



INSTAGRAM ON FIRE

Actor Rashami Desai has set Instagram on fire with her hot pink bikini photoshoot in a swimming pool

LEISURE P2



HUNT FOR REBELS

The Ethiopian government launches a manhunt for leaders of a rebellious faction in northern Tigray

INTERNATIONAL P10



OZ WIN SERIES

Steve Smith hits ton as Australia beat India by 51 runs to win ODI series

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I think a vaccine with 70% success rate is pretty good. You see, I am doing a terrific job while I never scored more than 40%

SHORT TAKES

CoBRA officer killed in IED blast

Raipur: An officer of the CRPF's jungle warfare unit, CoBRA, was killed while nine commandos were injured after Maoists triggered an IED blast in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, security officials said. They said the improvised explosive device blast took place in the Chintalnar forest area of the district around 9 pm Saturday and the injured personnel were evacuated by a Mi-17 V5 helicopter of the IAF around midnight. Assistant Commandant Nitin Bhalerao, 33, succumbed to injuries suffered in the blast in the early hours of Sunday.

34 killed in Afghan suicide bombings

Kabul: Afghan officials said Sunday at least 34 people were killed in two separate suicide bombings that targeted a military base and a provincial chief. In eastern Ghazni province, officials said 31 soldiers were killed and 24 others wounded when the attacker drove a military humvee full of explosives onto an army commando base before detonating the car bomb. In southern Afghanistan, officials said a suicide car bomber targeted the convoy of a provincial council chief in Zubal, killing at least three people and wounding 12 others, including children.

Restricted zone in front of Assembly

Bhubaneswar: The Commissionerate Police Sunday restricted the plying of general vehicles and movement of pedestrians on the stretch from Jayadev Bhawan to Ravindra Mandap on Sachivalaya Marg. Police took the decision following repeated attempts of self-immolation before the Assembly building and nearby areas. Police will stop commuters coming from Jaydev Vihar near 120 Battalion and those coming from Acharya Vihar will be stopped at Keshari Talkies. The restrictions will be in effect only during Assembly sessions.

Delhi's air quality remains poor

New Delhi: Delhi's air quality remained "poor" Sunday and is likely to deteriorate further amid a dip in the mercury and the wind speed. The city's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) was 268. It was 231 Saturday, 137 Friday, 302 Thursday and 413 Wednesday. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". The maximum wind speed was eight kmph Sunday.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 31.0°C	31.6°C
	MIN 16.2°C	15.0°C
Humidity	86%	69%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog/mist in the morning	

BJD EXPELS MLA PRADEEP PANIGRAHI

A STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE BJD SUNDAY SAID THAT PANIGRAHI WAS GUILTY OF BEING INVOLVED IN 'ANTI-PEOPLE' ACTIVITIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Sunday expelled senior MLA and former minister Pradeep Panigrahi from the primary membership of the party for his 'anti-people activities'.

An official release issued by the BJD read, "Pradeep Panigrahi, Gopalpur MLA, is expelled from the primary membership of the party with immediate effect for his anti-people activities."

Panigrahi is the first leader of the regional party who has been expelled on charges of 'anti-people' activities, while many members in the past were removed from the BJD for their 'anti-party' activities.

The action against Panigrahi came after the Vigilance department established his alleged association with suspended Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash Kumar Pathak.

The father-son duo has been arrested and sent to jail in connection with a disproportionate asset case. Panigrahi had allegedly helped Pathak's son Akash to operate a job racket.

Pathak's son has been accused of cheating youths in Ganjam district by luring them with jobs in a reputed com-



I am not involved in any kind of anti-people activity. The party should clarify as to what kind of activities it is referring to and also present proof in this regard

PRADEEP PANIGRAHI | MLA

pany. The MLA allegedly helped Akash in the cheating case, sources said.

However, Panigrahi refuted the charges leveled against him, saying, "I am not involved in any kind of anti-people activities. The party should clarify as to what kind of activities it is referring to and also present proof in this regard." "I was pulled up for calling the Chief Minister to warn him about an attempt by some people who were planning to topple his government. In fact, many senior party leaders resent that they are not able to meet the CM directly," he alleged.

He also defended the suspended IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash Kumar Pathak saying that the bureaucrat is an efficient officer and if there is any proof supporting the al-

legations against the officer, it should be brought to the fore.

"Akash was working in Romania but returned to Odisha to look after his ailing mother. He had scored highest mark in GMAT in 2016 and was given employment by the Tata Group," he claimed. However, Panigrahi failed to provide any proof to substantiate his claims.

Citing another example, Panigrahi said that he spoke to the Chief Minister over telephone after Biswaranjan Mohanty (a BJD leader) apprised him about the possibility of toppling the state government.

"Following this incident, MLA Pranab Prakash (Bobby) Das and MP Achyuta Samanta came to my house and pulled me up for making a call to the Chief Minister. I had told them that if the party

doesn't need me, I will quit and leave the state also. If you have any allegation against me, please place the proof before me," he said.

"Bobby also told me, there is proof that I have met top BJP leaders. I told them, if you have any proof, please bring it to the fore," the legislator said.

"Later, they inquired about my daughter's marriage which was scheduled for December 11 and said let us see," alleged Panigrahi, adding, "The entire episode is to stop my daughter's marriage."

Pointing figure at state administrative system, the Gopalpur legislator said, "The administration is not being run by the Chief Secretary, who is supposed to be the head of bureaucracy in the state. But, only one person is calling the shots here."

Stating the leaders who founded the party are being sidelined, Panigrahi alleged that there is discontent among senior leaders in the BJD as they are not able to meet chief minister and party president Naveen Patnaik directly.

Meanwhile, BJD leader PK Deb said, "The party president has taken the decision and he must have some prima facie evidence against him (Panigrahi). If someone cheats people and collects money promising jobs, it will be treated as anti-people."

Defiant farmers reject talks offer

Farmers pledged to continue the blockade, rejecting the Centre's appeal to move to the Burari ground

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 29: Rejecting the Centre's offer to hold talks once they move to the Burari ground, agitating farmers who have been staying put at Delhi's borders for four days said Sunday they will not end the blockade and will continue their stir against the new farm laws.

The agriculture reforms have not only freed peasants from various shackles but also bestowed on them new rights and opportunities

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

S Phul, Bhartiya Kisan Union's Punjab president, told reporters.

"The condition put for talks is an insult to farmers. We will never go to Burari. It is not a park but an open jail," he added. After spending another night in the cold, thousands of farmers continued to protest against the Centre's new agril laws on the fourth consecutive day Sunday, staying put at the Singhu and Tikri border points.

"We do not accept the condition of their (govt) proposal. We are ready to talk but will not accept any condition now," said Gurnam Singh Chadhoni, Haryana unit president for the Bhartiya Kisan Union. Darshan Pal, Punjab president of Krantikari Kisan Union, said, "The government has invited us to talk with conditions. The environment should be created for a conversation. We will not talk if there are any conditions".

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had appealed to the farmers to shift to the Burari ground and had said the Centre was ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

A delegation of the farmers has been invited for a discussion December 3, he said, adding now that some of their unions have demanded that talks should be held immediately, the Central government is ready to do so as soon as the protesters shift to the ground in Burari.

GURU PARV EVE



View of illuminated Golden Temple on the eve of 551st birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, in Amritsar, Sunday PPTI/PHOTO

ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED SINE DIE BEFORE A MONTH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: The winter session of the state Assembly adjourned sine die Sunday, a month before the schedule conclusion of the session on December 31.

As per a notification issued by the Assembly secretariat, the session, which began November 20, was supposed to have 40 working days.

After the passing Appropriation Bill to authorizing the state government to spend ₹11,700-crore in addition to the annual Budget, government Chief Whip Pramilla Mallik brought a proposal for adjournment of the House for an indefinite period

stating there is no other official business for the session.

Mallik's proposal was supported by BJD legislator Amar Prasad Satpathy and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Bikram Keshari Aruk. Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro announced adjournment of the House for an indefinite period.

However, Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati opposed the motion while the BJP members staged a walkout of the House in protest and staged dharna near Mahatma Gandhi's statue.

Expressing displeasure of the government's move, Leader of Opposition Pradipta Naik said,

"The session was supposed to continue till December 31. Many problems faced by the people were to be discussed in the House during the month-long session. We will submit a memorandum to the Governor protesting against the adjournment of the session."

Bahinipati said there were lots of issues to be discussed and debate on adjournment notices are yet to be held. The state government did not take the Opposition into confidence on the proposal moved by the government Chief Whip. There is a need to run the House for a few more days to discuss many important issues, he stated.

'Covidshield' vax trial participant alleges neuro breakdown

SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA FILES ₹100-CRORE CASE AFTER MAN SAYS VACCINE LEFT HIM ILL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Nov 29: A 40-year-old man who took part in the 'Covidshield' vaccine trial here has alleged serious side effects, including a virtual neurological breakdown and impairment of cognitive functions and has sought ₹5 crore compensation in a legal notice to Serum Institute of India (SII) and others, besides seeking a halt to the trial.

Alleging that the candidate vaccine was not safe, he has also sought cancelling approval for its testing, manufacture and distribution, failing which legal action would be taken.

The legal notice has been sent to Pune-based SII, which has collaborated with Oxford University and Astra Zeneca, a pharmaceutical company, in connection with making of the vaccine, 'Covidshield'.

The Indian Council of Medical Research, one of the sponsors besides SII, and Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, which administered the vaccine to the man, have been served with the notice.

The man, it alleged, suffered acute encephalopathy, damage or disease that affects the brain, following vaccination and all tests confirmed that the setback in his health



was due to the test vaccine. The trauma he underwent after taking it 'clearly proves' that the vaccine was not safe as made out to

be and all the stakeholders were trying to hide the adverse effect that the vaccine has had on him, the notice claimed.

An electroencephalogram (EEG) test showed that the brain was affected partially (dysfunction involving both hemispheres and the ascending sensory pathways on both sides from both the lower extremities).

A psychiatric evaluation revealed mild deficit in verbal and visual memory functions and an under functioning in overall cognitive functions, it said.

"He has gone through extreme sufferings, both neurologically and psychologically. The vaccine had

led to a virtual neurological breakdown in him."

The notice said it is impossible to "quantify monetarily, the sufferings, trauma, pain and humiliation (of hands, legs and body being tied and fastened firmly to the bed), which he and his family have undergone and are likely to undergo for a long time to come". When contacted, a spokesperson for Ramachandra said, "We also have got the notice," but declined to elaborate.

According to the legal notice, the information provided in the 'Participant Information Sheet (PIS)' was absolutely certain that Covidshield, the vaccine developed

by Oxford University, is safe and the man was hence led to believe it.

Meanwhile, a report said the Serum Institute has responded to "malicious and misconceived" allegations by preparing a ₹100 crore defamation suit against the Covidshield coronavirus vaccine trial participant who claimed to suffer a "virtual neurological breakdown" after being administered a dose.

A report in NDTV quoted the Serum Institute as stating that while it sympathised with the volunteer's medical condition there was "absolutely no correlation with the vaccine trial and the medical condition of the volunteer".

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NINTH HIKE IN FUEL RATES IN 10 DAYS

AGENCIES

PRICES IN BHUB

Petrol ₹82.99 (+0.21)
Diesel ₹78.91 (+0.32)

New Delhi, Nov 29: Oil marketing companies continued to increase the prices of petrol and diesel Sunday. This marks the ninth hike in fuel rates in past 10 days. In Delhi, the price of petrol was revised to ₹82.34 per litre from ₹82.13 with effect from 6 am November 29, and that of diesel to ₹72.42 per litre from ₹72.13 per litre, according to notifications from Indian Oil Corporation.

Similarly, in Mumbai, petrol and diesel rates were raised to ₹89.02 per litre and ₹78.97 per litre, from ₹88.81 per litre and ₹78.66 per litre respectively.

Since November 20, oil

marketing companies Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum have raised domestic fuel prices on nine occasions, following a two-week hiatus. In Delhi, petrol rates have been raised by ₹1.28 per litre and diesel by ₹1.96 during this period.

The three state-run companies currently review the domestic petrol and diesel rates on a daily basis, and implement any changes to align them with global benchmarks with effect from 6am.

UP REGISTERS FIRST CASE UNDER 'LOVE JIHAD' LAW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Nov 29: Uttar Pradesh has registered its first case under the new anti-conversion law in Bareilly district based on a complaint from the father of a young woman.

The case was registered at the Devarniyan police station in Bareilly district Saturday, officials said.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said a case was registered by Tikaram, a resident of Sharif Nagar village under Devarniyan police station (in Bareilly), who accused a man - Uvaish Ahmed - of the same village of trying to convert his daughter through "allurement" (bahla-phislaakar).

The case was registered against Uvaish Ahmed under the IPC and the new anti-conversion law.

Senior Superintendent of Police Rohit Singh Sajwan said four police teams have been formed to arrest the accused.

According to the complaint, Tikaram's daughter and Ahmed studied together in Class 12.

Three years ago, the accused started exerting pressure on her to undergo religious conversion and perform 'nikaah' (marriage). But when the woman opposed, he threatened to kidnap her; Tikaram alleged. Tikaram got his daughter married to someone else in June this year. However, Ahmed continued to harass her family members, the complaint said.



VICTORIA BECKHAM HAS A RARE RED LIP MOMENT

Singer-turned-designer Victoria Beckham upped the temperature by sporting red lips in her latest photo. In her latest Instagram photo, she has opted for red lips to promote her make-up range, reports *dailymail.co.uk*.

ANNE HATHAWAY REVEALS HER LOCKDOWN CHALLENGE AS A MOM

Actress Anne Hathaway is also a mother, and the lockdown brought along a set of challenges for her. Hathaway has sons Jonathan and Jack with husband Adam Shulman, and she opened up about motherhood during an interview with a magazine, reports *dailymail.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
 You will desire absolute freedom in whatever you do today. A lot of entertainment is on the cards for teenagers, like window shopping or going for a movie. Kids may demand a treat from you.

TAURUS
 Your unflinching punctuality, your insistence on following time schedules is due to be noticed and appreciated today. Your colleagues and superiors will be singing praises as soon as you arrive for work.

GEMINI
 You will make a reputation for yourself as a leader in your social circle. You yearn for something in your heart, and need to concentrate your energies upon attaining it. Your creative mind will come up with solutions today, to certain questions that have been perplexing you for quite some, says Ganesha.

CANCER
 With Ganesha's grace, whatever you think or persevere will be successful. Students will excel and finish pending work. You can display your imagination excellently. In short, a day of happiness and variety.

LEO
 You will relentlessly try to find means to progress at the workplace today. You will remain steadfast in your resolutions. You will not allow those working under you to slack. You will need to let go of your inhibitions and fears to be happy in life.

VIRGO
 Emotions that have been locked in the inner recesses of your heart might just surface today. You may develop an emotional attachment with your material possessions. However, Ganesha says, if you don't find your surroundings conducive, you will feel extremely restless.

LIBRA
 Ganesha says today will be an auspicious day for starting any new work. In the office you will be assigned new positions and you shall excel in the same. Whatever work is undertaken by you will see you attain success in it. Today is a lucky day for you Ganesha says

SCORPIO
 Being a workaholic may divert your attention from your family and you may have to bear the consequences. It's time to sort differences with your spouse. But, all this while, you need to be calm and patient. Watch your words in case of any arguments, warns Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
 It's time for invitations and grooving all night long. And even eat like a glutton. But, for a change you are not on a mood to party, though it is unlike you. You reject the idea of socialising and hitting the dance floor. And your friends do not like your changed avatar, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
 Not everyday is the same day. And, today is one of those days when you feel extremely confused, feels Ganesha. While you won't be able to get rid of negative emotions, your hard work will be paid off and lay a strong foundation for future.

AQUARIUS
 Cooperative and supportive, your colleagues will help you improve your performance at work. Also, your creativity will win you praises from one and all, foretells Ganesha.

PISCES
 Today you will get attention from the opposite sex and this will play an important role in your success in the near future. Due to the favourable alignment of the planets you will receive more than your expectations.

TISCA OPENS UP ON HER DIRECTORIAL DEBUT

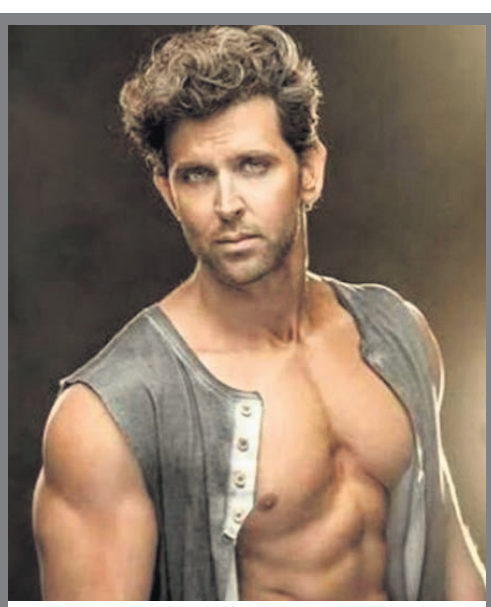
Mumbai: If you have stories to tell, then you have to make them yourself, feels actress-producer Tisca Chopra, who has tried her hand at film direction for the first time.

Tisca has made her debut as director with the short film *Rubaru*, which she has co-written with her husband, Captain Sanjay Chopra. The screenplay has been penned by Namrata Shenoy.

Talking about her debut directorial, Tisca said: "The film talks about a Bollywood actress who was very big once, but her career is now sort of slipping because there are younger and newer people on the block. The story shows how she is losing her confidence and what she does to bring herself back."

What prompted Tisca to try direction? The actress replied: "As an actor, you are always part of telling other people's stories. Somebody else has written it, somebody else has directed it, somebody else has produced it and you do your best to help fulfil their idea of the story with your imagination of the character."

I think, if you have stories to tell, then you have to make them yourself." **IANS**



Hrithik Roshan's beard chronicle

Mumbai: Actor Hrithik Roshan took to Instagram to share a last glimpse of his beard before shaving it off, and sent his fans in a state of excitement.

The actor shared a selfie featuring a tight close-up of his face. He looked straight into the camera in an intense manner, giving a glimpse of his grey and green eyes.

"Before the beard goes," he wrote with the picture, in which he posed shirtless.

The post delighted his fans, with many fans requesting him to not shave his beard. A user commented, "Nooooo," while another wrote, "Your selfies are no less than a photoshoot." Some were excited to see the transformation and complimented the actor on his good looks. One user wrote: "Closeup of the year."

Hrithik, who made his debut as a hero with the hit film *Kaho Na... Pyaar Hai*, completed 20 years in the industry in January this year. **IANS**

Rashami sizzles in hot pink bikini photoshoot

Mumbai: Television actress Rashami Desai on Sunday set Instagram on fire with her hot pink bikini photoshoot!

The actress shared photographs of herself where she can be seen standing in a swimming pool wearing a hot pink bikini underneath a white net dress. The photoshoot has been done in Lonavala.

Captioning the photographs, Rashami wrote that she wants to "go with the flow".

Commenting on her post, Rashami's fans showered her with love and admiration. On the work front, Rashami is all set to enter the digital world, and says her upcoming web project will help her break away from the regular television image. The actress plays the lead opposite

Tanuj Virwani in the web series *Tandoor*, an investigative thriller about a married couple whose lives take an unexpected turn after a murder.

Rashami also took to Instagram Sunday to share birthday wishes for her *Tandoor* co-star Tanuj Virwani. **IANS**



Pancham Veda's 15-day theatre workshop begins

BHUBANESWAR: Ranga Pancham, a 15-day state level production-oriented theatre workshop kicked off Sunday on the office premises of Pancham Veda, a prominent troupe of the city. The event is being organised by the troupe in collaboration with Eastern Zonal Cultural Council (EZCC), Kolkata.

Bhubaneswar Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena inaugurated the workshop. Among others, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi secretary Prabodh Rath, senior journalist Pradosh Pattanaik and theatre directors Dhirendranath Mallik, Bhaskar Chandra Mohapatra and Abhinna Routray attended the opening ceremony. Also

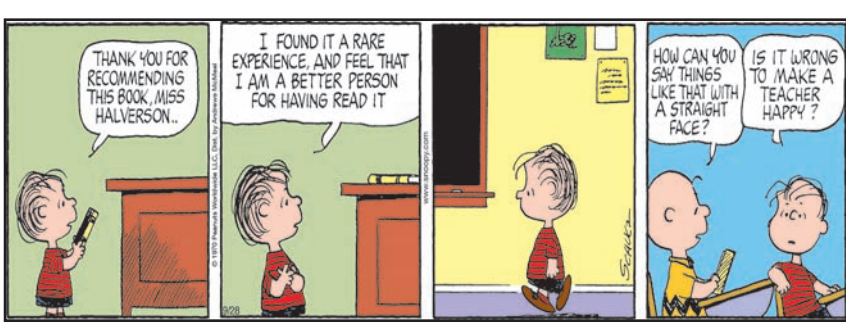


in attendance were city-based drama directors Prashanta Mohapatra, Bhajakrushna Mohanty and Kailash Mohapatra. As many as 15 students have en-

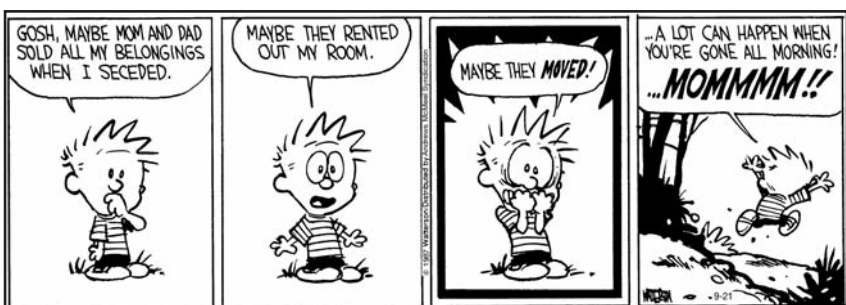
rolled their names to learn drama in the workshop which will be directed by renowned theatricalian Gajendra Nayak. Eminent dramatists, directors, actors and music directors have given their consent to attend the workshop, the organisers said and added that the participants will be issued certificates and a short play will be staged December 13, on the last day of the workshop.

The workshop could be conducted due to the cooperation by EZCC and it will certainly help create a pool of talents in the state, said Haren Sahoo, troupe's working president Haren Sahoo who also presided over the programme. Prakash Maharana, secretary, Pancham Veda, proposed a vote of thanks. **PNN**

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

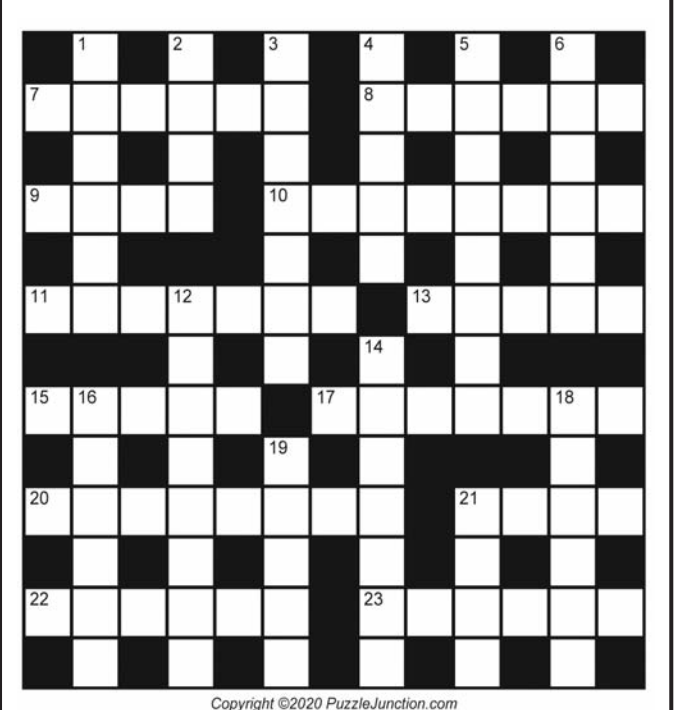


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Mouselike jumping rodent
 - 8 Do a slow burn
 - 9 Terrarium plant
 - 10 Driver's hope on ice
 - 11 In love
 - 13 Applying
 - 15 Forebodings
 - 17 Wine bottle sizes
 - 20 Social butterfly
 - 21 Ceremony
 - 22 Cavort
 - 23 Aare and Arno, e.g.
- Down**
- 1 Cash in, as a coupon
 - 2 Shade of black
 - 3 Palaces
 - 4 Academy Award
 - 5 Deep-six
 - 6 Hurler
 - 12 Squid's appendage
 - 14 Eagles and hawks, e.g.
 - 16 Stingy
 - 18 Ripe
 - 19 Flashlight
 - 21 Great review

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

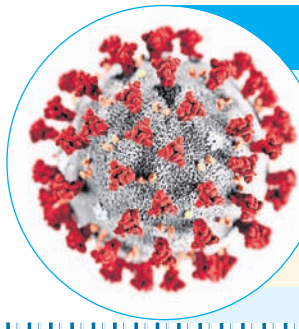
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



DECKED UP

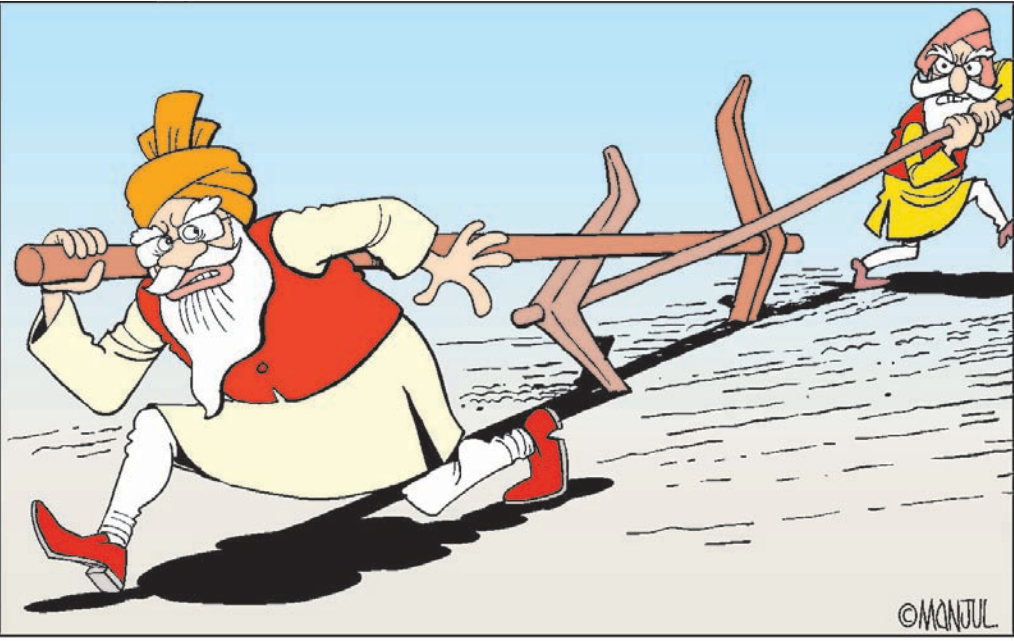
The road to an open-air theatre decorated with colourful lights for this year's Konark Festival, scheduled to be kick started December 1



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	6,27,41,363	4,33,52,008	14,61,092
India	93,35,462	87,43,161	1,35,992
Odisha	3,18,307	3,11,256	1,734

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



State PSUs to be 'target' oriented

The state has 36 PSUs and of these, 26 are profit-making, nine in loss and one reported no profit no loss

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: The state government Sunday informed the Assembly that it has been planning to set targets for the state-run Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to make them viable and profitable.

The response from the government came when a query was raised through an un-starred question. Responding to the query, Ashok Chandra Panda, Minister of State for Public Enterprises told the Assembly through a written statement about the steps taken by the government to improve the efficiency of the PSUs.

The minister said that the department has started signing memorandum of undertakings (MoUs)



We have planned rightsizing of manpower as per the requirement of the PSUs...Public Enterprises Selection Board is in place to select professionals from the open market in the top level managerial and Board level positions of the state PSUs

ASHOK CHANDRA PANDA | MINISTER OF STATE FOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

with the PSUs, with their administrative departments, with monitorable targets. Induction of strategic investors in the loss-making units for better functioning of the PSUs has also been planned, he added.

"We have planned rightsizing of manpower as per the requirement

of the PSUs by introducing Model Voluntary Retirement Scheme/Model Voluntary Separation Scheme for the State PSUs. In the process, the state is providing financial aid to the state PSUs to implement their voluntary retirement schemes, which should

be in line with the schemes of the state government," he said.

He also talked about implementation of corporate governance manual, pursuing clear policy framework by categorising state PSUs. He said that decision has also been taken to induct independent directors into the Board of Management of the state PSUs.

"Public Enterprises Selection Board is in place to select professionals from the open market in the top level managerial and Board level positions of the state PSUs for quality management," he said.

According to the minister, the state has a total of 36 government PSUs and of these, 26 are in profit, nine in loss and one reporting no profit no loss.

LORD'S SUNA BESHA TODAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Nov 29: Lord Jagannath and his siblings Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra would be adorned with the Suna Besha (golden attire) at the Ratnasinghasan (bejewelled throne) of Srimandir here on the occasion of Kartika Purnima, Monday.

As per the tradition, the deities would be decorated with several varieties of gold ornaments as part of the Suna Besha ritual, Srimandir sources said.

However, devotees would not be allowed to witness the golden attire of Srimandir deities as the shrine has been shut for people in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

"Devotees would not be allowed to enter into Srimandir and witness Lord's Suna Besha. However, they can have the glimpses of 'Patitapaban' or the image of Lord Jagannath at the Lions' Gate," said an official of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA). The district administration, meanwhile, urged people not to gather on the beach, riverbanks and at any of the holy ponds in the Pilgrim City to sail boats on the occasion of Kartika Purnima or the full moon day of Hindu month of Kartika.

Puri Sub-Collector Bhabataran Sahu urged people to celebrate the occasion at home in the wake of the pandemic. Earlier, the state government had imposed restrictions on the sailing of boats in the Puri sea and at the holy ponds of the city.

The district administration has deployed around 15 platoons of armed police personnel and 50 police officials to maintain law and order in the city and check people's congregation near water bodies.

BJP CONTINUES PROTEST ON PARI MURDER CASE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: Opposition BJP members continued their protest inside and outside the Assembly demanding dismissal of Agriculture Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo. They reiterated their demand for a CBI probe into the kidnapping and killing of a 5-year-old girl (Pari) in Nayagarh district.

During the morning session of the House, while some Saffron party members attempted to climb the Speaker's podium, Congress members said there is no point in disrupting the proceedings, after the state government announced a high court-monitored Special Investigation Team (SIT) for the case.

As BJP MLA Mohan Majhi was seen trying to climb atop the podium, Speaker SN Patro adjourned the

THE SAFFRON PARTY ALLEGES 'TACIT UNDERSTANDING' BETWEEN THE BJD AND CONG

proceedings first till 11.30 am and later till 3 pm. Similar scenes of chaos were witnessed when the House reassembled in post-lunch session. The House was then adjourned till 4 pm and later, the Speaker announced sine-die.

Putting black towels, agitating BJP members led by Leader of Opposition PK Naik staged a silent dharna near the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Assembly premises.

Accusing Congress of dancing to the tune of the ruling BJD in the

Assembly, Naik alleged that both the parties have a tacit understanding to bail each other out. He alleged that the Congress "suddenly" withdrew its agitation demanding resignation of the Agriculture minister as part of "a secret understanding" with the BJD. Naik, however, said his party will continue its agitation till the girl's family gets justice.

"As state government officials will be there in SIT, we don't have trust on such probe. Therefore, we are demanding CBI probe into the case," said BJP legislator Jay Narayan Mishra.

Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra said one should not think that a minister can influence an investigation if the probe was being monitored by the High Court. "Everybody should have faith in the judiciary," he said.

Potato at 50 & onion at 60; once necessity, now luxury

WITH THE HOLY MONTH OF KARTIK GOING ON, MANY RESIDENTS OF THE CAPITAL STICK TO VEGETARIAN DIET ONLY

AVIRAL MISHRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: With denizens sticking to vegetarian diet in the holy month of Kartik, prices of vegetables has been skyrocketing since the last two months. While the common man has been waiting for the inflation to cool down, the price increase seems to be far from over.

Take for instance, in September, potato was priced between Rs15 and 20 per kg but now it is being sold between Rs 45 and 50; registering about a 150 pc increase. Similarly, onion which was costing Rs 30-35 per kg has shot up by 50 pc and costs Rs60-65. Other vegetables such as Okra, Ladyfinger and Eggplant have also shown a similar increase.

"It is becoming immensely tough to make our monthly budget with rising prices," complained Shashi Kanti Behera, a homemaker here. "Prices of certain vegetables such as Puttol (Pointed Guard) are rising every week. Since its Kartik when we practice consumption of only vegetarian foods, the inflated prices are burning a hole in our pockets," she added.

Experts opine the inflation during Kartik month as 'normal' and said the inflation will cool down during first week of December. However, with state's heavy dependency on other states, no fall in prices is yet being observed and November is set to end. Consequently, this is said to have affect on small traders involved in the business.

"People have started limited their



FILE PHOTO

Potato at ₹50... You tell me, which is the basic item for a person maintaining vegetarian diet...Forget onion which has crossed the 60-mark! How would a middleclass man survive?

SHASHI KANTI BEHERA | HOMEMAKER

People are cutting on their consumption... We are unable to meet our daily sales targets too. With vegetables being perishable goods, either we are throwing away the unsold products or disposing them at throwaway prices

SUKANTI BEHERA | STREET VENDOR RASULGARH

buying. We would buy our usual quantity from the vegetable markets but our sales are getting hit, consequently, either we have to dispose them off or sell them at throwaway prices as they are perishable products," lamented Sukanti Behera, a street vendor at Rasulgarh.

While traders have blamed unseasonal rains in Odisha and other states as prime reason for rise in prices, Covid and poor monitoring of price check by authorities have

also been blamed for the continuous rise of vegetable rates.

"The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) is selling onions at unfair prices. While the market rate of onion is about Rs17,000 per quintal, it is being sold at Rs20,000. The state government is also ignoring such unfair practice," Sudhakar Panda, Secretary of Odisha Traders Association had earlier alleged.

'Missing' Ratnabhandar keys still a mystery

A judicial commission, constituted by the state govt to look into the issue, submitted its final report Nov 30, 2018

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Nov 29: The mystery with regard to the missing keys of Srimandir Ratnabhandar (treasure house) is yet to be solved even though two years have elapsed since the submission of a report by a judicial commission, constituted by the state government to look into the issue.

The judicial commission, headed by Orissa High Court retired judge Raghuraj Das, had submitted its 324-page final report on the missing keys to the state government November 30, 2018.

It is learnt that the state government had spent Rs 22, 27, 918 on the judicial panel to probe the missing key episode.

Many devotees and social activists, meanwhile, have expressed displeasure over the state government's failure to solve the issues related to the missing keys and take stock of the ornaments and precious items stored at the inner chamber of Ratnabhandar. They have also raised apprehensions on the safety of ornaments stored at the temple treasure house.

Servitors of the 12th century shrine usually open the outer chamber of the temple treasury quite a few times in a year to collect ornaments for the Suna Besha (golden attire) rituals of the presiding deities. However, the inner chamber of Ratnabhandar was opened for the last time in 1985, sources said. The Shree Jagannath Temple



THE STATE GOVT HAD FORMED A JUDICIAL COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO THE ISSUES RELATED TO THE MISSING KEYS JUNE 6, 2018

ORISSA HIGH COURT RETIRED JUDGE RAGHURAJ DAS WAS APPOINTED THE HEAD OF THE JUDICIAL COMMISSION

THE STATE GOVT SPENT ₹22,27,918 ON THE JUDICIAL PANEL

Managing Committee had deliberated on the structural status of the Ratnabhandar in a meeting March 20, 2018. Some members of the temple panel had raised issues related to the structural status of Ratnabhandar in the wake of major repair work at Srimandir Jagamohan.

The issue had also reached Orissa High Court. The court had directed the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) to examine the structural status of the temple treasury.

In accordance with the HC order,

a 16-member team of experts and senior government officials opened the Bahara (outer chamber) Ratnabhandar and examined its status April 4, 2018 after receiving the required permission from the state government.

However, the team did not open the inner chamber of Ratnabhandar but examined its status from outside. Later, it came to the fore that the keys to the inner chamber of Ratnabhandar were missing. The issue was raised at a meeting of the Srimandir managing committee May 28, 2018. The state government had formed

a judicial commission to look into the issues related to the missing keys June 6, 2018 after facing criticism from several quarters. The commission was told to submit its report within three months.

The SJTA, Puri district administration and some private individuals and organisations had submitted their affidavits to the judicial panel. In the meantime, the then Puri Collector Aravind Agrawal informed the media June 13, 2018 that 'duplicate' keys to the inner chamber of Ratnabhandar were found from an envelope at the district treasury. In this scenario, the state government had extended the tenure of the judicial panel till December 7, 2018.

Recently, Dillip Baral, a devotee, has written to the chairman of Srimandir Managing Committee seeking early inspection to the ornaments and precious items stored at the inner Ratnabhandar.

"The judicial panel had submitted its final report two years ago. But, the state government is yet to reveal anything on the missing keys. So, it is natural that apprehensions have been raised with regard to the safety of ornaments stored at the temple treasure house. To allay people's concern, the state government should take immediate steps to open the inner chamber of Ratnabhandar and take stock of the ornaments," said a social activist.

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Covid graph takes a dip

STATE REPORTS SINGLE DIGIT COVID-19 DEATHS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE SEPT 6

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: State's Covid-19 tally Sunday surged to 3,18,307 after 518 more people tested positive for the infection, while four fresh fatalities pushed Odisha's death toll to 1,734, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the 518 new cases, 297 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the remaining detected during contact tracing, the official said.

Sundargarh recorded the maximum number of fresh cases at 52, followed by Mayurbhanj at 49 and Cuttack at 45.

Taking to Twitter, the Health department said, "Regret to inform the demise of four Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Khurda district, of which



Bhubaneswar is a part, reported two fatalities and one each succumbed to the infection in Balasore and Dhenkanal.

Since September 6, this was the first time the coronavirus death toll in a day came down to a single digit, the official said.

The positivity rate stands at 5.43 per cent.

Over 58.63 lakh samples have been examined in the state, including 43,615 Saturday.

Meanwhile, another 707 Covid

IN NUGGETS

Sundargarh recorded the maximum number of fresh cases at 52, followed by Mayurbhanj at 49 and Cuttack at 45

Khurda reported two fatalities and one each succumbed to the infection in Balasore and Dhenkanal

Odisha's positivity rate stands at 5.43 per cent

Over 58.63 lakh samples have been examined in the state, including 43,615 Saturday

patients recovered, taking the total recoveries in Odisha to 3,11,256, the H&FW department tweeted.

The recovered cases include 65 from Cuttack, 65 from Khurda, 58 from Keonjhar, 48 from Mayurbhanj, 46 from Angul and 42 from Jagatsinghpur, the department said.

Probe ordered into murrum mining

This comes after residents of Parjang tehsil of Dhenkanal district approached the SEIAA seeking its intervention into the issue

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) has ordered an investigation into the allegations of illegal lifting and use of murrum in the construction of National Highway in Dhenkanal district.

This comes after the residents of Parjang tehsil of the district approached the government body seeking their intervention into the issue. The villagers raised the issue of unauthorised use of murrum by a private contractor in the area.

The SEIAA in its order said, "In inviting a reference to the subject, I am directed to inform you that complained petition received...in re-



FILE PHOTO

gard to illegal lifting of murrum/soil from various sources in Parjang Tahasil. The petitioner has alleged the violation of environment Protect Act, Forest Protection Act and EIA Notification 2006 and others."

"Therefore, you are requested to launch an enquiry into the matter and take appropriate action as per law and furnish action taken report to SEIAA positively," the order

of the body addressed to Dhenkanal district Collector said.

Earlier, a petition was filed by the villagers of affected areas to the SEIAA regarding rat hole mining of murrum illegally in the area for the construction of National Highway 53. It was said that the rat hole mining without considering the impact on the local environment has added to the woes of

The petitioner has alleged the violation of environment Protect Act, Forest Protection Act and EIA Notification 2006 and others

READS THE SEIAA ORDER

the villagers and endangered the local environment.

The villagers claimed that as murrum is a minor mineral, they cannot be lifted without approval from the SEIAA, an approved mining plan and consent from the State Pollution Control Board while lifting was also not allowed if the area was not mentioned in the District Survey Report.

The villagers had also informed the government body about lifting of murrum from areas near Sal trees, threatening the plant species and making those areas prone to soil erosion. It was alleged that the lifting of murrum was done without adequate approval and thus, qualified as blatant violations of the environment laws.

Five felicitated with Dharmapada award

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi felicitated five eminent personalities in the field of art with the prestigious Dharmapada Award for five years—2016 to 2020—at an event organised at Sanskruti Bhawan here, Sunday.

Eminent painter Mahendra Prasad Mahapatra received the honour for 2020 while noted pattachitra artist Binod Maharana was felicitated for 2019. Known painter Jagdish Chandra Kanungo received the prestigious award for 2018. Noted sculptor Shyam Sundar Patnaik, on the other hand, received the award for 2017, while renowned painter Banabihari Parida got the award for 2016. The Culture Minister handed over a cheque of Rs 5 lakh and a citation to each of the awardees.

Dharmapada Award is the highest honour given by Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi in the field of art,

sources said. Panigrahi also felicitated 25 eminent persons in the field of art for five years.

Rabinarayan Rath, Bijay Kumar Parida, Pravakar Moharana, Dinabandhu Mohapatra and Brundaban Moharana received the award for 2020. While Srinibas Padhiri, Laxmidhar Rana, Brajakishore Jena, Prasant Kumar Jena and Gouranga Barik were felicitated for 2019, Sidhar Moharana, Gokulananda Das, Tunendra Patnaik, Kalpataru Moharana and Ashok Kumar Moharana were awarded for 2018. Likewise, Radhashyam Bisoi, Debendra Das, Bannali Mohapatra, Lalit Mohan Patnaik and Dr Alekh Charan Sahoo were awarded for 2017, while Chandra Kumar Samantray, Sarat Chandra Mohanty, Basant Kumari Samant, Banchanidhi Patnaik and Jogesh Prasad Dani were honoured for 2016.

The Minister handed over a cheque of Rs 1 lakh and a citation to each of the awardees, sources added.

PANDEMIC AXE ON TRADE FAIR



Bali Yatra ground in Cuttack wears an empty look, Sunday, as the district administration has decided not to organise the annual trade fair in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic

OP PHOTO

8th edition of 'The Pride And Glory Of Bali-yatra'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: Though the pandemic has dented festive fervor and resulted to cancellations of many celebrations including Bali Yatra in Cuttack this year, 'Resource Indica: Roots & Revelations' will be celebrating the yatra through the eighth edition of 'The Pride And Glory Of Bali-yatra'.

Notably, 'The Pride And Glory Of Bali-yatra' is an initiative that is driven by the glorious maritime history of Odisha and dedicated to throw new light on Odisha cultural influence across South East Asia.

Presentations include pictorial exhibitions, coffee-table books and documentary films - all of which have been put together after extensive research on the subject and many visits to Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam to interact with people and shoot there.

The project is headed by Sudip Sen, a communication consultant

by profession and writer, photographer and filmmaker by passion. Sudip was born and brought up in Cuttack; and, as a child, had keenly observed the tradition of Boita Bandana and the annual Bali-yatra trade-fair in Cuttack.

'The Pride And Glory Of Bali-yatra' initiative has been acknowledged by Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, as truly never-before; and the curtain-raiser was held at the Odisha State Maritime Museum, Cuttack, in November 2013.

Thereafter, between 2014 and 2019, there have been six other editions that were presented in New Delhi, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack; and these editions were in association with Indian Council For Cultural Relations (ICCR), Indian National Trust For Art, Culture & Heritage (INTACH), The Asiatic Society, Alliance Francaise, Embassy Of Indonesia, New Delhi and Odisha Tourism.

23rd Kalinga Book Fair launched digitally

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: The digital edition of the 23rd Kalinga Book Fair 2020 was unveiled digitally, Sunday. The opening ceremony was inaugurated by Satkadi Hota, former president of Odisha Sahitya Akademi.

On the occasion, Renuka Mishra, secretary of Kalinga Book Fair, said that this year the book fair was organised digitally and students and experts of the state will be discussing on various issues and will review books online till December 8. Until now, more than 2,500 students of different educational institutes have registered themselves through Google Meet. This apart, various competitions such as poetry reading, essays and other contests will also be organised



Representational image

everyday.

This year a total of 11 books in nine categories such as Novel, Essay, Drama, Poetry, Children's book, Satire, short story, Religious and translation have been selected for the Annual Kalinga Book Fair Award. The authors of these books will be awarded at Sambadik Bhawan concluding day November 8, 2020.

Bijaya Mishra, former Vice

Chancellor of Ramadevi University, said that in today's time such digital sessions of books reading will be good way to make students attract towards book reading.

On the occasion, writer Adhyapaka Biswaranjan said, "Digitalization of book reading is the reality and this edition of Kalinga digital book fair is the example of accepting the reality in positive way."

FINAL YEAR BPUT STUDENTS DEMAND SPECIAL EXAMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: The United BPUT Students' Association Sunday protested near the residence of Skill development and Technical Education minister Premananda Nayak demanding special exams for the final year students. They also demanded immediate conductance of back paper examination of second and fourth semester students. After assurance from minister of declaring special dates of special exams within a week, the students called off their protests.

Earlier, the BPUT had decided to conduct the final semester theory examinations for all courses online with open book system and

set of innovative questions based on outcome based education, which tests the applied knowledge of the students.

Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT), Rourkela, Odisha, had said the students who have been appearing in the online examinations will be given another chance to sit for offline examinations as a regular student.

Deepak Kumar Sahoo, Director Examinations, had said in a statement that the students, who could not pass in their theory subjects for whatsoever the reason, will be given the chance to re-appear in the final year exams once the colleges are re-opened and normalcy is restored.

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LOST

I, Suresh Kumar Agrawal aged about 58 years, S/o. Late Gopiram Agrawal, Ward No.- 5, Daga Chowk, P.O.- Khariar Road, P.S.- Jonk, Dist.- Nuapada, Aadhaar No.- 997764661376 has applied for financial assistance to Central Bank of India, Khariar Road. I have expressed my inability to Bank to produce the Original Sale Deed No. 1383/74 dt.12.08.1974, executed by Mr. Maikul Nigam, S/o. Mr. Ganga Ram Nigam of Khariar Road, Dist.- Nuapada, in my favour as the same had been lost from my possession on 02.01.2018. I have also reported this matter before Jonk PS. on 06.01.2018, SDE No.- 10, but the same is not traced out. If anyone has found the same please return it to undersigned within 15days. SURESH KUMAR AGRAWAL, Khariar Road, Dist.- Nuapada, Mob.- 9437084902.

Cold-wave situation grips interior areas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 29: Cold-wave situation griped interior pockets of the state with mercury falling down to 15 degrees Celsius at 13 places.

Sonepur was the coldest place in the state Sunday; recording a minimum temperature of 9.4 degrees Celsius while the night temperature at Phulbani and Daringbadi was 10 degrees each.

The other places where mercury fell down below 15 degrees Celsius included Angul 12 degrees, Jharsuguda 13.2 degrees, Bhanjanipatna 13.5 degrees, Keonjhar 13.6 degrees, Sundargarh 14.5 degrees, Koraput 14.6 degrees and Baripada 14.9 degrees.

Cuttack, Bolangir and Sambalpur each recorded a minimum temperature of 15 degrees Celsius. The Met department said minimum temperature is very likely to fall by 2-3 degrees Celsius at a few places during the next 48 hours.



Youth held for posing as Maoist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kandhamal, Nov 29: The Kotagada police in Kandhamal district arrested a youth Sunday who has been extorting money from the villagers by posing as a Maoist.

The accused has been identified as Purna Tadingi.

Sources said, the fake Maoist had been threatening a youth named Uttam Uthana Singh, who was a Gram Rozgar in the Dharakota panchayat.

Uttam said that he even received death threats from the youth for not giving him money. He registered a complaint re-

garding this at the Kotagada police station.

After the FIR was registered, the police started an investigation. However, during investigation and raids in the area, police learnt

about the involvement of a fake racket. This fake Maoist has been involved in such cases in Jharkhand. The youth shortlists big industrialists, businessmen and extorts money from them. The miscreant had mastered the art by using the language mostly spoken by Maoists. He even followed their accent, style and looks. The accused has since been arrested.



Man arrested for killing nephew, step brother in Mayurbhanj

Udala, Nov 29: Police Sunday arrested a man for killing his stepbrother and nephew at Chanchunia village under Kaptipada police limits in Mayurbhanj district.

The accused has been identified as Sushil Hembram and his stepbrother as Ghanshyam Hembram. The identity of the

nephew is yet to be ascertained.

Sources said Sushil had a long-standing land dispute with Ghanshyam. Sushil's nephew was working on his field Friday. Sushil reached there and they had a verbal duel. Later, Sushil slit his nephew's throat with a sharp weapon and dumped the body in

a nearby jungle.

After receiving a missing report from the family members, police started an investigation and zeroed in on Sushil. At first, he refused his involvement but later confessed to have killed his nephew Friday and his stepbrother four days before, police said.

Nine fishermen nabbed in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary

Rajnagar, Nov 29: Nine fishermen were arrested and a trawler was seized by forest personnel Sunday for unlawful fishing activities along the Gahirmatha marine sanctuary.

The trawler used by them for fishing along the prohibited marine sanctuary was seized by the patrolling unit of the forest department.

They also seized a GPS, 3 VHPs, a fish finder, eight trailing nets and two quintals of marine fish. The arrested were produced at Pattamundai JMFC and their bails were rejected.

It may be noted here that prohibition on sea fishing remains enforced round the year within the marine sanctuary limits. However, sea patrolling is stepped

up within the Gahirmatha marine sanctuary territory during November-May in view of the annual mass nesting season of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles.

The fishermen were sent to jail custody under provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act and Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, said forest officials.

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MIDDLEMEN SCUTTLE LABOUR WELFARE; DEPT SITS PRETTY



Representative picture

SITTING DUCKS

Middlemen are taking advantage of the gullibility of labourers and extracting handsomely from them on the promise of getting them the identity cards

The labour department is allegedly sitting pretty to such fleecing of labourers while various outfits have demanded an investigation and action against middlemen

Various quarters have alleged that lakhs of rupees are being coughed up from the poor and gullible labourers on the promise of labour welfare

action against middlemen. It was alleged that middleman collects Rs 350 to Rs 900 from each labourer in Papadahandi.

The middleman has also collected Rs 450 each from over 100 labourers of Dunadangari village. Samandhu Pujari, Saita Gouda, Padam Gouda, Bhuban Gouda, Dhanapati Bhatra, Damuni Gouda and Suru Gouda accused the middleman of doing nothing even after taking money from them.

Such illegal activities have allegedly been going on in many other panchayats.

It was also alleged that some forged cards are provide to labourers. Another middleman has collected Rs 500 to Rs 1000 each from over a hundred people at Makia village in the same block. Suna Bisoyi, Jagannath Ganda, Suru Gouda, Sata Gouda, Mungai Gouda, Maina Gouda and Jaga Gouda of Makia have paid to the middleman for identity cards and registration.

Various quarters have alleged that lakhs of rupees are being coughed up from the poor and gullible labourers on the promise of labour welfare. They said that labour welfare of the state government has been hijacked by brokers while most labourers end up being exploited at the hands of middlemen. They said that the district administration should take such illegalities seriously and act accordingly.

The labour department is doing little to check the illegalities which are scuttling the very purpose of labour welfare.

When asked, district labour officer Narendra Gaipai said the matter will be investigated if any complaint comes.

official formalities for the registration. Middlemen are taking advantage of their gullibility and extracting handsomely from the farmers on the promise of getting them the identity cards.

Even though such illegality is going on in most parts of the district, the administration is taking no action.

A broker has taken money from a labourer several times to get him a card in Papadahandi block. But the broker is playing hide and seek and is not giving him the card. The labour department is also allegedly sitting pretty. Various outfits have demanded an investigation into such illegalities and

CROSSING THE HURDLE



Farmers of Galumunda crossing a creek, carrying paddy sacks on shoulders and bicycles, to a mandi in Khaprakhol of Bolangir district

OP PHOTO

Construction of rest house for attendants at MKCG in limbo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Nov 29: Even as the authorities of MKCG Medical College and Hospital have identified land for the construction of a rest house for attendants there is no headway in the project due to unknown reasons, a report said.

The Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Medical College and Hospital (MKCG) in the city is the only referral hospital in South Odisha which caters to various healthcare needs of patients in the region. The hospital is daily visited by over 15,000 patients from various parts of South Odisha, Khurda district and from areas in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh bordering the state.

However, the attendants accompanying patients are being subjected to unfair and harsh treatment due to lack of a rest house in the hospital. With no roof over their heads the attendants could be seen taking rest on verandahs of the wards which is causing them



The old rest shed

much hardship and discomfort.

A few months back an attendant resting on the verandah of a ward had to pay with his life and was robbed of his money after miscreants gave him poison laced biscuits to eat. The incident had then created shockwaves on the hospital premises and in the city.

Reports said the Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCI) has agreed to construct a 200-room rest house for attendants. The hospital authorities have also identified the land but the project has failed to take

off due to alleged red-tape.

The attendants accompanying patients remain with them till they are discharged from the hospital either after recovery or deaths. They spend their time here and there on the verandahs of the wards due to lack of a rest shed.

A rest shed was constructed in 2005 but it was soon closed down much to the disappointment of attendants. The rest shed is now in a dilapidated state due to lack of maintenance while hospital authorities have allotted a room to drivers of 108-ambulance services as rest room. The remaining rooms have become store houses for broken and damaged materials and equipment.

When contacted, Dr Santosh Kumar Mishra, hospital superintendent, said the land has been identified and the state government has been informed about it but they are yet to receive any communiqué from the PGCI authorities regarding the start of the construction.

8 hardcore criminals arrested, arms and ammunition seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Nov 29: In a major breakthrough, Aska police in Ganjam district Sunday arrested eight hardcore criminals and seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition from them.

According to Ganjam SP Brijesh Kumar Rai, the police were tipped off about the presence of a gang of dacoits at Gangapur area. As part of the drive against criminals, a special team has been formed. Acting on the tip-off, Aska IIC Prashant Sahu and the IICs of Badagada and Dharakote police stations and other team members raided the place where the dacoits were hiding and nabbed them.

Police seized 10 pistols, 53 rounds of ammunition, 13 crude bombs, sharp-edged weapons and four bikes from their possession.

The gang was involved in several crimes including murder.

Ganja plants worth ₹10 crore destroyed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mohana, Nov 29: A joint team comprising Mohana police, Gajapati district excise, revenue and forest department officials destroyed cannabis cultivation worth over Rs 10 crore at Bama village of Juba panchayat in the district Sunday.

The team raided Bama and its nearby areas. Police felled cannabis plants cultivated on 52 acres of land.

Later, the plants were torched under active supervision to make those unusable, official sources said.

The destroyed cannabis plants were worth around Rs 10.4 crore. Massive ganja cultivations of more than Rs 50 crore have been destroyed during the last seven days, a Mohana police official said.

The joint team had destroyed ganja cultivation worth Rs 13 crore Friday near Buduni village in Gajapati district.

Cannabis cultivation has gone up substantially since the outbreak of the pandemic in various parts of the district.

Ganjam rolls out strategy to prevent Covid second wave

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Nov 29: Even though new COVID-19 cases are steadily declining in Ganjam district, the administration has adopted a new strategy to keep the outbreak under control and prevent a second wave of the deadly disease.

Sources said the district administration has decided to conduct another screening and testing at transit points and major market places in order to avoid the second COVID-19 wave in the district.

District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange ordered Berhampur Municipal Commissioner, all BDOs of the district, and all executive officers of NACs to taken following strategies in their civic bodies: target test per block per day: 200 antigen tests and 25 RT-PCR tests; target testing points: bus stops/stands, railway stations, markets, major business centres, vegetable markets, grocery shops, medicine shops, vendors and shopkeepers in market places; target persons: those having COVID-19 symptoms such as cough, fever, breathing difficulties, headache, diarrhoea.

Vendors and shopkeepers will be tested while the existing mobile testing teams at block levels are to be assigned the task. Additional manpower are to be engaged by MOs of the CHCs.

Robbers, villagers engage in group clash; four injured



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Nov 29: Four persons were critically injured in a group clash with a gang of robbers at Haridapada village under Soro police limits in Balasure district Saturday night.

According to a source, Sudam Charan Baull, a resident of Haridapada, was returning home riding a bike Saturday night. At Pitakalia Chowk, a gang of robbers stopped him on his way and asked him to hand over whatever valuables he had with him.

Sudam somehow managed to pass the information to his family members seeking their help. Seeing him talking to his family over mobile phone, the miscreants started

beating him up.

Hearing his cries, some local residents came to his rescue and his family members joined later. The next scene turned uglier. A violent group clash ensued between the villagers and the robbers. While the villagers were trying to hold them till the arrival of the police, the robbers were trying to escape from the clutches of villagers.

On being informed, police reached the spot but by then all but one managed to flee from the spot. The police have detained the robber and launched a manhunt to nab his accomplices.

In the melee, three villagers and Sudam suffered critical injuries and are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Soro.

OSAP jawan to be rewarded for foiling armed assault

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Nov 29: OSAP jawan Himanshu Sekhar Patra has earned accolades from all quarters for thwarting an attempt of firing inside a bus under Bhuban police limits in Dhenkanal district.

The brave OSAP jawan will be conferred with 'DGP's Disc', as a token of recognition for his extraordinary service. DGP Abhay had invited Patra to his office for a cup of tea, during which he sounded this Saturday evening.

Police said, Patra confronted three miscreants after they tried to open fire inside a bus with an intention to commit crime at Bajji Rout overbridge in the district Friday night. The bike-borne youths abused the bus driver for overtaking and stopped the bus near Nilakanthapur. One of them tried to open fire when the jawan snatched away the firearm.

Minor girl alleges rape in captivity, rescued by locals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Nov 29: A man allegedly raped a minor girl in captivity on the pretext of marriage in Rairakhol police station area of Sambalpur district.

The incident came to the fore after the victim was rescued by some locals in the afternoon. Subsequently, she lodged an FIR with the police.

According to police, the accused Basant Sahu had kept the 17-year-old girl from Uparamunda area in a rented house at Shyamapur under Rairakhol police limits in the district.

"The man accompanied me to Rairakhol and physically abused me in a room where he had kept me confined. He was trying to sell me off to someone for money. I learnt about it when he was finalising a deal over phone," the minor girl said.

After the girl vehemently opposed, the accused locked her in the



room and went out. However, she was rescued by some neighbours who heard her screams for help.

Acting on the FIR, police registered a case and launched a probe, Rairakhol SDPO Hadibandhu Swain said.

This tiffin stall is not as lucky as 'Baba Ka Dhaba'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Nov 29: The coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent lockdowns and shutdowns have dealt a body blow to several small businesses across the country. While stories as that of Kanta Prasad and his wife Badami Devi -- owners of 'Baba Ka Dhaba' in New Delhi's Malviya Nagar -- exist where support of denizens made a difference, a vast majority of small business owners continue to struggle to make ends meet.

Bidyadhar Sahoo is a case in point. Life was smooth for Bidyadhar -- a sexagenarian -- until the outbreak of the pandemic. Originally from Nayagarh, Bidyadhar has settled with his family in Keonjhar town for over 10 years. He used to have a tiffin stall at Mining Road. Whatever he would earn from this stall was enough to run his family comprising of his wife and two sons. His sons would help him at the stall as well.



Then COVID-19 came, bringing misfortune for Bidyadhar and many others along with it. While students of the Mining Engineering College consisted of a major chunk of his customers, closure of educational institutions meant that Bidyadhar had to close down his shop. Bidyadhar presently sells

'Dahibara-Aludam' on his bicycle in the lanes and bylanes of Keonjhar. "With no option left, my younger son left for Cuttack a few months back and he is also selling 'Dahibara-Aludum' there. My elder son is with me, helping me in preparation," says Bidyadhar. Bidyadhar says his 'never say die' attitude keeps him going.

STRUGGLE FOR LIVELIHOOD

Life was smooth for Bidyadhar -- a sexagenarian -- until the outbreak of the pandemic which brought misfortune for him

Students of the Mining Engineering College consisted of a major chunk of his customers but closure of educational institutions meant that Bidyadhar had to close down his shop

Like many, Bidyadhar also lives with the hope that 'this time shall pass and better days will come.'

"With two huge pots, moving on bicycle is a difficult task for me. And the earning is also comparatively less. But I have no other option than this," he claims.

Like many, Bidyadhar also lives with the hope that 'this time shall pass and better days will come.' He eagerly waits for the opening of educational institutions.

HEALTH CONCERN



A health camp exclusively for sanitation workers of Jeypore municipality in Koraput is under way

OP PHOTO

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

Tibet in White House

When the president (Sikyong) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Lobsang Sangay, entered the precincts of the White House on November 20, it marked a red-letter day for the Tibetan government-in-exile. It also injects a new element into Sino-Indian relations. His meeting with Robert Destro, the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, at the invitation of the US State Department is "an acknowledgement" by the USA of both the democratic system of the CTA and its political head, claims the CTA. The Tibetan government-in-exile, which is yet to be recognised by any country, was in the past denied entry to the US Administrative buildings. "The logic for the denial was that the US government does not recognise the Tibetan government-in-exile," according to the CTA. Be that as it may, the momentous event of Sangay's entry into the White House opens a new chapter in the struggles of the Dalai Lama and his followers in the Tibetan government-in-exile to get international acceptance and support to the cause they have been championing since they fled their country in 1959 to evade reprisals by Communist China and get refuge in India.

In sharp contrast to the US state department's open invitation to the CTA, the visit of Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla to Dharamshala in July was kept under wraps. India's scared reactions in the backdrop of the acrimony over Chinese incursion into Indian territory in Ladakh sends only wrong signals. China is not only continuing to adopt belligerent postures over its Ladakh adventure, but is slowly and steadily encircling India through strategic alliances, trade pacts, and military build-up close to Indian borders with Pakistan and Nepal. If South Block opens regular dialogues with the Dalai Lama and the CTA officials, it may be good for both the Tibetan cause and India. But is India in any position to cock a snook at China in this manner is a big question that probably no one is willing to answer.

Shortly before Sangay's visit to the White House, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution affirming the significance of the advocacy for genuine autonomy for Tibetans in the People's Republic of China and the work His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has done to promote global peace, harmony, and understanding. Among other things, the resolution said that "it would be beneficial to convene a bipartisan, bicameral forum... between Members of Congress and His Holiness the Dalai Lama to discuss peaceful solutions to international conflicts." During the debate on 18 November Representative Ted Yoho also strongly criticised Beijing for violating the Tibetans' religious freedom: "The CCP sees Tibet culture and religious heritage as a threat to its control."

The US legislation has even gone to the length of lending its support to the role the Dalai Lama can play in choosing his successor, the 15th Dalai Lama. "The wishes of the 14th Dalai Lama, including any written instructions, should play a determinative role in the selection, education, and veneration of a future 15th Dalai Lama," it categorically states. If India is serious about taking on China, the least that New Delhi can do is simply to declare that India is ready to put its seal of approval on all decisions the Dalai Lama takes on his reincarnation and that it will welcome the 15th Dalai Lama as an honoured guest of India, the status the present pontiff has been enjoying since 1959.

India's prevarication on the Tibetan question will be at its own peril since the country will have to bear the brunt of changes in the Tibetan plateau effected by China to extract the plateau's rich natural resources. The US Bill recognises the key role of the Tibetan plateau containing glaciers, rivers, grasslands, and other geographical and ecological features that are crucial for supporting vegetation growth and biodiversity, regulating water flow and supply for an estimated 1.8 billion people.

India had a full-fledged mission in Lhasa for about two decades before 1947. An ICS officer Hugh Richardson served as the first head of the Indian Mission. However, the Prime Minister quietly downgraded the Mission into a Consulate General in 1952 and it was closed down for inexplicable reasons in December 1962. What exactly happened during the crucial two years before the Sino-Indian conflict is still shrouded in mystery. There are unconfirmed reports that the Indian Consul General in Lhasa had virtually been kept under house-arrest for thirteen months before the war broke out. But, there was no retaliation or complaint lodged by the Indian government.

Decades later Shivshankar Menon, as Ambassador in Beijing and Foreign Secretary, took initiatives for reopening the Mission in Lhasa, but to no avail. Nepal still has a representative in Lhasa today. That speaks volumes for the importance Nepal is getting in China's scheme of things in the Himalayan region.

Taking all things into consideration, India seems to be floating into a dangerous phase in the neighbourhood politics. While India's chest thumping may be acceptable at home by some, bravado on the international scene seems to be unacceptable by all our neighbours. India's failed diplomacy seems like it will soon bring forth tremendous amount of despair and grief to all of us.

WISDOM CORNER

- Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing that we see too late the one that is open. **ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL**
- Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving. **ALBERT EINSTEIN**
- The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears it is true. **J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER**

WORDSWORTH

Vilipend

Vilipend is a verb meaning to regard as worthless or of little value or to despise or vilify. Etymologically speaking, to define vilipend using vilify is to commit a tautology, since both derive from Latin vilis, vile or worthless, which is also obviously enough the source of English vile. Vilipend also includes the verb pendere, to weigh or estimate. To vilipend is to weigh somebody in the balance and find them not worth considering. It appeared in English in the fifteenth century and was a popular term right down into the nineteenth, though it has since dropped out of sight. In 1771 Tobias Smollett put it into the mouth of a character in Humphry Clinker: "I would not willingly vilipend any Christian, if, peradventure, he deserveth that epithet." Sir Walter Scott employed it in Waverley in 1814: "He became a gay visitor, and such a reveller, that in process of time he was observed to vilipend the modest fare which had at first been esteemed a banquet by his hungry appetite, and thereby highly displeased my wife." If you would like an obscure deprecatory term and for some reason calumnious and contumelious don't meet your needs, you could do worse than the related word vilipenditory.

LOL

Visit the barber

A man and a little boy entered a barbershop together. After the man received the full treatment - shave, shampoo, manicle, haircut, etc. - he placed the boy in the chair. "I'm goin' to buy a green tie to wear for the parade," he said. "I'll be back in a few minutes." When the boy's



haircut was completed and the man still hadn't returned, the barber said, "Looks like your daddy's forgotten all about you." "That wasn't my daddy," said the boy. "He just walked up, took me by the hand and said, 'Come on, son, we're gonna get a free haircut!'"

UNLIKELY COMRADESHIP

FOCUS WEST ASIA

For the new team being announced by the Biden administration any innovation can only follow repair work of the considerable wreckage that is being left behind by the outgoing team.

At this moment of transition, what construct does one place on the outgoing Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo's participation in the cloak-and-dagger meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu in the mega city of Neom being built on the Red Sea? The drama of this meeting was heightened by Netanyahu's office denying the meeting in tones which seemed to suggest that the Israelis were not busting their guts to keep the meeting secret. A pretense of secrecy was essential because otherwise 'MBS' would be in 'trouble'.

Netanyahu's Education Minister, Yoav Galant, could not contain his joy at the 'amazing achievement' because the 'Sunni world' was joining the Israel-US alliance to counter 'Iranian Shiite extremism.'

This Shia-Sunni confrontation, real or simulated, has been the game ever since the Shah was toppled in Iran. Why then this secrecy now? Why is MBS so scared being seen in an embrace with Netanyahu on Saudi soil? Because his people will find out? Do his people matter? But it turns out that human rights is an article of faith with the incoming Secretary of State, Antony Blinken. This may well be a source of anxiety not just for Saudi Arabia but all monarchies and authoritarian systems. Are there any in our vicinity?

A hint about MBS' source of anxiety was available in the other crucial meeting the Saudi king had with President Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. The Turkish strongman is part of a quadrangle which both, Washington (the incoming administration) and MBS, Netanyahu too, should be analysing.

After the Soviet collapse in 1991, it was elementary that creating a distance between Moscow and Beijing would remain a US strategic goal. But George W Bush and



No, it is not the Shia-Sunni divide which is bothering Mohammad bin Salman and Benjamin Netanyahu. What worries them deeply is the Shia-Sunni combine zeroing in on Israelis and Wahabis in unlikely comradeship

his deluded neo-cons asked for the moon - full spectrum global dominance into the American century. The financial crisis of 2008 rapped them hard on the knuckles. American decline was well underway when Trump greased the downward slide even more effectively.

The evolving Biden team will contemplate at the menacing quadrangle I mentioned at the outset. To begin with, Moscow and Beijing have never been closer. The duet spotted the potential of Iran too, and included it in the club. After all, Washington is just about to dust up the Iranian nuclear file for a resumption of a conversation with Tehran.

No sooner had Trump lost the election, when Imran Khan was on his maiden trip to Kabul. This, when the US troop withdrawal from the Afghan capital had run into the sort of snags which US representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad was trying to sort out. Was the Pakistan Prime Minister now effectively being positioned to handle the Afghan file? This became a very real anxiety in both Tehran and New Delhi. But Iran being re-invited on the nuclear file, mollifies it somewhat. How happy New Delhi should be with

its exertions in the Quad (US, Australia, Japan, India) only time can tell. The Japanese Foreign Minister has already clarified: our membership of the Quad is not directed against any country.

So, while the US was on the Trump rollercoaster and coping with the social mayhem and galloping Covid, other countries were moving increasingly in concert. There has been so much continuous chanting of the Shia-Sunni conflict that real and abiding antipathies have been lost sight of.

A convenient point of departure to explain this narrative are the two events in December, 1979, which rattled the Saudis, indeed the world - Ayatollah Khomeini's return, signalling the Iranian revolution. Around the same date, an anti-monarchy Sunni, an extreme version of the Muslim Brotherhood, Juhayman al-Otaybi, defied the Saudi state by occupying the holiest Muslim mosque of Mecca.

Unable to flush out Otaybi and his armed supporters, Saudis sought Western help. A situation emerged which to a non Muslim would read like a situation comedy. Since non Muslims are not allowed in Mecca, US and French soldiers had to be converted to Islam to enter the mosque and accomplish

the holy task of killing Otaybi and his men. This 'rebellion within' gives Saudis nightmares. But they feel more secure externalising the threat. They have persistently targeted Iran and Shiaism as threats to themselves, Israel, indeed, the West. When did you last hear of the 15 days siege of the Mecca Mosque?

To point fingers at the Muslim Brotherhood (Akhwan ul Muslimeen) as the enemy would isolate most of the GCC Sheikdoms from the larger Muslim 'Umma.' They would then be perceived as only the 'Wahabi' sect of the Sunni world.

Incalculable Saudi wealth, particularly after the quadrupling of oil prices following the 1973 Yom Kippur war, had the Western Military Industrial Complex salivating on Arab petrodollars. The oil rich Sheikhs are, by formal agreements, dependent on Western arms. Their wealth plus their links to Israel give them considerable control on Western media which has quite shockingly harped only on the Shia-Sunni conflict.

When the Arab Spring dethroned Hosni Mubarak, Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi became Egypt's Prime Minister. Coming to power of a Brother in Egypt caused the Saudis to load their camels with their billions and turn up in Cairo to stabilise Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's coup in Cairo. Brothers in power in Egypt was anathema to the Israelis too because the Hamas in Gaza would now have help from all sides. Brothers in Turkey, Qatar and Egypt. They were ideologically coherent with Hamas.

At the Shia end, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran, the Alawi elements in the Syrian Army, the Shia majority in Iraq, Houthis of Yemen are all supporting the Palestinian cause to the hilt.

No, it is not the Shia-Sunni divide which is bothering MBS and Netanyahu. What worries them deeply is the Shia-Sunni combine zeroing in on the Israelis and the Wahabis in unlikely comradeship.

The writer is a senior commentator on political and diplomatic issues. ians@ians.org

SPECTRUM NATION

Listen to farmers, bankers & workers

Indian farmers and bankers have put up a strong challenge to the move of privatisation, corporatisation of the economy and curtailment of labour rights.

The government is under WTO pressure to rush through the changes and bankers and farmers simultaneously organised Bharat bandh to oppose privatisation of banks and farmers' march to Delhi against the recently enacted farm-produce marketing laws and the draconian Electricity Bill 2020.

In a way the two simultaneous protests by the most influential sections of the society are causing a churning. The All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA)-sponsored opposes bank privatisation, allowing corporates to open banks, outsourcing, contract system and demands increase in rate of interest on bank deposits and reduction in service charges.

The bankers took cue from assertions of former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan and ex-deputy governor Viral Acharya that the RBI proposal to allow business houses into banking is fraught with risk for financial system. They argue that the corporates are the largest borrowers, and the economic (and political) power would be concentrated in certain business houses and in-house or connected lending

is invariably disastrous. They have even raised questions on the capacity of the regulators to remain independent.

Banks were nationalised in 1969 for the reasons now enumerated by Rajan and Acharya and to free the public money in the then private banks for access by the people. The nationalised banks have made significant contribution through democratisation of the lending process. Many banks in 1960s were stated to have been on the verge of collapse for siphoning of funds by corporate owners. Recent laxity of the regulator, since 2009, has also led to severe NPA crisis. Economic problems in the farm and banking sectors, curtailing of labour rights through three new labour laws dismantling 27 enactments are turning into a political crisis as tens of thousands of farmers from Punjab and Haryana crashed into Delhi.

Surprisingly enough Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) led by Dinesh Kulkarni lent its support to the farmers' causes and Delhi's Kejriwal government refused to allow police to use stadia to detain protesters. It is said to have changed the stance of the Centre and restrained the police. May be it has brought the concept of federal polity at the centre of national capital.

The farmers are also demanding

scrapping of the Electricity Act 2020 that does away with subsidised farm tariff. The All India Kisan Sabha says that replacing the subsidy with transfer of benefit to their bank accounts was not a solution and would aggravate their problems. The overall aim of the law is to reduce subsidies in the power sector and push for privatisation, especially in distribution. People in UP are up in arms against the whimsical functioning of power companies.

BKS ideologue Rajay Agarwal says the Shanta Kumar report, Niti Aayog draft paper on farmers' sustainable income, Commerce Ministry report on agriculture export, and three farm laws indicate the government's keenness for handing over domestic food market to select big retailers. "This will break the spine of unorganised wholesale food market and small-marginal farmers will turn to mere labourers if land lease bill comes without upper cap on land aggregator."

The government's move may impact future electoral courses or not but it has certainly brought to the fore that rushing through legislations against workers and farmers in favour of corporate and MNCs is not in the interests of the nation. It is not only farmers, bankers and the Opposition that are

protesting but even organisations like Swadeshi Jagaran Manch or BKS, part of the sangh parivar are opposing the move.

It is being perceived as changing the pattern of labour, banking and agriculture in the country. Across the board apprehensions are being expressed of the country succumbing to corporate and WTO pressures to further aggravate the problems already ruined by lockdown, severe production thawing, job losses and critical reduction of money flow. The perception of viewing MSP as subsidy is not correct. It only decides a floor. It should be agreed and ensured by law. Similarly, despite inflation galloping, keeping interest rates at a low of less than 5 per cent convolutes the basic principles, causes severe economic woes as value of deposits crashes and markets cringe. It is also a fact that the country cannot be left to the mercy of corporates.

The situation needs dialogue and the Centre has agreed to one though the date remains in suspense. It is prudent to listen to farmers, bankers and workers. The government should relent on its rigid stance to the drastic changes it made into farm, banking and labour laws. The country needs growth but it has to be for overall progress. ians@ians.org

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Great loss for Iran

Sir, There is no doubt that the recent assassination of the Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh is the handiwork of Israel. The whole world knows what the Israelis are capable of doing. The Eichmann kidnapping, the Entebbe operation, the hunting down of the killers of the Israeli Olympic team, the bombing of the Iraqi Osirak nuclear reactor: Their operations are well known throughout the world. The CIA and the Israeli intelligence services work closely. The most important thing is the Israeli leadership is always capable of taking bold decisions. Iranian General Qasem Soleimani was assassinated by the CIA-Mossad cooperation. In Israel there are different teams which work with the Israeli intelligence. But their real work remains the same - to stop any anti Israeli activities. Iran will do what it wants, but sure the killing of Fakhri-zadeh is a great loss for Iran.

Sunil Pradhan, KHARIAR (NUAPADA)

Unrelenting farmers

Sir, The 'Delhi Chalo' march showed no signs of easing, with thousands of farmers digging in their heels and staying put at the Singhu border between Delhi and Haryana. Even the Centre's assurance that it will hold talks with farmers' groups before December 3 if they vacated the roads and moved to the Nirankari Ground in Burari didn't appease the farmers. The stalemate has created a siege-like situation at the entry points to the national capital, and reining in the protesters is a tall order.

NJ Ravi Chandar, BANGALORE

We learn nothing

Sir, This refers to the news report "Maintenance people were 'unfit': PESO" published in Orissa POST on 29 November 2020. More than a month after the deadly explosion at a petrol pump near Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) report says that the maintenance contract was awarded to an unfit party which in turn gave subcontract to a local party. Bypassing the safety in industries dealing with explosives material often results in accidents. One of the reasons is corruption in awarding contracts to unfit parties and lack of supervision by competent technical authorities during work. Everybody forgets such accidents till the next accident. We learn nothing.

Gopal Prasad Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

MP LOSES 26 TIGERS IN 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Nov 29: Madhya Pradesh, which is known as the 'Tiger State' of India, has lost 26 striped animals so far this year, as per the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Reacting to it, Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister Vijay Shah told PTI that the average death rate of tigers was less compared to their birth rate in the state in last six years.

According to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) website, out of the 26 tiger deaths reported since April this year, MP lost 21 felines inside the tiger reserves, including 10 in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve.

No tiger death was reported in the first three months of this year, as per the data.

In 2019, the state lost 28 tigers while three cases of seizures of body parts due to poaching were also reported.

Karnataka, which is on the second position in the number of tigers in the country, registered eight deaths and two seizures of tiger body parts this year, as per the data.

The southern state lost 12 big cats last year.

"Right now, MP has 124 tiger cubs. The cubs were not counted during the last census (in 2018). In the next census, we are going to have more than 600 tigers," Shah said.

"We have more tigers than the area for them. Take the example of Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve-it has 125 tigers whereas it has the territory to house only 90," he said.

The minister attributed the big number of tiger deaths in Bandhavgarh to the territorial fight among the big cats for space and dominance.



ENDANGERED FELINES
In 2019, the state lost 28 tigers while three cases of seizures of body parts due to poaching were also reported
Karnataka, which is on the second position in the number of tigers in the country, registered eight deaths and two seizures of tiger body parts this year

Forest Minister Vijay Shah said that the average death rate of tigers was less compared to their birth rate in the state in last 6 years

Earlier, MP had lost the 'Tiger State' tag to Karnataka in the all India tiger estimation exercise for 2010, primarily due to alleged poaching in the Panna Tiger Reserve. That time, MP had 257 tigers compared to 300 in Karnataka.

In the 2014 tiger census, MP slipped to no.3 position in the country with 308 striped animals after Uttarakhand (340) and Karnataka (408). However, MP regained the tag in the 2018 census with 526 big cats, two more than in Karnataka.

Wildlife activist Ajay Dubey said Madhya Pradesh lacks a special tiger protection force.

"We have filed a petition in the high court for the formation of the special force which is pending. Karnataka has such a special force,

thus tigers there are protected," he said. The Centre in 2006 asked states to form the special force and offered to bear its expenditure, but MP has not formed it, he noted.

Karnataka has five tiger reserves and the number of striped animals there (as per the last count) was just two less than Madhya Pradesh, which has around six tiger reserves. "MP should learn from this," he said. A tiger was allegedly killed and buried in Shahdol district earlier this month, he said, noting that some people have been arrested in the case.

The recovery of a severed tiger head in the Panna Tiger Reserve last month suggests that poachers are operating in the wildlife areas, he said.

Govt sees farmers as terrorists: Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Nov 29: Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut Sunday said farmers protesting against the Centre's new agri laws are being treated as if they are terrorists, and it is sad that they are not being allowed to enter Delhi.

The government should consider the farmers' demands sympathetically, Raut told reporters here.

Thousands of farmers, protesting against three agriculture laws enacted by the Centre, have gathered at border points of the national capital as part of their 'Delhi Chalo' march. It is sad they are not being allowed to come to Delhi and are being treated as if they are terrorists and have come from outside the country. The government should consider the demands of farmers sympathetically, Raut said.

Consider all other demands sympathetically, Raut told reporters here.

It is sad they are not being allowed to come to Delhi and are being treated as if they are terrorists and have come from outside the country
SANJAY RAUT SHIV | SENA MP

pathetically. Different states are not doing well. It is up to the Centre to step in and help them, the Rajya Sabha member said.

Replying to a query, Raut claimed farmers were being dubbed as divisive because they come from Punjab.

Do you want to create instability by reminding the Punjab farmers of the Khalistan movement period, he asked the Centre.

Thousands of farmers continued their protest for the fourth consecutive day Sunday, staying put at the Singhu and Tikri border points, with farmer leaders deliberating upon their future course of action about proposed talks with the government.



With many roads and entry points of Delhi being blocked, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had appealed to the farmers to shift to the Burari ground, and said the Centre was ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

BJP attacks Uddhav over quota impasse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Nov 29: NCP leader turned BJP Rajya Sabha MP Udayanraje Bhosale Sunday said the issue of reservations for the Maratha community in Maharashtra was being delayed deliberately and asked people to seek answers from those responsible.

Speaking to reporters, Bhosale said Maratha quota was overlooked even at the time of the implementation of the Mandal Commission report as the party which ruled the state during that period (in 1990) overlooked problems of the community.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar was the Congress chief minister of



Maharashtra at the time. "All communities, except Marathas, were given reservations under Mandal Commission. The people you trusted and voted for

will pull you down," Bhosale said. He also hit out at the Uddhav Thackeray dispensation for "not taking the issue ahead" and claimed "the state government lawyer"

missed a hearing of the quota issue in the Supreme Court, adding that the "community will react to such tactics".

He praised former CM and BJP leader Devendra Fadnis and said the latter "took the initiative and enacted a law to give Marathas reservations".

Bhosale said Maharashtra Public Services Commission (MPSC) exams should be conducted now by keeping aside seats that will be part of the Maratha quota as the issue was now being heard in the apex court.

The SC recently stayed the implementation of the 2018 law granting reservation to Marathas in jobs and education and referred the matter to a larger Constitution bench.

Christian conversions raked up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Nov 29: BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh is all set to move the Freedom of Religion Bill, 2020 to curb 'love jihad' cases in a three-day assembly session beginning 28 December.

While the term itself is a coinage by Right-wing groups that seeks to accuse Muslim men of converting Hindu women by marriage, the new bill in Madhya Pradesh will skip the word 'Muslim', according to sources in the state government.

Also, of late, various state leaders have suddenly started targeting Christian missionaries for carrying out conversions in the guise of offering seva (service).

Allegations of 'forced' religious conversions to Christianity is an issue which the state has been battling for decades.

Madhya Pradesh was the first state to pass a law curbing forced religious conversions for any purpose, including marriage, in 1968. This was mainly aimed at arresting conversions from Hinduism to Christianity.

Addressing two events in tribal-dominated Umaria and Badwani districts in the last four days, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had accused Christians of forcibly trying to convert tribals.

While addressing an event at Badwani Friday, Chouhan recalled how Birsra Munda, a 19th century tribal freedom fighter from present-day Jharkhand, took on missionaries who sought to engage in large-scale conversions.



The chief minister also went on to say that missionaries should offer services but not in the hope of converting the beneficiary's faith.

Any attempt at conversion, either by force or offering allurements will be strictly punished, he added.

At Umaria, however, Chouhan restrained from using the word missionaries even as he attacked conversions to Christianity.

The Archbishop of Bhopal, Leo Cornelio, however said Chouhan's allegations were part of the BJP's politics.

"This is politics, not religion. Politicians make laws to create divisions in the society and to benefit electorally from them. My fear is that more laws you make the more rogues are likely to use them against minorities and the weaker sections," Cornelio told ThePrint.

He added, "Everyone enjoys freedom of religion in the country. We don't forcibly convert people. Conversion is not man's activity...it's god's grace. One can always return to one's original religion."

When queried by scribes whether a full-fledged law against love jihad will be framed in MP as hinted by UP and Haryana, the MP CM said, "They (UP and Haryana) are also contemplating legal provisions and we're also considering appropriate legal provisions against the nefarious practice."

Last week, a 21-year-old college student Nikita Tomar was shot dead outside her college in Haryana's Ballabgarh town by a man. The student's family alleged later that the accused was pressuring her to convert to Islam in order to marry him. Some outfits have alleged that the girl's killing is a case of 'love jihad.'

The Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar had hinted towards legal provisions against 'love jihad' Sunday, a day after UP CM Yogi Adityanath had dropped enough hints about formulating a law against the practice.

Panna Reserve begins vultures' radio-tagging

THERE ARE SEVEN SPECIES OF VULTURES IN PTR. OF THESE, FOUR ARE NATIVE TO THIS AREA, WHILE THREE OTHERS ARE MIGRATORY SPECIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panna, Nov 29: Scientists have started a project of radio-tagging vultures in Madhya Pradesh's Panna Tiger Reserve to study the movements and habits of these birds, an official has said.

Talking to reporters Saturday, Panna Tiger Reserve's field director claimed this is probably the first time that radio-tagging of vultures is being done in India.

The programme, which began two weeks back, is expected to go on for a month, he said.

"As many as 25 vultures are going to be radio-tagged in the Panna Tiger Reserve under a programme started with the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) so that a data could be generated about their movements and habits," the official said.

Scientists of the WII took training from other countries for the exercise, he said.

There are seven species of vultures in PTR. Of these, four are native to this area, while three others are migratory species.

"Vultures cover long distances, not only from other states, but also from one country to another. This study will find out how they reach PTR or go to other places and what are their routes and habits," Sharma said.

As per the WII programme, a cage with a door has been put up at PTR's Jhalar grassland where baits of fresh meat will be laid inside to attract the birds.

"The process of radio-tagging will be done once vultures become habitual of taking meat put inside the cage," the official said.



Farmers dump guavas as prices crash



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Nov 29: A video showing a group of farmers dumping freshly-harvested guavas into a civic garbage collection vehicle here has gone viral on social media, with the experts saying that a bumper crop of the fruit this year has resulted in its prices falling.

The wholesale prices of this vitamin C-rich fruit at Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Fruit and Vegetable Market in Indore currently ranges between Rs 4 and Rs 10 per kilo, sources in the market said Sunday. Farm sector experts said the

prices of guava have nosedived due to its abundant crop, which is ultimately causing losses to the cultivators.

Due to the falling prices, disappointed farmers are leaving behind the fruits in the market after finding that they are not getting enough returns.

The farmers know that transporting the fruits back was not beneficial due to the costs involved, they added. Talking to PTI, Rajesh Patel, who grows this fruit in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district, said, "The bumper guava harvest in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and other states has sent its prices crashing." The wholesale market of guava in Delhi, which supplies this fruit to the northern part of the country, has been hit hard due to the coronavirus situation there, he said.

Country guavas perish in three-four day after being plucked, he added.

We are providing sipper, straw to Stan: Jail authorities

Stan Swamy, 83, who is suffering from various health issues including Parkinson's disease, was arrested October 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Nov 29: Tribal rights activist Father Stan Swamy, an accused in the alleged Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, is being provided sipper and other facilities in the Talaja prison from the day of his arrest, a senior prison official said Sunday.

Swamy, 83, who is suffering from various health issues including Parkinson's disease, was arrested October 8 and has been lodged at the Talaja prison near here in Navi Mumbai.

Talking to PTI, a senior prison official said the allegation that prison authorities were not providing sipper and straw to Swamy were "baseless". "Not just sipper and straw, we are providing him other facilities too

like wheelchair, walking stick, walker, and two attendants were also provided to him," the official said.

"We know he is a patient, he suffers from Parkinson's disease. Why would we not provide him things which he requires," the official said.

Meanwhile, some Delhi-based lawyers have also sent straws and sippers for the activist in a parcel along with a letter to the Talaja prison Saturday.

"As lawyers, we were pained by the situation as all jail manuals provide for special facilities for inmates who have special needs," said Nandita Rao, one of the advocates who have signed the letter sent to the jail.

"We felt if someone does not even have a right to dignified

drinking water in judicial custody, then the basic values of our Constitution and humanity are being disrespected," she added. Swamy had earlier filed a plea in a special NIA court here, seeking that he be provided a straw and a sipper.

The court Thursday rejected his previous application seeking a direction to the National Investigation Agency to return the straw and sipper allegedly seized from him during the arrest.

Swamy had said he needs a straw and sipper as he has trouble eating and drinking because his hands shake due to the Parkinson's disease.

Thursday, the National Investigation Agency, which is probing the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links' case, denied that

it had confiscated Swamy's straw and sipper.

Swamy's lawyer Sharif Shaikh then filed a fresh application to obtain these things, besides winter clothing.

The activist Thursday also filed a bail plea in the special NIA court. As per the NIA, Swamy was involved in the activities of the banned CPI (Maoist), and had received funds through an associate for furthering Maoist agenda.

He was also the convener of the Persecuted Prisoners Solidarity Committee (PPSC), a frontal organisation of the CPI(Maoist), the NIA claimed.

Swamy in his bail plea denied the allegations and said that the prosecution had failed to bring on record any evidence.

of the day quote

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visit to Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadila was a recognition of Indian scientists and their work to produce the vaccine for COVID-19. That alone will lift morale of frontline warriors and reassure the nation

ANAND SHARMA | CONGRESS LEADER

So many companies are coming to Hyderabad, lakhs of people are getting jobs. We are getting so many investments. We have to save our city. All religions and castes should be together

K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO | TELANGANA CM

Few people asked me whether we could rename Hyderabad as Baghyananagar. I said why not

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

SHORT TAKES

Two cops commit suicide

Raipur: Two policemen have allegedly committed suicide in different districts of Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Bastar division, officials said Sunday. Constable Dinesh Verma, belonging to 4th battalion of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF), allegedly shot himself with his service rifle around 8.50 am on Sunday at his units camp in Pushpal police station premises in Sukma district, Additional Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma said. In another incident, police constable Vinod Porte (32) allegedly shot himself with an SLR rifle on Saturday afternoon in Pamed police station of Bijapur district, a local police official said.

Boy killed

Thane: A 20-year-old man from Palghar has been arrested for allegedly killing a minor boy from Bhiwandi in Thane district over a love affair, police said Sunday. The 14-year-old victim was in love with the accused's minor sister and this was the cause of murder, a Narpoli police station official said. "The girl's family had reprimanded the victim several times on this issue. However, the two continued to remain in touch. On Friday evening, the accused called the victim to Dadoda village, killed him and hid his body under a pipeline. He was arrested late Saturday night," he said.

Body found

Palghar: The decomposed body of an unidentified woman has been found by police in Maharashtra's Palghar district, a police official said Sunday. Some passersby experienced foul smell in Satalvi Khind area here on Saturday and alerted the police. Later, the police went to the area and found the decomposed body of a woman, believed to be around 30 to 35 years of age, the official said.

ATM gutted

Thane: An ATM centre of a nationalised bank has been gutted in a fire that broke out in the premises in Badlapur town of Maharashtra's Thane district, a civic official said Sunday. No one was injured in the blaze that erupted at the ATM located at Kulgaon in Badlapur around 9.30 pm on Saturday, Thane Municipal Corporation's regional disaster management cell chief Santosh Kadam said. A fire engine from Badlapur was rushed to the spot and the blaze was brought under control around 10.15 pm, he said. The ATM centre was completely gutted in the fire, the official said. The cause of the fire was not yet known, he added.

GHMC POLLS: HIGH OCTANE CAMPAIGN ENDS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Nov 29: The election campaign for any municipal body in the country has not been as shrill as it has been for Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), which is all set for polls Tuesday.

The campaign saw a bitter war of words with leaders of the main contenders for power engaged in no-holds-barred attack on their opponents. With central leaders and top leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) too plunging into the electioneering to take on both ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and its friendly party Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), the Hyderabad civic polls have turned into a high-octane battle.

Upeat over the victory in the Bihar Assembly elections and in bypolls in various states including Dubbak seat in Telangana, the BJP has entered the fray firing on all cylinders. For the saffron party, elections to the 150-member GHMC is not merely a 'gully' election but a semi-final in the run-up to the 2023 Assembly battle. Claiming to have emerged as the main opposition party replacing the Congress, the BJP is



Union Home Minister Amit Shah participates in an election campaign roadshow, ahead of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections, at Warasiguda in Hyderabad

aiming for power in Telangana to begin what its leaders call saffronisation of entire south India.

With a considerable support base among the urban electorate, the BJP hoping to reap rich dividends in a municipal body with over 74 lakh voters, covering 24 Assembly segments and five Lok Sabha constituencies. With Secunderabad Lok Sabha seat already under its belt, it is looking to cement its position further.

What made the GHMC polls fiercer is the history and unique character of Hyderabad, the fastest

growing metropolis and a leading information technology destination. With sizeable Muslim population, the city is considered stronghold of the MIM, which is trying to expand its base across the state.

The MIM is also buoyed over its impressive performance in recent Bihar elections, where it won five seats. The party, which is holding the Hyderabad Lok Sabha seat for nearly four decades, expanded itself in recent years to increase its tally of Assembly seats in Hyderabad to seven. It also established itself as a force in Maharashtra by winning

The Prime Minister's visit would serve as a strong motivation for Bharat Biotech to take its efforts forward in making the Coronavirus vaccine 'Covaxin'

N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU | TDP PRESIDENT

NIGHT TEMP IMPROVES

Minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Union Territories improved marginally Sunday due to partial cloud cover as the weather is likely to remain dry till Thursday, Met officials said



CoBRA officer killed, 9 hurt in IED blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, Nov 29: An officer of the CRPF's jungle warfare unit, CoBRA, was killed while nine commandos were injured after Maoists triggered an IED blast in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Saturday night, security officials said.

They said the improvised explosive device explosion took place in the Chintalnar forest area of the district at around 9 PM and the injured personnel were evacuated by an IAF helicopter at around midnight. Assistant Commandant Nitin P Bhalerao, 33, succumbed to injuries in the early hours of Sunday.

Nine commandos, including the team leader second-in-command rank officer Dinesh Kumar Singh, were injured in the incident, they said. Seven commandos are being treated at a hospital in Raipur, while two are being given medical care at a unit hospital at Chintalnar, located in the south Bastar area of the state, they said.

Sukma district is located at a distance of about 400 km from here. The injured troops belong to the 206th

battalion of the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA).

A joint team of the CoBRA and local police was out for an area domination exercise when the blast took place, the officials said. The team was scouting the area for the proposed induction of some new battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force and establishment of their new camps in this area and that is when the IED went off, official sources said.

Five more CRPF battalions are expected to be inducted in Chhattisgarh for anti-Maoist duties after the Union home ministry recently gave its approval. CRPF director general A P Maheshwari, who took a morning flight from Delhi to reach Raipur, laid a wreath and paid tributes to the officer at a force camp here.

"CRPF stands shoulder to shoulder with the family. The sacrifice won't go waste. We would carry forward the mission with more vigour and synergy and not let adversaries succeed in their dastardly acts," he said on his Twitter handle.

DRONE SPOTTED ALONG INDIA-PAKISTAN BORDER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Nov 29: Alert security forces deployed on the international border with Pakistan spotted a drone in Jammu district in J&K and fired to force it to return to the neighbouring country, police said Sunday.



Police said the drone was spotted on the Indian side of the international border in Arnia Sector in RS Pura area on Saturday evening. "The BSF troops fired at

the drone after which it withdrew to the Pakistan side," police said.

Drones have been used in recent times by militants and their handlers to drop weapons etc on the Indian side of the international border. After shooting down a drone that carried a huge consignment of weapons two months back, the se-

Drones have been used by militants and their handlers to drop weapons on the Indian side of the international border

curity forces are maintaining extra vigil against unmanned aerial vehicles along the international border and the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Man booked for killing elder son, raping daughter-in-law

AN FIR HAS BEEN REGISTERED AGAINST THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH RAPE AND MURDER. HE IS PRESENTLY ABSCONDING

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh), Nov 29: A 56-year-old man has been booked for allegedly shooting his elder son dead after the latter accused him of sexually assaulting his wife.

An FIR has been registered against the man who has been charged with rape and murder. He is presently absconding. The incident took place on Saturday when the daughter-in-law alleged that she was sexually assaulted by her father-in-law when she was alone at home on November 25. Her husband and other relatives had gone to attend a wedding func-

tion in another city.

She said that she had informed her husband and her mother-in-law on Saturday who confronted the accused and threatened to lodge a police complaint. A heated argument ensued and the younger brother of the accused took his father's side.

During the argument, the father took out his licensed revolver and shot at his elder son. Superintendent of Police (SP) Amit Kumar Anand said, "An FIR has been registered against the father and his younger son under IPC sections 302 (murder), 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) and 376

(rape) on the complaint of victim's wife. The younger brother of the deceased is absconding along with the main accused. We have set up teams to arrest them."

The SP further said, "The complainant will be sent for medical examination as she alleged that she was sexually assaulted. This is a sensitive matter and we are investigating all the aspects. The statements of the tenant, victim's mother and others will be recorded and verified."

The accused works at a security agency while the victim was employed as a support staff of a private hospital. The deceased son had been married a year ago.

JOYOUS MOMENT



Union MoS Home Nityanand Rai releases a pigeon during the National Cadet Corps (NCC) anniversary celebrations at Gandhi Maidan, in Patna, Sunday

WOMAN USES SOCIAL MEDIA TO SEARCH FOR BROTHER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh), Nov 29: After the police failed to trace her missing brother, a young woman has posted an appeal on social media, asking people to help her trace her brother.

Five days ago, on November 24, an Alto car fell into the Upper Ganga canal in the Purkazi area in Muzaffarnagar district after the driver lost control of the vehicle. All four occupants, who were residents of Delhi, were in the car. The divers rescued two women out of whom, one died later in the hospital.

The two young men - Nikhil and Praveen - who were in the car could not be traced. Nikhil's sister Sonam Kumari, who has appealed to the people to help find her brother, told local reporters, "It has been five days but we have no information about my brother



and his friend. My family is very upset. I have posted an appeal so that if anyone has any information about my brother, they can inform us."

Mini Devi, Sonam's mother, told reporters, "On November 18, my son had left home for Rishikesh to celebrate his 22nd birthday which falls on November 20. Nikhil said that he was going with his three friends. I asked him not to travel now but he was adamant." Purkazi SHO Jitendra Yadav said, "We are still searching, divers are looking for them in the water, downstream."

COVID TALLY NEARS 94 LAKH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 29: With 41,810 new coronavirus infections and 496 deaths in the past 24 hours, India's overall tally stood at 93,92,920 on Sunday, as the fatality toll touched 1,36,696, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said.

Currently, there are 4,53,956 active cases, whereas 88,02,267 patients have been cured and discharged so far. The recovery rate stands at 93.71 per cent, and the fatality rate is 1.46 as per cent, the Ministry said.

Maharashtra continued to be the worst-hit state with 18,14,515 cases till date. There are 90,965 active cases and 46,986 Covid-19 deaths. According to the ministry, almost 70 per cent of the daily new cases are contributed by eight States and UT, i.e., Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh.

The overall number of global coronavirus cases has surpassed the 62 million mark, while the deaths have surged to more than 1.45 million, according to Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Sunday, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 6,21,47,874 and 14,50,326, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 1,32,33,884 and 2,66,009, respectively, according to the CSSE. India comes in second place in terms of cases



Doubts raised

Ever since Bharat Biotech, a Hyderabad-based pharma company, became a partner with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for the development of Covid-19 vaccine, doubts were raised over the project. First, ICMR is a regulator of drugs and vaccine approval body and if it partners with a private company, it would favour the private company compared to others. Since India was in desperate need of vaccine, no one raised any objection. But the conflict of interest was there. Then came the sensational announcement - ICMR claimed that a vaccine will be out by

August 15. When hue and cry were raised as to how could the company complete Phase-I to Phase-IV trials even if these were clubbed, a sheepish ICMR said that it was not a deadline and the statement was misconstrued. There is no vaccine while we are approaching December. Then the announcement by DCGI that Covid-19 vaccine should be allowed even if it had the efficacy level of 50-60%. Normally, as per global standards, a vaccine should have an efficacy level of 75% plus. But the DCGI reduced it to 50-60%. The medical fraternity was not convinced. Now, the country is desperately waiting for a Covid-19 vaccine and the Prime Minister is personally holding a meeting almost every month.

Meira as AICC chief!

Utter confusion prevails in the Congress party as Gandhi family loyalists are not sure how Rahul Gandhi will conduct himself to return as party president in February-March. There are many among the loyalists who are pitching for his early return as

interim president. They think he should not delay the process. The revamped Central Election Authority (CEA) is working overtime to hold elections to the Congress Working Committee through 1,500-odd AICC delegates. Rahul Gandhi may be confirmed later as full-time president. On the other hand, the dissidents are equally determined to prevent Rahul's return as party chief. They are working on a couple of names who could be acceptable as party chief such as former Speaker Meira Kumar who is a Dalit leader from Bihar. She will have 3-4 vice-presidents to strengthen the party in various parts of the country. Since Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is disinclined not to don the mantle at this juncture, dissidents did not find any other suitable name so far.

Nadda on seventh heaven

Something unprecedented happened when the PM visited BJP headquarters for a "thanks giving" function to voters after the victory in Bihar. The win was a turning point for the BJP and its outcome

was crucial for the BJP and the NDA. Reason? A defeat would have galvanised the Congress and leadership of Rahul Gandhi and consolidated the Opposition unity. It would have badly affected the BJP in the ensuing polls for the five state Assemblies in May next year - West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry. Therefore, the PM was extremely happy and wanted to send a signal. During the course of his address, the PM suddenly said, "Nadda ji aap aage chalo hum tumhare saath hain" (Nadda ji, you lead from the front and we are with you). Heads turned as such right-handed compliments were not given to any of Nadda's predecessors by Modi in the past however big the victory in state elections had been. When Modi repeated the compliment, Nadda got up from his seat to thank Modi.

STC begins winding up

When the Modi government came to power, it had big plans to sell or shut down ailing PSUs. But six years into power,

the government realized that it's easier said than done. Hence, it came out with a bonanza to BSNL/MTNL employees to get rid of major work force and spent billions of rupees in giving VRS to them. But the revival of the BSNL is far from over as there is hardly any plan in the offing. The more than Rs one lakh crore VRS package may have gone for a toss. The revival, however, is miles away. But it may be achieving at least one feather in the cap - selling Air India and BPCL during this financial year itself. It watered down all the tough conditions for divestment and the government will be happy to sell AI for almost free and BPCL for a much lower valuation. It wanted to shut down STC six years ago and now the dream is finally coming true. It has been decided to delist the company on NSE and BSE and stop taking up any new business. The STC Board of Directors has issued notifications to close down all branches including Mumbai, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad by November 30 and others by December this year. Come 2021, STC may exist only on paper to resolve its ongoing legal and other issues.



Terrorists are making desperate attempts to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir to disrupt the District Development Council polls
MM NARAVANE | CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF

KULHAD TO REPLACE PLASTIC TEA CUPS

Tea will be sold in environment-friendly 'kulhads' (earthen cups) in place of plastic cups at all railway stations in the country, Railway minister Piyush Goyal said Sunday



of the day quote

The life and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev are inspiration for all human beings
RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

In BJP/RSS vision of India, Adivas and Dalits should not have access to education. Stopping scholarships for SC-ST students is their way of ends justifying their means
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Why is the price of potato so high? The crisis has been created artificially by those patronised by the ruling party. It has been created by those who take cut money for everything
DILIP GHOSH | BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Illegal gun factory unearthed

Patna: A small illegal gun factory run by a history-sheeter was unearthed in Chainpur area of Kaimur district in Bihar on Sunday after three persons were held during checking of vehicles, police said. In another case, CRPF men also seized arms and ammunition hidden in Naxal-affected Gaya district. "We are holding special vehicle-checking drive in the district, during which three youths riding a motorcycle were signalled to stop in Chainpur area. The accused tried to escape by taking a U-turn from the spot, but alert policemen chased and overpowered them after a brief chase," Kaimur Superintendent of Police Dilnawaz Ahmed said.

IEDs unearthed

Raipur: A day after a Naxal IED blast killed a CoBRA officer and injured nine commandos in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, security forces uncovered two such devices planted by ultras in Dantewada Sunday, an official said. The IEDs, each weighing 5 kilograms, were unearthed from beneath a road between Dhanikarka and Surna villages under Kuakonda police station limits, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said.

3 found dead

Srinagar: Three women, including a mother and her daughter, were found dead under mysterious circumstances on Sunday in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district. Police said the three women were found dead in the Lari village of Uri tehsil in Baramulla district. Reports said the tragedy could have been caused by a cooking gas cylinder blast, but the police said the cause of the death was yet to be established adding that a police team has been rushed to the village.

Drugs seized

Panaji: Hashish worth ₹35 lakh approximately was seized in three simultaneous raids conducted by the Goa Police's Anti-Narcotics Cell in the beach village of Arambol in North Goa Sunday, police said. Three persons were also arrested during the raids.

Body found

Barabanki (UP): The body of a 19-year-old girl gone missing two days ago was found stuffed in a jute bag dumped at a desolate place in the Ramnagar police station area of the district, police said Sunday. Barabanki Superintendent of Police Arvind Chaturvedi said the body was recovered on Saturday a day after she had gone missing from her home.

PM defends new farm laws



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

bodies about the new laws are misplaced, saying existing support measures like the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and state-run 'mandis' will remain in place.

In his address, Modi said "correct information, away from rumours and confusion of any kind" is a big strength for people in any field, as he spoke about a couple of farmers involved with innovative practices in the agricultural sector.

With the broadcast coming on the

New Delhi, Nov 29: Amid protests by a section of farmers against the recently enacted farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted Sunday that these reforms have opened doors of new opportunities for farmers and bestowed on them new rights.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said the farm laws have begun mitigating the troubles of farmers in a short period of time since their enactment in September as he cited the example of a Maharashtra farmer who used their provisions to get the money a trader had promised but not paid to him in time.

New dimensions related to agriculture and related fields have emerged as the recently enacted farm reforms have opened doors of new possibilities for farmers, he said. "The demands, which were made by farmers for years and regarding which every political party at some point of time had made promises, have been fulfilled... These reforms have not only freed them of various shackles but also given them new rights and new opportunities. These rights have begun mitigating farmers' problems in a very short span of time," he said.

The prime minister's remarks come at a time when thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, have dug in their heels at Delhi's border points and hundreds have gathered at the city's Burari ground to protest against the new farm laws.

The central government has reached out to them, underscoring its willingness to hold talks with them. It has also asserted that concerns expressed by some farm

New dimensions related to agriculture and related fields have emerged as the recently enacted farm reforms have opened doors of new possibilities for farmers, Modi said

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said the farm laws have begun mitigating the troubles of farmers in a short period of time since their enactment in September

eve of first Sikh guru Nanak Dev's birth anniversary and at a time of agitation from the farming community from Punjab, the prime minister also spoke extensively on his government's association with some significant events related to Sikhs and lauded their spirit of serving others.

"I feel that I have been specially blessed by Guru Sahib that he has associated me very closely with his work," Modi said. While Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary celebration falls on Monday, the Modi government was also associated with Guru Gobind Singh's 350th birth anniversary events a few years ago. Next year, the 400th birth anniversary of Guru Teg Bahadur will be observed, he noted.

Modi said, "I feel very grateful that Guru Sahib has granted me the opportunity to serve regularly. Opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor in November last year was historic. I will cherish this lifelong in my heart. It is the good fortune of all of us that we got the opportunity to serve Shri Darbaar Sahib once more. It has now become easier for our Sikh brothers and sisters abroad to send contributions in the service of Darbaar Sahib."

MAN KILLED OVER ₹200

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aligarh, Nov 29: A 30-year-old man was shot dead in a crowded market in Civil Lines area here after he allegedly refused to lend ₹200 to an acquaintance, police said Sunday.

Ansar Ahmad, a father of three, owned a tyre repair shop at Shamshad Market under Civil Lines Police Station and was killed on Saturday by Asif, police said. The accused is a drug addict and managed to flee the spot after committing the crime, Superintendent of Police (City) Abhishek Kumar told reporters.

According to police, Asif had on Saturday approached Ahmad wanting to lend his motorcycle, however, the request was turned down.

Later in the day, the accused again landed at Ahmad's shop and demanded ₹200 from him. As soon as the victim refused, Asif took out a country-made pistol from his pocket and before any of the bystanders could react, shot Ahmad in the head. He then grabbed a two-wheeler parked nearby and escaped, they said.

Hold talks with Pak: Mehbooba

She accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of "murdering the democracy" in the name of District Development Council (DDC) polls as alliance candidates were being confined to homes while others enjoyed full freedom to campaign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Nov 29: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti Sunday said elections are no solution to the Kashmir problem and called for a dialogue between India and Pakistan to address the issue.

She also accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of "murdering the democracy" in the name of District Development Council (DDC) polls as alliance candidates were being confined to homes while others enjoyed full freedom to campaign.

"Election is no solution to the Kashmir problem. There should be a dialogue between the two countries. If we are talking to China, which has taken our land, why not with Pakistan? Is it about being a Muslim country because everything is communal now," Mehbooba said at her Gupkar residence.

The former chief minister was not allowed to address a press conference on Friday after police prevented her from visiting PDP youth

WE ARE FINE



Spotted owls rescued by forest department officials from an abandoned house, at Santipur in Nadia district, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

MANHUNT LAUNCHED TO TRACE MISSING PILOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Nov 29: Nine warships, 14 aircraft as well as Indian Navy fast interceptor craft have been deployed to trace the missing pilot of a MiG-29K trainer aircraft which ditched mid-sea off Goa on November 26, the Indian Navy said Sunday.

The Navy statement said that some debris of the crashed fighter jet was recovered during the search process



The Navy statement also said that some debris of the crashed fighter jet was recovered during the search process. "The Indian Navy's search and rescue effort to locate the second pilot of the MiG-29K trainer aircraft which ditched off Goa on Nov 26, continues with extensive deployment of naval ships and aircraft," the statement said.

"Some debris of the aircraft including landing gear, turbo charger, fuel tank engine and wing engine cowling has been located," it added. "In addition to nine warships and 14 aircraft engaged in the search efforts, naval Fast Interceptor Craft are also deployed to search waters along the coast. Further, the marine and coastal police are on the look-

out and nearby fishing villages have been sensitised," the statement said.

Another pilot who was also on-board the ill-fated plane was rescued soon after the mishap, which occurred mid-sea. The MiG-29K aircraft was operating from on board aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, off Goa.

Chandigarh to get another landmark -- Museum of Trees

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Nov 29: Punjab Governor VP Singh Badnore will virtually inaugurate a unique environmental landmark in Chandigarh -- the Museum of Trees - to commemorate the 551st birth anniversary celebrations of first Sikh master, Guru Nanak Dev, on November 30.

Conceived and curated by former IAS officer and author DS Jaspal, the Museum of Trees nestled near the Chandigarh Railway Station comprises a sacred grove created out of genetic clones of 12 sacred trees associated with the Sikh religion.

The naming of sacred Sikh shrines after trees is unique to the religion. As many as 59 Sikh shrines are named after 19 such trees. The project, first-of-its kind in the world, has been funded by the Ministry of Culture and promoted by the Chandigarh Nature and Health Society, a registered NGO.

It is India's only outdoor walk-

The project has been funded by the Ministry of Culture and promoted by the Chandigarh Nature and Health Society

through museum where visitors can see replicas of different trees considered sacred by the Sikh community. Alongside each tree eight-foot high panels have been set up, carrying a picture of the tree, along with a description of its botanical features as well as the association between it and historical and religious shrine it is associated with.

To preserve and propagate the surviving sacred trees within various gurdwaras by reproducing true genotypes of the parent trees, the museum has successfully reproduced genetic replicas of 12 sacred trees.

WHY BURARI GROUND FAILS TO ATTRACT PROTESTERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 29: As thousands of farmers continue to rally at three interstate border points of Delhi, they have steadfastly refused to accept the government offer to hold their proposed protest against the three farm laws at Burari ground in north-west Delhi.

The farmers are adamant on rallying either at the Ramlila Maidan or the Jantar Mantar in central Delhi to voice their demands. So, why are the farmers reluctant to go to Burari ground, also known as Nirankari Maidan, to hold their protest?

The reason is elementary, so to say. It is the location that has prevented Burari ground from offer-

ing itself as a protest site over the years. Those fighting for a cause feel that Jantar Mantar and Ramlila ground are better options if their voices are to be heard by the powers that be.

Jantar Mantar -- located in the city's heart and only around 2 km from Parliament -- is the much desired protest site though it can't handle very large crowds. On the other hand, the Ramlila ground can handle a much larger crowd in central Delhi. Compared with the two, Burari ground is situated at the far outer edge of Delhi and hence is down on protesters' preferred venues.

Way back in 2011, Delhi Police had offered the Burari ground, sit-



uated on the Delhi outskirts as we move towards Mukarba Chowk, as a protest site to social activist Anna Hazare for his proposed hunger strike. But it did not happen. Anna later organised his sit-in at the Ramlila ground that lasted 12 days and witnessed swarms of supporters who rallied around for his cause.

The Ramlila ground was also the venue for yoga guru Swami Ramdev's indefinite hunger strike in June 2011 over his demand to bring back black money stashed in tax havens abroad. Many prominent political rallies and swearing-in ceremonies have also been held at the Ramlila ground and it remains the preferred location for those

who want to gather large crowds. On the other hand, Jantar Mantar has been preferred by those who demanded justice for Nirbhaya, voiced demand for 'One Rank One Pension' scheme for defence veterans, and even fought for justice for Hathras case victim recently.

So, protesting farmers are reluctant to move to the Burari ground as they fear that they will not be under the spotlight. Many think that their demands would be better heard if they protest either at Jantar Mantar or Ramlila ground. That's why only a few hundred farmers moved to the Burari ground on Saturday while thousands others decided to stay put at the Delhi-Haryana and Delhi-UP borders.

international



I condemn the killing of our hardworking farmers by terrorists in Borno State. The entire country is hurt by these senseless killings
MUHAMMADU BUHARI | NIGERIAN PRESIDENT

POPE WARNS CHURCH AGAINST MEOCRITY

Pope Francis, joined by the church's newest cardinals in Mass Sunday, warned against mediocrity as well as seeking out "godfathers" to promote one's own career



of the day quote

I have always advocated that military is not the option to resolve the Afghan conflict and now we are pursuing the same policy



IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER

The higher the infection numbers, the harder it will be to introduce steps for reopening



SEBASTIAN KURZ | CHANCELLOR OF AUSTRIA

I don't want to deter people from serving in a public position because it is very honourable in this set of circumstances to be so unjustifiably sanctioned by the US government



CARRIE LAM | HONG KONG LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Protests outside Netanyahu home

Jerusalem: About 1,000 protesters gathered outside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's official residence in Jerusalem Saturday night, pressing ahead with their months-long campaign demanding his resignation. A mix of grassroots groups have held the weekly protests, saying Netanyahu should step down while he is on trial for corruption and because of his handling of the coronavirus in Israel.

Missing Indian found in Dubai

Dubai: An Indian man who was reported missing since November 9 a day after he reached Dubai on a tourist visa, has been found in a hospital in the city, his relatives have confirmed. Amrithalingam Samayamuthu, 46, from Tamil Nadu, had come to Dubai to take up a job, Gulf News had quoted his nephew Durai Maniraja as saying in an earlier report.

Volcano erupts in Indonesia

Jakarta: The Ili Lewotolok volcano in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara province erupted Sunday, spewing a column of ash 4,000 metres to the sky, authorities said. The ash column is thick and gray, moving to the east and the west, Xinhua news agency quoted the Agency Geological Disaster Mitigation as saying in a statement.

SA experts fear 2nd nCoV wave

Johannesburg: South Africa could face a devastating second wave of coronavirus in January if strict prevention measures are not enforced during the coming holidays, according to the head of the COVID-19 Ministerial Advisory Committee. Professor Salim Abdool Karim's warning was endorsed in separate concerns expressed by Health Minister Zweli Mkhize; the chair of the South African Medical Association, Dr Angelique Coetzee; and Professor Mosa Moshabela, chief medical specialist of rural health and dean of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Nursing and Public Health.

HK to close schools

Hong Kong: Hong Kong has reported 115 new coronavirus infections, the first time it has seen cases in the triple digits since August 2. The government Sunday also announced that classes at kindergarten, primary and secondary schools will be shut for the rest of the year in light of the worsening coronavirus situation in the city.

34 KILLED IN TWO SEPARATE SUICIDE BOMBINGS IN AFGHAN

AGENCIES

Kabul, Nov 29: At least 34 people were killed Sunday in two separate suicide bombings in Afghanistan that targeted a military base and a provincial chief, officials said. There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the attacks, which took place as Afghan government representatives and the Taliban hold face-to-face talks in Qatar for the first time to end the country's decades-long war.

In eastern Ghazni province, 31 soldiers were killed and 24 others wounded when the attacker drove a military humvee full of explosives onto an army commando base before detonating the car bomb, according to an official in Afghanistan's National Security Council, who spoke anonymously because he was not permitted to speak directly to the media. In southern Afghanistan, another suicide car bomber targeted



Afgan national army soldiers arrive at the site of a suicide bombing AP PHOTO

the convoy of a provincial council chief in Zabul, killing at least three people and wounding 21 others, including children, according to provincial spokesman Gul Islam Sial. The provincial council chief, Attajan Haqbayat,

survived the attack on Sunday with minor injuries, though one of his bodyguards was among those killed, said provincial police spokesman Hikmatullah Kochai. There has been a sharp rise in violence this year and a surge of attacks by the Taliban against Afghanistan's beleaguered security forces since the start of peace talks in September.

There have also been deadly attacks this month claimed by Islamic State militants in Afghanistan, including a horrific attack on Kabul University that killed 22 people, most of them students.

SUSPECTED EXTREMISTS KILL 40 FARMERS

Maidguri: Suspected members of the Islamic militant group Boko Haram killed at least 40 rice farmers and fishermen while they were harvesting crops in Nigeria's northern Borno State, officials said. The attack was staged Saturday in a rice field in Garin Kwasebe, a Borno community known for rice farming, on the day residents of the state were casting votes for the first time in 13 years to elect local government councils, though many didn't go to cast their ballots. The farmers were reportedly rounded up and summarily killed by armed insurgents.

Woman gives birth to baby with COVID-19 antibodies

REUTERS

Singapore, Nov 29: A Singaporean woman, who was infected with the novel coronavirus in March when she was pregnant, has given birth to a baby with antibodies against the virus, offering a new clue as to whether the infection can be transferred from mother to child.

The baby was born this month without COVID-19 but with the virus antibodies, the Straits Times newspaper reported Sunday, citing the mother.

"My doctor suspects I have transferred my COVID-19 antibodies to him during my pregnancy," Celine Ng-Chan told the paper. Ng-Chan had been mildly ill from the disease and was discharged from hospital after two-and-a-half weeks, the Straits Times said. Ng-Chan and the National University Hospital (NUH), where

she gave birth, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The World Health Organisation says it is not yet known whether a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her foetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. To date, the active virus has not been found in samples of fluid around the baby in the womb or in breast milk.

Doctors in China have reported the detection and decline over time of COVID-19 antibodies in babies born to women with the coronavirus disease, according to an article published in October in the journal Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Transmission of the new coronavirus from mothers to newborns is rare, doctors from New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center reported in October in JAMA Pediatrics.

Thai pro-democracy protesters rally outside army base

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, Nov 29: Thailand's indefatigable pro-democracy activists took to Bangkok's streets again Sunday, this time to protest the army as they push forward with their campaign for sweeping reforms, including to the nation's monarchy.

Around 800 protesters gathered in the afternoon and in early evening marched to the base of the 11th Infantry Regiment, which is closely associated with the country's royal palace.

Their number grew to well over 1,000 as they settled in for speeches by protest leaders. An advance group of protesters had already

pulled away two decrepit buses that had been used to block the entrance to the base and removed strands of razor wire.

A large contingent of riot police, several rows deep, stood their ground in front of the gate but there didn't appear to be an imminent chance of a clash.

The protesters believe that the army undermines democracy in Thailand, and that King Maha Vajiralongkorn wields too much power and influence in what is supposed to be a democratic constitutional monarchy.

The student-led protesters for months now have been demanding reforms to make the monarchy more accountable.

Britain expects 'very significant' week for Brexit talks

AGENCIES

London, Nov 29: Britain and the European Union are heading into a "very significant" week, British foreign minister Dominic Raab said on Sunday, as talks over a trade deal enter their final days with serious differences yet to be resolved.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier told reporters in London that "works continue, even Sunday" on his way to a negotiating session, as both sides look for a deal to prevent disruption to almost \$1 trillion of trade at the end of December.

"This is a very significant week, the last real major week, subject to any further postponement... we're down to really two basic issues," Raab told the BBC.

Despite missing several self-imposed deadlines, the negotiations have failed to bridge differences on competition policy and the distribution of fishing rights.

But Britain's transitional EU exit agreement - during which the bloc's rules continue to apply - expires December 31, and Britain says it will not seek any extension. A deal would have to be ratified by both

FOR A CAUSE



A protester, demanding the resignation of President Alejandro Giammattei, paints her footprints in front of the police line that stands guard at the National Palace in Guatemala City

PTI PHOTO

Chinese Defence Min in Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Nov 29: China's Defence Minister Gen Wei Fenghe Sunday met Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and held talks with Nepal Army chief Gen Purna Chandra Thapa on various issues of bilateral interest, aimed at bolstering bilateral military cooperation and taking the existing friendly ties to a new height.

Gen Wei, who is also a State Councillor, held bilateral talks with Army chief Gen Thapa at the army headquarters here during his day-long "working visit" to Nepal, said a statement issued by the Nepal Army.

"Bilateral discussions were then held at the delegation-level mainly on issues pertaining to resumption of training and student exchange program and follow up on defence

assistance that have been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic," the statement said.

The Chinese defence minister is leading a 21-member delegation. It said the Chinese minister viewed both the proposals "positively and affirmed that the bilateral cooperation should resume as soon as possible, including exchange of high level visits."

He also pledged to provide additional assistance to the Nepali Army in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the statement said. The Nepali Army expressed confidence that "the visit will help in further strengthening and expanding the cordial military-to-military relations between the two countries."

Gen Wei also took part in various programs organised at the

Army Headquarters. "After the bilateral meeting, General Wei and his delegation were given a short presentation on the history and roles of the Nepali Army," the army statement said. He was also presented with a Guard of Honour.

The Chinese defence minister paid courtesy calls on President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister Oli, who also holds the defence portfolio. Earlier in the day, Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa welcomed Gen Wei at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

In the first week of November, Indian Army chief Gen. M M Naravane paid a three-day visit to Nepal aimed at resetting bilateral ties that came under severe strain following a bitter border row between the two countries.



sides, leaving little time for new delay. "The bottom line is in the ordi-

nary course of things we need to get a deal done over the next week or maybe another couple of days be-

yond that," Raab told Times Radio in a separate interview. Earlier, he had signalled some progress on the 'level playing field' provisions which look to ensure fair competition between Britain and the EU, and said fishing remained the most difficult issue to solve.

Despite accounting for 0.1% of the British economy, fishing rights have become a totemic issue for both sides. Britain has so far rejected EU proposals and remains adamant that as an independent nation it must have full control of its waters.

Over 150 held in anti-lockdown protests in London

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Nov 29: Scotland Yard has said its officers policing anti-lockdown protests in central London have made 155 arrests as part of early interventions to prevent people from gathering amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Metropolitan Police made arrests for offences including breaching coronavirus regulations, assaulting a police officer and possession of drugs.

Save Our Rights UK, a group holding demonstrations against the stay-at-home rules, said it held protests on Saturday against the government's COVID-19 lockdown. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had October 31 announced a second lockdown in England as the country crossed the grim milestone of 1 million coronavirus cases. The lockdown took effect November 5 and will last until December 2.

Large gatherings are banned under the coronavirus lockdown restrictions. The Metropolitan Police Saturday said its officers made a number of early interventions to prevent people from gathering and urge them to go home. As part of this, coaches transporting protesters into the UK capital were intercepted and those who did not turn back were either arrested or issued fines or fixed penalty notices under the coronavirus legislation, it said.

"This was a challenging day for Met, City of London and British Transport Police officers," Chief Superintendent Stuart Bell, policing commander on the protests, said Saturday.

"On Friday, we made it very clear how we would police this event, warning those looking to attend that they risked facing enforcement action if they attended a gathering in London," he said.

"The EU have just got to recognise the point of principle here," Raab told Times Radio.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier, who met through the weekend with UK counterpart David Frost, has said there are still "significant divergences."

If there is no deal, New Year's Day will bring huge disruption, with the overnight imposition of tariffs and other barriers to UK-EU trade. That will hurt both sides, but the burden will fall most heavily on Britain, which does almost half its trade with the EU.

