



ROLE MODEL

Actor Shilpa Shetty Kundra says practicing yoga helps her kick-start a day on an energetic note

LEISURE P2



BENGALI PRIDE VS HINDUTVA

TMC will embrace 'Bengali pride' as its main poll plank for 2021 Assembly polls to counter BJP's Hindutva

TWO STATES P7



CHINA'S DAM ON BRAHMAPUTRA

India concerned over China's plan to build a major hydropower project on Brahmaputra river in Tibet

INTERNATIONAL P10

Modi govt authoritarian: Farmers

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Nov 30: The agitating farmers Monday accused the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre of being communal, fascist and authoritarian, and rejected the government's demand to assemble at the Sant Nirankari ground in Burari to stage their protest.

Addressing a press conference here at the Delhi-Haryana border in Singhu, Darshan Pal, President of the Krantikari Kisan Union's Punjab chapter, said, "The Modi government speaks something else on face but has a dagger on its side. The BJP is communal, fascist and authoritarian."

Pal said that the farmers will hold another meeting to strengthen the movement. "We reject the proposal. We have come here to tell our story and we won't step back," he said, rejecting



FACEOFF

The new farm laws have been brought in for benefit of farmers. We will see and experience benefits of these new laws in the coming days, says Modi

Farmers are opposing black laws. They've left their farms and kin behind. Do you want to stand with them or Modi's capitalist friends? asks Rahul

the offer of the government to move to the Burari ground for the protest. Activist Yogendra Yadav also addressed the press conference and described the farmers' protest as a "historic" moment. Yadav said, "This is happening after 31 years. Previously, Mahendra Singh Tikait had brought the farmers together."

Yadav added that a lie is being spread that the farmers are unaware. "Today the reality is that each and every child of Punjab and Haryana is completely aware of the draconian laws," he said. Farmers from several parts of the country have gathered in Delhi over the three controversial farm laws passed by the Parliament recently.

They are demanding repealing of these new agrarian laws. Prime Minister Narendra Modi backed the three farm laws during his monthly radio broadcast programme Sunday.

Protests to intensify



NEW DELHI/SONIPAT: The shadow of the pandemic looms large and experts warn their agitation could well be a COVID-19 superspreader but farmers, some in masks and many without them, protesting in Delhi and at gateways into the city say the new farm laws pose a greater threat to their survival.

As thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana but also from UP and Rajasthan, protest at the national capital's border points and in north Delhi's Burari ground for the fifth day on Monday, COVID-19 continues its spread. There have been few signs of social distancing during the protests that started last week with the farmers, banded under various organisations, leaving their homes and moving towards Delhi. "A protest is a mass gathering and thus from a public health perspective, I would urge protective and preventive behaviour against the spread of coronavirus infection, failing which a superspreading event might set in," cautioned Dr Samiran Panda, head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases division at the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Seeking strict compliance with norms, he said it is important to note that SARS-COV-2 is a transmission efficient virus and such gatherings are conducive to its spread. Many of the farmers, threatening to block all five entry points into the capital, said they are aware the infection is still raging but the Centre's new farm laws are a bigger threat. Gurmeet Singh from Faridkot in Punjab, for instance, has been at the Burari ground, one of the largest in the city, for three days and counting. And he has no intention of moving. For him, and hundreds of other farmers at Delhi where they were allowed to assemble, the three contentious farm laws are a bigger disease.

No repeal of farm laws: Modi

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Nov 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday resisted calls for the repeal of farm reforms that have ignited the biggest protests by farmers in years around Delhi, saying they were being misled and that deregulation would benefit them.

Thousands of people from the big farming state of Punjab were camped out on the outskirts of Delhi for a fifth day demanding that they be allowed to stage protests in the city centre against the new laws that open up India's

tightly regulated farm produce market.

Farmers who could earlier sell grains and other products only at neighbouring government-regulated wholesale markets can now sell them across the country, including to big food processing companies and retailers. But farm groups and opposition parties say the government will eventually abolish the wholesale markets where growers were assured of a minimum support price, leaving small farmers at the mercy of corporate agri-businesses. Speaking at a public rally during a visit to his political con-

stituency of Varanasi in northern India, Modi dismissed the fears as misplaced. "The new farm laws have been brought in for benefit of the farmers. We will see and experience benefits of these new laws in the coming days," he said. He blamed the opposition for spreading rumours about the future of farmers. The farm sector contributes 15% of India's \$2.9 trillion GDP and employs its 1.3 bn people. The government says the deregulation of the sector will attract investment and fix the supply chains that lose a quarter of India's produce to wastage.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We have no option but to follow Modi ji. Farmers are unwilling to talk to us and call us Godi media.

Man sets own house afire after kin refuse to serve dog meat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Nov 30: In a shocking incident, a resident of Kirtanpur village under Kankadahada area in Dhenkanal district set his house on fire Monday after his wife and mother allegedly refused to cook dog meat for him. The accused has been identified as Shukadeb Pradhan.

The matter came to the fore after the wife and mother of the accused lodged an FIR against him at Kankadahada police station.

According to them, Pradhan had brought a dog to his home Monday morning. He then asked his wife and mother to kill the dog and cook the meat for him. However, the duo rejected Pradhan's proposal. Taking advantage of the spat that followed the refusal, the dog fled the spot.

An angry Pradhan then tried to manhandle his wife and mother. However, the two managed to escape. Then he set his house on fire.

Police, after registering a case, are on the lookout for Pradhan. The accused has also fled the village after setting his house on fire.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	30.9°C	30.0°C
TEMP MIN	16.0°C	14.8°C
Humidity	89%	78%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

ZERO CONVICTION OF ERRANT COPS IN STATE

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, Nov 30: Police officials often found misusing the unfettered power vested with them to maintain peace and public order hardly face the consequences.

Several such incidents related to custodial torture and police high-handedness have come to the fore in Odisha. The death of two persons in police custody in Puri and Rourkela within 24 hours sparked a state-wide public outcry.

The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHR) held police personnel guilty of abusing power. A few days back, the rights body asked the state government to pay

Rs.1.5 lakh compensation to the family of a tribal youth from Raygada who was killed by security forces in a fake encounter in 2016. However, the erring cops rarely get punishment for the wrongdoings.

A perusal of data from National Crime Records Bureau and Bureau of Police Research and Development revealed that most of such complaints against police officials went unheard. The victims, who moved various forums seeking action against cops, failed to get justice. The data also revealed that a large number of complaints are yet to go through trials. According to NCRB, 40 complaints had been received against police officials in 2014. Out

of this, departmental inquiry was instituted in 14 cases, magisterial inquiry in one case while judicial inquiry against 21 cases. The accused cops faced trial in 10 cases in 2014. The number of complaints against police officials rose to 96 in 2015 out of which cases were registered against 95. Similarly, 55 cops were arrested in 2015. Out of 47 cops who faced trial in 2015, two were acquitted while trial is pending in other cases. 35 policemen were arrested in 64 cases registered in 2016. As per the record, police submitted charge-sheets against 25 in 2016. In 2017, the number of cases registered against cops stood at 44 out of which 14 were either quashed or stayed by courts. Charge-sheets were submitted against 12 but none was arrested in 2017.

In 2018, four police personnel were arrested and 19 cases were registered while in 2019, 32 cases were registered and four were charge-sheeted in 2019. None of the accused cops faced arrest in 2018 and 2019. Trial was completed in two cases over last six years while officers involved in these cases were acquitted. The complainants have been awaiting justice in other cases.



A file photo of people protesting custodial deaths in Puri

M-Webster's top word of 2020 not a shocker: Pandemic

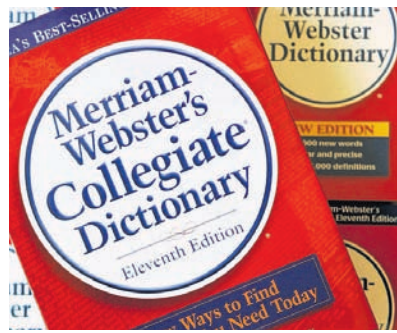
AGENCIES

New York, Nov 30: If you were to choose a word that rose above most in 2020, which word would it be? Ding, ding, ding: Merriam-Webster Monday announced "pandemic" as its 2020 word of the year. "That probably isn't a big shock," Peter Sokolowski, editor at large for Merriam-Webster, told The Associated Press.

"Often the big news story has a technical word that's associated with it and in this case, the word pandemic is not just technical but has become general. It's probably the word by which we'll refer to this period in the future," he said. The word took on urgent specificity in March, when the coronavirus crisis was designated a pandemic, but it started to trend up on Merriam-Webster.Com as early as January and again in February when the first US deaths and outbreaks on cruise ships occurred.

On March 11, when the World Health Organisation declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic, lookups on the site for pandemic spiked hugely. Site interest for the word has remained significantly high through the year, Sokolowski said.

By huge, Sokolowski means searches for pandemic on March 11 were 115,806 per cent higher than lookups experienced on the same date last year. Pandemic, with roots in Latin and Greek, is a combination of "pan," for all, and "demos,"



for people or population.

The latter is the same root of "democracy," Sokolowski noted. The word pandemic dates to the mid-1600s, used broadly for "universal" and more specifically to disease in a medical text in the 1660s, he said. That was after the

TRENDING UP

The word took on urgent specificity in March, but it started to trend up on Merriam-Webster.Com as early as January and again in February

Lookups on the site for pandemic spiked hugely when the WHO declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic March 11 this year

plagues of the Middle Ages, Sokolowski said. He attributes the lookup traffic for pandemic not entirely to searchers who didn't know what it meant but also to those on the hunt for more detail, or for inspiration or comfort. "We see that the word love is looked up around

reopening of temples and other religious places of worship.

"DM/municipal commissioner may permit public worship at religious places with appropriate curbs based on local assessment of the situation with regard to spread of Covid-19," it said. Cinemas, swimming pools, entertainment complexes, theatres, auditoriums, and similar places will remain shut. However, swimming pools under the control of government will open for training of sports persons.

Marriage related gatherings have been allowed with a ceiling of 200 persons and funeral/last rites with a ceiling of 50 persons. All academic, technical and skill development institutions (except for medical colleges) will be shut till December 31 or such date as will be decided by the concerned departments. Earlier, the school and mass education department issued a notification for closure of schools till December end.

Anganwadi Centres will be closed. Educational bodies can conduct exams, evaluations and other activities. The government has permitted open air theatres subject to compliance of Covid protocols.

Biden fractures foot during play with dog

AGENCIES

Washington, Nov 30: US President-elect Joe Biden has hairline fractures in his mid-foot and will likely require a walking boot for several weeks, his doctor said, after the Democratic leader slipped while playing with his dog.

Biden twisted his ankle Saturday when he slipped while playing with Major, his 2-year-old German shepherd. Biden, who celebrated his 78th birthday on November 20, is set to be the oldest president in US history when he is inaugurated January 20.

"Initial X-rays did not show any obvious fracture, but his clinical exam warranted more detailed imaging," Biden's physician Dr Kevin O'Connor said in a statement on Sunday.



"Follow-up CT scan confirmed hairline fractures of President-elect Biden's lateral and intermediate cuneiform bones, which are in the midfoot. It is anticipated that he may need a walking boot for several weeks," said O'Connor, Director (Executive Medicine) at The George Washington Medical Faculty Associates, on Biden's imaging results. He was examined by an orthopedist "out of an abundance of caution."

To avoid disrupting regularly scheduled appointments on Monday, arrangements were made for Biden to receive an X-ray and then an additional CT scan on Sunday afternoon, with the expected delays involved when opening closed offices and giving personnel time to set up, a Biden spokesperson said. President Donald Trump, a Republican, who has not yet conceded the November 3 presidential election, tweeted, "Get well soon!" Biden's last health record was released by Dr O'Connor in December 2019.

DISNEY'S SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO BOSEMAN

The late Hollywood star Chadwick Boseman has been honoured with a new opening montage in the original *Black Panther*, highlighting his appearance in the title role. The Walt Disney Company honoured Boseman on what would have been the late actor's 44th birthday November 29.



WHAT MADE KYLIE MINOGUE CRY

Singer Kylie Minogue says she cried when she heard her latest song, *Say Something*, for the first time. The 52-year-old singer felt an instant connection to the track, her first single from new album *Disco*. In the music video, the singer is seen riding a horse. She revealed that it was a last minute change.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you will land up in a tricky or hazardous situation. You will feel compelled to wade against the tide, which may not be such a productive thing, says Ganesh. Nothing seems to be going your way.

TAURUS
Today you are going to focus on enhancing your looks and appearance, says Ganesh. Instead of trying to seek satisfaction from within yourself you will be flaunting your fine clothes, your hairstyles. A visit to a beauty parlour cannot be ruled out.

GEMINI
You will feel out of sorts today. This could result in distances between you and your loved ones. You may fall into the wrong sorts of debates on account of your ill-temper. You need to keep a curb on your emotions to perform better, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You are most likely to appear edgy and hyper-critical to others, says Ganesh. Remain your typical poised self. Try not to be harsh to others, if you wish to save your relationships and sustain a reputable image.

LEO
You will pay more attention to matters at home. You may take up home renovation projects. You may end up replacing the entire furniture at your place even. You will spend the day enjoying with your family members and friends, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Confidently take on the challenges that in all likelihood will test your business abilities, especially the ones that are related to your investments and monetary matters. You will most probably come up with novel ideas to solve long-pending issues, and Ganesh says that this will be very effective.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you will be busy in your work field today and will be able to attain your goals in your work field today. Your level of enthusiasm will be at its peak. Today you may be able to meet with a person from the opposite sex who will be your future partner.

SCORPIO
You are a visionary and today you work towards building a successful future. But, expecting an instant result would be unfair. You need to have patience to bring in those dynamic changes in your life. Wait and watch, the patience would reap sweet fruits!

SAGITTARIUS
You need to increase your tolerance power as you may have to face criticism from close ones. However, it is not feasible to please everyone around. You may just be happy doing basic favours for your loved ones. Ganesh asks you to be patient.

CAPRICORN
If you are planning to fly to foreign shores for further studies, start documentation and other preparations today, says Ganesh. Whether you are a student or not, on this favourable day, all you need to do is to make a priority list, follow it and finish off your work one by one.

AQUARIUS
Meeting people from the different walks of life, having a good conversation with them and widening the horizon of your knowledge - this will be the highlight of today for you.

PISCES
Are you fretting over the obstacles you are facing on the business front? Ganesh tackles the root of your problem and advises you to be patient and have faith in your undertakings. Good things will come your way, in good time.

Shilpa's mantra to start day on energetic note

Mumbai: Actress Shilpa Shetty prefers to kick-start her day on an energetic note, and yoga helps her prepare her for the day ahead.

The actress took to her Instagram Monday to share a video where she is seen performing Eka Pada Kapotasana.

"Beginning a new day and a new week on an energetic note may not always be the easiest thing to do. But, what we can do is stretch and flex our muscles well enough to



prepare ourselves for the day ahead," Shilpa wrote on Instagram along with a video.

In the video, the actress is seen in pink and black top and black pants, as she does yoga out in her garden.

Shilpa recently wrapped up shooting of *Nikamma*. She is all set to return to films after 13 years with two releases, *Hungama 2* and *Nikamma*.

IAN S



Alaya's witty tips for fans

Mumbai: Actress Alaya F. has a witty yet effective tip for fans who wish to strike an uber-slim pose during photo-ops.

In her new Instagram post, Alaya sits stretched backwards, cutting a slim frame. There's a trick to her svelte pose, if you go by her caption.

"Yes yes, I was sucking my stomach in and holding my breath," she wrote alongside the image, where she is seen wearing a burnt orange bralette paired black cycling shorts and a beige coat. The image has over one lakh likes on her Instagram page.

The actress recently celebrated her 23rd birthday and shared a couple of pictures from the celebrations. Alaya, daughter of actress Pooja Bedi, made her Hindi film debut with *Jawaani Jaaneman* earlier this year. She has a three-film deal with producer Jay Shewakramani.

IAN S



'Everybody loves an underdog story'

New Delhi: Filmmaker Hansal Mehta, who is currently riding high on the success of his new sports drama *Chhalaang*, has revealed why sports-based films do well.

According to Mehta, the story of an underdog resonates with the audiences.

"I think everybody loves a good underdog story. Everybody loves sports and an underdog story. I mean who doesn't like an underdog fighting. Who doesn't



HANSAL MEHTA

love watching that? That is the reason my show *Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story* worked because it is an underdog story," Mehta said.

Chhalaang, starring Rajkumar Rao and Nushratt Bharuccha, revolves around a PT teacher and sports education.

He also went down memory lane to recall his experience of working with ailing actor Rahul Roy who suffered a brain stroke Sunday while shooting for *LAC - Live the Battle* in Kargil.

IAN S

Konark to witness twin tourist events from today

KONARK DANCE FESTIVAL, ORGANISED FOR OVER LAST THREE DECADES, SHOWCASES THE BEST OF INDIA'S TRADITIONAL AND CLASSICAL DANCE FORMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Odisha's prime coastal tourism hub of Konark will once again witness a global confluence of arts through the twin annual events of the Konark Festival of classical dance performances with the grand Sun Temple in the backdrop and the International Sand Art Festival.

The 31st edition of the Konark Dance Festival being organised by Odisha Tourism will be held at the Open Air Auditorium with the magnificent Konark Sun Temple from 1st - 5th December 2020, between 6:00 and 8:30 pm. The event showcases the best of India's traditional



and classical dance forms, besides offering interesting insights into the rich cultural heritage of the country. A solitary splendour par excellence, folk-

lore and mythology have created layers of legends shrouding the genesis of this world heritage monument built in the 13th century A.D. Leading exponents and dance enthusiasts of almost all main classical dance forms of India including Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Kuchipudi and Kathak will take part in the five-day classical dance carnival, adding to the appeal of the event that has few parallels elsewhere.

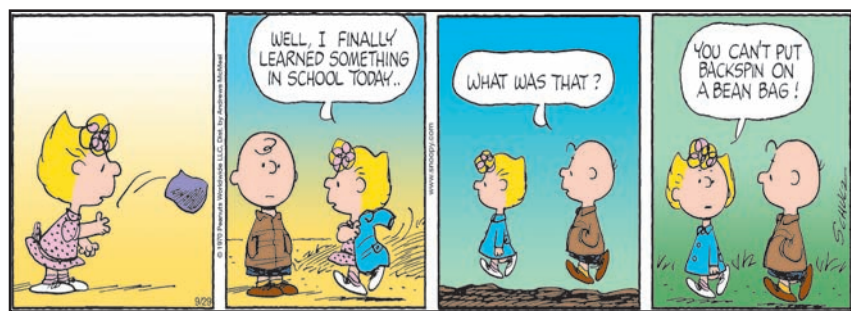
Acclaimed Odissi exponent Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty and her group Orissa Dance Academy will perform on the first day of the festival followed by a performance by Bharatanatyam dancer Sheela Unnikrishnan of Sridevi Nrithyalaya,

Chennai.

On the other hand, the 9th edition of the International Sand Art Festival with Padma Shri award and globally renowned sand artist Sudarshan Pattnaik as its brand ambassador and chief curator, will be held coinciding with the Konark Festival, on the pristine Chandrabhaga Beach, three km away from the Sun Temple. The event will span the entire day from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Keeping in view the COVID-19 global pandemic the event will be organised following protocols issued by Government of Odisha and Government of India. The event of 2020 will witness participation of 70 artists from across India.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

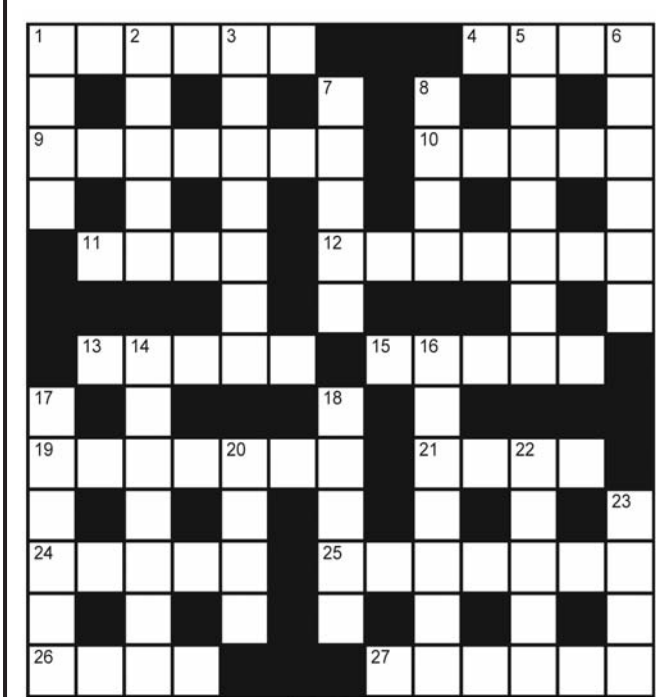


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

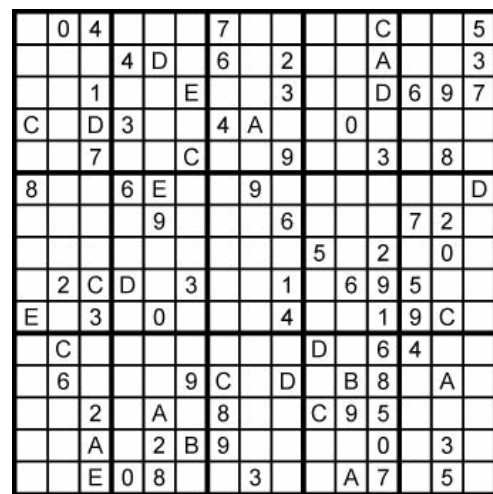


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- Across**
- 1 Russian capital
 - 4 Hunt for
 - 9 Spartan
 - 10 Summary
 - 11 Pacific island nation
 - 12 Swiss cheese
 - 13 Birds of prey
 - 15 Sign of life
 - 19 Picture
 - 21 Taxing trip
 - 24 Watchful
 - 25 Booked
 - 26 Boat propellers
 - 27 2004 Olympics site
 - Down**
 - 1 Honeyed drink
 - 2 Raw fish dish
 - 3 Stone pillar
 - 5 Surpasses
 - 6 Smoked herring
 - 7 Neutral shade
 - 8 Mrs., in Bonn
 - 14 Rookie
 - 16 High-strung
 - 17 Shrew
 - 18 Flu symptom
 - 20 Greek letter
 - 22 Tidal bore
 - 23 Time to beware

SUDOKU

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

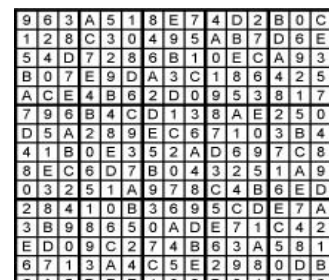


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

FOCUS ENVIRONMENT

GLOBAL 'WASTE' PANDEMIC



The global distribution of population compared to percentage of waste generation shows China and India to be major contributors (36% of world's population with 28% share in municipal solid waste) closely followed by the USA (4% world's population contributing 12% of the waste!)

Korea is highly encouraging. South Korea adopted a waste charging policy way back in 1995 and observed that the overall waste disposal rate substantially dropped by 40% within a few years. The recycling rate increased to 60%, whereas the economic benefits of the recycling industry increased from HK\$1.7 billion in 2001 to HK\$7 billion in 2009. The "per Bag Trash Collection Fee" system was worked well in Seoul after it was adopted from Taipei. This illustrates the fact that modern societies driven by rampant consumerism need to pay for their environmental footprint - be it in the form of a carbon tax or waste charging system. The detrimental effect of our lifestyles driving run-away climate crisis can only be tamed by such a "user pay" model and implementation of circular economy principles by producers and manufacturers.

solid waste-related emissions are anticipated to increase to 2.6 billion tons of CO₂-equivalent by 2050. Much of this comes from the food waste comprising 44% of MSW (contributing 50% of the GHG emissions from rotting) and the fact that 33% of all MSW are disposed of in open dumps and/or burnt.

Delhi, the capital of India, generated about 371 tons of biomedical waste per day in June 2020. This quantity was increased by 1,400% as compared to 25 tons per day in May 2020. Uttar Pradesh, the highest populated state in India, generated about 247 tons of infectious medical waste per day in July 2020, despite having less than 10 tons per day of installed capacity of treatment. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is generating nearly 7,000% more biomedical waste from 3 tons per day before the Covid-19 outbreak to 206 tons per day as of July 2020. Similar trends of infectious medical waste generation due to the Covid-19 are observed in other countries of the South Asia region.

While the prospects of a zero waste future may look utopian in light of the above scenario, it is not as difficult as we are made to believe. Hong Kong has performed abysmally against its own target as per the government issued "Hong Kong Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022", in 2013, which set out a comprehensive strategy to reduce waste and increase recovery and recycling. A recycling fund of one billion Hong Kong dollars has not made any significant dent yet with the proposed 'Waste Charging Fee' proposal stuck in the legislative process. However, the experience of neighbouring Taiwan and South

For a 'zero waste' future to be realised the first step has to be for policy makers in power such as the Secretary of Environment of Hong Kong to change their mindset. While recycling the ubiquitous disposable face mask is not easy, it is not impossible along with the bulk of the waste plastics that currently goes to the landfill. India's 'Recycle Man' - 27-year-old Vinish Desai claims to recycle PPE, including disposable face masks, into bricks that can be used for construction. It has also been demonstrated that much of the waste plastics can be converted back to fuel oil through catalytic thermal pyrolysis by scientists from VSSUT, lightweight plastic aggregates for use in concrete by a company in New Zealand or melted and simply reshaped into plastic products like bricks, blocks and plates that can be found online etc. Only by such innovative ideas supported by progressive policy support from the governments, can the world hope to avoid the inevitable waste plastic pandemic in future.

The author is an academic currently visiting Hong Kong University of Science and Technology as a Research Scholar. He can be reached by email at dhanadam@gmail.com

Tug of war in Nepal

It's no coincidence that both India and China have, by turn, been frantically wooing Nepal this month. Kathmandu has witnessed in the whole of November a tug of war of sorts between its two giant neighbours over getting its attention. First, it was the Indian Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane who visited Nepal's capital and met the country's political and military leadership. This was followed by a two-day trip by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla beginning November 26. Soon after the announcement of Shringla's impending visit, there was media speculation that China's Defence Minister Wei Fenghe would follow suit even though both Nepal and China pleaded ignorance of such a plan. But, after Shringla had left Nepal, Wei, who is also China's State Councillor, landed in Kathmandu on November 29 for a day-long stopover and held a flurry of meetings with Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, who is also the Defence Minister; President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Nepal Army Chief Purna Chandra Thapa before flying straight to Pakistan in the evening. According to reports, Wei's visit was preceded by the arrival of a three-member high-level Chinese team in Kathmandu on November 24 which is learnt to have had parleys with the leadership of Nepal's ruling and Opposition parties.

Interestingly, on October 4, Samant Goel, head of India's foreign intelligence, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), had been to Nepal to hold meetings with Oli, Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba and former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai.

The spurt in India's diplomatic overtures to Nepal at a time when a whistleblower MP of Nepal revealed to a UK daily that China has stepped up its military preparations through encroachment of Nepal's territory brings to the fore the country's changed foreign policy towards its neighbours primarily due to the BJP government's emphasis on trying to make Nepal a junior country. Nepal not only changed its Constitution to term itself 'Secular' instead of its previous position as a 'Hindoo nation' but the Indian reprisal in the form of supporting the Madhesi agitation and blockage of land routes to the mountain country upset the common citizen. The domestic agenda of Hindutva does not seem to have been well received as a foreign policy in the neighbourhood.

Apparently, China has been using to the hilt the border disputes between India and Nepal over the possession of Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura. Indian Army chief General Naravane angered the Nepalese establishment in May with his suggestion at a think tank-event that Nepal's protests against India inaugurating a new road that would connect Uttarakhand to the China-India-Nepal trijunction in the Lipulekh pass, were at the behest of China. Nepal claims the new road passes through its territory. In retaliation Nepal approved in June a new political map that showed Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as part of Nepal. India has traditionally considered these areas to be its own. In November last year Kathmandu had protested against a new political map of India following the reorganization of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Centrally-controlled territories showing Kalapani as part of India. At that time, Nepal's Foreign Ministry asserted: "Kalapani is a part of Nepal. The remaining issues related to the border should be resolved in bilateral consensus and any unilateral actions will be unacceptable to the Nepal government."

During the meeting with Wei, Oli has iterated Nepal's commitment to 'One-China' policy and assured him that Nepalese soil would never be allowed to be used against China, Oli's foreign relations adviser, Rajan Bhattarai told the media. "The Prime Minister said that Nepal is committed to implementing the agreements reached during the visits of President Bhandari and his to China as well as President Xi Jinping's to Nepal," Bhattarai said. Wei, in response, appreciated Nepal's commitment to 'One-China' policy and said Nepal and China share trouble-free relations and are ready to contribute to each other's development and prosperity.

Curiously, China has already expressed its concern over the sluggish implementation of projects under its Belt and Road Initiative to which Nepal signed up in 2016. China has succeeded in getting Pakistan's support in this regard when the latter declared early November that Gilgit-Baltistan would be accorded provisional provincial status. This is supposed to facilitate the construction of the strategic road connecting Pakistan and China.

The Chinese team visiting Nepal before Wei is learnt to have talked to the ruling party leadership to underscore China's keenness to see stability in the country and an end to internal bickering. It wants continuation of the present regime in Kathmandu. It also expressed its displeasure over the Opposition MP's 'disclosure' about Chinese encroachment into Nepalese territory.

When China is trying to make the right noises in Kathmandu backed by its steady military-trade-diplomatic initiatives, India should immediately recalibrate its foreign policy vis-à-vis its neighbours lest China would drive permanent wedges. Recent events point to a very lethargic response from the mandarins at New Delhi. Busy with internal politics and trying to divert attention of the people from miseries of the contracting economy and gross failures of most domestic policies, Indian leaders are observed visiting multiple vaccine producing facilities in a single day while foreign policy adventurism has backfired. The damages inflicted thus will have long-term effects on the way India forges relationship with her neighbours.



Dhanada K Mishra

THE PANDEMIC OUTBREAK IN THE SOUTH ASIA REGION IS NOT ONLY HARMING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION BUT BECOMING A HUGE LIABILITY FOR THE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Sustainable management of increasing quantities of wastes such as municipal solid waste (MSW), industrial wastes, agricultural wastes, construction demolition waste (CDW) etc. is a global challenge. Municipal solid waste generation will increase to 3.40 billion metric tons by 2050 from around 2.01 billion tons currently as per a World Bank report. In 2016, the world produced 242 million tons of plastic waste as part of MSW, which was about 12 per cent. It is estimated that only 13.5% of today's waste is recycled and 5.5% is composted. Plastic waste is choking our oceans, yet our consumption of plastics is only increasing. The Covid-19 pandemic has added significantly to this crisis by a sudden increase in the consumption of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). An estimated 1.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide - equivalent (CO₂-equivalent) greenhouse gas emissions were generated from solid waste in 2016, which is about 5 per cent of global emissions. Without improvements,

SPECTRUM JUDICIARY

Supreme Court connectivity

The Supreme Court should look beyond the boundaries and try to reach approbation with the litigators. The usual camaraderie seems to be lost since lawyers have to travel miles to reach Delhi for the court matters. Article 130 of the Constitution provides "The Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places, as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint". The pandemic couldn't be any bigger and provides the best opportunity to cajole people in providing an ultimate alternative. Here we will try to understand the need for enhancing the reach of a common man to the Supreme Court. The workload of cases has reached an all-time high. The wide jurisdiction ranging from Original, Appellate to Advisory has brought an insurmountable task for a sole institution. Several civil law countries from Europe have specialised Constitutional Court and Supreme Courts to deal with specific matters exclusively, unlike India. The current demand pushes for a division of Supreme Court jurisdictions into Original Division

(Constitutional), Appellate division (arising from Articles 132, 134 etc.) and Advisory (Article 143). The current standards of justice delivery system need reforms as we move towards a new world order. The Supreme Court should also consider adopting a new method of a fixed judge-litigant ratio. This will allow a check on the rising pendency of cases and also set a precedent for High Courts, District and Sessions court, etc.

The right to approach the SC for appeal under Articles 132 and 134 is too far fetched when the aggrieved can't afford to travel to Delhi and bear the costs. Article 39A allows the state to take measures for providing free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society and ensures justice for all. The harmonious interpretation of both Article 130 and Article 39A, allows the state to take such measures. As per article 74 of the Constitution, the President has to act in aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. Interpreting these three Articles allow the Supreme Court to establish branches of Supreme Court outside Delhi.

The heterogeneous applicability of laws has avoided many pe-

titions. Should the petitions be sponsored to make SC easily accessible or should the SC establish different branches to deal with matters? The latter looks necessary owing to the plight and penury of individuals.

Several High Courts have had circuit courts functioning meeting the demands for easier justice. Replicating the same for the Supreme Court is mere extension of the idea of easier access to justice. Four Law Commission reports and a Parliamentary committee report have suggested opening of SC branches in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. The 10th, 11th and 18th Law Commissions had suggested for a Constitutional and an Appellate bench. The Constitutional division at the Delhi was suggested to deal with Constitutional and allied matters, and the Appellate division to deal with appellate matters. A Bill was introduced in Rajya Sabha as well to establish a permanent bench of SC in Kolkata, which demanded jurisdiction over states from East and North-East. Despite the efforts, the Supreme Court had struck down a petition seeking for an establishment of a

circuit court. There arises a need for the review of the judgment when the needs and demands have made a paradigm shift in terms of pecuniary norms. The Covid-19 pandemic has made things worse for litigators who would avoid otherwise taking the litigation to the Supreme Court. The court sessions have moved online, but are all lawyers' tech savvy to adapt to the new world order of online dispute resolution? Once the pandemic is over, the world will return to a new normalcy. The time is ripe for the appropriate authorities to mend things and look forward for a new beginning.

The BJP-led government at the Centre was in state of disarray when asked to take a stand, unlike the Congress which considered it as an election agenda. The quaint fashioned attitude is often aggravated by unsuitable pronouncement of criticism. Only time can tell if the pandemic has brought a change in the attitude.

The writer is an Odisha-based lawyer and independent researcher. He can be reached at rahulpradhan349@gmail.com

WISDOM CORNER

- It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then. **LEWIS CARROLL**
- The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg. It's what you're made of. Not the circumstances. **UNKNOWN**
- If we have the attitude that it's going to be a great day it usually is. **CATHERINE PULSIFER**

WORDSWORTH

Best bib and tucker

A tucker was a bit of lace worn around the neck and top of the bodice by 17th-18th century women, presumably something that was tucked in; the bib was closely related to our modern term - a shirt-front or covering for the breast. The expression is first recorded from the middle of the eighteenth century, initially only for women and girls, as you might expect, but later on also to men, when the words had become a fixed phrase and disengaged from their real meanings. Before then, the common expression seems to have been best bib and band (band meaning collar), also commonly used for men as well as women, which continued after the new term had come into use, though it seems to have died out at the end of the eighteenth century. The word derives from the same source as the tucker of food, but is unconnected in meaning.

LOL PAINTING THE PORCH

A blonde, wanting to earn some money, decided to hire herself out as a handyman-type and started canvassing a wealthy neighborhood. She went to the front door of the first house and asked the owner if he had any jobs for her to do. "Well, you can paint my porch. How much will you charge?" The blonde said, "How about 50 dollars?" The man agreed and told her that the paint and ladders that she might need were in the garage. The man's wife, inside the house, heard the conversation and said to her husband, "Does she realize that the porch goes all the way around the house?" The man replied, "She should. She was standing on the porch." A short time later, the blonde came to the door to collect her money. "You're finished already?" he asked. "Yes," the blonde answered, "and I had paint left over, so I gave it two coats." Impressed, the man reached in his pocket for the \$50. "And by the way," the blonde added, "that's not a Porch, it's a Ferrari."



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
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People are supreme

Sir, The whole world witnessed the barbaric and inhuman behaviour of the police against the farmers who tried to enter Delhi for a particular purpose which was lawful. In fact, it is well within the knowledge of the people that police are a part and parcel of this system and they always suppressed people's movement to protect the ruling class. For the first time such type of massive arrangement had been made by both the Central and state governments - as if the country is preparing to protect itself from foreign invaders trying to enter India. The ruling class must remember that people are supreme in a democracy and in the end they will prevail. They put an end to serfdom, feudalism and monarchy in various regions, giving birth to a new social order i.e. democracy. Now it is time to review the demands of the trade unions and whether they are legal or illegal. 1. Cash transfer of ₹7,500 per month for all non-income tax paying families. 2. 10kg free ration per person per month to all needy. 3. Expansion of MNREGA to provide 200 days' work in a year in rural areas at enhanced wages; extension of employment guarantee to urban areas. 4. Withdraw all anti-farmer laws and anti-labour codes. Stop privatisation of the public sector including the financial sector and stop corporatisation of state-run manufacturing and service entities. 5. Withdraw the draconian circular on forced premature retirement of government and PSU employees. 6. Provide pension to all, scrap NPS and restore earlier pension and improve EPS-95. Are these all illegitimate demand?
Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Avoid farm crisis

Sir, Issues like food crisis and unemployment have been highlighted by the mainstream English television channels like BBC and CNN, especially in the wake of the current Covid-19 pandemic. CNN had highlighted the issue of food insecurities in America caused by the current pandemic, whereas BBC has been highlighting the larger unemployment crisis in European countries. In fact, countries in the West like the USA and the UK should take these issues seriously and must tackle them all head-on given their characteristics, geological structure and socio-economic status. The recent farmer protests in India had caught the attention of everyone out there. Any crisis in the farming sector should not be allowed to escalate into a bigger issue. On the contrary, the government should accelerate and strengthen agricultural activities, food production and consequent trade.
P. Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI

TMC's 'Bengali Pride' to take on BJP's Hindutva

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Nov 30: Buoyed by the 'positive' response to its 'insider versus outsider' campaign, the TMC leadership has decided to embrace 'Bengali pride' as its main poll plank for the 2021 assembly polls to counter the BJP's aggressive Hindutva campaign in West Bengal.

The Mamata Banerjee-led party, which has often been mocked by opponents for not having a well-defined ideological plank, seems to have finally found one in Bengali sub-nationalism, as a section of top party leaders feels only an "inclusive message of regionalism, which the Bengalis can identify with, will counter the aggressive nationalism and Hindutva practised by the saffron camp."

"During the next assembly polls, apart from development, Bengali pride will be our main poll plank. Bengali pride is not just about Bengalis, it appeals to all sons of the soil. This philosophy will help counter BJP's attempts to import leaders from outside to control the people of the state," senior TMC leader and MP Sougata Roy told PTI.

According to TMC sources, much like the regional parties of Tamil Nadu, which are proponents of Tamil pride, and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, which harps on Marathi 'Ashmita' (pride), the TMC plans to emerge as the protector of Bengali culture and identity.

"The JD(U) in Bihar had talked about 'Bihari versus Bahari'. Even the BJP, which boasts of nationalism, had campaigned on the poll plank of Gujarat 'Ashmita' during the 2007 Gujarat elections. So if



NARRATIVES THEMED AROUND 'BENGALI PRIDE' AND 'NATIVES VERSUS OUTSIDERS' ARE SLOWLY GAINING MOMENTUM, WITH VARIOUS OUTFITS RAISING THE PITCH FOR RESERVATION FOR DOMICILE BENGALIS IN JOBS AND EDUCATION IN THE STATE, WHERE, UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO, CULTURAL SUB-NATIONALISM WAS AN ALIEN CONCEPT.

BATTLE FOR BENGAL

- The TMC, which rose to power after a long fight against the CPI(M)-led Left Front, had initially adopted the slogan of 'Maa Mati Manush' (Mother, Land and People), carefully blending socialism and secularism - a powerful concoction that countered the communists and their doctrines well
- The party tasted success in 2011 and continued its winning streak in 2016 assembly polls
- The rise of the BJP in Bengal's political map, however, has made the TMC realise that its socialist slogan was not all enough to offset 'Hindutva', especially at a time when it has been branded as a party "that favours only minorities" by the saffron camp

we do the same, we think no one should complain about it," another TMC leader said.

A senior party leader, who was a part of a select group of the members that formulated this ideological plank, said, "divisive politics and religious polarisation could never be countered with development politics. Only sub-nationalism and regionalism can do that."

According to TMC sources, after the electoral reverses in the Lok Sabha polls last year, and with the emergence of the BJP as a prime contender for power, the TMC initially tried to shed the 'anti-Hindu' tag and embrace 'soft Hindutva', but it soon realised that it could never beat the BJP in its own game.

The party then took a cue from the results of the final phase of the Lok Sabha polls in Bengal, where the saffron party, which, despite

its spectacular performance in the previous phases, drew a blank in all nine seats that went to polls towards the end.

The TMC zoomed past the saffron party in the final phase with its fiery campaign over "insult to Bengali icons," following the desecration of social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's bust during a BJP rally.

Although the BJP had denied the allegations, the damage was done. Then on, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee has often invoked Bengali sub-nationalism, and called the BJP a party of 'outsiders'.

Citing Bengal's demographic map, where 70 per cent is Hindu population and 30 per cent Muslims, the TMC leader said, "The state consists of 86 per cent Bengalis, that's the antidote of BJP's politics. Bengalis are an independent-

minded community since the days of British Raj.

"Post-independence, too, be it the Congress or the Communists, none of them ever accepted the supremacy of Delhi. Hindu-Muslim politics won't work here," he said.

Over the last two weeks, the TMC had been holding aggressive 'insider versus outsider' campaigns to corner the BJP in various areas, and statements such as 'Bengal will be turned into Gujarat' with the import of leaders from other states, has provided the much-needed ammo to even out the party's internal conflicts, which is now out in the open.

Lack of a face to counter Banerjee and the BJP's "over-dependence" on central leadership has added to the benefits of the TMC.

"People have to decide whether they want to be dominated by outsiders or handover the reins to a son

U'khand Cong likely to have a Dalit chief



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 30: Ahead of the Uttarakhand polls, the Congress is likely to replace the current state president with a Dalit.

High level sources said the proposal has been sent to the party president after much deliberation. However, the source did not reveal the name of the person who could lead the party into the elections.

The Uttarakhand leaders have impressed upon the party high command that Dalits are decisive in at least 18 Assembly seats, and have 5,000 to 10,000 votes in remaining ones. The move is aimed to stop the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) from eating into the Dalit votes in plains. The party is also feeling that there is no Dalit leader at fore to tap on this vote after Yashpal Arya left the party and joined the BJP. The Congress has Harish Rawat as its top most leader after the demise of ND Tiwari and former

Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna left the party to join the BJP. Rawat has been made the General Secretary in-charge Punjab, but he had said, "Home is where the heart is" giving a message to the people that he is still in the state politics.

While the state politics is mainly centered around the Rajput vs. Brahmin, the Congress wants to get a Dalit as state president to give space to all communities. While Harish Rawat is a Rajput, the CLP leader Indira Hridayesh is a Brahmin.

The party has Rajya Sabha MP Pradeep Tamta as its Dalit face in the state. It is likely that he may be the front runner for the post. He is backed by several leaders of the party, while Mamta Rakesh and Rajkumar both are from the SC category and sitting MLAs but Tamta being senior can get the benefit. The current Congress state in-charge Devendra Yadav did not respond to calls and messages on the issue.

Mamata govt gears up for mass outreach

THE DRIVE WOULD BE CARRIED OUT BY THE TMC GOVERNMENT TO PROPAGATE ITS SCHEMES AHEAD OF THE HIGH-VOLTAGE ELECTORAL BATTLE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Nov 30: The Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government is gearing up for its mass outreach programme ahead of the crucial assembly polls scheduled in 2021.

The programme, titled door-to-door government, will kickstart from December 1 where the state administration would highlight 10 different state government schemes running across Bengal.

The initiative was taken after the CM made an announcement last week in Bankura during a administrative meeting. These schemes are - Konnyashree, Kad dyosathi (food scheme), Sasthosathi (health scheme), 100-days work, Shikhiya shree (education scheme) etc. According to sources in the



state government, the campaign will continue from December 1 to January 30 in four phases in all municipal and panchayat areas across

schemes. District magistrates will head the 'door-to-door government' campaign in their respective districts. These camps would be set up in various schools, college premises, community halls and panchayat offices, so that maximum number of people can avail the benefits of such government schemes across the state, an official said.

According to political observers, the drive would be carried out by the state government to propagate its schemes in order to garner support for the incumbent Trinamool Congress government in Bengal ahead of the high-voltage electoral battle.

Elections to the 294-member West Bengal Assembly are likely to be held in April-May next year.

Uttarakhand has a bridge for reptiles and animals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Nainital, Nov 30: A bridge for reptiles may sound uncanny but the Uttarakhand Forest Department has built a first-of-its-kind elevated eco-bridge across a busy highway in Ramnagar forest division so that reptiles trying to cross over are not crushed under traffic.

The 90-foot-long structure of bamboo, jute, and grass was built across the two-lane Kalandhungi-Nainital highway by local contractors over a period of 10 days. The cost of the bridge is Rs 2 lakh.

The highway is the main route to Nainital, and is used by a large number of vehicles, especially in the tourist season.

The adjoining jungle is home to

lizards, snakes, including pythons, rodents, squirrels and monkeys, and the reptiles frequently get crushed under the passing vehicles. The 5-foot-wide, 40-foot-high bridge can take the weight of three adult humans, and forest officials said they hope it would be used by even leopards.

Ramnagar Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Chandra Shekhar Joshi said that the bridge, which will be monitored by four camera traps, will be studied as a model by the Forest Department.

Joshi said that the bridge has been made at a point where the road arcs in a wide 'U', and vehicles going downhill often travel at high speed. It is expected that by reducing the need for sudden braking

in front of a crossing animal, the road will be safer for human beings too. "This is a dense forest, and elephants, leopards, deer, and blue bulls move in this area. Drivers can see them from some distance and slow down or stop, but they rarely do so for snakes, lizards, monitors, or squirrels," said a forest official.

He said that in order to attract reptiles and other small animals to the bridge, creepers will be grown on it and it will be layered with grass and leaves.

The DFO said that boards were being put up to create awareness of the need to protect reptiles. Forest staff would patrol the area to ensure tourists do not try to use the bridge for selfies, he added.



As Covid surges, social gatherings limited to 100

AGENCIES

Dehradun, Nov 30: Amid surge in coronavirus cases, the Uttarakhand government said the number of people allowed at social gatherings have been reduced to 100 from 200.

The state's COVID-19 tally rose to 74,795 Monday with 455 more persons testing positive for the disease, while nine more infected patients died in the state, a state health department bulletin said.

In a notification Sunday, the Uttarakhand government said only 100 people will now be allowed for social gatherings and there will be mandatory registration for all inbound persons.

Earlier, the Uttarakhand government clarified that there will be no weekend lockdown in the state capital but only closure of market places, barring shops selling essentials, Sundays for sanitisation purposes in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Dehradun district administration has issued an order for strict closure of market places on Sundays in the state capital for sanitisation purposes, an official at the Chief Minister's Office said making it clear that the word "closure" should not be confused with "lockdown" which is technically different. However, shops selling essentials like fruits and vegetables and medicines, petrol pumps and LPG agencies will remain out of the ambit of the Sunday closure so that people are not inconvenienced, the official said, news agency PTI reported.

RELIGIOUS FERVOUR



Devotees gather to take bath at the Har Ki Pauri on the holy occasion of Kartik Purnima, in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, Monday.

Bengal to start free ambulance service for road mishap victims

STARTING WITH AT LEAST 150 AMBULANCES, THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS AT THE MOMENT SETTING UP A DETAILED MAP OF ACCIDENT PRONE ZONES AND NEARBY HOSPITALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Nov 30: To help save lives of road accident victims by taking them to nearby hospitals as

quickly as possible, the West Bengal government will soon start a free-ambulance service, a senior official of the state health department said Monday.

Starting with at least 150 ambulances, the state government is at the moment setting up a detailed map of the accident prone zones and the nearby hospitals, he said.

This service will primarily work on the GPS system and for the same, the state government will have to bear a cost of around Rs 30 crore, the official said.

"This will definitely help us in saving the lives of road accident victims. We are targeting to take the victims to nearby hospitals or medical colleges or trauma care centre within 15 to 20 minutes after getting calls regarding the accident. This

is in a planning stage and we are dying to start it as soon as possible," he told PTI.

There will be two types of ambulances - basic life support ambulances and the advance life support ambulances, he said, adding that a toll free number will be given.

The Health department is in talks with the Public Works Department (PWD), police and the transport department, he said.

"The police and the transport department have been asked to provide details of the accident prone areas in the state depending on which the PWD department will be preparing a map on the accident prone zones here for this kind of ambulance services," he said. The map "Trauma care ambulance mappings" will be having markings of the accident prone zones and nearby hospitals.

The health department is also mulling the option of hiring ambulances from private operators, he said.

"This will help us in cutting down in the budget," the official said. Asked whether private hospitals will also be enrolled for the services, the bureaucrat said that at the moment the department has concentrated on including those run by the state government.

"That's also in our mind. It's not that we have not spoken to them. But you will see that most of the best private hospitals are in and around the city. Anyway, we will see that option once this initiative is rolled out," he added.



The health department is also mulling the option of hiring ambulances from private operators. (PICTURE USED FOR REPRESENTATION)



“We will soon be completing eleven months in our fight against COVID-19. Since then, the most important principle to protect ourselves and others is to follow basic principles of hygiene and physical distancing. In the fight against COVID-19, our biggest weapon is a mask and sanitizer”
HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

CRACKING THE WHIP

Cracking the whip on tourists who refuse to wear face masks and argue against civic authorities, Panaji Mayor Uday Madkaikar said Monday that police will henceforth accompany officials enforcing the norm and that errant tourists will be photographed and fined



of the day quote

The Modi government has persecuted the farmer - first it brought black laws and then used lathis against them, but it forgot that when the farmer raises his voice, it resonates throughout the country
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER



All temporary COVID Care Centres in Assam have been closed down with patients being treated at hospitals, following a considerable decline in the number of COVID-19 cases in the state
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM HEALTH MINISTER



Iron ore mining could be resumed in the state by auctioning the mining leases
PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM



SHORT TAKES

Cop found dead

Raipur: A police official has allegedly committed suicide at his home in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, an official said Monday. Assistant Sub-Inspector Sannu Madvi, who was in his late 40s and posted at Kutru police station in the district, was found hanging from the ceiling at his house in Tumla village on Sunday evening, the police official said. Sunday morning, Madvi left his duty place, located in a Naxal-hit area, saying he was going to his village, about 15 to 20 km away from there, to oversee crop harvesting work at his farm, he said.

CRPF SI dies

Srinagar: A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Sub-Inspector died on Monday while on duty in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district, police said. SI Shabad Kumar of the 93rd CRPF Battalion fell unconscious during duty hours at DK Marg Higher Secondary School.

Pakistan violates ceasefire

Jammu: Pakistan troops fired with small firearms and also indulged in shelling with mortars on Monday to violate ceasefire on the line of control (LoC) in J&K's Poonch district. Defence Ministry spokesman Colonel Devender Anand said that the ceasefire violation was reported around 3.10 pm along the LoC in Shahpur Sector, to which "Indian Army retaliates befittingly".

Tihar inmate murdered

New Delhi: A 23-year-old undertrial in Tihar prison was murdered early morning on Monday. The inmate was identified as Dil Sher Singh, accused in a 2019 murder case at Jahangirpuri in Delhi. "Dilsher was lodged in Jail no.3 Tihar was attacked, with an improvised sharp object, by three other undertrial prisoners. He succumbed to his injuries and was declared dead by the duty doctor," said an officer.

TN extends COVID lockdown

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami Monday extended the Covid-19 lockdown in the state till December 31 subject to certain relaxations. In a statement issued here, Palaniswami said based on the discussions with medical, public health experts and District Collectors to prevent coronavirus spread, the Covid-19 lockdown is extended till December 31 from November 30.

Terrorism biggest challenge: India at SCO

VICE PRESIDENT VENKAIHAH NAIDU SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGE FACED BY THE REGION IS TERRORISM, PARTICULARLY CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM, AND THAT INDIA REMAINED CONCERNED ABOUT THREATS EMERGING FROM UNGOVERNED SPACES AS WELL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 30: Asserting that terrorism is the biggest challenge the region is facing, India Monday criticised Pakistan for using it as an "instrument of state policy", and called upon the SCO to combat the menace collectively and enforce internationally recognised legal statutes to comprehensively eradicate safe havens, infrastructure and financial networks supporting terrorism.

In an address at the Council of Heads of Government meeting of the eight-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Vice President Venkaiah Naidu said the most important challenge faced by the region is terrorism, particularly cross-border terrorism, and that India remained concerned about threats emerging from ungoverned spaces as well.

"Terrorism is truly the enemy of humanity. It is a scourge we need to collectively combat. We remain concerned about threats emerging from ungoverned spaces and are particularly concerned about states that leverage terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Such an approach is entirely against the spirit and ideals and the charter of the



SCO," he said at the virtual meet hosted by India.

He said elimination of this threat will help the countries realise shared potential and create conditions for stable and secure economic growth and sustainable development. He also called upon SCO member states to enforce internationally recognised legal statutes to comprehensively eradicate safe havens, infrastructure and financial networks supporting terrorism, a statement issued by Naidu's office said.

In another indirect reference to Pakistan, the Vice President criticised attempts to bring bilateral is-

sues into the SCO by blatantly violating its well-established principles and norms of charter safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the member states.

"Such acts are counterproductive to the spirit of consensus and cooperation that define the SCO as an organisation," he said. In mid-September, India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval walked out of a virtual meeting of top security officials of the SCO member states after the Pakistani representative projected a map that inaccurately depicted Kashmir.

India hosted the meet for the first time after it got full membership of the influential grouping in 2017. The council of heads of government is the second highest forum of the SCO after the annual summit of the top leaders of the grouping. India's representation at the SCO council of heads of government has often been at the level of a cabinet minister. Last year, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh attended it in Uzbekistan. Talking about the importance of collective efforts to overcome the coronavirus crisis and its adverse impact, the vice president said, "our hope is pinned on trade and investment as an engine of reviving growth and driver of economic recovery."

"For trade to play its part in the recovery process, all the partners must be trustworthy and transparent", he said adding that nations must demonstrate their compliance with multilateral rules of trade. At the same time, he said economic growth and trade can only operate in an environment of peace and security. "Peace is the essential prerequisite for progress." He said India was emerging as an economic force at the global level and the country's GDP was expected to reach USD 5 trillion by 2025.

How this student lost IIT Bombay seat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Nov 30: An 18-year-old student has lost his seat for a four-year electrical engineering course in the prestigious IIT Bombay after he "inadvertently" clicked on a "wrong" link which was meant to withdraw from the process.

The student, Siddhant Batra who hails from Agra, has now approached the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the institution to admit him after the IIT said it cannot intervene at this stage as all the seats for the course were full and admission rules had to be followed.

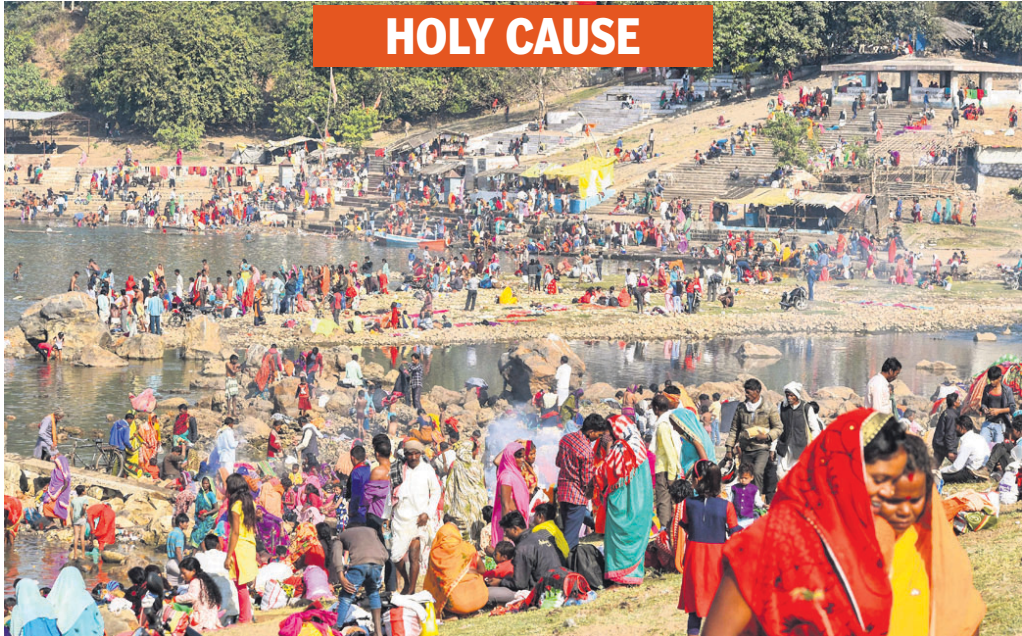
It said Batra could apply again next year for JEE (Advanced). The Bombay High Court had initially directed the IIT to consider Batra's petition, after he approached it earlier this month, as representation and pass appropriate orders. Batra, who had secured All India Rank (AIR) of 270 in JEE Advanced exams and secured admission, claimed in his plea that he had clicked the wrong link which was meant to withdraw his seat. Batra intended to freeze the seat, the plea said. On November 23, a division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni dismissed Batra's petition noting that IIT had considered his representation and passed its order.

In his petition to the Supreme Court, Batra has sought a direc-

tion to the IIT to consider his case on humanitarian grounds, and requested creation of an additional seat to undo his loss. Batra, who lives with his grandparents following the death of his parents, in the plea said he had worked hard against all odds to crack IIT JEE exams.

The petition, filed through advocate Pralhad Paranjpe, said Batra had lost his father when he was a child and was brought up by his mother who died in 2018. As per his plea, Batra, while filling out the admission process online, came upon a page with 'freeze' option, which he thought meant confirming the seat and the completion of his admission process.

"On October 31, 2020 when Batra was surfing the IIT portal to check for further updates, he came upon a link which carried a declaration that read 'I would like to withdraw from the seat allocation process of JoSAA (Joint Seat Allocation Authority)', the petition said. As per the plea, Batra inadvertently clicked on this link and stated 'IIT Bombay, Electrical Engineering' as reasons for withdrawal. It added that Batra never intended to withdraw his admission. In November 2020, when the final list of students was uploaded on the IIT portal, Batra's name was not included. The IIT, in its order, however, said the withdrawal option was a "conscious" two-step process.



Devotees gather to take holy dip in the Narmada on the occasion of Kartik Purnima in Jabalpur, Monday

Another cyclone to affect TN, Kerala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 30: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Monday announced that a cyclone brewing in the Bay of Bengal is likely to affect Tamil Nadu and Kerala, less than a week after cyclone Nivar wreaked havoc in the southern states.

The cyclone will cross the Sri Lanka coast December 2 and bring heavy rain over Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it said in the bulletin. Fishermen out at sea are advised to return to the coast by Monday.

The depression in southeast Bay of Bengal is very likely to intensify into a deep depression during next 12 hours and into a cyclonic storm during subsequent 24 hours.

"It is very likely to move west-northwestwards and cross the Sri Lanka coast during evening or night of 2nd December," the IMD said.

HOLY CAUSE



Devotees gather to take holy dip in the Narmada on the occasion of Kartik Purnima in Jabalpur, Monday

PROF RESCUES TURTLE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Nov 30: A turtle belonging to a vulnerable species has been saved from being sold in a fish market in Assam Monday, thanks to the initiative of an academicians, an official said.

Head of the Life Science and Bioinformatics department of Assam University Sarbani Giri had gone to the fish market when she noticed a man putting up an Indian peacock soft-shell turtle (Nilssonina hurum), which was alive, for sale.

He wanted to cut the turtle into pieces and sell it but Giri immediately stopped him from doing so and offered to buy it

alive for Rs 4,000, a forest official said. Her gesture moved the man and he gave her the turtle.

After bringing it home, Giri called upon the Cachar Forest Division in Silchar to release it in its natural habitat, the official said. Personnel of the forest

department took the turtle from the professor and thanked her for saving the life of the turtle. The forest department has decided to team up with the fisheries department to create awareness among fishermen about turtles. The Indian peacock soft-shell turtle is found in South Asia and is listed on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red list as a vulnerable species.



Leopard strays into hostel, triggers panic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Nov 30: A leopard strayed into a girls' hostel in Guwahati Monday, triggering panic among the people, officials said.

Mousumi Bora who owns the hostel, located in Hengrabari, said she had mistaken the leopard that was trapped under a sofa to be a piece of cloth and was about to pick it up when she realised it was a wild animal. Bora and the 15 inmates of the hostel locked themselves up in a room, and informed forest officials, she said.

Officials of the Assam State Zoo, Wildlife Division and Territorial Division along with police soon arrived with a tranquiliser gun. It took them more than four hours to tranquilise the leopard, officials said.

When the animal was hit with the tranquiliser shot, the leopard entered a nearby house, causing panic in the area, they said. Forest officials then rescued the tranquilised animal, put it in a cage and took it to the Assam State Zoo, said Tejas Mariswamy, the divisional forest officer of the zoo.

The leopard will be in the zoo till it wakes up and then examined if it has sustained any injuries, he said. A microchip will be inserted into the animal before it is released in the forest, he added. Bora said that in the CCTV footage of her hostel premises, the animal was seen entering the premises in the wee hours. Assam Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya tweeted, "Another successful operation today as we safely rescued an Indian leopard which took shelter in a hostel in Hengrabari, Guwahati. The success can be attributed to the timely intervention of our Assam State Zoo, Wildlife Division and Territorial Division staff and police team."

2 DELHI PATIENTS FOUND REINFECTED WITH COVID

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 30: The Sir Ganga Ram Hospital has reported two peculiar cases about two patients which it says have re-contracted the Covid-19 infection within a short span of recovery from the viral disease.

The patients include a man with co-morbidity and a healthcare staff of the hospital itself. As per the hospital, the man was found to be reinfected in mere 25 days of testing negative from the first attack of the Covid-19.

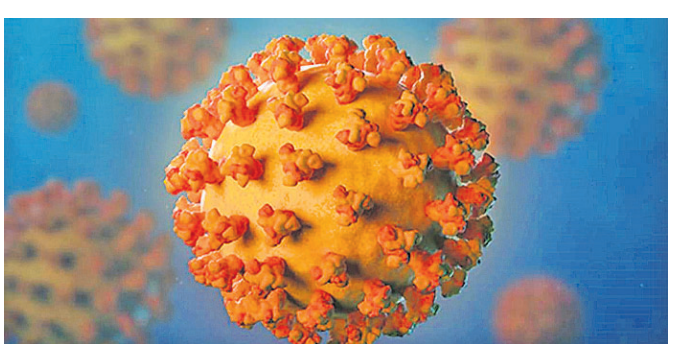
However, the staff was found to be reinfected within two months of the recovery from the previous episode. The disease severity was found to be in the mild category in

both the episodes. Surprisingly, the antibodies developed after the first infection was also found at negligible level in the patients.

Dr Atul Kakkar, Senior consultant and Vice chairman of Department of Medicine said that the antibody levels were either negligible or totally absent in the body of the two patients since they tested negative for the antibodies.

The first patient, who is in his middle age with an underlying condition of diabetes mellitus, was found reinfected within a month of testing negative for the disease. The patient had a liver involvement due to alcohol and renal involvement due to diabetes.

"He had nasal discharge and was subsequently found to have fungal



infection of sinuses (mucormycosis) in addition to Covid-19 infection (RT-PCR). He was treated with antifungal and other supportive medications and about 10 days later he was tested negative for Covid and

discharged home. He was readmitted due to abdominal distension 25 days later and required hospitalization during which he was retested and found COVID 19 positive," informed Dr Kakkar.

The second case is of the healthcare staff of the hospital. She was tested positive for COVID-19 in August and retested positive for the disease in October. "She was initially admitted to the Covid facility for 3 days but later shifted to home isolation for 17 days in view of mild nature of her illness. On August 23, she rejoined work at the hospital after testing negative. In October, she developed a fresh episode of cough, generalised weakness and malaise. On October 28, the patient was investigated and was found to be Covid-19 positive once again. She was readmitted in the Covid facility and tested negative in few days after being diagnosed," Dr Kakkar said. "During the course the patient was tested for Covid-19 an-

tibodies but her antibody levels were negative," he added. However, when asked whether the CT value were recorded during the investigation in both the cases during the first episode and the claimed re-infection, Dr Kakkar said that the hospital considered it inconsequential during the re-infection.

"Both these cases follow the defined criteria of re-infection. However, in ideal circumstances, gene sequencing should have been done in both the cases," he added. Dr Kakkar also said that the re-infection with COVID was considered as a rare possibility so far. However, it may start happening with the patients who recovered with the mild form of the viral disease.



The ordinance on love jihad brought by the UP government in a hurry is full of doubts and apprehensions
MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

COLDEST NOV IN DELHI

The month of November was the coldest in the national capital in 71 years, with the mean minimum temperature dropping to 10.2 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department



of the day quote

They (functionaries) told me that they are with me whatever my decision may be. I will make known by decision (on political foray) as soon as possible
RAJINIKANTH | ACTOR

As a result, in terms of the recent GDP figure, we are only six per cent behind, and I hope that in the next quarter, the GDP will be in plus (positive)
AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

When talks between farmers and the central government take place, we are sure that the confusion will be sorted out. The farmers will get above MSP for their produce
NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER

China's growing presence in IOR worries India



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 30: India has observed that there is an increasing trend of Chinese research vessels and fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), raising security concerns for countries in the ocean.

While the Chinese fishing vessels indicate the country's growing footprint in the Indian Ocean Region, the research vessels have raised security concerns as they could be surveying the characteristics of the sea water for improving submarine warfare capabilities.

"There has been a steady rise in the deployment of Chinese research vessels in Indian Ocean Region. The general area of deployment has been observed in ninety-degree East Ridge and South-West Indian Ridge," said a source in the government.

The source also stated that there is also an increasing trend of Chinese Fishing Vessels in high

seas in the Indian Ocean Region. Around 300 Chinese fishing vessels sail every year but last year almost 450 vessels sailed. "The fishing activity has a seasonal behaviour wherein the fishing vessels withdraw from Arabian Sea prior to the onset of monsoon and return in September and October," the source said.

The concentration of Chinese fishing activities has been observed in the Central Arabian Sea and South West Indian Ocean.

It was further pointed that the Chinese Navy ships including their submarines frequent the waters on the pretext of anti-piracy operations. The Indian Navy is aware of China's growing maritime prowess in the Indian Ocean Region as it is expanding its naval operations.

Further, China has also been shifting a lot of resources from other arms to the Navy, keeping in line with their aim of becoming a global power. Last year in September, a Chinese vessel close to the Indian

Expanding outreach

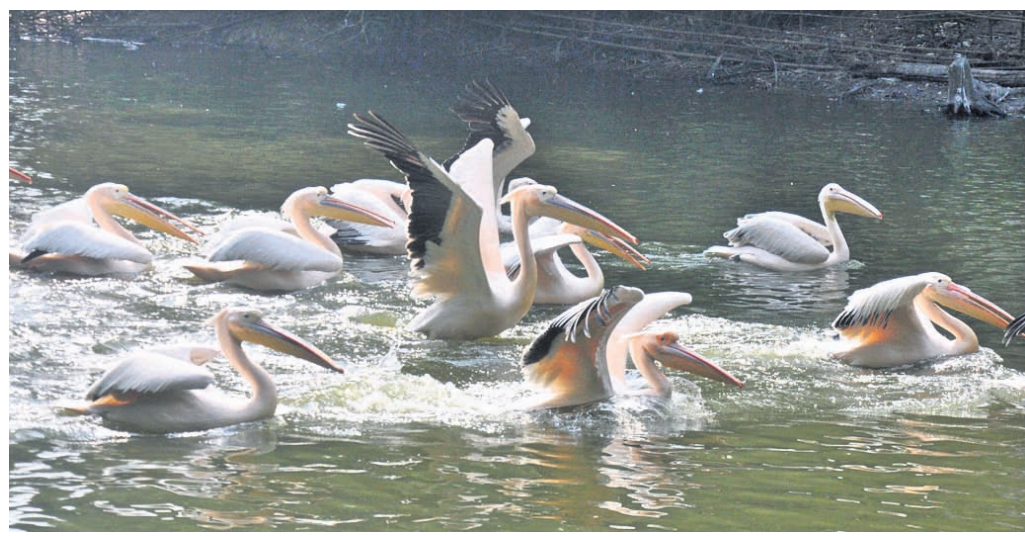
In a sign of its growing global outreach, the Indian Navy is associating with 21 countries and 22 multi-national agencies for quick sharing of information related to maritime activities in the Indian Ocean Region. At any given time, the Indian Navy monitors close to 12,000 ships and 300 fishing vessels in the Indian Ocean Region. Apart from that, there are close to 3 lakh Indian fishing vessels operating in the seas and their activities too are observed by the force. The Indian Ocean Region accounts for 75 per cent of the world's maritime trade and 50 per cent of global consumption passes through it prompting security measures involving multiple countries.

waters was whisked away after it was suspected to be on a spying mission.

These research vessels come in the Indian Ocean Region also to either survey areas for deep sea mining or to study the characteristics of the water for ensuring the safety of submarines from anti-submarine warfare, the source said.

However, these vessels are tracked by the Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders fitted in them. The AIS information, comprising an AIS code that is specific to a country, is clearly detectable and the Indian Navy is keeping an eye on each and every Chinese vessel entering the region.

JOY OF TOGETHERNESS



Pelicans enjoying in water at Assam state zoo in Guwahati

UNI PHOTO

Spread of HIV/AIDS in Northeast India alarming

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala/Aizawl, Nov 30: The status of HIV/AIDS epidemic in north-eastern states of India is indeed alarming, said a report by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO).

The AIDS-related mortality per 1,00,000 population in India was estimated to be the highest in Manipur (36.86), followed by Mizoram (28.34), Nagaland (26.20), Andhra Pradesh (21.76), Puducherry (15.33), Meghalaya (11.08) and Telangana (10.79), the NACO report added.

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Joint Secretary, Alok Saxena, in his observation, incorporated in the recent NACO report, said evidence has emerged globally that HIV-infected people are more at Covid-19 death risk as compared to HIV-negative patients.

In another disturbing development, the trend of Intravenous Drug Users (IDU) is rising at a



Representative image

lion people, respectively.

Mizoram recorded more than 20,000 HIV positive cases and nearly 2,000 deaths since the first case in 1990. Smuggling of drugs, arms and other contraband worth thousands of crores takes place frequently in the north-eastern region from across the borders, especially from Myanmar.

Officials said the drugs were smuggled from Myanmar which shares 1,643 km of unfenced border with four north-eastern states -- Mizoram (510 km), Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Manipur (398 km) and Nagaland (215 km).

However, after half a decade the first death due to overdose of heroin injection was witnessed when a 24-year-old youth died due to heroin overdose in 1984. Since then there was a noticeable rise in the growth of substance abuse population and heroin, Proxynon, cough syrup, sedatives, Nitrozeepam and volatile are the preferred drugs of choice.

SHORT TAKES

K'taka gears up for panchayat polls

Bangalore: The Karnataka State Election Commission (KSEC) Monday announced the dates for gram panchayat elections for 5,762 panchayats in two phases. Now after the Assembly, Lok Sabha and the recent by-polls, the political parties in Karnataka are gearing up for the gram panchayat elections - the largest in terms of the number of seats and candidates contesting. Gram Panchayat elections are being held for 92,121 seats in 35,884 constituencies spread across 5,762 gram panchayats in Karnataka.

Assam to reopen elementary schools

Guwahati: Considering the improved Covid-19 situation, the Assam government has decided to reopen elementary schools -- Nursery to Class 6 -- from January 1, Education and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Monday. He said that the government has also decided on limited reopening of the hostels of colleges and universities for final year students and for residential students of Class 10 and 12 from December 15.

Hosp fire: Guj gov't forms probe panel

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat government Monday constituted an inquiry commission under Gujarat High Court judge DA Mehta (ret'd) to probe the Rajkot hospital fire in which five COVID-19 patients died November 27, an official release said.

Man beaten to death

Gurugram: A 26-year-old man identified as Hoshiyaar and hailing from Bulandshahr district in Uttar Pradesh, was allegedly beaten to death by a hotel owner identified as Sanjay Kumar and his friend Anil, in a fight over drinking liquor in Gurugram, the police said. The incident took place on the intervening Thursday/Friday night after which Hoshiyaar was treated at the Safdarjung hospital in Delhi but died Sunday from severe head injuries.

Elephant found dead

Jhargram (WB): A full-grown elephant was found dead in West Bengal's Jhargram district Monday, triggering tension in the area, officials said. Locals said the elephant was electrocuted after coming in contact with a high-tension wire in the Nischintan forest where it came to drink water from the Lepashi dam.

FARMERS' PROTEST IMPACT
Supply of vegetables, fruits from other states hit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 30: The supply of vegetables and fruits to the city from other states has been impacted and it has been halved at Azadpur Mandi, one of Delhi's largest wholesale market, owing to the protest by farmers at the Singhu and Tikri border points of the national capital for the last five days.

Vendors in other parts of Delhi said due to curtailed supply, the wholesale rates of seasonal vegetables has gone up by ₹50- ₹100.

They said the roadblock at Singhu and Tikri border has impacted supply of vegetables and fruits from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The arrival of vegetables and fruits to Delhi's largest wholesale market at Azadpur has been reduced by half due to the closed borders, said Adil Khan, chairman Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee at Azadpur.

"During normal days, around 2,500 trucks of vegetables and fruits used to arrive at Azadpur Mandi from other states. The number has come down to around 1,000 trucks now and if the borders remained closed for a few more days, the situation will worsen," Khan said.

He, however, said the rates have not registered any significant rise so far because local produce and stocks are being sold. Some other vendors said the wholesale rates of seasonal vegetables has already gone up by ₹50- ₹100 due to the short supply. They said due to obstructions at the border, the trucks are finding it difficult to reach Delhi and those somehow managing to do so are getting delayed by several hours. The trucks from Punjab carrying fruits and vegetables that would normally take around 9-10 hours for a trip to Delhi, now takes 12-14 hours due to closure of Singhu border, said another wholesaler.

DISCARDED FISHING NETS
THREATEN GANGA WILDLIFE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 30: Plastic pollution from discarded fishing gear in the Ganges River poses a threat to wildlife such as the critically endangered three-striped roofed turtle and the endangered Ganges river dolphin, according to an international team including researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India.

In the study, published in the Journal Science of The Total Environment, surveys along the length of the river, from the mouth in Bangladesh to the Himalayas in India, show levels of waste fishing gear are highest near to the sea. The researchers noted that fishing nets -- all made of plastic -- were the most common type of gear found.

Interviews with local fishers showed high rates of fishing equip-



Representative image

ment being discarded in the river -- driven by short gear lifespans and lack of appropriate disposal systems, they said.

"The Ganges River supports some of the world's largest inland fisheries, but no research has been done to assess plastic pollution from this industry, and its impacts on wildlife," said Sarah Nelms from the University of Exeter in the UK. The researchers

used a list of 21 river species of "conservation concern" identified by the Wildlife Institute of India in Uttarakhand.

They combined existing information on entanglements of similar species worldwide with the new data on levels of waste fishing gear in the Ganges to estimate which species are most at risk.

"There is no system for fishers to recycle their nets. Most fishers told us they mend and re-purpose nets if they can, but if they can't do that the nets are often discarded in the river," said Nelms.

The findings offer hope for solutions based on "circular economy" where waste is dramatically reduced by reusing materials, according to Professor Heather Koldeley, from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

Delhi govt reduces RT-PCR test price to ₹800

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 30: The Arvind Kejriwal government Monday ordered all private laboratories to reduce the price of RT-PCR tests in the national capital to ₹800 from ₹2,400.

According to an order issued by the health department, private laboratories have been asked to charge ₹800 for testing "samples collected by government teams and collected from collection sites by private sector labs as requisitioned by districts and hospitals".

However, the testing of samples collected through home visit will cost ₹1,200. All labs and hospitals have also been asked to display the revised rates at a prominent place within 24 hours. The private laboratories have also been asked to process samples, share the reports with the client (government or individual) and update all reports on the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) portal within 24 hours of collection of samples.

ENSURE FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN HOSPS'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 30: The Centre Monday directed all states and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure fire safety measures in all hospitals and nursing homes in the wake of recent various fire incidents at such institutions.

Noting "non-adherence" of fire safety measures by various hospitals and nursing homes in the past leading to the occurrence of fire incidents, Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla issued the directions in a letter to the Chief Secretaries off all the states and UTs. "I would urge you to ensure compliance of DG Fire Service safety advisory issued November 28, 2020, and direct to immediately re-inspect or re-check all hospitals and nursing homes from the point of view of fire protection and means of escape to prevent recurrence of such fire incidences in future," he directed.

WORRYING SITUATION
1 in 5 families likely to attend weddings this season

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 30: At a time when the coronavirus infection is fast spreading, one in five families say that they will be attending engagements and weddings this season, sparking fears of the situation worsening in the country, a survey revealed Monday.

The pandemic may have spoiled the big fat wedding plans of many, but it has not dampened their spirit to tie the knot as planned, though with a reduced guest list. Many states have capped the limit of attendees allowed in weddings and similar mass gatherings between 50-150.

LocalCircles' observed an increase in citizen posts in regard to how they will be attending weddings and their plans to stay safe. Instances were also highlighted in Delhi of hotels taking bookings in three names to work



Representative image

around to the government's 50 guests per wedding rule, to permit 150 guests in an event.

On basis of this feedback, to gauge the percentage of families expected to attend weddings in this sea-

son, a survey was conducted which received more than 17,000 responses from citizens across 239 districts of India. The respondents were divided between 62 per cent men and 38 per cent women, while 51 per

cent respondents were from tier-1 cities, 23 per cent from tier-2, and 26 per cent from tier-3, 4 and rural districts. The first question, "What is your plan to attend engagements and weddings in person for November-December this year?", received 8,957 responses. Out of these, 44 per cent voted, "don't have any invitations" for these months, while 35 per cent said "was invited to attend but are taking a pass this year due to Covid-19".

On the other hand, approximately, 20 per cent of citizens said they expect to attend engagements and weddings in the November-December wedding season this year. Given that weddings, both local and outstation, are generally family affairs, it is likely that in many family members would be likely to attend and as a result, the actual number would be higher than 20 per cent. This received 8,456 responses,

with 38 per cent of citizens who plan to attend engagements and weddings in November and December believe the risk of Covid spread is average, low or non-existent. However, 57 per cent said "there is a high risk and they will be taking all precautions".

The fact that nearly 2 in 5 respondents believe that the spread of risk at weddings is average, low or non-existent is of great concern as all that is required is one Covid positive individual to spread the virus. Given that many cases in India have been asymptomatic, the risk of spread is nothing short of high. With cities like Delhi already reporting 5,000-8,000 daily cases in the last few weeks, weddings along with the winter weather and severe air quality is likely to worsen the Covid-19 situation further putting high levels of stress on the Covid health infrastructure.



Canberra is seeking an apology from Beijing about a tweet containing a false image of an Australian soldier holding the knife to the throat of an Afghan child

VOLCANO ERUPTS IN INDONESIA, SPEWS SMOKE 4 KM HIGH

A volcano in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara province erupted Sunday, spewing ash and smoke as high as four kms into the sky and forcing more than 2,700 residents to seek refuge, the country's disaster mitigation agency said



of the day quote

There almost certainly is going to be an uptick because of what has happened with the (Thanksgiving) travel. We may see a surge upon a surge in two or three weeks

ANTHONY FAUCI | TOP US SCIENTIST

We're still waiting to see the full facts of what's happened in Iran, but I would say that we stick to the rule of international humanitarian law, which is very clear against targeting civilians

DOMINIC RAAB | UK FOREIGN SECRETARY

This election was rigged. This election was a total fraud. It's not like you're gonna change my mind. My mind will not change in six months

DONALD TRUMP | US PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Cops charged for beating Black man

Paris: Four French police officers have been charged in connection with the beating of a black man in Paris, with two held in custody, a judicial source said Monday.

Explosions in 3 Malian cities

Bamako (Mali): The cities of Kidal, Gao and Menaqa in northern Mali were hit by simultaneous attacks Monday against military camps housing international forces, according to residents and a United Nations official.

Lahore world's most polluted city

Lahore: Lahore has again topped the list of the most polluted city in the world, according to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index Monday.

Global Covid-19 cases top 62.6mn

Washington: The overall number of global coronavirus cases has topped 62.6 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 1.45 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

China to build major dam on Brahmaputra: Report

Proposals for dams on the Brahmaputra have evoked concerns in India and Bangladesh, the riparian states



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Nov 30: China will build a major hydropower project on Brahmaputra river in Tibet and a proposal for this has been clearly put forward in the 14th Five-Year Plan to be implemented from next year, the official media quoted the head of a Chinese company tasked to build the dam as saying.

Yan Zhiyong, chairman of the Power Construction Corp of China, said China will "implement hydropower exploitation in the downstream of the Yarlung Zangbo River" (the Tibetan name for Brahmaputra) and the project could serve to maintain water resources and domestic security.

Speaking at a conference Thursday, Yan said the project was clearly put forward in the proposals for formulating the country's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and its long-term goals through 2035 made by the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), it quoted an article on the WeChat account of the Central

- The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 were adopted by Plenum last month
Details of the plan were expected to be released after the formal ratification by National People's Congress (NPC) early next year

Committee of the Communist Youth League of China Sunday. "There is no parallel in history... it will be a historic opportunity for the Chinese hydropower industry," Yan told the conference organised to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the China Society for Hydropower Engineering.

The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 were adopted by Plenum - a key policy body of the CPC - last month. Details of the plan were expected

to be released after the formal ratification by National People's Congress (NPC) early next year. Proposals for dams on the Brahmaputra have evoked concerns in India and Bangladesh, the riparian states, and China has downplayed such anxieties saying it would keep their interests in mind.

As a lower riparian State with considerable established user rights to the waters of the trans-border rivers, the Indian government has consistently conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities and has urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas.

China has already operationalised the \$1.5 billion Zam Hydropower Station, the largest in Tibet in 2015.

About the new dam, the Global Times report said that speculation about China planning to build a "super hydropower station" in Medog county where the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon is located, have circulated for years.

Medog is the last county in Tibet which borders Arunachal Pradesh.

In his address, Yan said that the hydropower exploitation of the Yarlung Zangbo River downstream is more than a hydropower project. It is also meaningful for the environment, national security, living standards, energy and international cooperation.

The mainstream of the Yarlung Zangbo River has the richest water resources in Tibet Autonomous Region, about 80 million kilowatt hours (kWh), while the 50-kilometer section of the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon has 70 million kWh that could be developed with a 2,000-meter drop, which equals more than three Three Gorges power stations in Hubei province.

MUSIC FOR MONKEYS



British musician Paul Barton plays the piano for monkeys in Lopburi, Thailand. Barton has played at four venues in Lopburi, a province famous for its marauding monkeys and he hopes his music can calm the hungry wild monkeys REUTERS PHOTO

BIDEN NAMES ALL WOMEN WHITE HOUSE COMMS TEAM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Nov 30: US President-elect Joe Biden has named a seven member all-women team to lead the White House communications war room, headed by his campaign communications director Kate Bedingfield. This is the first time in American political history that the senior White House communications team will be entirely female.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris described the announcement as "barrier-shattering".

The new hires: Elizabeth E. Alexander, Communications Director for the First Lady, Kate Bedingfield, White House Communications Director, Ashley Etienne, Communications Director

Indian-American Neera Tanden to head budget office



New York: Joe Biden, who is to become US President in January, has picked Indian-American Neera Tanden, a controversial close confidante of the Clintons, to head the powerful White House Office of Management and Budget, according to several media reports. But opposition to Tanden was welling up Sunday night soon after the news of her selection leaked because she is an outspoken critic of Republicans and is considered a partisan within her Democratic Party.

for the Vice President, Karine Jean Pierre, Principal Deputy Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, White House Press Secretary, Symone Sanders,

Senior Advisor and Chief Spokesperson for the Vice President and Pili Tobar, Deputy White House Communications Director.

PHONE TAPPING

Maryam Nawaz dares 'puppet' Imran Khan to question ISI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Nov 30: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice-president Maryam Nawaz said Monday that "puppet" Prime Minister Imran Khan should have "some courage" to question the country's top spy agency - Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) - as why it is tapping his telephone calls.

Her remarks came in response to Prime Minister Khan's recent disclosure that he was aware that the agencies tap his phone calls.

"This puppet and selected premier Imran even does not have the courage to ask the ISI as why it is tapping his calls. He should tell the ISI that it is not the work of the institution that comes under the Prime Minister," said Maryam, the daughter of deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

"The ISI taps phone of the prime minister and others. This is not new news for me. If any guts left in this puppet (Imran Khan) he should take on the ISI on this matter," she said. She is leading Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in absence of her



Maryam's remarks came in response to Prime Minister Khan's recent disclosure that he was aware that the agencies tap his phone calls

father Nawaz Sharif who has been living in London since November 2019. Sharif's younger brother and PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif is in custody of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), leaving it to Maryam to lead the party.

Khan in a recent interview to a local TV channel had said: "The ISI and the IB (Intelligence Bureau) know whatever I do and with whom I talk to on telephone."

Khan said: "It happens all over the world. Even the CIA does the same in the US."

The Prime Minister was of the view that the agencies do such things as they are responsible for providing security to the heads.

"The ISI knows as to whom I will be calling and why I am calling. The ISI also knows as to who has taken money out of the country," he said.

Khan said the Pakistan Army knows everything about him.

Beware of Covid-19 vaccine scams: FDA

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Nov 30: With the coronavirus vaccine inching toward approval in the US, weary Americans longing for a path back to normal life. But criminals are waiting, too, ready to use that desperation to their advantage, federal investigators say.

But criminals are waiting, too, ready to use that desperation to their advantage, federal investigators say.

Homeland Security investigators are working with Pfizer, Moderna and dozens of other drug companies racing to complete and distribute the vaccine and treatments for the virus.

The goal: to prepare for the scams that are coming, especially after the mess of criminal activity this year with phony personal protective equipment, false cures and extortion schemes.

"We're all very excited about the potential vaccine and treatments," said Steve Francis, as-

sistant director for global trade investigations with Homeland Security Investigations.

"But I also caution against these criminal organisations and individuals that will try to exploit the American public."

No vaccine has yet been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has approved the first treatment for Covid-19, the antiviral drug remdesivir.

With vaccines and treatments both, it has warned about the potential for fraud. "The FDA is particularly concerned that these deceptive and misleading products might cause Americans to delay or stop appropriate medical treatment, leading to serious and life-threatening harm," the agency said in a recent statement.

The drug companies are to have safeguards and brand-protection features in place to help avoid fraud, but that may not be available until the second generation of vaccine.



Uproar in France over proposed limits on filming police

FRENCH ACTIVISTS FEAR THAT A PROPOSED NEW SECURITY LAW WILL DEPRIVE THEM OF A POTENT WEAPON AGAINST ABUSE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, Nov 30: French activists fear that a proposed new security law will deprive them of a potent weapon against abuse - cellphone videos of police activity - threatening their efforts to document possible cases of police brutality, especially in impoverished immigrant neighbourhoods.

French President Emmanuel Macron's government is pushing a new security law. Critics fear the new law could hurt press freedoms and make it more difficult for all citizens to report on police brutality.

"I was lucky enough to have videos that protect me," said Michel Zecler, a Black music producer who was beaten up recently by several

French police officers. Videos first published Thursday by French website Loopsider have been seen by over 14 million viewers, resulting in widespread outrage over police actions.

Two of the officers are in jail while they are investigated while two others, also under investigation, are out on bail.

The draft Bill, still being debated in parliament, has prompted protests across the country called by press freedom advocates and civil rights campaigners. Tens of thousands of people marched Saturday in Paris to reject the measure, including families and friends of people killed by police.

"For decades, descendants of post-colonial immigration and residents



Cars burn during a demonstration against the "Global Security Bill" that rights groups say would make it a crime to circulate an image of a police officer's face and would infringe journalists' freedom in France, Paris

in populous neighbourhoods have denounced police brutality," Sihame Assbague, an anti-racism activist, told this news agency. Videos by the public have helped to show a wider

audience that there is a "systemic problem with French police forces, who are abusing, punching, beating, mutilating, killing," she said. Activists say the Bill may have an

even greater impact on people other than journalists, especially those of immigrant origin living in neighbourhoods where relationships with the police have long been tense. Images posted online have been key to denouncing cases of officers' misconduct and racism in recent years, they argue.

Assbague expressed fears that, under the proposed law, those who post videos of police abuses online may be put on trial, where they would face up to a year in jail and a 45,000-euro (\$53,000) fine.

"I tend to believe that a young Arab man from a poor suburb who posts a video of police brutality in his neighbourhood will be more at risk of being found guilty than a journalist who did a video during a protest," she said.

Amal Bentousi's brother Amine was shot in the back and killed by a police officer in 2012. The officer was sentenced to a five-year suspended prison sentence. Along with other families of victims, in March she launched a mobile phone app called Emergency-Police Violence to record abuses and bring cases to court.

The app has been downloaded more than 50,000 times. The proposed law is partly a response to demands from police unions, who say it will provide greater protection for officers.

Abdoulaye Kante, a Black police officer with 20 years of experience in Paris and its suburbs, is both a supporter of the proposed law and strongly condemns police brutality and violence against officers.

