



CREATIVE CHOICE

Actor Yami Gautam, in her latest post, says there is something about black and white tones that fascinates her

LEISURE P2



STILL A MYSTERY

China has called on the US to invite the WHO to investigate origins of the COVID-19 as it is still a mystery

INTERNATIONAL P10



DJOKOVIC ADVANCES

World No.1 Novak Djokovic sees off Frances Tiafoe to make it to the third round of Australian Open

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Ms Nature is opposing your development plans, sir! Whom shall we call to handle it... ED, CBI or Income Tax?

SHORT TAKES

Twitter suspends over 500 accounts

New Delhi: Twitter said Wednesday it has suspended over 500 accounts, and blocked access to several others within India as it partly acceded to a government order to curb spread of misinformation and inflammatory content around farmers' protests. This development comes in the backdrop of the government ordering Twitter to take down 1,178 accounts February 4 with links to Pakistan and Khalistan supporters. These accounts were spreading misinformation and provocative content related to farmers' protests. P3

Aussie island hit by strong tsunami

Sydney: A 7.7-magnitude earthquake that hit some regions in the South Pacific has generated a tsunami, the Australian weather agency said Wednesday. "Tsunami confirmed," the Australian Bureau of Meteorology said in a tweet. It also warned of a threat to Lord Howe Island, which is about 550 kilometres (340 miles) east of Australia's mainland. One of the most famous tourist spots in Australia, the island is the home to many species of birds. The scale of destruction the island has suffered is yet to be ascertained.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	51309.39	↓ 19.6
NIFTY	15106.50	↓ 2.80
DOLLAR	73.21	↓ ₹0.12
EURO	88.48	↑ ₹0.11
GOLD	₹48,168	↑ ₹220
SILVER	₹69,631	↓ ₹65

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	33.6°C	32.2°C
MAX	33.6°C	32.2°C
MIN	15.4°C	14.0°C
Humidity	94%	81%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning

CHINA CLAIMS DISENGAGEMENT OF ITS OWN AND INDIAN TROOPS HAS BEGUN

Ladakh standoff 'ends'

AGENCIES

Beijing, Feb 10: The frontline troops of China and India at the south and north banks of the Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh started synchronised and organised disengagement from Wednesday, the Chinese defence ministry announced here.

There was no comment from the Indian side on the statement made by the spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defence, Senior Colonel Wu Qian, and carried by China's official media.

"The Chinese and Indian frontline troops at the southern and northern bank of the Pangong Tso Lake start synchronised and organised disengagement from February 10," Wu said in a brief statement.

"This move is in accordance with the consensus reached by both sides at the ninth round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting," the statement added.

The militaries of China and India have been engaged in a tense standoff in eastern Ladakh since early May last year. The two countries have conducted several rounds of military and diplomatic-level talks to resolve the face-off.

The ninth round of China-India Corps Commander-level meeting was held on the Chinese side of the Moldo-



Chushul border. Since May last year, Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in skirmishes along the LAC near Pangong lake in Ladakh and the Tibet Autonomous region. In one of the violent clashes, 20 Indian soldiers and over 40 Chinese troops were killed in the Galwan Valley

CHINA WANTS 'PACKAGE DEAL'

BEIJING: China, which has been blocking India's efforts to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), reiterated Wednesday its stand on New Delhi's bid, and called for evolving a 'package solution' that is acceptable to all to reform the top organ of the global body. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin's comments in response to a question came a day after India and China discussed a wide range of issues relating to the top UN body. "As for India's bid for permanent membership to the UNSC, I can reiterate China's principled position on this. Efforts should be made to seek a package solution that accommodates all parties' interests and concerns on the basis of extensive and democratic consultations," said Wang.

economies resulted in Indian people threatening to boycott Chinese products. The accusations that Chinese smartphone apps were stealing Indian data, led to the government banning over 200 Chinese apps.

However, the bilateral trade continued through the hostility and during the coronavirus pandemic, which had originated in Wuhan city of Hubei province in China.

DISPUTE REGARDING THREE VILLAGES STATE MOVES SC OVER KOTIA ISSUE

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 10: The Odisha government Wednesday filed a contempt petition in the Supreme Court against Andhra Pradesh. It was seeking a stay on the notification issued by Andhra Pradesh for holding elections in three villages of Kotia gram panchayat in Koraput district.

Odisha, in the contempt petition filed through advocate Sibo Shankar Mishra, submitted that Andhra Pradesh has wilfully and deliberately violated the Supreme Court order dated December 2, 1968 and the judgement dated March 30, 2006 by transgressing into Odisha's territory. The apex court in its 1968 and 2006 judgements had asked both the states to maintain status quo on the boundary dispute with regard to Kotia group of villages.

Odisha contended that Andhra Pradesh last year March 5 last year had issued notification to conduct local body elections in the Vizianagaram district.

"Salur is one of the Mandals where the Panchayat election was also notified to be conducted on the scheduled date. In the notification, Andhra Pradesh deliberately roped in three villages from the 'Kotia Group of Villages' falling under the territory of Koraput district of Orissa into Salur Mandal of Vizianagaram District," the Odisha government said in the petition.

The state also contended that Andhra Pradesh changed the name of the three villages of Kotia GP. The name of Ganjaipadar has been changed into Ganjabadra, Phattusenary into Pattuchennum and Phagusenary into Phaguluchennuru.

Petrol, diesel rates record new high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 10: Petrol and diesel prices Wednesday scaled new highs in the country as rates were hiked for the second day in a row. Petrol price was hiked by 30 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The increase took petrol price to an all-time high of ₹87.60 a litre in Delhi and to ₹94.12 in Mumbai. Diesel rates rose to ₹77.73 per litre in the national capital and

CITY FUEL PRICES	
PETROL	₹88.27 (+0.30)
DIESEL	₹84.68 (+0.28)

to an all-time high of ₹84.63 in Mumbai. Rates vary from state to state depending on the local incidence of taxation (VAT) and freight. Petrol and diesel prices have increased 14 times in 2021, which add up to ₹3.89 and ₹3.86 per litre respectively so far.

RTOs go paperless in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 10: As part of the 5T initiative of the Odisha government, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched Wednesday nine citizen-centric online services of the State Transport Authority (STA) through virtual mode. This will see the regional transport offices (RTOs) go paperless enabling the citizens to get the services online from any place any time.

Among the services launched by Naveen include vehicle registration, auto approval of goods and contract carriage permits, special permits for buses, online application of international driving permit, renewal of registration and transfer of ownership in

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE

- Automated and hassle free vehicle registration
- Auto approval of contract carriage permit
- Auto approval of goods carriage permit
- Auto approval of inter-state special permit for buses
- Auto approval of inter-region special permit for buses
- International driving permit
- Learner's Licence in UMANG mobile App
- Renewal of registration in any RTO
- Transfer of ownership in any RTO

any RTO of Odisha and getting learners' licences through mobile App.

The chief minister said that the freedom to choose any transport office within Odisha for vehicle-related services will help people. The long queues in front of transport offices will soon be a thing of past, Naveen pointed out.

Underlining the 5T initiative of Odisha, the Chief Minister said that his government is committed to provide citizen-centric services in a hassle-free manner through online process, system improvement and automation.

Others who were present at the launch were Commerce and Transport Minister Padmanabh Behera and Secretary to CM (5T) VK Pandian.

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NEW FARM LAWS OPTIONAL: MODI

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 10: Asserting that the Central government honours the farmers and it is ready to accept their logical suggestions on the three farm laws, PM Narendra Modi declared Wednesday that these laws are 'optional and not compulsory'. The Prime Minister made the announcement while speaking on the motion of thanks on the President's address in the Lok Sabha.

In the backdrop of the ongoing farmers' agitation on Delhi's borders for over two months, Modi said 'rumours are being spread that these laws are against the farmers'. The Prime Minister said that these laws were passed in Parliament

in view of reforms in the agriculture sector as it was the need of the hour.

He asked 'whether these three farm laws snatched the facilities of farmers which they were getting earlier?'

"There is no restriction on anyone. These laws do not create obstacles in the growth of farmers. These laws are optional, not compulsory. These acts neither stopped old 'Mandis' nor affected purchase of produce on MSP," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said that the government has always honoured farmers and it will continue giving them respect in future too, and that the government is still ready to accept their suggestions even after several rounds of talks with them.

DSPL - 200

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

Illumination Work at Talasari Beach Front and Surrounding Areas from Chandaneswar to Udayapur & Development of Beachfront & Beautification of sea-side at Talasari-Udayapur Beach

FOUNDATION STONES TO BE LAID BY

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHA

11 FEBRUARY 2021 || 3.00 PM

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JLO NOT TO PAY ATTENTION TO AFFAIR RUMOURS OF FIANCE

Singer Jennifer Lopez has reportedly snubbed rumours around her fiance Alex Rodriguez's alleged affair. "J.Lo will soon begin working on her movie in the Dominican Republic. She doesn't let the cheating rumours get to her and chooses not to pay attention," a source told *eonline.com*.

RITA LOSES REALITY SHOW FOR FLOUTING COVID RULE

Singer and songwriter Rita Ora has reportedly been left out of the show *The Masked Singer*. Her infamous episode of breaking Covid rules to celebrate her birthday has cost her the job of a judge on the show.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES



Today is just another busy day. You may remain hassled sorting out problems at office and then at home. Your bosses may allow you certain concessions and this will ease things to some extent. Ganesha says you will gain valuable guidance from elderly people.

TAURUS



Today might be a day of untying and getting out of the tangles, says Ganesha. You may take the blame for the actions of another. Things may get frustrating around the afternoon and your confidence levels may stoop.

GEMINI



You will spend your time figuring out other people and their motivations today. You will probably spend time discussing issues of security and finance with your family members today. You will gain love and appreciation from people owing to your caring nature, says Ganesha.

CANCER



You will display a special attention towards beloved ones. This is an apt time for a frank chat on vital issues with your life part-ner, says Ganesha. You never allow heart to dictate terms to mind, yet today will be sentimental with your wife.

LEO



Your day will be one of mixed results. On one hand you will be dissatisfied with your spouse or business partner, on the other hand you will make fantastic returns on your speculations. You will be able to maintain a balance owing to the advise of some friend, says Ganesha.

VIRGO



You will take your destiny in your own hands today. You possess the vision to penetrate the masks that people wear to hide their true selves. You will carefully select the friends to spend your time with, and you will also make plans for success.

LIBRA



Ganesha says today is a good day for government related work. Those of you who are government employees will be able to get good results for their work. Your work will be rewarded and your performance and efficiency will be praised. You will be able to have a heart to heart talk with your loved one.

SCORPIO



Free your mind from negative thoughts. You need to be in high spirits to work with your team and delegate equal responsibilities to your team mates. Know their calibre and designate accordingly.

SAGITTARIUS



The morning seems to begin on a lazy note today, as your energy level is equal to zero. Thus, you may try to decentralise your activities and divide it between your co-workers. But make sure the responsibilities are delegated in the right hands or you may have to regret your decision.

CAPRICORN



You will want to expand the horizon of your business. But, you will be confused about the path to take for the expansion. You want to reach to the sky, but such a dilemma will keep you in a double mind.

AQUARIUS



It's a busy day at work, and you're probably involved in some pending project work. It's advisable that you don't get complacent. Keep an eye on your opponents to have an edge over them, suggests Ganesha.

PISCES



You will find yourself ecstatic now that certain important projects you have been slaving over are nearing completion. You will implement new strategies and will hope that everything goes according to plan. You will experience intimate moments with your partner.

Jallikattu out, Bittu makes it to Oscar race

Based on a true story, the film explores a heartwarming tale of friendship between two school friends



Los Angeles: The official Indian entry in the Best International Feature Film (BIFF) category, *Jallikattu*, might be out of the Oscar race, but there is still a chance for an Indian film to shine at the upcoming 93rd Academy Awards. The short film *Bittu* has made it to the Live Action Short Film shortlist, and is still in contention for a nomination.

Karishma Dev Dube's *Bittu* is part of the ten-movie list. The film has been presented by Ekta Kapoor; Guneet Monga and Tahira Kashyap under their Indian Women Rising initiative.

Now, members of the Short Films and Feature Animation Branch will vote to determine if the film makes the nomination

cut. Based on a true story, *Bittu* follows the journey of a fierce little girl who refuses to be forgotten. It explores a heartwarming tale of friendship between two school friends.

Other films in the short film shortlist are: *Da Yie*, *Feeling Through*, *The Human Voice*, *The Kicksled Choir*, *The Letter Room*, *The Present*, *Two Distant Strangers*, *The Van* and *White Eye*.

Meanwhile, the Malayalam film *Jallikattu*, which was the official Indian entry in the BIFF category this year, failed to make it to the shortlist.

The final nominations for the Oscars will be announced March 15. This year, the award gala will be held April 25. IANS

Neha's Taara promises V'Day vibes



Mumbai: With Valentine's Day round the corner, singer Neha Bhasin is all set to celebrate love with her latest track, scheduled to release February 11.

Titled *Taara*, Neha's new song aims to blend classic acoustics with poetic lyrics.

"The intention behind the song is to be able to bring in the old wine served in a new bottle vibe. It is an ode to Punjabi folk music coupled with classic melody and a subtle touch of modern acoustics," Neha says.

"Taara brings together a musical scape that has live tabla, duffs, ghunghroos, rabab, and guitars, along with lyrics that bring alive what feels like love from the yesteryears. When you hear the song, you are sure to feel a sense of peace and transcend to a world of music where one feels extremely content," she adds.

The track has also been incorporated in the recently-released Zee5 film, *Lahore Confidential*. IANS

Keep animals off the plates: Sonu

Mumbai: Actor Sonu Sood has been roped in for a People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India ad that encourages meat-free eating habits. Sonu appears with a pair of chicks on his shoulder in the new campaign for PETA India.

The actor said: "This Valentine's Day, I encourage everyone to show some love to chicks – and cows, buffaloes, goats, pigs, and fish. There's nothing more attractive than kindness, and we can all be kind to animals, our planet, and our bodies by keeping animals off our plates."

Sonu, who was named PETA India's Hottest Vegetarian in 2020, has appeared in a previous pro-vegetarian PETA India ad campaign, participated in the group's "Hug A Vegetarian Day" and supported a social media appeal to push McDonald's India to add a McVegan burger to its menu.

During the pandemic, he helped thousands of stranded migrant workers and students return to their homes, among other actions to help people in need.

He is part of a long list of celebrities including Anushka Sharma, Shahid Kapoor, Hema Malini, and R. Madhavan who have teamed up with PETA India to promote meat-free meals. IANS

Tones of B&W fascinate Yami

Mumbai: Actress Yami Gautam posted a monochrome picture Wednesday, stating there is something about black and white tones that fascinates her.

Yami posted the monochrome picture on Instagram. In the image, she is seen dressed in a shirt and a skirt. She is seen looking away from the camera and seems to be deep in thought.

"Something about black n white tones," Yami captioned the post.

Yami has just wrapped up shooting for the horror comedy *Bhoot Police*. The film co-stars Saif Ali Khan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Arjun Kapoor and Jaaved Jaaferi, and is directed by Pavan Karpalani.

She will also be seen in the upcoming film *Dasvi*. She has taken the method route for her role of a Haryanvi girl in this movie. She is taking lessons in the Haryanvi language as well as honing her dialect, and also working on nuances of body language for the role. IANS



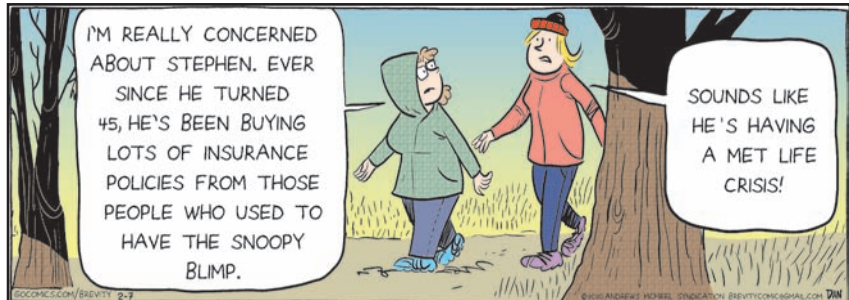
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

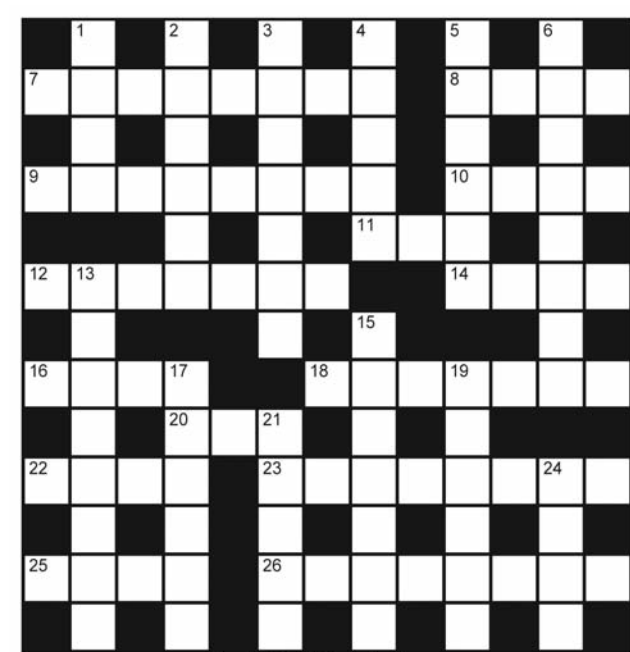


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

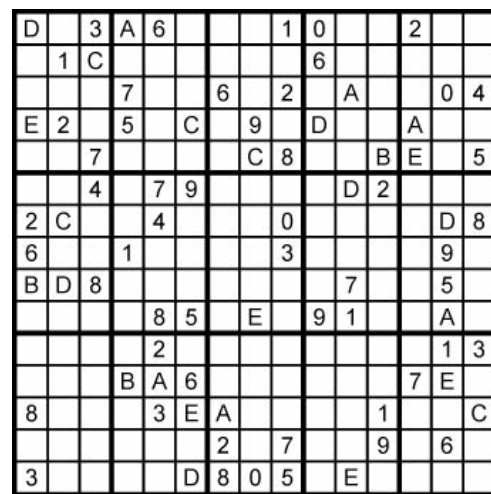
- 7 New York City's nickname (3,5)
- 8 Drink garnish or party
- 9 Abandoned ship
- 10 Dentist's directive
- 11 Sweet potato natives
- 12 Mombasa
- 14 Entomb
- 16 Simians, e.g.
- 20 Misfortune
- 22 Like hen's teeth
- 23 Kind of attack
- 25 Ukraine's capital
- 26 "Divine Comedy," for one (4,4)
- 3 Choices
- 4 Breakwater
- 5 Sang-froid
- 6 Brainy
- 13 Accentuation
- 15 Black Sea republic
- 17 Veer off suddenly
- 19 Odds and ends
- 21 Ruhr Valley city
- 24 Hunt for

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CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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

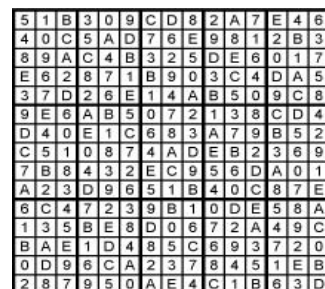


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Deeper trading ties with India will create opportunities for UK businesses that were simply not there as part of the EU, and set the stage for a much closer partnership with one of the economic powerhouses of the present and future. LIZ TRUSS | INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARY, UK

PAK TO BEGIN COVID VAX The Covid-19 vaccination of Pakistan's senior citizens aged above 65 years will begin next month. Asad Umar, chief of anti-covid NCOC, tweeted that the government will begin the registration process next week.

of the day quote

Broadly speaking, we have expressed our concerns regarding the need for full transparency and access from China and the WHO to all information regarding the earliest days of the pandemic. NED PRICE | SPOKESPERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT, US

We are still not where we want to be. We were late to authorize. We were too optimistic when it came to massive production and perhaps we were too confident that, what we ordered, would actually be delivered on time. URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

As for India's bid for permanent membership to the UNSC, I can reiterate China's principled position on this issue. China supports UNSC reforms in a manner that increases the authority and efficacy of the UNSC, increases the representation and voice of developing countries. WANG WENBIN | SPOKESPERSON (FOREIGN MINISTRY), CHINA

SHORT TAKES

Turkey unveils space program

Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan unveiled an ambitious 10-year space programme for his country Tuesday that includes missions to the moon, sending Turkish astronauts into space and developing internationally viable satellite systems. Erdogan announced the programme, seen as part of his vision for placing Turkey in expanded regional and global role, during a live televised event laced with special effects.

Australian court extends detention

Canberra: Australia's highest court Wednesday upheld a law that can keep extremists in prison after they have served their sentences. Five of the seven High Court judges dismissed a constitutional challenge by convicted terrorist Abdul Benbrika who remains in a Victoria state prison despite his 15-year sentence expiring in November last year. The 60-year-old Muslim cleric is the first to be incarcerated by a so-called continuing detention order based on an anti-terror law created in 2017.

Myanmar protesters back on streets

Yangon: Crowds demonstrating against the military takeover in Myanmar again defied a ban on protests Wednesday, even after security forces ratcheted up the use of force against them and raided the headquarters of the political party of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Fresh protests were reported in Yangon and Mandalay, the country's two biggest cities, as well as the capital Naypyitaw and elsewhere.

Explosions in Kabul kill two, wound five

Kabul: A chain of bomb explosions targeting Kabul police Wednesday killed a district police chief and his bodyguard, and also wounded five people, officials said. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blasts, which were all caused by so-called sticky bombs, explosive devices attached to vehicles that are remotely detonated or set off by timers.

Covid origins still a mystery as WHO-China probe ends

AGENCIES BEIJING, Feb 10: China called on the United States Wednesday to invite the World Health Organization to investigate origins of the Covid-19 outbreak there, as sparring over the pandemic continued after the WHO wrapped up its field work in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Hours after the WHO team revealed preliminary findings at a Wuhan news conference Tuesday, Washington said it wants to scrutinize data used by the team, which concluded that the virus causing COVID-19 did not originate in a laboratory in Wuhan, and that bats remain a likely source. "We wish that the US can, like China, uphold an open and transparent attitude, and be able to invite WHO experts to the US to conduct origin tracing research and inspection," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular daily briefing, repeating a call it has been making recently. The origins of the coronavirus pandemic, which first emerged in Wuhan in late 2019, are highly politicised, with China pushing the idea that the virus has roots outside its borders. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said on Tuesday that the Biden administration had not been involved in the "planning and implementation" of the WHO investigation and wants to take an independent review of its findings and underlying data. "The US independently examining the WHO's data? It's the WHO



The origins of the coronavirus pandemic, which first emerged in Wuhan in late 2019, are highly politicised, with China pushing the idea that the virus has roots outside its borders

who should examine the US data," said Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of the Global Times, a tabloid run by the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily on social media platform Weibo. "Did we all mishear, or is this spokesperson really so shameless?" Peter Ben Embarek, who heads the WHO-led team that spent four weeks in China - two of them in quarantine - said that the investigation had not dramatically changed

its picture of the outbreak, although the virus could have crossed borders before arriving in Wuhan. In addition to ruling out a lab leak, he said that frozen food could possibly be a means of transmitting the virus, which would support a thesis backed by Beijing, which has blamed some case clusters on imported food packaging. The WHO's conclusion "completely refutes the conspiracy theory raised by some anti-China hawks, like former US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, who has been accusing the Wuhan Institute of Virology of leaking the virus," the Global Times wrote. Pompeo had said there was "a significant amount of evidence" that the new coronavirus emerged from a Chinese laboratory. Chinese officials have stressed in recent months that the virus could have emerged in multiple regions outside China. Earlier, the House impeachment

US Senate clears Trump's impeachment trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WASHINGTON, Feb 10: Six Republican Senators joined their Democratic colleagues in the United States Senate to vote Tuesday that the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump is constitutional. The Senate confirmed the constitutionality of Trump's impeachment trial by 56-44 votes following presentation from both sides - House impeachment managers and lawyers representing the former president - paving the way for the historic impeachment trial of the 45th President of the United States who left office January 20. From Wednesday onwards, each of the two sides - the House impeachment managers and Trump lawyers - would have up to 16 hours to present their case before the 100-member Senate for them to vote on the impeachment of Trump days later. Both the Republicans and the Democrats have 50 members each. To impeach Trump, the Senate needs to vote the House impeachment motion by 67 votes. It means the Democrats will need 11 more Republicans to the six they already have to impeach Trump. Political analysts said that it is unlikely to happen and the former president will likely be acquitted. The six Republican Senators who supported the Democrats were Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, Mitt Romney, Ben Sasse, Bill Cassidy and Pat Toomey. Trump's impeachment trial is slated to begin Wednesday noon. Earlier, the House impeachment



DONALD TRUMP IS THE ONLY US PRESIDENT TO BE IMPEACHED TWICE. CURRENT PRESIDENT JO BIDEN HAS REFRAINED FROM SPEAKING ABOUT THE TRIAL. 6 REPUBLICANS VOTED IN FAVOUR OF TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT.

managers started the debate on the constitutionality of the impeachment by showing footage of the Capitol Hill riots January 6. "If that's not an impeachable offense, then there is no such thing," said Lead House Impeachment Manager Jamie Raskin. Trump's attorneys David Schoen and Bruce Castor argued that impeaching a former president when he is a private citizen is unconstitutional. They warned the Democrats were setting a wrong precedent. Media reports said that Trump was dissatisfied with the defense by his lawyers.

EU lawmakers approve \$815bn recovery programme

ASSOCIATED PRESS BRUSSELS, Feb 10: European Union (EU) lawmakers Wednesday approved a 672.5 billion euro (\$815 billion) recovery package of loans and grants to help member nations recover more quickly from the coronavirus pandemic, but countries will not receive the money for several months. The European Parliament voted 582-40, with 69 abstentions, in favor of the regulation for the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the central pillar of the bloc's 750 billion euro (\$910 billion) recovery plan. The leaders of the EU's 27 nations adopted the RRF last year.

To receive their share of the money, which is linked to respecting the rule of law, EU members must submit their plans for the funds by the end of April. Each plan has to have at least 37% of its budget dedicated to fighting climate change and at least 20% to improving digital transformation and other actions. "In the long-term, this money is going to bring about change and progress to meet our digital and climate goals," Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, a lawmaker closely involved in the negotiations, said. "We will ensure that the measures will alleviate poverty and unemployment, and will take into account the gender dimension of this crisis. Our health systems will also become more resilient." So far, 18 nations have submitted their draft plans to the European Commission, which is in charge of assessing them.

'US to stand by India in face of Chinese aggression'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE NEW YORK, Feb 10: In the face of China's aggressive actions against India, the US will stand with New Delhi, according to State Department spokesperson Ned Price. "We are concerned by Beijing's pattern of ongoing attempts to intimidate its neighbours. As always, we'll stand with friends, we'll stand with partners, we'll stand with allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in, in this case, the Indo-Pacific," Price said Tuesday during a press briefing. Asked about the new administration's position on China's growing aggressiveness towards India, Price said that the US is monitoring the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) where China has intruded on Indian territory, leading to clashes between the militaries of the two countries. "We note the ongoing talks between the governments of India and China, and we continue to support direct dialogue and a peaceful resolution of those border disputes," he said. Price stressed the importance of cooperation between India and the US in the Indo-Pacific region, an area that has seen aggressive actions by China against countries there. "India is one of the most important partners in the Indo-Pacific region to us. We welcome India's emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the region." Price was asked whether Secretary of State Antony Blinken had brought up the human rights issues over which several Democratic Party leaders, including Vice President Kamala Harris and Indian-American House of Representatives member Pramila Jayapal, have raised concerns.



Without giving a direct response, the spokesman said: "What I can say, and this applies not only to India but to every partner of ours across the board, we are committed to supporting democratic values, including a free and open civil society and the strong rule of law. "We regularly engage with the government of India, including, as you referenced and I alluded to, today, on our shared commitment to democratic values. We believe it's the bedrock for the US-India relationship."

Democratic Party leaders, including Vice President Kamala Harris and Indian-American House of Representatives member Pramila Jayapal, have raised concerns. Without giving a direct response, the spokesman said: "What I can say, and this applies not only to India but to every partner of ours across the board, we are committed to supporting democratic values, including a free and open civil society and the strong rule of law. "We regularly engage with the government of India, including, as you referenced and I alluded to, today, on our shared commitment to democratic values. We believe it's the bedrock for the US-India relationship."

PICTURE PERFECT



One of the two eighteen-month-old twin pandas plays in snow at Pairi Daiza zoo in Brugelette, Belgium. REUTERS

Thai protesters take to streets

REUTERS BANGKOK, Feb 10: Hundreds of Thai protesters gathered in Bangkok on Wednesday to demand the release of four activists remanded in custody pending trial on charges of insulting Thailand's king, a crime punishable by 15 years in prison. Many protesters banged pots and pans, borrowing from nightly displays of discontent in neighbouring Myanmar at last week's coup, while some held Myanmar flags to show support for the country's pro-democracy movement. The Bangkok demonstration had originally been organised to show

solitary with protesters in Myanmar, but it morphed into calls to change or end the strict "lese majeste" law after the four activists were detained on Tuesday. Police in riot gear briefly scuffled with protesters when activists marched near a police station. A smoke canister was seen on the ground near the protest site. "If we come out to the streets in the hundreds of thousands, we can reform monarchy," protest leader Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul said. Youth-led protests in Thailand last year broke traditional taboos by openly calling for reform of the

powerful monarchy and the denial of bail for the four protest leaders prosecuted for royal insults has enraged activists. About 1,000 protesters had gathered by nightfall, some holding signs that said "free our friends" and "abolish 112", referring to the article of the criminal code that covers royal insults. Others struck metal pans bearing the numbers 112. Some 44 opposition lawmakers earlier Wednesday submitted a proposal to amend the article. Protest leaders declared the rally a resumption of last year's street demonstrations.

20 UN peacekeepers injured in central Mali terror attack

AGENCIES DAKAR, Feb 10: An attack on a United Nations base in central Mali has injured at least 20 peacekeepers, the UN mission spokesman said Wednesday. The temporary UN Base in Kerena, near Douzenta, was the target of direct and indirect fire early Wednesday morning, Olivier Salgado said in a statement on Twitter.



Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and head of the mission there, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, "strongly condemns this cowardly attack on the peacekeepers and has ensured that all measures are taken to ensure that the wounded receive appropriate treatment," Salgado said. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but Islamic extremists linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group stage regular attacks on U.N. Peacekeepers and soldiers. Attacks by jihadists in northern Mali this year have also killed at least five UN Peacekeepers.

UN agencies press EU over rising migrant pushback cases

ASSOCIATED PRESS BRUSSELS, Feb 10: UN agencies are pressing the European Union to end the growing practices of denying migrants their right to apply for asylum, collectively expelling them and using violence against people trying to enter the bloc without authorisation. Border pushbacks and collective expulsions are illegal under international refugee treaties, which allow people fearing for their safety to apply for protection. Greece and even the EU's border and coast guard agency Frontex are among those accused of pushbacks or complicity in them. They deny using such methods. The International Organisation for Migration said Wednesday that



it continues to receive documented reports of human rights violations against migrants and refugees, including children, involving countries that are part of the 27-nation bloc. "The use of excessive force and violence against civilians is unjustifiable," IOM Chief of Staff Eugenio Ambrosi said. He said the sovereignty of EU countries "including their competence to maintain the integrity of their borders must be aligned with their obligations under international law and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all." The IOM, which receives EU funds for its work in countries around the Mediterranean and North Africa, said it welcomed a series of investigations launched to get to the bot-

tom of the pushback cases. Late last month, the UN refugee agency also warned that the right to asylum is "under attack" at Europe's borders and it called on countries to investigate and stop illegal pushbacks and expulsions. The UNHCR said new migrant arrivals to the EU continue to decline each year, with 95,000 arrivals by sea and land last year, a decrease of 23%.

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MAN UTD IN FA CUP LAST 8



Manchester, Feb 10: Manchester United are into the FA Cup quarterfinals for a seventh straight season. Bournemouth got there for only the second time in their 122-year history.

Scott McTominay's 97th-minute strike earned United a 1-0 win over West Ham in a lackluster fifth-round match that required extra time at snowy Old Trafford Tuesday.

In another demonstration of his growing assuredness in front of goal, the midfielder steered a volley into the bottom corner after a neat lay-off by Marcus Rashford at the end of a counterattack. The 24-year-old McTominay scored the winner against Watford in the third round, and also netted in his last two Premier League games.

"Scott has really developed that part of his game this season," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said. "We let him go into the box more often, unleash him. He's a very good striker of the ball, very clinical. He was a forward in his younger days and you can see the authority when he gets a chance to finish."

United, a 12-time winner of the FA Cup, are accustomed to going deep in cup competitions under Solskjaer over the past year but the semifinals have been the ceiling, with the team losing in the last four in the League Cup (twice), the FA Cup and the Europa League.

Along with the Europa League, the FA Cup looks to be United's best chance of collecting their first piece of silverware since 2017 after falling five points behind Manchester City in the Premier League title race. City also has a game in hand.

West Ham, led by former Man United manager David Moyes, frustrated Solskjaer's side with a disciplined defensive performance but wasn't helped by losing three players — Angelo Ogbonna (ankle), his replacement Issa Diop (head), and Andriy Yarmolenko (knee) — to injury by the 54th minute. The team was already without its only senior striker, Michail Antonio, whose minutes were being managed by Moyes after a recent injury.

Diop was replaced by Ryan Fredericks at half-time following a clash of heads with Anthony Martial in the 37th, making it the first concussion substitute in English soccer. In a rule introduced on a trial basis for this season, teams are allowed to use a maximum of two concussion subs from the fifth round onward. It is also being trialed in the Premier League.

Second-division Bournemouth beat Burnley 2-0 and are in quarterfinals of the world's oldest club knockout competition for the first time since the 1956-57 season. Goals by Sam Surridge and Junior Stanislas, from the penalty spot, saw off a depleted Burnley side at Turf Moor.

Burnley was looking to advance to the quarterfinals for the first time since the 2002-03 season, but manager Sean Dyche chose to rest his key players — including the entire first-choice defense and goalkeeper Nick Pope — with his team battling to avoid relegation in the Premier League.

It later emerged that Burnley came within minutes of potentially getting disqualified from the competition after Dyche initially named Erik Pieters in his starting lineup — despite the left back being suspended for the game after collecting yellow cards in each of the previous two rounds.

Burnley were alerted to their error by Bournemouth officials just before kickoff and replaced Pieters with Anthony Driscoll-Glennon.

Bournemouth, who were relegated from the top flight last season, was being managed on an interim basis by former Tottenham and Real Madrid defender Jonathan Woodgate following the recent departure of Jason Tindall.

Scott McTominay celebrates Manchester United's winner against West Ham, Tuesday

Real move closer to Liga leaders Atletico

Madrid, Feb 10: It was an assist by a left back on a goal by another left back that sealed Real Madrid's win in the Spanish league.

Zinedine Zidane's team needed an unusual starting lineup to keep their momentum and cut Atletico Madrid's lead to five points, with Marcelo setting up Ferland Mendy for the team's second goal in a 2-0 win over Getafe.

Karim Benzema had already scored in the second half and Madrid went on to win for the third time in four games in a match that was postponed from the first round as European competitions finished later than scheduled last season because of the coronavirus pandemic.

With his squad depleted by injuries and suspensions, Zidane was forced to change the team's formation and use some players out of position. Nine players were unavailable for the match at the Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium, including captain Sergio Ramos, Toni Kroos and Eden Hazard.

Zidane switched to a 3-5-2 formation and promoted the first senior-squad start for 20-year-old Marvin Park. Two other youth players later entered the game — Victor Chust and Sergio Arribas.

The victory came a day after Atletico conceded late and stumbled to a 2-2 home draw against Celta Vigo to see their eight-game winning streak end. Madrid, trying to repeat as league champion for the first time since 2007-08, moved closer to the top but their city rival remained with two games in hand.

Madrid have been recovering from a difficult start to the year, when they endured disappointing results that included an embarrassing elimination to third-



Karim Benzema rejoice after putting Real Madrid up front, Tuesday

Odisha look to end Blasters' play-off hopes

Margao, Feb 10: Their play-off hopes all but over, bottom placed Odisha FC will play for pride when they take Kerala Blasters in an Indian Super League (ISL) match here Thursday.

Odisha FC have been on a six-match winless run now, having won only one game all season, which came against Kerala Blasters. And they will be keen to repeat that feat when they face the same opponents at the Fatorla Stadium in the return league fixture.

While Odisha will be battling for pride, Kerala placed a rung above at 10th, will try and reach as close as they can to a top-four spot. While Odisha have just eight points from 15 games, Kerala still have a chance to reach the play-offs having garnered 15 points from 16 games, eight points adrift of fourth placed Hyderabad FC. Odisha coach Gerald Peyton is aware that Kerala will

be fighting for all that they have but he will take confidence from their record against the southern outfit. In their three meetings so far, Kerala have never beaten Odisha.

Like their opponents, Kerala have also been struggling. They are winless in four games and have conceded the most goals this season (27).

Odisha lie a close second on that table, having conceded 25 goals. The defensive issues faced by both teams are visible from the fact that Odisha has faced the maximum number of shots on target while Kerala have faced the second-most.

Kerala has to put in some encouraging displays in their last few games but have been unable to hold on to whatever advantage they have managed to gain.

In their last two games against ATK Mohun Bagan and Mumbai City FC, Kerala suffered defeats despite opening the scoring. They have now dropped 16 points from winning positions this season.



Odisha FC players go are having a practice session

Juventus reach Italian Cup final beating Inter

Turin, Feb 10: Juventus progressed to their sixth Italian Cup final in seven years after a 0-0 draw against Inter Milan to win 2-1 on aggregate. They will face either Atalanta or Napoli in the final, which will be played May 19.

Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo has faced criticism in the first season in his managerial career but his team won the Italian Super Cup last year and are still firmly in the hunt for what would be a record-extending 10th successive Serie A title.

It is the second successive season Inter have been eliminated in the semifinal of the Italian Cup. They are also out of European competition, having finished bottom of their Champions League group.

Juventus had won the first leg 2-1 last week, with Cristiano Ronaldo



scoring both goals for the Bianconeri. Ronaldo also netted Saturday in a 2-0 victory over Roma in the league, a day after celebrating his 36th birthday.

He was kept quiet in Turin, although the Juventus forward did go close on three occasions at the end of the first half. Conte has only had one success over his former club, with the Nerazzurri having beaten Juventus in the league last month.

Djoko holds off Tiafoe to enter 3rd round

Melbourne, Feb 10: Frances Tiafoe had never played a No.1, had never beaten anyone in the top 5, and now he'd just won a tie-breaker against Novak Djokovic to level their second-round match at the Australian Open.

Full of animation in his court-side chair, Tiafoe took the court and said what was obvious to everyone watching: "I love this".

Tiafoe, a 23-year-old American who reached the quarterfinals here two years ago, threw everything he could at eight-time Australian Open champion Djokovic. He pulled the crowd into the contest, too. But it wasn't quite enough, with the defending champion winning 6-3, 6-7(3-7), 7-6(7-2), 6-3 in a three and half-hour afternoon match on Rod Laver Arena.

The fourth set was on serve and appeared headed for another tiebreaker when Tiafoe was given a time violation on his serve. He lost his temper, and ultimately the game. He didn't win another game in the match, which finished with a double-fault.

Tiafoe shook his head, then jogged to the net to embrace Djokovic. He'll take plenty from this. Djokovic bowed, touched the court with his hand, and then went into his more customary celebrations.

Dominic Thiem, who lost the final here last year to Djokovic but went one better to win the US Open, eased through the second round with a 6-



Novak Djokovic plays a backhand during his match against Frances Tiafoe, Wednesday

4, 6-0, 6-2 win over Donnik Koeper.

Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka, the 2014 Australian Open champion, wasted a big lead in the fifth-set tie-break — and three match points — before losing 5-7, 1-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-7(9-11) to Marton Fucsovics. Five unforced errors in the last seven points of the tie-breaker cost him the match.

Serena Williams kept her bid for

a 24th Grand Slam singles title on track, making only 11 unforced errors as she swept Nina Stojanovic 6-3, 6-0. But a 21st trip to Melbourne Park ended painfully for her older sister, Venus Williams.

The seven-time major winner was trailing 1-5 in the opening set against Sara Errani when she landed awkwardly on her ankle as she approached the net for a volley. She

fought back tears before receiving treatment on the ankle, and gamely continued, hobbling between points, before losing 6-1, 6-0.

Former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu, coming back from 15 months out with injury, became the latest top 10 player to be beaten by veteran Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan 3-6, 2-6.

Another Canadian mounting a comeback also lost. Rebecca Marino, a former top 40 player competing in a major tournament for the first time in eight years, was beaten by No.19-seeded Marketa Vondrousova 6-1, 7-5.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, the 2019 Australian Open runner-up, lost to Sorana Cirstea 6-4, 1-6, 6-1. Garbine Muguruza, the Australian Open runner-up last year, defeated Liudmila Samsonova 6-3, 6-1.

Ann Li, a 20-year-old American, reached the third round for the second major in a row by beating Alize Cornet 6-2, 7-6(8-6). World No.7-seeded Aryna Sabalenka eliminated Daria Kasatkina 7-6(7-5), 6-3.

In men's play, No.11 Denis Shapovalov beat veteran Australian qualifier Bernard Tomic 6-1, 6-3, 6-2 and his fellow Canadian Milos Raonic held off Corentin Moutet 6-7(1-7), 6-1, 6-1, 6-4. World No.8 Diego Schwartzman and No.20 Felix Auger-Aliassime were among the seeded men to advance.

Sushil, Bibhansu help BBSR B beat Balasore



Sushil K Barik

Bhubaneswar, Feb 10: Sushil K Barik (4/26) and Bibhansu S Ray (76, 115b) helped Bhubaneswar B overpower Balasore by 99 runs in their first match of the OCA Inter-District U-19 Boys' Super League at the Bidanasi Ground in Cuttack, Wednesday.

BBSR B posted 233/4 in their allotted 50 overs after being put into bat first. Bibhansu was the top scorer and he was ably supported by a watchful knock from MG Kumar (50, 105b) and blitzkrieg of a knock by Pankaj K Sahoo (44 n.o, 25b). Subha S Barik (2/51) and Rajib L Sahu (1/56) shared three wickets between them.

The target was too much for Balasore, who were bundled out for only 134 in 39.1 overs. Skipper Suman S Ojha (41, 74b) and Arun

K Rout (30, 60b) were the only Balasore batsmen who offered some resistance. Sushil was the wrecker in chief and he was adjudged Player of the match. He was ably supported by Sagar K Mulia (3/26).

At BOSE Ground, Cuttack: Sambalpur 95 (Nitish Singh 31 n.o; Saideep Mohapatra 4/24) lost to Cuttack A 96/1 (Shashang Rungata 39 n.o, Prince S Behera 32; Shrestha Singh 1/12) by 9 wickets.

At Railway Ground, BBSR: KIIT 205 (Ramani R Jena 53, Gourish Patra 45 n.o, Manitej Mohanty 31; Om Kumar 4/49, Sachin Yadav 3/38) lost to Jharsuguda 206/6 (Dhananjay Yadav 65 n.o, Anubhav Pradhan 48, Om Kumar 32; Manitej Mohanty 2/49) by 4 wickets.

At Town Club Ground, BBSR: Rourkela 211/9 (Hemant Nayak 43, Basant R Rathour 32 n.o, Aashirwad Swain 32; Mir Kafiruddin 4/41) beat Bhadrak 189 (Mir Kafiruddin 45, Surya Mohapatra 33; Goutam Sana 3/31, Swoop S Bhuyan 2/23) by 22 runs.

DEB BAGS BRONZE

Madhumita Deb secured a bronze medal on the closing day of the 36th National Junior Athletics Championships at the Sarsujai Stadium in Guwahati, Assam. Deb won the medal in 200m of the girls' U-20 category, clocking 24.90s.

Enes late own goal helps JFC bag full points

Goa, Feb 10: In a dramatic finish, Jamshedpur FC rode on a last-gasp own goal by Enes Sipovic to come out of the match with full three points in their Indian Super League encounter with Chennaiyin FC at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim, Wednesday.

When it looked like both the teams will end up sharing points, the own goal from Sipovic in the added-on time turned the tide towards Jamshedpur and they completed their revenge of their loss in their previous encounter.

David Grande got the ball inside the box towards the right-hand side. He cut inside to his stronger left foot and decided to test the keeper and looked to go to the far post.

Unluckily for Chennaiyin, the ball took the deflection of Sipovic's foot and went into the back of the net at the near post. It was a big heartbreak for Chennaiyin, but jubilation for the Men of Steel.

Earlier, both the teams tussled hard to find the back of the net but failed as the defensive unit of either team made sure none managed an advantage.