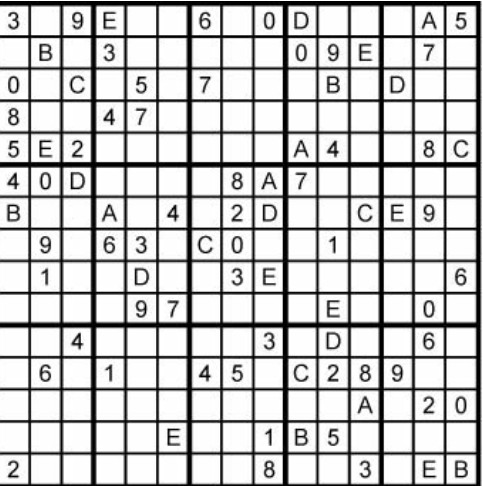
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Port city of northeastern Brazil
 - 8 European flatfish
 - 9 Ewe's mate
 - 10 Short-tailed songbird
 - 12 Hired
 - 13 Gallic goodbye
 - 15 Running behind time
 - 17 Forsake
 - 20 Opera houses
 - 21 Archaeological site
 - 23 Vipers
 - 24 They protect cooks
 - 4 Express verbally
 - 5 Very large pooch (5,4)
 - 6 Fencing word
 - 11 Anteaters
 - 14 Really bad
 - 16 Acropolis figure
 - 18 Burger toppers
 - 19 Greet the day
 - 22 Ornamental vase
- Down**
- 1 Sojourn
 - 2 Drill need
 - 3 Beloved of Hero

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.

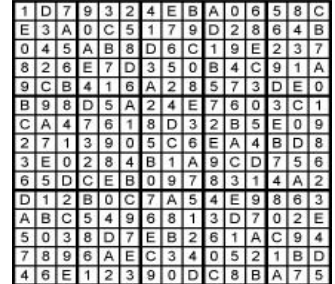


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

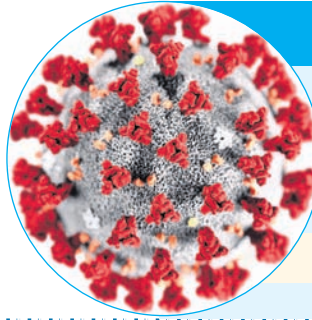


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



SHRINE VISIT

People in large number visit Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar, Sunday. The 11th century shrine reopened for devotees recently after remaining shut for several months due to the Covid-19 pandemic



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	9,02,29,232	6,46,03,251	19,37,304
India	1,04,51,346	1,00,75,395	1,51,048
Odisha	3,31,862	3,28,043	1,891

Experts' mixed reaction to vax drive

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: With the Covishield vaccine of Serum Institute and Covaxin of Bharat Biotech getting nod from the Centre for administration to health and frontline professionals, experts in Odisha have mixed reaction to it.

Dr Swayam Pragyan Parida is an Associate Professor of Community Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar. She said that more communication is

Several drugs and vaccines have some associated risks. However, we need to understand that the benefits of the vaccine can outweigh the risks. Approval of vaccines is done by the regulatory authorities after robust safety standard norms and checkgates. Its efficacy and risks have been analysed and tested

DR SWAYAM PRAGYAN PARIDA | ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMMUNITY MEDICINE, AIIMS, BHUBANESWAR

Both the manufacturers have attempted to not inform the people about the potential side effects the vaccines can have. Several normal procedures of getting approval have been evaded...

JAGANNATH CHATTERJEE | ANTI-VACCINE ADVOCATE



File photo of dry run for Covid vaccination in Bhubaneswar

needed to inform the people about the role of such vaccine during a pandemic.

"Many drugs and vaccines have some associated risks. However, we need to understand that the benefits of the vaccine can outweigh the risks. Approval of vaccines is done by the regulatory authorities after robust safety standard norms and checkgates. Its efficacy and risks have been analysed and tested," she added. She explained that vaccines mimic the real invasion of the pathogen into the body and trigger a natural defence of the body to fight against the disease causing organism.

"Multiple exposures through these vaccines can bolster the human body to fight against these pathogens effectively. Even when the antibodies decline, the body has memory cells which learn how to

fight against particular bacteria or virus and defeat them after the body is exposed to it multiple times," she concluded.

Anurag Srivastava, a researcher from the University of Turin (Italy), told Orissa POST that Covid-19 is tough to fight without a vaccine as it was a RNA-based virus and most of the hard to tackle viruses in the world belong to the category.

He also said that India is going to use the two vaccines which were produced through traditional way, owing to which the public would have more faith on them.

"Both the vaccines in India—Covishield and Covaxin—have been formulated with the traditional way of manufacturing the prophylactic unlike some foreign vaccines where the new mode of roping in the messenger RNA is been utilised," he said. He explained that

HOW COVISHIELD & COVAXIN WORK	
COVISHIELD (by Serum Institute of India)	COVAXIN (by Bharat Biotech)
A vector named Chimpanzee Adeno virus is taken. The virus causes common cold in Chimpanzee and has been used earlier in many vaccines like in Zika, MERS. The vector virus which is considered safe is then clubbed with the genetic material of Covid-19 which makes the spike protein. The clubbed material containing the harmless genetic materials from both the viruses is then given in the vaccine.	A sample of Coronavirus taken from the National Institute of Virus, Pune was taken; it was later inactivated with a chemical named beta-propiolactone. The inactivation ensures the virus doesn't replicate further. The inactivated virus is then mixed with an Aluminium-based compound. The combination is later introduced as vaccine in human body.
WHEN INTRODUCED IN HUMAN BODY THEY TRIGGER A NATURAL DEFENCE AND PRODUCE ANTIBODIES AND MEMORY CELLS.	

while Covishield of Serum Institute is using the chimpanzee adeno virus as a vector, the Covaxin of Bharat Biotech is using the inactivated Coronavirus to trigger natural response in the human body.

However, experts who have studied efficacy of other vaccines are not satisfied with the pace of bringing the vaccine and also with the alleged shielding of vaccine efficacy data. Jagannath Chatterjee, an anti-vaccine advocate from the city said, "Both the manufacturers have attempted to not inform the people about the potential side effects the vaccines can have. Several normal procedures of getting approval have been evaded. Several noted scientists and experts worldwide have ex-

pressed their reservations against the vaccines." He also alleged that United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) listed 21 serious adverse effects of Covid vaccines while apprehensions have also been made in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) on the issue. "There are numerous recorded research data on adverse effects of several vaccines including that of Covid vaccines. Several vaccines in the past triggered cancer, disability and other abnormalities post vaccination as side effect. In India, Covid vaccine approvals, different phases of trials and manufacturing also went parallel, raising doubts over the overall process," he concluded.

Committee on Netaji attempt to discredit Odisha, Cong alleges



The press meet in progress

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: The Odisha unit of Congress party Sunday accused the BJP-led Central government of ignoring Odias while forming a high-level committee for commemoration of the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

The party alleged that the Narendra Modi government at the Centre has formed the committee with an intention of discrediting Odisha and erasing the state's link with Netaji.

It also alleged that the BJP-led Central government has formed the panel by keeping eye on the upcoming Assembly election in West Bengal.

"There has been a desperate attempt by the Union government to discredit Odisha and insult its people. Netaji is the pride of Odisha and the legendary freedom fighter

...the representation of intellectuals, journalists, experts and political leaders from Odisha is one of the least in the panel

NISHIKANT MISHRA | CONGRESS LEADER

had strong connections with the state. However, the representation of intellectuals, journalists, experts and political leaders from Odisha is one of the least in the panel," said Congress leader Nishikant Mishra at a presser here, Sunday.

The Congress leader claimed that the high-level committee has over 70 members. But, only three members of the panel are from Odisha while 26 members are from West Bengal.

"Even actors and sarpanches from other states have also been included in the committee. However, the Governor of Odisha hasn't been included in the panel," Mishra added.

Avian flu affects chicken, egg sales but 'marginally'

DENIZENS OF THE CITY SEEM A BIT APPREHENSIVE TO CONSUME POULTRY PRODUCTS AFTER HUNDREDS OF CHICKENS WERE FOUND DEAD IN KHURDA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: Demand for eggs and chicken in the state capital has observed a marginal drop as customers here are apprehensive against spread of bird flu after hundreds of birds were found dead in Khurda district.

The Avian influenza, or largely known as bird flu, has been reported from different parts of countries such as Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana in recent weeks. Although the state government maintained that there is no prevalence of the flu here, deaths of more than 100 chickens in a poultry farm in Khurda district between January 6 and 9 has fuelled fear among people.

"Although there has been no drastic drop in demand of the poultry products, there has been a slight decrease. While earlier, the whole-sale price of eggs was Rs 62.5 a dozen, it was Rs 55, Saturday. Similarly, prices of broilers have come down from Rs 87 to about 80," said Sameer Mohanty, a poultry wholesaler here.

While the Avian flu is largely said to be reason for the fall, the drop in prices is also attributed to restaurants and hotels procuring lesser poultry products past last week. Sources said that meat and other related dishes have been lesser in de-



Representative pic

mand as customers are reluctant to consume the same.

"Earlier a week ago we were receiving about 30-40 orders on dishes such as Chicken Biryani, Egg Rolls, Chicken Masala, Egg Curry among others. The demand was even higher between Christmas and New Year's Eve. However, for the past three to four days, we have only received 20-25 orders on daily basis including online food platforms. Although, sales of fish products have remained the same," said Basudev Raut, manager at a

restaurant here.

However, the state government earlier has requested people not to panic and consume chicken meat, eggs and other poultry products after cooking them properly. "Rapid Response Teams with veterinary assistant surgeons, livestock inspectors and social workers have been formed in each block to check the spread of bird flu," Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Chief Secretary of Odisha had earlier stated.

Bird flu, also called avian influenza, is a viral infection that can infect not only birds, but also hu-

We have witnessed a drop in orders for chicken products but sales of fish products have remained the same

BASUDEV RAUT | MANAGER, RESTAURANT

Although there has been no drastic drop in demand for the poultry products, there has been a slight decrease. Earlier, the wholesale price of eggs was Rs62.5 a dozen, it was Rs55, Saturday. Similarly, prices of broilers have come down from Rs87 to about 80

SAMEER MOHANTY | POULTRY PRODUCTS' WHOLESALER

mans and other animals. Most forms of the virus are restricted to birds.

H5N1 is the most common form of bird flu. It's deadly to birds and can easily affect humans and other animals that come in contact with a carrier. According to the World Health Organization Trusted source, H5N1 was first discovered in humans in 1997 and has killed nearly 60 per cent of those infected.

Consuming properly cooked poultry or eggs from infected birds doesn't transmit the bird flu, but eggs should never be served runny. Meat is considered safe if it has been cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F (73.9°C).

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



TWO SHOPS IN CAPITAL CITY GUTTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: Goods worth over several lakhs were reduced to ashes as fire broke out in a shop at Sahara Campus in Rasulgarh here Sunday afternoon. The locals called the Fire department after seeing smoke billowing out of a shop, Rudra Earth Movers, selling various spare parts, at 3.30 pm in the afternoon. The fire soon spread to other shops close to it.



Two shops including a motor lubricant store was gutted completely while the fire caused minor dam-

ages to another lubricant shop. Due to the lubricant and other inflammable products, the fire turned severe and gutted all the goods inside the stores in just a few minutes.

The fire services personnel immediately reached the spot along with two fire tenders to douse the fire. Quick action by the firemen saved several other shops at the market. The Fire services officers have started probe to know the exact cause behind the fire.

AIMING AT THE SKY



Youths buying colourful kites from a roadside vendor in Naya Sarak area of Cuttack ahead of the Makar Sankranti festival, Sunday

PIC: RAIKISHORE MOHANTY

New eel species found from Bay of Bengal

THE NEW SPECIES HAS BEEN SCIENTIFICALLY NAMED AS CIRRHIMURAENA INDICA

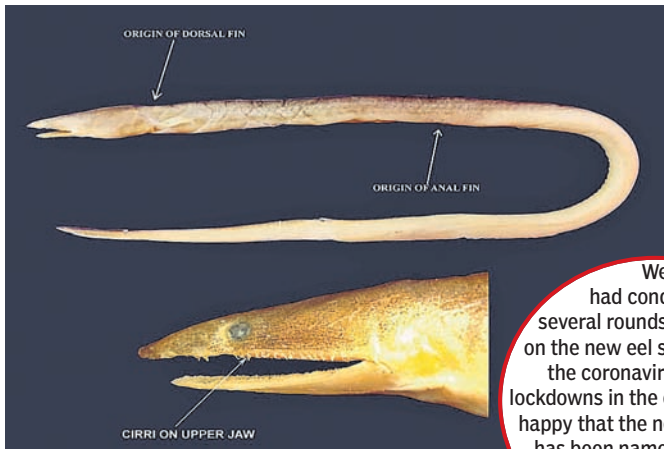
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: A group of researchers, mostly from Odisha, have found a new species of eel from the Bay of Bengal.

The new eel species, found from the sea coasts of Odisha and West Bengal, has been scientifically named as Cirrhimuraena Indica, sources said.

Anil Mahapatra of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) at Gopalpur in Ganjam, Swarup Ranjan Mohanty of Zoology department at Ravenshaw University in Cuttack, Shuvendu Sekhar Mishra of ZSI-Kolkata, Jay Kishore Seth of Zoology department at Berhampur University and Dipanjan Dey of Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya in West Bengal found the new eel species from Bay of Bengal, sources said.

The researchers collected six



specimens of the new eel species from the fishing harbours of Paradip in Odisha and Petuaghat in West Bengal and conducted their research at a newly-built laboratory at ZSI, Gopalpur.

The new species of eel has some

distinct features in its genetic character: The body colour of the new eel species remains intact when the marine fish is preserved with the help of alcohol and formalin. But, the fins of a

preserved eel turn white in colour, sources said.

"We had conducted several rounds of research on the new eel species during the coronavirus-induced lockdowns in the country. We are happy that the new eel species has been named after India," said scientist Anil Mahapatra of ZSI, Gopalpur.

It is worth mentioning here that Mahapatra has created a special identity for himself in the world for his research on marine eel species. Cirrhimuraena Indica is the 14th new marine eel species found by Mahapatra, sources said.

A research thesis on the new eel species has been accepted by the Journal of Fish Biology for publication recently, sources added.

Colleges, varsities reopen today

Hostels open only for 2020- 21 final-year UG/PG students as well as PhD, MPhil and other research scholars

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: The colleges and universities in the state will resume from January 11 for the students of final year in undergraduate and post-graduate courses.

The Higher Education department issued guidelines for the colleges and universities January 3.

The penultimate semester exams for the students of UG/PG courses will be held from March 16 to March 31 and the final semester examinations will take place between June 16 and June 30, a notification issued by the Higher Education department said.

The government decided to reopen colleges and universities considering the improvement in Covid-19 situation in the state and the huge academic loss of students due to the pandemic situation.

Classroom teaching has been suspended since March 2020.

“The state public universities and government as well as non-government degree colleges (coming under H.E. Department) are hereby directed to commence physical classroom teaching for students of 2020-21 Final Year UG/PG courses from 11-01-2021(Monday),” the notification said.

The government also issued a guideline for the conduct of classroom teaching which should be held in a regular manner to cover all chapters of the syllabus irrespective of coverage of some chapters by online mode.

“Whenever possible, the physical classroom teaching shall be recorded and shared with absentee students,”



Representative pic

the guideline said adding that Covid-19 prevention protocols need to be followed.

It has been made mandatory for all the persons coming to colleges and varsities to wear facemasks.

Social distancing should be maintained in classrooms and, if needed, crowded classes can be divided into batches and teaching hours in a day can be extended, the guideline said.

However, teachers, students and staff residing in active containment zone shall not come to their institutes, it said.

Hostels will be opened from January 10 only for 2020-21 final-year UG/PG students as well as PhD, MPhil and other research scholars. In order to compensate for the lost days, physical classes should be conducted on all days except the examination period, Sundays, January 26 (the Republic Day), February 16 (Saraswati Puja) and April 1 (Utkal Divas).

260 fresh Covid-19 infections



BHUBANESWAR: State's Covid-19 caseload Sunday mounted to 3,31,862 after 260 more people tested positive for the viral infection, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The state's coronavirus death toll remained at 1,891 as no new fatality due to the infection has been reported since Saturday, said the official.

Nos. vis-à-vis national data
The new cases were detected in 29 of the coastal state's 30 districts, with 151 reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 109 are local contact cases.

Sundargarh district recorded the highest of 31 fresh cases followed by Cuttack (24) and Angul (21). No new positive case was detected from Nayagarh district since Saturday, the official pointed out.

Apart from 1,891 coronavirus fatalities reported so far, 53 other Covid-19 positive patients have also died due to comorbidities.

Currently, Odisha has 2,115 active Covid-19 cases while 3,27,803 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease.

The state has so far conducted over 71.72 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, the official said.

WORK IN PROGRESS



Preparations going on at full pace for the upcoming Mukteswar Mahotsav in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

Villagers knock at OHRC doors against detention

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10 : The residents of Kakendri village Sunday lodged an application before Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) accusing the state crime branch's Special Task Force of illegally detaining five villagers. They alleged that a 'revengeful' STF has forcefully taken away some villagers who are yet to return their respective homes.

Notably, some locals Wednesday allegedly thrashed and detained a seven-member team of the special task force of the Crime Branch, when they were conducting a raid at the village under Sadar police limits in Kandhamal district.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

4 of a family in Paradip set example for others



POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Jan 10: At a time when poaching cases are on the rise, four members of a family here in Jagatsinghpur district have set an example for others by becoming animal and bird lovers.

Madhusmit Pati, aged 54, his brother Biraja Prasad, who is four years younger to him, his two sons Saswat (23) and Sourabh (14), are known as dedicated animal and bird lovers.

According to Rajnagar DFO, Bikash Ranjan Das, it is rare to find, at least in Odisha, that not one or two but as many as four members of a family becoming animal lovers and getting involved in animal and bird census.

When asked how this started, Madhusmit said he was working at Paradeep Phosphates Limited when he started working for the cause of animals and birds.

"In 1996, I founded an NGO called 'Nature Club' and started working for conservation of wild animals in Bhitarkanika sanctuary. In 2011, I was selected into the bird and Olive Ridley census teams. And since then I have been in these teams," he said.

Following his elder brother's footsteps, Biraja gave up his BTech mid way and joined his brother. He got himself so involved in wildlife conservation that he hardly got time to think about himself. He has not married as yet. He has rescued many injured animals and reptiles, got them treated and then released them in jungles.

Seeing their father and uncle

from their childhood days, Saswat and Sourabh also fell in love with wild animals and jungles.

Saswat said that he got attracted to wildlife when he was just 13 years old. "During holidays, I would go to jungles, spend hours there clicking photos. I used to have an inclination towards birds," he observed.

His photographs of birds and tigers in Sundarban made him familiar to the forest department. He was included into the bird census team in 2013. Now he is studying wildlife conservation at AR University, Cambridge (UK). He has made many short films on birds and tigers.

The bug of wildlife photography has bitten Sourabh as well. He is best known for his special talent of identifying any bird accurately. He has also been included in bird census teams for four years now. According to Madhusmit, in order to maintain a balance on earth, there is no denying that protection of animals and nature is a must.

"If we don't start working for their conservation from now, we cannot evade destruction. I am afraid it is just a matter of time," he said.

While holding up Madhusmit and his family members as examples, regional chief conservator, Forest and Environment Department, Manoj Kumar Mohapatra said that if students show interest in conservation of wildlife and forest, they can have a bright career in this field and, at the same time, they will also get a chance to work for nature's preservation.

'No' classroom for students of this Malkangiri school



POST NEWS NETWORK

Korukonda, Jan 10: The happiness of returning to school after a long gap vanished for students of Government High School in Neelakamberu panchayat under Korukonda block in Malkangiri district after they were made to sit in open for classes Friday.

The teachers took their classes in the open as well. Such a situation came to be as the classrooms that had become part of a quarantine centre set up here, was yet to be handed over to the school headmaster.

The government along with announcing reopening of schools had also directed that the classrooms of the schools that were converted into quarantine centres be handed over to the schools.

In this respect, Malkangiri District Collector also had directed all the BDOs to hand over the class-

rooms to the concerned schools through his letter no-2451/20 sent September 18, 2020.

Three months have since passed since, but the classrooms-turned-quarantine centres of the government schools are yet to be handed over. Worse, these classrooms are yet to be sanitised.

When asked, headmaster, Ramesh Chandra Parida said he had already requested the local sarpanch, Korukonda BDO and the District Collector in written September 9, 2020 and 18.11.2020 respectively to take steps to hand over the classrooms. But he was yet to get back the rooms.

"This is the reason why we are forced to take classes in open," Parida added.

When contacted, Korukonda BDO Anshuman Mohapatra said he would direct the panchayat office to take necessary steps to open the classrooms by Monday.

Unruly bikers, better take note!

Commissionerate Police launches special drive against unruly/rowdy bikers in Silver City; driving licence of violators to be suspended

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 10: Unruly bikers, better take note. The Commissionerate Police has launched a special drive against bikers indulging in rash and negligent driving on the busy streets of the Silver City here.

Cuttack deputy commissioner of police (DCP) took to the Twitter to inform that they have detected as many as 43 cases of violation of road rules during the special drive in the Millennium City in the past 24 hours.

"The special drive was launched across the Cuttack UPD and driving licenses (DL) of 99 persons were suspended. While a fine of Rs 17,500 was collected from the erring bikers, 26 two-wheelers have been seized and kept at several police stations under the Cuttack UPD during the drive," the DCP tweeted.

Sources said that all police stations (PSS) under the Cuttack UPD have been asked to keep a tab on unruly bikers who are indulging in rash and careless driving in the Silver City, jeopardising the safety of the public in general.

"All PSSs have been instructed to keep watch on them & take strong action. ACP Traffic is monitoring



While a fine of Rs17,500 was collected from the erring bikers, 26 two-wheelers have been seized and kept at several police stations under the Cuttack UPD during the drive
DCP, CUTTACK

& supervising the entire operation as the Nodal Officer. Bikes of Rowdy/Unruly users are being seized & their DL will subsequently

be suspended with fine within the Provisions of MV Rules," the Cuttack DCP further tweeted.

According to the Cuttack DCP, unruly or rowdy bikers are those two-wheeler riders who wilfully disobey the traffic rules. "Bikers who resort to rash and negligent driving on public roads and those who don't bother wearing helmet are under the police scanner. Two-wheelers sans registration plate, using fancy number plates and those using high sound multi-horns, inconveniencing the public will be penalised," the DCP said.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit in the court of Executive Magistrate, Angul on dt. 02.11.2020 do hereby solemnly state that I am B.S Bijayeeni Singh, D/o-Brundaban Singh resident of Dholapasi, Po-Batagaon, Dist-Dhenkanal, 759018 have changed my name from B.S Bijayeeni Singh to Bijayeeni which is one & same person. Henceforth, I shall be known as Bijayeeni for all purposes.

PLAYFUL MOOD



Swans frolic in Guajhara holy pond in the Old Town area of Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Saffron goes after Naveen, Ministers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: The state unit of the BJP Sunday attacked the Chief Minister and other ministers for their alleged 'incomplete asset declaration'.

"The CM and ministers' asset declaration is incomplete. They need to declare details regarding their assets for the last 10 years. People have the right to know that. The ministers and the CM should also make public their sources of

income," said BJP leader Prithviraj Harichandan.

He further said, "The people's representatives must explain the reasons for an increase in their assets.

ASSET DECLARATION

Otherwise, such an exercise is nothing but eyewash. The notion of fighting corruption has no meaning without complete data on the ministers' assets. If you really want to fight corruption, then there should be a law on declaration of assets. This is our demand."

Ganja smuggling: Nagpur ATS arrests Koraput man

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: A team of the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS)'s Nagpur branch of Maharashtra has arrested a villager of Kalaguda under Jeypore Sadar police limits in Koraput district for allegedly smuggling ganja to Nagpur.

Sadar Police station sources Sunday said Khagapati Pangri was arrested last night from his village. The accused was taken to Nagpur for further interrogation, sources said.



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Major fishery project in dry riverbeds ‘shelved’

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagatsinghpur, Jan 10: Four years ago, the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI) had planned a major fishery project in the dry stretches of three rivers -- Alka, Balia and Kathajodi in Jagatsinghpur district. The ambitious project that assumes much importance to the fisheries sector has reportedly been shelved.

Reports said CIFRI had conducted a survey on the potential of fishery in the dry riverbeds. The plan was to push pisciculture in 150 hectares in dry riverbeds.

Alka in this district is almost dead. The land mafia has grabbed major parts of this river. Parts of two other rivers -- Balia and Kathajodi have also been dead in the district. Hectares of land belonging to these rivers are under encroachments in different parts.

The CIFRI had estimated that 600 tonnes of fish worth Rs 7 crore can be produced annually. It is a pity

that the ambitious project, aimed at boosting pisciculture and creating income generation opportunities for the people, has been pushed into cold storage.

According to reports, the district fisheries department had prepared a detailed project report (DPR) in 2016-17. A number of officials comprising the then divisional executive engineer of fisheries and the district fisheries officer had made field visits of the three riparian areas. They had identified stretches of the rivers where fish can be grown. The DPR was submitted to the state government.

In the DPR, it was learnt that a 5-km dry stretch of 300-metre wide in Kathajodi from Saideipur to Redhua under Raghunathpur block was suitable for fishery. People of Tihuda and Gopalpur were to benefit from the pisciculture. In the first phase, 75 hectares of this river were to be developed for the purpose.



FILE PHOTO

Besides, 50 hectares of dry riverbed of Balia stretching for 5 km under Kujang block were found to be fit for fishery.

This project could have immensely benefitted hundreds of people living in Badanga, Balia, Parianga and Patapur.

The dead part of the Alka passing through Biridi, Jagatsinghpur and Naugaon blocks had been surveyed for fishery. Three hectares of

riverbed near Purna Basundhara under Biridi block were proposed for fishery. People of Balia, Kasapa, Dandilo and Sadehi were to be benefitted.

A stretch of 25 hectares riverbed from Ichhapur to Majhikora under Balikuda block was identified for fishery which would have created good earning opportunities for thousands of people living in Iswarpur, Nardia, Majhokora,

Headmaster among 3 injured in bear attack on school premises

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 10: A headmaster and two villagers suffered injuries after a bear attacked them on the premises of Naranpur High School in Keonjhar district Sunday.

The injured people were identified as headmaster Basanta Kumar Kar (57), Bhagabata Sahu (48) and Mayadhar Behera (48). They were admitted to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH).

According to a source, the bear had somehow entered the Naranpur High School at 7 am

when the teacher was about to enter the classroom Sunday morning unaware of the presence of the wild animal. The bear suddenly leapt towards him and attacked him, a local man said.

Hearing his cries for help, nearby villagers came to his rescue and tried to drive the animal away. In the process, the bear injured two more villagers. However, they succeeded in driving the bear away into the jungle.

The injured persons were immediately rushed to the DHH where they are undergoing treatment, it was learnt.



IMMERSED IN PLAY



Two kids are immersed playing on the bank of a pond in Sambalpur, Sunday

OP PHOTO

40 para-teachers issued show-cause notices for forging certificates in Boudh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, Jan 10: Forged experience certificates have proved costly for 40 para-teachers in Boudh district. The district education officer has issued show-cause notices to all the teachers, a report said.

According to the report, the state government has laid stress on quality education and made terms and conditions for teachers stricter.

As per the government guidelines, the jobs of para-teachers, who have worked over six years, will be regularised.

As many as 85 teachers from three blocks of the district had applied for job regularisation. They had submitted various documents including their experience certificates to the district education office.

The district education office has sent their certificates to the Board authorities for verification.

On verification by the Board, experience certificates furnished by 40 teachers were found to be fake.

"After this illegality came to the fore, all the teachers have been served with show-cause notices," said district education officer Gendra Kujur.

Most of the teachers with fake experience certificates are from



As many as 85 teachers from three blocks of the district had applied for job regularisation. They had submitted various documents including their experience certificates

Harbhanga block.

Earlier, various quarters had alleged that scores of teachers have been serving on the basis of fake certificates. The state government had ordered for verification of certificates of all the teachers in the district.

Thirteen teachers were caught with forged certificates. They were dismissed from service. Now, detection of forged experience certificates has caused a lot of worry for the department and the teachers too.

Maoist hideout busted, landmine recovered

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chittrakonda, Jan 10: Security forces have busted a Maoist hideout in Handikhal forest in Swabhimani Anchal under Chittrakonda block of Malkangiri district, a district police official Sunday said.

Based on specific information, an operation was launched by the jawans of Border Security Force (BSF) at Handikhal forest under Panaspur panchayat.

The forces seized an unexploded landmine, grenades and other ammunition in the raid. The incident has sparked shockwaves among the residents in the area.

A landmine weighing 5 kg kept inside a drum was also recovered by the security forces. This apart, Maoist fatigues, clothes, articles, some other explosive items, multi-meters and walkie-talkies were seized from the spot.

Later, a bomb disposal squad was sent to the spot to defuse the landmine.

The jawans said that the seized explosives are suspected to belong to cadres of the Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal



ANTI-MAOIST DRIVE

The forces seized an unexploded landmine, grenades and other ammunition in the raid. The incident has sparked shockwaves among the residents in the area

Already on the backfoot, the ultras are reportedly exploring all possible means to target the security forces engaged in anti-Maoist operations in the state

Committee and was intended for use in subversive activities against civilians and security forces.

Already on the backfoot, the ultras are reportedly exploring all possible means to target the security forces engaged in anti-Maoist operations in the state.

Following the seizure, the BSF jawans have intensified combing operations in the area.

Earlier January 8, the security forces had seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition including hand grenades and other explo-

sives after busting a major Maoist hideout in Kandhamal district. The camp was busted during a joint combing operation by SOG jawans and DVF.

Last year, a country-made revolver, claymore mine and other explosives were seized from a Maoist dump in Malkangiri. The Maoist dump was unearthed October 26, 2020 during a joint combing operation by the SOG and BSF jawans at several places under Jodamba police limits in the district.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Jan 10: Tribal-dominated Rayagada district is indeed a treasure trove of nature. Durgapadu waterfall is one of the picture postcard sites in the district, but the tourism department allegedly has failed to explore its tourism potential, a report said.

The waterfall, which is tucked away amid a scenic sylvan setting, is on the borders of Andhra-Odisha, 37 km from the district headquarters.

Water cascading down from a cliff offers a breathtaking view to people. Even though the place lacks basic infrastructure, many people from various parts of Andhra Pradesh and other neighbouring states come to this place for sight-seeing and picnicking.

Locals and traders observed that the place has much potential to boost tourism in the region while people will get earning opportunities.

"The tourism department should tag the place as a tourist spot and make efforts to develop the place with basic facilities so as to attract tourists. In the absence of proper foot track, people have to negotiate



with craggy and hilly paths to reach the waterfall," locals said.

Despite the commuting difficulties, people still come to the place. As commuting in the treacherous terrains is difficult, the place needs to be connected with a ropeway, locals said.

The place is not far from the district headquarters. One can travel from Rayagada via Jhula Bridge and Pipiliguda. The other route to this waterfall is from Kolnara via Panichhatta.

There is another alternative route to this place - from Ramangada or Kumudpur.

For tourists, there is need for rest sheds, drinking water and a motorable road.

Encroachments push Gobari to brink of extinction

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Jan 10: The mythology famed Gobari river flowing through this district is fast turning into a dead river with its water turning toxic and becoming unfit for consumption, a report said.

The river mentioned as 'Madhusagar' in mythology is slowly losing its water retaining capacity due to large scale encroachment on its banks. The encroachment of the river is more in the town than in rural areas.

The river is no longer able to provide sufficient water for irrigation of farmlands. However, the water resources department has not stopped collecting water cess from the farmers.

Concerned over the development, the residents have lodged complaints with the district administration but without any success. The residents alleged that a test report of the water

samples conducted by the water resources department in 2013 confirmed presence of toxic substances in the river but no action has been taken yet in this direction.

The report claims high presence of toxic substances like cadmium, chromium and potassium in the river. People using the river water now get affected by skin diseases and water-borne disease.

Recently, the Kendrapara Municipality has started discharging the waste water of the town through two siphons. Moreover, open defecation by people on the river banks and discharge of sewage into the river has also polluted its water.

This apart, lack of regular cleaning has led to growth of hyacinths and weeds in the river.

According to an estimate by the water resources department, the water of the 138 km-long Gobari river helps in irrigating 7,616 hectares of farmlands on both sides of the

SEVERE POLLUTION POSES DANGER TOO



river. Its water also irrigates an additional 4000 hectares of farmland after a creek embankment project came up at Malibasa, Tantiapala, Benakanda and Bijaynagar areas under Mahakalapara block of the district.

The water drawn from the river

helps in irrigating rabi crops on 3,200 hectares of farmland and oilseeds like groundnuts on 600 hectares of farmland.

The water is used by over 80,000 residents daily in the district. A survey report by the water resources department claims that the river water

is used directly or indirectly to irrigate around 30,000 hectares of farmland in the district.

Sk Amjan of Kendrapara town, Tuna Sahu of Phorad village, Nilamadhab Mohapatra and Niranjan Parida of Kansar village said that seven rivers including the Gobari flowing through the district have deeply influenced the lives and livelihoods of the people.

The water route of Gobari was the main mode of goods transport when there was no road transport facilities five decades back, they said. In post-Independence era, the river route was developed and the river water was provided to the farmers for irrigation.

When contacted, Prabodh Kumar Rout, executive engineer of the water resources department, said that a plan has been made for the last three years for renovation of the river. The programme will be launched soon, he added.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL
KESINGA, KALAHANDI, ODISHA, PIN-766012
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No.81/NAC(K) Date: 08.01.2021
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Executive Officer, N.A.C., Kesinga on behalf of NAC Kesinga invites "Expression of Interest" from Comptroller & Auditor General Empanelled Audit firms for auditing of annual accounts for the year 2013-14 to 2019-20 of NAC, Kesinga, Dist. - Kalahandi. The expression of interest should indicate the audit fees, taxes, T.A./D.A. and accommodation charges if any, separately with detail bodista of the firm and it should reach in the above mentioned address in sealed envelopes on or before 22 January 2021 by 12 P.M. The minimum fee of audit and criterion for selection is given hereunder. The EOI will be opened in the same day at 3.30 P.M. The interested party on their authorized representative may attend the same. The authority reserves all the right to accept/reject any or all the 'EOI' without assigning any reason therefor.

TECHNICAL CRITERIA FOR SELECTION	
CRITERIA	MARKS
Nos. of CA in the firm	Upto 10 Nos. - 10 marks 11 to 20 Nos. - 20 marks
Nos. of years of establishment of firm	Upto 15 years - 10 marks 15-25 years - 15 marks 25-35 years - 20 marks above 35 years - 25 marks
Turnover per annum	Upto 20 lakhs - 10 marks 21 to 40 lakhs - 15 marks Above 40 lakhs - 20 marks
Audit experience (maximum 30 marks)	Govt. Audit each organization-5 marks PSU, Audit each organization - 5 marks 5 marks

Head office in Odisha
SCOPE OF WORKS
Preparation of financial statements i.e. income & expenditure account, balance sheet, all schedules to income and expenditure and balance sheet, receipt payment account and trial balance etc. and Bank reconciliation statement audited from 2013-14 to 2019-20 (Year wise).
Terms & conditions: 1. Audit fees per year - Rs.30,000/- (Rupees Thirty thousand). 2. Necessary documents such as GSTIN/PAN/Registration of firm/CAG empanelled certificate or documents should be attached. 3. All documents should be attached as indicate in the criteria for selection
Sd/- Executive Officer, NAC, Kesinga

“Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism.”

SRI AUROBINDO



Beware the dangers

The permanent ban of US President Donald Trump on Twitter and the indefinite one on Facebook by the social media giants are measures too little, too late. The two platforms have been allowing top notch politicians and ruling parties across the world to use their tools maliciously to advance their political agendas with impunity. It took a mob-fuelled insurrection at America’s citadel of democracy, the Capitol, for the social media platforms to act against Trump. Of course, such action by Corporates, tech or otherwise, against a sitting US President is not an easy task. To top it, Trump is known to be a vengeful man. Yet, Twitter has, for the past few months, been flagging most of Trump’s tweets as being unverified.

The events of 6 January 2021 need to be viewed in very many different ways. Those who have heard Trump’s speech to his followers that day in which he asked them to march down Pennsylvania Avenue and lay siege to the Capitol would have realized the dangers that lay in it. Trump’s instigation should be considered unpardonable. The rioters came prepared to physically stop the proceedings taking place to certify Joe Biden’s win in the Electoral College votes. This may remind some of the failed 1923 Beerhall Pusch instigated by Hitler and his Nazi party followers. They had attacked the Bavarian Defence Ministry building with the aim of taking control of the government. The guards present there had opened fire in which more than a dozen Nazi party members were shot dead. Hitler had fled from the site. The government decided not to take any severe steps against the Nazis. History tells us that the soft pedaling resulted in millions of deaths across the world. Similarly, if the US establishment does not handle Trumpism as a serious problem immediately, the US could face severe stress at the end of the four year term of Biden. A revival of Trump’s madness would result in serious consequences not only for the US but also for the rest of the world.

WISDOM CORNER

- “The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”
RALPH WALDO EMERSON
- “A man will renounce any pleasures you like but he will not give up his suffering.”
GEORGE GURDJIEFF
- “To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.”
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

WORDSWORTH

Willy-nilly

One modern meaning of this common but odd-looking expression is “without direction or planning; haphazardly”: We’ve got to make it a physical game and we are not going to go there and chuck the ball about willy-nilly. We’ve got to go there with a purpose and that purpose is to win the game -- Doncaster Free Press, 15 Nov. 2011. Its original sense appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when people used it to suggest that something must be done no matter whether one is willing or unwilling, whether one wants to or not. It’s a modified form of an older phrase that is variously expressed as will I, nill I or will ye, nill ye, or sometimes as nilling willing. Will here is used in its sense of wanting to do something, to wish or desire that something should happen (when you make your will, you are using the same sense: you are expressing your wishes for the distribution of your goods after you die). Nill is very old, known before the Norman Conquest, but has long since vanished from the language. It was the opposite of will, so to nill is to want not to do something, to refuse or reject some course of action. So will I, nill I can be expanded into “be I willing, be I unwilling”, combining the two sentiments with the implication that it doesn’t much matter what you feel, you’re stuck with doing something. More recently, this conflict gave rise to an implication that a person was not sure whether to do something, and so suggested he was undecided or indecisive. Even more recently, the associated sense has grown up of embarking on some project without direction or planning or in a disorganised way. There is an equivalent Latin phrase nolens volens, which is formed from two Latin participles that mean “unwilling, willing”. It is sometimes said that willy-nilly is actually a translation of the Latin phrase. It may have been an influence, but it’s hard to tell.

Wiseacre

Although some experts do profess themselves baffled by the acre part of this word, we know where it comes from -- the Middle Dutch wissseggher, a soothsayer, a wise sayer. The first part is from the same source as our wit. The Oxford English Dictionary says that the original Dutch pronunciation of the word was (roughly WAIS-zegger). It first appeared in English in a scurrilous ballad of 1595 that had the catchy title A Quest of Enquire, by women to know, Whether the Tripe-Wife were trimmed by Doll. A tripe-wife was a tripe dresser, in this case a well-to-do London widow who sold her wares from a stall; the trimming referred to the cheating of her by one Doll Phillips, who pretended to be a fortune teller who could tell her which of her suitors she was to marry. The story was based on real events, though embroidered. We know that the Dutch pronunciation had already changed, since in the ballad it’s given as wise-aker. The shift from Dutch to English is a good example of a common form of folk etymology, in which an odd or foreign word is changed until it looks familiar, even if its parts make no real sense. The word seems never to have been used in English in the literal sense of a wise person that it had in Dutch, perhaps because of the traditional enmity between the two nations that led to a series of disparaging terms such as Dutch courage. It has always meant a person projecting an unjustified appearance of wisdom or specialist knowledge -- a wiseacre pontificates on a subject despite being ignorant about it.

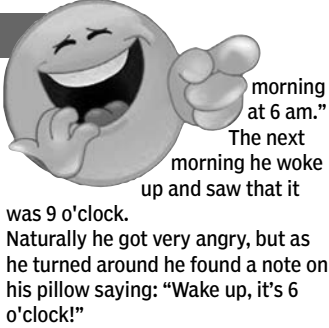
Wittol

Way back in medieval times there was the English cokewold, which eventually became our modern cuckold. The first bit is also the source of our cuckoo, with -old attached as a suffix giving a pejorative sense. Some clever wordsmith of the fifteenth century took the old word and changed the first part into wete, the quality of awareness or knowledge, so making wetewold. Wete is our modern wit in slight disguise. So the idea behind wittol -- as it was later written and said -- was of somebody who knew he was a cuckold, but especially somebody who was untroubled by the situation. This was not a state of affairs that most spectators thought reasonable or likely, so the word later took on a sense of a half-witted person, a fool. It was not accidental that William Congreve entitled a character in his play The Old Bachelor Sir Joseph Wittol. Shakespeare borrowed the adjective in The Merry Wives of Windsor: “I know him not; yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the jealous wittolly knave hath masses of money; for the which his wife seems to me well-favoured”.

LOL

Getting into fights

They were married, but since the argument they had a few days earlier, they hadn’t been talking to each other. Instead, they were giving each other written notes. One evening he gave her a paper where it said: “Wake me up tomorrow



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS FOR TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS MUST BE INCREASED MANIFOLD

The Finance Minister should increase the budget allocations for science and communications and for providing direct cash transfers to all citizens. The former will lay the foundations of our economic prowess, while the latter will engage our manpower in productive employment, put purchasing power in the hands of people, generate demand in the market and set in motion a fortuitous cycle of employment generation, production, creation of demand and yet more employment generation.

The year 2020-21 was abnormal hence I will give my suggestions for the coming budget on the basis of the figures for 2019-20. I have given all figures in approximate to keep the presentation simple. On the revenue side, my first suggestion is that the rates of Corporate Tax must be increased. The share of the Central Government in the collections from Corporate Tax was ₹3.2 lakh crore in 2019-20. This may be increased to ₹4 lakh crore. Indeed, there will be a tendency of Indian Corporates to shift their head offices to foreign countries in order to avoid paying high taxes. This should be dealt by amending the Double Tax Avoidance Agreements that we have entered into in the last two decades. Two, Income Tax rates must be increased. The share of the Central Government in collection from Income Tax was ₹2.8 lakh crore in 2019-20. This must be increased to ₹4 lakh crore in 2021-22. Indeed, this will lead to reduction in demand from the better-off sections but much greater demand will be created from the common man by the dropping of helicopter money as I propose below. Three, GST rates must be reduced. The share of the Central Government in GST collections was ₹6.1 lakh crore in 2019-20. This must be reduced to ₹4 lakh crore in 2021-22. This will lead to lower prices of goods and rev up demand. Four, customs duties must be increased three times. The share of the Central Government in customs duties collection was ₹0.6 lakh crore in 2019-20. This must be increased to ₹2 lakh crore in 2021-

FOCUS ECONOMY

PRE-BUDGET MUSINGS



When domestic demand can be generated by increase in taxes and dropping of helicopter money; why try to do the same by borrowing and pushing us into a debt trap?

22. This will provide a big boost to domestic production by providing them protection from cheap imports. Five, Central Excise Duties must be increased by about 67 per cent. These are collected mainly on petroleum products. The Central Government collected ₹2.5 lakh crore in 2019-20 from these duties. This must be increased to ₹4 lakh crore in 2021-22. This increase will lead to higher price of petroleum products, reduced demand and lesser dependence on imports. That, in turn will lead to less pressure on us to export. Once again, the loss to the common man from higher price of petroleum products will be many times compensated by the helicopter money. Six, fiscal deficit may be reduced from the 7 per cent-plus expected in 2020-21 and restricted to 3.8 per cent of GDP as it was in 2019-20. That will provide ₹7.6 lakh crore from borrowings. The total budget of the Central Government was ₹27 lakh crore in 2019-20. This will increase

to ₹30 lakh crore due to increased receipts from taxes suggested above after compensating for reduced receipts from GST. On the expenditure side, the first suggestion is that the allocations for defense must be increased. The Central Government spent ₹4.4 lakh crore on defense in 2019-20. This must be increased to ₹7 lakh crore in 2021-22 in view of the China threat. Two, allocations for technology and communications must be increased manifold. The Central Government spent ₹0.3 lakh crore each on these heads in 2019-20. This must be increased five times for both the heads in 2021-22. These sectors will lay the foundations of our future technological progress and this must be done pronto. Three, allocation for Home Ministry at ₹1.4 lakh crore must be maintained since law and order is a fundamental requirement of a stable economy. Four, allocation for Health Ministry at ₹0.6 lakh crore must be maintained. However, there is a need to

change the composition of expenditures within the Ministry. The expenditures on Central Government Health Services and similar schemes that provide health care to individuals must be scrapped entirely and the beneficiaries must be asked to pay in full for the services. The money saved may be diverted for research in control of Covid-19 pandemic. Five, expenditures on infrastructure must be temporarily reduced and expenditures on welfare schemes like Public Distribution System, MNREGA and education that provide welfare services to the people directly must be entirely scrapped. The Central Government spent ₹20 lakh crore on these Ministries in 2019-20. This must be reduced to ₹10 lakh crore in 2021-22. The abovementioned expenditures will require ₹22 lakh crore leaving a balance of ₹8 lakh crore out of the total revenue of ₹30 lakh crore. This money should be transferred as ‘helicopter money’ into the bank accounts of the 140 crore of our citizens providing ₹500 per person per month to all the people. This transfer will more than nullify the loss from the dismantling of the welfare schemes and increased burden from increase in petroleum prices. This transfer will immediately generate a huge demand for goods in the market. Coupled with the increase in import duties this will lead to higher domestic production. The expenditures on infrastructure such as highways can be restored after one or two years once the economy is back in motion.

We are in a crisis period. The Finance Minister should not increase expenditures on capital-intensive infrastructure schemes by borrowing ever larger amounts. That will impose a higher interest burden and throttle the economy. When domestic demand can be generated by increase in taxes and dropping of helicopter money; why try to do the same by borrowing and pushing us into a debt trap?

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM BREXIT & INDIA

Contours of business to change



Shivaji Sarkar

THE EU AND THE UK TOGETHER GIVE ABOUT \$30 BILLION IT BUSINESS TO INDIA

The exit of Britain from the European Union -- Brexit -- is likely to impact India, businesses based in the UK, IT exports and possible market and currency volatility leading to inflationary pressure on the Indian economy.

Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan had said that “We are in the midst of an age of competitive devaluation and beggar-thy-neighbour policy. When elephants fight, the grass suffers.” India therefore has a real concern. Britain is considered a gateway to the EU for it, but with Brexit, the advantage by India is lost. Therefore, there is a need to get border-free access.

According to experts, while Brexit paves way for a free trade agreement (FTA) between New Delhi and London, it might take the sheen away from India’s planned FTA with the EU. India had a lot of contentious issues while negotiating FTA with the EU. The FTAs have their problems too and there are experts who are not in favour of more FTAs. In the new situation a fresh FTA process, and that is cumbersome, may have to be started with the UK. However, now

the UK could have a different view. Brexit may have an impact on the decisions of Indian companies to invest in the future. India’s IT sector exports 17 per cent of its services, about \$30 billion, to the UK. The EU and the UK together give about \$30 billion IT business to India.

Over 800 companies from the country employing 1.1 lakh persons have set up bases there for easy access to the EU market. Their overheads and tax payment burdens now may increase. A NASSCOM report says, “Indian IT industry is going to experience a negative influence in the short term due to Brexit.”

The deal announced on New Year eve means that about half of the \$900 yearly EU-UK commerce will remain free of tariffs and quotas. However, goods moving between the EU and UK will be subject to customs and other controls and additional paperwork. It would add to cost and is expected to have other major disruptions.

The idea that India could have a better relationship with the US to make up for the losses is far-fetched because Trump may be on the exit, but Trumpism - protectionist approach - is likely to con-

tinue with the new US President Joe Biden.

There is another aspect too. India is the third largest source of FDI to the UK in terms of number of projects. So far, India has been investing more in the UK than in the rest of Europe. The key sectors attracting Indian investment include healthcare, agri-tech, food, and drinks.

So the question is whether the UK would be able to ignore India. Or would India for a wider EU area be focusing on moving out of Britain to have greater access to larger economies in the EU. The pattern of the way India is doing business in the region can change. There is a perception that the UK would have to strive harder in the post-COVID-19 market to maintain its strength. In other words, it can become a smaller economy and not as beneficial to India or rest of the world as it may be perceived now. India is cautiously watching.

Tata Motors’ losses have been mounting as Jaguar lost about \$4.6 billion and the company sacked 4500 workers, it was reported on January 30, 2020, that is pre-pandemic. In August, 2020 it reported JLR lost 413 million pounds till

June due to COVID-19 as sales were down 70 per cent. Tatas also lost Pound 371 million in the UK’s largest steelworks at Port Talbot. Lakshmi Mittal lost Pound 35 billion and became bankrupt with Pound 130 million debts in October 2020.

Therefore, India-related businesses are in a tizzy in the UK pre and post COVID. In 2019, 56 per cent of the UK companies were upbeat about doing business in India, the UK-India Business Council stated. Post COVID despite the enthusiasm, most of these companies are not in a position to continue with their efforts for now. Interestingly, the UK is among the top countries with which India enjoys a trade surplus.

If businesses shift from the UK to Europe, it could be a major loss to Britain. Brexit is changing the scenario in many ways, more so as there is weak global growth and the Eurozone heads for recession. India gradually would be changing its trade contours in the West and may reduce ties with the UK and increase with Germany, France and other EU countries. Right strategy is critical.

Another flying coffin

Sir, Yet another Boeing aeroplane has ended as a flying coffin after a Sriwijaya aircraft carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members plunged into the sea north of Jakarta, Indonesia. The Boeing 737-500 disappeared from the radar four minutes after taking off from Pontianak, the West Kalimantan province’s capital. While our hearts go out to the passengers, crew, and their families, the authorities would do well to determine what caused the tragedy.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Governor vs government

Sir, Perhaps there is something in the seat of power that compels the Governors to behave in a specific way against the ‘interests’ of the state governments. Former Chief Justice of India P Sathasivam, who served as Kerala’s Governor for five years was in the eye of the storm on more than one occasion. Sathasivam’s successor, Arif Mohammad Khan has demonstrated that he is no less than his predecessor when it comes to taking on the state government. Khan objected to convening of the special session of Kerala Assembly to discuss the contentious farmers’ issue. Although he later agreed upon a revised request of the state government, his demeanour is definitely a sign of things to come. Governors have always been a subject of ferocious debate among the media, public and politicians so much so there were suggestions in some quarters to abolish the Governor’s post all-together though that sounded too radical a proposition. The Justice ₹Sarkaria Commission had stressed on the Centre taking the State Chief Minister into confidence before assigning somebody the Governor’s post and underscored the importance of “personal rapport” between the Chief Minister and the Governor. Both Sathasivam and Khan were apparently annoyed with the state for not ‘consulting’ them before arriving at important decisions but there is no clause in the Constitution that speaks about ‘consultation’. It does not require an expert to spell out what’s there, and what not, to men like Sathasivam and Khan. Clearly, these learned individuals did not want to be ignored or, in other words, they suffer from a ‘superiority complex’. Indubitably, Governors are seen to toe the line of their appointers when they try to use their discretionary powers or take on the state governments.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Fadnavis, Thackeray's security reduced

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 10: The Maharashtra government has reduced the security cover of former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and his family, former UP governor Ram Naik and MNS president Raj Thackeray, and withdrawn the security cover of state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil.

State BJP spokesman Keshav Upadhye termed the action unfortunate and a 'vendetta' of the ruling coalition against his party's leaders.

Fadnavis, who is at present leader of opposition in the state Assembly, alleged that the government was now giving security 'on the basis of politics', and that this would not impact his plans to travel and meet people.

However, state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh rejected the opposition BJP's charge and said the security of political leaders was reviewed as per the prevailing threat perception.

As per a government notification issued on January 8, Fadnavis



will now get 'Y-plus security with escort', instead of the 'Z-plus' cover. The security of his wife Amruta Fadnavis and daughter Divija has been downgraded from 'Y-plus with escort' to 'X' category.

Former Uttar Pradesh governor Ram Naik will now get 'Y' cover instead of 'Y-plus'.

MNS chief Raj Thackeray's security cover has been downgraded from 'Z' to 'Y plus with escort'.

The security covers of BJP leader

and former CM Narayan Rane, state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil and senior party leader Sudhir Mungantiwar have been withdrawn. Rane had 'Y-plus' security.

Besides, the security of state Lokayukta M L Tahiliani has been downgraded from 'Z' to 'Y'.

According to sources, the 'Z-plus' security comprises a bullet-proof car, a police inspector, two assistant police inspectors, two police sub-inspectors, two escort vehicles with

POLITICS HEATS UP

State BJP spokesman Keshav Upadhye termed the action unfortunate and a 'vendetta' of the ruling coalition against his party's leaders

State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh rejected the opposition BJP's charge and said the security of political leaders was reviewed as per the prevailing threat perception

six constables in each, and 10 other constables at any given point of time, while the 'Z' category has a security cover of 22 personnel.

The 'Y' category comprises a security cover of 11 personnel, while the 'X' category has a security cover of two personnel, the sources said.

The government, as per the notification, has upgraded the security of two persons, downgraded of 11, withdrawn of 16, while 13 new peo-

ple have got security cover.

Prominent among the new persons to get security are Sunetra Pawar, wife of state Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, and Varun Sardesai, secretary of the Yuva Sena and nephew of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's wife Rashmi Thackeray.

Both have been given 'X' security cover.

Union minister Ramdas Athawale will get only 'Y-plus' security instead of the 'Y-plus with escort', while central minister Raosaheb Danve's 'Y-plus' cover has been withdrawn.

The government has also withdrawn the security cover of former minister Rajkumar Badole, BJP MLAs Prasad Lad and Ram Kadam, and former speaker and BJP MLA Haribhau Bagade.

The state has also withdrawn the 'X' category security of former Mumbai Congress chief Kripashankar Singh, who quit the party, and BJP's former minister Shobhatai Fadnavis, an aunt of Devendra Fadnavis.

7-month pregnant rape survivor dies

The father of the girl, who was mentally unsound, said the family came to know about their daughter being six-month pregnant December 6



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bareilly, Jan 10: A 15-year-old rape survivor who was seven months pregnant died of pregnancy-related complications at the district hospital here, police said Sunday.

She was admitted to the hospital on Saturday night and passed away Thursday night, they said.

Senior Superintendent of the hospital Dr Subodh Sharma said the girl was brought to the hospital in serious condition and her health deteriorated further.

Despite best efforts by the doctors, she could not be saved, he added.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Bareilly, Rohit Singh Sajwan said, "The post-mortem report says that the death took place due to infection."

"The viscera of the girl has been preserved," he added.

The father of the girl, who was mentally unsound, said the family came to know about their daughter being six-month pregnant on December 6.

He said she was raped allegedly by a 30-year-old man in a sugarcane field in June last year when she had gone out of

The girl's father had sought permission from the district administration to abort her baby but the permission was denied

the house for some work. The accused had threatened her that he will kill her family members if she revealed the incident to them.

The victim's father filed a complaint at Fatehganj West police station regarding the rape of his daughter on December 4, following which a case under the POCSO Act and the IPC was registered against the accused, police said. The accused was arrested on December 6, they added.

Station House Officer of Fatehganj West police station Ashwani Kumar said a charge-sheet has been filed in the case.

The girl's father had sought permission from the district administration to abort her baby but the permission was denied as doctors cited the pregnancy was of many days and a police case was on.

'Period room' for women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, Jan 10: In a bid to ease the woes during menstruation of women residing in congested slums and to provide them hygienic sanitary facilities, a 'period room' has been set up at a public toilet in Maharashtra's Thane city.

Claimed to be the first-of-its-kind initiative at a public toilet, the facility is equipped with a urinal, jet spray, toilet roll holder, soap, running water and a dustbin, a civic official told PTI Sunday.

The much needed facility, set up by the Thane Municipal Corporation in collaboration with an NGO, was opened for women at a slum in Shanti Nagar locality of Wagle Estate area last Monday, he said.

Painted on the outer wall of the toilet block are colourful pictures

with messages advocating good hygiene, including during menstruation.

"This ₹45,000 low-cost facility will be replicated in all 120 community toilets in the city," the official said.

He said women living in small houses, which do not have a separate bathing section, many a times find it difficult to change during periods. This facility will be a boon for such women and

go a long way in promoting good hygiene, the official said.

There are no public toilets for women in most of the localities and this facility will help provide them some relief, he said.

The initiative indicates that slums are undergoing a revamp, with facilities like schools, health clinics and good toilets being set up there, the official said.

AMUSEMENT AMID ANGUISH



Farmers organise a wrestling competition during their protest against the new farm laws, at the Ghazipur border in New Delhi, Sunday

HOSPITAL FIRE SAFETY NORMS WERE IGNORED: EXPERT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Jan 10: A day after a blaze at a hospital in Bhandara killed 10 infants, National Fire Service College Director Ramesh Kumar said fire safety standards were being ignored in sensitive establishments, including hospitals, and the issue requires a lot of attention.

Talking to PTI Sunday, Kumar said advance fire safety equipment are needed to be installed in all buildings and they have to be then properly maintained by trained staff.

Three fire engineers from the National Fire Service College, a Nagpur-based autonomous body managed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, are part of the team conducting a probe into the fire in a hospital at Bhandara in Maharashtra, he said.

"We would be emphasising on fire safety angles and how useful the safety equipment were and whether



they were working or not, and whether the safety audit of the hospital took place or not," Kumar said.

He said the Centre as well as the Maharashtra government have laid down stringent fire safety norms.

"The Maharashtra government has also passed an Act that these norms should be followed, be it private or government buildings. But, these factors are being ignored by people. These factors need a lot of attention," he said.

"Advance fire safety equipment should be installed in all buildings, like hospitals, which are sensitive, and multi-storey buildings, where there is always a danger of collateral damage in case of a fire, and there should also be periodic inspections," the official said.

In most places, even if the fire safety equipment are installed, they are generally not functional. Even if they are functional, people are not trained to use it, he said.

CM MEETS VICTIMS' KIN

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Sunday met kin of the newborns who died in a fire at the Bhandara district hospital the day before and said orders have been issued for conducting safety audit of all hospitals in the state. Ten of the 17 infants, aged between one month and three months, died in the blaze erupted at the Special Newborn Care Unit of the four-storey state-run hospital here in east Maharashtra. Thackeray said the probe will ascertain if the fire was an accident or was the fallout of ignoring an earlier safety report. The CM also informed that orders have been issued to check if there have been any incidents of ignoring safety norms at hospitals.

AGENCIES

Lucknow, Jan 10: The Uttar Pradesh government approved a slew of measures as part of its Excise Policy 2021-2022 in a cabinet meeting headed by CM Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow which are expected to bring about a fall in the prices of alcohol in the state.

The prices of wine, beverages with low alcoholic content and foreign liquor is expected to fall with the UP government reducing the Covid cess imposed on liquor vends. Prices of alcohol are set to get cheaper in Uttar Pradesh as the state government announced a cut on excise duty Saturday.

The Uttar Pradesh government approved a slew of measures as part of its Excise Policy 2021-2022 in a cabinet meeting headed by CM Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. In a bid to boost alcohol production in the state, the UP government an-



nounced that the excise duty on beer will be slashed from 280% to nearly 200%.

The shelf life of beer will be 9 months as per the new UP excise policy. "To provide good quality liquor at economic prices, UP Made Liquor (in Tetra-pack and of 42.8 per cent strength only) made from Grain ENA, shall be sold at an MRP of ₹85 through country liquor shops," the UP government said in a statement.

Apart from this, the prices of

wine, beverages with low alcoholic content and foreign liquor are also expected to fall with the government reducing the Covid cess imposed on liquor vends. Premium retail vends shall be permitted at airports. Wine tasting facility and sale of drinking accessories shall be allowed at premium retail vends.

To promote the production of wine within the state, wine made out of locally produced fruits shall be exempted from excise duty for a period of five years, the government said. Vintners shall be allowed the retail sale of wine. Wine Taverns shall also be allowed in its premises, the policy added.

To promote ease of doing business, brand registration, label approval, bar and micro-brewery licences will have the option to be renewed up to 3 years instead of requiring approvals every year, the New Excise Policy said.

'BMC needs 2 commissioners'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 10: Maharashtra Textiles Minister Aslam Shaikh has demanded two municipal commissioners for Mumbai to facilitate better development of the metropolis and provision of basic amenities to the people.

Shaikh, who is also the guardian minister of Mumbai city in a video posted on his Twitter handle Saturday, said he has made the demand on the lines of the prevailing system of separate collectors for the island city and suburbs.

Considering the growing population and expanse of the city and suburbs, having two commissioners will make it easier to provide basic amenities like water, footpath, gardens sewage facilities and other development urgently.

At present, it is not possible for one commissioner to address all these issues urgently, the Congress leader said, adding that he had held a meeting with the urban de-



velopment department and a decision is expected soon.

There should be two civic commissioners - one for the island city and one for suburbs. This will help maintain both geographical and population balance, said Shaikh, who is the MLA from Mumbai's Malvani constituency.

However, Maharashtra BJP MLA Atul Bhatkalkar hit back at Shaikh and accused the Congress of attempting to divide Mumbai.

The BJP will never allow such a proposal and will take to streets to oppose it. We demand that the Shiv Sena make its stand clear on this, he said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Jan 10: Following the confirmation of bird flu in samples collected from the Kanpur zoo, the Nawab Wajid Ali Shah Zoological Garden in Lucknow is opting for preventive measures and keeping a close watch on the birds kept in the bird enclosure, officials said on Sunday.

No case (of bird flu) has been reported here, yet we are taking all the preventive measures. The virus spreads from the excreta of migratory birds and our effort is to ensure that it does not come here, zoo Director RK Singh said.

Bottles containing a solution of potassium permanganate have been kept at the gates of the zoo so that the visitors enter the premises disinfected, he said.

We are maintaining a watch on the birds' enclosure. If any unusual behaviour is seen in any bird, it



will be taken to the isolation ward, Singh added.

In Bareilly, arrangements to provide drinking water to migratory birds have been shut and reflectors are being installed at the Central Avian Research Institute (CARI).

In order to ensure that migratory birds do not enter the CARI cam-

pus through the aerial route, reflectors are being installed on a war footing. The lower branches of the trees on the roadside have been cut, so that the birds do not drop their excreta on the road, Acting Director of the institute Sanjeev Kumar said.

The Centre on Saturday said the

BIRD FLU SCARE

The Centre Saturday said the outbreak of bird flu or avian influenza has been reported in Uttar Pradesh, taking the number of affected states in the country to seven

Besides Uttar Pradesh, the other six states where bird flu has been confirmed are Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat

outbreak of bird flu or avian influenza has been reported in Uttar Pradesh, taking the number of affected states in the country to seven.

Besides Uttar Pradesh, the other six states where bird flu has been confirmed are Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath directed officials on Friday to remain alert in view of the bird-flu cases reported from various parts of the country.

He asked the officials to relieve the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in Bareilly of all responsibilities relating to COVID-19 so that it can concentrate on bird flu and its testing, an official release said.

Holding a review meeting with senior officials, the chief minister pointed out that every year in winter, migratory birds arrive in large numbers in Allahabad, where the Magh Mela is also organised.

Thus, there is a need to take extra precautions in view of the bird-flu scare, he said.

The chief minister directed the Prayagraj Mela Pradhikaran to make people aware of the matter and also asked the mela authority to publicise that pilgrims should not feed the birds.

of the day quote

The voice of reason and love can never be suppressed for long. In the end, democracy and the spirit of our Constitution shall prevail



TEHEEN POONAWALLA | ACTIVIST

This is the first time that different opposition parties are unitedly demanding that the government should withdraw the farm laws. The government did not discuss the laws with farmers or any state government before enacting these



SACHIN PILOT | FORMER RAJASTHAN DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

No atrocity has been recorded against the SC and ST communities in Assam in 2020 and for which, the efforts of the state government under the leadership of (CM) Sarbananda Sonowal should be applauded



RAMDAS ATHAWALE | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Robbers target jewellery shop

Ulhasnagar (Maharashtra): At least three shop staff, including the owner, were injured when a gang of four opened fire in a daring daylight heist at a jewellery shop in Ambarnath town in Thane district Sunday afternoon, police said. The four persons, who came on two motorcycles, looted the prominent jewellery shop, decamping with 250 gms of gold articles worth around Rs 13 lakh. Deputy Commissioner of Police Prashant Mohite said that the incident occurred around 1.45 p.m. when the four entered the shop and engaged the sales staff in small talk and asked to be shown some jewellery for purchase.

Bomb-making items seized

Gondia: Gunpowder, nails, glass, wire and other explosive-making materials were seized Sunday afternoon from a Naxal hideout in Bharnoli forest in Arjuni Morgaon tehsil of Gondia, police said. The operation was carried out by a joint team of local police, C-60 commandos and Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad personnel. Additional Superintendent of Police Atul Kulkarni said.

Skeletal remains found

Thane: The skeleton of a 7-year-old boy who went missing from Bhiwandi in Thane district in November last year was found in the water tank of a building close to his home, police said Sunday. The remains were found Saturday by boys after a cricket ball fell into the tank while they were playing, an official said.

Body found in suitcase

Hyderabad: A missing auto-rickshaw driver was Sunday found killed and his body stuffed in a suitcase on the roadside here, police said. A police patrol team found the man's body which bore injuries in the head at around 3.30 am on Aramghar-Mehdipatnam road in the early hours, they said. A case of murder had been registered, police said adding further investigations were on. The deceased was suspected to be involved in a theft case and had been reported missing since Friday by his wife.



Arvind Kejriwal was always the sneaky little fellow of AAP but it's surprising that his other party leaders are also following suit and spreading a web of lies to deceive the farmers of Punjab

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

NO 'ACTIVE' FOREST FIRE NOW IN DZUKOU

As no active fire was noticed in Nagaland's Dzukou range on Sunday, operations will be scaled down but the situation will be constantly monitored, a forest officer said.



Farmers' unrest continues

HUNDREDS OF PROTESTING FARMERS INDULGED IN VANDALISM AND VIOLENCE AT A 'KISAN MAHAPANCHAYAT' EVENT JUST AHEAD OF THE ARRIVAL OF HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR, FORCING AUTHORITIES TO CANCEL THE EVENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karnal (Har), Jan 10: Protesting farmers here on Sunday vandalised the venue of a "kisan mahapanchayat" where Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar was to address people to highlight "benefits" of the Centre's three agriculture laws.

The Haryana Police used water cannons and lobbed teargas shells to prevent farmers from marching towards Kaimla village, where the programme was to be held. The farmers, however, reached the venue and damaged a makeshift helipad where Khattar's chopper was to land despite elaborate security arrangements made by police. Some protesters also uprooted its tiles.

They damaged the programme stage, breaking chairs, tables and flower pots at the venue. Police personnel were also pelted with stones and had to run for cover. They also tore BJP hoardings and uprooted banners in the presence of police. Under the banner of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni), farmers had earlier announced to oppose the "kisan mahapanchayat".

Later in the evening, Khattar accused BKU (Charuni) president Gurnam Singh Charuni, the Congress and Communists for "in-



stigating" people. Police had made elaborate security arrangements for the chief minister's visit to the village where he was to speak to people to highlight "benefits" of the new farm laws.

Director General of Police (Crime) Muhammad Akil was also present at the spot. The protesting farmers earlier carried black flags and shouted slogans against the BJP-led state government as they attempted to march towards Kaimla village.

Police put up barricades at the entry points of the village to prevent them from reaching the programme venue. However, the farmers crossed the barricade put up at Gharaunda on the Kaimla road. Police had also parked several trucks carrying sand at one of the roads to prevent them

from entering Kaimla village. Karnal Superintendent of Police Ganga Ram Punia also tried to pacify the agitators, but in vain. "All farmers are here to whom the CM 'sahib' intends to explain the farm laws. We will not allow the government to hold this programme," a protester said.

The farmers criticised the state government, saying it was holding a programme over the laws at a time when farmers across the country protesting against these. The government is trying to rub salt into our wounds with this "kisan mahapanchayat", another protester added. Some local villagers and BJP workers also had a face-off with the protesters when they reached the venue.

Police also resorted to mild cane

charge to disperse them. Addressing the media in Chandigarh, Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar said he gave directions to land his chopper in Karnal keeping in mind the law and order situation.

He held the Congress and Communists responsible for this incident, saying such "andhergardi" is not acceptable. "If anybody is involved in this agitation, it is the Congress and Communists," he claimed. Khattar said some farmer leaders who had assured not to disrupt the event backtracked from their promise. "I want to state that there is a strong democracy in the country and everybody has the right to put forth his point," he said. He said those who were behind the act have defamed the farming community. "Our farmers do not involve in such things," he said. The CM said whatever he wanted to say to people in the "kisan mahapanchayat" was said by party leaders who were present there.

To a question, Khattar denied that there was any intelligence failure behind this incident. Reacting to the incident, Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the government should avoid confrontation with farmers.

"Farmers have certain apprehensions over the new farm Acts.

The government should rather repeal these Acts as desired by farmers and avoid confrontation with them by holding functions like the mahapanchayat," he said. The former CM reiterated his demand of convening a session of the state assembly. "This government has lost the faith of its legislators and people. The Congress wants to bring a no-confidence motion against the Khattar government," he said. Haryana Congress chief Kumari Selja said the mahapanchayat convened by Khattar did not get support from people.

"The government has lost the trust of people," she said. AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said the proposed mahapanchayat was a "government sponsored" event which has been shown "its true picture" by the protesters. Meanwhile, a purported video of BKU leader Gurnam Singh Charuni, making an appeal to end the arrogance of the CM by not allowing him to address the mahapanchayat, circulated on social media. On January 6, the BKU (Charuni) had threatened to oppose the "kisan mahapanchayat". Besides addressing the programme, the Haryana CM was also supposed to announce development works worth Rs 47 crore for Karnal.

'Co-WIN to be foundation of vaccination drive'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: The Centre Sunday said Co-WIN, an online platform for monitoring COVID-19 vaccine delivery, shall form the foundation for the anti-coronavirus inoculation drive which shall be citizen-centric so that the vaccine is available anytime and anywhere.

India will launch its COVID-19 vaccination drive from January 16 in what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called the world's largest inoculation programme with priority to be given to nearly three crore healthcare and frontline workers. As part of preparations for the nationwide rollout of COVID-19 vaccine, the Health Ministry Sunday held a video conference with officials from states and Union Territories.

The meeting was chaired by Ram Sewak Sharma, the chairman of Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management to combat COVID-19 and member of National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of COVID-19. Giving an overall view of the CoWIN software and the principles that shall underpin the technology backup for the vaccination exercise, he said robust, dependable and agile technology shall form both the foundation and the back-up for the vaccination drive.

SC to hear pleas on farm laws, ongoing agitation today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: Amid a deadlock in the government's negotiations with protesting farmer unions, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a clutch of pleas challenging the new farm laws as well as the ones raising issues related to the ongoing agitation at Delhi borders.

The eighth round of talks between the Centre and the farmer unions January 7 appeared heading nowhere as the Centre ruled out repealing the contentious laws while the farmer leaders said they are ready to fight till death and their 'ghar waapsi' will happen only after 'law waapsi'. The Monday hearing on the pleas by a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde assumes significance as the Centre and the farmer leaders are scheduled to hold their next meeting on January 15. The top court, which had observed that there is no improvement on the ground regarding farmers' protests, was told by the Centre on the last date of hearing that "healthy discussions" were going on between the government and the unions over all the issues and there was good chance that both sides may come to a conclusion in the near future. The court had then assured the government of an adjourn-



ment January 11 provided it urges so saying that the settlement through talks was a possibility. "We understand the situation and encourage the consultation. We can adjourn the matters on Monday (January 11) if you submit the same due to the ongoing consultation process," it had said.

After the eighth round of talks, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar had said no decision could be reached as the farmer leaders did not present alternatives to their demand for the repeal of the laws. On Saturday, a farmers' body, Consortium of Indian Farmers Associations (CIFA), moved the top court in support of the three laws and sought impleadment in the matter.

It said the laws are "beneficial" to farmers and will enable increased income and growth of agriculture. The apex court had earlier issued notice and sought the Centre's response on a batch of pleas against the three contentious farm laws - the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

Don't deploy officials with record of lapses, says EC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: Gearing up for elections in five states in the coming months, the EC has reminded these states not to assign any poll-related duty to officials who have been charged for any lapse in any election in the past.

In an advisory to the chief secretaries of Assam, Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the Election Commission (EC) has also said that officers against whom it had recommended disciplinary action in past and which is pending or has resulted in a penalty should also not be deployed for poll-related work.

The advisory, sent last month, said any officer, who is due to retire within the coming six months, should not be associated with any election-related duty.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry are coming to an end on different dates in May and June this year. Assembly elections are likely to take place sometime in April-May.

The poll watchdog also asked these states to ensure that officers directly connected with the conduct of elections are not posted in their home districts and those who have spent three years in a district in the last four years.

It is usual for the poll panel to issue such directions ahead of Lok Sabha or assembly polls to ensure that officials do not interfere in the election process in any way and the exercise remains free and fair.



Siberian migratory birds fly over river Ganga in Prayagraj

UNI PHOTO

'nCoV ICU patients at risk of acute brain dysfunction'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: COVID-19 patients admitted to intensive care in the early months of the pandemic experienced a higher burden of delirium and coma than is typically found in those hospitalised with acute respiratory failure, according to the largest study of its kind to date.

The research, published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine journal, tracked the incidence of delirium and coma in over 2,000 COVID-19 patients admitted before April 28, 2020, to 69 adult



intensive care units across 14 countries. According to the scientists, led by those at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in the US, the choice of sedative medications and curbs on family visitation played a role in increasing acute brain dysfunction for these patients. They said ICU delirium is associated with

higher medical costs and greater risk of death and long-term ICU-related dementia. Nearly 82 per cent of the patients in the study were comatose for a median of 10 days, and 55 per cent were delirious for a median of three days. The scientists noted that acute brain dysfunction lasted for an average of 12 days. "This is double what is seen in non-COVID ICU patients," said study co-author Brenda Pun from VUMC. The scientists believe COVID-19 could predispose patients to a higher burden of acute brain dysfunction.

COVID-19 IMPACT

MoE suggests door-to-door survey to enroll students

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: The Education Ministry has asked the states to conduct a door-to-door survey to identify out-of-school children and prepare an action plan for their enrolment as part of efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on migrants, according to officials.

The ministry has also recommended relaxing detention norms to prevent drop-outs this year as well as a slew of measures to address learning loss due to the coronavirus-induced shutdown of schools. The move is particularly aimed at identification, admission and continued education of migrant children who have been affected during the

pandemic, they said.

"In order to mitigate the impact of challenges thrown by the COVID-19 pandemic for out of school children, it was felt necessary for every state and UT to devise a proper strategy for preventing increased dropouts, lower enrolments, loss of learning and deterioration in the gains made in providing universal access, quality and equity in the recent years," a senior ministry official said.

"The states and UTs have been advised to carry out proper identification of Out-of-School Children (OoSC) for 6 to 18 years age group through a comprehensive door-to-door survey and prepare an action plan for their enrolment," the official added.



The ministry has also issued guidelines for offering support to students during the closure of schools and when they reopen.

"To ensure that school-going children have access to education with quality and equity and to minimize the impact of the pandemic on

school education across the country, the Ministry of Education has prepared and issued detailed guidelines on steps to be taken by the States and UTs during school closure and when the schools reopen," the official said. Exploring the option of classroom-on-wheels and classes in small groups at the village level, increasing the access of children to online and digital resources, use of TV and radio to reduce learning losses and ensuring easy and timely access to the provisions of uniforms, textbooks and mid-day meals are among the recommendations made by the ministry for student support during the closure of schools.

Similarly, the guidelines for student support when schools reopen after prolonged closure include

preparation and running of school readiness modules and bridge course for the initial period so that they can adjust to the school environment and do not feel stressed or left-out.

Identifying students across different grades based on their learning levels and relaxing detention norms to prevent drop out this year have also been recommended.

The ministry has also suggested encouraging children to read books beyond the syllabus and indulge in creative writing and problem solving for ensuring reading with comprehension and numeracy skills. Large-scale remedial programmes and learning enhancement programmes should be held to mitigate learning loss and inequality, it recommended.

of the day quote

Deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the unfortunate plane crash in Indonesia. India stands with Indonesia in this hour of grief



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

In order to enable the students to attend the online classes, the government has decided to give free data cards with usage capacity of 2 GB per day between January to April



K. PALANISWAMI | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

I promise you as Gujarat Chief Minister that all will certainly get vaccination as per priority arrangement. We should keep patience and trust



VIJAY RUPANI | GUJARAT CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Major tragedy averted in Poonch

Jammu: A major tragedy was averted with the timely detection of a 2.4 kg Improvised Explosive Device (IED) fitted on a motorcycle in Mendhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, a police officer said Sunday. The IED was found planted on the roadside along Gohlad Reelan-Mendhar Road by a police party around 10 pm Saturday and was destroyed in a controlled explosion by the bomb disposal squad around 1 pm Sunday, Poonch Senior Superintendent of Police Ramesh Angral said.

Pak violates ceasefire

Jammu: Pakistani troops violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked mortar shelling and firing on forward posts and villages in different sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua districts of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. However, there was no immediate report of any damage on the Indian side, they said.

16 injured in road mishap

Udhampur/Jammu: At least 16 pilgrims, hailing from Delhi, were injured when a mini-bus enroute to the famous Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine skidded off the road and fell into a 15-foot deep ditch in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said Sunday. The accident took place near Chenani late Saturday night when the vehicle was returning from snow-bound Patnitop hill resort, the officials said.

AMU student shot dead

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh): A student of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has been shot dead, police said Sunday. The deceased Atif, a second-year BA student, was returning home on a two-wheeler with his friend late on Saturday night in the Quarsi police circle area, when the assailants opened fire. Atif fell down at the spot while his friend Zaid escaped with the Scooty.

Man kills self

Ambala (Haryana): A 55-year-old woman, who had recently contested the Municipal Council election in Haryana's Ambala city, was shot dead by a man who also killed himself later Sunday, police said.



I am happy to inform that our government is making arrangements for reaching the vaccine to all people of the state free of any charge
MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CHIEF MINISTER

FOG AND FROST AFFECT NORMAL LIFE IN J&K

Fog and frost Sunday affected the pedestrian and vehicular movement in Jammu and Kashmir as the weather office said there would be improvement as the day advances



BIRD FLU SCARE

Centre asks states, UTs to increase surveillance

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 10: The Centre has directed states and union territories across the country to increase surveillance around water bodies, live bird markets, zoos, and poultry farms as well as strengthen biosecurity at poultry farms amid the bird flu scare.

The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a statement on Sunday that the states and UTs have been asked to increase public awareness and prevent the spread of misinformation on the avian influenza or bird flu.

The states and UTs have also been requested to ensure proper disposal of animal/bird carcasses, the statement added.

After the confirmation of avian influenza in samples taken from poultry from two farms in Panchkula district of Haryana, the state had deployed nine rapid response teams and undertaken control and containment operations at both the places, the Ministry added.

Samples of crows/wild birds had confirmed avian influenza (H5) in Surat district of Gujarat as well as Sirohi district in Rajasthan. Further, reports of unusual deaths of 86 crows and 2 egrets were received from Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh.

Reports of unusual mortality of wild birds was also received from Nahan, Bilaspur and Mandi in Himachal and the samples sent to



a designated laboratory for testing, the Ministry said.

Advisories have since been issued to the affected states to prevent further spread of the avian disease. So far, the disease has been confirmed from Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh. "The test reports of samples sent to the designated laboratory from Delhi and Maharashtra are still awaited. Further, no samples have been confirmed positive for avian flu in wild birds from Balod district in Chhattisgarh," it added. The control and containment operation has been completed in two affected districts of Kerala and post-operational surveillance programme guidelines issued to the southern state. The central teams formed to monitor the situation are visiting the affected areas across the country. One of the central teams visited Kerala on January 9 and is monitoring the epicentre

spots and also conducting epidemiological investigations. Another central team visited Himachal on January 10 and undertook a survey in the affected areas.

The Centre said test reports of samples from Delhi and Maharashtra, which have been sent to the designated laboratory, are still awaited. Control and containment have been completed in both the affected districts of Kerala. Post operational surveillance programme guidelines have been issued to the state. Meanwhile, the central teams formed for monitoring the situation in the affected areas of the country are visiting the affected sites. One of the central teams reached Kerala on January 9 and is presently monitoring the epicentre sites and conducting epidemiological investigation. Another central team reached Himachal Pradesh on January 10 and is undertaking survey in the affected areas.

India's disaster response force to get UN tag

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: India could soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country's federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardisation later this year, a top ranking official has said.

The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.

"Just like we have the Bureau of Indian Standards in the country, the UN agency INSARAG standardises disaster response teams across the world. It is an international gold standard," NDRF director general S N Pradhan told PTI in an interview. "We are very much in thick of it and hopefully we will get the standardisation in 2021."

He further explained the purpose of this categorisation that is

possessed by some of India's neighbours like China and Pakistan. "If there is a call from the UN to respond to some disaster you will be called upon...You will be an international response force," Pradhan said. "It is not that we have not been doing that (going for international rescue operations) but when NDRF went to Japan and Nepal in the past it was a bilateral decision between two countries but with this standardisation it will be a UN mandated task," he said.

It will be a matter of great prestige for India that its force is known as an international response force, the DG said. The National Disaster Response Force was raised in 2006 to undertake specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and manmade disasters or life threatening situations. It has 12 operational battalions comprising more than 15,000 personnel based across the country at present while four more battalions are taking shape.

"In Chile and China, the UN has certified their provincial teams so that state teams can also travel across the world for disaster response operations," he said.



MATTER OF DAILY BREAD



A man collects palm sap from a palm tree in Mohanbhog village, Tripura

UNI PHOTO

Bird flu virus is heat-labile

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 10: Contrary to what some people think that the bird flu virus, also known as Avian influenza, is spread to humans via consumption of cooked poultry products, health experts Sunday stressed that it usually does not infect people as the virus is heat-labile (degraded and killed when subjected to heat).

Avian influenza refers to the disease caused by infection with avian (bird) influenza (flu) Type A viruses. These viruses occur naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect domestic poultry and other bird and animal species. According to the

World Health organisation (WHO), cooking of poultry (e.g. chicken, ducks and geese) at or above 70 degree Celsius so that absolutely no meat remains raw and red, is a safe measure to kill the virus in areas with outbreaks in poultry.

Richa Sareen, consultant (pulmonology) at Fortis Vasant Kunj in New Delhi, said the virus is heat-labile and it gets killed with cooking temperatures.

"At this time, people should eat fully cooked chicken and eggs and not raw or partially cooked ones. One should avoid going to open markets that sell poultry as they are the focal point of the spread," Sareen told IANS. "People who handle poultry should take special

precautions. They should wear PPE, gloves and masks while handling birds and should practice frequent hand washing," she added.

Although the virus causing bird flu usually does not infect people, but rare cases of human infection with these viruses have been reported, especially in individuals working with infected domestic birds. Bird Flu is a communicable virus among the avian population and human to human spread is not too prominent with the current strain. However, viruses are prone to mutation, so if this virus undergoes mutation in future, it has the potential to spread from human to human and cause a pandemic.

among others. Interestingly, it is Sitaram Yechury who invited Sharad Pawar to Delhi for talks late last month as he is the 'tallest leader among the opposition parties.' Yechury will talk to Rahul Gandhi with whom he has a wonderful chemistry and bring the like-minded together. Congress is riddled with dissensions and defections and the death of senior leader Ahmed Patel has created a vacuum in the political arena. The Congress doesn't have a leader of stature who can talk to all top political leaders of other parties. Now Yechury has taken up the task of uniting the opposition like his predecessor late Harkishan Singh Surjeet in the 90s. It was CPM late leader V P Singh, H D Deve Gowda and I K Gujral as Prime Ministers in the 90s. Yechury felt that the fundamental issue was that the opposition needs to be strengthened and all parties have

to be brought together. These parties had come together in the past and now coming together on the farmers' issue.

Govt on a sticky wicket

The government is 'ready' to give written assurance to farmers on Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their produce. But incorporating the same into the law is turning out to be a vex issue. Reason; of the 23 crops falling under the MSP regime, only wheat, rice and maize are procured at MSP rates. Even Wheat & rice is procured only 8-10% of the total production outside Punjab & Haryana by the Centre. Noted agriculture economist Ashok Gulati had put this figure to only 6% while it may be 30% plus in Punjab & Haryana. Therefore, there is a catch when Pushpendra Singh,

Rajini fans hold demonstration



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 10: Fans of actor Rajinikanth Sunday held a peaceful demonstration here Sunday, demanding their screen idol take a plunge into the Tamil Nadu politics.

The actor's fans held banners reading "Va Thalaivaa Va (Come Leader Come)", and "Ippo Illaina, Eppovum Illai (If Not Now, Never)" as they urged Rajinikanth to get into the state politics as he had announced earlier. The demonstration was held despite the request made by the Rajini Makkal Mandram not to go ahead with it.

On December 29, 2020, Rajinikanth announced his decision not to get into Tamil Nadu politics, citing Covid-19 pandemic as it would risk his health condition. His volte-face came a few days after he, earlier in December, sounded his poll bugle against the ruling AIADMK as well as against the major opposition party DMK.

"The time has come to change the fate of Tamil Nadu. Political and government change in the state is important. It will surely change. The political change is important and is compulsion of time. If not now, it is not possible ever. Everything has to be changed. We will change everything," he had said. The actor had said he would float his political party in January 2021 and an announcement in that regard will be made December 31, 2020.

However, a bout of illness forced him to change his plans. On December 31, 2017, Rajinikanth had announced his decision to float a political party to practice 'spiritual politics' and contest all 234 Assembly seats in Tamil Nadu in 2021.

SAILOR DIES BY 'SUICIDE' ON NAVY SHIP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Jan 10: A Navy sailor was found dead on board a warship here Sunday with a bullet injury, an official said.

Ramesh Choudhary (22) was posted on board INS Betwa, a Navy spokesperson said in a release. The sailor's service issue rifle was found next to him, the release said, but did not specify if it was suicide.



INS Betwa is a Brahmaputra-class guided missile frigate currently in service with the Indian Navy. The ship is named after the Betwa river. The sailor, who recently returned to the warship after leave, hailed from Jodhpur in Rajasthan and is survived by his parents and a younger sister, the release said.

The matter is under investigation by the police with the assistance of naval authorities, the release added.



Rumblings in 'parivar'

The six-term Gujrat MP Mansukh Vasava may have withdrawn his resignation from the BJP and also Lok Sabha after a lot of prodding by top leadership of the saffron leadership. But it did expose the rumblings in the 'parivar'. These rumblings rarely surface as the BJP has been keeping its affairs behind

the curtains. But Vasava fired the public salvo after he failed to persuade the PMO to withdraw the controversial notification by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) declaring 121 villages in Narmada district in Gujrat as part of eco-sensitive zone. He had extended his support to the movement by tribals on the issue. Since he came from Modi's home state, no minister or leader could dare interfere in the Gujrat affairs. An upset Vasava dropped the bombshell by quitting his Lok Sabha seat and all hell broke. It is learnt that the PM spoke to him and he withdrew the resignation within the next 36 hours. But this incident should be a wakeup call as it brings out chinks in the working of the government where nothing moves without the PMO. The BJP Rajya Sabha MP, Subramanian Swamy, has been bitterly attacking the government

on many issues. But he never attacked the PMO. However, he targeted the PMO for appointing someone as principal scientific adviser; Dr. Vijay Raghavan brought the Chinese Wuhan Bat virus project to Nagaland to experiment on the Bats without clearance. Soon instructions went that no party functionary should react to his statements. In another tweet, Swamy urged the prime minister to cancel the Republic Day parade this year in view of the pandemic.

Yechury pivot of Oppn unity

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury will renew efforts of uniting the opposition parties and speak to the Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi after his return from abroad. He will also speak to NCP chief Sharad Pawar



The Department of Health invests in understanding community concerns, and is developing information and communication to meet the needs of the community, including pregnant women and young families
GREG HUNT | HEALTH MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

LOW FLYING JETS SPREAD JITTERS

Israeli military jets carried out several low flying flights over Beirut as reconnaissance drones also buzzed overhead Sunday in what has become a daily occurrence. Israel regularly violates Lebanon airspace, often to carry out strikes in neighboring Syria



of the day quote

xxl think China and Vietnam, have shown that there's a way of dealing with a pandemic even in the absence of a vaccine, that will allow the economy to get back, at least close to normal operating capacity by learning how to deal with local outbreaks

HELGE BERGER | ASST DIR, APAC DEPARTMENT, IMF



I offer an affectionate greeting to the people of US, shaken by the recent siege of (Capitol) Congress. I pray for those who lost their lives, five (people), in those dramatic moments. Nothing is gained with violence but so much is lost

POPE FRANCIS | LEADER OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Over the last week we've vaccinated more people than in the entirety of December, so we're accelerating the roll-out

MATT HANCOCK | HEALTH SECY, BRITAIN



SHORT TAKES

Spain paralysed by snowstorm

Madrid: Emergency crews in central Spain cleared 500 roads and rescued over 1,500 people stranded in vehicles as the country slowly shovels out of its worst snowstorm in recent memory. Madrid's Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas International Airport remained closed Sunday as it has since Friday night. Train lines traversing the capital were also shut down and over 150 roads were still impassable. Storm Filomena has lost strength as it moved eastward but authorities are still urging people to remain at home.

Pak's Covid tally crosses 500,000

Islamabad: Pakistan's coronavirus tally Sunday crossed a half million cases after 2,899 new infections were detected in the last 24 hours, the health ministry said. 46 people died due to the virus, taking the total number of Covid-19 fatalities to 10,644, while another 2,278 patients are in critical condition, the Ministry of National Health Services said. With detection of 2,899 new cases, the total number of infections in the country reached 502,416, it said.

Ukraine grapples with Covid surge

Kiev: A medical college in western Ukraine has been transformed into a temporary hospital as the coronavirus inundates the Eastern European country. The foyer of the college in the city of Lviv holds 50 beds for Covid-19 patients, and 300 more are placed in lecture halls and auditoriums to accommodate the overflow of people seeking care at a packed emergency hospital nearby. The head of the hospital's therapy division, Marta Sayko, said the college space has doubled treatment capacity.

Night curfew implemented

Quebec City: A curfew meant to curb a surge in coronavirus infections took effect across Quebec Saturday evening. The measure is needed to prevent gatherings that have fueled the rampant spread of the virus, Premier Francois Legault said in announcing the rules earlier in the week. The French-speaking Canadian province has a population of more than 8.4 million.

'Prince Harry, Meghan quit social media for good'

The couple who had announced their decision to step back from official royal duties to relocate with their one-year-old son Archie last year will no longer use platforms like Twitter and Facebook

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 10: Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, have reportedly decided to quit social media as they focus on their roles in the US away from frontline British royalty.

According to 'The Sunday Times', the couple who had announced their decision to step back from official royal duties to relocate with their one-year-old son Archie last year will no longer use platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

The duo, who amassed more than 10 million Instagram followers as working royals, are reportedly rejecting social media as part of their new "progressive role" in America.



A source close to the couple told the newspaper they had "no plans" to use social media for their new Archewell Foundation and were

"very unlikely" to return to platforms in a personal capacity.

The couple is understood to have become disillusioned by the "hate"

they encountered on social media. Meghan Markle, a former actress, has spoken about the "almost unsurvivable" experience of online trolling. Before her marriage to Prince Harry in 2018, the 39-year-old had a prolific social media presence, with 1.9 million followers on Instagram, 350,000 Twitter followers and 800,000 likes on her Facebook page. She also had a lifestyle website and blog called The Tig and used the sites for her commercial fashion and beauty partnerships, to promote her friends' businesses, offer food and travel tips.

However, she had shut those down soon after she began dating the 36-year-old prince and the couple together created the @SussexRoyal

Instagram account. However, they stopped posting on the account as part of branding negotiations with the royal family after stepping down from official duties.

According to the newspaper report, instead of using social media, Harry and Meghan are poised to continue promoting their work in online video and television appearances, through selected publications and via their Archewell website, which they launched fully on New Year's Eve. They also have production and podcast deals in place with the streaming giants Netflix and Spotify. They are also expected to resume more frequent public appearances when the coronavirus pandemic eases.

Global Covid-19 caseload top 89.5mn: Johns Hopkins



AGENCIES

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 22,110,203 and 372,152 respectively

the country's death toll soared to 150,798.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed cases are Brazil (8,075,998), Russia (3,344,175), the UK (3,026,313), France (2,824,920), Turkey (2,317,118), Italy (2,257,866), Spain (2,050,360), Germany (1,914,335), Colombia (1,771,363), Argentina (1,714,409), Mexico (1,507,931), Poland (1,376,389), Iran (1,280,438), South Africa (1,214,176), Ukraine (1,144,943) and Peru (1,026,180), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of fatalities at 202,631.

The countries with a death toll above 20,000 are Mexico (132,069), the UK (81,000), Italy (78,394), France (67,734), Russia (60,523), Iran (56,100), Spain (51,874), Colombia (45,784), Argentina (44,417), Germany (40,221), Peru (38,049), South Africa (32,824), Poland (31,011), Indonesia (23,947), Turkey (22,631), and Ukraine (20,526).

Washington, Jan 10: The overall global coronavirus caseload has topped 89.5 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 1.92 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Sunday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 89,571,229 and 1,924,331, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 22,110,203 and 372,152, respectively, according to the CSSE.

India comes in second place in terms of cases at 10,431,639, while

Chinese media blasts latest Pompeo move on Taiwan

AGENCIES

Beijing, Jan 10: China's state media lashed out at the latest move on Taiwan by the departing Trump administration, accusing US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "seeking to maliciously inflict a long-lasting scar on China-US ties."

A writer for the official Xinhua News Agency said in a commentary Sunday that the lifting of longstanding restrictions on US government contacts with Taiwanese counterparts proves that Pompeo "is only interested in stoking unwarranted confrontations, and has no interest in world peace."

A commentary posted online by CGTN, the English-language channel of state broadcaster CCTV, called Pompeo's announcement "a cowardly act of sabotage" of the next US administration.

"The Trump administration, in its continuing efforts to burn the house down before leaving office, has crossed a dangerous red line with China days before incoming President Joe Biden takes office," the commentary read in part. Biden takes office January 20.



There was no immediate comment from the Chinese government on Pompeo's decision to end State Department restrictions on how US officials can interact with Taiwan, which he said had been implemented to appease the Communist regime in Beijing.

Taiwan is a sensitive issue for China's ruling Communist Party, which considers the self-governing island of 23.6 million people a renegade province that should be brought under its rule.

Under the one-China policy, the US recognises Beijing as the government of China and doesn't have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. However, it maintains unofficial contacts including a de facto embassy in Taipei, the capital, and supplies military equip-

Under the One China policy, the US recognises Beijing as the government of China and doesn't have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. However, it maintains unofficial contacts with Taiwan

ment for the island's defense. Taiwanese leaders welcomed Pompeo's announcement.

"We are expressing our gratitude toward the US for speaking out and supporting Taiwan," Premier Su Tseng-chang told reporters. "We also hope to interact actively with each other further, so that Taiwan could have an even bigger space in the international society."

He and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, who thanked Pompeo on Twitter, emphasized the values of freedom and democracy shared by Taiwan and the US — a contrast to China's authoritarian one-party state.

'No talks with India until autonomy restored in JK'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Jan 10: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said Sunday that no dialogue is possible with India until New Delhi restores the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Khan said this while responding to a question about any possibility of a dialogue with New Delhi during his interactions with the representatives of the digital media in Islamabad.

"No talks possible with India until they restore the autonomous status" of Jammu and Kashmir, he said. "We don't have adversarial relations with any country except India which is trying to destabilise Pakistan," he claimed.

Ties between India and Pakistan nosedived after a terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016 by terror groups based in Pakistan. Subsequent attacks, including one



on Indian Army camp in Uri, further deteriorated the relationship. The relationship further dipped after India's war planes pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp deep inside Pakistan on February 26, 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed.

Withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special powers and bifurcating the state into two union territories in August last year also evoked a strong reaction from Pakistan, which has been unsuccessfully trying to rally international support against India on the Kashmir issue.

Britain is 'gung ho' about world role after Brexit

AGENCIES

United Nations, Jan 10: Britain's new UN ambassador says the government is feeling "gung ho" about continuing its role as an important player on the world stage despite its exit from the European Union.

Barbara Woodward pointed to the United Kingdom's permanent seat on the powerful UN Security Council, its presidency this year of the Group of Seven major industrialized nations, its membership in the Group of 20 leading economic powers and NATO, and its hosting of the next United Nations global climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.

"Don't underestimate the power

of the relationship with the EU," she stressed in an interview with The Associated Press this past week.

"There's a lot of values and principles which we share with European partners which I think will stand us in good stead." Britain's long and sometimes contentious divorce from the EU became final December 31, a split that left the 27-member bloc without one of its major economic powers and the UK freer to chart its future but facing a world trying to confront a deadly pandemic and cope with rising unemployment, growing divisions between haves and have-nots, and a climate crisis. An article in the US-based World Politics Review in October identified three visions



for Britain's future: "Catastrophists who argue that the UK has become completely irrelevant on the international stage as a result of Brexit; the nostalgics, who see a powerful Britain through the lens of a great colonial power; and the

denialists, who refuse to accept that Britain must adapt to a changing global context."

Authors Ben Judah, a British-French journalist and author, and Georgina Wright, a Brexit researcher at the Institute for Government, a

Johnson is expected to visit India on R-Day, as part of a much-touted 'tilt to the Indo-Pacific'. Britain has also opened discussions to join the 11-nation TPP and is pushing to become a dialogue partner of the ASEAN

U.K. Think tank, said that since Britain voted to leave the EU in 2016 "it is undeniable that both British leadership and influence over global affairs have taken a hit."

"In international circles, it has be-

4 dead following shooting spree in Chicago area

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicago, Jan 10: A man killed three people and wounded four others in a series of shootings over roughly four hours that started on Chicago's South Side and ended with his death in a shootout with police in a parking lot just north of the city.



Investigators are trying to determine a motive for the attacks, which began Saturday afternoon with the killing of a 30-year-old University of Chicago student who was shot in the head while sitting in his car in a parking garage in the Hyde Park neighborhood, Chicago police Superintendent David Brown told reporters. He didn't release any of the victims' names.

The shooter, 32-year-old Jason Nightengale, then "just randomly" walked into an apartment building a block away, where he shot a 46-year-old security guard who was sitting at the desk and a 77-year-old woman who was getting her mail, Brown said. The guard was pronounced dead at a hospital and the older woman, who was shot in the head, was hospitalized in critical condition, the Chicago Tribune reported.

Power supply restored in Pak after blackout



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Jan 10: Power supply was restored fully or partially Sunday in many cities in Pakistan, including the national capital Islamabad, hours after several towns in the country plunged into darkness following a huge blackout due to a fault in the power distribution system.

The power outage was reported shortly before midnight almost simultaneously in many cities. Residents of Karachi, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Islamabad, Multan and others faced the blackout.

Pakistan Energy Minister Omar Ayub Khan said that technical teams were working to fully restore the power supply.

He said that electricity supply was restored fully or partially in many cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Karachi and Faisalabad but it would take some time before the restoration of normal supply.

Khan, along with Information Minister Shibli Faraz, told reporters that the power supply snapped at 11:41 pm Saturday after a technical fault at Guddu power plant in Sindh. "It had what we call a 'cascading effect' and shut down the power system, choking about 10,320MW of electricity," he said.

come fashionable to be overly dismissive of Britain's weight in world affairs," they said. "Yet the country continues to carry weight." Woodward, who came to the UN after more than five years as ambassador to China and previously served in Russia, agrees.

"We've had a pretty introspective three years with Brexit negotiations and managing Covid," she said, but with the upcoming climate summit and Britain's presidency of the G7 as the group grapples with economic recovery from the pandemic, "I think we've got quite a big role to play." She said PM Boris Johnson is "very keen on multilateralism."

of the day quote

Regarding steel and cement, this is really a problem for all of us. Actually, I feel this is a cartel by some big people are doing in cement and steel

NITIN GADKARI | UNION ROAD TRANSPORT MINISTER

Business has recovered drastically and we have been seeing growth since September. Given that we lost 3-4 months of business, we are aiming at clocking Rs 500 crore sales in the current fiscal

RAJ PATEL | DIRECTOR, ROYALE TOUCHE

We would like to believe that demand would carry forward in January as well. We have already introduced three new products and this gives us confidence that 2021 is going to be a better year in terms of sales than 2020

NAVEEN SONI | SENIOR VP (SALES AND SERVICE), TOYOTA AND KIRLOSKAR GROUP

SHORT TAKES

Apple, Amazon remove Parler

Washington: Technology giant Apple has suspended US-based microblogging platform Parler, where most of the supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump are shifting their base, from its Play Store, asserting that there is no place on its platform for threats of violence and illegal activity while e-commerce major Amazon also removed the social network favoured by conservative politicians.

PLUSS in talks with investors

Mumbai: Tata Capital-backed Pluss Advanced Technologies (PLUSS) is in discussions with investors from India and abroad for a second round of funding for research and development (R&D) of new products, a top company executive said. The Delhi-based company had last month announced designing and manufacturing of precise temperature controlled boxes for last-mile delivery of Covid-19 vaccines. India has already announced that it will launch its Covid-19 vaccination drive from January 16.

Exports show signs of revival: Official

New Delhi: The country's exports grew 16.22 per cent year-on-year to \$6.21 billion in the first week of January, mainly driven by healthy growth in pharmaceuticals, and engineering sectors, reflecting signs of revival, an official said Sunday. The exports during the first week of January last year were at \$5.34 billion. Imports during January 1-7 this year too increased by 1.07 per cent to \$8.7 billion as against \$8.6 billion in the same period of 2020, the official said.

CiC rises ₹3.23L cr

Mumbai: The Currency in Circulation (CiC) grew by around 13% in the first nine months of the current fiscal as people preferred holding on to cash as a precautionary measure amid the uncertainty caused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CiC grew by Rs 3,23,003 crore, or 13.2%, to Rs 27,70,315 crore as on January 1, 2021 from Rs 24,47,312 crore as on March 31, 2020, according to recent data released by the RBI. In the April-December period of FY2020, it had grown by nearly 6%.



Risk aversion has traditionally seen a flight to gold. This led to the sharp rally in 2020. But the correction in August has given some leeway for investors to accumulate

VIDYA BALA | CO-FOUNDER, PRIMEINVESTOR.IN

CREDAI SEEKS TAX SOPS

Realtors' apex body CREDAI has suggested the government to increase tax exemptions in the upcoming Budget to boost housing demand and enhance limit of deduction under section 80C of income tax for principal repayment on home loans



'CITIES KEY TO INDIA'S POST-PANDEMIC GROWTH'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: Cities have borne the maximum brunt of the COVID-19 outbreak but they will also be key to India's post-pandemic growth as they account for nearly 70 per cent of the country's GDP and an average of 25-30 people migrate to cities from rural areas every single minute, a new study has shown. The study by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF) said the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic has been catastrophic for cities. "According to estimates, about 70 per cent of India's GDP comes from its cities and around 25-30 people migrate to the cities from rural areas

every minute. However, most big cities in India have a wide economic disparity, with expansive slums and a large urban poor population," the WEF said.

The study further said that about 25 million households in India - 35 per cent of all urban households - cannot afford housing at market prices and it is time to create a new urban paradigm that enables cities to be healthier, more inclusive and more resilient.

The WEF report, titled Indian Cities in the Post-Pandemic World, highlights the country's most pressing urban challenges that were further exacerbated by the pandemic. The report also provides insights for



translating the lessons learned from the pandemic into an urban reform agenda. The impact of the pandemic has

been profoundly uneven on different population groups. Vulnerable populations, including low-income migrant workers, have suffered the

dual blows of lost income and weak social-protection coverage, while the pandemic has also laid bare gender-based imbalances in public and private life in India's urban areas, the WEF said.

The report, produced in collaboration with Mumbai-based IDFC Institute, compiles insights from leading global and Indian urban experts across seven thematic pillars - planning, housing, transport, environment, public health, gender and vulnerable populations.

Among other recommendations, the report underscores the critical role data can play in helping cities manage and direct emergency operations during a crisis.

"But data alone is not a panacea; realizing the potential of cities requires empowered and capable governance, investment in transport and infrastructure to fuel productive urban economies, and a rethink of outdated planning norms and regulations," the WEF said.

The wide-ranging recommendations compiled in the report include a rethink of outdated urban planning regulations, which will make cities more compact, commuter-friendly and green.

It also recommends greater decentralisation and empowerment of local governments, which will allow for more proximate and responsive governance.

'Economy heading towards V-shaped recovery in 2021'

AGENCIES

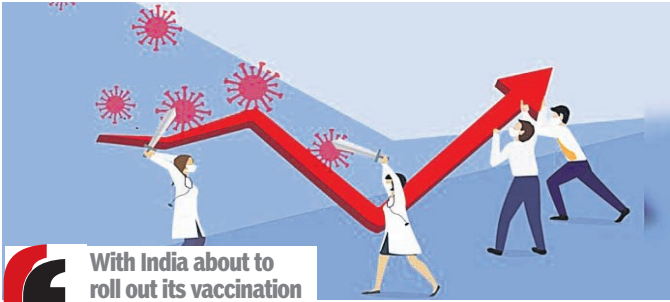
New Delhi, Jan 10: India's economy is showing decisive signs of a 'V-shaped' recovery in 2021 with the return of consumer confidence, robust financial markets, an uptick in manufacturing and exporters braving it out in the global market with never-say-die spirit, ASSOCHAM said Sunday.

The industry chamber said it expects immense accruals of economic benefits from the COVID-19 vaccination programme about to be rolled out.

"The high-frequency data is a strong pointer to a V-shaped recovery in 2021 with the seeds bursting into green shoots over the last two months of 2020 itself," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said.

India's GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during 2020-21 as the COVID-19 pandemic severely hit the key manufacturing and services segments, as per government projections released on Thursday.

"With India about to roll out its vaccination programme with approvals of the two vaccines, the accruals of the economic benefits would be significant, especially to



With India about to roll out its vaccination programme, the accruals of the economic benefits would be significant, especially to sectors such as hospitality, transportation, entertainment, which were hit hard during the pandemic

DEEPAK SOOD | SECRETARY GENERAL, ASSOCHAM

sectors such as hospitality, transportation, entertainment, which were hit hard during the pandemic," Sood said.

According to ASSOCHAM, the most definitive of the data is the record collection of Rs 1.15 lakh crore in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) during December.

"The state-wise collection showed the fightback spirit in consumer confidence. Illustratively, the largest

consumption state of Maharashtra, which was amongst the severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, has posted a healthy growth of seven per cent in GST collection; even as the total GST mop-up was up 12 per cent year-on-year," Sood said.

He said the Budget for 2021-22 would be a major catalyst. "Great focus on healthcare, agriculture and revival of demand would be imperatives in Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget".

The entire healthcare value chain from hospitals to medical education, primary health centres, scientific laboratories and further to the pharmaceutical industry along with the logistics is most likely to receive a booster shot of support from the forthcoming Budget, Sood added.

FMCG cos look to hike prices

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 10: Consumers may have to shell out more money for their daily use products as FMCG firms, which are facing inflationary pressure on their key raw material inputs, are considering marginal hike on their products price to offset it.

Some FMCG companies like Marico and others have already gone for price hike, while some which include Dabur, Parle and Patanjali are closely monitoring the situation.

FMCG players have been trying to absorb the price increase of raw material inputs such as coconut oil, edible oil and palm oil, but they are unlikely to hold the prices of their commodities for a long time

as that will impact their gross margins. "We have seen a significant rise in input cost and especially edible oil in the last three to four months and that is putting pressures on our margins and costs. As of now, we have not taken any price hike

but we are closely monitoring it and if it goes like this then probably, we may go for a price hike," Parle Products Senior Category Head Mayank Shah said.

According to him, these commodities are cyclic in nature. When asked about the price hike, Shah said: "It will be across products as edible oil is being used in all products. It would be at least 4 to 5 per cent."



CAIT asks govt to ban WhatsApp, Facebook over new privacy policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 10: Traders' body CAIT Sunday wrote to Information and Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad demanding that the government restrict WhatsApp from implementing its new privacy policy or impose a ban on the messaging app and its parent company Facebook.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) claimed that through the new privacy policy, "all kinds of personal data, payment transactions, contacts, location and other vital information of a person who is using WhatsApp will be acquired by it and can be used for any purpose by WhatsApp".



In the communication to Prasad, CAIT has demanded that "government should immediately restrict WhatsApp from implementing the new policy or put a ban on WhatsApp and its parent company Facebook", the traders' body stated.

CAIT said Facebook has more than 200 million users in India and enabling it to access data of every user can pose serious threat to not only the economy but even to the security of the country.

However, in an email response to PTI, a WhatsApp spokesperson

said, "To further increase transparency, we updated the privacy policy to describe that going forward businesses can choose to receive secure hosting services from our parent company Facebook to help manage their communications with their customers on WhatsApp.

"Though of course, it remains up to the user whether or not they want to message with a business on WhatsApp."

The spokesperson further said that the update does not change WhatsApp's data sharing practices with Facebook and does not impact how people communicate privately with friends or family wherever they are in the world.

China recovering faster than bigger economies: IMF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 10: China is recovering fast ahead of most large economies, but the recovery is still unbalanced and facing significant downside risks, the IMF has said, projecting an eight per cent growth rate for the world's second largest economy in 2021.

However, the main concern around the Chinese recovery that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has is the lack of balance, said Hlge Berger, Mission Chief for China and Assistant Director, Asia and Pacific Department of the IMF.

The recovery is still relying mostly on public support. Private investment has strengthened recently, but consumption is lagging. Growth rates and consumption recently have been higher, but the level of consumption compared to its pre-crisis trend is still rather low, he told reporters during a conference call Saturday on the publication of the 2020 China Article IV Staff Report.



"China is recovering fast ahead of most large economies, but the recovery is still unbalanced and facing significant downside risks. We are seeing growth at around 2 per cent in 2020 and around 8 per cent in 2021. December numbers have been surprising on the upside, so there are some upside risks to that

forecast," said Berger.

On the other hand, he said that there are significant downside risks. Domestically, there is a pandemic risk that is still around. Also, the external environment has generally become a little bit more difficult for China and its economic relations with other countries.

POST-COVID TIMES

Growth rates and consumption recently have been higher, but the level of consumption compared to its pre-crisis trend is still rather low

China's recovery is, however, unbalanced and facing significant downside risks

The external environment has generally become a bit more difficult for China and its economic relations with other countries

"This is a large reason for the fact that we think that there's still an output gap this year of 1.8 per cent. That's the difference between what the economy potentially can have in terms of GDP and what we are actually expecting in terms of demand. So that's where this lack of balance comes in, and this has important implications for the way macro policies should be conducted," Berger said. In the short term, he

said, the IMF does not withdraw macroeconomic policy support prematurely in China. And this is the advice that other countries are getting from the IMF, so this is a bit of a global concern, but it applies to China as well.

"The second implication of our analysis of the outlook and the risks around it is that we need to make sure that we adjust the composition of macroeconomic support away from investment towards household support. This will directly help consumption. This has implications, of course, for our policies to strengthen the social safety net," Berger said.

Noting that structural reforms have been progressing despite the pandemic which is quite an achievement in China, Berger said that this reform effort has been predominantly in the area of opening financial services to the outside world, and less so in the real sector. Real sector reforms, however, are important, he said.

'Include natural gas under GST to push for gas-based economy'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 10: The government should bring natural gas under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime to realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a gas-based economy and raising the share of the environment-friendly fuel in India's energy basket, the industry has said.

Natural gas is currently outside the ambit of GST, and existing legacy taxes - central excise duty, state VAT, central sales tax - continue to be applicable on the fuel.



"Non-inclusion of natural gas under GST regime is having adverse impact on its prices due to stranding of taxes in the hands of gas producers/suppliers and is also impacting natural gas-based industries due to stranding of legacy taxes paid on it," the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI) said.

In a pre-Budget memorandum to the Finance Ministry, FIPI, which boasts of members from across the oil and gas spectrum, said the value-added tax (VAT) rate on natural gas is very high in different states - 14.5 per cent in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, 15 per cent in Gujarat, 14 per cent in Madhya Pradesh.

"Since gas-based industries do not get the benefit of tax credit of VAT paid on purchases of natural gas, it is resulting in an increase in cost of production of such industrial consumers and would have an inflationary effect on the economy," it said.

MOHAMMED SIRAJ CALLED 'BROWN DOG, BIG MONKEY', CRICKET AUSTRALIA APOLOGISES

Racial abuse: 6 evicted from SCG

AGENCIES

Sydney/New Delhi, Jan 10: Indian cricketers, especially pacer Mohammed Siraj, endured racist slurs for a second successive day in the third Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) here Sunday. It caused a brief halt in the fourth day's play, expulsion of some spectators from the ground and an

all-round condemnation of the incidents.

Siraj is still grieving the death of his father a little over a month ago. He was called a 'Brown Dog' and 'Big Monkey' from the SCG stands, BCCI sources in New Delhi said.

The 26-year-old is on his maiden tour Down Under. He followed the protocol and promptly went up to his skipper Ajinkya Rahane and the on-field umpires. The umpires then halted play for about 10 minutes and called in the security, which evicted six people.

This was after the bowler and his senior pace partner Jasprit Bumrah were abused by a drunk man Saturday. The BCCI has already complained about it to ICC match referee David Boon.

Kohli slams Aussie fans

New Delhi: For Virat Kohli, it is 'absolute peak of rowdy behaviour' that few Australian fans hurled racial slurs at Mohammed Siraj during the third Test being played at Sydneey. He demanded stern action against the offenders. Kohli himself was at the receiving end of some of the choicest abuses during the 2011-12 Test series. "Racial abuse is absolutely unacceptable. Having gone through many incidents of really pathetic things said on the boundary lines, this is the absolute peak of rowdy behaviour. It's sad to see this happen on the field," Kohli, who is on a paternity break, tweeted.

SHORT TAKES

Hooda miffed

Mumbai: The Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) has sought a report from the manager of its senior team after experienced player Deepak Hooda stormed out of the preparatory camp for Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, alleging 'misbehaviour' by skipper Krunal Pandya. The national T20 tournament began Sunday with multiple matches across the country. Hooda had sent an email to the BCA. He wrote, "At this moment, I am demoralised, depressed and under pressure. My team captain Mr Krunal Pandya is using abusing language to me in front of my teammates and also other state teams," Hooda wrote. "I am being forced to leave the camp," he added. "We are waiting for the manager's report," BCA secretary Ajit Lele said Sunday.

Stunning upset

Abu Dhabi: Russian qualifier Anastasia Gasanova, who made her maiden WTA main draw appearance this week, could barely believe what she achieved Saturday after breezing past former World No. Karolina Pliskova in the second round here. Gasanova won her first-ever tour-level match in the opening round of the WTA 500 event here to set up the clash with Czech Pliskova. And then to her utter surprise Gasanova won 6-2, 6-4. Pliskova is currently ranked sixth in the world.

Impressive show

New Delhi: Tamil Nadu's C Kavi Rakshna and Rajasthan's Divyansh Singh Panwar won the women's and men's 10m Air Rifle events respectively at the National Shooting T2 trials here Sunday. Rakshna emerged on top in a quality field which included current World No.1 Elavenil Valarivan as well as Tokyo Olympics quota holders Apurvi Chandela and Anjum Moudgil, among others. She shot 251.4 in the finals to win the event ahead of Rajasthan's Nisha Kanwar (250.7).

They have been quite nasty and have been hurling abuses as well. But this time they have used racial abuses

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN

"As series hosts, we unreservedly apologise to our friends in the Indian cricket team. We assure them we will prosecute the matter to its fullest extent," said Sean Carroll, Cricket Australia's (CA) Head of Integrity and Security.

"Once those responsible are



A security personnel asks fans to leave for allegedly hurling racial abuses at Mohammed Siraj at the Sydney Cricket Ground during the India-Australia third Test, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

identified, CA will take the strongest measures possible under our Anti-Harassment Code. They will face lengthy bans, further sanctions and referral to NSW (New South Wales) Police," added Carroll.

In Dubai, the ICC also issued a statement, condemning the turn of events and seeking an action taken report from CA.

Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin articulated the Indian play-

ers' deep sense of hurt. He said that such an incident hasn't happened for the first time here. "Look, I would like to point out something. This is my fourth tour to Australia. Sydney, especially here, we have had a few experiences even in the past," Ashwin said. "I personally experienced it (racial slur) as well. They do tend to get nasty. I don't know why or for what reason," Ashwin added. He also

called for an iron fisted response to such diatribes.

Paine fined

Australia captain Tim Paine was fined 15 per cent of his match fee Sunday for showing dissent at an umpire's decision on day three of the third Test. He was found to have breached 'Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel', the ICC said in a release.

'NOTHING NEW DOWN UNDER'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 10: Former cricketers and BCCI officials did not mince words as the racial slur against Mohammed Siraj overshadowed the keenly-contested third Test between India and Australia being played at Sydney. Here's what they had to say.

Mohammad Azharuddin: Every time we play with Australia, something of this thing happens. It is becoming a regular affair. Nobody should tolerate all these things. The ICC should look



into the matter and quickly resolve this problem forever

Harbhajan Singh:

I personally have heard many things on the field while playing in Australia about me, my religion, my colour and much more. This isn't the first time the crowd is doing this nonsense. How do you stop them?



Justin Langer:

Sorry, it is upsetting and it is disappointing. ...It is one of my greatest pet hates in life that people can think they can come to a sporting event, whether it is cricket



or any kind and pay their money and think that they can abuse or do whatever they like. I have hated it as a player, I have hated it as a coach, we have seen in different parts of the world, it is really sad to see this happen in Australia.

Jay Shah (BCCI secretary):

Racism has no place in our great sport or in any walk of society. I've spoken to Cricket Australia and they have ensured strict action against the offenders. BCCI and Cricket Australia stand together. These acts of discrimination will not be tolerated at all.



EASY FOR BARCELONA, REAL MADRID HELD

Griezmann ends goal drought

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Jan 10: First it was Pedro 'Pedri' González shining with his assists. Then the injury-prone Dembele Ousmane earned a spot in the attack. Now the oft-maligned Antoine Griezmann is back to scoring goals. All in all, Barcelona are slowly showing signs this season might not be a wash after all. Griezmann scored a brace and set up Lionel Messi for one of the Argentine's two goals Saturday to lead Barcelona to a 4-0 win at Granada.

Barcelona's first three-match winning run in the La Liga under Ronald Koeman put them four points behind leader Atlético Madrid, whose home game scheduled for Saturday against Athletic Bilbao was postponed due to a blizzard.

"Our situation is still complicated, but the team are playing better. We have had three games on the road and won all," Koeman said. "We are more focused from the start of the games now, and when we are focused and move the ball with pace, there are few teams that can control us," he added.



BACK IN BUSINESS: Antoine Griezmann (hands up) celebrates after scoring against Granada in the La Liga game played Saturday

Second-placed Real Madrid was one point behind Atlético after being held at Osasuna to 0-0 in a match played in steady snowfall and with barely any scoring chances for either side. Atlético have three more games to play than their top title rivals.

Griezmann got Barcelona started with his first goal in nearly a month in the 12th minute when a pass by Sergio Busquets was deflected to him by a Granada defender. He then set up Messi to double the lead with a left-footed shot from the edge of the area in the 36th. Messi got his league

AUSSIES SET VICTORY TARGET OF 407 FOR MEN IN BLUE

India face tough task



MOMENT TO CHERISH: Australian players celebrate with bowler Josh Hazlewood after the dismissal of Shubman Gill at the SCG, Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 10: Cheteshwar Pujara (9 batting, 29 balls) was left to summon his trademark doggedness with skipper Ajinkya Rahane (four batting) after India lost their openers in pursuit of an improbable 407 at the Sydney Cricket Ground here Sunday. The Test is at an intriguing stage with the Australians firm favourites to take a 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

Pujara had faced flak for his 50 off 176 balls in the first innings. However, such is the situation that now such an effort is needed from the one-drop batsman after India finished the fourth day on 98 for two largely due to a 71-run opening stand between Rohit Sharma (52, 98b, 5x4, 1x6) and Shubman Gill (31). Rohit was unlucky picking out Mitchell Starc in the deep while pulling Pat Cummins. Gill on the other hand, fell to peach of a delivery from Josh Hazlewood.

It was after 53 years that an Indian opening pair had struck two 50 plus partnerships in the same Test Down Under. Last time also it was here where Farokh Engineer and Syed Abid Ali had a decent outing albeit in a lost cause.

A delectable chip shot coming down the track off Nathan Lyon helped Rohit bring up his half century but his dismissal in the next over left fans yearning for more.

As far as Australia are concerned, they hardly put a foot wrong during the two sessions that they batted. Steve Smith (81, 167b, 8x4, 1x6) missed out on a second hundred but

Scoreboard

Australia 1st innings: 338
India 1st innings: 244
Australia 2nd innings (overnight 166/2): Marnus Labuschagne c Saha b Navdeep Saini 73, Steve Smith lbw b Ashwin 81, Matthew Wade c Saha b Saini 4, Cameron Green c Saha b Bumrah 84, Tim Paine n o 39, Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-3) 8,
Total: 312/6 declared.
Fall: 1/16, 2/35, 3/138, 4/148, 5/208, 6/312
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 21-4-68-1, Mohammed Siraj 25-5-90-1, Navdeep Saini 16-2-54-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 25-1-95-2.
India 2nd innings: Rohit Sharma c Starc b Cummins 52, Shubman Gill c Paine b Hazlewood 31, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 9, Ajinkya Rahane batting 4, Extras: (lb-1, nb-1) 2,
Total: 98 for 2.
Fall: 1/71, 2/92.
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 6-0-27-0, Josh Hazlewood 8-3-11-1, Pat Cummins 9-1-25-1, Nathan Lyon 9-3-22-0, Cameron Green 2-0-12-0.

rookie Cameron Green (84, 132b, 8x4, 4x6) played a hapless Indian attack. The Aussies declared at the stroke of tea after putting on 312 for six wickets. It left the Indians to chase a victory target of 407.

Marnus Labuschagne (73, 118b, 9x4) once again batted positively during his second century partnership of the match (103 runs) with Smith. The butter-fingered Indian fielders also didn't help the bowlers' cause as Hanuma Vihari, Rohit and Rahane missed regulation catches at square leg, slip and gully.

Japanese people against hosting Tokyo Olympics

AGENCIES

Tokyo, Jan 10: About 80 per cent of people in Japan have said this year's Tokyo Olympics should be cancelled or delayed as worries mount about a record surge in coronavirus cases across the country, a 'Kyodo News' poll showed Sunday. The survey found 35.3 per cent want the Games to be cancelled and 44.8 per cent favoured another delay. The world's biggest multi-sports event, postponed last year due to the pandemic, is scheduled to be held from July 23-Aug. 8 in the Japanese capital.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared a state of emergency for the greater Tokyo region Thursday and could extend the measure to other areas as Japan struggles to contain a surge in infections. Suga has come under fire for his handling of the pandemic and his support rate has tumbled since he took office in September. About 79 per cent of the people asserted that it is high time for Suga to announce the postponement or cancellation of the Olympics.

Lions tame Cheetas with ease

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 10: Odisha Lions beat Odisha Cheetas by 22 runs in a match of the MGM T20 cricket tournament played at the Barabati Stadium here Sunday. Batting first, the Lions scored 133 for the loss of six wickets in their 20 overs and then restricted the opposition to 111 for nine to win the game by a comfortable margin.

Swastik Samal (40) and Subhrajyoti Mishra (30) gave the Lions a good start putting up 71 runs for the opening wicket, but others could not capitalise. Abhishek Rout (2/21) turned out to be the best bowler for the Cheetas.

None of the batsmen of the Odisha Cheetas got going against some steady bowling by the Lions. Badal Bhoi (22) top scored for them. Nauttam Bhanja (2/26) and Bikash Rout (2/13) were the best bowlers for the Lions.

Tournament for women

The Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) announced Sunday that it will organise a women's cricket league beginning January 15. OCA said in a press release that 90 players will be divided into six teams and the games will be played on a round robin basis. Fifty four of the women cricketers have represented the state either in the senior or junior format. The remaining 36 have been picked up through the talent search programme conducted by the OCA.

All the players will be kept in a bio-security bubble created at the KIIT campus. Matches will be played at various venues in the Odisha capital.

Matches will be played in both the ODI and T20 formats. While the ODI tourney will begin January 15, the T20 event will be played from January 22.