



KAT'S LIFE MANTRAS

Actress Katrina Kaif opens up on Instagram on how she wants to try and live her life

LEISURE P2



CLERIC SLAMS MAMATA

Indian Secular Front head Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui feels the WB govt has done more harm than good to Muslims

TWO STATES P7



NUCLEAR TREATY EXTENDED

The Russian parliament Wednesday approved the extension of the last remaining nuclear arms control pact with US

INTERNATIONAL P10

Cracks appear among farm unions

Two unions withdraw from stir No one will be spared, says Delhi Police

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 27: Even as the farmer unions continued to allege that "anti-social" elements had perpetrated Tuesday's incidents, the violence started taking a toll with Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhanu) and All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee withdrawing from the protests.



Farmers hoist 'Nishan Sahib' flag at the Red Fort during the tractor rally amid the 72nd Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi

Protesting farmer leaders have postponed their foot march to Parliament February 1, when the annual Budget is presented, against the three farm laws in wake of the violence in Delhi during the tractor parade on Republic Day.

A senior farmer leader said that Samkyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is an umbrella body of 41 protesting unions, took the final call on the postponement of the February 1 foot march.

As many as 37 farmer leaders, including Rakesh Tikait, Yogendra Yadav, Darshan Pal and Gurnam Singh Chaduni, have been named in an FIR in connection with the violence during the tractor parade that left 300 police personnel injured.

Delhi Police said that 22 FIRs have

been filed and around 200 people detained. Multiple videos and CCTV footage are being scanned to identify those involved in the violence and strict action will be taken against the culprits. The FIR registered at Samaypur Badli names 37 farmer leaders including Tikait, Yadav, Darshan Pal and Chaduni and their role will be probed, the police said.

The case has been registered under various sections of IPC including 147, 148 (related to rioting), 307 (attempt to murder) and 120B (punishment of criminal conspiracy).

Union Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlad Patel visited the Red Fort Wednesday to take stock of the damage caused by a section of farmers who stormed the monument and hoisted the Nishan Sahib, the Sikh religious flag, there after deviating from the rally route. The minister has sought a report on the incident.

Vandalised metal detector gate and ticket counter, and shards of glass were seen on the premises of the Red

WHAT HAPPENED AT RED FORT

After a clash between the farmers and the police at the ITO intersection where hundreds of protesters were seen chasing police personnel with sticks and ramming their tractors into the buses, they headed towards the Red Fort at around 1 p.m. Hundreds of farmers on their tractors with flags reached central Delhi from different parts of the national capital and ultimately made their way to the Red Fort after breaching all the barricades on the way. They even hoisted the Nishan Sahib flag on a flagpole inside the Red Fort, while some Nihangs were seen waving their swords from the dome of the historic monument.

Fort during the visit by the minister who was accompanied by the secretary of culture ministry and the ASI Director-General.

Security has been beefed up in several places across the national capital, especially at the Red Fort and farmer protest sites, with the deployment of additional paramilitary forces. Delhi Metro authorities shut the Lal Quila station and restricted entry to the Jama Masjid station.

The tractor parade on Republic Day that was to highlight the demands of the farmer unions to repeal three new agri laws dissolved into anarchy on the streets of the city as tens of thousands of protesters broke through barriers, fought with police, and overturned vehicles.

Start Strong. Grow Stronger.

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Oil companies hike petrol, diesel prices

Branded petrol in Delhi comes for ₹89.10 a litre and for ₹95.61 in Mumbai.

The main difference between regular and premium fuel grades is the octane number. Regular fuel has a lower octane number -- 87, while Premium fuel generally gets a 91 octane rating or higher.

State-owned fuel retailers -- IOC, BPCL and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) -- had January 6, resumed daily price revision after nearly a month-long hiatus.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: Fuel prices here were hiked again with petrol increasing by 61 paisa and diesel by 64 paisa. The revised rates for petrol and diesel in the city stood at ₹86.97 and ₹83.32 respectively.

Fuel prices, which vary from state to state depending on local sales tax or VAT, are now at record high levels in the country.

In Sriganganagar, regular petrol costs ₹88.40 per litre and premium or branded petrol comes for ₹101.15 a

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

This violence can't be tolerated. None of our party workers were involved in it!

TIKTOK TO SHUT DOWN INDIA BIZ

New Delhi, Jan 27: Chinese social media firm Bytedance, which owns Tiktok and Helo apps, has announced the closure of its India business following continued restrictions on its services in the country.

Tiktok's global interim head Vanessa Pappas and vice president for global business solutions Blake Chandlee in a joint email to employees have communicated the decision of the company that it is reducing team size and the decision will impact all employees in India. The executives expressed uncertainty on the company's comeback but expressed hope to do so in times to come.

While we don't know when we will make a comeback in India, we are confident in our resilience, and desire to do so in times to come, the email said.

Apex court stays order on groping

New Delhi, Jan 27: The Supreme Court Wednesday stayed the Bombay High Court order which acquitted a man under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act saying "groping a minor's breast without skin to skin contact cannot be termed as sexual assault".

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian stayed the high court order after Attorney General K K Venugopal mentioned the matter.

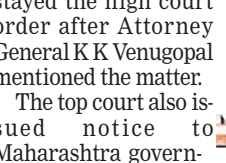
The top court also issued notice to Maharashtra government and permitted the AG to file an appeal against the January 19 verdict of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court. The verdict said that groping a minor's breast without skin to skin contact cannot be termed as sexual assault as defined under the POCSO Act.

It said that since the man groped the child without removing her clothes the offence cannot be termed as sexual assault but it does constitute the offence of outraging a woman's modesty under IPC section 354. The high court had modified the order of a sessions court, which had sentenced a 39-year-old man to three years of imprisonment for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl.

It held that mere groping will not fall under the definition of sexual assault. As per the prosecution and the minor victim's testimony in court, in December 2016, the accused, one Satish, had taken the girl to his house in Nagpur on the pretext of giving her something to eat.

Once there, he gripped her breast and attempted to remove her clothes, the High Court had recorded in her verdict.

However, since he groped her without removing her clothes, the offence cannot be termed as sexual assault and, instead, constitutes the offence of outraging a woman's modesty under IPC section 354, the high court had held. While IPC section 354 entails a minimum imprisonment for one year, sexual assault under the POCSO Act entails a minimum imprisonment of three years.



The Bombay HC had held that physical contact mentioned in the definition of sexual assault must be 'skin to skin' contact

Cops rescue 894 kids in 8 days

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: In a special drive launched by Odisha police, cops rescued 894 missing children from different parts of the state, a top official said Wednesday.

Notably, the drive for tracing out missing children started January 18 and continued till January 25.

Out of the total 894 children, 94 are boys and 800 are girls. The cops started the special drive following 834 missing complaints registered in different police stations across the state.

During the special drive, Kendrapara police rescued 127 children whereas Mayurbhanj police rescued 111 and Balasore 88 children.

and 800 were girls

Odisha DGP Abhay said. He appreciated the good work done by different district superintendents of police (SPs).

Notably, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data suggests that the recovery rate of missing children in Odisha was 27.1 per cent in 2019, the lowest in the country.

Reports also claim that more than 4000 children, who have gone missing in the last few years, are still untraceable.

As many as 73,138 children were reported to be missing across India in 2019 -- or 200 on an average every day -- according to the National Crime Records Bureau's -- Crime In India 2019 report.

Tainted IFS officer, son get bail

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: The Special Vigilance Court here Wednesday granted bail to IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash, who were arrested in a disproportionate assets (DA) case in November last year.

The investigating agency could not file a charge sheet even after 60 days of the arrest, an official said.

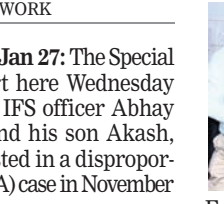
A 1987 batch IFS officer, Pathak served as the Additional PCCF (plan, programme and afforestation) and was all set to become the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) this June till the Vigilance sleuths raided his residence and other premises November 26, 2020.

Simultaneous raids were carried out in Bhubaneswar, Mumbai, Pune, Bihar and Rajasthan by around 150 officers -- one of the biggest by the state Vigilance -- to unearth alleged disproportionate assets (DA) owned by the 58-year-old officer, Vigilance sources said.

The Odisha cadre IFS officer was reportedly found in possession of DA worth several crore of rupees which was around 435 per cent of his total income, they added.

Hours after his arrest, the state government suspended Pathak from service. According to the anti-corruption wing of the state police, Pathak is the highest-ranked Forest official in Odisha to ever face a corruption case.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had December 17 last year recom-



Officers with the state Vigilance during the raid.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAURIATION
SENSEX 47409.93	937.66
NIFTY 13967.50	271.40
DOLLAR 73.50	₹0.09
EURO 88.60	₹0.07
GOLD ₹48,775	₹368
SILVER ₹65,704	₹831

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	19.0°C	28.0°C
TEMP MIN	18.6°C	15.6°C
Humidity	57%	64%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather likely

India's Covaxin neutralises UK virus strain: Study

New Delhi, Jan 27: Covaxin -- a vaccine developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech -- is effective against UK variants of COVID-19, according to a study on 26 participants, shared by the company Wednesday.

"A comparable neutralization activity of sera of the vaccinated individuals showed against UK-variant and the heterologous strain with similar efficiency dispel the uncertainty of possible neutralization escape," the article said.

Covaxin has been accorded approval for restricted emergency use in the country by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) on January 3.

While giving the approval for Covaxin, DCGI V G Somani had said, "Bharat Biotech has developed a Whole Virion Inactivated Coronavirus Vaccine (Covaxin) in collaboration with ICMR and NIV (Pune), from where they received the virus seed strains. This vaccine is developed on the Vero cell platform, which has a well-established track record of safety and efficacy in the country & globally."

The ICMR's National Institute of Virology scientist performed the plaque reduction neutralization test using sera collected from the 26 recipients of Bharat Biotech's coronavirus vaccine (COVAXIN) against UK-variant strain.

"A comparable neutralization activity of the vaccinated individuals sera showed against UK-variant and the heterologous strain with similar efficiency dispel the uncertainty of possible neutralization escape," stated document ap-

SILVER BULLET

- The sero-conversion rate with neutralising antibodies following vaccination with Covaxin was 99.6 per cent
- A rapid surge in SARS-CoV-2 cases due to the Variant of Concern (VOC) in the United Kingdom (UK) raised concerns in several countries

homologous strain and two heterologous strains with the characteristic substitution of the UK-variant," said the authors.

"The median ratio of 50 per cent neutralization of sera was found to be 0.8 and 0.9 when compared with earlier detected SARS CoV-2 strains against mutant UK strain," they said.

The ICMR scientist mentioned that they have reported the development of an inactivated whole-virion SARS-CoV-2 vaccine (Covaxin) which elicited remarkable neutralizing antibody response in phase I clinical trial against homologous, and two heterologous strains from the unclassified cluster. In phase II clinical trial, the vaccine candidate showed noteworthy results with plaque reduction neutralization test.

HOSP GUARD DIES AFTER VACCINATION

NUAPADA: A security guard engaged at the Nuapada district headquarters hospital (DHH) died while undergoing treatment. He had fallen sick after being administered the COVID-19 vaccine injection January 23. The 27-year-old security guard was identified as Nanikaram Keunt of Dianmunda village in Nuapada district. His family members alleged that he died due to adverse effects of the vaccination. Keunt was on duty Monday at the DHH. He complained of ill health in the evening. Later, he was admitted to the hospital. As his condition deteriorated, a decision was taken to transfer Keunt to VIMSAR, Burla, where he breathed his last.

leisure



CHRISSEY TEIGEN HAS AN UNUSUAL REASON NOT TO BE DISTURBED

Model Chrissy Teigen Wednesday urged everyone not to bother her, and her reason is quite original and entertaining. "Please do not bother me today for i am *emoting*," she wrote as the caption.

KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS WAS MEANT TO BE A 'FILLER': KHLOE

Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian reveals the popular show *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* started as a filler programme. She claims the pilot didn't go anywhere at first.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you want to do something for the environment. Ganesha says plant a tree, clean up your neighbourhood, ask for a paper bag. You wish to lead the world into a better place? Do it by all means, but one step at a time.

TAURUS
You may feel suspicious about the people around you, feels Ganesha. You are also likely to emerge victorious in visa matters. You will take time to let your loved ones know how much you care for them. Have a positive attitude and it will win many hearts for you, advises Ganesha.

GEMINI
If you are embroiled in a legal dispute, an out-of-court settlement is likely, predicts Ganesha. You are a courageous person and you'll need a lot of it today. Don't back down from your decisions. You may have to be stern with a few people. Your resilience will pay off.

CANCER
Today, you will be at the centre of all your plans. Your responsibilities at home are likely to be unnecessary digressions for you, with your help-yourself-only attitude. However, you may feel that you are not getting enough returns of your hard work. Ganesha advises you to become more responsible at home, and your family's love and affection will make up for the insufficient returns.

LEO
Today may not be the best time to mess with you, considering the aura of invincibility that you possess. Be it a game, a competition, or an argument, you will have the edge over others in every sphere, says Ganesha. Also, you may come across people with whom you will have personal differences, and those who will try to change your fortunes. The best way to deal with them, according to Ganesha, is to be patient and play the waiting game.

VIRGO
A renewed zest for life will bring in a transformation in you. It is a good time to let people know how important and intelligent - yes, you can be both - are. Your eminence will be obvious as you show how things are meant to be done.

LIBRA
Good news! You will be a people's person today. Close friends, relatives and family - you seem to want to spend your time with all of them today, says Ganesha. Better news? Your romantic brilliance will be at its peak today as your fancy takes wings and creativity flows freely in manners that seem irresistible. Best news? The opposite sex just can't seem to keep their hands off you. Need you want more, asks Ganesha?

SCORPIO
You may face the music from bosses today, forecasts Ganesha. Your colleagues too may not warm up to you and offer half-hearted support. Novices knocking on the doors of career may look forward to belated success in interviews and final selection.

SAGITTARIUS
A day full of cheer and joy is in store. You will probably enrol in a part-time course and sharpen your skills. But for those in police and legal professions, you will be the lions of the jungle! Roar and stamp your authority, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Your grand orchestration may not come to fruition, and even your best-laid plans may go awry, says Ganesha. Squabbles with people over petty issues will add to your growing vexation; keep calm and you'll handle all of it just fine.

AQUARIUS
Today is an important day in the larger scheme of things. You may finally decide to buy a home, change your job, or marry! Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards too. Reputation and rewards are all yours today. This acknowledgement helps you remain committed, says Ganesha.

PISCES
Financially, you have bright prospects awaiting you today. You will be able to deal with the mind-numbing financial jugglery required to take stock of your monetary matters with precision. You might be dealing with people who secretly have an axe to grind against you, cautions Ganesha.

Yami walks down memory lane

MUMBAI: Actress Yami Gautam has reminisced about her journey from her television commercial days to her current stint in Hindi cinema. Yami posted a throwback picture on Instagram where she can be seen shooting for a TVC as a background artiste while sharing screen space with actress Asin Thottumkal. Yami is draped in a saree.



It was my birthday and I remember my mother sitting at

far away and watching me work since early morning," she wrote. "I walked up to Mummy, who has always encouraged me at every step, for her feedback & she said keep learning and working hard everyday this way, you are doing very well. It was such a beautiful time," she added. Meanwhile, Yami Wednesday shared the news that she has wrapped up shooting for her forthcoming horror comedy flick *Bhoot Police*.

Just-married Varun thanks all

MUMBAI: Actor Varun Dhawan Wednesday tweeted his thanks to all, for their love and positivity shown towards him and his wife, fashion designer Natasha Dalal. "The last few days me and Natasha have received so much love and positivity from everyone so just wanted to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart," he wrote. Varun got married to his childhood sweetheart Natasha at The Mansion House resort in Alibaug Sunday. He opted for an intimate affair, rather than a big wedding owing to the ongoing pandemic. He got married in the presence of family

members and close friends. Since Sunday, the actor has been sharing various



moments from the wedding on his Instagram. He shared wedding pictures



on social media, captioning the post: "Lifelong love just became official". In his latest post, he has

shared a picture of Natasha's mehendi ceremony where the actor can be seen planting a kiss on her cheek.

Atibadi Samman for eminent author Ramachandra Behera

THE WINNER OF KENDRA SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD HAD RECEIVED INDIA'S FOURTH HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD PADMA SHRI IN 2020



Ramachandra Behera

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: Eminent Odia writer and dramatist Ramachandra Behera, who has already left a mark in the field of literature, will be honoured with the prestigious Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman, announced Odisha Sahitya Akademi Wednesday. Apart from Behera, 15 other litterateurs- Debendra Kumar Dash, Girija Shankar Sharma, Ashok Kumar Patnaik, Babaji Charan Patnaik, Baidhar Sahoo, Jeevan Krushna Mohapatra, Digaraj Brahma, Rudra Narayan Prusty, Soubhagini Mishra, Swarajya Lakshmi Mishra, Krupasindhu Nayak, Nirmal Prabha Nayak, Raseshwari Mishra, Radha Binod Nayak and Maheshwar Mulia will also be felicitated by the Akademi, said Akademi's secretary Suchsmita Mantri in a press release.



Receiving Sahitya Akademi Award from Gopi Chand Narang in 2005

Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman is an honour conferred on eminent litterateurs for their immense contributions in the field literature.

"It is a great moment for me.. It is the greatest award and I thank all my readers," said Rama Chandra, who received Padma Shri in 2020

Ramachandra Behera is one amongst the few writers known for his literary works which depict 'the slice of life' in its natural form. A well-known radio dramatist of the seventies, Behera's stories and novels take us to the man's struggle for survival. A teacher by profession, adored by students for his insightful lectures, 75-year-old Behera's literary journey continues with vigour. A recipient of many awards for his literary creations, he is among the rare breed of writers whose depiction of extraordinary ordinariness of human condition and situation takes a new dimension in the world of 'survival of the fittest'. Other honours he received earlier include the Kendra Sahitya Akademi award, the State Sahitya Akademi award, Katha Samman, Sarala Samman, Utkal Sahitya Samman, Tarini Samman, Vishubha Puraskar,

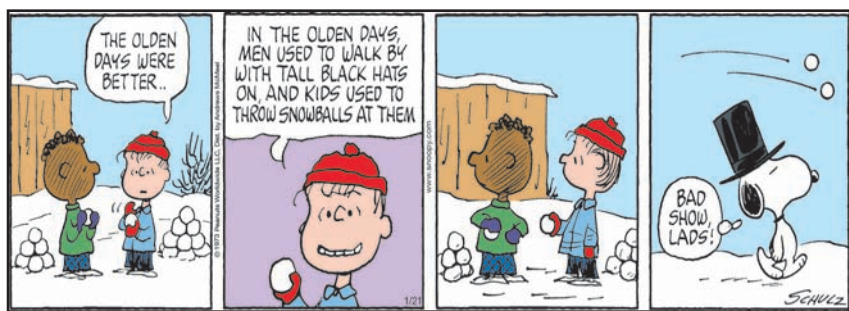
RAMCHANDRA'S SELECT WORKS

Name of book	Year of publication
Dwitiya Smasana	1976
Achinha Pruthibi	1979
Abasista Ayusha	1982
Dhusara Suryasta	1996
Monica Ebe Kenuthi	2000
Padatalara Mati	2003
Ratira Shesha Prustha	2006
Marichikara Mahaka	2009
Nikhaj Aparadhi	2009
Eithi Akasha	2012

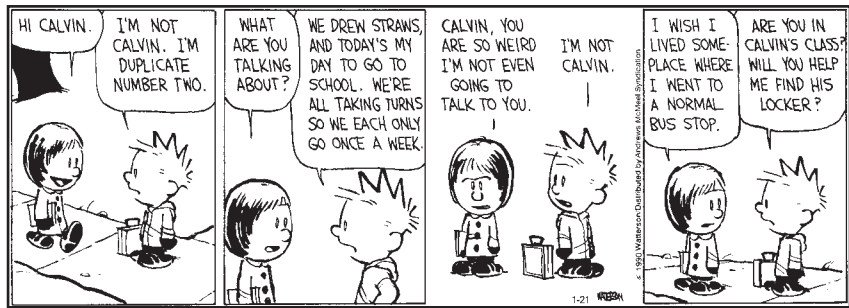
Bharatiya Bhasa Parishad Sadhana Samman and Natya Samman.

FUN post

PEANUTS



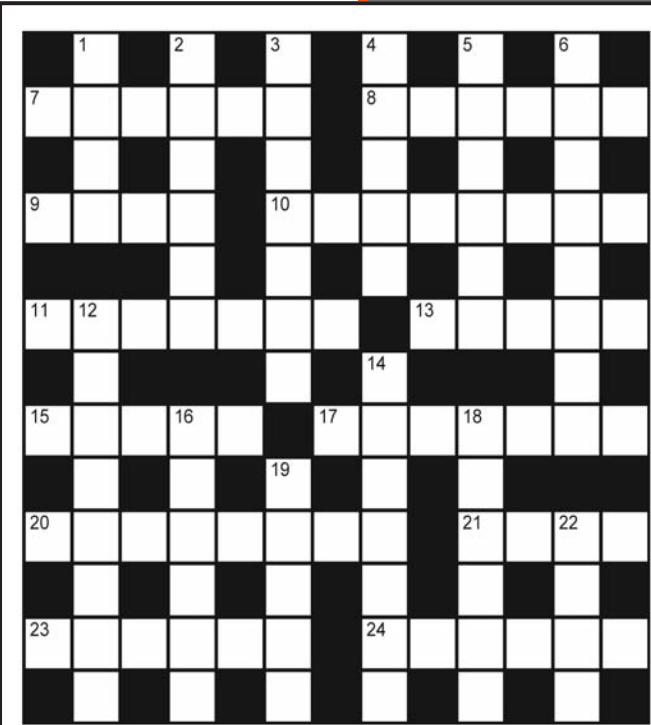
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



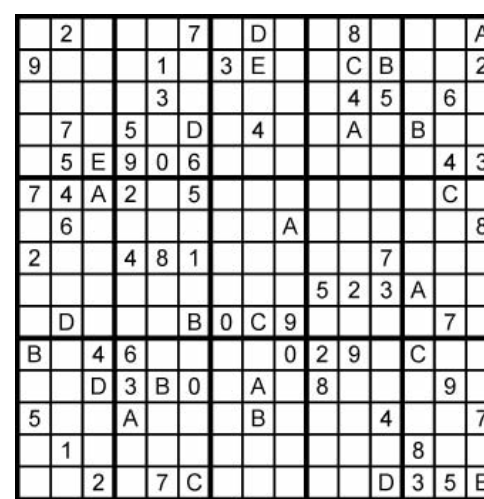
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Regal fur
 - 8 Tickled pink
 - 9 Card game start
 - 10 Conniptions
 - 11 Sporting dogs
 - 13 Grassy plain
 - 15 Outriggers
 - 17 Sweet Italian wine
 - 20 Kind of kit (5,3)
 - 21 Fencing sword
 - 23 Entebbe locale
 - 24 Withstand
 - 5 Cask
 - 6 Battery part
 - 12 Net income
 - 14 Equestrian gear
 - 16 Missing in action?
 - 18 Shells out
 - 19 Panama, for one
 - 22 Emerald Isle

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

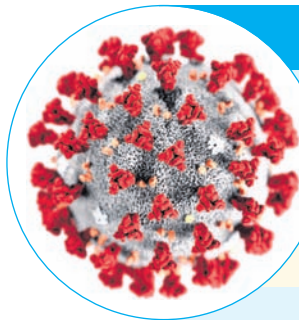


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



EVICITION DRIVE

Civic authorities remove encroachments from College Square area in Cuttack, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,09,89,348	7,30,03,108	21,71,104
India	1,06,89,527	1,03,59,305	1,53,724
Odisha	3,34,667	3,31,535	1,906

Rift in BJD over Cuttack bus terminal plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: Former Barabati-Cuttack MLA Debashish Samantaray has criticised Cuttack Lok Sabha MP Bhartruhari Mahtab for his comments on the proposed new bus terminal in Cuttack.

"It is sad to hear the views of Cuttack MP. According to my opinion, this is certainly an act of indiscipline. The Chief Minister of Odisha has been winning the elections due to the development works carried out by him. The remarks made by the Lok Sabha MP on the bus stand are not good to hear," he said.



He also added, "The bus stand was made keeping in mind the need of the people. There are important areas to be served from the proposed area. This was one of the best gifts from the CM to Cuttack."

Mahtab had claimed that the decision was taken without much deliberation and that local representatives were not taken into confidence.

"I was not aware of the decision which was taken through Google map and not with proper discussions. There are several public amenities there. Taking a discussion based on proper discussion could have been good," Mahtab had said. The government has planned to construct a new bus terminal at Khan Nagar.

High Court to have 14 vacancies in 6 months

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 27: In what could hinder timely delivery of justice in the state, the strength of the Orissa High Court judges would reduce to 13, half of the court's sanctioned strength within next six months.

In an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, the High Court anticipated that it is likely to have 14 vacancies within six months. It has been further submitted to the court that the present sanctioned strength of judges in Orissa High Court stands at 27, which are to be filled from two sources - 18 from Bar and nine from Higher Judicial Service of the state.

"The present working strength of judges in the High Court is 15 including the Chief Justice. Out of 18 Bar quota and nine service quota, the present functional strength of



SC asks Centre to respond to the recommendations made by the High Courts for appointment of judges

judges from Bar segment is 10 and service segment is five. Accordingly, the present vacancy position form Bar segment is eight and service segment is four," the HC stated in the affidavit.

"So far as the anticipated vacancy is concerned, two vacancies will arise within six months, both are from Bar segment," it added.

Significantly, the Supreme Court, while hearing a petition seeking appointment of additional judges in High Courts, Wednesday, asked the Union ministry of Law and Justice to lay down a timeline and apprise the court of the time it will take to respond to the recommendations made by the High Courts for the appointment of judges.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for Orissa HC, Sibho Sankar Mishra, submitted to the apex court that Chief Justice S Muralidhar has assumed the charge of the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court January 4. "So, it would be difficult to make recommendations for appointment of judges immediately," he stated.

Centre releases ₹1,693cr for rural local bodies

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 27: The Union government has released Rs 1693.50 crore to Odisha as grants for the rural local bodies (RLBs) in the state.

The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has released an amount of Rs 12,351.5 crore to 18 states as the 2nd instalment of basic grants released in financial year 2020-21. The Centre has released the grant to the states that have submitted the utilisation certificates (UCs) for the first instalment and on the recommendation of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

"The states are required to transfer the grants to the RLBs within 10 working days of receipt from the Union government. Any delay beyond 10 working days requires the state governments to release the grants with interest," the ministry said.

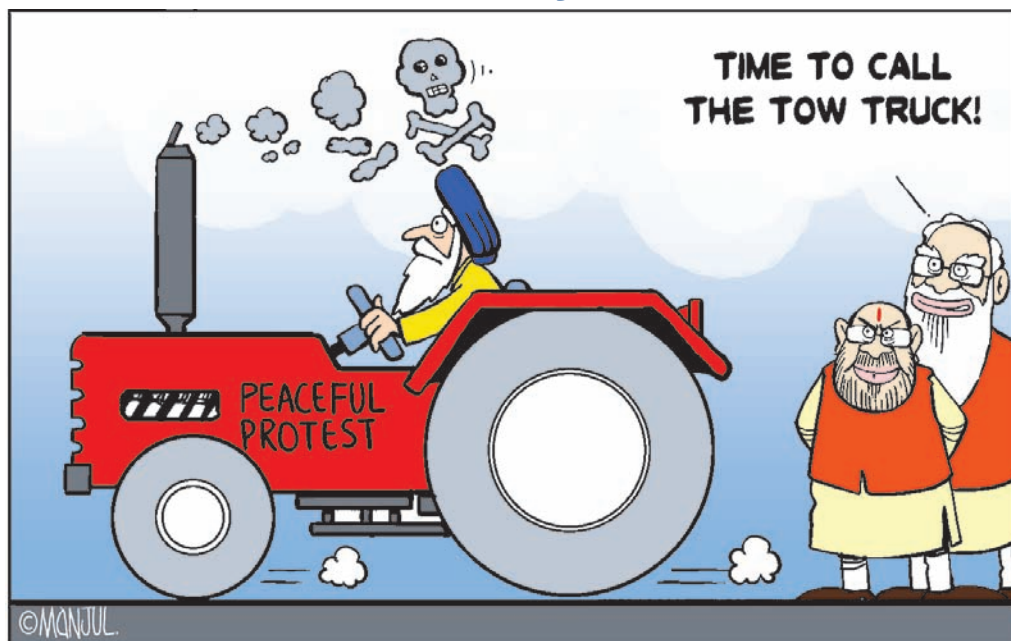
The Ministry of Finance also informed that the grants to RLBs are released as per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission to create community assets and improve financial viability of the RLBs. The grants are provided to all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj - village, block and

district level bodies - to enable pooling of resources across villages and blocks, the ministry said.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended two types of grants to the RLBs - basic and tied grants. Basic grants are untied and can be used by the local bodies for location specific needs except for salary or other establishment expenditure.

The tied grants can be used for basic services of sanitation and maintenance of open defecation free (ODF) status and supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Pariksha Darpan to help HSC examinees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Wednesday unveiled a guide book (test paper) titled 'Pariksha Darpan' for students appearing for the annual High School Certificate (HSC) examination this year. The guide book will be provided to the students for free.

The minister also flag off vehicles for the distribution of the guide books in Nuapada, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Koprapt districts in the first phase Wednesday. The test papers will reach other districts by February 12. District education officers (DEOs) have been asked to distribute the books to the students of government, aided and private Odisha medium schools by



February 15, 2021.

The books will be distributed to over six lakh students of the state to help them prepare better for the examination.

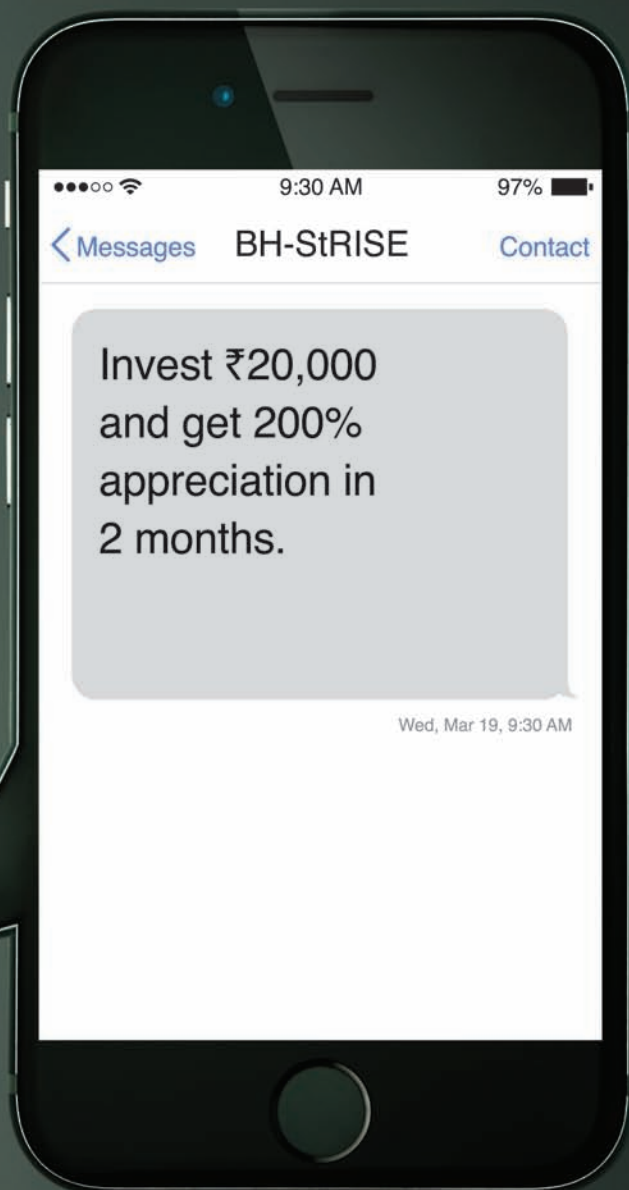
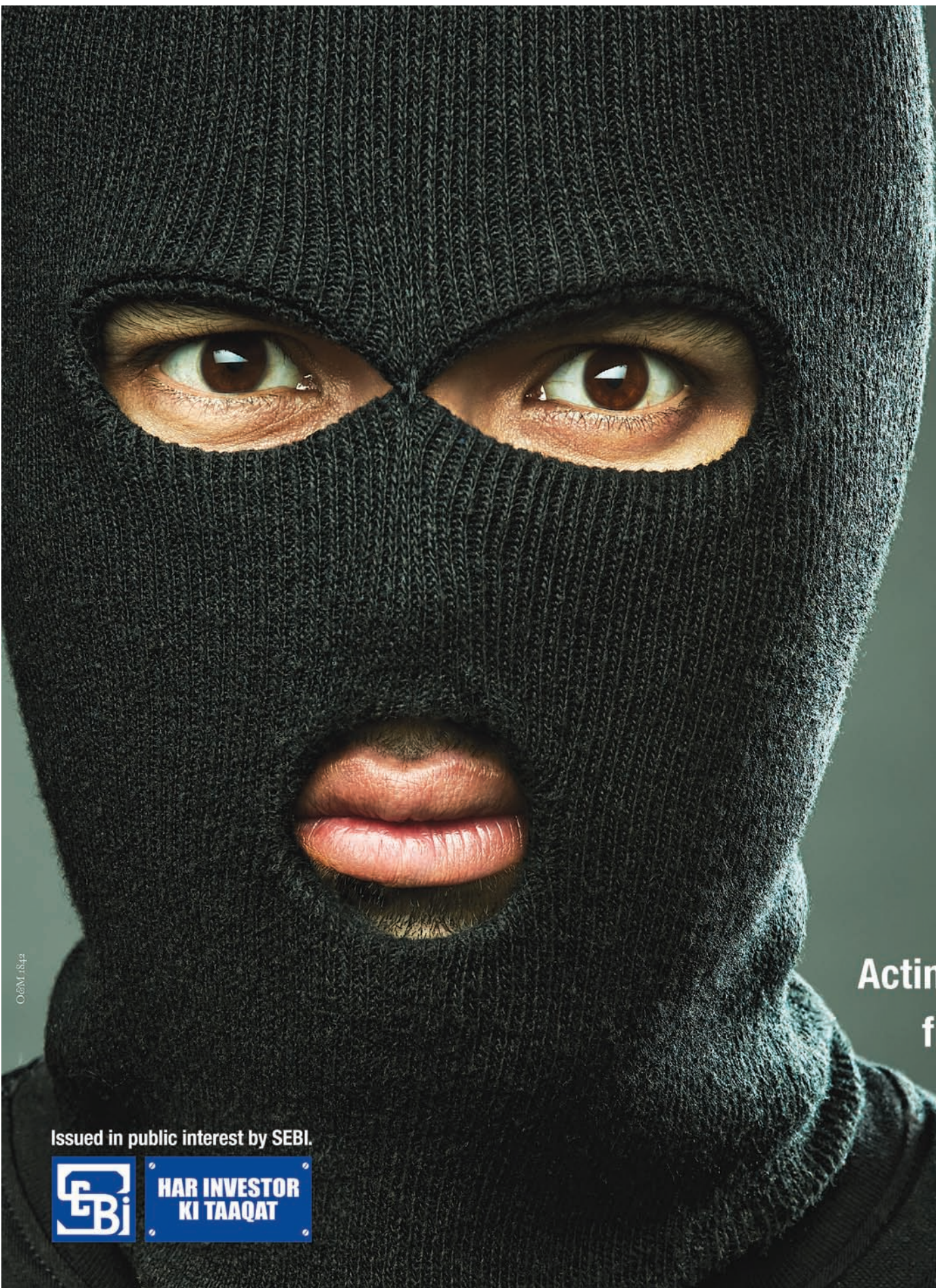
Dash said the 700-page 'Pariksha Darpan' will contain probable questions with answers. This year, over six lakh students are scheduled to appear for the examination.

Dash said, "Earlier, the government had condensed the syllabus of the students by 30 per cent to reduce the stress of the students and

waived the examination fee of the students in view of the Covid-19 pandemic."

The annual HSC examination conducted by Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha is scheduled to commence May 3.

Highlighting the importance of the book, Dash said, "Students could not utilise online education properly due to various reasons for which they lost many crucial days. To help them fare better in the exam, we decided to provide this book which contains probable questions and answers exclusively meant for the Class X Annual Matric Exams-2021 to be conducted by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE)." As per the notification, Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) will bear the cost of the books.



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DCP cautions against cybercrime

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: The cybercrime helpdesk here has been receiving 40-50 calls related to cyber frauds on an average per day, Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash said here Wednesday.

"In the last three days, we have received nearly 50 calls from Bhubaneswar UPD and nearly 70 calls from outside Bhubaneswar," said Dash, giving an idea on the rising cybercrimes these days.

"As per our analysis, most of the fraud cases are through UPI transactions or ATM card transactions," he said, sharing details of the type of frauds.

Informing that the helpdesk is meant only for Bhubaneswar urban police district (UPD), Dash cautioned people against sharing One Time Password (OTP), personal details like Aadhaar and PAN numbers, clicking on unfamiliar URLs in order to avoid falling victim to cyber frauds.



5 ARRESTED FROM UTTAR PRADESH

BHAWANIPATNA: Odisha Police Wednesday arrested five cyber miscreants from Uttar Pradesh for allegedly withdrawing money from the bank account of a senior citizen of Kalahandi district, an official said.

The accused were identified as Abhilash Singh, Parvez Ahmed, Wahid Khan, Sahrukh Khan and Zuned Ahmed while another accused is absconding and yet to be traced. Rs 52,388 in cash was also re-

covered from the possession of the accused persons.

The breakthrough came after a special team formed by the Kalahandi SP arrested the accused persons during an investigation into the incident. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in the court, Ramesh Chandra Sethi, sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) of Bhawanipatna said.

Police said a senior citizen Gangadhar Subudhi lost Rs 2.65 lakh in an online fraud January

16. Later, Subudhi lodged a complaint at the Bhawanipatna police station on which police registered a case and started an investigation.

Police said Subudhi received a phone call from the customer care executive of a private telecom firm on winning a prize January 16. The caller impersonated himself as the customer care executive of the telecom firm informed Subudhi that his name has been selected for an award of Rs 20,000 and a mobile phone. The caller then sent an app link to his mobile phone and asked Subudhi to download it.

Unsuspecting, Subudhi downloaded the app and submitted his wife Saralabala Prusti's bank account details with the caller over phone. Within seconds, Rs 2.65 lakh was debited from their accounts in two installments.

Rattled, Subudhi lodged a complaint regarding the cyber fraud in the police station. Later, he met the SP, officials of the district cyber cell and narrated his ordeal. The officials assured him of taking stringent action against the fraudsters.

MUSICAL PLAY



Artistes of Lavanya Theatre, Bhubaneswar, stage musical play *Mahiravan Baddha* at the State-level Gitanatya Utsav organised by Odia Language Literature & Culture department at Rabindra Mandap in the Capital city, Wednesday

IMD forecasts foggy weather

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Wednesday forecast moderate to dense fog in different parts of the state during the next four days.

The IMD claimed that dry weather is most likely to prevail in most of the districts of Odisha Thursday while shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at one or two places in Malkangiri, Koraput, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Nabarangpur, Bolangir and Boudh on the day.

The department forecast dense fog warning for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. While issuing yellow warning, the IMD said that Thursday, dense fog is very likely to occur at one or two places in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Angul.

The weatherman meanwhile claimed that light rain is likely to occur at one or two places in some districts Thursday. It also forecast that shallow to moderate fog is likely to cover the skies of northern coastal districts of Odisha. The department also predicted dense fog at one or two places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Nayagarh, Angul, Puri, Dhenkanal and Mayurbhanj Friday.

RT-PCR test resumes for Srimandir servitors



A health worker collects swab sample of a servitor in Puri, Wednesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Jan 27: The Health department, in association with the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), Wednesday, started collecting swab samples of Srimandir servitors for RT-PCR tests to keep the Covid-19 infections at bay.

The office of the chief district medical officer (CDMO) has constituted a special team to collect swab samples of the servitors. "The doors of Srimandir have been thrown open for all devotees. Even, devotees have been allowed to visit the shrine without producing covid negative reports. Hence, there is chance of fresh covid infection among the servi-

tors," said a source in the SJTA.

According to sources, all the servitors, SJTA employees and staffers of shelter houses for devotees would undergo the RT-PCR tests. "The health workers would collect swab samples of 50 servitors in a day. The RT-PCR tests would continue till March 1. The SJTA has prepared a detailed schedule in this regard. Today, samples were collected from Suar-Mahasuar servitors," said an official of the temple administration.

Notably, the SJTA had earlier urged the state government to vaccinate Srimandir servitors and their family members on priority basis.

COVID TALLY STANDS AT 3,34,667

ODISHA'S CORONAVIRUS TOLL REMAINS AT 1,906 AS NO NEW FATALITY DUE TO THE VIRAL INFECTION WAS REPORTED IN THE LAST 24 HOURS: HEALTH DEPARTMENT

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: State's Covid-19 tally Wednesday mounted to 3,34,667 as 138 more people tested positive for the disease, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

As many as 81 new cases were reported from quarantine centres and 57 detected during contact tracing.

Cuttack district recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 26, followed by Nuapada and Sundargarh at 15 each.

Six districts—Dhenkanal, Kandhamal, Kendrapara, Koraput, Nayagarh and Nabarangpur—did not register any new case since Tuesday, the official said.

The death toll remained at 1,906 as no new fatality due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours, said the H&FW department official.

Altogether 1,77,090 health workers have already received Covid-19 vaccine and the next phase will cover another batch of about 1,73,836 people.

"The state has achieved a 92 per cent immunisation coverage and set a target to vaccinate 1,92,555 health-care workers in the first phase,"

The story so far

- Of the 1,906 Covid-19 fatalities reported in the state so far, Khurda accounted for 335, followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (173), Cuttack (141) and Puri (117)
- Cuttack recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 26, followed by Nuapada and Sundargarh at 15 each
- Odisha has so far conducted over 76.12 lakh sample tests for Covid-19
- The coastal state's positivity rate stands at 4.4 per cent

H&FW director Bijay Panigrahi said.

He also said the next phase of the inoculation drive resumed in Bhubaneswar Wednesday and will begin in other parts of the state January 28.

A 27-year-old healthcare worker of the Nuapada District Headquarters Hospital died Tuesday, three days after taking the Covid-19 vaccine, while the state health department said his death was not related to vaccination.

Of the 1,906 Covid-19 fatalities reported in the state so far, Khurda district accounted for 335, followed by

Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (173), Cuttack (141) and Puri (117).

As many as 53 other Covid-19 patients have also died due to comorbidity, the official pointed out.

Odisha now has 1,281 active cases, while 3,31,427 people have recovered from the disease till Tuesday.

The government also started RT-PCR tests for servitors of the Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri from Wednesday.

The state has so far conducted over 76.12 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 24,110 Tuesday, and the positivity rate stands at 4.4 per cent, added the official.

S&ME Minister flags off awareness campaign

BHUBANESWAR: School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Wednesday flagged off two vehicles here which are aimed at spreading awareness on Covid-19 through folk art in four districts. Artists will perform folk art like 'pala' and 'dasakathia' to sensitise the people on novel coronavirus. According to Bikash Mohapatra, secretary of Suprativa, a voluntary organisation hosting the campaign, four districts—Khurda, Jagpur, Balasore and Bhadrak—have been selected for the campaign in the first phase. More districts will be covered in coming days. "The main objective of the campaign is to disseminate scientific knowledge among the masses so as to prevent the spread of the killer disease," Mohapatra pointed out. Artists will sanitise the people on what coronavirus is, how it spreads, its symptoms, general advice, precautionary measures, benefit of social distancing and using mask. Besides, ways of washing hands, safety of schoolchildren and importance of vaccination will also be a part of the awareness drive.

CURTAINS DOWN ON SUTRAA-2021 EXPO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: The wedding special exhibition 'Sutraa-2021', a two-day-long programme being held at a hotel here, concluded Wednesday. More than 47 stalls showcased wedding clothes, lehengas, sarees, kurtis, western clothes, hair accessories, various home decors and winter products. Weavers from Kolkata, Chandigarh, Delhi, Mumbai, Raipur, Varanasi, Pune, Gujarat, Rajasthan and



Lucknow participated in the expo. Suniti Verma, who has a wedding of her niece, purchased bangles and a gold necklace from Avama and said, "Due to Covid, every plan was

put on the back-burner. So, now as I came to know about the expo, I have bought some gold bangles and a necklace as gift for my niece and am very happy with my purchase."

Cotton Fab 2020 concludes in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: The Cotton Fab 2020 with 120 stalls from 12 states including Odisha came to a glorifying end at Exhibition Ground Wednesday in the city. The fair began January 19 and witnessed a profitable sale this year.

The fair showcased stalls from Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Odisha, which sold numerous products exceeding all expectations, source said.

Fabrics and products like Chikankari work from UP, Banarasi sarees, handloom carpets, Kantha stitch sarees, Dhakai Jamdani sarees from West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir's hand embroidered sarees, Punjab's Phulkari dupatta, sherwani and suits, Gujarat's Kutch Ajrakh, block print and Banjara embroidery suits were among the highly sold goods. Rajasthan's Barmer, Sanganer, blockprint clothes also allured the buyers.

The Firozabad glass work and Bangle stalls attracted a huge crowd on the last day.

Parties decry Delhi violence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 27: Almost all political parties in the state unequivocally condemned the violence during the farmers' rally in the national capital January 26.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress party from the state strongly objected to the violence that erupted in the national capital, especially the incident at Red Fort where protesters took down the Tricolour and hoisted their flag.

BJD leader Amar Satpathy said, "We have always stood by farmers. Our party has been batting for MSP guarantee. We had demanded making MSP as part of the legislation also." Whatever violent activities happened yesterday was condemnable, he added.

He also said that his party believes



in peaceful protests of farmers. He added when it comes to Odisha, the government has been working to weed out any hassle faced by them.

The Congress party too jumped

onto the bandwagon to decry the violent activities. Party leader Suresh Routray said, "The Prime Minister has lack of knowledge on farmers' issues. We have very high regards for the Tricolour. I am aghast by the fact that the protesting farmers climbed onto the Lal Quila edifice." Routray questioned, "How can they climb onto that?" "This shows that the government and the intelligence services have failed in tackling the issue. This exposes the failure of the Union government," he added. BJP leader Sambit Patra also went down heavily on the protesting farmers for allegedly taking the path of violence. He said that some farmers during the protests turned extremists. Patra urged people to call those violent protesting farmers "as extremists without a second thought."

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Patnagarh, I, Premananda Patra, R/o. Vill/P.O.- Bhanpur, Dist.- Bolangir declared that in my Voter ID and LIC Policy No.18356663 my name has been mentioned as Mudhaman Patra. Whereas in Aadhaar card my name has been mentioned as Premananda Patra. That both the names belongs to same and one person.

JOB CRY



Members of ICT School Coordinator Association take out a rally from Ram Mandir Square to Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, seeking job regularisation

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TALCHER-BIMALAGARH RAILWAY PROJECT

Double displacement for RSP, Rengali oustees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, Jan 27: Even as people to be displaced (once again) by the Talcher-Bimalagarh railway project in Deogarh are demanding high compensation for their land, the administration has initiated the groundwork for the project. Notably, Talcher-Bimalagarh railway project is hanging fire due to land hurdle in different districts in the state.

The East Coast Railway (ECoR) intends to complete the Bimalagarh-Talcher Broad Gauge rail line by March 2025 with the administrations facing inordinate delay in availability of land.

Reports said, people united under the Bimalagarh-Talcher Railway Displaced Proposed Committee from Barkote block of Deogarh recently submitted a memorandum to the Collector, seeking appropriate damages to their land.

They alleged that people who were displaced by Rourkela Steel Plant and Rengali dam project had been rehabilitated at Masina, Kumbharagadia, Ambagaon, Harekrushnapur, Makforsonpur, Singhshla, Kantalbahal, Damkucha, Jagannathpur, Lakhpalli,



SEEKING HIGH DAMAGES

People drawn from many villages under Barkote block of Deogarh and united under the Bimalagarh-Talcher Railway Displaced Proposed Committee recently submitted a memorandum to the Collector, seeking appropriate damages to their land

They alleged that people who were displaced by Rourkela Steel Plant and Rengali dam project had been rehabilitated at Masina, Kumbharagadia, Ambagaon, Harekrushnapur, Makforsonpur, Singhshla, Kantalbahal, Damkucha, Jagannathpur, Lakhpalli, Akharashila, Rangamatia, Indranijharan, Balanda, Bahadaposi and Gopapur villages

Akharashila, Rangamatia, Indranijharan, Balanda, Bahadaposi and Gopapur villages. Now, they have not even managed to lead life normally due to displacement.

Again, this railway project is going to displace them which has become a cause of worry.

On the other hand, the administration has started cutting down trees on the land of these people, but compensation for the tree has not been paid. They lamented that they had no idea about how much compensation will be paid and when it will be paid. They have expressed their doubts over getting appropriate compensation

They pointed out that as they are going to face displacement twice, they should be paid ₹10 lakh as compensation per a decimal of land.

It is said that only 288 acres of the total 921 acres of private land had been acquired till July 14, 2020.

There has been little progress in land acquisition in Sundargarh and Deogarh districts. The ECoR has got final stage-II approval for the entire 664 acres of forest land from the Ministry of Environment and Forest June 4, 2020.

Earlier, the ECoR had planned to start the project work from

Bimalagarh side in Sundargarh and complete it by June, 2022.

It may be noted here that the five-decade-old demand for the rail line was sanctioned in 2003-04. The project estimate of ₹810.70 crore was approved in 2007-08. As it continued to delay, its cost was further revised to ₹1,928.07 crore in November, 2016 for a total length of 149.78 km rail line through Angul, Deogarh and Sundargarh districts.

As of now, only 17.62 km from Talcher to Sunakhani has been completed while the next stretch of 16.3 km is targeted to be finished by March, 2022.

Hanuman coin gang busted, 7 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 27: Badabazaar police busted a gang dealing in 'Hanuman coins' for ₹2 crore as it arrested seven persons during a raid at a house at Shanti Nagar Tuesday. The accused were identified as Pradeep Mohapatra, 41, and Suresh Meher, 31, of Khetraju in Sambalpur, Anil Kusum of Sasan police station limits in Sambalpur, Akshaya Kumar Patra, 36, of Sorada in Ganjam district, Jayanta Pradhan, 21 and Vijay Kumar Bag, 40, of Panposh in Rourkela, and S Jayaram Patra of Bomket under KNUagaon in Kandhamal district. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in the court.



The mastermind of the racket, Surya Patra, managed to flee the scene during the raid. More details on the operational pattern of the gang can be ascertained after Patra is arrested, police said. The accused used to collect old Hanuman coins and smuggle them outside of the state at a premium.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Badabazaar police raided the house of Surya Patra at Shanti Nagar in the town when the accused were trying to ink a deal of ₹2 crore on Hanuman coins. Police found the seven persons congregated in the house for a deal of ₹2 crore for three 'Hanuman coins' and were waiting for the arrival of customers. A search operation was conducted in the house and three 'Hanuman coins', ₹1.5 lakh, two motorcycles, magnets, spirit, mobile phones were seized.

5-yr old girl raped

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, Jan 27: A five-year old girl was raped by a youth under Thakurgarh police limits in Angul district, Tuesday. The accused was identified as Rinku Sethy, 22, of Kumunda village under Colliery police limits. The matter came to the fore after police registered a case and arrested the youth in this connection, Wednesday.

Family members alleged that Rinku, while on a visit to his relative's house, lured the survivor to the nearby jungle with chocolates and raped the tiny tot over there. Family members rescued the girl when she narrated her ordeal before them. Her family members lodged a complaint at the police station.

Row over death of college girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 27: The body of a Plus-III 2nd year student of Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar was found on roadside at Mulapala area under Kuakhia police limits in Jajpur district Wednesday.

The deceased has been identified as Jharaphula Nayak of Marundeiposi village under Nayagarh police limits in Mayurbhanj district.

The deceased had gone January 24 to Bhubaneswar and had at-



tended her classes the next day. Police said that they are trying to find out the reason how her body was found in Jajpur district.

Sources said two youths brought the body on a scooter and dumped

it on the roadside. The unidentified youths immediately fled the spot with their vehicle. A hand bag was also thrown near the body.

Kuakhia police launched a probe in this connection. They have sent the girl's body for post-mortem. Only after the post-mortem report comes in, then the real cause of the student's death will be known. Police are also examining CCTV footage of the area where the girl's body was found to identify the vehicle or the youths who allegedly dumped the body of the girl.

People forced to drink fluoride-laced water

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Jan 27: Fluoride-laced drinking water at Putubari village of Bhogbadi panchayat under Dasapalla block in Nayagarh district poses a threat to villagers who are mostly Dalits.

The most noticeable problem the villagers are suffering is premature aging. Putubari village has a population of 109, comprising 20 families belonging to Dalit communities. They earn their livelihood primarily by making and selling bamboo products like winnowing fans, hand held fans and baskets among others in nearby markets.

The residents allege that drinking water problem in their village is perennial. "There were two tube wells. Two wells (Nanda Kua) were dug up later. The water we draw from the wells is fit for consumption but the two wells are not enough to meet the daily requirement. These wells go dry in winter season, making the summers difficult for us," Ram Kisan, a local, said.

"The two tube wells dispense fluoride-laced water. Initially, we could not understand

why we are suffering from joint pains and our teeth were getting discoloured. Only when the water was tested, we came to learn that there were traces of fluoride in the water," said another resident.

According to Jagannath Parichha, when they did not have tube wells, they used to fetch water from the wells. "With the passage of time, the level of groundwater started to deplete. Faced with acute drinking water crisis, we started using tube well water. Now fluorosis disease has emerged as a major concern for us," Parichha observed.

Surendra Mantri, another villager, joined Parichha and said, "Among others, Puja Gantayat (9), Badal Gantayat (10), Akash Behera (10), Goutam Mantri (13) and Shakti Mantri (12) are suffering from fluorosis disease. If the government finds a solution to our drinking water problem, then we don't need to consume fluoride-laced water. Apart from drinking water problem, we don't have a pucca road to our village either. In the past, we took our issues up with the administration on several occasions but to no avail. The disease has been forced upon us."



By your stumbling, the world is perfected.

SRI AUROBINDO



Outbreak underplayed

While several States of India roil under the latest outbreak of avian influenza, the strategy of mass culling of poultry birds, to contain the spread, is a knee-jerk reaction adopted by health authorities. This is not the first bird flu outbreak in India. Repeated outbreaks have been occurring since 2006 - all met with the same response: killing millions of birds to 'contain' the disease.

The government has refused to understand why India has become the home of avian influenza. Since there is no understanding, they refuse to change the policies that are causing this epidemic again and again. This is a disaster of our own making. Poultry farm workers, and billions of poultry birds, are disproportionately affected and the first victims of this disaster. Collateral damage includes health workers who act as first responders. And God knows how many people who eat the dead chickens, in the belief that they cannot get the disease.

The reason for this epidemic is rooted in intensive animal agriculture, or factory farming, and the entire gamut of unsustainable animal husbandry practices. Abysmal poultry farm conditions make these farms high risk environments - as incubators of bacterial and viral pathogens. Air samples, collected and tested from such farms, have demonstrated a toxic cocktail of virulent strains of pestilence.

It is a known fact that the Epidemics and Disease Control Department of WHO routinely collects samples of birds from poultry farms, to detect, monitor and control emerging, new strains of influenza viruses. The reason this is being done is because of the deadly nature of the avian influenza virus, with its capability to mutate rapidly and turn into a deadly flu pandemic.

Is India's own response to the avian flu adequate? The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, has come up with an Action Plan 2021 for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza. The Health Ministry has expedited a team of public health experts, from the National Centre of Disease Control, to monitor outbreak in affected States. Strategies include: disease surveillance, coordinated responses between Health & Animal Husbandry Departments, Municipalities, District Administration, and SOPs for containment.

How effective are such strategic interventions in a bid to battle the bird flu? Is enforcement actually happening at the State, District and Block levels? Once again, it is baffling to observe the failure of the government to regard the outbreak as a man-made disaster that is inherently connected to animal husbandry/poultry farming practices. The presence of a powerful factory farming lobby, that has influence with the government, will never allow for open acknowledgement of the fact. Businesses and profits worth crores ride on this industry. Meanwhile, the unholy nexus will continue to safeguard industry interest over public interest. We have been battling for the last 10 years for one simple thing, that would stop not just avian flu but many other diseases like diabetes and tuberculosis in hens. What is this magic bullet? Simply increasing the cage size of the poultry kept chickens so that they can move freely. Such a simple thing. But every time it is going to be done, the Poultry Association contacts the politicians and bureaucrats in the Animal Husbandry Ministry, the Environment Ministry, the FSSAI - and voila, it is shelved again. We are in court to get this done - but the court does not even realise the importance of this small measure.

This unholy nexus between the industry and the government is reflected in the official narrative built around the bird flu. Anticipating a dip in consumer demand for poultry products that could cripple the industry, the DAHD has issued public statements emphasising that "meat and eggs are safe for consumption if prepared/cooked at adequate temperatures." Deconstructing such a white lie, I will only ask the public to use their common sense. How can flesh, or eggs, from a diseased and infected animal ever be safe for consumption? This defies logic.

Till date, the Centre has been careful not to categorise the current strain of avian influenza virus (H5N8) circulating in the country as "zoonotic" i.e. the ability of the virus to transmit from animals to humans. Official descriptions of the virus include "highly pathogenic"/ "highly contagious", "confined to birds only." The rationale for quelling public fear and not creating a panic situation, by underplaying the outbreak may be understood to an extent. Yet, it also the government's duty to understand and convey the magnitude of the fact that the virus is of animal-origin and has tremendous capability to ingeniously mutate and jump the species-barrier. Novel viruses, that emerge from animals, mean humans do not have natural immunity to fight off the virus. We still lack a universal flu vaccine that will be effective against all strains of influenza viruses.

Avian influenza viruses, once they transmit to humans, are associated with a high mortality rate. The cause of death will eventually be severe respiratory collapse. In the case of the H7N9 avian flu virus outbreak in China in 2013, 60 per cent of infected people died.

It is frightful to see the rapid increase of H5N8 virus zigzagging across Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan. Meanwhile, as the avian flu contagion comes to a boil, the country is still in the midst of battling the coronavirus. Are we going to lurch from one to another?

The government must engage in a systemic review of India's current factory farming/animal husbandry sector. The welfare standards for poultry birds must be raised higher. There has to be an overhaul of the industry, and its regulation is of utmost importance. Even the European Union Parliament recently voted in favour of greater regulation of factory farming and better animal welfare standards.

Culling of animals is the most convenient measure in any situation of zoonotic disease outbreak. A parallel may be drawn to the recent culling of the captive mink population in Denmark over fears of Covid-19 transmission from these animals. The mass genocide was a tragedy of epic proportions. Minks are highly intelligent, sensitive creatures - cursed, because of the demand for their beautiful fur, to live a miserable lifetime on fur farms. The farms rank low in animal welfare, hygiene and sanitary standards, closely mirroring the conditions prevalent at a poultry farm.

Our public health policies cannot operate in silos. It is grossly speciesist, morally bankrupt and shortsighted to disregard lives of non-human animals. Did we kill humans who spread Covid? No, we evolved standards to contain the spread. But the only thing we do, in an exactly similar situation with a strain of the same flu, is to just kill the birds and pay crores of compensation for poultry owners who caused this epidemic to begin with. They should be sent to jail instead of being rewarded.

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org

WISDOM CORNER

- One of the secrets of life is that all that is really worth the doing is what we do for others. **LEWIS CARROLL**
- One's eyes are what one is, one's mouth is what one becomes. **JOHN GALSWORTHY**
- Have no fear of perfection - you'll never reach it. **SALVADOR DALI**

FOCUS US FOREIGN POLICY

BIDEN'S CHINA QUESTION

In his inaugural address, US President Joe Biden declared that Americans "will be judged" for how they "resolve the cascading crises of our era." He expressed confidence that the country would "rise to the occasion," and pledged that the United States would lead "not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example."

The contrast with President Donald Trump's divisive, isolationist rhetoric could not be sharper. But adopting a different tone is easier than reversing America's relative decline. To do that, Biden will need to provide wise, forward-looking leadership. And that does not necessarily mean breaking with everything that Trump did.

America's debilitating political polarisation has undermined its international standing. Partisan considerations have hampered - even precluded - the pursuit of long-term foreign-policy objectives. US policy toward a declining Russia, for example, has become hostage to US domestic politics.

Biden's calls for unity reflect his awareness of this. But the truth is that healing the deep rupture in US society may be beyond any president's ability, not least because so many Republican voters seem to have abandoned all faith in evidence and expertise. So, rather than becoming consumed by domestic political divisions, Biden must rise above them.

And yet, there is one area where there is broad bipartisan consensus: the need to stand up to China. Trump understood this. Indeed, his tough China policy is his most consequential - and constructive - foreign-policy legacy. Unless Biden pursues a similar approach, the erosion of US global leadership will become inexorable.

The Indo-Pacific region - a global economic hub and geopolitical hotspot - is central to an effective China strategy. Recognising the region's immense importance to the world order, China has been steadily reshaping it to serve Chinese interests, using heavy-handed economic coercion, political repression, and aggressive



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expansionism to have its way from the Himalayas and Hong Kong to the South and East China Seas.

The only way to preserve a stable regional balance of power is with a rules-based, democracy-led order - or, as the Trump administration put it, a "free and open Indo-Pacific." Over the last year, this vision has spurred the region's democracies to deepen their strategic bonds and inspired even the faraway democracies of Europe to implement supportive policies. Under the Biden administration's leadership, countries must now build on this progress, creating a true concert of democracies capable of providing stability and balance in the Indo-Pacific.

Biden seems to understand this. He has made clear his intention to build a united democratic front to counter China. But he is also at risk of undermining his own vision.

For starters, Biden did not embrace the term "Indo-Pacific" until after his electoral victory, and when he did, he replaced "free and open" with "secure and prosperous." But, whereas "free and open" automatically implies a rules-based, democracy-led order,

"secure and prosperous" leaves room for the inclusion of - and even leadership by - autocratic regimes. This ignores the crux of the Indo-Pacific challenge: a revisionist China is actively seeking to supplant the US as the region's dominant power.

Making matters worse, Biden has signaled a possible reset of ties with China. This would play right into China's hands.

Trump's China policy was not just about trade or human rights. It sent the (right) message that China is a predatory communist state without political legitimacy or the rule of law. This helped to tip the scales in America's favour. Over the last year, unfavourable perceptions of China reached historic highs in many countries. While this was largely because of the made-in-China COVID-19 pandemic, Trump's ideological onslaught and China's own aggression - such as on its Himalayan border with India - also played a role.

If the Biden administration abandons economic decoupling and treats China as a major competitor, rather than an implacable adversary, it will tip the scales in the opposite direction, relieving

pressure on Chinese President Xi Jinping's regime and undermining faith in US leadership. This could embolden China to destabilise the Indo-Pacific further, with Taiwan possibly its next direct target.

Moreover, US conciliation would give India second thoughts about aligning itself too closely with the US, and would likely lead to Japan's militarisation - a potential game changer in the Indo-Pacific. It would also facilitate China's efforts to leverage its vast market to draw in America's democratic allies - a risk underscored by its recent investment deal with the European Union. All of this would undermine efforts to forge the united democratic front Biden envisions, compounding the threat of China's aggressive authoritarianism.

The worst choice Biden can make is to seek shared leadership with China in the Indo-Pacific, as some are advocating. Worryingly, Biden's team does not seem clear on this. In a 2019 essay, Jake Sullivan (Biden's national security adviser) and Kurt Campbell (Biden's "Indo-Pacific czar" at the National Security Council) championed "coexistence with China," describing the country as "an essential US partner."

To be sure, Sullivan and Campbell did not call for Sino-American joint hegemony, in the Indo-Pacific or beyond. But they also did not take the clear and necessary position that the US must forge a concert of democracies to bring sustained multilateral pressure to bear on China.

After four years of Trump, Biden is right to tout the importance of domestic unity. But a tough line on China is one of the few policy areas behind which Americans can unite. More important, it is the only way to ensure a stable Indo-Pacific and world order.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Brahma Chellaney

THE WORST CHOICE BIDEN CAN MAKE IS TO SEEK SHARED LEADERSHIP WITH CHINA IN THE INDO-PACIFIC, AS SOME ARE ADVOCATING



Maneka Gandhi

The unholy nexus between the poultry industry and the government is reflected in the official narrative built around bird flu

IN JEST THIS

Getting taller can shorten your bank balance



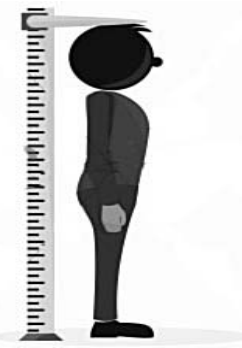
Melvin Durai

INDEED, IF YOU'RE 5-FOOT-11, YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE THIS SURGERY

The average height of a man in India is about 5-foot-5 (165 cm), while the average height of a woman is 5 feet (152.6 cm). How you compare to these averages may determine whether you consider yourself "short" or "tall," but so might other factors. You may be 5-foot-4 and consider yourself tall, especially if your entire village is less than five feet tall. You may be 5-foot-10 and consider yourself short, especially if your best friend is 6-foot-10 basketballer Princepal Singh.

Whatever your height, if you'd like to be a little taller, there are several options you can consider. As I noted in a recent column, one way to get taller is to eat great quantities of roti, paneer, chana masala, and butter chicken. Eating a lot of Punjabi food may indeed help you grow tall, just as it has for Princepal Singh, as well as 7-foot-2 Satnam Singh and many others. The average height of a man in Patiala, Punjab, is 5-foot-10, which probably has more to do with nutrition than genes.

But here's a warning: switching your diet to Punjabi cuisine won't work if you're 40 years old.



You need to be a teenager or younger for it to work - and there are no guarantees. Eating lots of protein-rich foods may give you a few inches, but don't complain if it's not your height that increases, but your width.

A more reliable way to become taller is to wear elevator shoes. These are not high-heeled shoes, but special shoes with height-boosting insoles, which can discreetly add as many as five inches to your height. One day, you are 5-foot-5, the next day you are 5-foot-10. If anyone asks you the secret to your sudden growth spurt, you can say that you visited a Punjabi buffet.

The problem with height-enhancing shoes is that they're not a permanent solution. A man may be able to convince a prospective bride that he's really 5-foot-10, but once they get married, he'll have the thorny predicament of having to wear his shoes to bed. Otherwise his new bride will start to get suspicious.

Bride: "Hey, what happened? Looks like you lost a few inches." Man: "Are you talking about my height or something else?"

Bride: "Your height, of course. You seem shorter."

Man: "Oh, I'm just shrinking myself, so I can give you more room on the bed."

If elevator shoes do not serve your needs well, you may consider something rather drastic to enhance your height: surgery.

Yes, you can do what 28-year-old Alphonso Flores of Dallas, Texas, did. He was 5-foot-11, but wanted to be over six feet tall. It was a desire he had carried since age 12 and he achieved it by visiting Dr. Kevin Debiparshad of The LimbplastX Institute of Las Vegas.

Debiparshad performed a procedure that increased the length of

Flores' femurs (thigh bones), making him 6-foot-1. He is taller by two inches, but his bank balance is shorter by \$75,000 (almost Rs 55 lakh).

The surgery involved making a few incisions and placing an implant in the hollow of the bone. The implant increases the length of the bone by a millimeter each day. Using this method, Debiparshad can increase a patient's height by as much as six inches.

"I really wanted to be more like my heroes," Flores told The Daily Mail. "All of my heroes were super tall. Particularly people like Michael Jordan, Phil Jackson, Kobe Bryant, and of course my father."

But then he added this: "I highly encourage people to really look into themselves before they commit to having the surgery, and really think about why they are doing this to ensure that it's for the right reason."

Indeed, if you're 5-foot-11, you probably shouldn't have this surgery. If you have Rs 55 lakh lying around, just think of how much roti, paneer, chana masala, and butter chicken you could buy for the children in your city.

Drop in ranking

Sir, Odisha dropped to 14th position in the second edition of the India Innovation Index, 2020 released by NITI Aayog. The state had secured 12th rank in the first edition of the index launched in October 2019. The drop in 2020 came barely five months after Odisha slipped to 29th rank from 14th rank in ease of doing business ranking released by the department for promotion of industry and internal trade in September, last year. According to the Innovation Index, 2020, Odisha ranked 10th in human capital parameter while it ranked 15th in investment parameter. Among other parameters, the state ranked 14th in knowledge workers, 16th in business environment and 12th in safety and legal environment. In the performance parameters, Odisha ranked 15th in knowledge output and 8th in knowledge diffusion. The state has dropped in most of the parameters compared to the India Innovation Index, 2019. The fall in Odisha's rank in innovation index is despite the state government's claim of having taken a number of steps to promote innovation in higher educational institutions and technical institutions like establishment of incubator centres and common facility centres to nurture innovation. The state government needs to enhance its expenditure on higher and technical education, research and development and on science and technology.

Kamal Lochan Dash, JAJPUR

A good concession

Sir, The government's offer to discuss not just the laws clause by clause but also any concern the farmers have during the 18 months when the laws are held in suspense is as good a concession as the farmers could expect to get. This period should be used not just to negotiate a mutually agreeable legal framework but also to carry out a transition from the present regime of excessive grain production in Punjab and Haryana at the expense of groundwater, soil health, and enormous subsidies. The industrious farmers of northwest India can be persuaded to produce the crops that India is desperately short of, such as oilseeds, pulses, and fruit, or to more lucrative crops such as flowers. The government would have time to carry out the substantial investment it has announced in farmgate infrastructure, climate-controlled storage, and other infrastructure linking farmers to the market. When farm incomes go up and costs come down, in the absence of the need to keep increasing the quantity of inputs season after cropping season, farmers are unlikely to feel as attached to the status quo as they are today.

Kanhu Charan Rout, BHADRAK

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

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Will this influential cleric cut into TMC votes?

Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui, who has muddied political waters of Bengal with the launch of Indian Secular Front, feels the Mamata Banerjee government has done more harm than good to Muslims

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 27: Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui, the influential cleric of Furfura Sharif, who has muddied the political waters of West Bengal with the launch of Indian Secular Front (ISF), feels the Mamata Banerjee government has done more harm than good to Muslims by creating a Hindu-Muslim divide. The 34-year-old cleric is trying to forge an alliance with the Congress-CPI(M) combine as also the AIMIM of Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi ahead of the assembly polls, after the TMC gave him the cold shoulder.



'KINGMAKER'

Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui asserts his newly floated political outfit will prove to be the 'kingmaker' in the state which roughly has 30 per cent Muslim voters. Muslims are widely believed to influence the election outcome in 100-110 of the state's 294 Assembly seats, and have acted as a bulwark for Mamata Banerjee's party against any attempt to upset her appellation.

There are apprehensions that a split in Muslim votes due to the presence of parties led by leaders from the community could dent her bid for a third straight term in office. Siddiqui has rejected suggestions that his outfit will be a B-Team of the BJP, an accusation also levelled by Mamata Banerjee against Owaisi's party.

'Muslim appeasement' has led to a rift between Hindus and Muslims. "The BJP worked overtime to exploit it and rub it in that Muslims are getting everything and at the cost of Hindus. Mamata Banerjee has done more harm than good to Muslims by creating this perception," he said. Siddiqui alleged that after his announcement about contesting the elections, the state government has started harassing ISF supporters by implicating them in false cases. "They (the TMC) will get a befitting reply for their arrogance," he asserted.

Siddiqui said the doors of his organisation are open to all barring the TMC and the BJP. "We are also in talks with AIMIM. Owaisi Saab told me they will follow us as we know Bengal better," Siddiqui, who is fondly called Bhaijaan (elder brother) by his followers, said. Siddiqui rejected suggestions that his outfit will be a B-Team of the BJP, an accusation also levelled by Mamata Banerjee against Owaisi's party. "We are not here only to seek Muslim votes but also

Kashmiri politicians being persecuted by Centre: Mehbooba



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Jan 27: PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti Wednesday said the arrest of her party's youth wing president Waheed ur Rehman Para was emblematic of the situation of Kashmiri politicians who she claimed were being 'persecuted' by the Centre for not toeing its line. Para was arrested November 25, 2020 in connection with the Naveed Babu and Dy SP Davinder Singh case for supporting the Hizbul Mujahideen terror group. Para, who had filed his nomination papers before his arrest, was elected to the District Development Council from Pulwama while in custody. He has not been administered oath as DDC member so far.

his grandfather would unfurl the Indian flag when not many Kashmiris would do so. Waheed's interest in politics started at a young age," she tweeted. "As a child he'd visit the local MLA's house & listen to political conversations with rapt attention. His mother was scared that one fine day he'd pursue this passion for politics & become a target for militants. Sadly this fear consumed her & she died when Waheed was a teenager," the former chief minister of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state said in the longish thread. She said the system in which Para had placed his faith was going after him with a vengeance. "Today the very same system that he placed his faith in is going after him with a vengeance. Waheed despite being in illegal detention lasting a year fought & won DDC elections from jail. Even after a strong bail order by NIA court he was rearrested by CIK on unknown charges," the PDP chief tweeted. "Not having any proof to substantiate these charges, GOI is on a spree where Waheed is arrested by one agency after another. It is sheer political vendetta & an attempt to sabotage the life of a young & promising 32 year old man," she added. Mehbooba said the judicial system was the last hope of the young politician. "His last hope now rests on the justice system & I hope that truth & justice prevail," she said.

GROUND ZERO



Senior security personnel inspect the area after a militant attack on Road Opening Party (ROP) of the army at Shamsipora in Kulgam District of South Kashmir, Wednesday. One soldier was killed and three others were injured in an explosion. PTI PHOTO

He was granted bail by an NIA court earlier this month but has been taken into custody by Counter Insurgency Kashmir (CIK) wing of JK police. "Waheed's persecution by the Indian government is emblematic of the situation that Kashmiri politicians find themselves in today. Disliked & mistrusted by people in J&K for their faith in Indian constitution on one hand & punished by GOI for not toeing their line on the other," Mehbooba said in a series of tweets. The PDP president gave a personal rendition of Para's initiation into politics. "PDPs @parawahid arrested immediately after filing his DDC nomination hails from a family where

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'Mulaqat' resumes in Jammu & Kashmir jails after 10 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 27: The joy of nine-year-old Mohammad Hussain knew no bounds as he accompanied his mother to meet his father lodged at a jail here, as authorities Wednesday resumed 'Mulaqat' after a gap of over 10 months due to coronavirus-driven restrictions.

'Mulaqat' facility allows prisoners to meet their family members. Hussain joined several other families from Jammu and Kashmir who queued up to meet their relatives on the first day of the resumption of the facility at district jail Amphalla in the heart of the city, which Jail Superintendent Mirza Saleem Ahmad Beig termed as a 'Republic Day' gift to the inmates and their kin. Hussain, who travelled from Mumbai to meet his father Aijaz said, "I am seeing my father after a long time."

Aijaz, an undertrial, was arrested in May 2019 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. "We last met before the outbreak of the pandemic and I am happy to visit my father again though we talked on several occasions on phone during the lockdown period," Hussain, the youngest among Aijaz's four children and a class 4 student, told PTI. Emotional scenes filled the newly-constructed interview room, having 17 cabins and a child play corner, with state-of-the-art facility like sound proof walls to eliminate noise and provide a better environment to the inmates during their meetings. Jail Superintendent Mirza Saleem Ahmed Beig said though the prisons department under the leadership of Director General of Police (Prisons) V K Singh introduced various facilities like inmate calling system and video conferencing, the "physical 'mulaqat' is altogether a different feeling."

"We can feel the frustration among the inmates for not being able to meet their relatives since March 24 last year when the mulaqat was stopped due to COVID-19... the decision to resume the meeting between the inmates and a maximum of three relatives once a month is in the right direction and at an appropriate time. It is a Republic Day gift to the prisoners and their families," he said. Amit Kumar's mother, a resident of Chatta area of Jammu, broke down repeatedly on seeing her son for the first time in the past eight months after his arrest in a molestation case. Accompanied by her husband and another son, the woman who wished not to be named said she had spent sleepless nights ever since his son's arrest.

West Bengal tops in 100-day work programme yet again

Around 14 lakh migrant labourers had returned to the state since March last year when the lockdown was announced in the country to check the spread of Covid-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 27: West Bengal generated 36 crore person days under the 100 Days' Work scheme to get the first position in the country and bag the National Award four times in a row, the state government said Wednesday. "In the current year also, with 36 crore person days generation and 1.1 crore workers engaged, West Bengal is Number 1 in the country today," the government said in a statement. The state "receives National Award continuously in 100 Days' Work for the last 4 years," it said. At least 6,46,299 migrant labourers were provided with jobs while 3,81,604 such workers got new job cards, the statement said. The West Bengal government, since the launch of the 'Duare Sarkar' drive in December has received over 11 lakh requests for



job cards under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a senior official said Wednesday. "Duare Sarkar" is an initiative of the state government for delivery of specific schemes at the doorsteps of people through camps organised at the level of gram panchayat and municipal ward. "Over 2.53 crore people have vis-

ited 26,036 Duare Sarkar camps between December 1 and January 25. Of them, 11,38,960 people sought job cards under the MGNREGA," an official data released by the state government revealed. A significant proportion of the migrant workers, who returned to the state during the lockdown but did not apply for job cards initially thinking of going back to the states where they had migrated in search of livelihood. Now they have applied and this could be a reason behind the surge in the number of applicants, an official said. "Another reason is people have lost jobs and but did not get new employment. They have applied for job cards," he said. Around 14 lakh migrant labourers had returned to the state since March last year when the lockdown was announced in the country to check the spread of COVID-19.

IN A FIRST, KOLKATA GETS A BOAT LIBRARY

The idea behind the project is that one can read books while appreciating the beauty of Kolkata, cruising on the Hoogly river

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 27: The Kolkata Young Readers' Boat Library, the first such here to give access to children across age groups and segments to pick and read their favourite book while floating on the beautiful Hoogly river, has been launched by the West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) and the Apeejay Anand Children's Library. The beautiful library, decorated with attractive artworks of children and housing books across genres for young readers adorning its shelves will encourage and inspire children to read and experience

the joy of reading. The famed Oxford Bookstores have curated the selection of titles and literature and the boat library will eventually host year-long activities for children on board, such as storytelling, dramatised readings, poetry sessions, book launches, music and more, to captivate young minds. The Kolkata Young Readers' Boat Library was launched virtually by Rajanvir Singh Kapur, MD, West Bengal Transport Corporation and Priti Paul, Director Apeejay Surrendra Group. "The idea behind the Kolkata Young Readers' Boat Library is that one can read from a good collection of books while appreciating



the beauty of Kolkata from the floating marvel on the river Hoogly. The boat library would take people for a nice three-hour trip and there

The famed Oxford Bookstores have curated the selection of titles and literature and the boat library will eventually host year-long activities for children on board

out to the largest group of young readers. Our collaboration with West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) in this novel venture is one which brings to life our vision," Priti Paul said. "The river is the life-breath of Bengal and a waterway of tremendous sacred and cultural significance. We celebrate the river with this initiative and, further, reading and learning on the move will undoubtedly create an environment where children can celebrate and re-discover our history and roots as we make our way on board the floating library and delve into books through this educational-recreational endeavour to which we are all so committed," she added.



Spoke with my US counterpart, Secretary Def Austin and conveyed my warm wishes on his appointment
RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

DELHI RECORDS MINIMUM TEMP OF 5.4 DEG CELSIUS

Delhi Wednesday recorded a minimum temperature of 5.4 degrees Celsius, three notches below the normal, even as the weather department said cold wave might make a comeback over the next two days



of the day quote

If conspirators infiltrated the farmers' agitation, what were the intelligence agencies and the Home Ministry doing? Is it not a failure of the Modi government? The Home Minister should be held responsible directly
RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY



Mankind will only remember one thing from the year 2020 that is the deadly virus that created devastation across the world. But at the same time, it will also be remembered how science and healthcare sectors came to the rescue in a record time
HARSH VARDHAN | HEALTH MINISTER



Good conversation with British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab. Thanked him for his Republic Day good wishes. Encouraged by the progress on the issues that were discussed in December. Look forward to remaining in touch
S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER



MHA issues fresh COVID-19 guidelines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Wednesday allowed cinema halls and theatres to operate with more people while swimming pools have been permitted for use by all in fresh COVID-19 reopening guidelines.

According to these new guidelines, to be effective for February 1, there shall be no restriction on inter-state and intra-state movement of people and goods including those for cross land-border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries. No separate permission/ approval/ e-permit will be required for such movements, the MHA said.

All activities have been permitted outside containment zones, except a few which will be subject to strict adherence of SOPs. Social, religious, sports, entertainment, educational, cultural, religious gatherings have already been permitted up to a maximum of 50 per cent of the hall capacity, with a ceiling of 200 people in closed spaces; and keeping of the size of the ground



or space in view, in open spaces.

"Now such gatherings will be allowed subject to SOP of the state and UT concerned. Cinema halls and theatres have already been permitted up to 50 per cent of seating capacity. Now they will be permitted to operate at higher seating capacity, for which a revised SOP will be issued by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in consultation with MHA," the guidelines said.

Swimming pools have already been permitted for use of sports persons. Now these will be permitted for use of all, for which a revised SOP will be issued by Ministry of Youth Affairs and

Sports in consultation with MHA. Business to Business (B2B) exhibition halls have already been permitted. Now all types of exhibition halls will be permitted, for which a revised SOP will be issued by the Department of Commerce in consultation with MHA.

The main focus of the guidelines is to consolidate the substantial gains that have been achieved against the spread of COVID-19 which is visible in the steady decline in number of active and new cases in the country over the last four months.

"It is, therefore, emphasised that to fully overcome the pandemic, there is need to maintain caution

and to strictly follow the prescribed containment strategy focussed on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines and SOPs issued by MHA and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)," the guidelines said.

Containment zones, if required, shall be carefully demarcated by the district authorities at the micro level, taking into consideration guidelines prescribed by the MOHFW in this regard. Within the demarcated containment zones, containment measures, as prescribed by MOHFW shall be scrupulously followed.

Local district, police and municipal authorities shall be responsible to ensure that the prescribed containment measures are strictly followed and state and union territory governments shall ensure the accountability of the officers concerned in this regard.

The MHA said state and union territory governments shall take all necessary measures to promote COVID-19 appropriate behaviour and ensure wearing of face masks, hand hygiene and social distancing.

Farmers' cancel Budget Day march to Parliament



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 27: As cracks began to appear in their ongoing agitation against the agri laws, farmer unions Wednesday cancelled their planned march to Parliament February 1 when the Budget would be presented.

The decision by farmer unions came a day after massive violence during their tractor parade in the national capital that left nearly 400 police personnel injured.

The farmer leaders, however, alleged that there was a conspiracy behind Tuesday's incidents and demanded a probe. They said their agitation against the farm laws will continue and public meetings and hunger strikes will be held across the country on January 30.

"The tractor parade was hit by a government conspiracy. Deep Sidhu is an RSS man. Police let him go after he hoisted a religious flag at Red Fort," farmer leader Darshan Pal, who has been accused by police of making inflammatory speeches, alleged at a press conference. Sidhu is a former aide of actor and BJP MP Sunny Deol. Deol had distanced himself from Sidhu in December after he supported the farmers' agitation.

"We have cancelled our plan for a march to Parliament on budget day on February 1. But our agitation will continue and there will be public meetings and hunger strike across the country on January 30," Pal said. Another farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal claimed that over two lakh tractors and lakhs of people participated in Tuesday's parade and "99.9 percent of the protesters were peaceful".

Even as the farmer unions con-

Pleas in SC seek inquiry panel

Two pleas were filed in the Supreme Court on Wednesday over the tractor rally violence on the Republic Day with one seeking setting up of a commission, headed by a retired apex court judge, to inquire into the incident while the other urged it to direct the media not to declare farmers as "terrorist" without any evidence. The tractor parade on Tuesday that was to highlight the demands of farmer unions to repeal three new agri laws dissolved into anarchy on the streets of the national capital as thousands of protesters broke through barriers, fought with the police, overturned vehicles and hoisted a religious flag from the ramparts of the iconic Red Fort. Petitioner-advocate Vishal Tiwari, besides seeking setting up of an inquiry commission, has sought direction to concerned authority to lodge FIRs against individuals or organisations responsible for the violence and causing dishonour of the National Flag January 26.

continued to allege that "anti-social" elements had perpetrated the violence to "torpedo" their peaceful agitation against the farm laws, Tuesday's incidents that have been widely condemned started taking a toll with Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhanu) and All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee withdrawing from the protests on the Delhi's borders.

3 more Rafale jets leave for India from France

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: A third batch of three more Rafale fighter jets Wednesday took off from France for a non-stop flight to India, in a further boost to the strike capability of the Indian Air Force.

The Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) of the United Arab Emirates will provide mid-air refuelling to the three Rafale jets, according to the Indian Embassy in France.

"Three more Rafale jets take off from France for a non stop flight to India with mid air refueling by UAE MRTT. Adding more strength to India's air power. Wishing our amazing pilots smooth flight&safe landing with superb fighter jets," it tweeted.



The first batch of five Rafale jets arrived in India July 29, 2020, nearly four years after India signed an inter-governmental agreement with France to procure 36 of the aircraft at a cost of Rs 59,000 crore.

The second batch of three Rafale jets arrived in India November 3. The Rafale jets, manufactured by French aerospace major Dassault Aviation, are India's first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 years after the Sukhoi jets were imported from Russia.

The new fleet of Rafale jets has been carrying out sorties in eastern Ladakh.

The Rafale jets are capable of carrying a range of potent weapons. European missile maker MBDA's Meteor beyond visual range air-to-air missile, Scalp cruise missile and MICA weapons system will be the mainstay of the weapons package of the Rafale jets.

SHORT TAKES

NIA takes over Balwinder case

New Delhi: Over three and half months after the murder of Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh Sandhu in Punjab, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the probe from the Punjab Police as the killing was linked to a conspiracy hatched by Pakistan-based Khalistani terrorist Lakhvir Singh Rode and his ISI handlers. An NIA spokesperson said that the anti-terror probe agency has registered a case on Tuesday into the killing of Sandhu, who was shot dead by two unidentified men in the early hours of October 16 last year at the residence-cum-school run by him in Punjab's Tarn Taran. After committing the murder, the assailants had immediately escaped on a motorcycle.

100 injured in cops-teacher clash

Agartala: At least 87 teachers and 17 police personnel were injured in a pitched battle Wednesday with the security forces knocking down the tents in which thousands of Tripura government school teachers, who had lost their jobs following the court's verdict, have been holding sit-in protest for the past 52 days demanding restoration of their jobs. Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Arindam Nath told IANS that 223 agitating teachers were arrested as they assembled near the official residence of Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb.

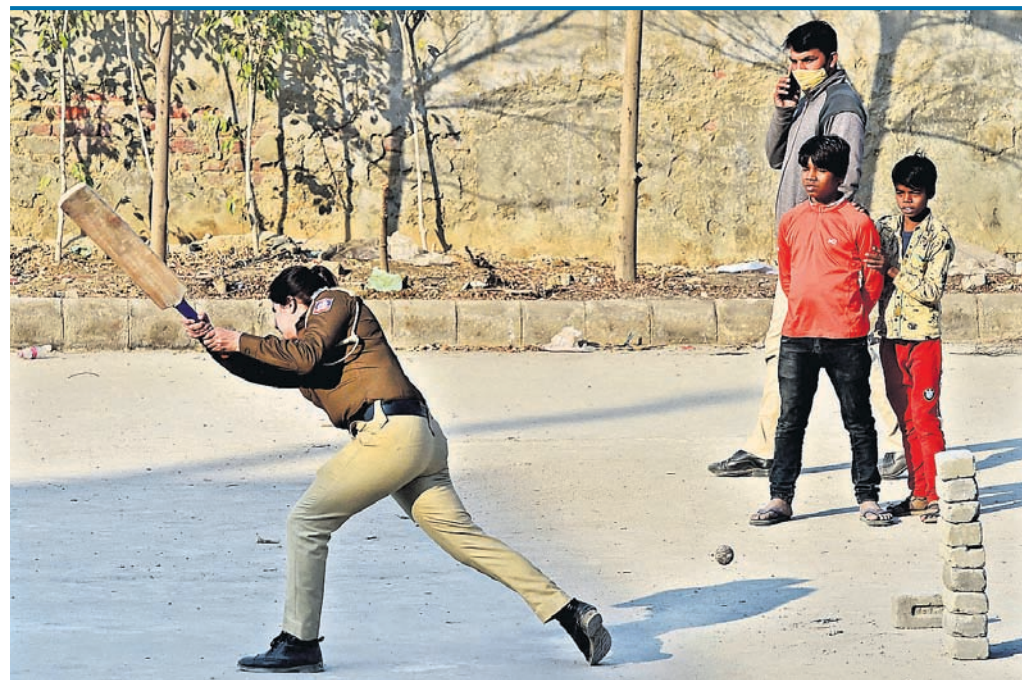
Naxals kill 2 villagers

Rajnandgaon: A group of Naxals killed two villagers, one of them an elderly relative of a sarpanch, at separate places in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon district on suspicion that they were working as police informers, police said Wednesday. One of the victims, 65-year-old Indarsai Mandavi, was killed at Kamkheda village, the other, identified as Dhansai Ghavde (40), was murdered in Murarpani, a police official here said.

Heroin seized

Aizawl: The Assam Rifles and Mizoram Excise and Narcotics Department in a joint operation seized heroin worth Rs 42.80 lakh and arrested two persons from here on Wednesday, a statement issued by the paramilitary force said.

PLAY TIME



A policewoman plays cricket with local children, in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Bird flu confirmed in more places in Maha, Guj & Ch'garh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: The Centre Wednesday said bird flu has been confirmed in poultry birds in few more places in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh.

So far, the outbreak of bird flu or avian influenza in poultry birds has been confirmed in nine states - Kerala, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The disease in other birds such as crows, migratory and wild birds has been confirmed in 12 states.

In a statement, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said that bird flu has been confirmed in poultry samples from Nanded, Solapur, Pune, Ahmednagar, Buldhana, Akola, Nashik and Hingoli districts of Maharashtra as well as in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat and Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh. Further, the viral disease has been confirmed in crows in Rudraprayag Forest Division (Uttarakhand), in Titar in Junagad (Gujarat) and in



peacocks in Beed (Maharashtra).

The ministry said control and containment operations are going on in the affected epicentres of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. Surveillance work is continuing at the places where positive results have been reported in other species of birds, excluding poultry, it added. On compensation to poultry farmers, the ministry said the Maharashtra government has sanctioned a compensation package of Rs 1.3 crore for culling of poultry and other birds, eggs and poultry feed and operational cost of disease control within 1 kilometre radius of the infected area, under the Bird Flu Disease Control Program.

Abhay Chautala resigns from Haryana Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 27: Indian National Lok Dal leader Abhay Singh Chautala, who was his party's lone representative in the 90-member Haryana Assembly, Wednesday resigned as an MLA over the three new Central farm laws.

"I decided I cannot sit in the Assembly with those who bring resolutions favouring these laws," Chautala said, referring to the BJP-led government's earlier move of bringing in a resolution backing the Centre's three contentious farm laws.

Abhay, who is the younger son of INLD president and former Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, drove to the state assembly complex with his supporters in his green tractor to submit his resignation.

"Abhay Chautala, who represents the Ellenabad constituency, came to me personally and tendered his resignation and I have accepted it with immediate effect," Speaker Gian Chand Gupta said,



adding his resignation letter was correct in all technical aspects.

Abhay has said in his resignation letter that he was resigning as farmers' demands have not been met by the government, the Speaker told reporters here.

In his resignation paper, Abhay has referred to two letters he had sent to the Speaker earlier this month, telling him that if the Centre failed to accept farmers' demand to repeal the new farm laws then his letters be treated as his resignation from the state assembly. Gupta said,

The Speaker had not accepted Abhay's previous letters as his resignation on the grounds that "conditional letters" cannot be considered as such.

In the letter to Gupta, Abhay, the 57-year-old general secretary of the INLD, had slammed the Centre for imposing the "black laws" on farmers in an "undemocratic way" and said the farming community in the entire country is opposing these legislations.

After Abhay's resignation, the 90-member Haryana Assembly now has 40 MLAs of the BJP, 10 of ally JJP, 31 members of the main opposition Congress and one MLA of Haryana Lokhit Party.

Seven members are Independents, out of whom five including Power Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala support the ruling combine. Abhay's move to resign is likely to come as a boost for workers of the party, which has been out of power for over 15 years in Haryana and has suffered a series of electoral setbacks in recent times.

Twitter's full tweet archive now free for academic researchers

INDO-ASIAN NEW SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 27: Twitter has allowed third-party academic researchers free access to the full history of public conversation via the full-archive search endpoint, which was previously limited to paid premium or enterprise customers.

Twitter API was first introduced in 2006 and since then, academic researchers have used data from the public conversation to study topics as diverse as the conversation on Twitter itself.

These include state-backed efforts to disrupt the public conversation to floods and climate change, from attitudes and perceptions about COVID-19 to efforts to pro-



mote healthy conversation online. "Today, academic researchers

are one of the largest groups of people using the Twitter API," the

The new initiative will ensure more precise filtering capabilities "across all v2 endpoints to limit data collection to what is relevant for your study and minimise data cleaning requirements"

Twitter API was first introduced in 2006 and since then, academic researchers have used data from the public conversation to study topics as diverse as the conversation on Twitter itself

company said in a blog post late Tuesday.

With the new Academic Research product track on the Twitter API,

qualified researchers will have access to all data released to date.

They will have higher levels of access to the Twitter developer platform for free, including a significantly higher monthly Tweet volume cap of 10 million (20 times higher than what's available on the Standard product track today).

The new initiative will ensure more precise filtering capabilities "across all v2 endpoints to limit data collection to what is relevant for your study and minimise data cleaning requirements".

"The Academic Research product track gives researchers a window into understanding the use of Twitter and social media at large, and is an important step by Twitter

to support the scientific community," said Dr Sarah Shugars, Assistant Professor at New York University.

Twitter said that in the coming months, it will introduce a specialised Business product track, as well as additional levels of access within its Academic Research, Standard, and Business product tracks.

"Twitter's enhancements for academic research have the potential to eliminate many of the bottlenecks that scholars confront in working with Twitter's API, and allow us to better evaluate the impact and origin of trends we discover," said Dr David Lazer, Professor at Northeastern University.

of the day quote

In Karnataka, whichever political party's government or chief minister take charge, they have one thing in common - atrocities against Marathi people and language

The farm laws were detrimental to the interests of not only the farmers but the whole country

Pakistan can't move without China, they both support each other, and in the circumstances, mere talks with China won't lead anywhere, we need to augment our military prowess

SHORT TAKES

8 of family killed in road mishap

Jaipur: Eight members of a family from Madhya Pradesh were killed in an accident in Rajasthan that killed two fathers-and-sons duo Wednesday. Four others were also injured as the jeep the family was travelling in was hit by a trolley while they were returning from a pilgrimage to the Khatu Shyam ji temple.

POCSO charges against engineer

Banda (UP): A special POCSO court here on Wednesday recorded the statements of six children in connection with a case, being investigated by the CBI, of alleged sexual exploitation of minors by a government engineer and his wife. The CBI had arrested the couple for allegedly exploiting children sexually and selling videos of the acts to paedophiles across the globe on the internet for the last 10 years.

Two farmers die

Etah (UP): Two farmers died when their hut caught fire here, police said Wednesday. The incident took place in Piphara village in the Jaithara area Tuesday night, they added. Kalicharan (40) and Radheyshyam (35) were sleeping in a hut after lighting a bonfire to protect themselves from cold, police said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, they said. Police said a probe into the matter is on.

Tigress found dead

Mandla: A tigress has died after getting stuck in a wire trap allegedly laid by poachers in Madhya Pradesh's Kanha Tiger Reserve, an official said Wednesday. The female, around two years' old, was found dead Tuesday by some beat guards in Khapa forest range of the Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR) here, he said. "The tigress died after getting entangled in a wire trap used by poachers," a forest official said.

Youth kidnapped

Lucknow: A 20-year-old youth from Amethi has been kidnapped from Sarojini Nagar area in Lucknow. The incident took place late Tuesday night and the victim, Abhinav Upadhyay, was kidnapped from outside his rented house at Daroga Kheda in Sarojini Nagar police circle.

INDIA'S VACCINE DIPLOMACY

5L Covishield doses to Lanka



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 27: As a beneficiary of India's vaccine diplomacy, Sri Lanka will Thursday receive a consignment of 500,000 doses of 'Covishield' vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII).

This gift of Covid-19 vaccine doses to Sri Lanka is a part of India's 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative under which India has gifted vaccines to seven other countries in the region, sources said.

This humanitarian gesture amid the pandemic is in accordance with India's commitment to its 'Neighbourhood First' policy and SAGAR doctrine in which Sri Lanka has a prominent position.

The delivery of the Covid-19 vaccine doses to Sri Lanka is a fulfilment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa during the Virtual Bilateral Summit held in September 2020.

The Sri Lankan government has finalised the priority list of vulnerable groups including health care workers and armed personnel who will be first to receive the vaccine. Sri Lanka approved emergency use of the vaccine January 23.

In line with Prime Minister Modi's statement that India sees international cooperation in the area of fight against the Covid-19 pandemic as its duty, his government has played the role of the first responder in the region. It has extended a USD 400 million currency swap facility to Sri Lanka to ensure financial stability of the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Next-gen' vax may be needed to tackle emerging variants'

The spread of COVID-19 variants is not an immediate problem but it's time already for next-gen preventives to tackle them, say scientists as countries fine-tune their vaccine dissemination programmes and the race to put more vaccines in the market gathers pace. Work on vaccines will have to continue on parallel tracks - one to tackle the SARS-CoV-2 virus with first generation vaccines and the other to prepare for possible mutations and new variants - say experts as they map the future course of the infection. Responding to concerns on the effectiveness of current vaccines in the face of emerging variants, immunologist Satyajit Rath said vaccine-resistant virus variants are either not present or not spreading in sufficient scales and rates to be an immediate problem. And though the present vaccination campaign will indeed contribute to slowing the pandemic, next-generation vaccines to deal with the "most vaccine-resistant of the emerging variant viruses will need to be developed from now even as we begin to vaccinate communities with the first-generation vaccines", the scientist from New Delhi's National Institute of Immunology told PTI.

The Modi government also gifted approximately 26 tonnes of essential lifesaving medicines and equipment to Sri Lanka. India was the first to send such a consignment onboard two special Air India aircraft. The government also facilitated the repatriation of several hundred Sri Lankan citizens from various Indian cities.

GSK, PATH, BHARAT BIOTECH SIGN PACT FOR MALARIA VAX

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Jan 27: Global health-care company GSK, non-profit agency working to end health inequity PATH, and vaccine maker Bharat Biotech Wednesday announced the signing of a product transfer agreement for malaria vaccine RTS,S/AS01E.

The agreement includes the transfer of manufacturing of the RTS,S antigen part of the vaccine and the grant of a license on all rights pertaining to the RTS,S/AS01 malaria vaccine to Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd (BBIL). GSK will retain the production of the adjuvant of the vaccine (AS01E) and will supply it to Bharat Biotech.

BBIL was selected through a comprehensive, competitive process undertaken by GSK and PATH, working in consultation with the World Health Organisation (WHO), the vaccine maker said in a statement here.



Representative image

The RTS,S/AS01E malaria vaccine, developed by GSK for more than 30 years, and in partnership with PATH since 2001, is currently being piloted in regions of Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi under the Malaria Vaccine Implementation Programme (MVIP). Ministries of Health concerned are leading the implementation of the vaccine, which is being given to young children through the three countries' routine immunisation programmes, with WHO providing technical and scientific leadership, playing a coordinating role, and working in collaboration with GSK, PATH, and a range of other partners.

STRICT RULE



A BMC official fines people not wearing masks, at the sea-front during sunset in Mumbai

entific opinion from the European Medicines Agency and approval by the regulatory authorities of Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi for use in the MVIP).

The first dose of the vaccine has reached more than 500,000 children since the pilots were initiated by Ministries of Health in the three participating countries in 2019.

This agreement with BBIL is the result of efforts by GSK, PATH, and WHO to help ensure long-term sustainable vaccine supply in the event of a WHO policy recommendation for broader use and a commitment of sustained funding. This builds on existing GSK commitments to donate up to 10 million RTS,S/AS01E doses for use in the pilot, and to supply up to 15 million doses annually until 2028 if the product is recommended for wider use by WHO.

It is expected that by 2029, at the latest, BBIL will be the sole supplier of the vaccine, with GSK supplying the adjuvant AS01E to them.

24 NAXALS, SURRENDER IN CH'GARH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dantewada, Jan 27: A total of 24 Naxals, including 12 women, have surrendered in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Dantewada district, police said Wednesday.

The cadres, who were active in south Bastar region, turned themselves in before police on the occasion of the Republic Day Tuesday, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said. Three of the rebels were carrying rewards of ₹1 lakh each on their heads, he said.

The official said the cadres expressed disappointment with the "hollow" Maoist ideology. They were also impressed by the district police's 'Lon Varratu' (return to your home/village) rehabilitation campaign, prompting them to quit the violence, he said. Among those who surrendered, Aaytu Muchaki (31), head of Chikpal-Junglepara Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan (DAKMS-frontal wing of Maoists), Baman Denga Sodhi (40), head of Chikpal-Schoolpara DAKMS, and Kamli Madkam (32) were carrying rewards of ₹1 lakh each on their heads. The other 21 rebels were active as lower rung cadres, the official said.



They were given an immediate assistance of ₹10,000 each and will be provided facilities further as per the government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said.

Under the 'Lon Varratu' (term coined in local Gondi dialect which means 'return to your village/home') initiative, the Dantewada police have put up posters and banners in native villages of at least 1,600 Naxals, mostly carrying rewards on their heads, appealing them to return to the mainstream.

Actors, makers may face arrest

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 27: The actors and makers web series 'Tandav', including Saif Ali Khan and Ali Abbas Zafar, are likely to face arrest after the Supreme Court on Wednesday turned down their pleas for protection from arrest.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan only issued notice on clubbing various FIRs registered across the country and asked actor Zeeshan Ayyub and others to move to high courts for quashing the FIRs or for bail in the matters.

Senior Advocate Fali S. Nariman requested for an order of no coercive action against the cast and producers of the web series. However, the bench refused to grant relief. "Approach High Court" said the top court.

During the hearing the apex court noted that it may consider the request for clubbing the FIRs, but it cannot take the power of the High Court under CrPC.



TANDAV FIRS

The observation was made after senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi requested the court to grant the petitioners no coercive step order, club the FIRs and issue notice to the parties. Ahead of lunch, the top court had orally observed that freedom of speech was not absolute during its hearing on pleas seeking stay on FIRs against actors and producers of Tandav web series on Amazon Prime.

Justice Bhushan had expressed its disinclination to pass any direction to stay the FIRs. Senior advocates Fali S. Nariman, Mukul Rohatgi and Siddharth Luthra cited the top court judgment in Arnab Goswami case to seek relief in the matter.

Luthra argued that the director of the web series is being harassed. "Is this way liberty should be protected in the country and FIRs are being filed across the country," he added. The bench observed that the right to freedom of speech is not absolute and it is subjected to restrictions.

IIT Madras finds reason of visibility reduction in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: Chloride-rich particles resulting from plastic burning may be primarily responsible for haze and fog formation in Northern India, including Delhi, during the winter months, according to an international study led by researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras.

The study, published in the journal Nature Geoscience, may help develop better policies to improve the air quality and visibility in North India.

Many studies in the past have identified particulate matter or aerosol particles with diameter less than 2.5 micrometre (PM2.5) as a major pollutant, responsible for haze and fog formation over Indo-Gangetic plain, including Delhi. However, the role of PM2.5 and detailed chemistry

of haze and fog formation over national capital was poorly understood. The new study found that chloride-rich particles were the highest inorganic fraction in particulate matter, primarily responsible for haze and fog formation in the region. "We realised that despite absolute PM2.5 mass burden over Delhi being much less than other polluted megacities around the world, including Beijing, the pollution and atmospheric chemistry of Delhi is much more complex to understand," said Sachin S Gunthe, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras, who led the study. The latest study greatly enhances our understanding about the precise role of PM2.5 in chemistry of fog formation, which will help policy makers to frame the better policies for improving the air quality and visibility over the national capital.

64% believe climate change a global emergency: Survey

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 27: Sixty-four per cent of the people who participated in a survey in 50 countries across the world believe that climate change is a "global emergency", despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Peoples' Climate Vote - the world's biggest so far - covered over half of the global population that includes over half a million persons under the age of 18, a key constituency on climate change that is typically unable to vote yet in regular elections. It was published on Wednesday.

Detailed results broken down by age, gender, and education level

will be shared with governments around the world by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which organised the innovative poll along with the University of Oxford.

In many participating countries, it is the first time that large-scale polling of public opinion has ever been conducted on the topic of climate change.

Year 2021 is a pivotal one for countries' climate action commitments, with a key round of negotiations set to take place at the UN Climate Summit in November in Glasgow, UK.

In the survey, respondents were asked if climate change was a global

emergency and whether they supported 18 key climate policies across six action areas: Economy, energy, transport, food and farms, nature, and protecting people.

Results show that people often want broad climate policies beyond the current state of play. For example, in eight of the 10 survey countries with the highest emissions from the power sector, a majority of those surveyed backed more renewable energy.

In four of the five countries with the highest emissions from land-use change and enough data on policy preferences, there was majority support for conserving forests and land.



Representative image

Nine of the 10 countries with the most urbanised populations backed more use of clean electric cars and buses, or bicycles.

The innovative survey was distributed across mobile gaming networks in order to include hard-to

surveyed countries, resulting in small margins of error of plus/minus two per cent.

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner said: "The results of the survey clearly illustrate that urgent climate action has broad support among people around the globe, across nationalities, age, gender and education level.

Policies had wide-ranging support, with the most popular being on conservation of forests and land (54 per cent public support), more solar, wind and renewable power (53 per cent), adoption of climate-friendly farming techniques (52 per cent) and more investment in green businesses and jobs (50 per cent).

international



“We know China is working across the UN system to drive an authoritarian agenda that stands in opposition to the founding values of the institution: American values. Their success depends on our continued withdrawal. That will not happen on my watch”

LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD, | AMERICAN DIPLOMAT

PROTESTERS EVICTED

Some protesters against a high-speed rail link between London and north England were evicted from a park in the capital early Wednesday after they dug tunnels and set up a makeshift camp and had occupied Euston Square Gardens, claiming there were plans to build a temporary taxi rank



of the day quote

If the white man was able to come up with vaccinations, then vaccinations for AIDS would have been brought, tuberculosis would be a thing of the past, vaccines for malaria and cancer would have been found

JOHN MAGUFULI | PRESIDENT, TANZANIA

The US strategy supports the continuation of war and bloodshed among various Afghan groups in the political spectrum

ALI SHAMKHANI | SECRETARY, SUPREME NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, IRAN

The progress of vaccine distribution will play a decisive role on whether the Tokyo Olympic Games can be held or not

BILL GATES | CO-FOUNDER, MICROSOFT

SHORT TAKES

Nepal launches Covid vax drive

Kathmandu: Nepal Wednesday launched a nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive with the one million doses of vaccine provided by India under grant assistance in sync with its 'Neighbourhood First' policy. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli inaugurated the vaccination campaign at the Prime Minister's residence at Baluwatar Wednesday morning. At the same time, government hospitals across the country vaccinated doctors and front-line health workers actively engaged in the field.

German gov apologises

Berlin: A German state governor has apologised for referring to Chancellor Angela Merkel as "little Merkel" during a recent online event, saying he had unintentionally displayed macho behaviour. Bodo Ramelow, who governs the state of Thuringia, told German weekly Die Zeit that he greatly regretted using the term "Merkelchen" while talking chatting with other politicians and the public on the social networking app Clubhouse. Die Zeit on Wednesday quoted Ramelow saying that he should have used the diminutive form in reference to male politicians.

China deploys anal swabs

Beijing: China has begun using anal swabs to test those it considers at high risk of contracting Covid-19, state TV reported, with social media users and travellers squirming over the invasive procedure which doctors say can be more effective in detecting the virus. Officials took anal swabs from residents of neighbourhoods with confirmed Covid-19 cases in Beijing last week, broadcaster CCTV said, while those in designated quarantine facilities have also undergone the test.

2 dead in Texas

Austin: A reported hostage situation at a Texas doctor's office has ended with two people dead, authorities said. A SWAT team found the bodies late Tuesday after negotiators spent hours trying to speak to the people inside the building in Austin, police said. Some residents nearby were evacuated as police responded and others were asked to stay inside their homes. It's unclear what led to the deaths or who was inside the building.

US, Russia agree to extend 'New START' nuclear treaty

The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Jan 27: The lower house of Russian parliament Wednesday quickly approved the extension of the last remaining nuclear arms control pact days before it's due to expire.

The State Duma voted unanimously to extend the New START treaty for five years. The vote came a day after a phone call between US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin, in which they voiced satisfaction with the exchange of diplomatic notes about extending the New START treaty. They agreed to complete the necessary procedures in the next few days, according to the Kremlin.

The pact's extension doesn't require congressional approval in the US, but Russian lawmakers must ratify the move. Top members of the upper house, the Federation Council, said it was set to quickly follow suit and endorse the extension later Wednesday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told lawmakers that the extension will be validated by exchanging diplomatic notes once all the procedures are completed.

New START expires February 5. After taking office last week, Biden proposed extending the treaty for five years, and the Kremlin quickly welcomed the offer.



The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.

Biden indicated during the campaign that he favored the preservation of the New START treaty, which was negotiated during his tenure as US vice president.

Russia has long proposed prolonging the pact without any conditions or changes, but the Trump administration waited until last year to start talks and made the extension contingent on a set of demands. The talks stalled, and months of bargaining have failed to narrow differences.

The negotiations were also

marred by tensions between Russia and the United States, which have been fueled by the Ukrainian crisis, Moscow's meddling in the 2016 US presidential election and other irritants. After both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, New START is the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries. Earlier this month, Russia announced that it would follow the US in pulling out of the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed surveillance flights over military facilities, to help build trust and transparency between Russia and the West.

Before the Biden administration took office, Russia always had offered to extend New START for five years — a possibility that was envisaged by the pact at the time it was signed.

Pak gov't decides to amend Constitution for Senate election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Jan 27: Pakistan Cabinet has decided to table a bill in Parliament to amend the Constitution for holding the Senate elections through open vote. The decision was taken during the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

"The government wants the (Senate) polls to be held in a transparent manner and without horse-trading. This is why we want Senate polls to be held through an open ballot," Information Minister Shibli Faraz told the media after the meeting.



He said that in the past, money was used in Senate elections and votes were bought making the House election a mockery. He asked what was the use of an Upper House in which people come through purchasing of votes.

Faraz also said that people opposing the proposed move are forgetting that their own party had demanded open ballot in the past.

"The government will present a constitutional amendment bill in the parliament so that Senate polls are held through open ballot," he said. Already the government petitioned to the SC, seeking direction to hold the upcoming Senate elections through open ballot.

EASA clears Boeing 737 Max to fly again



AGENCIES

Berlin, Jan 27: A modified version of the Boeing 737 Max, incorporating multiple safety upgrades, has been approved to resume flights in Europe, following nearly two years of reviews after the aircraft was involved in two deadly crashes that saw the planes grounded worldwide, the European aviation safety agency said Wednesday.

Changes mandated by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency, or EASA, include a package of software upgrades, a reworking of the electrical system, maintenance checks, operations manual updates and new crew training.

"We have reached a significant milestone on a long road," said EASA executive director Patrick Ky. "Following extensive analysis by EASA, we have determined that

the 737 MAX can safely return to service. This assessment was carried out in full independence of Boeing or the Federal Aviation Administration and without any economic or political pressure — we asked difficult questions until we got answers and pushed for solutions which satisfied our exacting safety requirements. We carried out our own flight tests and simulator sessions and did not rely on others to do this for us."

The planes were grounded in March 2019 following the crashes of a Lion Air flight near Jakarta October 29, 2018, and an Ethiopian Airlines flight March 10, 2019, killing a total of 346 people. Investigators determined that the cause of the crashes was a faulty computer system that pushed the plane's nose downward in flight and couldn't be overridden by pilots.

Changes mandated by EASA, include a package of software upgrades, a reworking of the electrical system, maintenance checks, operations manual updates and new crew training

Global cases surpass 100mn as nations tackle vaccine shortages



REUTERS

New York, Jan 27: Global coronavirus cases surpassed 100 million Wednesday, according to a Reuters tally, as countries around the world struggle with new virus variants and vaccine shortfalls. Almost 1.3% of the world's population has now been infected with Covid-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, and more than 2.1 million people have died.

One person has been infected every 7.7 seconds, on average, since the start of the year. Around 668,250 cases have been reported each day over the same period, and the global fatality rate stands at 2.15%.

The worst-affected countries — the United States, India, Brazil, Russia and the United Kingdom — make up more than half all reported Covid-19 cases but represent 28% of the global population, according to a Reuters analysis.

It took the world 11 months to record the first 50 million cases of the pandemic, compared to just three months for cases to double to 100 million.

Around 56 countries have begun vaccinating people for the coronavirus, administering at least 64 million doses. Israel leads the world

on per capita vaccinations, inoculating 29% of its population with at least one dose.

UNITED STATES

With over 25 million cases, the United States has 25% of all reported Covid cases although it accounts for just 4% of the world's population. The United States leads the world in the daily average number of new deaths reported, accounting for one in every five deaths reported worldwide each day. With just under 425,000 fatalities, the US has reported almost twice as many deaths as Brazil, which has the second-highest death toll in the world.

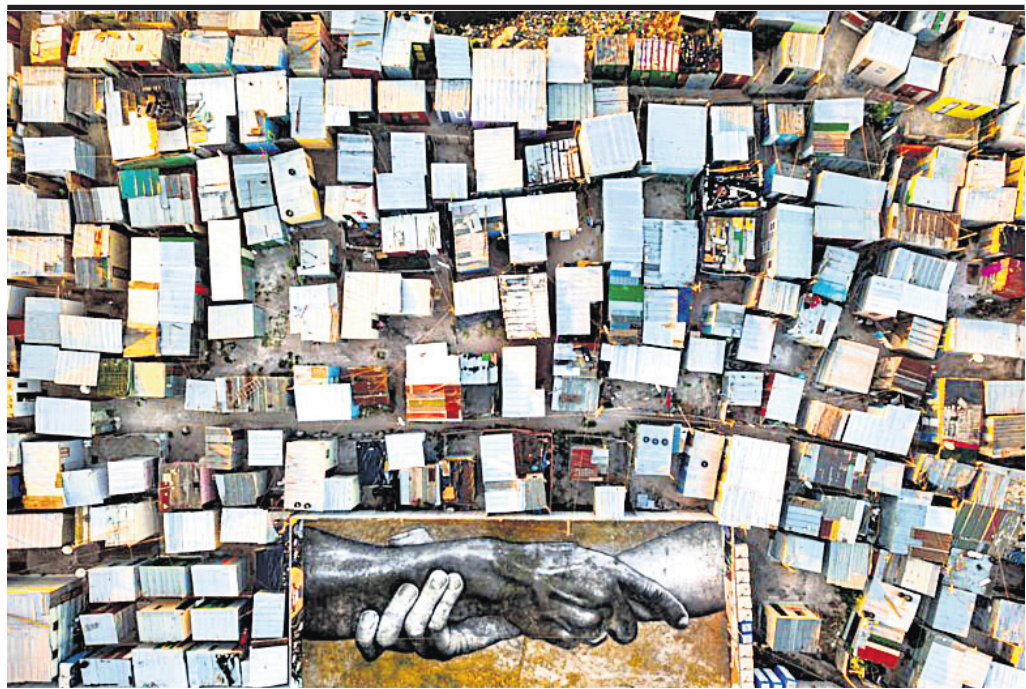
As the worst-affected region in the world, Europe is currently reporting a million new infections about every four days and has reported nearly 30 million since the pandemic began. Britain on Tuesday reached 100,000 deaths.

The Eastern European region, including countries like Russia, Poland and Ukraine, contribute to nearly 10% of all global Covid-19 cases. Despite securing deals for vaccine supplies early on, many European countries are facing delays in shipments from both Pfizer Inc and AstraZeneca Plc

ASIA AND AFRICA

In India, the nation with the second-highest number of cases, infections are decreasing, with almost 13,700 new infections reported on average each day — around 15% of its peak. PM Narendra Modi said that India was completely self-reliant on coronavirus vaccine supplies.

SPECTACULAR VISION



An aerial view shows a giant land-art fresco by French artist Saype, painted for the 9th step of his worldwide "Beyond Walls" project in Phillippi township, Cape Town, South Africa

Covid relief: Biden to reopen 'Obamacare' markets

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 27: Fulfilling a campaign promise, President Joe Biden plans to reopen the HealthCare.gov insurance markets for a special sign-up opportunity geared to people needing coverage in the coronavirus pandemic. Biden is expected to sign an executive order Thursday, said two people familiar with the plan, whose details were still being finalized.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the pending order ahead of a formal announcement. Although the number of uninsured Americans has grown because of job losses due to the economic hit of COVID-19, the Trump administration resisted calls to authorise a "special enrollment period" for people uninsured in the pandemic.



Failure to repeal and replace "Obamacare" as he repeatedly vowed to do was one of former President Donald Trump's most bitter disappointments. His administration continued trying to find ways to limit the programme or unravel it entirely.

A Supreme Court decision on Trump's final legal challenge to the Affordable Care Act is expected this year. The White House had no comment on Biden's expected order, but the two individuals familiar with the plan said the new enrollment period would not go into effect immediately.

Holocaust remembrance: Pope warns against new nationalism

REUTERS

Vatican City, Jan 27: Pope Francis Wednesday marked the 76th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp by urging people to keep a close watch on ideological extremism, because "these things can happen again".

He spoke three weeks after displays of anti-Semitism surfaced at the US Capitol riot January 6 and two weeks after one of Montreal's largest synagogues was vandalised and almost set on fire.

Speaking at his general audience, held inside the papal library because of coronavirus restric-



tions, Francis said it was imperative that the world did not forget.

"To remember is an expression of humanity. To remember is a sign

of civility. To remember is a condition for a better future of peace

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL VANDALISED

Paris: Vandals painted graffiti on France's Holocaust Memorial ahead of international commemorations of the Nazi slaughter of millions of Jews. The Israeli Embassy in France tweeted a photo of the pro-Uighur graffiti scrawled on a wall etched with the names of tens of thousands of French victims of the Holocaust. The embassy expressed "horror and anger" at the vandalism "on such a symbolic day." Paris police said the graffiti was discovered Wednesday morning, as ceremonies were being held or planned around the world to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is observed on the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp on January 27, 1945. The graffiti was quickly cleaned off.

and fraternity," said Francis, who visited Auschwitz in 2016.

The Nazis and their allies murdered around 6 million Jews, as well as others, in German-occupied

Europe. More than a million people, most of them Jews, were killed at Auschwitz in southern Poland, which was liberated by Soviet troops January 27, 1945.

business

of the day quote

India is a huge market for Japanese industry and expressed confidence that going forward, there will be a substantial development in the India-Japan trade relationship

As a responsible global technology leader, we are proud to contribute and support the creation of macro-scale solutions to healthcare issues for a better future for all

GH RAO | PRESIDENT (ENGINEERING AND R&D SERVICES), HCL TECHNOLOGIES

In 2014, less than 1 per cent ethanol was being blended with petrol against the target of 5 per cent. In the last sugar year, this ratio has reached 8.5 per cent and next year it is 10 per cent

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | OIL MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

SBI Card MD, CEO resigns

New Delhi: SBI Card Wednesday said its Managing Director (MD) and CEO Ashwini Kumar Tewari has resigned pursuant to his appointment as MD of State Bank of India. "We wish to inform that Ashwini Kumar Tewari, Managing Director & CEO (nominated by State Bank of India) of the company has tendered his resignation from directorship of the company with effect from the close of business hours of January 27, 2020," SBI Card said in a regulatory filing.

Reliance signs \$15mn deal

Jerusalem: Reliance Group has signed a \$15 million deal with Israeli company Breath of Health (BOH) to distribute the firm's swift Covid-19 breath testing system that provides results within seconds. "It takes a few seconds to get the result," BOH's CEO, Arie Laor, said. The tests conducted by the company so far have given back results in less than a minute, he added. According to the agreement, the Indian corporate giant will purchase hundreds of systems from the Israeli company in a deal valued at \$15 million.

'Apps ban violates WTO rules'

Beijing: China said Wednesday that the Indian government's decision to keep a ban on 59 Chinese apps was a violation of the World Trade Organization's fair rules of business and would hurt Chinese firms. The ban dates from last year when political tension between the neighbours rose over their disputed border. This month the Indian government decided to keep the ban on TikTok and other apps. "We urge the Indian side to immediately correct its discriminatory measures," Chinese embassy spokesperson Ji Rong said.

HUL Q3 net up 18.8% at ₹1,938 cr

New Delhi: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd Wednesday reported a 20.3 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to ₹1,938 crore for the third quarter ended December 2020, helped by growth in volume and prices. HUL's consolidated net profit was ₹s 1,631 crore in the October-December quarter previous fiscal.



The scope for tax concessions in the upcoming Budget next week is very limited, and the finance minister may prefer to inject stimulus into the economy through increased expenditure, mainly in infrastructure

DK SRIVASTAVA | ECONOMIST, EY INDIA

BOEING POSTS \$8.4bn LOSS

Boeing lost \$8.4 billion in the fourth quarter on weaker demand for planes during the pandemic and another setback to a new large plane designed for long-haul flights



IMF favours extension of pandemic support measures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 27: Ahead of India's annual budget presentation next week, IMF's Chief Economist Gita Gopinath has favoured the extension of the pandemic support measures, thrust on investment in infrastructure and expanding health sectors programmes like Ayushman Bharat, and a very credible divestment path for commercially viable companies.

The Indian government has provided a lot of schemes for small and medium enterprises, most of which is in the form of liquidity support, Gopinath told PTI Tuesday. "And you want to revisit it and see how effectively that is working and see whether additional sup-

port may need to be provided," she said while responding to a question on her recommendations to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, ahead of her presentation of the annual Union Budget February 1.

It would be a good time for banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to raise capital given the attractiveness of financing conditions at this point, she said.

"We have to also keep in mind that as these pandemic measures are lifted, there would very likely be an increase in non-performing loans. Even the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) has projected that," Gopinath said.

But there might also be a need for the capital support to be provided by the government for pub-



The Indian government has provided a lot of schemes for small and medium enterprises, most of which is in the form of liquidity support

GITA GOPINATH | CHIEF ECONOMIST, IMF

lic sector enterprises. That has been long on the table which is to improve governance of public sector banks, she said.

Observing that there is a need for more public infrastructure spending, she said that the government has expressed an intention to do that.

"There are needs to make more

public investment. That would be another area that would require thrust," she said, adding that health is another sector which needs renewed focus.

"In this pandemic, there has been spending but if you look at the health needs of the country, health capacity has to be increased. We can also see an argument for expand-

ing Ayushman Bharat programme for instance and also increasing the number of medical personnel," Gopinath said.

Gopinath said that there has to be progress made on the GST (Goods and Services Tax) collections. There seems to be a gap with compliance which is an important area to fix.

India's finance ministry on Monday released the 13th instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to the states to meet GST compensation shortfall, taking the total amount of funds released to Rs 78,000 crore.

The government had set up a special borrowing window in October 2020 to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of the implementation of the GST.

German govt cuts 2021 growth forecast to 3%

AGENCIES

Berlin, Jan 27: The German government Wednesday cut its growth forecast for this year to 3 per cent as Europe's biggest economy faces persistent headwinds from the coronavirus pandemic.

In late October, the government had forecast growth of 4.4 per cent this year. The country started a partial shutdown shortly afterward and deepened it in mid-December. That lockdown, Germany's second, is still in place.



Official data released earlier this month showed that the economy shrank by 5 per cent last year, ending a decade of growth. That was still a smaller drop than many had expected.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said that "while industry is still robust at present, the services sector is badly hit."

"We are currently seeing a flattening of the infection figures, which gives us hope," he said in a statement. "But the situation is still serious and the danger from the virus mutation not yet over."

Germany had a relatively successful first phase of the pandemic, but saw infections shoot up during the fall and winter months. Restaurants, bars, sports and leisure facilities were shut on Nov 2 in an effort to halt the rise. That succeeded for a while, but didn't bring case numbers down.

Schools and nonessential shops were closed December 16, and the restrictions were extended last week until February 14. Although cases are now falling, authorities are worried about the potential impact of new virus variants such as the one first detected in Britain.

FDI into India up 37% during April-Nov 2020

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 27: India attracted a total FDI inflow of \$58.37 billion during April to November 2020, an official statement said Wednesday. According to the statement, the FDI inflows was the highest ever for the first eight months of a financial year and 22 per cent higher as compared to the first 8 months of 2019-20 when the country attracted \$47.67 billion.

In terms of FDI equity, inflow received during FY 20-21 April to November 2020 stood at \$43.85 billion. "It is also the highest ever for the first 8 months of a financial year and 37 per cent more compared to the first 8 months of 2019-20 (\$32.11 billion)," the statement said.

As per the statement, FDI is a major driver of economic growth and an important source of non-debt finance for the economic development of India.

"It has been the endeavour of the government to put in place an enabling and investor friendly FDI policy. The intent all this while has been to make the FDI policy more investor friendly and remove the policy bottlenecks that have been hindering the investment inflows into the country."

"The steps taken in this direction have borne fruit, as is evident from the ever-increasing volumes of FDI inflows being received



According to the statement, the FDI inflows was the highest ever for the first eight months of a financial year

In terms of FDI equity, inflow received during FY 20-21 April to November 2020 stood at \$43.85 billion

The communiqué cited that measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country

into the country." Accordingly, the communiqué cited that measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country.

"The following trends in India's Foreign Direct Investment are an endorsement of its status as a preferred investment destination amongst global investors."

Govt invites global bidders for NINL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar Jan 27: After several prolonged efforts, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL) is finally going for strategic disinvestment. The central government has now initiated the process of NINL's privatisation by inviting global expressions of interest (EOIs) for strategic disinvestment of the public sector undertaking (PSU).

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) - nodal body in-charge of inviting bidders, has issued a global invitation for EOIs. The government now targets to disinvest 100 per cent shareholding of the six state-run stakeholders of NINL which include four Central PSUs - Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation (MMTC), National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC), Bharat Heavy Electricals

Ltd (BHEL) and MECON - and two Odisha government companies IPICOL and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) are shareholders in NINL.

Moreover, recently a high level meeting was held regarding NINL which was co-chaired by commerce & industry minister and Minister for PNG & Steel Dharmendra Pradhan. Pradhan said that, in view of the promoters not being able to infuse further funds to NINL, in particular MMTC, DIPAM will take up few issues. It was also said that a corpus fund of Rs 150/175 crore to be kept for payment of salaries & arrears and other statutory dues of NINL. Government permits NINL to sell its 5 lakh tonnes (25% of its production capacity) vide letter no 16/54/2019-M.VI dated 5th January, 2021 iron ore from its captive mines to alleviate its financial stress as decide in the above high level meeting.

Walmart to build more robot-filled warehouses

Walmart declined to say how many of the warehouses it will build, but construction has started at stores in Texas and Utah

AGENCIES

New York, Jan 27: Walmart is enlisting the help of robots to keep up with a surge in online orders. The company said Wednesday that it plans to build warehouses at its stores where self-driving robots will fetch groceries and have them ready for shoppers to pick up in an hour or less.

Walmart declined to say how many of the warehouses it will build, but construction has started at stores in Lewisville, Texas; Plano, Texas; American Fork, Utah; and Bentonville, Arkansas, where Walmart's corporate offices are based.

A test site was opened more than a year ago at a store in Salem, New Hampshire.



Walmart hopes the warehouses will speed up curbside pickups, where orders are brought outside to shoppers' cars. Both options became increasingly popular as virus-weary shoppers avoid going inside stores.

At the start of the pandemic last year, Walmart said delivery and pickup sales grew 300 per cent. The company said the robots won't roam store aisles. Instead, they'll stay inside warehouses built in separate areas, either within a store or next

to it. Windows will be placed at some locations so shoppers can watch the robots work.

The wheeled robots carry crates of apple juice, cereal and other small goods to Walmart workers, who then bag them for shoppers. Rival Amazon uses similar technology in its warehouses, with robots bringing books, vitamins and other small items to workers to box and ship.

Walmart said the robots save time since employees don't have to walk store aisles to find items. Workers will, however, have to go into the store to pick out fresh groceries, such as meat, fish and vegetables. They'll also have to grab TVs, vacuum cleaners and other large items that are too large for the robots to carry.

HDIL group case: Yes Bank founder Rana Kapoor arrested by ED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Jan 27: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Yes Bank's former Chairman Rana Kapoor in an alleged money-laundering case pertaining to the probe in a HDIL group company, official sources said Wednesday.

Currently in jail in the DHFL case, Kapoor - who has been sent to ED custody till January 30 - had allegedly sanctioned a Rs 200 crore loan to Mack Star Marketing Pvt Ltd, a group company of the HDIL promoters Rakesh Wadhawan and Sarang Wadhawan.

The Wadhawans are charged with duping the Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative Bank of around Rs 6,000 crore - a scam that erupted in September 2019, shaking banking and corporate circles. In the latest case, Kapoor allegedly conspired to sanction the Rs 200 crore loan to Mack Star that was diverted to HDIL which used it to repay its outstanding with Yes Bank.

The ED claimed that the intention was to siphon off the loan amounts and give a lifeline to HDIL's group companies to settle their outstanding with Yes Bank to prevent them from become NPA's. This is the second time Kapoor has been arrested in less than 10 months.

BIZ BUZZ

SBI Bhubaneswar Circle celebrates Republic Day



Bhubaneswar: State Bank of India Bhubaneswar Circle celebrated 72nd Republic Day at Local Head Office, Bhubaneswar. The national flag was hoisted by General Manager NW-1 CLN Charyulu in the presence of Dy. General Manager & CDO Anup Kumar Sinha and other dignitaries and staff members of the bank. The Guard of Honour given by the SBI Security Department of SBI. In this occasion, the General Manager also felicitated the employees of the SBI for their good work done during the period.

OHPC celebrates Republic Day

Bhubaneswar: The 72nd Republic Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm among the employees of OHPC at their corporate office, training centre and its units. At the corporate office, the national flag was hoisted by Pravabh Mohanty, Director (Finance) in presence of Prabhodh Kumar Mohanty, Director (HR), Manoranjan Biswal, Director (Operation) I/c, officers & staff. Prabhodh Kumar Mohanty, Director (HR) hoisted the National Flag at the OHPC Training Centre, Chandaka. The Republic Day was celebrated at the respective offices by maintaining appropriate social distancing, wearing of masks and related protocols as per the directives issued by the Govt.



BoB offers ₹98.96cr credit to SHGs

Bhubaneswar: Bank of Baroda (BoB) offered credit to 1928 Self Help Groups (SHGs) during a Credit Linkage Mela. The three regions of BoB (Bhubaneswar, Bhubaneswar-II and Sambalpur) together sanctioned linkage to 1928 groups amounting Rs 98.96 crore as in the state during this Special SHG Credit Linkage Drive. Bank of Baroda organized SHG Credit Linkage Mela at different location linked to respective branches operating there of the state of Odisha under Special Drive for "SHG Credit Linkage 2020-21" under the name "Samuh Se Samrudhi January 25, 2021 to fulfill the very objective of bringing a large section of rural poor into intentional credit framework and to boost SHG portfolio of the branch as well as the bank. Bank is dedicated to upliftment of poorer by financing through SHG linkage and other agriculture loans.



Debate heats up over how countries tax Big Tech firms

AGENCIES

Frankfurt, Jan 27: An international debate over how countries tax big US technology companies such as Google, Amazon and Facebook is heating up, presenting a challenge for new President Joe Biden's administration.

There's a mid-year deadline for talks on a global deal that aims to defuse trade disputes with France and other countries that are imposing go-it-alone taxes the US sees as discriminatory.

France has imposed its own 3% tax on digital revenue for large tech companies — in effect singling out



the US tech giants — but has said it would withdraw the tax in favour of an international solution being negotiated under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a Paris-based international organization of 37 advanced economies.

US trade officials have called unilateral digital taxes unfair and threatened trade retaliation against French goods, but have held off imposing sanctions.

Finance officials from 137 countries are convening online Wednesday to resume negotiations over how best to make sure multinational companies don't avoid taxation by shifting activities and profits among countries.

One key question is how to appropriately tax multinationals — such as tech firms — that may have no on-the-ground presence in a country but nonetheless do substantial business there in the form

of digital activities such as online advertising, sale of user data, search engines, or social media platforms.

The talks are about how to allocate part of a company's revenue to the country where its services are used, so that government there could benefit from the taxes.

The two-day meeting is to assess where things stand and no final decision is expected. But OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría has said a deal must be found by the middle of this year to keep a tax war from turning into a trade war that the world economy doesn't need.

The pandemic has only put a sharper edge on the issue of digi-

tal taxation: the virus outbreak has accelerated digitalization through remote work and contactless activities, and in some cases led to strong profits for digital companies; meanwhile, government budgets have been put under strain through added spending and less tax revenue.

Said KPMG's Corwin: "A lot of the countries have said, we're holding for the OECD to get to an agreement, but the combination of the politics on the ground of wanting to impose these taxes, as well as the fiscal demands of the financial fallout of the pandemic, is increasing the pressure for governments to act."

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NEWLY-INTRODUCED ICC PLAYER OF MONTH AWARDS FOR JANUARY

Pant, Ashwin in contention



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Jan 27: India's senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and swashbuckling wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant would be in contention for the newly-introduced player of the month awards announced by the International Cricket Council (ICC), Wednesday.

Besides Ashwin and Pant, two other Indians - Mohammed Siraj and Thangarasu Natarajan - are also in the fray. All of them played a stellar role in India's recent historic Test series win against Australia.

The world body said the awards will recognise the best performances of both male and female cricketers across all forms of international cricket throughout the year.

Other players named for the awards for January are England captain Joe Root, star Australia batsman Steve Smith, Rahmanullah Gurbaz of Afghanistan, Marizanne Kapp and Nadine de Klerk of South Africa and Nida Dar of Pakistan.

Fans are invited to vote online every month to award their favourite male and

Kohli, Rohit remain top two batsmen in ODIs

DUBAI: India captain Virat Kohli and senior batsman Rohit Sharma retained their number one and two position respectively in the ICC rankings for ODI batsmen, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah remained at the third spot in the bowler's list. Kohli, who had scored 89 and 63 against Australia in his last two ODI appearance, has 870 points to his kitty. Rohit, who missed the tour of Australia due to an injury and has not featured in any one-day game since the COVID-19 pandemic began, remained at the second spot, five points ahead of Pakistan skipper Babar Azam (837). Among the bowlers, Bumrah remained the best-placed Indian, occupying the third spot with 700 points. New Zealand pacer Trent Boult (722) and Afghan spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman (701) occupy the top two spots.

female cricketers across all formats of international cricket played in that month, the ICC said in a release.

An independent ICC Voting Academy comprising former players, broadcasters and journalists from around the world

will team up with fans to vote for the winners. Geoff Allardice, ICC General Manager - Cricket said: "The ICC Player of the Month is a great way to connect with fans of the sport and celebrate performances of their favourite players throughout the year.

"It gives us all an opportunity to acknowledge world class performances on the field by male and female cricketers and they have been in abundance throughout January."

The three nominees for each of the categories will be determined by the ICC Awards Nominations Committee based on on-field performances and overall achievements during the period of that month (the first to the last day of each calendar month.)

The Voting Academy will submit its votes by email and will retain a 90 per cent share of the vote. Subsequently, on the first day of each month, fans registered with the ICC website and will have a 10 per cent share of the vote. Winners will be announced every second Monday of the month on the ICC's digital channels.

Man City move to top of EPL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 27: Fueled by a sparkling attacking display, Manchester City's players powered to the top of the Premier League for the first time this season - and even the opposition are stopping to admire their work.

In a comical exhibit for VAR's ever-lengthening highlights reel, West Bromwich Albion's defenders virtually stopped in their tracks and looked on as Joao Cancelo curled a shot into the top corner for the second of City's goals in a 5-0 rout, Tuesday.

After all, the assistant referee had raised the flag for offside moments earlier but City, unlike West Brom, played



on as Bernardo Silva collected the ball and fed Cancelo, who - unchallenged - picked his spot from the edge of the area.

A video review showed Silva was actually inside and the goal was allowed to stand. City

was on course to match its biggest league win of the season and, on the evidence of this game and the last couple of months, Pep Guardiola's team is going to be hard to stop. Make it seven straight wins

in the league - and 11 in all competitions - for City in an ominous run of results. City became the ninth side to finish a day in first place this season, the most within a single top-flight campaign since 1986-87.

Even if Manchester United reclaims the lead on Wednesday by beating Sheffield United, City - on its longest winning run in more than three years - looks to be the team to beat.

Ilkay Gundogan netted twice to make it seven goals in the last eight league games for a midfielder who has never been a prolific scorer in his career but has hit a rich vein of form. Riyad Mahrez and Raheem Sterling set each other up for the final two goals.

Kerala Blasters, Jamshedpur play out goalless stalemate



AGENCIES

Goa, Jan 27: Kerala Blasters were held to a goalless draw by Jamshedpur FC at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim, Wednesday. By the virtue of the result, Kerala Blasters are at the eighth place with 15 points while Jamshedpur FC a spot ahead with similar points, courtesy a better goal difference.

Jamshedpur began the match with a lot of intent but possession and tempo changed hands as Blasters looked like the most dominating side throughout the span of the match.

Gary Hooper and Jordan Murray combine well in unison to create plenty of chances but both failed to hit the target. The Men of Steel, on the other hand, defended for their lives and will be happy to get one point from the match.

However, this match could have gone Blasters' way had substitute Seityasen Singh connected his shot inside the box in the 88th minute. It was a perfect build up for Blasters as Sahal Samad laid the ball from the centre to Seityasen who went for a shot but Stephen Eze cleared off the danger.

Sindhu, Srikanth lose campaign openers at WTF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Jan 27: Star Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth fought their hearts out before suffering close defeats in their respective group 'B' openers at the USD 1.5 million BWF World Tour Finals (WTF) here, Wednesday.

A week after a demoralising defeat at the Thailand Open quarterfinals, World Champion Sindhu produced a much-improved performance but still lost to World No.1 Tai Tzu Ying of Taiwan 21-19, 12-21. It was Sindhu's 16th defeat to Tzu Ying in 21 meetings.

"It was a good match, there were no easy points. In the third game I came back and it was just one point difference at one stage. I broke my racket strings twice (during rallies) and that made a difference," Sindhu said.

Former World No.1 Srikanth too squandered an opening game advantage, losing 21-15, 16-21 to World No.3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a gruelling 77-minute contest.

Olympic silver medalist Sindhu, who had won the prestigious title in 2018, will next play Ratchanok Intanon, who had handed her a humiliating defeat last week. World No.14 Srikanth, on the other hand, will face Wang Tzu Wei of Chinese Taipei, Thursday.

ENGLAND ARRIVE IN CHENNAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 27: Members of the England cricket team including captain Joe Root arrived in the city Wednesday for the four-match series against India with the first two Tests to be played here.

Some of the Indian players and members of the support staff also landed in this southern city, airport sources said.

Root and Co flew in from Sri Lanka at around 10.30 AM and headed to the hotel where members of the two teams will be put up as part of the bio-bubble, a Tamil Nadu Cricket Association official said.

The England team had on Monday completed a 2-0 series sweep of the Tests against Sri Lanka with Root slamming two big centuries. Star all-rounder Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer had arrived in the city Sunday and are in quarantine.

While a few Indian players including star batsman Rohit Sharma and Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane arrived Tuesday night, some others like Cheteshwar Pujara, Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant, star of the series clinching victory in the Brisbane



Test, reached Wednesday morning. Team coach Ravi Shastri flew in from Mumbai as did several other players from destinations across the country. Skipper Virat Kohli was scheduled to arrive Wednesday.

The players of the two teams will be staying at Hotel Leela Palace in a bio-bubble as part of quarantine protocols and will

undergo testing for COVID-19, the TNCA official said.

"They will be in quarantine for six days and are set to start practising from February 2," the official added. The first Test will be played at the MA Chidambaram stadium from February 5 and the second from February 13. Chennai had last hosted a Test match in December 2016 against England.

IPL auction to take place February 18

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: The IPL players' auction ahead of the 2021 edition will take place in Chennai February 18, the league organisers announced, Wednesday.

The announcement was made via IPL's Twitter handle exactly a week after this agency reported the date. "IPL 2021 Player Auction on 18th February," read part of the post. The 'mini auction' will take place following the first two Tests between India and England in Chennai. The series begins February 5 while the second Test will be played from February 13 to 17.

The BCCI is also yet to decide whether the IPL will happen in India even though the Board President Sourav Ganguly has repeatedly asserted that everything possible would be done to keep the glitzy event at its home.

The 2020 edition was held in the UAE in September-November due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A smooth conduct of India's home series against England from next month should pave the way for the lucrative league to be held at home.

The player retention deadline ended January 20 and the trading window closes February 4. A total of 139 players were retained by the franchises and 57 players were released. KXIP will enter the auction with the biggest purse (Rs 53.20 crore), followed by RCB (Rs 35.90 crore) and RR (Rs 34.85 crore). With Rs 10.75 crore each, KKR and SRH have the lowest purse going into the auction.

Siraj was racially abused, verifies CA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Jan 27: Cricket Australia (CA) Wednesday confirmed that India pacer Mohammad Siraj was racially abused during the Sydney Test but cleared the six spectators who were evicted from the ground after the infamous incident that halted play for a while.

The investigation into the incident remains ongoing, said Cricket Australia, which has submitted its report to the ICC.

"CA confirms that members of the Indian cricket team were subjected to racial abuse. CA's own investigation into the matter remains open, with CCTV footage, ticketing data and interviews with spectators still being analysed in an attempt to locate those responsible," said Sean Carroll, CA's Head of Integrity and Security in a statement.

"CA's investigation concluded

that the spectators filmed and/or photographed by media in the Brewongle Stand concourse at the conclusion of the 86th over on day four of the Test did not engage in racist behaviour."

"As stated at the time of the incident, CA has a zero tolerance policy towards discriminatory behaviour in all forms and, as hosts of the Border-Gavaskar series, apologises to the Indian men's cricket team.

"CA is awaiting confirmation from NSW Police that it has completed its investigation into the matter and will not offer further comment until it is received," Carroll added.

Play was halted for a few minutes on the fourth day of the third Test on January 10 after Siraj complained of racial abuse from the crowd. This prompted the security personnel to enter the stands and look for the mischief-mongers before six people were asked to leave.

BEHTAR ZINDAGI KE LIYE

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Jo apnon se kare pyaar, wo Prestige se kaise karke inkaar.

*Conditions apply.

Authorised Dealers - BHUBANESWAR: Pratap Sewing Machine-9776142287, Ulkal Light House-978327554, Ulkal Sales-9853150619, Reeta-9938677424, Sai Associate-9937065641, Bharat Electronics & Home Appliances-9168169396, Spectra Vision-9937222277, S.B Enterprises-9437310480, D.B Enterprises-9437090516, Kitchen King-9938475829, Situ Plastic-8280118658, Nilamadhab Light & Electricals-9778504621, Maharana Enterprises-9937475812, Kitchen Plaza-9337756820, S.R Electronics-7008571900, Santosh Enterprises-7978083689, DAS & DAS-8995014877, Vinayak Aluminium-8847845848, Euroasia-9040273010, Maa Sarala Traders-8270113197, Sai Sriyani Enterprise-9777096631, Famous Traders-8658336922, CUTTACK- Balaji Distributors-8763153928, Union Sales Emporium-9338461472, Arbind Home Appliances-9438480346, Arbind Plastic-9337234986, Sarjany Electronics-86-840227761, Mahavir General Store-9337005131, Nigam Traders-9438280382, Chandri Electronics-9437063211, Raj Electronics Plaza-8114748664, Friends Electricals-965338494, S.M Enterprises-943983070, Ganapati Electricals-9249905133, Urmila Agency-9861031536, Anand Gen Store-8517414592, Mahaveer Fan Appliance-9861174489, Roy Emporium-9337013713, ROURKELA- Prestige-7008413290, Garg Enterprises-704584070, Unique Steel-6371564009, Khemka Kitchen Ware-9583948726, Kitchen Accessories-700858146, Pooja General Store-9668986422, OmCrkery Emporium-9661086065, Baba Mani Enterprises-9040537713, Kamal Enterprises-8249031351, Sunil Hard Ware-9861018747, Variety Store-9861013323, Panda Home Appliances-9178696984, Dash & Sons-6372310525, Durga Aluminium-8895343288