



DEFINING CONFIDENCE

Actor Taapsee Pannu has shared a picture on social media, which is all about being confident

LEISURE P2



MP CABINET EXPANSION

Madhya Pradesh Cabinet was expanded Sunday with the induction of two loyalists of BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia

TWO STATES P7



COPS SUSPENDED

Eight police officials in Pakistan were suspended for dereliction of duty after a Hindu temple was vandalised and set on fire

INTERNATIONAL P10

Covishield, Covaxin approved for emergency use

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 3: Eleven months after the first case of deadly coronavirus was detected in India, Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) VG Somani Sunday approved Serum Institute of India's 'Covishield' vaccine and Bharat Biotech's 'Covaxin' for emergency use, paving the way for their roll-out and administration to millions.

This is a major relief for India which has the second highest number of infections in the world, after the US. The Central government plans to vaccinate nearly 30 crore people in the first phase of drive in the next six to eight months.

The vaccine will be first offered to one crore healthcare workers, along with two crore frontline and essential workers and 27 crore elderly, mostly above the age of 50 years with co-morbidities.

The Subject Expert Committee, tasked with vetting the vaccine proposals, had recommended Oxford-



The vaccine will be first offered to one crore healthcare workers, along with two crore frontline and essential workers and 27 crore elderly with co-morbidities

Serum Institute of India this week said it has stockpiled 40-50 million doses of its Covid-19 vaccine. India is likely to receive a majority of these 50 million doses

AstraZeneca's 'Covishield' and Bharat Biotech's indigenous 'Covaxin' for emergency use approval January 1 and 2, respectively. The final call was to be taken by the DCGI.

The expert panel recommended granting permission for restricted emergency use of 'Covaxin' in "public interest" as an abundant precaution, in clinical trial mode, especially in the

context of infection by mutant strains.

Pune-based Serum Institute of India has partnered with Oxford-AstraZeneca for conducting clinical trials and manufacturing 'Covishield', while Bharat Biotech has collaborated with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for 'Covaxin'.

Serum and Bharat Biotech Pfizer had applied for the accelerated approval

December 6 and 7, respectively.

The UK and Argentina have already approved the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. More than five crore doses of the vaccine have already been stockpiled by its manufacturer, Serum Institute of India.

Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine will play a major role in India's plan to vaccinate its population against Covid-19 due to several factors - low-cost, ease of storage and transport.

Serum Institute of India this week said it has a stockpiled 40-50 million doses of its Covid-19 vaccine. India is likely to receive a majority of these 50 million doses.

As far as Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is concerned, it is India's first indigenous vaccine for coronavirus. The inactivated virus vaccine is being developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Virology (NIV). **(More P8 & P11)**

Withdraw approval for Covaxin: AIDAN

NEW DELHI: The All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN) said it is shocked to learn of the SEC's recommendation to grant REU approval to Bharat Biotech's Covaxin in "clinical trial mode" and "especially in the context of infection by mutant strains". "In light of the intense concerns arising from the absence of efficacy data and hence the limited regulatory review of the vaccine candidate, the implications of public rollout of an untested product, and lack of transparency we urge the DCGI to reconsider the recommendations of the SEC in granting the REU approval to Covaxin," it said.

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'10 crore Indians' card data selling on Dark Web

The massive data dump on the Dark Web has been leaked from a compromised server of digital payments gateway Juspay

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 3: Independent cyber security researcher Rajshekh Rajaharia claimed Sunday that data of nearly 10 crore credit and debit card holders in the country is being sold for an undisclosed amount on the Dark Web.

According to Rajaharia, the massive data dump on the Dark Web has been leaked from a compromised server of Bangalore-based digital payments gateway Juspay.

JusPay told this news agency that no card numbers or financial information was compromised during the cyber-attack and the actual number is much lower than the 10 crore-figure being reported.

"On August 18, 2020, an unauthorised attempt on our servers was detected and terminated when in progress. No card numbers, financial credentials or transaction data were compromised," a com-

pany spokesperson said in a statement.

"Some data records containing non-anonymised, plain-text email and phone numbers were compromised, which form a fraction of the 10 crore data records," the spokesperson added.

However, Rajaharia claimed that the data was being sold on the Dark Web for an undisclosed amount via cryptocurrency Bitcoin.

"For this data, hackers are also contacting via Telegram," he said.

According to him, PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) have been followed by Juspay in storing users' card information.

"However, if the hackers can find out the Hash algorithm used to generate the card fingerprint, they will be able to decrypt the masked card number. In this condition, all 10 crore cardholders are at risk," Rajaharia noted.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Please list myself and my lover in priority list. We would at least like to meet this Valentine's Day!

SHORT TAKES

₹830 cr GST evasion detected

New Delhi: The GST department has unearthed ₹831 crore tax evasion by an unregistered gutka or tobacco manufacturing unit in the national capital, according to an official statement. Based on specific inputs, a raid was conducted at the factory in Budh Vihar area and large quantity of gutka and machines worth crores were seized by officials. The owner of the factory was also arrested during the raid, officials said. According to GST Commissioner, Delhi, Shubhagata Kumar, the firm was evading the payment of Goods and Services Tax (GST) by manufacturing and clandestinely supplying gutka/pan masala/tobacco products without any registration and payment of duty. At least 65 workers were employed at the manufacturing unit, he said. **P7**

Man who returned from Pak jail missing

Sundergarh: Birju Kulu, who had returned from Pakistan to his native village at Katanga in this district recently, reportedly went missing from his house. Kulu has spent 20 years in Pakistan jail. Though Kulu is untraceable since Saturday night, the matter came to light only after his sister lodged a missing complaint at Kutra police station Sunday. His sister Tedrace Kulu said that Birju went missing since Saturday night. Police and family members along with the villagers have launched a search operation.

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	29.8°C	30.2°C
MIN	14.5°C	12.2°C
Humidity	56%	60%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather likely

State colleges, varsities to reopen Jan 11

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: Odisha government Sunday announced that physical classes in colleges and universities in the state will resume from January 11 for the students of final year undergraduate and post-graduate courses.

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

The government decided to reopen colleges and universities considering the improvement in Covid-19 situation in the state and the huge academic loss of students due to the pandemic situation. Classroom teaching has been suspended since March 2020.

"The State Public Universities and government as well as non-government degree colleges (coming under H.E. Department) are hereby directed to



commence physical classroom teaching for students of 2020-21 Final Year UG/PG courses from 11-01-2021(Monday)," the notification said.

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

"Whenever possible, the physical classroom teaching shall be recorded and shared with absentee students," the guideline said adding that Covid-19 prevention protocols need to be followed.

Matric students to answer 80 marks papers

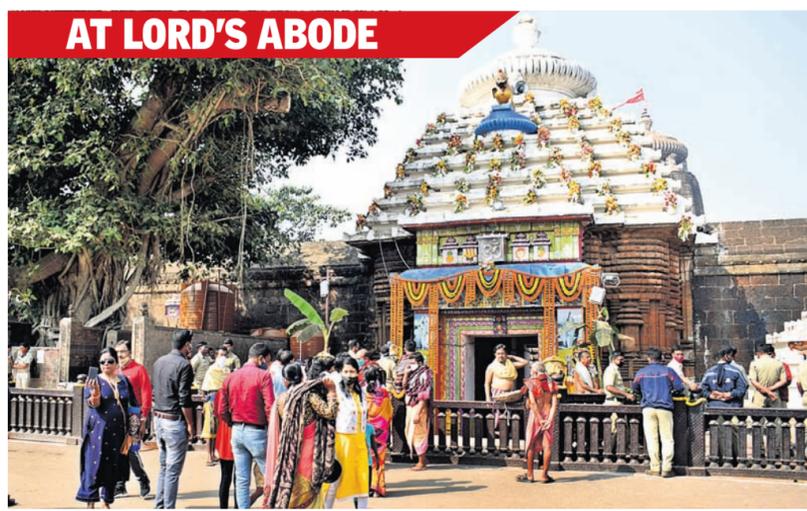
BHUBANESWAR: School and Mass Education minister Samir Ranjan Dash Sunday said Class X students appearing for the annual Matric exams in Odisha this year will have to answer 80 marks in each paper.

The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) has decided that 50 marks will comprise objective questions in the OMR (optical mark recognition) format and the remaining 30 marks will be subjective, the minister added.

It has been made mandatory for all the persons coming to colleges and varsities to wear facemasks. Social distancing should be maintained in classrooms and, if needed, crowded classes can be divided into batches and teaching hours in a day can be extended, the guideline said. However, teachers, students and staff residing in active containment zone shall not come to their

institutes, it said. Hostels will be opened from January 10 only for 2020-21 final year UG/PG students as well as PhD, MPhil and other research scholars.

In order to compensate for the lost days, physical classes should be conducted on all days except the examination period, Sundays, January 26 (the Republic Day), February 16 (the Saraswati Puja) and April 1 (the Utkal Divas).



Devotees at Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar after it opened doors for the public, Sunday

PHOTO: MAUSAM NANDA

China expands power of its military

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 3: China has revised its National Defence Law, expanding the power of its armed forces headed by President Xi Jinping to mobilise military and civilian resources to defend its national interests both at home and abroad.

The new law, effective from January 1, weakens the role of the State Council, China's Cabinet headed by Premier Li Keqiang, in formulating military policy, handing decision-making powers to the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the two million-strong People's Liberation Army (PLA) headed by Xi, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported Sunday. Xi, 67, has emerged as the

The new law provides Xi with the legal grounds to respond to the challenges of accelerating confrontations between China and the US

Communist Party of China's (CPC) most powerful leader after its founder Mao Zedong, holding the posts of CPC General Secretary, head of the military besides the Presidency with prospects of a life-long tenure. He is the only civilian leader in the CMC, packed with high-ranking military officials. The amendments for the National Defence Law were passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress

December 26 last year. The revised law came into force after the key convolve of the ruling CPC in November last year finalised plans to build a fully modern military on par with the US by 2027.

By the year 2027, which marks the centennial of the founding of the PLA, China will build a fully modern military, a goal that is in alignment with the national strength and will fulfil the future national defence need, official media reports earlier said. The revised law specifically stresses the need to build a nationwide coordination mechanism for the mobilisation of state-owned and private enterprises to take part in research into new defence technologies covering conventional weapons, as well as the non-traditional domains of cybersecurity.

ODISHA'S 'SUPER 30'

Destitute medical aspirants on way to become doctors

BORN IN HUMBLE FAMILIES THEY WERE RECONCILING TO THEIR FATE, BUT DESTINY HAD WRITTEN A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR THEM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: Born in humble families they were reconciling to their fate, but destiny had written a different course for them.

Braving all odds, a select group of medical aspirants of Odisha coming from humble background have got entry in medical colleges after clearing tough National Eligibility and Entrance Test (NEET) examination in 2020.

Their dream of becoming medics got wings due to noble initiative of an Odisha-based charitable group whose all the 19 students succeeded in the NEET, the results of which were declared in October. The winners are wards of daily

labourer; vegetable seller; truck driver; fisherman and idli-vada seller. These meritorious students are products of 'Zindagi' programme run by a non-governmental organisation of academician Ajay Bahadur Singh.

Majority of them got admission in government medical colleges of the state. The world has come to know about the success story of Super 30 of mathematician Anand Kumar who helped economically deprived children become engineer by qualifying in JEE exams but, the similar feat of the Odisha group in the field of medical studies is no less romantic.

The exciting tales of Khirodini Sahoo, Roshan Paik, Satyajit Sahoo and Debashish Biswal hailing from



remote places of Odisha whose families' life starts and ends with the challenge of meeting two ends.

Khirodini Sahoo hailing from Angul district is the daughter of farm labourer Kanhu Charan Sahoo. She used to extend helping hands

to parents in the field to keep the home fires burning. But, providence helped her continue with her studies and today her wish of wearing a doctor's apron is within reach.

Roshan Paik whose both parents are also agri labourers is another

success story. Debashish Biswal of Kendrapara is the ward of a small grocery shop owner for whom arranging two square meals is the topmost priority.

Satyajit Sahoo, son of a vegetable vendor in a remote village of Cuttack district is another fortunate lot.

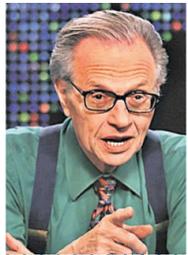
"We got birth in humble families and were destined to live a life of penury. It's only because of the 'Zindagi' foundation that we managed to keep our dreams alive and are on way to become doctors," an elated Sahoo and Biswal said.

Under the programme run by 'Zindagi' foundation, talented underprivileged students are selected from across Odisha and provided free coaching and food to help them

crack NEET and become a doctor. "The year 2020 was a tough challenge for all of us, but firm in our determination we did not let the students feel helpless," Singh told this news agency.

Another success story is of Subhendu Parida, who used to vend 'Idli Vada' alongside his parents. He qualified in NEET exam by achieving 609 marks.

Singh started Zindagi Foundation in the year 2017 in Bhubaneswar. The man behind the success stories of these children had to leave his medical studies and sell tea and shabat (squash) in the temple town of Deogarh in Jharkhand to sustain his family undergoing financial hardship and pursue studies.



LARRY KING HOSPITALISED AFTER TESTING POSITIVE FOR COVID

Veteran talk show host Larry King has been hospitalised after testing positive for Covid-19. King is receiving treatment at a medical center here, a source close to King's family told ABC News and CNN, reports *variety.com*.

ZOE KRAVITZ FILES FOR DIVORCE FROM KARL GLUSMAN

Actress Zoe Kravitz and actor Karl Glusman have split after 18 months of marriage. In court records obtained by *people.com*, the Big Little Lies star filed for divorce from Glusman December 23. A representative for Kravitz confirmed the split to *people.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are in high spirits today. This is a good time to do all those things that you have been procrastinating for a long time. You may do all the things you dislike doing, like arranging your wardrobe.

TAURUS
This day you could be wasting your time and energy in thankless activities. You are not likely to get the results you seek, says Ganesh. This is mainly because you will be trying to play the good guy and going out of your way to make everyone happy at the same time.

GEMINI
You need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of the decisions you take today, as well as proceed on all matters with caution. You will attempt to dispose off matters casually today. You will worry more about your own interests in the later half of the day.

CANCER
Ganesh reminds you that an auspicious work must begin with you. Fulfill your task first, before embarking on a helping spree. You will spend the evening in romantic moments with your beloved. It will lighten your mood and give you immense joy.

LEO
You will open your heart to someone special today, and spill all your hidden desires and feelings. You will say everything you feel truthfully. Your love and attention is likely to be reciprocated. It is a good day, for romance is in the air, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Your courageous nature will impress many people. However, Ganesh warns that something particular could ruin your show. On deep contemplation, you will find a lot of progress in your inner self. In the evening, the antics of your children will put a smile on your face.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today is a good day for businessmen. Your luck will really favor you today. Your emotions will dull your brainwork today and this will create a problem in your gaining success and moving ahead in life and career.

SCORPIO
You share an unspoken bond with your partner; your eyes speak a thousand words even when you do not talk to each other. Your skills and talents at work are likely to grab attention and you may even receive a round of applause for it.

SAGITTARIUS
Pack your travel bags; business trip on the cards. Money makes the world go around and so it does for you. Consider financial matters as your priority today. In the evening, sit back, relax and bask in the glory of success, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You get up from the bed today with a strong desire to prove your metal to the world, feels Ganesh. Enthusiastic and jovial, you are in your best possible mood. You will seek approval of your family members for actions. The hard work you will do at work will surely get appreciated and rewarded by the end of the day.

AQUARIUS
You will understand the importance of friends in your life, and you will go an extra mile to get back in touch with them. Your communication skills will help you get through the door at work, and everybody, even your competitors will be appreciate your talents.

PISCES
Today being a slightly risky day for, tread cautiously when it comes to financial dealings. Read the fine print and thoroughly thrash out the nitty-gritty's of any contracts you commit to.

Taapsee's definition of 'confidence'

Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu has shared a picture on social media, which is all about being confident.

Taapsee posted a picture on social media, where she is seen wearing a grey ensemble paired with round sunglasses and has left her hair open.

"Confidence is not walking into a room thinking you are better than everyone else. It's walking into a room and not having to compare yourself to anyone else in the first place. #HappySunday," Taapsee posted the picture.

Taapsee will next be seen in *Rashmi Rocket*, where she plays a runner from the Rann of Kutch who fights for her identity and becomes an athlete. Priyanshu Painyuli plays Taapsee's husband in the Akarsh Khurana directorial. She will also be seen in *Loop Lapeta* and *Hasen Dillruba*. IANS

Hrithik entering 2021 with a new skill



Mumbai: Actor Hrithik Roshan has started the year 2021 with a new skill of flying a drone.

Hrithik posted a video on Instagram. The clip featured Hrithik and his friends lying on grass while the War actor is flying a drone, which also features a camera.

"Entering 2021 with new skills #Droneselfies," Hrithik wrote as the caption.

On the work front, Hrithik will be seen sharing screen space with actor Saif Ali Khan in the Hindi remake of the 2017 Tamil superhit film *Vikram Vedha*.

The original starred R. Madhavan as righteous police officer Vikram while Vijay Sethupathi played the gangster Vedha. In the Hindi remake, Hrithik will play the gangster while Saif essays the cop.

The film draws from the ancient lore of *Vikram-Betaal*, where a wily gangster manages to escape every time a determined cop nabs him, by narrating a new story drawn from his own life.

The Hindi remake will be directed by Pushkar-Gayathri, who also helmed the Tamil original.

The film, backed by Neeraj Panday, is expected to go on floors soon. IANS

The Hollywood biggies roster of 2021

When it comes to Hollywood, 2021 is going to be a year of superheroes, reboots and follow-ups on the big screen - and, of course, James Bond.

Here is a look at a few exciting Hollywood releases lined up in 2021:

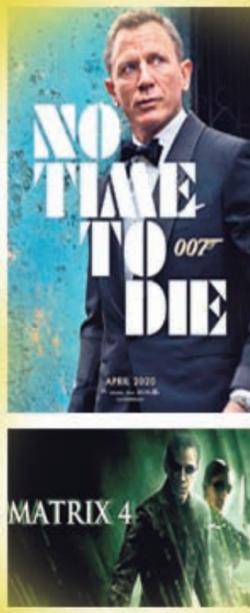
No Time To Die

Certainly the most talked-about Hollywood film not to release in 2020, Daniel Craig's final outing as James Bond is now scheduled to release on April 2 this year.

The Matrix 4

Priyanka Chopra will be joining Keanu Reeves in the next part of *The Matrix*, which is expected to release later this year. The film is produced, co-written and directed by Lana Wachowski, who co-directed and co-wrote three of the previous films with her sister Lilly.

Tom And Jerry
The live-action/CG-animated film features the iconic cartoon characters as they go on another fun-filled adventure. The film stars Chloe Grace



Fast & Furious 9

Hollywood stars Vin Diesel and John Cena will give bromance a new spin in the upcoming *Fast & Furious* film, which will be fuelled by the emotion of vengeance. The saga sees the return of Justin Lin as director, who helmed the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the series.

Mission: Impossible 7

Tom Cruise returns as Ethan Hunt in *Mission: Impossible 7*, which is helmed by filmmaker Christopher McQuarrie. It is slated to open November 19, 2021.

Morbis

The Spider-Man spinoff is slated to release March 19. It stars Jared Leto in the titular role as Michael Morbius, a scientist who turns into a vampire.

Moretz and Michael Pena. It is expected to open in the first quarter of the year.

Eternals

Directed by Chloe Zhao, the film stars Angelina Jolie, Richard Madden, Kit Harington, Gemma Chan, Salma Hayek and Kumail Nanjiani. It is about the super-powered beings, The Celestials, and their villainous adversaries, The Deviants, in a war set millions of years ago.

West Side Story

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg has re-imagined the musical *West Side Story* for the big screen. The classic New York tale tells the story of two lovers - Maria, a Puerto Rican, whose brother Bernardo is the leader of the Sharks street gang, and Tony, a former leader of the Jets, who battled the Sharks.

Kiara shares her life mantra

Mumbai: Actress Kiara Advani, on social media, shared the mantra she follows.

Kiara posted a picture on Instagram where she is seen wearing a pink and white bikini and captioned it, 'Swim, Sleep, Hydrate, Eat Repeat.'

Kiara's recent release was *Indoo Ki Jawaani*, which revolves around a dating application.

The actress has three films lined up over the next months -- *Shershaah* opposite Sidharth Malhotra, the Kartik Aaryan-starrer *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*, and *Jug Jugg Jeeyo* co-starring Anil Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor and Varun Dhawan.

She was among the rare stars to have releases on OTT as well as

theatres, in a year that has been fraught by the pandemic.

Kiara, who started her journey in Hindi film industry with *Fugly* in 2014, has impressed in hit films as *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story*, *Kabir Singh*, and *Good Newwz*, as well as the digitally released anthology *Lust Stories*. IANS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

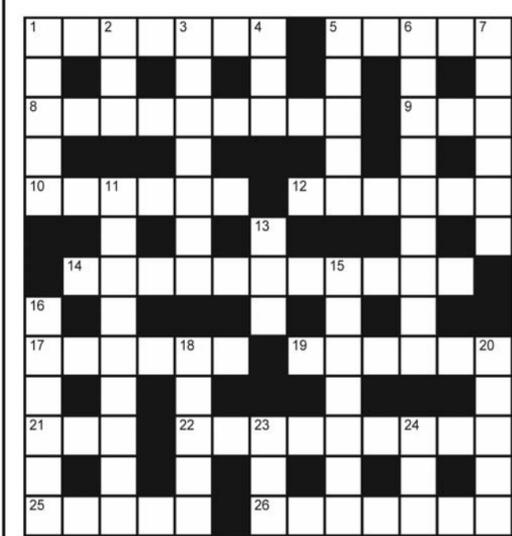


BREVITY



FUN post

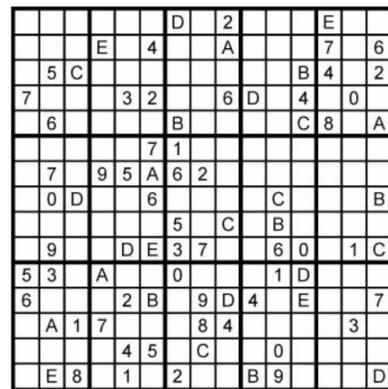
CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Fortrightness
5 Harvests
8 Golf course features (4,5)
9 ___ vapore (steamed)
10 Apia native
12 Tropical Asian starlings
14 Noisy timekeeper (6,5)
17 All together
19 Way out
21 Idiosyncrasy
22 Robot
25 Corpulent plus
26 Abandons
Down
1 Wine barrels
2 Oui's opposite
3 Australian bush country
4 River inlet
5 Dangerous
6 Skier's worry
7 Meager
11 Soup-strainer?
13 Bunk
15 Lentils and peas
16 Casual eatery
18 Pursue
20 Propels
23 Tiny amount
24 Rocky peak

SUDOKU

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

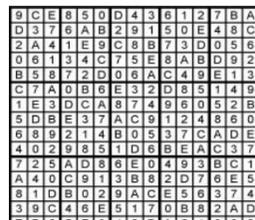


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

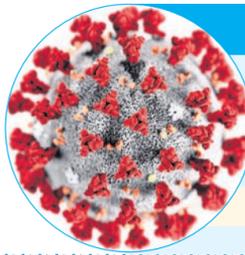


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DEVOTION IN THE AIR

Devotees offer prayers at Ram Mandir in Bhubaneswar as the shrine reopened for people, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	8,51,59,587	6,02,31,223	18,46,260
India	1,02,45,326	98,33,339	1,48,475
Odisha	3,30,309	3,26,209	1,883

Srimandir reopens for all devotees

DEVOTEES WHO AREN'T ECONOMICALLY WELL-OFF COULDN'T ENTER THE SHRINE AS THEY COULDN'T AFFORD TO PAY FOR THEIR COVID TESTS



(Clockwise from top) Swarms of devotees wait for their turn to visit Srimandir, Several others enter the shrine through the Lions' Gate and Governor Ganeshi Lal near the temple

FOR THEY COULDN'T

Private hospitals are demanding at least Rs 500 to conduct Covid tests on a person. I couldn't arrange money to have Covid reports for my family. So, we returned home by paying our obeisance to Patitapaban at the Lions' Gate

SRIBATSHA MOHANTY | A DEVOTEE FROM CUTTACK

Only rich people can obtain the Covid reports and visit Srimandir. We don't have money for the Covid test. We offered our prayers before the Patitapaban and are returning home with a heavy heart

SANATAN JENA | A DEVOTEE FROM GOP AREA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Jan 3: After remaining shut for nine months due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath, was reopened for all devotees Sunday with strict adherence to the Covid-19 norms.

Earlier, family members of the servitors were allowed to visit the Srimandir from December 23 to 25 while the residents of Puri city had the opportunity to enter the 12th century shrine and offer prayers to the presiding deities from December 26 to 31. As part of the Covid-19 norms, the shrine was closed for people January 1 and 2 to avoid huge rush. "Hundreds of devotees from several districts of the state Sunday visited Srimandir by producing their identity proofs and

Covid negative reports. Long queues were seen on the Grand Road from the early morning," said an official of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration.

The SJTA and the Puri district administration deployed adequate health staff and other officials to conduct thermal screening of the devotees and verify their identity proofs and Covid reports. A total of 15 platoons of armed police personnel led by two additional SPs, six DSPs, nine inspectors and 35 sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors were deployed near Srimandir and on the Grand Road to regulate the crowd and maintain law and order.

Governor Ganeshi Lal Sunday visited the Holy City and paid obeisance to Patitapaban (the image of Lord Jagannath) at the Lions' Gate of Srimandir. The Governor did not

enter into the shrine due to the Covid-19 norms. "I am happy to visit the land of Lord Jagannath today. May the Lord bless all his devotees," said the Governor. School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash, however, visited Srimandir by producing the Covid negative report. "I prayed before the Lord for the welfare of all people of Odisha," Dash said. The minister also expressed his satisfaction for the elaborate arrangement made by the district administration and the SJTA to ensure smooth darshan for the devotees.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra too visited the shrine by producing all documents.

On the other hand, many devotees who were not aware of the mandatory Covid negative report could not visit the shrine. Similarly,

many poor people also could not enter into the shrine as they did not have the Covid report.

"Private hospitals are demanding at least Rs 500 to conduct Covid tests on a person. I could not arrange money to have Covid reports for my family. So, we returned home by paying our obeisance to Patitapaban at the Lions' Gate," rued Sribatsha Mohanty, a devotee from Cuttack.

Some devotees, meanwhile, claimed that the Puri DHH did not have the facility to test samples and issue Covid reports. "A few private hospitals in Puri are conducting the Covid tests. Only rich people can obtain the Covid reports and visit Srimandir. We did not have money to collect the Covid reports. We offer our prayers before the Patitapaban and return home with a heavy heart," said Sanatan Jena, a devotee from Gop.

Dense fog across state for next 3 days, MeT warns

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: The meteorological department has predicted dense fog in different districts in the next three days.

According to the warning issued by the department, Angul, Boudh, Sonepur, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal and Bhadrak districts are likely to witness heavy fog on the early morning of Monday.

While Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Kandhamal and Jagatsinghpur are likely to see heavy dense fog on the early morning of Tuesday and Wednesday. The office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) has also issued advisory to the Collectors, police and other officials asking them to be alert for the same.

Police and transport officials of respective districts may take steps for controlled plying of vehicles.

HRAO thanks Naveen for proposing int'l airport in Pilgrim City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) has thanked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for proposing the Centre to set up an international airport in Puri to boost tourism sector.

The HRAO hoped that the state government would create the required infrastructure for the project with the state-of-the-art technology. "The international airport in Puri will attract large number of Hindus residing in other countries to the coastal city of Odisha. Besides, the airport will enable people from other states to get flight access to the land of Lord Jagannath," said the association in a letter to the Chief Minister Sunday.

The association also urged the state government to take necessary steps to declare the Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath as a national holiday. "The initiative will help attracting more devotees and tourists from across the country to Odisha. In the process Puri will definitely become a hub for spiritual tourism

JK MOHANTY | CHAIRMAN, HRAO

city as a major attraction in eastern India, the association said.

The HRAO claimed that Odisha has huge tourism potential in terms of art, crafts, culture, cuisines, beaches, lakes, mountains and tribes. This apart, Odisha is well-known for mangrove forests at Bhitarkanika and rich temple architecture.

The association has suggested the state government to take steps to create additional 5,000 classified

hotel rooms in Odisha to compete with the hotel infrastructure of the other states of India. It also pleaded for direct flight connectivity between Bhubaneswar and Bodhgaya and Bhubaneswar and Varanasi to attract tourists and Buddhist traffic to the state.

The HRAO also suggested the state government to promote water sports in Chilika lake to attract more tourists to Odisha. The association lauded the state government and the Chief Minister for the initiative to beautify the surroundings of Srimandir and develop Puri as a heritage city.

"The state government is taking steps to make Odisha the sports capital of India. Besides, the state has become as a preferred destination for investors," said the letter.

Brown sugar worth ₹50L seized, 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: The Quick Action Team (QAT) of Commissionerate Police Sunday seized brown sugar worth around Rs 50 lakhs in Tamando area on the outskirts of the city here. The cops also arrested two drug peddlers from an eatery during the raid here Sunday morning.

The accused persons were identified as Sk Nasimuddin alias Papu, 23, of Rajpur Basti under Jaleswar police limits in Balasore and Chittaranjan Routraya of Mancheswar area here.

Following a tip-off, the QAT team along with Tamando police carried out a raid near a roadside eatery and arrested the accused persons while dealing drugs at the spot. The sleuths seized

520 grams worth brown sugar weighing around Rs 50 lakhs. This apart, two motorcycles and four mobile phones were also seized by the cops during the raid.

Tamando police arrested the accused by registering a case (1/21) under NDPS Act in this regard. The accused were later sent to judicial custody by the court.

BJD, BJP playing 'letter politics', says OPCC prez

The OPCC chief said there is a virtual competition between the BJP and the BJD when it comes to highlighting issues related to women's rights

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjan Patnaik Sunday accused the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of indulging in publicity stunts over the safety of women and children.

Patnaik accused the parties of indulging in letter-politics. "Earlier, the state saw Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik writing letters to the Union government over several issues. Now, a new trend has begun wherein a Union Minister is writing a host of letters to the CM. This apart, Naveen is writing to the Prime Minister. Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra



Pradhan, on the other hand, is writing to the CM," he said.

The OPCC chief said that there is a virtual competition between the BJP and the BJD when it comes to highlighting issues related to women's rights.

"Both the parties are trying to take credits for raising the issues.

There is also a competition between the two over Other Backward Classes and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes reservation," he said.

"How long the politics of letter writing will go on in the state? Both parties talk tall on women's issues. If you go by government's data, maximum crimes are reported from BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh," Patnaik pointed out.

"Just see the trend. Most BJP-ruled states paint a grim picture when it comes to crimes against women. The situation in Odisha is no better as crimes against women have witnessed a northward trend. Besides, more than 5,000 children went missing in two years," Niranjan said.

HANDLOOM EXPO



Women check out garments at Cottonfab-2020 at Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

20K families are in smiles 'again'

Orissa POST talks to vendors, life guards and tourists visiting the Puri beach; checks their excitement and takes stock of the business scenario

CHAITALI SHOME, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: As Covid restrictions continue to get relaxed; tourists are wasting no time to make a beeline at the beaches here. The pandemic had put hundreds of small vendors out of business; estimates say around 20,000 families had to struggle for two square meals a day. However, with the new year 2021 here, revelers and small-scale businessmen are hopeful that this year will bring many fortunes to compensate for the last year loss.

Orissa POST talked to vendors, life guards and tourists visiting the beaches here.

Kartika Sahoo, a bhelpuri seller here, said, "For the last 35 years, I had been in this business, it passed from generation to generation. Never in my life had I faced such a situation." During the pandemic induced lockdown, Kartika was forced to toil as a mason to put food



For the last 35 years, I have been in this business....During the pandemic induced lockdown, I was forced to toil as a mason.... Thankfully, the crowd is back here and business seems to be as usual

KARTIKA SAHOO | BHELPURI SELLER

We haven't received any Covid assistance money from the government. It was quite difficult to manage our expenses during the lockdown. Under the Swachhata Abhiyan, we dedicate an hour daily to keep the beach clean

NRUSINGHA DALEI | MEMBER OF A VENDORS' ASSOCIATION

on the table for his family. He breathed a sigh of relief saying, "Thankfully, the crowd is back here and business seems to be as usual."

For lifeguards G Kartik and Jaga, resident of Bali Dalia Sahi of Puri, the sea seems to be back to life. "The waves were missing the tourists and the tourists were missing this cool breeze, it's a win-win situation and we hope, we have defeated the virus," said Jaga. "We are keeping a strict eye on the tourists

going into the sea," said G Kartik. Many small-time traders pointed out that although there is a Blue Flag category beach, which charges Rs20 per hour, tourists prefer the Puri beach as it does not have such restrictions regarding vendors.

Annie Hota, a tourist from Berhampur, said, "Just a few days ago, if I may recall, there was a mishap at the Blue Flag beach. There are only three lifeguards in a radius of one kilometer. Therefore, my husband

and in-laws prefer this beach." Nrusingha Dalei, a member of a vendors' association, MBKB, Puri, said, "We haven't received any Covid assistance money from the government. It was quite difficult to manage our expenses during the lockdown." He added that the vendors are abiding by every rule and law and keeping the beach clean. "Under the Swachhata Abhiyan, we dedicate an hour daily to keep the beach clean."

Traffic fines worth ₹8cr yet to be collected

State logs 3 more Covid deaths

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: The Commissionerate Police is yet to collect traffic penalties of around Rs8 crores from the persons caught violating traffic regulations in the Twin City during 2020. The pending fine amount is eight times more than the amount collected from the violators during the above period.

A reply to an RTI query revealed that the Commissionerate Police has collected Rs1, 14, 69,950 while fines to the tune of Rs 8,78,1200 are yet to be realised from the violators. As many as 29,128 traffic violations were detected by the Commissionerate Police during the previous year.

Meanwhile, traffic sources revealed that around 85,099 have not paid the fine for traffic violations which far exceed the number of violators who deposited the fine amount.

However, the Commissionerate Police avoided sharing year-wise



data in connection with the fine amount still to be realised from the violators for the last ten years. It also did not share the number of persons who are yet to pay the fine charged for the violations each year between 2010 and 2019.

The reply also revealed that the detection in traffic violations and subsequent collection of fine amount witnessed a sharp decline in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019, as many as 1,16,729 traffic viola-

tions were detected while the cops collected Rs3,32,74,550 from the violators during the year. The Commissionerate Police recorded a decrease of around 65 per cent in the collection of fine during 2020 as compared to 2019.

On the other hand, the Commissionerate Police collected Rs3, 77,09,900 from 1,80,833 violators in 2018. The Commissionerate Police collected Rs3,14,17,300 from 1,41,674 violators in 2016 while the

collection declined to Rs2, 52,76,000 in 2017. As many as 99,332 persons were found violating traffic regulations in 2017.

The cops collected to the tune of Rs2, 58,11,090 from 1,05,216 traffic violators in 2015. The collection of fine from traffic violators stood at Rs 2, 55, 41,905 in 2014. Meanwhile, as many as 97,859 persons were fined for violating traffic rules in 2014. As many as 66,302 traffic rule violators paid Rs 1, 05, 56,140 in 2013. The collection stood at Rs 1, 02, 40,800 in 2012. The Commissionerate Police detected 69,164 persons flouting various traffic rules in 2012.

Speaking on the issue a top traffic police official stated that the courts have been intimidated about the persons who have not paid the fine despite the issuance of challans against them. The courts will take appropriate decision in this regard. The traffic police are also trying to streamline the digital systems to send the challans directly through online.

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: State's Covid-19 caseload Sunday mounted to 3,30,309 with 192 more people testing positive for the infection, while three fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 1,883, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the 192 cases, 109 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the rest detected during contact tracing, the official said.

Six districts—Bhadrak, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Keonjhar and Malkangiri—did not report any new case since Saturday.

Sundargarh district recorded the maximum number of fresh cases at 33, followed by Angul at 24 and Bolangir at 17. Three deaths were reported from Bolangir, Ganjam and Sundargarh districts, the official pointed out.

As many as 53 Covid-19 patients in the state died due to comorbidities. The coastal state's positivity rate stands at 4.71 per cent,



VITAL STATS

SUNDARGARH RECORDED THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF FRESH CASES AT 33, FOLLOWED BY ANGUL AT 24 AND BOLANGIR AT 17

Three deaths were reported from Bolangir, Ganjam and Sundargarh

Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.71 per cent

Over 70 lakh samples have been examined so far

navirus in a span of 24 hours, taking the total number of positive cases in the country to 1,03,23,965, according to an update by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

BJP alleges BJD workers of killing Saffron party leader



BJP leaders and others at SCBMCH in Cuttack to pay their respects to slain Kulamani Baral

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Nischintakoili/Mahanga, Jan 3: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has alleged that the recent murder of a BJP leader at Salepur was done by the workers of BJD.

BJP leader Bhruju Buxipatra said, "The murder of Kulamani Baral was done by the BJD workers. BJD has planned and executed the crime. The deceased had been visiting police stations seeking justice in a murder case of a panchayat member. Attack on him was anticipated."

He also said, "He had tried to expose irregularities in execution of rural housing schemes. All such things were done under the patronage of BJD minister and MLAs. He also had written to the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on such issues."

The BJP leader said, "We condemn the incident and the masterminds should be booked. There could be division of thoughts but that should not lead to murders in Odisha. The BJD government is now turning Odisha to West Bengal. The police has often harassed BJP people in the past and gave patronage to BJD leaders who murdered many BJP leaders in the state in the past."

Buxipatra demanded that the CM should take a vow to deliver justice in the case otherwise agitations would be organised across the state.

Meanwhile, Kulamani Baral's son Ramakant Baral Sunday lodged an FIR against 12 persons whom Ramakant suspects to be involved in his father's murder.

According to police sources, the FIR was filed against four persons of Jankoti village and eight residents

of Nrutang village at the Mahanga Police Station. Cops have detained a person for questioning.

Notably, the miscreants also killed Kulamani's associate Dibya Singh Baral.

Kulamani Baral – a local leader of BJP – was returning home Saturday evening with Dibyasingh on a motorcycle. Some unidentified miscreants attacked the duo with sharp weapons near Jankoti area in Cuttack district. Both sustained critical injuries in the attack.

According to an eyewitness, a group of six armed youths repeatedly hacked the duo leaving them critically injured.

Locals rescued the injured in a critical condition. Later, they were rushed to the community health centre (CHC) at Mahanga in an ambulance. However, doctors declared Kulamani 'brought dead'.

Dibyasingh was shifted to the SCBMCH as his health condition deteriorated. He succumbed to his injuries Sunday morning while undergoing treatment at Cuttack SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH).

Cuttack rural police registered a case in this connection and launched a probe with the help of forensic team. A manhunt is on to nab the assailants. Police DIG Ashis Kumar Singh, Rural SP B Jugal Kishore and ASP Pradyumna Kumar Jena also reached the spot and took stock of the crime. The motive behind the attack has not been ascertained yet. Past enmity could be a probable cause, a police official stated.



BJD general secretary (organisation) Pranab Prakash Das addresses the state executive body meeting of All Odisha Anganwadi workers and helpers front affiliated to Biju Sramika Samukhya in Bhubaneswar, Sunday. Minister Tukuni Sahu and MP Subhash Singh are also seen

RSP logs record production despite nCoV challenges

AGENCIES & PNN

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: Rourkela Steel Plant, a unit of the state-run SAIL, Sunday said it has registered an impressive performance in 2020, despite the Covid-19 challenges and set record monthly hot metal production of 4,06,397 tonne and crude steel output of 3,62,388 tonne in December.

The year-end performance also includes the best single-day production of 15,180 tonne hot metal December 30 and a record dispatch of 16,552 tonne saleable steel on the last day of 2020, it said.

The raw materials handling plant (RMHP) clocked the highest monthly



base mix stacking of 10,92,111 tonne in the last month.

Other major achievements during 2020 include the highest single-day crude steel production of

A power-packed national record created by the steel melting shop-II (SMS-II) has set in motion the process of the turnaround. It had clocked 48 blows to register the highest blow in a single converter July 2, 2020

RSP

13,336 tonne October 28 and saleable steel output of 21,354 tonne October 31.

"A power-packed national record created by the steel melting shop-II (SMS-II) has set in motion the

process of the turnaround. It had clocked 48 blows to register the highest blow in a single converter July 2, 2020," the RSP said in a statement.

Besides, the steel plant registered the best performance in major techno-economic parameters such as the lowest energy consumption in November and the highest steel ladle life. During the year, the RSP made a significant stride into the niche market by developing many import-substitute grade steel products, the statement said.

With favourable market conditions prevailing now, the authorities of the RSP are now looking forward to scale new heights in 2021, it added.

State-level NTSE exam conducted

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: Around 50,000 students from the state took the state-level National Talent Search Examination (NTSE) Sunday. The exams were conducted at more than 200 exam centers by Directorate of TE & SCERT, Government of Odisha.

The exam was conducted to select 259 candidates from the state for National Level Talent Search Examination stage-II, 2021. Eligible students studying in Class X appeared the exam.

The Directorate of TE & SCERT is entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the first tier screening examination known as 'State Level Talent Search Examination' for selection of stipulated number (State Quota) of candidates of the national level examination.

THE EXAM WAS CONDUCTED TO SELECT 259 CANDIDATES FROM THE STATE FOR NATIONAL LEVEL TALENT SEARCH EXAMINATION STAGE-II, 2021

The National Level Talent Search Examination is conducted by NCERT for candidates selected through Stage – I.

Earlier, the State Level National Talent Search Examination, 2020-2021 was scheduled to be held 13.12.2020 (Sunday) but later changed to January 3, 2021 due to Covid 19 pandemic.

Brainstorming session to protect coastal ecosystems

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 3: A webinar was organised on the theme 'Coastal ecosystems of Odisha: Human impacts and changing scenario' by Odisha Environmental Society Sunday. Experts said that while global warming and climate change are gaining momentum as the offshoot of unsustainable developmental practices, scientists are warning about the vulnerability of the coastal regions to such detrimental alterations.

Under such circumstance, mitigation and adaptation measures are required to be undertaken in right earnest to protect the coastal resources and the flow of benefits from them. Coasts are very sensitive to sea level rise, increase in frequency and intensity of storms, higher level of precipitation and warmer ocean temperatures. Further, rising carbon dioxide concentration is making seawaters more acidic, which has significant impact on coastal ecosystems and the species of animals and plants



Odisha, blessed with a coastline of 482 km, should rise to the occasion by designing and implementing a comprehensive, robust climate policy to limit the magnitude of risks posed by the climate change and adapt to its expected impacts, experts opine

inhabiting these habitats. Odisha, blessed with a coastline of 482 km, should rise to the occasion by designing and implementing a comprehensive, robust climate policy to limit the magnitude of risks posed by the climate change and adapt

The state requires undertaking advanced scientific research on both current and possible future climate scenarios and on diverse cross-cutting themes. It needs to study the effects on various sectors employing different analytical tools

SUNDARA NARAYAN PATRO | PRESIDENT, OES

to study the effects on various sectors employing different analytical tools. Shoreline erosion, seawater intrusion, frequent cyclones and loss in coastal biodiversity are already a concern in many areas of the state. This necessitates the constitution of an expert committee selecting scientists from climatology, oceanography, environment, biology, geography and social sciences to deal with the crisis.

On the occasion Pratap Kumar Mohanty, Dept. of Marine Sciences, Berhampur University presented a

talk on 'Coastal processes and cyclonic storms along Odisha coast: Impact analysis with special reference to turtle nesting habitats'. He narrated how erosion and accretion processes are occurring along the coast commensurate with the developmental activities, thereby causing ecosystem disruptions in the coastal region. He also explained how nesting process of Olive Ridley turtles was upset in the post-cyclonic period after episodes of Phalin, Hudhud and Titli.

Bisnu Prasad Dash, Dept. of Biosciences and Biotechnology, FM University spoke on the topic 'Horseshoe crabs in Odisha coast: Significance, bio-prospecting and conservation issues'. He narrated how various human activities, including infrastructural developments and fishing activities, are pushing the horseshoe crab species into the threatened category. We can derive a lot of medicinal and other benefits from it by protecting the species. Thus, it needs to be placed in Schedule I instead of Schedule IV of the Wildlife Act.

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4 held for minor's rape in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 3: Five days after a minor was gangraped at Jalananda village under Ghasipura police limits in Keonjhar district, the police arrested all the four accused Sunday.

The accused were identified as Meda Naik, Chugulu Naik, Balia Naik and Kuna Naik. They were arrested under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code and the POCSO Act.

According to the police, the victim, aged 17, was living with her widowed mother in the village. It was December 29 last year. She had gone to a nullah to answer nature's call. Finding her alone, the four accused overpowered her and took her to a secluded place where they took turns on her.



Reaching home, she narrated her ordeal before her mother who then registered a complaint at the Ghasipura police station.

The police said the accused would be produced in a court after their medical examination.

An investigation is underway, it was learnt.

Students deprived of Odia textbooks in AP



LEFT IN LURCH

As examinations are drawing closer, Odia students in Andhra Pradesh are worried about how they will appear the test without reading the books at all

Odia students are studying in 185 schools (in the parts of Odia speaking tracts) in Srikakulam district. Besides, there are scores of Odia students in various schools in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts

Andhra govt with help of Odia teachers has been printing textbooks of Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Social Studies and Environment Science and providing them to Odia students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, Jan 3: After demarcation of borders between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh post Independence, Chapara Zilla Parishad High School of Odisha became a part of Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh. Scores of Odia people have been living in the area. But their children studying in this high school allege that they are deprived of Odia textbooks in

the current year.

From November 2, the schools in Andhra Pradesh have reopened, but the students have not got Odia textbooks till date. As examinations are drawing closer, they are worried about how they will appear the test without reading the books at all.

As per the agreement between the two governments, Odisha will cater to the needs of Odia textbooks for Odia students in schools in Andhra

Pradesh while the Andhra government will cater to the needs of Telugu textbooks to Telugu students studying in Odisha in the beginning of the academic session.

As a result, the studies of nearly 12,500 Odia students were affected due to the unavailability of Odia textbooks. The Odisha government was supposed to provide textbooks to Odia students (upto class-10) in June. According to reports, Odia students are studying in 185 schools (in the parts of Odia speaking tracts) in Srikakulam district. Besides, there are scores of Odia students in various schools in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts.

"Due to unavailability of textbooks in Odia language, students are not interested to study in Odia language. For this problem, their number is falling in schools in the fringe districts of Andhra Pradesh," lamented students Puspa Majhi, Swati Dalei and Madhusudan Majhi.

On the other hand, the Andhra government with help of Odia teachers has been printing textbooks of Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Social Studies and Environment Science and providing them to Odia students every year; but Odia textbooks are not available, said B Rabinda Kumar, Science teacher of Chapara Zilla Parishad High School.

NORM VIOLATION



With Covid norms eased, tourists throng Gopalpur beach in Ganjam, in violation of social distancing norms, Sunday.

20 yrs on, no effort yet for revival of Konark jute mill

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 3: Even as 20 years have passed since the closure of the state-owned Konark Jute Mill in Dhanmandal in this district, the state government seems to be lacking in efforts for its revival, a report said.

The jute mill was shut down in 2001 due to shortage of raw material and sustained loss. It has been lying defunct since then and no concrete efforts have been made for its revival.

The plant had then employed over 2,600 labourers including 1,200 permanent staff. The mill was producing 13,240 tonnes of different varieties of sacks

The closure of the jute mill rendered over 26,000 employees and workers jobless.

It was a profit-making and viable unit of the state government. However, due to alleged mismanagement and corruption the mill slipped into bankruptcy and was finally shut down.

Reports said the revival of the jute mill seems not to be on the government agenda. It became clear when Barchana MLA Amar Prasad Satapathy, who is also from ruling party, questioned the steps being taken by the state government on the revival of the jute mill in the State Assembly in October, 2020.

The concerned minister replied that the Chowdar-based OTM, Jharsuguda-based Bhaskar Textile Mills Ltd, Bhubaneswar-based Orissa State Handloom Development Corporation and Baripada-based New Mayurbhanj Textile Mills have been shut down.

However, the minister failed to give any convincing reply on the revival of this sick jute mill and creation of employment opportunities. Reports said that the foundation stone for the jute mill was laid in 1975 when Nandini Satpathy was the Chief Minister. Later, the jute mill was established at a plan outlay of Rs 8 crore on the joint efforts of the Centre and the state government. The jute mill was inaugurated by then Union Minister for Steel and Mines Biju Patnaik in 1979. The plant had then employed over 2,600 labourers including 1,200 permanent staff. The mill was producing 13,240 tonnes of different varieties of sacks. The mill incurred loss from the start which continued for 12 years. Later,

it started manufacturing a special variety of sack on the efforts of then MLA Amar Prasad Satpathy in 1991. This helped it earn profits till 1994.

Later, then Chief Minister Biju Patnaik sanctioned Rs 8 crore for its modernisation and renovation. The labour outfits had then alleged that several lakhs from the sanctioned funds were usurped. The mill was procuring raw materials from the farmers of Jajpur, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts.

However, the authorities alleging that the jute procured from these districts were of sub-standard quality procured two new varieties of jute from Kolkata. This paved the way for the downfall of the mill as it again turned into a loss making unit and was closed down in 2001.

The state government sold the jute mill when its accumulated losses touched Rs 27 crore in 2011. A private company Sanatan Commercial bought the jute mill for Rs 13 crore, but it failed to run the mill and vanished overnight.



Mayurbhanj's Merumatha calls for attention

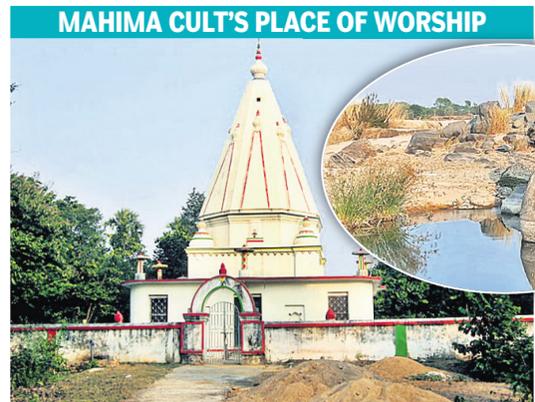
A visitor would reach the shrine after travelling nearly 12km from the block headquarters, around 40km from the district headquarters of Baripada

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 3: Even as the state government spends crores of rupees for preservation and development of different places of worship across Odisha, the famous 'Merumatha' in Mayurbhanj district which belongs to the Mahima cult calls for attention amid administrative apathy.

The state government has already accorded Merumatha the status of a tourist place in Mayurbhanj. The Mahima shrine is located at Sirsha under Saraskana block in the district. This neglected tourist destination which is located amidst greenery and scenic beauty has failed to attract visitors from within and outside the state.

The Subarnarekha River flows near Merumatha. A visitor would reach the shrine after travelling nearly 12km from the block headquarters, around 40km from the



MAHIMA CULT'S PLACE OF WORSHIP

planted on the research centre premises, of which about 300 plants have died, owing to improper maintenance and apathetic attitude of district officials. The district tourism officer had earlier proposed an expenditure of Rs 1.41,00,000 towards development and beautification of the Mahima shrine. The proposal had included construction of drinking water stands, toilets, lighting facility, a congregation hall and a park.

Local denizens namely Rabindra Nath Sahu, Kunjabihari Sethi, Sudhir Kumar Sahu, and Ashok Kumar Prusty have demanded immediate development as well as beautification of the Merumatha.

district headquarters of Baripada. There is a forest cover on 56 acres of land. In 1990, around 20 acres of land earlier owned by the

Merumatha was ceded to the state government for developing a research centre of medicinal plants. Over 500 medicinal plants were

Chakotiya Bhunjias & their sacred kitchens

POST NEWS NETWORK

Tarbo, Jan 3: If you happen to be in any village in Nuapada district inhabited by people belong to the Chakotiya Bhunjia tribe, keep it in mind that you should not touch their red building, locally called as 'Lal Bungalow'.

If you touch their red building, even accidentally; they will set the building on fire.

In fact they have been following this bizarre and harsh tradition for generations.

There are a total of 53 hamlets in Sunabeda sanctuary under Komana block in Nuapada district. The villages are located about 36,000 feet above the mean sea level (MSL).

These villages are mostly inhabited by Chakotiya Bhunjia tribals. People of other tribal communities are also living in these villages, but



STEEPED IN TRADITION

There are a total of 53 hamlets in Sunabeda sanctuary under Komana block in Nuapada district. The villages are located about 36,000 feet above the mean sea level

The Chakotiya Bhunjia tribals call their kitchen as 'Lal Bungalow' which is the most sacred place in their house. If any outsider touches it, even accidentally; they assume their 'Lal Bungalow' gets defiled

there number is next to nothing. Different tribes practice different customs and traditions. In that way, the Chakotiya Bhunjia people also follow a tradition which is not only different from others but in-

teresting as well. They call their kitchen as 'Lal Bungalow'. It is the most sacred place in their house. If any outsider touches it, even accidentally; they assume their 'Lal Bungalow' gets de-

filed. They destroy the house by setting it on fire and get another one constructed in its place.

Since they know that their kitchen has the risk of being touched by outsiders, their kitchen is con-

structed in that way so that it can easily be burnt down.

Instead of using bricks, stone chips, boulders and iron rods in constructing their kitchens, they use mud and timbers.

Why they regard their kitchen so sacred?

They in fact worship their deities and forefathers in this 'Lal Bungalow'.

Anyone from outside their families is strictly not allowed to touch their sacred house. Even their married off daughters no longer enjoy the right of touching the house, let alone going inside it.

Even if the married off daughters come to their parents' house as guests, their food is cooked outside. This will continue for as long as they stay in their parents' house. If she touches the 'Lal Bungalow', the next moment it is set on fire.

Selfie proves fatal for man

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, Jan 3: After a frantic search, a team comprising ODRAF personnel and fire brigade Saturday afternoon fished out the body of a man who had gone missing at Duduma waterfall near Semiliguda area in Koraput district.

The deceased was identified as Satya Parija from Kaliagaon area near Jeypore town in the district. Satya had gone to the waterfall along with four of his friends to celebrate New Year. He, unfortunately, fell into the

waterfall while taking a selfie and went missing Friday.

Satya's friends started a search for him; however, he could not be traced. On being informed, the ODRAF and fire personnel joined them in searching for missing Satya. "We had been trying hard to retrieve the body since Friday. A joint team of fire services department and ODRAF successfully recovered his body Saturday afternoon. It is a drowning case, so his family will get compensation of Rs 4 lakh as per government norms," Machhkund tehsildar Manas Ranjan Patnaik said.

AT HER ABODE



Devotees offer prayers at Samaleswari temple in Sambalpur, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Annual bird census begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri/Baripada, Jan 3: The annual bird census of Odisha began Sunday with counting of avian species in Puri and Mayurbhanj districts. The census started at 5.30am and continued till 12noon, a forest department official informed.

According to the official, separate teams of forest officials conducted surveys at water bodies in Simlipal, Baripada, Rairangpur, Karanjia and Balasore forest divisions of Mayurbhanj district. The teams counted the number of avian guests that have arrived here during the nesting season, including the resident ones. In another similar drive, forest officials of Puri forest division including ornithologists and wildlife experts carried out the census work in Konark, Astaranga, Gop, Balukhand



and Brahmagiri forest ranges under Puri wildlife division.

The department is finalising modalities to include students of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) in the annual census work, a senior forest official said. Notably, each team was provided with binoculars, two-way radio sets, GPS sets and other equipment to carry out the task.

The annual census of migratory at Hirakud reservoir will be conducted by Sambalpur forest division January 7.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, TUSURA
At/P.O.: Tusura, Dist.: Balangir, PIN: 767030
e-mail: nactusura@gmail.com Dt.01.01.2021

No. 1693

QUOTATION CALL FOR SANITATION OUTSOURCING
Sealed quotations are invited from intending registered firms/NGOs/Organization and Private Companies satisfying eligibility criteria as per Detailed Quotation Call Notice for outsourcing or Sanitation work in 11 wards of Tusura NAC with 62 No. of sanitation workers and door to door collection in 11 wards, spreading of bleaching powder, bush cutting, transporting/segregation of Wet & Dry waste to MCC/MRF site, so as to reach the Office of the Executive Officer, Tusura NAC by 3.00 P.M. of 18.01.2021 through Speed Post only. The quotations so received shall be opened on 20.01.2021 at 3.00 P.M. in presence of the quotators or their authorized representatives. Detailed terms and conditions will be available from the Office of the undersigned on 05.01.2021 to 18.01.2021 (Except Holidays).

I. Cost of quotations paper - Rs.6000/- (Non refundable)
II. Security Deposit - Rs.3,00,000/- (Rupees three lakhs) only NSC/DD/BED duly pledged favour of Executive Officer, Tusura NAC.
III. Sale of Quotations Paper - 05.01.2021 to 18.01.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.
IV. Receipt of Quotations (through Speed Post) - Upto 18.01.2021 (upto 3.00 P.M.)
V. Opening of Quotations : At Council Hall, Tusura NAC on Dt.20.01.2021 at 3.00 P.M.

Office will not be responsible for any postal service delay. The authority reserves the right to cancel any or all quotations without assigning any reason thereof and shall bear no liability consequent upon such decision.

Sd./- Executive Officer, Tusura NAC



We must march on with the quiet certitude that what has to be done will be done.
THE MOTHER

The Smoker Smokes

The government of India has recently proposed a draft law to raise legal age for smoking to 21 years from the present 18 years. Titled 'Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply & Distribution) Amendment Act 2020', the Bill, when it becomes law, is bound to create an unnatural atmosphere at the implementation level.

India has the unique distinction of being, probably, the only nation in the whole world which sells single cigarette sticks to consumers. Worldwide, a smoker is compelled to purchase a sealed pack of cigarettes. The reasons behind the Indian scenario could be two fold. First, the average smoker in this country being financially stressed, is unwilling to buy a whole pack and prefers not to spend a hefty sum. Second, again the average smoker may not be a chain smoker and does not feel the necessity to hold on to a whole pack. That possession could also imply, perforce, sharing with friends and colleagues which could be economically draining. These economic assumptions seem acceptable when different surveys are studied. One study for example, conducted a few years ago, claims that when taxation is increased by 10% on cigarettes, number of smokers declines by nearly 8%. These indicators point out that higher cost of such goods do make a difference in a country where the consumer is extremely price conscious.

To combat the menace of underage smoking, Maharashtra government enacted a law banning sale of single cigarette sticks in September 2020. According to findings of that state government, this step has indeed affected consumption of cigarettes. Another survey claims that when people are allowed to buy a single cigarette, they do not feel the effect of higher taxation. According to The Global Tobacco Youth Survey, 2016, 'the Indian state of Maharashtra has the lowest rate of smokers in that country.' Such reports strengthen the impression that raising taxes alone do not hinder growth of tobacco addicts. The real problem lies at the retail shop level. These and many such other issues never get addressed by the government when laws are drafted and passed in the legislatures. For example, it would be very difficult for a rural cigarette shop owner to judge the true age of a customer. Today many school going children look very grown up, even though they may be in their teens. The new law would expect every customer to carry a proof of age. The problem does not end there because every shopkeeper will then be expected to have the ability to read and decipher that proof. In most other countries, every citizen carries an identification card (ID). That is considered normal since the ID has very many roles and uses in regular day to day life. For instance, the ID proof of age allows free entry to many museums and sites as well as a person below a certain age is entitled to travel discounts on coaches and trains.

India unfortunately has a plethora of cards or IDs that do not seem to deliver. As an example, our Aadhaar cards may be necessary for getting benefits from government's welfare schemes but cannot be used as a quick reference for age or address verification unless the cumbersome process of using a computer with internet facility is resorted to. A youngster trying to prove that her age is above 21 years through her Aadhaar card will not make the cigarette shop owner's life simpler. Across the civilized world, buying alcohol also requires proof of age. In India, that is not even an issue. A person of any age can queue up in front of any liquor shop and buy whatever amount of alcohol he desires provided he has the cash. It is in such activities that the country seems united. Here it can be truthfully claimed that 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari—India is One'. Throughout the length and breadth of this country, alcohol shops do not ask for verification of age of the purchaser. This is certainly a bigger threat to law and order as well as traffic. It is a proven fact that drivers under the influence of alcohol have caused serious road mishaps, killing innocents in thousands every year. This is a singularly deadly cause for the huge number of deaths on Indian roads annually. Yet the government does not bother about it. Instead, licences are granted, on a daily basis, to open new liquor shops as well as bars right beside highways. The slogan - 'Don't Mix Drinking and Driving' - has remained just that, a slogan!

Tobacco or Alcohol, the government's efforts at controlling such intoxicants will never have the desired effects since the ground realities are not being taken into consideration when drafting such imbecile laws.

WISDOM CORNER

- Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. **GEORGE BERNARD SHAW**
- The flower that smells the sweetest is shy and lowly. **WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**
- Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced. **JOHN KEATS**

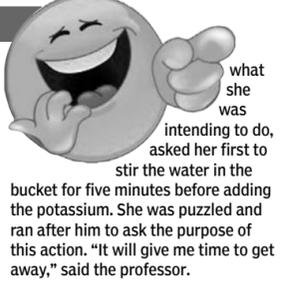
WORDSWORTH

Wigg
On Good Friday 1664, Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary, "Home to the only Lenten supper I have had of wiggs and ale." Though they were sometimes said to be like Good Friday buns, ancestors of hot-cross buns, wiggs seem to have been linked not only with the end of Lent but with other special occasions, too; Clement Miles noted in his book Christmas in Ritual and Tradition in 1912, "In Shropshire 'wigs' or caraway buns dipped in ale were eaten on Christmas Eve." They were also recorded as being associated with St Andrew's Day on 30 November, for some reason notably in Bedfordshire. A Lincolnshire variation on an old children's rhyme goes: Tom, Tom, the baker's son, Stole a wig and away he run; The wig was eat, and Tom was beat, And Tom went roaring down the street. In the nineteenth century, wiggs (or wigs or whigs; spellings have been very variable) were widely known and equally widely variable in their recipes. Caraway was one constituent mentioned in some parts of Britain (these were presumably the type recorded in The Tale of Ginger and Pickles by Beatrix Potter: "But a person cannot live on 'seed wigs' and sponge cake and butter buns"); in other places it was said they should be sweet and contain currants (though in northern England this was a spice wig, a plain wig being without them). In Lincolnshire, plums were considered to be a vital ingredient (though currants were meant, as in plum pudding), while in Hampshire honey was essential. On the other hand, the austere burghers of Bristol said a wig was a local name for a plain halfpenny bun. They were nearest its origin, since a wig was at first simply a fine wheaten loaf lacking these later elaborations.

LOL

A dangerous mix

A student wished to make some potassium hydroxide solution (aqueous) and decided to throw a large lump of potassium into a bucket of water. Her professor observed what she was about to do, out of the corner of his eye and hurried towards her, and after confirming this was



what she was intending to do, asked her first to stir the water in the bucket for five minutes before adding the potassium. She was puzzled and ran after him to ask the purpose of this action. "It will give me time to get away," said the professor.

FOCUS ECONOMY

SOFTER RULES, FASTER GROWTH

The bad year is gone. Hope of a good 2021 has set in. The bell tolls for a new India despite the burgeoning battle for coming out of the shadows of COVID-19. The economy is "reflating faster at a pace that beats most predictions," says the Reserve Bank of India.



Shivaji Sarkar

THE NEW BUDGET HAS TO TAKE CARE OF THE GROWTH TRAJECTORY, SOFTEN MANY LAWS/TAXES, CREATE JOBS AND DEMAND, AND REPOSE TRUST IN THE PEOPLE

The bounce back it says may be faster in Q4 (last quarter of 2020-21) as the country prepares to present the new Central budget. The Credit Suisse adds to it saying the growth turn in industrial policy can add 1.7 per cent to GDP by 2027 or 0.3-0.5 per cent a year. Nomura expects a gradual withdrawal of liquidity with higher policy rates. Recent government measures and some other indicators suggest positive growth at a slower pace as the economy gradually unlocks. The RBI says business sentiments have moved to a recovery path though overall sentiments are yet to reach pre-pandemic levels as the unprecedented lockdown brought activities to a grinding halt.

The pandemic hit major economies. Global growth came down to minus 4 per cent, advanced economies to minus 6 per cent and the Chinese economy to about two per cent, according to IMF World Economic Outlook of October 2020. The IMF says that in 2021 all economies are supposed to do better around 4 per cent or more but on a deflated growth in 2020. It projects 10.3 per cent contraction for India and RBI sees lower 7.5 per cent contraction. Overall Indian economic growth, as per IMF may be 8.8 per cent in the next fiscal year. Since this would be on a low base effect of 2020-21 (-23.9 per cent) so actual growth in 2021-22 may be lower than the 2019-20 level.

India did not lag behind in announcing stimulus and lending guarantees and pro-poor measures, including free food grains and higher rural employment guarantees. The relief to the people, however, did not reflect the rise in demand, perhaps because of contraction of the cash available



Many GST provisions are harsh and should be softened if India wants to be *atmanirbhar*. China has taken such steps for decades to help its entrepreneurship capture global markets. Indian systems on the contrary work on a 'blow hot blow cold' model and don't trust the people

to people. The prolonged lockdown and a protracted slowdown made businesses ill-equipped to deal with the economic pain. The increasing bad debt problem with banks, NBFs and the financial sector added to difficulties though public sector banks were merged to create larger entities to meet global giants.

India's sequential or month-on-month recovery looks better; according to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) analyses of the Nomura India Business Resumption Index or Purchasing Manager's Indices (PMI). The PMI suggest that economic activity has resumed to pre-pandemic levels. But the low base effect and low cash levels with the poor, who spend more and create the mass demand are unable yet to boost up economic activities. Though many corporates have restored salaries, many still are unable to do so or are delaying payments. This apart, many who lost jobs during the pandemic have not yet got them back.

The recent labour codes have increased working hours and are stated to have done away with many of workplace safeguards. The wage-led growth is perceived to be replaced by profits, which in turn creates a smaller base. The new farm laws, though may open up markets for farmers, are likely

to hit the rural inter-dependent social fibre and ultimately create much smaller base as many are feared to lose jobs or social support they have. The society needs a larger base and the agriculture policy should not be dependent on the market controlled by companies. The APMC mandis may go through a process of reform but a parallel 'market' may not be in the interest of the country. Added to this are possibilities of opening up the banking sector to the corporate, wiping out the difference between the lender and borrower - reminiscent of pre-1969 nationalisation of banks - situation may not be beneficial. More so as the State Bank of India, Union Bank of India and Indian Overseas Bank have challenged the bankruptcy resolution of one of the biggest companies and say that their stake is ten-times larger than what Vijay Mallya owed to them. The policy makers need to go through the gamut before allowing such a move amid apprehensions that it would exacerbate the economic crisis.

India's is a peculiar economy that is driven by the poor, who despite their low incomes are the largest purchasers and boost manufacturing, electricity, gas, mining and many other products. That is the practical economy and this needs to guide the country's deci-

sion making. The present post-lockdown recovery is delicate. It requires participation of all and particularly the marginalised to decide on a course that would ensure sustained growth. Dialogue to create a New India is essential for setting the contours. It needs not only a correction but also prevention from plunging into past mistakes.

The RBI's latest bulletins state the economy is coming out of abyss and with care could improve in medium term and gradually average the last 30 years' growth track of 6.5 to 7 per cent. Credit Suisse supports it by saying that after a few years of downgrades of Indian economy, "we have reasons to upgrade". It also feels that corporate tax cut and new labour codes too should help.

The gradual larger GST collection is also an indicator that production activities are gaining momentum. The industry wants concessions on e-invoicing and relaxations on many other issues to continue. The government's impatience to have larger accrual is natural but the situation is fragile and a helpful attitude towards industry and businesses would be beneficial for the country in the long run. Many GST provisions are harsh and should be softened if the country wants to be *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant). China has taken such sustained steps for decades to help its entrepreneurship capture global markets. Indian systems on the contrary work on a 'blow hot blow cold' model and don't trust the people.

The country can grow faster if the wealth of the people is not destroyed as some of the rules such as junking of cars and pollution control methods, high penalties of Motor Vehicles Act have done. India has to prepare for the real challenges beyond 2021-22. The new Budget has to take care of the growth trajectory, soften many laws/taxes, create jobs and demand, and repose trust in the people. Softer rules and involvement of people are needed for a better economy.

INFA

SPECTRUM URBANISATION

Smart cities: Are they intelligent enough?



SK Nag

TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE SMART CITY, THE ROADMAP MUST BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN CURRENT NEEDS AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

A futuristic city proactively and predictably adjusts city management infrastructure to facilitate and deliver a better living situation under its design philosophy. So, smart cities are fast becoming a need. But are these future cities intelligent enough to support such changed demands? Though the answers might have contrary views but to achieve a sustainable and resilient smart city, the roadmap must bridge the gap between current needs and future expectations.

Smart cities by design are technology-enabled urban infrastructure conceptualised to eliminate the multidimensional inconvenience resulting from operating inefficiencies. Through an evolutionary and iterative process, the city aims to enhance its dwellers' quality of life and tries to achieve 'ease of living'. Modern-day living has many incremental and associated lifestyle difficulties. Out of which the growing population is a concern for all. Indian population is growing exponentially, and soon there will be many showstoppers caused by overpopulation to dismiss the concept of 'ease of living'. Food security, incompetent healthcare services, collapsed public transport system, and many such issues will crop in if the government does not address population growth. Consequently,

the smart city is an imperative, not a choice, and a blueprint of the same needs a well thought pragmatic approach to address today's and tomorrow's concern.

A typical city which people will love to live in shall have key performance indices (KPIs) like easy accessibility to transportation, information system, educational establishment, library, hospital and other community services, uninterrupted supply of water, electricity and IT network, speedy and efficient waste management system and faster crime detection and prevention infrastructure. Therefore, a city of next generation should judiciously address these KPIs to make living safer and better. This is a data-centric solution to urban infrastructure. The concept brings down the resource mobilisation need to optimal level with a predictive algorithm to reduce wasteful mobilisation of govt resources. For example, a city that has an underground waste disposal system can predict in advance the pattern of garbage being thrown into a chute at a particular time of the day. Accordingly, a compressed air system (which keeps the system running) is activated in those locations to optimise the captive requirement of compressed air capacity.

The designing philosophy of smart cities necessarily calls for a

deeper study of population growth rate. Influx in various cities is a clear indication of unequal allocation of fair and reasonable government attention. Villagers migrate to cities searching for employment as they don't get enough opportunities to support their aspirations in villages. So it is a two-sided problem. The first being reproductive growth, and the second is the economic pressure of migration to cities. The city designer, therefore, must understand the population growth pattern of our country and respective cities. By 2050, our population will be somewhere between 1.5 to 1.6 billion and to cater to all these people's aspirations we may need many more smart cities to accommodate them in big numbers. If they are not smart enough, sustainability will be an issue.

Covid-19 has proved how weak our global health system is. The urban information system design needs to generate and feed the algorithmic model with near real-time data. According to the demand, the system is necessarily designed to have agility to predict, act and augment the variable resources, sometimes proactively and sometimes reactively.

Prediction plays an important role in intelligent system design where the infrastructure has to combat natural disasters. The pre-

dition model has many system advantages. It can trigger the system in advance and raise the alarm to prevent loss of assets and lives. Leveraging an intelligent information system might add many advantages to overcome Acts of God.' Capital expenditure outlays to build a smart city should aim to optimise the operating expenditure outlays in successive years under respective municipal bodies. Otherwise, tax burden will deteriorate the health of these technical devices due to inadequate or no maintenance. A proper functional ICT system allows the government to optimise resource utilisation by equitable deployment in a time-bound manner. This pushes the system efficiency upward and, in return, brings down the tax burden on citizens.

Our 70 per cent population will live in cities by 2050. We are yet to gain momentum to harvest the benefit of technology-enabled cities. Our blueprint must mention the end of the road; otherwise, our population's demand will always surpass the facility made available due to a delayed bureaucratic implementation.

The writer is a Mumbai-based MSME strategist, mentor and energy expert. Views are personal.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Under the skin

Sir, The Australian media has made much ado about the alleged breach of Covid protocol 'Down Under' by five Indian players - Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant, Navdeep Saini and Prithvi Shaw. We believe that the quintet was sitting outdoors, as allowed by protocols, and it was only after a drizzle they had to move indoors. Though isolated from the rest of the contingent, they can train separately, which is some solace for the team. The episode following a stirring win in Melbourne must get under the Indian players, administrators, and fans' skin.

NJ Ravi Chander,
BANGALORE

Infra requirement

Sir, The Biju Patnaik International Airport at Bhubaneswar caters to the need of tourists visiting Puri and Bhubaneswar. Puri is just 58 km from Bhubaneswar airport. If an airport comes up at Puri the state will have two international airports within a distance of 50 km. Bhubaneswar being the city of temples attracts as many tourists as Puri and Konark. In fact, Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar form a golden triangle for tourists visiting the state. Bhubaneswar is smart city and has many star hotels of international standard, and this is required for international tourists' comfort. Odisha is big state and on the path of fast development. Three more airports are required in the north, west and south of Bhubaneswar to cover the infrastructure requirement of the whole state.

Gopal Prasad Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

Beware of rumours

Sir, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has requested the people to not pay attention to the rumours against the much-awaited vaccine to prevent Covid-19. He stated that our prime criteria in the vaccine trial are safety and efficacy and nothing will be compromised. The objective of the dry run for Covid-19 vaccine is to measure the operational possibility in a field environment, to test the linkages between planning and execution, and to identify the challenges and lead the way forward prior to the actual implementation. The vaccine, which is worldwide recognised as AZD1222 will be the first silver bullet for the country. The people need to be cautious of rumours and wait for a few months.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Scindia loyalists return as ministers

WITH THEIR INDUCTION, THE CURRENT STRENGTH OF MADHYA PRADESH CABINET WENT UP TO 31

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Jan 3: The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh cabinet was expanded Sunday with the induction of two loyalists of BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, whose exit from the Congress in March last year triggered the fall of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath-led dispensation in the state.

Governor Anandiben Patel administered the oath of office to Tulsiram Silawat and Govind Rajput, who returned to the cabinet after a gap of more than two months.

With their induction, the current strength of the state cabinet went up to 31. The number of members in the council of ministers in MP cannot exceed 35.

During their brief oath-taking ceremony held at the Raj Bhawan, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Protom Speaker Rameshwar Sharma and several ministers of the state cabinet were present.

A public relations officer of Raj Bhawan on Sunday said that the resignations of two other ministers, Imarti Devi and Girraj Dandotia, who lost the November 3 Assembly bypolls, have been accepted a few



days back.

This is the third expansion of the state cabinet ever since Chouhan took over as the chief minister for the fourth term in March 2020 after the collapse of the Congress government.

Silawat and Rajput had been inducted into the cabinet in April last year during its first expansion. However, they had to step down in October as they were not members of the state legislature because the

coronavirus pandemic delayed the bypolls.

There is a provision that a non-MLA, who got inducted in the cabinet, should get elected to the State Assembly within six months.

The second expansion of Chouhan's cabinet took place on July 2 last year with the induction of 28 ministers, including a dozen loyalists of Jyotiraditya Scindia.

The first expansion was held on April 21 last year wherein five min-

3RD CABINET EXPANSION

The first expansion was held on April 21 last year wherein five ministers, including Silawat and Rajput, were inducted

Silawat and Rajput were among the Congress MLAs who had resigned and joined the BJP with Scindia in March last year

In the Assembly bypolls held in November, the BJP had won 19 out of the 28 seats, while the opposition Congress had bagged nine

isters, including Silawat and Rajput, were inducted.

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In the Assembly bypolls held in November, the BJP had won 19 out of the 28 seats, while the opposition Congress had bagged nine.

Silawat and Rajput had won the bypoll from Sanver and Surkhi constituencies respectively.

GST OFFICIALS DETECT ₹830 CR TAX EVASION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Central GST authorities have detected a tax evasion of over ₹830 crore by an illegal pan-masala manufacturing unit here and arrested a person for his involvement, according to an official statement.

The firm was evading the payment of Goods and Services Tax (GST) by manufacturing and clandestinely supplying gutkha/pan masala/tobacco products without any registration and payment of duty, it said.

"On the basis of the search at the premises of the manufacturer, it was found that illegal manufacturing of gutkha/pan masala/tobacco product was going on, evidenced by a godown, machines, raw materials and manufactured products at the premises," the office of Commissioner central tax (Delhi West) said in a statement Saturday.

Around 65 labourers were found working at the illegal factory, it said.

The searches resulted in the seizure of finished gutkha and raw materials such as chuna, sada katha, tobacco leaves etc, valued



at Rs. 4.14 cr approximately, the statement said.

"On the basis of evidence gathered, stocks seized and confessional statements recorded the total duty evasion is estimated to be approx ₹831.72 crores. Further investigation is in progress," it said.

The finished product of gutkha was being supplied by the unit to various states, the statement said.

One person has been arrested in the matter on the basis of his involvement in the manufacture and

supply of goods without issue of any invoice with the intention to evade tax, as well as in transporting, removing, depositing, keeping, concealing, supplying, or purchasing any goods, it said.

The accused was arrested and produced before the local court here Saturday that has sent him to 14 days judicial custody, the statement said.

A senior official said the illegal unit was operating from Budh Vihar area here.

RAINS ADDS TO FARMERS' WOES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Waterlogged tents, soaked firewood and blankets, and cold conditions - farmers camping at Delhi borders in protest against new farm laws had a difficult morning on Sunday due to overnight rains.

The continuous downpour led to waterlogging at agitation venues and waterproof tents did not help much, according to the protesters.

Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar, who is a member of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, said farmers have waterproof tents but they cannot protect them from biting cold and waterlogging.

"The situation is very bad at protest sites due to rain which has caused waterlogging. There is so much cold after the rains, but the government is not able to see our misery," he said.

Gurwinder Singh, who is camping at Singhu Border, said there is waterlogging at some places as civic facilities are not up to the mark but asserted that the weather will not dampen the spirit of farmers who have been protesting for over a month.

"Despite facing several problems, we will not move from here until our demands are met," he said.

According to a MeT Department official, heavy rainfall was reported

in areas across Delhi and minimum temperatures have increased due to clouding and easterly winds.

"Safdarjung observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 9.9 degrees Celsius, an increase of 6.7 degrees with 25 mm rain. Palam observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 11.4 degrees Celsius with 18 mm rain. Rain with hail storm is expected until January 6," the official said.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been camping at three Delhi border points -- Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur -- for more than a month, demanding repeal of three farm laws and a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) and other two issues.

Bharatiya Kisan Union Ugrahan leader Sukhdev Singh, whose Union is leading the protest at Tikri border, said arrangements made by farmers to brave the cold weather are not helping much because of rains and subsequent waterlogging.

Veerpal Singh, a protesting farmer, said their blankets, clothes and wood are soaked.

"Our clothes are soaked due to waterlogging caused by rains. Besides, we are facing difficulties to cook food as rain water has also soaked firewood. We do have an LPG cylinder but not everyone here has it," he said.

Chouhan warns stone pelters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Jan 3: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that stern action and a law were needed against those who indulge in stone pelting.

His statement comes in the wake of recent incidents of stone pelting on vehicle rallies taken out in western Madhya Pradesh by some groups to raise awareness about the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"Stern action and a law are needed against stone-pelters. At times, stone pelting poses danger to life," Chouhan told top bureaucrats in the state during an online meeting on Saturday.

Vehicle rallies are being taken out in villages in the state by certain groups to raise awareness on the



construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya ahead of the launch of a nationwide public campaign by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust from January 15 to mobilise funds for the temple project.

Right wing organisations, including the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), have said that stones were hurled at them during the rallies. However, Muslims in the Malwa region (western region) have alleged that their places of worship and houses were targeted during the rallies.

Ghazipur landfill's height reduced

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: The height of the Ghazipur landfill site has reduced by 12 metres due to sustained efforts made in the last one year, claimed East Delhi BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, who is closely associated with the project.

The landfill site where garbage from East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) areas is dumped, was saturated since 2002 and had attained a height of 65 metres, said the BJP MP.

"Since day one of becoming East Delhi MP, my top most priority has been to ensure a substantial reduction in the Ghazipur landfill which is a source of pollution and misery for the people of the constituency," he said.

Multiple meetings with various authorities, use of crores of rupees from my MP LAD fund and tremendous efforts put in by EDMC, have finally helped reduce height of the landfill at the top by 12 metres, he said.

"After almost one and a half years we are finally witnessing the



initial results of our hard labour and the garbage mountain is reducing. I would like to tell East Delhi people that this is just the beginning and we will not give up till we completely remove this gigantic dump," Gautam asserted.

The EDMC has deployed 15 trommels to process the legacy waste by excavating the dump. Then it is transported to trommels for seg-

regation. Machinery including excavators, trucks, loaders were deployed 24x7 to dig the waste and transport it to trommels for segregation.

Arrangements were made to transport the inert material after processing to NTPC Badarpur for its biodiversity park while the refuse derivative fuel (RDF) is sent to a waste to energy plant, he said.

Closure of COVID centres in MP soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Jan 3: The Madhya Pradesh government has ordered closure of all COVID care centres in the state, except those in Bhopal, from January 1 in view of the low occupancy of beds, as per an official order made available on Sunday.

This decision evoked a sharp reaction from the opposition Congress, with its state unit president Kamal Nath questioning the rationale behind the order.

Defending the decision, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the pandemic is under control in the state and there is no justification to keep the COVID care centres open "just for the sake of keeping them open".

As per the state government order dated December 31, 2020 and directed to district collectors and health authorities, a policy decision has been taken to shut the COVID Care centres from the first day of New Year due to low occupancy of beds.

These centres were set up across the state for lodging COVID-19 patients.

The order also stated that in the case of rise of infected patients, health authorities can reopen these centres with prior permission of the state government.

Meanwhile, Nath tweeted: "Deaths due to coronavirus con-

This decision evoked a sharp reaction from the opposition Congress, with Kamal Nath questioning the rationale behind the order

tinuing in the state. The statistics of infection is increasing daily. Even the assembly session was cancelled due to fear of coronavirus and the Shivraj government closed all COVID care centres in the state except Bhopal?"

Hitting back, CM Chouhan said, if required, these COVID care centres will be opened again.

"Does Kamal Nath want COVID centres to remain open always? The COVID-19 situation is fully under control in the state. Arrangements are already in place for providing adequate treatment (to patients). Home isolation is also provided.

"If needed, these COVID care centres will be opened again, but there is no justification to keep them open for the sake of keeping them open," Chouhan said in a statement.

As on January 2, the total number of coronavirus positive cases in Madhya Pradesh stood at 2,43,302 including 3,627 fatalities, as per health officials.



100 Naxals sneaked into MP from C'garh, Maha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balaghat (MP), Jan 3: Around 100 Naxals from Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra have sneaked into Madhya Pradesh over the past few months to expand their base, prompting the state government to seek deployment of six companies of paramilitary forces in the rebel-hit areas, a police official said.

These security forces are likely to be deployed soon in MP's Balaghat and tribal-dominated Mandla districts, which the Naxals have entered, he said.

"As per the information provided to us by our sources, around 100 rebels from Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra have entered Madhya Pradesh over the past few months to expand their base in the region," the official said.

Six dalams (groups) of Naxals are operating in Balaghat and Mandla districts. Of these, Khatia



Mocha Dalam in Mandla came up last year, he said, adding that Mandla and Balaghat share a long border.

Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra, during his visit to Balaghat last month, had told reporters that six companies of

paramilitary forces are going to be sent to Balaghat and Mandla to tackle the Naxal menace.

The Madhya Pradesh police's anti-Naxal wing Hawk Force is already deployed in Balaghat. Besides, a Central Reserve Police Force

KEEPING VIGIL

The Madhya Pradesh police's anti-Naxal wing Hawk Force is already deployed in Balaghat

3 Maoists - two from Chhattisgarh and one from Maharashtra - were killed in 3 separate encounters with police in Balaghat

(CRPF) battalion is also stationed there, the official said.

Police said that Naxals have sneaked into MP from the neighbouring states can be gauged from the fact that three women Maoists-two from Chhattisgarh and one from Maharashtra- were killed in three separate encounters with police in Balaghat in November and December 2020.

A rebel who had entered Balaghat from Chhattisgarh had also been cap-

national



The state government has decided to vaccinate health workers, including doctors, nurses and paramedics on priority along with the police personnel
ANIL DESHMUKH | MAHA HOME MINISTER

SADANANDA GOWDA HOSPITALISED

Union Minister D V Sadananda Gowda collapsed due to low blood sugar in Chitradurga while on his way to the city from Shivamogga on Sunday and has been admitted to a hospital here, official sources said.



of the day quote

The Uddhav Thackeray government in Maharashtra could collapse over the remaining of Aurangabad and asked the ruling alliance to not get involved in a controversy on the issue

RAMDAS ATHAWALE | UNION MINISTER

The BJP, which has been systemically trampling all democratic and constitutional institutions, has not spared even the office of Governor

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CM

BJP has realised after the gram panchayat results that all its attempts to finish off the JD(S) have failed

H D KUMARASWAMY | FORMER KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

Rawat reviews military preparedness along LAC in Arunachal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: At the end of his two-day visit to various forward posts near the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat on Sunday said he was satisfied with the "high morale and motivation" of the armed forces personnel who will ensure "certain victory if challenged or given the opportunity", according to the Army.

Gen Rawat's visit to key locations in the frontier state came amid the nearly eight-month-long Sino-India border standoff in eastern Ladakh.

"CDS complimented soldiers for adopting innovative measures for surveillance through locally developed technology & the defence preparedness to face any challenge," the Army said in a tweet.

The Chief of Defence Staff visited several key installations including "forward most air maintained" posts in Dibang Valley, Lohit sector and Subansiri valley since his arrival in the state on Saturday morning, according to the Army.

On Sunday, Gen Rawat interacted with personnel of the Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) deployed along the Subansiri valley, it said.

Sources said Gen Rawat reviewed the overall preparedness of the armed forces in key forward bases and asked them to remain vigilant. The Army and the Indian Air Force have been maintaining a high state of operational readiness along the nearly 3,500-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in view of the eastern Ladakh standoff.

AAP to contest all seats in Guj local body polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Jan 3: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Sunday said it will contest all seats in the upcoming local bodies polls in Gujarat, and announced the first list of 504 candidates.

AAP's Delhi MLA and party spokesperson Atishi released the first list of candidates for the elections to the local bodies in the state, such as municipalities, municipal corporations, district and taluka panchayats, likely to be held in February.

"AAP will contest elections on all seats in the local bodies polls in the state for the first time. With this, the party will enter the electoral politics of Gujarat as a strong alternative to the BJP. AAP will work to remove the BJP from power," she said.

"Not just the local bodies polls, but AAP will also contest the Vidhan Sabha elections in Gujarat as well as other polls. People of Gujarat want an alternative," she said.

She claimed that it is on the demand of the people of Gujarat that AAP is entering the electoral politics in the state.

The list is being announced weeks in advance as the candidates need to conduct door-to-door campaign, she added.

The AAP leader said the party has also opened an email address for the people to register their complaints, if they have any, against the candidates.

Cong questions nod to Covaxin; BJP hits back



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: The BJP Sunday hit out at the Congress after some of its leaders questioned the approval process for Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine, with party president J P Nadda alleging that when ever India achieves something commendable the opposition party comes up with "wild theories" and "ridicule" the accomplishments.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri also took a swipe at the opposition leaders, saying they are on a quest for permanent political marginalisation.

His dig, however, drew a sharp retort from Congress leader Jairam Ramesh who compared him with Nazi propagandists. Nadda accused the Congress and other opposition parties of trying to cause panic among people to further their "failed politics and nefarious agendas".

"Congress and the Opposition is not proud of anything Indian. They should introspect about how their lies on the COVID-19 vaccine will be used by vested interest groups for their own agendas," the BJP chief said in a series of tweets.

Some Congress leaders, including Anand Sharma, Shashi Tharoor and Jairam Ramesh, on Sunday raised serious concerns over the grant of approval to Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine for restricted use, saying it is "premature" and can prove dangerous.

Nadda said, "Time and again we have seen whenever India achieves something commendable - that will further public good - the Congress comes up with wild theories to oppose and ridicule the accomplishments. The more they oppose, the more they are exposed. Latest example is the Covid vaccines." He said people have been rejecting such politics and will keep doing so in the future. "Congress and other Opposition leaders are trying

to cause panic in the minds of the people. I urge them to do politics on other issues, they should avoid playing with people's precious lives and hard-earned livelihoods," Nadda said. While the entire nation is happy about the development of vaccines, the opposition led by the Congress is filled with anger, ridicule and disdain, he alleged.

In a tweet, Puri said, "Our in-house cynics M's Jairam, Tharoor & Akhilesh are behaving true to form. They first questioned the valour of our soldiers & are now unhappy that the two vaccines to get DCGI nod are made in India. Clearly, they are on a quest for permanent political marginalization."

Jairam Ramesh retorted, "So says the in-house Goebbels-cum-Albert Speer."

Both Goebbels and Speer were close allies of German dictator Hitler. Tharoor, a Congress MP and former union minister, also countered Puri, saying he had never questioned the valour of our soldiers. "I would be happy and proud if more Indian vaccines are approved — but only after a full 3-phase trial confirms they are safe & effective. Short-circuiting the process is unprecedented, inadvisable & risks lives. "We are baffled to understand what scientific logic has motivated the SEC (subject expert committee) to approve this vaccine posthaste... In violation of the criteria in the draft regulatory guidelines for the development of Covid-19 vaccines published by CDSCO on 21/9/20," he tweeted, referring to Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Ramesh had earlier said that Bharat Biotech is a first-rate enterprise while adding that it is puzzling that internationally-accepted protocols relating to phase three trials are being modified for Covaxin. He asked Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to clarify.

COVID-19 VACCINE APPROVAL

Proud moment for India, say SII, Bharat Biotech

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: With the government approving two COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use, Serum Institute Sunday said it is ready to roll out Covishield vaccine in India in the coming weeks, while Bharat Biotech termed the nod to Covaxin as a giant leap for novel product development.

Even as the two companies gear up to roll out the vaccines, another homegrown pharma major Zydus Cadila said it has received Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) approval to initiate Phase III clinical trials of its COVID-19 vaccine ZyCoV-D. Pune-based vaccine major Serum Institute of India (SII) had entered into a collaboration with the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca to manufacture the vaccine Covishield.

"Happy new year, everyone! All the risks @SerumInstIndia took with stockpiling the vaccine, have finally paid off. COVISHIELD, India's



first COVID-19 vaccine is approved, safe, effective and ready to roll-out in the coming weeks," SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said in a tweet.

The company has already stockpiled around 50 million dosages of the vaccine and aims to produce up to 100 million dosages per month by March next year. The Oxford-Serum Institute of India (SII) had entered into a collaboration with the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca to manufacture the vaccine Covishield.

"Happy new year, everyone! All the risks @SerumInstIndia took with stockpiling the vaccine, have finally paid off. COVISHIELD, India's

@adarpoonawalla took a huge risk in creating capacity. But his bet was not just about financial rewards. It will help save millions of lives. A salute."

Reacting to the move by the DCGI, Bharat Biotech Chairman and Managing Director Krishna Ella said, "The approval of COVAXIN for emergency use is a giant leap for innovation and novel product development in India. It is a proud moment for the nation and a great milestone in India's scientific capability, a kickstart to the innovation ecosystem in India".

The phase-III human clinical trials of Covaxin began in mid-November. Bharat Biotech aims to recruit 26,000 volunteers across the country for the phase-III trials.

Meanwhile, Zydus Cadila said it has received DCGI approval to initiate phase III clinical trials of its COVID-19 vaccine ZyCoV-D. It will be initiating a phase III clinical trial in around 30,000 volunteers.

SHORT TAKES

Active nCoV cases drop below 2.5L

New Delhi: The COVID-19 active caseload in India has dropped below 2.5 lakh with the recoveries exceeding new cases and low number of fatalities per day, the Health ministry said Sunday. "India's present active caseload consists of just 2.39 per cent of India's Total Positive Cases. The new recoveries of 20,923 in the last 24 hours have led to a net decline of 2,963 in the Total Active cases," the Health ministry said in a statement.

Man killed by group

New Delhi: A 27-year-old man was beaten to death by a group of people in west Delhi's Raghuraj Nagar, police said Sunday. The deceased has been identified as Satender, a resident of Janta Colony in Shivaji Vihar. He was previously found involved in around eight cases, including that of robbery and thefts, they said. The exact cause of quarrel that triggered the fight can be ascertained after nabbing the absconding suspects, police said.

2 held for issuing fake RTA tax slips

Gurugram: A team of the Regional Transport Authority, Gurugram have arrested two persons who were allegedly issuing fake tax slips of the RTA to drivers, an official said Sunday. The fraudsters were overpowered by the RTA team near Ambience Mall and later handed over to the DLF Phase-3 police station Saturday.

Nadda to meet Gujarat leaders

Ahmedabad: BJP national president JP Nadda and general secretary BL Santhosh will visit Gujarat on Monday and meet senior party leaders here ahead of local body polls. In a statement, the party said the two leaders will participate in a meeting in Gandhinagar to be attended by state unit chief CR Patil, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani and Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel among others.

Man gets 14-yr jail term

Noida (UP): A court here has sentenced a man to 14 years' rigorous imprisonment for raping a minor in 2016, the Gautam Buddh Nagar police said Sunday. The order was issued by a special judge for cases lodged under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the police said.

FUN TIME



People enjoy a merry-go-round ride at RK Beach in Visakhapatnam

PTI PHOTO

Intense wet spell to continue over north India till Jan 5: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: North India is likely to witness an intense wet spell till Tuesday, with a fairly widespread precipitation accompanied with thunderstorm, lightning and hailstorm at isolated places, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday.

The activities will peak on Sunday and Monday over the plains (Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan) and on Monday over the western Himalayan region (Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), it added.

After the wet spell, fresh northerly-northwesterly winds are likely to set in over the plains of north-west India, causing "cold wave to severe cold wave conditions" at



isolated places in Punjab, Haryana and north Rajasthan from January 7 onwards, the IMD said.

An active western disturbance lies as a middle-and-upper-level cyclonic circulation over central Pakistan and neighbourhood, with its induced cyclonic circulation over southwest Rajasthan and neighbourhood at lower levels.

A north-south zone of wind confluence was also observed Sunday

from north Punjab to northeast Arabian Sea, with a strong interaction between southwesterly in association with the western disturbance and lower-level moist southeasterlies. Rains lashed the national capital in the morning. According to a MeT department official, heavy rainfall was reported in areas across Delhi and the minimum temperatures have increased due to clouds and easterly winds.

Bird flu alert in Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Jan 3: A bird flu alert has been sounded in Rajasthan after the presence of the dreaded virus was confirmed in dead crows in Jhalawar and more avian deaths were reported in other districts, including Jaipur, officials said.

The Animal Husbandry Department has set up a state-level control room and sent its teams to the districts for

effective monitoring, they said. On Sunday, seven crows were found dead at the iconic Jal Mahal here, taking the toll to 252 in the state. The Principal Secretary, Animal Husbandry, Kunji Lal Meena, told reporters on Sunday that the deaths due to bird flu have been mainly reported among crows, with most of them from the Kota and

Jodhpur divisions. "The virus is dangerous and necessary guidelines have been issued. All field officers and poultry farm owners have been asked to remain vigilant. Effective monitoring is ensured at all sites, especially in wetlands, Sambhar Lake and Kaila Devi bird sanctuary," Meena said, adding a control room has been set up at the state level. He said the crow deaths were reported on December 25 from Jhalawar. Their samples were sent to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSD) in Bhopal and the bird flu virus was detected. So far, the death of 100 crows has been reported from Jhalawar, 72 from Baran, 47 from Kota, 19 from Pali, seven from Jodhpur and seven from Jaipur.



Pak-based terror groups resort to cyber recruitment in J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Jan 3: Pakistan's intelligence agency and terror groups are now carrying out recruitment in Jammu and Kashmir using applications in cyber and mobile space as direct physical interactions have become difficult due to the security forces' hawk-eyed vigil, officials said Sunday.

Fake videos of alleged atrocities committed by the security forces and building a false narrative are now often used by the ISI handlers from Pakistan to whip up emotions among the new recruits, they said, citing intelligence reports and technical

surveillance. In 2020, over two dozen terror modules were busted by security agencies leading to the arrest of over 40 such sympathisers.

Two surrendered terrorists, Tawar Waghey and Amir Ahmed Mir, who laid down their arms before 34 Rashtriya Rifles of the Army late last month, had given an insight into their joining of terror modules that showed that cyber recruitment was being carried out on a large scale. Both the terrorists had come in contact with a Pakistan-based handler via Facebook who indoctrinated them before handing them over to a recruiter



code-named Khalid and Mohammed Abbas Sheikh. The two terrorists were provided training online using various links available on public

NEW THREAT

Earlier, terrorist sympathisers used to establish physical contact with the prospective recruits to bring them into a terror group's rank and files

However, after security agencies cracked down on such sympathisers, they changed their modus operandi

platforms like YouTube and both of them had met their local contact only once in Shopian in south Kashmir, the officials said. This, according to

the officials, is done to avoid exposure of sleeper cells created by Pakistan's ISI within the valley. Security agencies have busted several modules following intelligence inputs provided by local residents.

The two terrorists, after being recruited into The Resistance Front (TRF), which is believed to be a shadow outfit of banned terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba, were receiving orders as well as religious teachings from Pakistan-based Burhan Hamza. The officials said there were around 40 such cases where the recruitment was done and indoctrination carried out through social media, especially in

south Kashmir. The new recruits were awaiting orders from across the border. Terror groups are definitely facing a shortage of arms and that is one of the reasons why Pakistan-based terror outfits are more focused on sending more arms and less manpower, the officials said. They gave an example of last month's encounter on the outskirts of Jammu city where a valley-bound group of four terrorists was carrying 11 assault rifles and a huge quantity of ammunition. The death of a 22-year-old local terrorist Amir Siraj in north Kashmir late last month was yet another case of cyber recruitment, the officials said.

of the day quote

Around 1.60 lakh health workers in Punjab will receive a COVID-19 vaccine in the first phase

BALBIR SINGH SIDHU | PUNJAB HEALTH MINISTER

A target has been set for making 140-150 (BJP) MLAs win in the next assembly polls. To organise the party for this, I will soon begin a state-wide tour

B S YEDIYURAPPA | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

We are a political party; we will establish our presence and fight the elections (in West Bengal)

ASADUDDIN OWAISSI | AIMIM CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Arms, ammunition seized in Poonch

Jammu: Security forces Sunday recovered a cache of arms and ammunition near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, a police officer said. This was the third round of recovery of arms and ammunition in the district following the busting of a three-member module of Jammu and Kashmir Gazanvi Force.

Suspected Naxal held in Gujarat

Surat: A suspected Naxal, who was wanted in Jharkhand for several offences, has been arrested from Kosamba in Gujarat's Surat district, where he worked as a machine mechanic at a factory for the last three years, police said Sunday. The accused, identified as Guddu Singh, was arrested Saturday in a joint operation carried out by Kosamba police in Surat and Nandih Bazar police in Jharkhand's Palamu district, V K Patel, inspector of Kosamba police station, said.

School teacher found hanging

Agartala: A retrenched school teacher was found hanging in his house in South Tripura district, police said Sunday. Uttam Tripura (32) was found hanging in his house at Kamalkantapara, a remote tribal hamlet in the district, about 85-km from here, the police said. Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Belonia, Soumya Debbarma said a case of unnatural death was registered with Puratan Rajbari police station based on a complaint lodged by the wife of the deceased.

Fire at Noida shopping mall

Noida (UP): A fire broke out in the warehouse of a shopping mall in the commercial hub of Sector 18 in Noida Sunday, officials said. The fire was reported around 1 pm and has been doused, they said. "The fire broke out in the warehouse of DLF Mall of India which was soon doused by Fire Department. Nobody was injured in the incident," an official from local Sector 20 police station said.

11 injured in J&K road mishap

Bhaderwah (J&K): At least 11 people were injured on Sunday when a passenger bus skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. The bus was on its way from Bhaderwah to Jammu when its driver lost control due to slippery conditions near Ganpat bridge.



The swadeshi anti-Covid vaccine is welcome and congratulations to the scientists

MAYAWATI | BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY SUPREMO

FRESH SNOWFALL IN KASHMIR AND LADAKH

Moderate to heavy snowfall started on Sunday in Kashmir and Ladakh while rains lashed the Jammu division



23 dead in roof collapse at cremation ground

The incident was reported in the morning when several people, who came for the last rites of a fruit-seller, took shelter under a recently built structure of the cemetery to save themselves from getting drenched



Rescue operation carried out by NDRF personnel

Ghaziabad (UP), Jan 3: Twenty-three people, most of them attending a funeral, were killed and 15 others injured when the roof of a shelter at a cremation ground in Uttar Pradesh's Muradnagar collapsed Sunday, police said.

The dead, all of them men, were mostly relatives or neighbours of Jai Ram, who was being cremated at that time, officials said. Rescue workers sifted through the building's rubble for hours to ensure that more victims were not trapped there. The local people were the first to arrive at the cremation ground in Muradnagar's Ukharsa village in Ghaziabad district, adjoining the national capital.

Police followed by a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) unit also then reached the spot, pulling out the dead and the injured from the debris.

Apart from the 23 dead, 15 others were admitted at different hospitals, Ghaziabad (Rural) Superintendent of Police Iraj Raja said. At least 18 of them had been identified by the evening. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the deaths.

"I express my condolences to the near and dear ones of those who lost their lives in this accident, and also hope for a quick recovery of the injured," Modi tweeted in Hindi. Adityanath announced Rs 2 lakh as financial relief for the families of each man killed.

The chief minister also directed Meerut's Divisional Commissioner and Additional Director General of the police zone to submit a report on the incident. Union minister V K Singh, who is a Member of Parliament from Ghaziabad, and several senior police and administration officials visited the accident site. Uttar Pradesh Health Minister Atul Garg, who is the local BJP MLA, met some of the injured at the government hospital here. President Ram Nath Kovind offered his condolences to the family of the deceased. "My condolences to the family of the deceased. I pray that those hurt in this accident get well soon. Local administration is working for relief & assistance," President Ram Nath Kovind said in a tweet.

'Arrogant govt must withdraw farm laws'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: In a scathing attack on the Centre over the farmers' protests, Congress president Sonia Gandhi Sunday said that for the first time since independence such an "arrogant" government has come to power that cannot see the sufferings of 'annadatas', and demanded that the new farm laws be immediately withdrawn unconditionally.

In a statement in Hindi, she said governments and their leaders who ignore public sentiments in a democracy cannot govern for long and it is now quite clear that the protesting farmers will not bow in the face of the Centre's policy of "tire and pushover".

"There is still time, the Modi government should leave the arrogance of power and immediately withdraw the three black laws unconditionally to end the agitation of the farmers who are dying in the cold and rain. This is Rajdharm and a true tribute to the farmers who have lost their lives," Sonia Gandhi said. The Modi government should remember that democracy means protecting the interests of the people and the farmers-workers, she said. "Along with the people of the country, I am also disturbed seeing the condition of the 'annadatas' who have been agitating for 39 days at the borders of Delhi in the bitter cold and rain in support of their demands," Sonia Gandhi said.

In the wake of the government's apathy, so far, more than 50 farmers have lost their lives with some even taking the step of committing suicide due to the government's neglect, she said. The Congress is also supporting the farmers' agitation against the legislations. After the sixth round of formal negotiations Wednesday, the government and farm unions reached some common ground to resolve protesting farmers' concerns over rise in power tariff and penalties for stubble burning, but the two sides remained deadlocked over the main contentious issues of the repeal of three farm laws and a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP).



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Cops beat up tourist, video goes viral

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Manali, Jan 3: A shocking video clip of a group of policemen mercilessly beating up a man in the newly inaugurated Atal Tunnel beneath the Rohtang Pass near here in Himachal Pradesh went viral Sunday.

The police admitted that the incident involving the tourist and policemen was a result of an overtaking incident amid a massive traffic snarl in the tunnel on Saturday. The video was shot by a passerby.

In the clip, a Constable can be seen beating the man with a stick. Many bystanders watch but no one intervenes. Another policeman joins in towards the end of the clip and beats the man again by kicking him on the face and slapping him.



Among the six security personnel involved, one allegedly belonged to the Border Roads Organisation.

Twitter users who shared the video clip expressed shock over the "inhuman" treatment of the tourist by the policemen involved.

Earlier, a case of hooliganism had come to light when a group of youngsters from Delhi stopped their three vehicles midway in the Atal Tunnel, a new tourist attraction where parking vehicle inside is an offence, and started clicking photographs, recording videos and dancing. This led to obstruction of traffic inside the tunnel.

Anger brewing among Telangana farmers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Jan 3: At a time when thousands of farmers are protesting on the Delhi borders against three new central farm laws, anger is brewing among the farming community in Telangana as well against the state's move not to purchase agricultural produce in their villages.

Farmers' groups and opposition parties are gearing up for statewide protests against the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government's decision not to set up procurement centres in villages to purchase various crops.

Interestingly, the government cited new farm laws while announcing the move last week, prompting farmer organisations and non-BJP opposition to slam it for its "U-turn on farm legislations".

The government, which had opened procurement centres in villages to purchase crops during Covid-19 lockdown, declared that it was not possible to go in for similar procurement again.

"The new farm laws allow farmers to sell their crops anywhere. Hence, the state government need not set up purchase centres in villages," the Chief Minister's Office stated after Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao held a review meeting with Ministers and top officials.

"Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the government had set up purchase centres in villages and bought crops on humanitarian grounds so that farmers don't suffer losses. It is not possible to do it every time. The government is not a business organisation or trader. It is not a rice miller or a dal miller. Sale and purchase is not the responsibility of the government," the CMO quoted participants in the meeting as saying.

The TRS government also cited heavy losses incurred due to purchase of crops during the last six years for the decision. It incurred Rs 7,500 crore loss due to purchase of paddy, sorghum, maize, red gram, Bengal gram and sunflower. Though the government had purchased agricultural produce by paying the Minimum Support Price (MSP), it had to sell the same at lower prices in the market, as there was no demand for these crops.

The decision evoked sharp reaction from farmer groups and opposition parties. They were baffled over the U-turn by TRS, which had not only opposed the new farm laws in Parliament but also joined the nationwide shutdown called by farmer groups on December 8.

In September, the TRS chief had conveyed strict instruction to his party MPs to vote against the farm laws in Parliament. He alleged that the new legislations would harm the interests of the farmers and enable corporate lobbies to exploit them.

The issue of procurement centres was raised by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) during 'chalo Hyderabad' organised by it last week to intensify the agitation against farm laws.



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MATTER OF FAITH



A Hindu devotee offers prayer on a foggy and cold morning in Prayagraj

Digital channels of Prasar Bharati record 100% growth in 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Digital channels of Prasar Bharati have registered more than 100 per cent growth in 2020, with Pakistan being the second highest digital audience for Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR), the government said Sunday.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said the channels across Doordarshan and Akashvani clocked over a billion digital views and over six billion digital watch minutes in the year. "Interestingly during 2020, Pakistan accounted for the second highest digital audience for DD and AIR content after domestic audience from within India, with the United States close behind,"



the ministry said in a statement.

It said during 2020, Prasar Bharati's mobile application 'NewsOnAir' added more than 2.5 million users with the platform registering over 300 million views. Live Radio streaming broadcasting over 200 streams emerged as the most popular feature, it said. "Besides DD National and DD

News, the other channels in the top 20 digital channels of Prasar Bharati are Marathi News from DD Sahyadri, Kannada programming on DD Chandana, Bangla News from DD Bangla and Telugu programming on DD Saptagiri. "While DD Sports and Akashvani Sports have created a steady digital following with live commentary, Prasar Bharati Archives and DD Kisan have been steady digital performers featuring in top 10," the statement said.

Underscoring the substantial digital audience for news from the Northeast, the ministry said Northeast service of All India Radio (AIR) News was also in the top 10, and incidentally crossed the 1,00,000 subscribers' digital milestone.



A saffron flag in Srinagar

BJP may have won three Councilors out of the 140 seats in the District Development Council (DDC) polls in the valley and 72 of the 140 in the Jammu region. Of the three, it won just one in the Srinagar rural DDC. But it is trying hard to capture it by engineering a majority. A couple of Councilors

belonging to the National Conference and PDP have already switched sides to the Apni Party of Altaf Bukhari, a local businessman & ex-minister in the PDP-BJP government who floated his own party after the abrogation of Article 370. The BJP is also wooing 4 independents as the PDP, NC & Apni Party won three seats each. Nobody has a majority.

The BJP's top leadership is working overtime to capture the Srinagar DDC as it will be a great day in the history to have BJP-Apni Party DDC in the heart of the Valley. The BJP has perfected the art of converting a minority into the majority in many states and this process will now continue in the Valley too. Interestingly, the BJP recently captured the Srinagar Municipal Corporation indirectly by engineering defection of Junaid Azim Mattoo to the Apni Party.

ISI rearing its head again

The Intelligence agencies had sounded out to the government at least two months ago that ISI of Pakistan has shifted tack. It has moved its focus to Punjab where farmers' agitation is building up. It may provide an opportunity to reap the harvest. But it seems those handling such Field Reports (FRs) from Punjab in the corridors of powers here didn't bother much. Now many new TV channels and newspapers have propped up overnight in Punjab broadcasting and printing whatever they like. They have appeared on the scene and injected fresh ammunition to the already surcharged atmosphere. What started as an agitation of Punjab farmers only has now been joined by protesters from Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP

and other states. The Modi government had not bargained for this. The situation is worrisome as ISI is playing a key role and militancy may raise its head again in Punjab. Since last week, joint operations launched by the BSF and Punjab Police have led to the recovery of at least 11 Chinese made grenades, two AK-47 rifles and several rounds of live ammunition from border areas of Wazirpur Chak village in Gurdaspur district.

MP tops in wheat procurement

One of the reasons for Madhya Pradesh farmers staying away from the current agitation is that they have been deriving maximum benefit of MSP compared to farmers in Punjab, Haryana and

elsewhere in Wheat procurement. Data from Rabi Marketing Seasons (RMS) 2016-17 to 2020-21 (five year period) shows that a total of 47.58 lakh farmers from MP availed of MSP compared to 44.56 lakh farmers from Punjab and 37.30 lakhs from Haryana. A scrutiny of data revealed that Punjab was ahead in 2016-17 when out of a total of 20.46 lakh beneficial farmers in the country 41 per cent belonged to the Punjab, 26 per cent from Haryana & 23% from MP. Come 2018-19 and MP overtook Punjab and Haryana. As many as 9.58 lakhs (24 per cent) farmers from Madhya Pradesh reaped the benefits of MSP in wheat compared to 23% in Punjab.

Why blame Rahul

Why Blame Rahul Gandhi for his usual year-end sojourn in

Italy abandoning the Foundation Day function of his party. There is no denial that he pushes off on vacation many times during the year and that has been his routine ever since he stepped into politics since 2004. But why blame him. Even Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav left for London with his family. As if this is not enough, another farmer leader and Haryana's Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala is holidaying in the Rann of Kutch. Want to know where Bihar's Tejashwi Yadav goes for holidaying? Delhi is his destination and he doesn't meet anybody here. He is not even seen with the agitating farmers or sending a contingent from Bihar either. Young ministers belonging to the BJP may be sulking as Modi is keeping a close watch on them and a couple of them have paid the price too in the past. But other parties have no such problem.



I am deeply saddened by the death of two French soldiers in Mali. France is determined in its fight against terrorism
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

INDIAN STARTUP WINS RECOGNITION IN S'PORE

A 19-year-old Indian student in Singapore Harsh Dalal is keeping his options open on a startup he has built with four applications in his teenage while schooling.



of the day quote

Court cases would be slapped within 72 hours against persons making derogatory remarks against the Pakistan's Army
SHEIKH RASHID AHMED | INTERIOR MINISTER, PAKISTAN

The lockdown must be extended until the end of January. It's clear that Chancellor Angela Merkel and Germany's 16 state governors will agree to extend it
MARKUS SOEDER | GOVERNOR, BAVARIA

Certainly our people don't use any form of protective measures, neither masks nor social distancing. you move around the city (of Mogadishu) or countryside, nobody even talks about it
MOHAMED ABDULLAH FARMAJAO | PRESIDENT, SOMALIA

Biden flexes Georgia muscle

AGENCIES

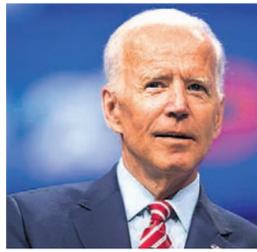
Washington, Jan 3: President-elect Joe Biden is going all-in to help Democrats win two Senate runoff in Georgia that will determine party control in the critical early years of his administration, a widespread effort that not long ago would have been unthinkable in a Republican-dominated state in the Deep South.

The push ahead of Tuesday's election comes with early voting making some Republicans nervous as President Donald Trump, who narrowly lost the state to Biden, continues to assert falsely that the Georgia election process is rigged.

Biden and his team have steered at least USD 18 million to help Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock try to unseat Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler.

Biden's campaign manager and incoming White House deputy chief of staff, Jen O'Malley Dillon, confirmed the figures on Saturday, ahead of upcoming visits to the state by both Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. The money includes about USD 6 million in staff and voter data support and \$12 million in fundraising for the two campaigns.

The president-elect and Harris also have recorded robocalls to



blanket the state ahead of Tuesday. The pair has planned media interviews in markets across Georgia, including morning and late-afternoon "drive-time" radio on Election Day. The effort reflects the high stakes, with Democrats needing a sweep to tilt the Senate in their favor, while Republicans need just one seat to keep their majority and force Biden to contend with divided government. Beyond what it means for Biden's legislative prospects, the president-elect's activity highlights the state's evolution into a legitimate two-party battleground and what Biden's team touts as his advantages as the first Democrat since 1992 to carry the state in a presidential election.

"We're not having any conversations about whether there's a value add to have the president-elect be a part of this. There is," O'Malley

Dillon said in an interview.

"The party feels that way and sees the unique coalition that he's put together." Biden will be in Atlanta on Monday, the same day that Trump heads to the north Georgia town of Dalton for an election eve rally. Vice President Mike Pence also will be in Georgia on Monday. Harris will be in Savannah on Sunday.

Republicans face considerable pressure to maximize their expected Election Day advantage to make up for an apparent repeat of Democrats' success in early voting turnout in November's election.

"This is a turnout election, and the Democrats are turning out their votes," Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, warned a GOP crowd Saturday in Cumming, an Atlanta suburb where he campaigned with Loeffler.

In November, about 5 million ballots were cast altogether. That included 3.6 million early ballots and about 1.4 million on Election Day. Democrats posted a wide advantage in early ballots, but Republicans made up ground on November 3. Biden defeated Trump by about 12,500 votes; Perdue led Ossoff by about 88,000 votes but fell short of the required majority to win outright. Loeffler and Warnock were forced into a runoff because both fell well shy of a majority.

11 PAK MINERS SHOT DEAD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

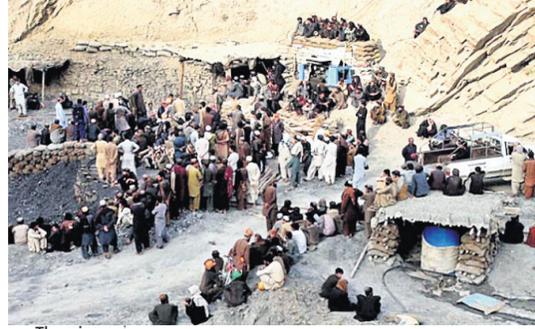
Karachi, Jan 3: At least 11 coal miners from Pakistan's minority Shia Hazara community were killed on Sunday after gunmen kidnapped them and took them to nearby mountains, where they opened fire on them in the restive southwestern province of Balochistan, according to media reports.

According to police, the miners were on the way to work at Machh coal field when the unidentified gunmen kidnapped them and opened fire on them after taking them to the nearby hills, the Express Tribune reported.

Six of the miners died on the spot and five who were critically wounded died on the way to a hospital. According to media reports, an initial investigation has revealed that the attackers identified the miners as being from a Shia Hazara community and the gunmen took them away, leaving others unharmed.

A heavy contingent of police, Frontier Corps, and district administration officials reached the site after the incident.

Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned the killing of 11 coal miners and termed the incident a yet another cowardly [and] inhumane act of terrorism.



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"The families of the victims will not be left abandoned by the [government]," Khan tweeted. "Have asked the FC to use all resources to apprehend these killers and bring them to justice."

Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan has condemned the incident and sought an inquiry report from the authorities concerned, the daily reported.

Those who targeted these innocent coal miners do not deserve any concessions, he said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the killing but banned Sunni extremist organisation Lashker-e-Jhangvi has targeted the minority Hazara community in Baluchistan in the past.

SHORT TAKES

Israelis demand PM's resignation

Jerusalem: Thousands of Israelis protested again Saturday against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demanding that the long-serving leader resign over corruption charges against him and for allegedly mishandling the coronavirus crisis. Holding signs reading "Go" and "Everyone is equal before the law," the demonstrators crowded a Jerusalem square near Netanyahu's official residence, where they have gathered for months to call for his resignation. Netanyahu is charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes.

Lack of space in funeral homes

Los Angeles: As communities across the country feel the pain of a surge in coronavirus cases, funeral homes in the hot spot of Southern California say they must turn away grieving families as they run out of space for the bodies piling up. The head of the state funeral directors association says mortuaries are being inundated as the United States nears a grim tally of 350,000 COVID-19 deaths. More than 20 million people in the country have been infected.

Australian states reimpose curbs

Sydney: More Australian states and territories are reimposing travel restrictions to prevent the coronavirus spreading from new outbreaks in New South Wales and Victoria states. The Australian Capital Territory has shut out non-residents who have been in the northern beaches of Sydney, where the outbreaks are most concentrated. Greater Sydney and other smaller centers, unless they have an exemption. The island state of Tasmania has barred anyone directly linked to the latest Victorian cases, listing exposure sites.

Airport in Yemen begins operations

Sanaa: A plane landed Sunday at the airport in Yemen's southern port city of Aden, officials said, the first commercial flight to arrive since the deadly missile attack last week on the facility that killed at least 25 people and wounded 110 others. The attack Wednesday took place just moments after a plane carrying members of Yemen's Cabinet landed on a flight from the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh.

TEMPLE VANDALISM

8 police officials suspended in Pak

So far, 100 people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the incident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Peshawar, Jan 3: Eight police officials in Pakistan were suspended on Sunday for dereliction of duty after a Hindu temple was vandalised and set on fire by a mob led by members of a radical Islamist party in the country's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

So far, 100 people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the incident, the police said, adding that 45 were arrested on Sunday.

Over 350 people have been named in the FIR after the temple in Karak district's Terri village was vandalised and set on fire on Wednesday by a mob protesting against its expansion work. Superintendent of Police (Investigation) Zahir Shah said that 100 people, including seven leading figures, have been arrested in the case while efforts were on to arrest all the 350 nominated accused in the FIR.

The leading figures include Maulana Amanullah, Maulana Imdadullah, Maulana Matullah, Maulana Muhammad Hakeem and Maulana Anwar Zaman.

The arrested accused were produced before an anti-terrorist court which sent them to three days of po-



lice custody.

District Police Officer of Karak Irfanullah Marwat suspended eight police officials on Saturday for dereliction of duty.

The temple, which also has a Samadhi of a Hindu religious leader, was attacked by the mob after members of the Hindu community received permission from the local authorities to renovate its decades-old building.

The mob, led by some local clerics and supporters of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party (Fazal ur Rehman group), demolished the newly-constructed work alongside the old structure. The attack on the temple drew strong condemnation from human rights activists and the minority Hindu community leaders.

India has also lodged a protest with Pakistan over the vandalism of the temple and sought a strict action against those responsible for the incident.

The protest was conveyed to Pakistan through diplomatic channels, sources in New Delhi said on Friday. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan has assured that the government would reconstruct the damaged temple and the Samadhi at the shortest possible time.

Will Turkey become a nuclear power with Pak's support?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 3: A rogue nexus involving Pakistan and Turkey, with China looking the other way, maybe taking root to fulfil Ankara's ambition to emerge as the world's next nuclear weapon power.

Suspicious about Pakistan's covert support for Turkish nukes has been aroused by a recent meeting of the Turkey-Pakistan High-Level Military Dialogue Group (HLMDG). The assemblage took place on December 22-23, 2020.

Pakistan's Defence Secretary Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Mian Muhammad Hilal Hussain led the delegation from Islamabad, while Deputy Chief of Turkish Army General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu headed the Turkish

team, says an article.

There are other indications that collaboration on nuclear delivery systems was the hot topic discussed during the meeting.

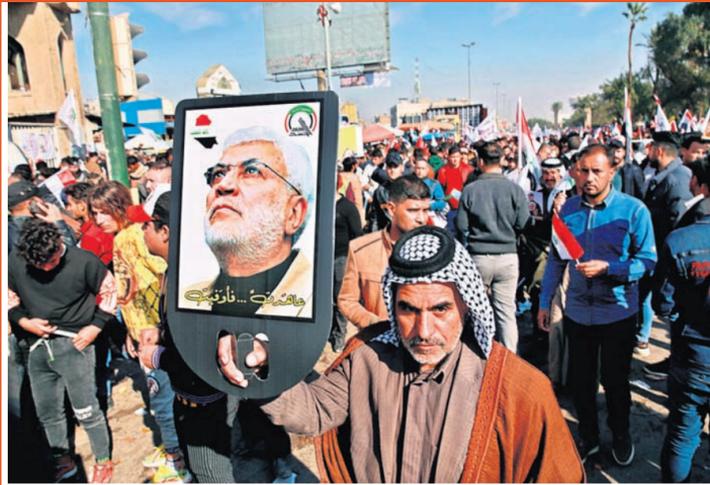
The visitors from Islamabad met top Turkish Army generals and bureaucrats dealing with missile production and aerial military hardware. The hosts included Professor Ismail Demir head of Presidency of Turkish Defence Industries and Temil Kotil, CEO of Turkish Aerospace Limited (TAI).

The Pakistani defence delegation also visited top Turkish defence companies including Bakyar (UAV OEM), TAI, HAVELSAN and ASELSAN. Analysts say that the insider meetings in Turkey took place within a rapidly evolving



geopolitical context. Islamabad and Ankara have become staunch strategic allies, a partnership sealed by personal bonds between Turkey's ambitious President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistan's military backed Prime Minister Imran Khan. It is no secret that Erdogan hopes to emerge as the pre-eminent Islamic

REMEMBERING A HERO



A supporter of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces, holds a photo of him during a protest in Tahrir Square, Iraq, Sunday

Procession marks death anniversary of Soleimani

AGENCIES

Baghdad, Jan 3: A mock funeral procession in Iraq marked the one-year anniversary of the US drone strike near Baghdad that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and top Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Thousands of mourners joined the march on the highway leading to the Baghdad airport Saturday evening where the strike that killed the two men took place. It was blocked with cars.

Posters of the dead men adorned both sides of the road, which was lined with tents that served food and drinks for those who walked the highway. The scene of the bombing was turned into a shrine-like area sealed off by red ropes, with a photo of Soleimani and al-Muhandis in the middle, as mourners lit candles. Shrapnel marks were still visible on the asphalt and walls in the area.

400 mn km within 163 days

AGENCIES

Beijing, Jan 3: China's first Mars exploration mission Tianwen-1 travelled more than 400 million km by Sunday morning and is expected to enter Mars orbit next month, the country's space agency said.

So far, the Mars probe had flown in space for 163 days. It was about 130 million km from Earth and about 8.3 million km from Mars, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

According to the CNSA, the probe is functioning stably and is scheduled to slow down before entering Mars orbit in more than a month and preparing itself to land on the red planet.

Since its launch on July 23, 2020, the Mars probe has captured an image showing both Earth and the Moon, as well as taking several selfies.

Tianwen-1 probe, weighing about five tonnes, consists of an orbiter, a lander and a rover. It is designed



to complete orbiting, landing and roving in one mission.

After entering Mars orbit, it will spend two to three months surveying potential landing sites, using a high-resolution camera to prepare for the landing in May.

After the landing, the rover will

be released to conduct scientific exploration with an expected lifespan of at least 90 Martian days (about three months on Earth), and the orbiter, with a design life of one Martian year (about 687 days on Earth), will relay communications for the rover while conducting its own scientific detection, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Tianwen-1 means Questions to Heaven and comes from a poem written by Qu Yuan (about 340-278 BC), one of the well-known poets of ancient China.

The US, Russia, India and the EU have so far succeeded in sending missions to Mars regarded as the most complex space mission. India became the first Asian country to have successfully launched its Mars orbiter mission Mangalyaan which has entered the orbit of the red planet in 2014.

India also became the first country to have entered the Martian orbit in its first attempt.

Johnson warns lockdown may get tougher

AGENCIES

London, Jan 3: Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Sunday warned that the current tiered system of lockdown to arrest the spread of COVID-19 may have to be toughened further as the UK grapples with the new strain of the coronavirus.

As teachers' unions have been calling for a countrywide closure of all schools for a few weeks due to the rapid spread of the new variation, Johnson insisted that parents should send their children to school from Monday.

However, he admitted that even stricter restrictions for the wider public may be on their way in the coming weeks as the coronavirus cases in the country jumped by 57,725 this weekend, taking the death toll close to 75,000.

and Malaysia. Apart from the HLMDG conclave, on December 21, 2020, Lt. Gen. Sahir Shamsahad of Pakistani Army also met Lt. Gen. Wali Turkchi of Turkish Army in Ankara for the Second Round of Turkish-Pakistani Military Talks. Sources said that transfer of missile technology and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) were the focus of these discussions.

Apart from ideological reasons, there is a clear quid pro quo in the Turkey-Pakistan alliance. The International Institute of Strategic Studies, points out that Turkish companies have backed Pakistan to covertly import materials from Europe, and export the finished products to players like Libya and North Korea.

There have been some media reports that have spotlighted that Turkey might be possessing a considerable number of centrifuges, spinning machines that purify uranium to higher grades, made by Pakistan.

On his part, Erdogan has made no secret about his nuclear ambitions—a gateway for the fulfilment of his self-espoused dream of elevating Turkey's status to the heights of the Ottoman empire. In September 2019, he said: "Some countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not one or two. I, however, am not supposed to have missiles with nuclear warheads. This, I cannot accept... And right next to us, there is Israel, right? With everything, it is frightening."



We are reaching a critical milestone in our vaccine development programme and towards our goal of helping people fight the pandemic with an indigenously discovered, safe and efficacious vaccine
PANKAJ R PATEL | CHAIRMAN, ZYDUS GROUP

INDUSTRY BODY LAUDS BSNL'S MOVE

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry has lauded state-run BSNL's move to test India-made telecom equipment before allowing indigenous manufacturers participate in the 4G tender to be floated by the company



of the day quote

India has become power surplus under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the past six years and is also witnessing the highest growth rate in renewable energy in the world.

RK SINGH | UNION MINISTER

For the logistics sector, 2020 has been a busy one! More so, during the lockdown, when the sector emerged as the key player in prioritising the shipments of essentials and medical goods

RS SUBRAMANIAN | SENIOR VP & MD, DHL EXPRESS

In order to take undue advantage and profiteering, the integrated steel companies fix up the steel prices almost at par with the international steel prices despite all the protection and incentives provided to steel industry backed up with secured iron ore and other raw material supply

RK SHARMA | SECRETARY GENERAL, FIMI

CAIT plans to reduce Chinese imports to ₹1L cr in 2021

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 3: The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Sunday said it has targeted to reduce imports from China to ₹1 lakh crore this year.

In a statement, the traders' body said it would run a programme this year to "liberate" the country's e-commerce business from the clutches of foreign companies. "As part of its 'Boycott Chinese Goods' campaign from June 10,



2020, the CAIT has set the target of bringing down imports from China by ₹1 lakh crore by the end of this year," the traders' body

BOYCOTTING CHINA

- The traders' body said it would run a programme this year to "liberate" India's e-commerce business from the clutches of foreign companies
- It also said it would urge the government on the formation of e-commerce policy
- CAIT's priorities also include supporting women entrepreneurs

Retail Trade Policy, Traders Welfare Board at the Centre and all states, simplification of GST tax system and creation of a separate income tax slab for traders of the country.

It would urge the government for formation of a joint committee of officials and traders in all the districts and also seek the simplification of Food Safety and Standards Act.

CAIT's would also include supporting women entrepreneurs.

It would also make efforts for making the pension scheme more rational for traders, subsidised insurance scheme for traders and their employees, availing easy access of loan for traders.

Centre invites EoIs for 26 per cent stake sale in BEML

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 3: The government Sunday invited preliminary bids for strategic sale of 26 per cent stake along with transfer of management control in defence PSU BEML.



"Govt has issued the PIM/EOI for disinvestment of 26 per cent equity share capital of BEML Ltd along with transfer of management control. Disinvestment will be through a two stage competitive bidding process," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted.

Bidders can submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) for buying the stake in BEML by March 1, as per the Preliminary Information Memorandum (PIM) issued by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).

At the current market price, a 26 per cent sale could fetch about ₹1,000 crore to the exchequer. Shares of BEML closed at ₹974.25, on Friday.

BEML is involved in sectors like defence, rail, power, mining and infrastructure.

The company's total revenue from operations was ₹3,028.82 crore in fiscal 2019-20.

SBI Capital Markets has been appointed as the advisor by the Government of India (GOI) for advising and managing the proposed strategic disinvestment of BEML.

Samsung likely to report \$9bn in operating income

AGENCIES

Seoul, Jan 3: Samsung Electronics, the world's largest memory chip maker, is expected to report a smaller-than-earlier operating income estimate due to the weakness of the US dollar, industry sources said Sunday.

Samsung, also the world's largest smartphone vendor, is likely to report an operating income of 9.74 trillion won (\$8.95 billion) during the fourth quarter of last year, up 36.8 per cent from a year earlier.

But the latest estimate is slightly lower than the 10.16 trillion won projected a month earlier, reports Yonhap news agency.

Samsung reported an operating income of 12.35 trillion won during the third quarter of last year, the highest in over two years, driven by rising chip demand and a recovery in smartphone demand.

But during the October-December period, the global resurgence in virus cases and the weaker dollar may hurt the tech giant's profitability.

"Samsung may have racked up 4.3 trillion won in operating income during the last quarter, smaller than the third quarter's 5.5 trillion won because of the weak dollar," said Lee Seung-woo, an analyst at Eugene Investment & Securities.

Private banks witnessed rise in NPAs in FY20: RBI

A recent report by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), cited that gross NPA ratio as well as the ratio of restructured standard assets to total funded amounts emanating from larger borrowal accounts in the public sector banks have gone down

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 3: Private sector banks witnessed a rise in non-performing assets (NPA) in respect of large borrowal accounts with exposure of ₹five crore or above.

A recent report by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), cited that gross NPA ratio as well as the ratio of restructured standard assets to total funded amounts emanating from larger borrowal accounts in the public sector banks have gone down.

At the end of September 2020, large borrowal accounts constituted 79.8 per cent of NPAs and 53.7 per cent of total loans, it said.

"During 2019-20, PSBs' GNPA ratio as well as the ratio of restructured standard assets to total



funded amounts emanating from larger borrowal accounts trended downwards. On the contrary, PVBs experienced an increasing share of NPAs in respect of such accounts," it said.

Further, the share of special mention accounts (SMA-0) witnessed a sharp rise in September 2020, which, according to the report, may be an initial sign of stress after lifting of moratorium August 31, 2020.

However, the share of other categories of SMAs i.e., SMA-1 and SMA-2 remained at a relatively lower level, it said.

The RBI report also showed that the decline in NPAs in the last financial year was achieved largely on the back of write-offs.

As per the data, that both public and private sector banks wrote off NPAs worth over ₹2.37 lakh crore.

The banks' net NPA stood over ₹2.89 lakh crore in 2019-20 as against ₹3.55 lakh crore in 2018-19.

Vaccines nod 'turning point' in fight against Covid: Niti

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Terming the approval given to two coronavirus vaccines for emergency use as "turning point" in India's fight against COVID-19, Niti Aayog member VK Paul Sunday said the speed with which scientists and the industry came together to meet this challenge epitomizes the spirit and potential of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

India's drug regulator DCGI Sunday approved Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country, paving the way for a massive inoculation drive.

"Today is a turning point in India's fight against Covid-19 as two Made-in-India vaccines get approval for emergency use," the Niti Aayog said in a tweet quoting Paul, who is also the Chairman of National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration.

"The speed with which our scientists and industry came together to meet this challenge, epitomizes the spirit and potential of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," it added.

The approval by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) was given on the basis of recommendations submitted by a COVID-



Today is a turning point in India's fight against Covid as two Made-in-India vaccines get approval for emergency use
VK PAUL | MEMBER, NITI AAYOG

19 subject expert committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). "After adequate examination, CDSCO has decided to accept the recommendations of the Expert Committee and accordingly, vaccines of M/s Serum and M/s Bharat Biotech are being approved for restricted use in emergency situation," DCGI Dr V G Somani told a press conference here. This paves the way for the roll out of at least two vaccines in India in the coming days.

The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, has tied up with AstraZeneca to manufacture Covishield.

Covaxin has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Serum Institute of India's CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted, "Happy new year, everyone! All the risks Serum Institute of India took with stockpiling the vaccine, have finally paid off. COVISHIELD, India's first COVID-19 vaccine is approved, safe, effective and ready to roll-out in the coming weeks."

Seven of top-10 firms add ₹75K cr in cumulative m-cap

IT major Infosys' m-cap rose by ₹10,251.38 crore to ₹5,36,878.45 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Seven of the top-10 most valued domestic firms together added ₹75,845.46 crore in market valuation in the past week, with HDFC twins emerging as the biggest gainers. Apart from HDFC duo, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance were other gainers.

On the other hand, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Hindustan Unilever Limited and Bharti Airtel saw erosion in their market valuation.

The valuation of HDFC jumped by ₹20,857.99 crore to ₹4,62,586.41 crore and that of HDFC Bank zoomed by ₹15,393.9 crore to reach ₹7,84,758.50 crore.

IT major Infosys' m-cap rose by ₹10,251.38 crore to ₹5,36,878.45 crore. The market capitalisation of ICICI



Bank gained ₹9,609.3 crore to reach ₹3,64,199.40 crore and that of TCS went up by ₹7,410.96 crore to ₹10,98,773.29 crore.

Kotak Mahindra Bank added ₹6,500.94 crore to take its m-cap to ₹3,94,914.98 crore and Bajaj Finance gained ₹5,820.99 crore to reach ₹3,18,181.18 crore.

In contrast, the market capitalisation of RIL declined by

₹4,279.13 crore to ₹12,59,741.96 crore and that of HUL dipped by ₹2,948.69 crore to ₹5,60,933.06 crore. Bharti Airtel's valuation fell by ₹1,063.83 crore to ₹2,81,015.76 crore.

The ranking of top-10 firms are RIL, TCS, HDFC Bank, HUL, Infosys, HDFC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.

CIL capex utilisation over ₹8,000cr till December

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 3: Despite its cash-flow issues, Coal India Ltd (CIL) has already spent over ₹8,000 crore as capital expenditure (capex) till December 2020 in the current fiscal, and is looking to meet a revised target of ₹13,000 crore of such expense by the end of FY21, an official said Sunday.

The capital expenditure target for the financial year 2020-21 was initially set at ₹10,000 crore, the CIL official said.

The government has instructed the public sector companies to increase their capital expenses to boost the economy which was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.

"With the achievements of our internal goals, the government has raised our capital expenditure target to ₹13,000 crore.

"We have already crossed ₹8,000 crore till December and will definitely surpass the ₹10,000-crore mark. We will chase the new goal



as this will help revive the economy," a CIL official said.

The Maharatna PSU had spent ₹5,023 crore till September this fiscal, which was 118 per cent utilisation of its half-yearly target.

The spending was made for procuring heavy earth-moving machinery, setting up railway lines, development of sidings, exploration works and investments in joint ventures.

The major challenge for Coal India for accelerating capital expenditure has been the cash-flow issues, the official said.

MARKET OUTLOOK

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Jan 3: Expectations of healthy quarterly results along with FII inflows' supportive global cues and developments over fast anti-Covid vaccine rollout will power the accelerated rise in Indian equities at least in the near future.

Accordingly, a positive earning outlook on many sectors will sustain investors' interest in the market. Besides, the step by step development over the rollout plan of anti-Covid vaccine will further augment hopes of a faster economic revival.

However, analysts cite the possibility of intermittent profit booking to hamper the upward trajectory. "After a rollercoaster 2020 with a satisfying end, markets could go



into the new calendar year with hopes of improvement in corporate performance that would justify the current valuations," said Deepak

Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities. "Nifty has finally managed to close above 14,000. Advance decline

ratio is sharply in the positive suggesting higher interest in broader markets. The uptrend in the market is maturing after the Nifty ended up for the ninth consecutive week; however, there are no signs of immediate reversal." On the earnings front, the release of Q3FY21 results will commence from

the next week. Investors expect robust earning figures in the back of healthy fes-

tive season sales and opening up of the economy.

"The market momentum seen in the last couple of months is likely to continue on the back of strong global cues, sustained inflows, and improving macro trends," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"Further highest ever GST collections for December at ₹1.15 lakh crore can add to the positive momentum. The December quarterly results and Union Budget around 1st of February will be some of the key events for the market."

Recently, December automobile data showed healthy up-tick while GST collections reached record high levels.

"The trend in the market starting

next week will be based on the upcoming corporate earnings release for the 3rd quarter. IT and banking stocks will be in the limelight as major companies in these sectors are expected to kickstart the result season in the coming days," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

"Improvements in corporate earnings in the upcoming result season will keep the market buoyant." According to LKP Securities' Head of Research S Ranganathan, "Rural stocks should also be in focus on the back of sops given last month coupled with buoyant sale of tractors."

"Consumer Stocks who have had a good month of December would also be in focus during the coming week."

DDA launches new housing scheme

New Delhi: The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has launched a new housing scheme that offers 1,354 flats ranging from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS)/Janata to High Income Group (HIG) categories in areas like Dwarka, Vasant Kunj, Rohini, Jasola and Manglupuri. Applicants can apply online till February 16 through the DDA website.

EATING OUT FIASCO: ALL FIVE ISOLATED PLAYERS TO TRAVEL IN SAME CHARTERED FLIGHT TO SYDNEY

BCCI in damage control mode

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 2: The entire Indian cricket contingent, including the five players who are in precautionary isolation, will travel to Sydney. It is the venue for the third Test against Australia. The five will travel in the same chartered flight, BCCI officials said Sunday. The players are vice-captain Rohit Sharma, opener Shubman Gill, stumper Rishabh Pant, pacer Navdeep Saini and batsman Prithvi Shaw. Out of the five, the first three are expected to part of the playing XI in the Test. Question marks over the participation arose after a video emerged of the five allegedly breaching bio-security protocols.

Cricket Australia (CA) in a media release Saturday, said it is probing the matter jointly with the BCCI. The video was posted on Twitter by a fan who identified himself as Navaldeep Singh. "If you carefully read the CA statement, they never said that it's a breach. They said that they are seeking to determine if it's a breach. So there is no restriction on these five players travelling with the team to Sydney," a senior BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity Sunday. "Had the gentleman (the fan) in question not lied about hugging a



STIRRING THE HORNET'S NEST: This is the picture which has sent both BCCI and CA into a tizzy

player (Rishabh Pant) on social media, this mess wouldn't have happened. The players had gone inside the restaurant because it was drizzling. This guy, without permission, shot a video and then paid the bill which no one asked him. After that for publicity he put a screen grab of bill. You want to tell

me that Cricket Australia will be taking a decision based on a purported video of a person who first lied and then retracted his statement," the official added.

However, the incident has put administrative manager Girish Dongre in a spot of bother. He is the man under the BCCI scanner now.

Dongre is an employee of the BCCI and is supposed to handle and also keep the team abreast about the COVID-19 protocols.

"There is a professional team of people who have to ensure that every rule is being followed and it was Dongre's duty to ensure that players are told that they can't get

- All five who allegedly violated bio-security protocols to travel on same flight with others
- The 5 were seen training with the other members of the Indian team in the gym
- Administration manager Girish Dongre under BCCI scanner for failure to communicate properly with players

into an indoor area," informed the official.

The Indian side Sunday boarded two buses to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) for a gym session after their practice session was cancelled due to rain.

Gill boarded a team bus to return to the hotel with several other members of the touring party after training. However, a spokesman for the Indian side said social distancing requirements were met, the report claimed.

Friday's incident according to a couple of media reports was not the first time that Indian players seemingly breached the bio-secure protocols. India captain Virat Kohli and limited-overs all-rounder Hardik Pandya were also pictured at a shop in Sydney in early December during the white-ball leg of the tour.

Rahane, a born leader: Chappell

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Ian Chappell is not surprised to see Ajinkya Rahane captain India 'flawlessly' to a series-leaving triumph against Australia in the Melbourne Test. He feels the Mumbaier comes across a 'born leader', capable of being both 'smart and brave'. India won the second Test by a convincing margin of eight wickets.

"It was no surprise that Rahane captained India flawlessly at the MCG. Anyone who saw him in charge in Dharamsala in 2017 would have recognised a man born to lead cricket teams," Chappell wrote in his column for a cricket-specific website. In the game Rahane scored 46 and 38 not out in the two innings he played.

"The moment that caught my attention in the Dharamsala match was the time

Rahane called on debutant left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav. At that point David Warner and Steve Smith were involved in a century partnership. "This is a brave move" I thought, and it turned out to be a very smart one," Chappell recalled.

Yadav quickly claimed the wicket of Warner, caught by Rahane at first slip, and that prompted a five-wicket slide for Australia to lose the match.

"However, there's much more to his leadership than just those two important qualities. He is calm when things could easily get out of hand," said the former Oz captain, who is a respected figure in world cricket.

"He (Rahane) has earned the respect of his teammates, one of the most important aspects of good captaincy. And he gets runs when they are needed, which adds to the respect his team have for him," Chappell pointed out.

"The captain's century came at a time when India could easily have faded to a two-nil deficit, and it was this performance that gave his team the conviction that victory was attainable," Chappell signed off.



Ajinkya Rahane poses with his man of the match award at Melbourne

SHORT TAKES

Ganguly stable

Kolkata: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has tested negative for COVID-19 and is at present not feverish, doctors said Sunday. He had to undergo compulsory COVID-19 testing after getting admitted to a hospital here Saturday after suffering a heart attack. He has undergone angioplasty to remove a block in his heart. The doctors said that Saturday night was 'uneventful' and Ganguly 'slept well'. He had breakfast and tea in the morning and routine electrocardiogram (ECG) test done at 10.00am produced 'satisfactory' results. "The medical board will meet tomorrow (Monday) and discuss regarding further treatment plans," said the hospital in its statement.

Coutinho sidelined

Madrid: Star forward Philippe Coutinho will be out of action for 'approximately three months' after undergoing a successful knee surgery, FC Barcelona said Saturday. "Philippe Coutinho has undergone a successful operation on the external meniscus of his left knee on Saturday. The verdict is that he will be out of action for approximately three months," a statement from the club read. Coutinho was injured in the final game of 2020 against Eibar at Camp Nou.

Shuttlers leave

New Delhi: The Indian badminton team, including Olympic hopefuls Saina Nehwal, B Sai Praneeth and Kidambi Srikanth, left Sunday for Thailand to compete in back-to-back BWF World Tour Super 1000 events. World Champion PV Sindhu will join them from London after flying through Doha. Except for Srikanth, this tournament will be the first event for others since the coronavirus-induced break. The two Super 1000 events - Yonex Thailand Open (January 12-17) and Toyota Thailand Open (January 19-24) will feature the world's best. The other members who left for Bangkok were HS Prannoy, Parupalli Kashyap, Sameer Verma and Manu Attri.

Momota tests +ve

New Delhi: World No.1 shuttler Kento Momota's long-awaited return to the international circuit got delayed after the Japanese tested positive for COVID-19. It prompted his national team to pull out of upcoming events in Thailand, Badminton World Federation (BWF) said Sunday. BWF and Badminton Association of Thailand (BAT) can confirm that Japan's men's singles world No.1 Kento Momota has tested positive for COVID-19," BWF said in a statement. "Hence the entire team has pulled out," it added. AGENCIES

Uncertainty over Brisbane Test

AGENCIES

Brisbane, Jan 3: Reports have emerged about Team India's reluctance to play the fourth and final Test of the ongoing series against Australia here at the Gabba, due to harsher bio-security protocols. However, members of the Queensland government have said the visiting team should not enter the state if they are unwilling to coordinate with the protocols that have been laid out.

"If the Indians don't want to play by the rules, don't come," Queensland's Health Shadow

Minister Ros Bates was quoted as saying by 'Fox Sports'. Tim Mander, Queensland's Shadow Sports Minister, said there's no room for ignoring the protocols and that every individual would have to go through the same drill.

"If the Indian cricket team want to spit the dummy and disregard quarantine guidelines in Brisbane for the fourth Test, then they shouldn't come. The same rules must apply for everyone. Simple," Mander asserted.

Australia batsman Matthew Wade has also said that the hosts are looking forward to the Gabba

Test. They are willing to make sacrifices to follow the schedule. "We'd love to be running outside in Australia like everybody is doing right now. But we understand that we need to make some sacrifices to get this tour done,"

QUEENSLAND SPORTS MINISTER

Test. They are willing to make sacrifices to follow the schedule.

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HOSTING T20 WORLD CUP IN 2021

Tax issues plague BCCI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 3: The cash-rich BCCI could end up paying up to a massive Rs 906 crore in tax if the Union government declines to grant full tax exemption for staging the ICC T20 World Cup in India this year. Even if the government grants partial exemption, the board will have to pay at least ₹227 crore in taxes, if it wants to host the tournament.

The T20 World Cup is just 10 months away. The International Cricket Council (ICC) has earmarked the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a backup venue to host the seventh edition of the tournament. The BCCI has already missed a couple of deadlines - December 31, 2019, and December 31, 2020 - and now the pressure mounts on it to decide quickly if it wants to host the prestigious tournament. An official said that the new and revised deadline is in February.

An application of the BCCI, seeking full tax exemption for the 2021 T20 World Cup, is lying with the Union Finance Ministry for a long time, but the Narendra Modi-led government is yet to take a final decision on the request.

The ICC has given two options

If there is no exemption, the minimum BCCI will have to pay is ₹227 crore, the maximum ₹907 crore

ICC has already earmarked the UAE as a backup venue

The BCCI will have to get back to the ICC by February 2021 on the issue

to the BCCI. They are: the T20 World Cup is relocated to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The other is that it provides an undertaking that if it fails to get the exemption then it will have to meet the tax liabilities, which could be a minimum of ₹226.58 crore and a high of ₹906.33 crore.

In 2011 when 50-over World Cup was held in India, the Manmohan Singh-led government sat on the application from the BCCI for inordinately long, before the Prime Minister himself intervened and granted it at the last minute. But for the 2016 T20 World Cup, the Modi government had granted only 10 per cent tax exemption.

And because the government had not granted full tax exemption, the ICC has withheld \$23.75 million from the share that the BCCI was entitled to receive.

DEFENDING CHAMPS REGAIN LA LIGA TOP SPOT

Efficient Real Madrid overcome Celta

AGENCIES

Madrid, Jan 3: Real Madrid beat an in-form Celta Vigo 2-0 at home Saturday thanks to a goal and assist apiece from Spanish pair Lucas Vazquez and Marco Asensio, putting the side above city rivals Atletico Madrid at the top of La Liga. The win took the Spanish champions to the summit on 36 points, one ahead of second-placed Atletico. However, Atletico have played three games less and they face Alaves, Sunday

Real were smarting from a surprise 1-1 draw at struggling Elche in their last match and were missing captain Sergio Ramos, who was out with a stomach bug. But they got off to an ideal start thanks to a towering header from Vazquez, who out-jumped two Celta defenders to power home a cross from Asensio.

Vazquez returned the favour early in the second half to tee up Asensio after Real had recovered the ball high in Celta's half. Zinedine Zidane's side comfortably saw out the victory, ending Celta's unbeaten run of six games under new coach Eduardo Coudet.



DOUBLE TROUBLE: Real Madrid goalscorers Marco Asensio (left) and Lucas Vazquez celebrate after their side's win over Celta Vigo

"We said before the game that after slipping up against Elche we wanted to show our usual aggression and win the ball back high up

the pitch," said Vazquez. "Right now every game is key, we are on a good run, we didn't expect to draw the other day but the team are

in good shape and if we keep playing like this we'll be fighting for everything," he added.

The trip to Real was their biggest test so far since Coudet took charge. Celta almost took the lead when talismanic striker Iago Aspas ran through and knocked the ball past keeper Thibaut Courtois but Real defender Nacho recovered to clear it off the line.

After Vasquez had scored their first goal, Real nearly doubled their lead when Dani Carvajal tried his luck from outside the box and saw his shot whistle past the post.

Celta suffered a huge blow when Aspas, La Liga's joint-top scorer with nine goals, was forced off in visible pain with a suspected muscle injury.

Asensio's goal moments later delivered a knockout blow and they later also lost forward Nolito to an injury.

"We played a complete match from start to finish," Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said. "We controlled the game, were balanced in our transitions between attack and defense, and recovered the ball with our pressure," he added.

ODISHA FC REMAIN WINLESS AFTER EIGHT GAMES

Maiden victory for new look East Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vasco, Jan 3: SC East Bengal (SCEB) finally made the right moves to beat a lacklustre Odisha FC 3-1 and secure their first win in their maiden ISL season here Sunday. On the other hand, the Odisha side remained winless even after eight games and are currently at the bottom of the table with two points. East Bengal took their points tally to six a good show.

In the basement battle, the Red-and-Gold scored through Anthony Pilkington (12th) and Jacques Maghoma (39th) to give them a 2-0 cushion at half time at the Tilak Maidan. The Kolkata heavyweights maintained their high intensity before their latest Nigerian recruit Bright Enohakhare sealed the issue with a terrific 88th minute strike.



East Bengal players celebrate after their victory over Odisha FC in the ISL game played Sunday

Odisha FC pulled one back through Diego Mauricio in the injury time (90+3rd minute), but it was not enough as they suffered their sixth defeat.

Everything fell in place for the

Gaikwad, who initiated the goal-scoring move with a nice long throw in near the post. The ball bounced in towards the far post where Pilkington capitalised on a defensive lapse to rise above the man before calmly heading it in.

The goalkeeping, too, was spot on from Debjit Majumder who effected a couple of spectacular saves from Manuel Onwu and Diego Mauricio. East Bengal went on to double their lead with Matti Steinmann providing the assist to Maghoma who made no mistake with a powerful shot.

Fowler pressed Enohakhare in place of Maghoma in the 73rd minute and the 22-year-old Nigerian scored on his debut in what was a fine team effort by the SCEB forwards. The new recruit looked quite sharp and enterprising.

Jaguars, Panthers play out thrilling tie

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 3: Odisha Jaguars and Odisha Panthers were involved in a thrilling tie in a game of the MGM Odisha T20 cricket league played Sunday here at the Barabati Stadium. Batting first Odisha Jaguars could only manage 105 for seven in their 20 overs. However, then their bowlers bowled admirably to restrict the opposition to the same score. Incidentally this was the first tie of the ongoing tournament.

Girija Rout (36) was the top scorer for the Jaguars. However, others failed to support him as the Jaguars lost wickets at regular intervals. Subham Nayak (2/21) and Jayant Behera (2/19) bowled well in tandem. Basant Mohanty and Alok Sahoo (both 1/15) however, had identical figures. What was expected to be an easy

chase for the Panthers did not turn out so. Nishikant Rout (32 n o) top scored for the Panthers while Sparsh Somani (31) batted well, but they consumed too many deliveries. Nirbishankar Barik (2/12) was the best bowler for the Jaguars.

SANTOSH TRIUMPHS

Top seeded Santosh Mohanty won the men's single title Sunday at the Gurukul Men's Open tennis tournament which concluded Sunday in Bhubaneswar. In the final, Santosh beat Ashish Kumar Parida 4-6, 6-3, (10-8). After the first two sets were shared, it was decided that the first to win 10 points will be declared champion.

In the semifinals played earlier Santosh beat Vivek Mahananda 10-1 while Ashish subdued Avish Kansari 10-5.