



ON WARPATH

Actor Kangana Ranaut has opposed Kamal Haasan's proposal to make household work a paid job

LEISURE

P2



LOKAYUKTA PROBE

Probe ordered into alleged illegal withdrawal of money by a senior officer from OSCB between 2013 and 2015

DOWNTOWN

P4



TOUGH LOCKDOWN

Britain began its third Covid-19 lockdown Tuesday with citizens under orders to stay at home

INTERNATIONAL

P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Vaccine has been approved. I am waiting for experts to approve the approval process before we take it.

SHORT TAKES

Boris drops India visit as UK locks down

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson Tuesday spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to express his regret over not being able to visit India as planned for the Republic Day on January 26 due to the growing health crisis created by the new variant of coronavirus in the UK. Johnson's call with Modi came a day after he addressed the nation in a televised address to plunge the country into a new stay-at-home lockdown as his medical chiefs warned that the National Health Service (NHS) was under threat of being overwhelmed by the rising infection rates. Johnson has indicated that his India visit would take place during the first half of this year and before the G7 Summit presided over by the UK.

Yet another WB minister resigns

Kolkata: West Bengal Minister of State for Youth Services and Sports Laxmi Ratan Shukla resigned from his post Tuesday, sources in the state secretariat said. Shukla sent his resignation letter to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and a copy of it to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, they said. The former cricketer's resignation came almost a fortnight after state transport minister Suwendu Adhikari had left the party and joined BJP.

Union Budget likely Feb 1

New Delhi: The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA) has recommended that the Budget session of Parliament commence from January 29 and conclude April 8. According to the committee's recommendation, while Part 1 of the session would be held from January 29 to February 15, Part 2 would be from March 8 to April 8. President Ram Nath Kovind would address the joint sitting of the two houses January 29, a Friday, and the Union Budget would be presented February 1, sources said citing the CCPA recommendations.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	48437.78	↑	260.98
NIFTY	14199.50	↑	66.60
DOLLAR	73.25	↑	₹0.22
EURO	90.09	↑	₹0.13
GOLD	₹51,561	↑	₹137
SILVER	₹70,367	↑	₹331

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
MAX	31.8°C	30.2°C	
MIN	14.0°C	12.8°C	
Humidity	82%	84%	Forecast
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Fog/mist in the morning

Vaccination to start by Jan 13

THE FINAL CALL ON THE DATE OF VACCINATION, HOWEVER, LIES WITH THE GOVT

SII, BHARAT BIOTECH BURY VAX HATCHET

NEW DELHI: In a show of solidarity after some bitter comments, Adar Poonawala and Krishna Ella, jointly on behalf of Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech respectively Tuesday communicated their combined intent to develop manufacture and supply the Covid-19 vaccines for India and globally. "Both companies respect the great work being carried out by each other and put behind us the miscommunication and misunderstanding caused during the past week. We are fully aware of the importance of vaccines for people and countries alike, we hereby communicate our joint pledge to provide global access for our Covid-19 vaccines," they said in a joint statement. There had been some allegations by Bharat Biotech on Monday blaming Serum Institute and the quality of trials. They said, the more important task in front of them is saving the lives and livelihoods of populations in India and the world.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 5: The Union health ministry Tuesday said it is prepared to roll out Covid-19 vaccine by January 13 - 10 days from the date of emergency use authorisation which was issued January 3, but noted that the final decision lies with the government.

Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said healthcare and frontline workers need not register themselves as their database has been populated on to the Co-WIN vaccine delivery management system. "Based on the feedback of dry-run, the ministry is ready to introduce Covid-19 vaccine within 10 days from the date of emergency use authorisation," he said. However, Bhushan said the final decision will be taken by the government.

The country's drugs regulator Sunday granted restricted emergency use approval to Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield and also to indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech. Bhushan said Co-WIN system is made in India and for the world, and whichever country wants to use it, the



Indian government will actively help. NITI Aayog member (health) Dr VK Paul said an optimistic scenario is

emerging with the pandemic situation in India consistently improving in terms of active cases and new deaths declining. "Let's hope this trend will continue. In terms of the new UK mutant issue, this mutation has entered this country and 71 have been isolated which shows our capacity to mount that kind of a scientific investigation. But at the same time we have not seen the emergence of any untoward cluster in the country as of now which is reassuring so far," Paul said.

38K VACCINATION HUBS IN STATE

BHUBANESWAR: The state government Tuesday said it will administer Covid vaccines through 38,000 centres and claimed full preparedness for a smooth rollout of the programme. Health Director Bijay Panigrahi, while interacting with the media, said, "When a person comes to take the vaccination with prior registration, s/he will first wait in a room where his or her credentials will be verified. The beneficiaries will go one by one to the vaccination room where their identity will be matched with the system." After administration of the vaccine, the person will need to wait in an observation room for 30 minutes to see if there is any adverse reaction. If they are found okay they could go home. We are now set to roll out the vaccine and prepared for the same. The vaccine will be given on the upper arm, Panigrahi said. The department had earlier claimed that by the end of this month the state is likely to get their supply of vaccines. The government is ready with the first list of the beneficiaries.

Jail DIG among 7 officials given compulsory exit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Carrying forward its drive against corrupt and inefficient officials, the state government Tuesday ordered compulsory retirement of seven officials including Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of prisons Gopabandhu Mallick.

Six other officials who have been given the punishment included a commandant, a deputy commandant, a DSP, a CDPO and two mines officials. With seven more officials given compulsory retirement, the number of such persons mounted to 104 within a span of one year.

Action was taken against Mallick for misuse of power as head of a jail warder selection committee and his involvement in irregularities in the selection process. This apart, his performance was not satisfactory and his honesty was also questioned, the sources said.

The suspended Child Development Project Officer Snigdharani Mishra was booked in two vigilance cases during her posting at Nandapur in Koraput district. The vigilance had registered a complaint against her in 2016 for amassing disproportionate assets to the tune of ₹80 lakh and accepting ₹1.75 lakh from an SHG.

The Commandant of OSAP Ekanta Priya Nayak was suspended from his job for misbehaving and assaulting his subordinates. He was also accused of drinking. Similarly, DSP Goutam Mallick has two civil cases lodged against him while deputy commandant in OSAP Debendra Nath Behera was booked for allegedly stealing wood from forests.



IN SAFE HANDS

A woman wrapped in a shawl carries a child during a cold winter morning owing to rains in New Delhi, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Frequent health checkups of school kids

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: With schools across the state set to reopen for Class 10 and 12 students January 8, the state government has decided to conduct health checkup of students in schools.

Additional Chief Secretary Health and Family Welfare PK Mohapatra Tuesday wrote a letter to all Collectors, municipal commissioners and chief district medical officers (CDMOs) in this regard.

"Although separate SoPs in this regard have been issued by the school & mass education department, still we have to take precautionary measures in order to avoid any eventuality in view of Covid-19. It is, therefore, requested to take necessary steps for mobiliza-

NO FURTHER CUT IN SYLLABUS: MIN

BHUBANESWAR: Clearing all doubts regarding further reduction of syllabus following reopening of schools January 8, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Tuesday ruled out any such move. Earlier, the syllabus was reduced by 30 per cent in view of reduced duration of the academic year. There are plans to shorten it further, the minister said. While giving the above information Dash said as per the state government guidelines, sanitization and safety of all students are being prioritized after the opening of schools across Odisha. "Classes will be held for 100 days. To this end, classes will be held Sundays too. Moreover, DEOs have been asked to appoint teachers if required," the minister said. Regarding COVID-19 test of students, Dash said no such decision has been taken so far. The test will be done if the Health Department directs to do so.

tion of local ASHAs/ANMs with instructions to pay visits to nearby schools and conduct weekly health check-up of students, teachers and non-teaching staff as a precautionary measure and facilitate the testing of symptomatic cases," the letter said.

Holding a high-level meeting with all secretaries Monday evening, Chief Secretary SC Mohapatra had asked the health & family welfare department to conduct frequent health checkups in educational institutions and hostels as a preventive measure against possible break-

out of the pandemic. The head of the educational institutions were asked to be in constant touch with local health workers and doctors and report any suspected case immediately to them.

"Now that we are opening many normal livelihood activities including schools, colleges and hostels; we have to be more focused on expeditious implementation of the projects amid Covid restrictions. We have also to get ready for vaccination," the chief secretary said.

However, he cautioned the departments to follow the Covid protocols and SOPs strictly without compromise. Mohapatra advised senior officers to start district visits and resolve field-level implementation issues as and when they emerge.

SC PAVES WAY FOR CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 5: The Supreme Court Tuesday cleared the decks for the ambitious Central Vista Project, which covers a three-km stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate in Lutyens' Delhi, by upholding the environmental clearance and the notification for change in land use.

The Central Vista revamp, announced in September, 2019 envisages a new triangular Parliament building, with a seating capacity for 900 to 1,200 MPs, that is to be constructed by August, 2022 when the country will be celebrating its 75th Independence Day. The common Central Secretariat is likely to be built by 2024 under the project. A three-judge bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar, by 2:1 majority, held that the grant of green clearance and the notification for change in land use was valid.

Justice Khanwilkar, writing the judgement for himself and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari, also directed that the project proponent set up smog tower and use anti-smog guns at the construction site for the Central Vista project. Justice Sanjiv Khanna, the third judge on the bench, also agreed on the issue of award of project. He, however, disagreed with the judgment on change of land use and on grant of environmental clearance for the project. The SC said prior permission shall be taken from heritage conservation panel and other authorities before start of work.

Ex-top banker sentenced to death in China for bribery

AGENCIES

Beijing, Jan 5: The former head of state-owned China Huarong Asset Management Co Ltd was sentenced to death Tuesday for bribe taking in one of the harshest punishments for economic crimes in recent years. Lai Xiaomin, 58, was also found guilty by the Second Intermediate People's Court of Tianjin of lesser charges including corruption and bigamy.

Life sentences and suspended death sentences commuted to life after two years are frequently handed down in corruption cases, but death sentences without the chance of reprieve have become rare in recent years. Such sentences

are automatically appealed to China's highest court. Lai was placed under investigation by the ruling Communist Party's corruption watchdog in 2018 and expelled from the party later the same year.

In its ruling, the Tianjin court cited the "especially enormous" size of the bribes Lai accepted, saying they exceeded 600 million yuan (\$93 million) in one instance.

In total, it said Lai collected or sought to collect 1.79 billion yuan (US\$260 million) over a decade in exchange for abusing his position to make investments, offer construction contracts, help with promo-

tions and provide other favours.

He was also convicted of embezzling more than 25 million yuan (almost \$4 million) in state assets and starting a second family



while still married to his first wife. Although Lai provided useful details about malfeasance by his subordinates, the seriousness of his bribetaking and "degree of harm caused to society" were not enough to win him leniency, the court said in its ruling.

"Lai Xiaomin is lawless and greedy in the extreme," the ruling said. "His crimes are extremely serious and must be punished severely under law." Huarong is one of four entities created in the 1990s to buy non-performing loans from banks, helping to revive the state-owned finance industry.

Such asset management companies expanded into bank-

ing, insurance, real estate finance and other fields. Lai was accused of squandering public money, illegally organising banquets, engaging in sexual dealings with multiple women and taking bribes, the anti-corruption agency said in 2018.

Investigators seized hundreds of millions of yuan (tens of millions of dollars) in cash from Lai's properties, the Chinese business news magazine Caixin reported in 2018.

Lai was one of hundreds of officials at government agencies, state companies and the military who have been detained in an anti-corruption crackdown launched in 2012. Other senior officials snared in the crackdown include a former head of China's insurance regulator.

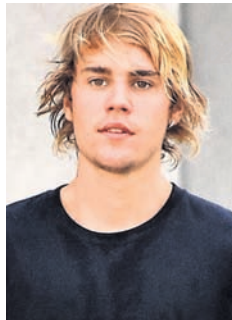


BOND GIRL TANYA NOT DEAD BUT CRITICAL, PUBLICIST NOW SAYS

Bond girl Tanya Roberts not dead but critical, says her representative in a new statement. Hours after declaring her dead, Roberts' publicist Mike Pingel shared that she is still alive and continues to be in hospital, reports *hollywoodreporter.com*.

JUSTIN BIEBER STILL INSISTS 'TOM CRUISE IS TOAST'

Pop star Justin Bieber is continuing his long-running joke about wanting to challenge Tom Cruise to a fight, saying that the Hollywood star would be toast should that happen. Bieber previously shared that he was 'stupid' to challenge the action hero to a fight.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

If you're looking to get married, buy the ring today. But before you take the leap, weigh all the pros and cons carefully, says Ganesha. All in all, this may be a day filled with activities related to your relationship and by the time the day ends, you may be on cloud nine!

TAURUS

The time you previously spent on certain activities may not yield results as expected, predicts Ganesha. You will be reluctant to travel today. Your may find yourself wanting more space and freedom of expression.

GEMINI

You will try very hard to strike a balance between logic and emotions. Though you may succeed in doing so in front of the world, you may not be so discreet with your friends. You will have an excellent time with your sweetheart, but your physical appearance will be a cause of concern to you, says Ganesha.

CANCER

A string of domestic responsibilities awaits you; today, you are about to realise that it is a long, long string. Chances are that this sudden rise in work pressure may also lead to blood pressure problems.

LEO

You sure love playing a team sport, but that does not diminish the fact that you are a tough player to compete with, says Ganesha. If only they had a rugby team at the local club! You derive a sense of completion from the fact that you have given your best effort to any endeavour.

VIRGO

You will begin your journey on the long, hard road to success, predicts Ganesha. Hard work will be the key to any progress that you make. Avoid short cuts, and all the toil and trouble will pay off with rich returns as recognition and rewards will come your way. You may let a few opportunities fly past because of fear of taking risks.

LIBRA

Today promises a definite sense of pride and joy from children who bring home glory, says Ganesha. Fiscal gains are also on the cards, and you may consider it worthwhile to put your money into lucrative businesses. Money-lenders and stock brokers are likely to make handsome earnings on this charming and enchanting day.

SCORPIO

In all probability, your mood is extremely hawkish today. Your belligerence may even put off Lady Luck for the time being. Ganesha advises you to stay away from confrontations and troubles of any kind. The evening, however, promises to be relaxing.

SAGITTARIUS

Remember that actions always speak louder than words. You will, in all probability, finish your work that has been seeking your attention for long now. You shall also successfully bring continuing disputes to the table and resolve them logically.

CAPRICORN

Success never comes easy, but in your case, it will make an exception, says Ganesha. You will meet with success in social as well as professional life, and this will also make heavy your treasure box. At work, prepare to get loaded with new assignments and simultaneously deal with existing work pressure.

AQUARIUS

Optimism rules today, and you are assured of your success. You are not usually affected by others' opinions, and that is how it should be. But you must keep in mind the inconvenience your decisions may cause people.

PISCES

For those in the creative fields of marketing or advertising, today is an extraordinary opportunity to tweak your marketing mix into bringing in maximum profits with bare minimum efforts. Your health interests will also take priority now, and you will find yourself spending more time in the gym, says Ganesha.

KAMAL HAASAN PROPOSES TO MAKE HOUSEHOLD WORK A PAID JOB

Stop seeing everything as business: Kangana

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut Tuesday opposed the proposal given by actor-politician Kamal Haasan to recognise household work as a salaried profession. The actress said this will be like reducing a home owner to an employee and trying to pay God for his creation. "Don't put a price tag on sex we have with our love, don't pay us for mothering our own, we don't need salary for being the Queens of our own little kingdom our home, stop seeing everything as business. Surrender to your woman she needs all of you not just your love/respect/salary," Kangana tweeted from her verified account Tuesday.

Kangana's tweet came in response to Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's tweet, which reads: "I welcome @ikamalhasan's idea of recognising housework as a salaried profession, w/the state govt paying a monthly wage to homemakers. This will recognise & monetise the services of women homemakers in society, enhance their power & autonomy & create near-universal basic income." IANS



Anupria hopes for a better year ahead

Mumbai: Actress Anupria Goenka says the success of *Criminal Justice Behind Closed Doors* leaves her with the hope for a better year.

"The success of *Criminal Justice Behind Closed Doors* makes the end of 2020 exciting for me. It leaves me with hope for a better year and god knows we all need one. I thank the makers for showing faith in me and my co-actors for keeping me on my toes. Most of all, a big thanks to the viewers for their love," Anupria said.

The actress essays the role of Nikhat Hussain, a criminal defence lawyer, in the series that also features Kirti Kulhari, Pankaj Tripathi, Ashish Vidyarthi and Jisshu Sengupta. The eight-part courtroom drama series has been directed by Rohan Sippy and Arjun Mukerjee, and written by Apurva Asrani. IANS



Madhavan hits back at troll

Chennai: Actor R. Madhavan has slammed a netizen on social media for labelling him a drug addict and alcoholic.

It all began with actor Amit Sadh tweeting a beautiful photograph of himself clicked together with Madhavan, expressing his love for 'Maddy sir'.

Commenting on the actor's tweet, a user wrote: "Maddy was once my heartthrob But Now It's so disheartening to see Madhavan ruining his brilliant career, health and life behind alcohol and narco drugs."

Madhavan slammed the troll, described as a doctor. The actor wrote: "Oh .. So that's your diagnoses ? I am worried for YOUR patients. May be you need a Docs appointment."

Madhavan recently unveiled the trailer of his next film *Maara*. The Tamil film casts the actor as an artist named Maara, and it also features South actress Shraddha Srinath. IANS

39TH STATE AWARDS FOR VISUAL ARTS

Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi announces 8 winners

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: The 39th State Lalit Kala Akademi award for Visual Arts for the year 2020-21 will be conferred on eight eligible artists of the state, officials announced Tuesday at a presser here.

The awardees are : Biswaranjan Kar, Sudhiranjan Maharatha for Sculpture, Bikash Chandra Senapati for Drawing, Suryakanta Swain, Anup Kumar Chand, Jyoti Prakash Sethi for Watercolour, Pramod Kumar Maharana for Contemporary Painting and Sujit Kumar Swain for Printmaking.

The award carries a cash prize of Rs Two lakhs, a certificate, a plaque and an Uttariya. A special booklet was also released on the occasion containing the works of the artists.

According to official sources, more than 800 entries were received from

LIST OF AWARDEES



Suryakanta Swain



Anup Kr. Chand



Jyoti Prakash Sethi



Biswaranjan Kar



Pramod kumar Maharana



Sudhiranjan Maharatha



Sujit Kumar Swain



Bikash Chandra Senapati

515 artists from across the state. In the first selection, the Akademi had shortlisted 237 names of which eight were finalised in the second and final round for this prestigious award. Akademi President Sudarshan Patnaik, Culture department director Ranjan Kumar

Das, Officer on Special Duty Manswini Sahoo and Akademi Secretary Gajendra Sahoo were present during the press meet. The panel of Akademi members which selected the winners included Panchanan Samal, Akshay Kumar Samal and Shyam Sundar Meher.

Varsha's music video with differently-abled released

BHUBANESWAR: *Kichi Magunahin Tate*, a music video presented by actress Varsha Priyadarshini was released Tuesday. Singing sensation Namita Meleka has lent her voice to the song while the video features Varsha along with acid attack survivor Pramodini and some differently-abled children.

A couple of months ago, Namita,

a tribal girl from Koraput, was encouraged by Varsha to have a career in playback singing. The *Nimki* actress, after spotting Namita in social media, had promised to give her an opportunity in playback singing. Living up to her commitment, she facilitated the recording of a devotional song sung by Namita in a Cuttack studio which was filmed.

Renowned lyricist Bijay Malla composed the song while the music was scored by popular Odia music director Premanand. The video was choreographed by Debasis Sahoo. Some disabled children including Sandhyarani, Asha Bahadur, Purnima Rout, Dipa Sahay and Bhaskar Sahay of Ashraya School, Cuttack have also acted in the video. PNN

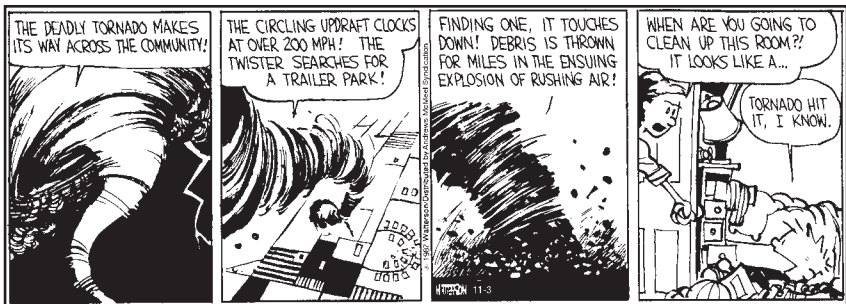


A screenshot of the video

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

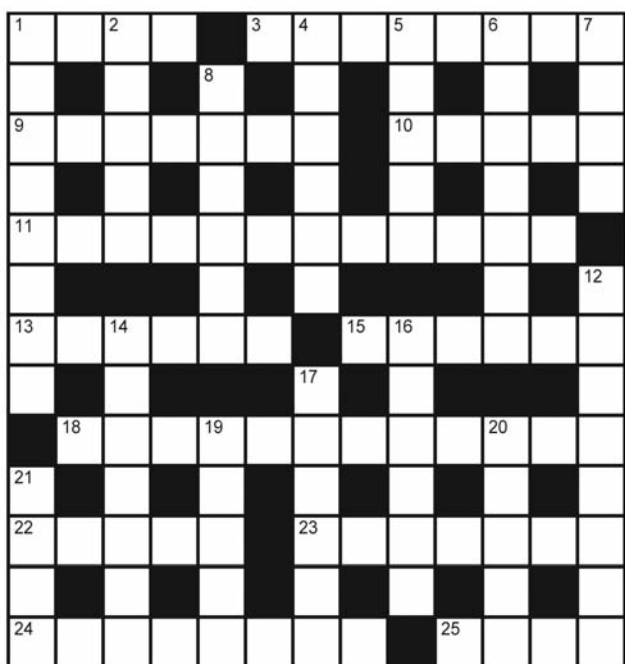


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 1 Jetty
- 3 A drink before dinner
- 9 Time interval
- 10 Come out of denial
- 11 Now and then (4,2,1,5)
- 13 Set aflame
- 15 Entertains
- 18 Manufacturing system (8,4)

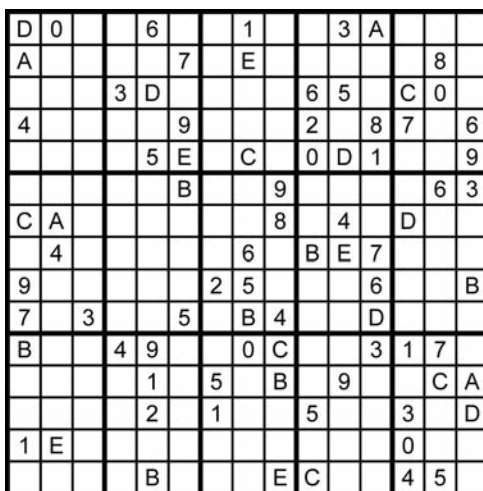
Down

- 1 Impractical
- 2 Storage area
- 4 Argentine grassland
- 5 Get there
- 22 Overturn
- 23 Sauce ingredient
- 24 Like some investments (4-4)
- 25 Take care of

- 6 Mexican dishes
- 7 Destiny
- 8 Creative person
- 12 Small celestial body
- 14 Savings (4,3)
- 16 Tumult
- 17 Monastery big-wigs
- 19 Patriarch
- 20 Boiling mad
- 21 Word to a sled dog

SUDOKU

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

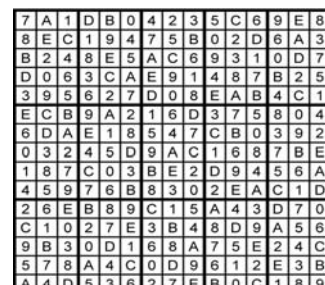


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



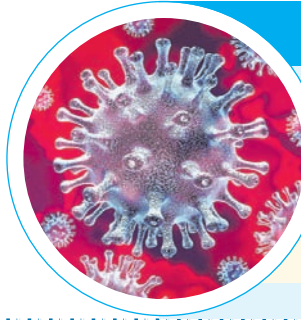
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



FUEL FOR HEARTH

A man cutting firewood with an axe in Unit-IX area of Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	8,63,25,436	6,12,49,999	18,65,882
India	1,03,56,844	99,75,958	1,49,850
Odisha	3,30,690	3,26,778	1,887

Covid report hurdle for Jagannath lovers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Jan 5: The doors of Srimandir might have been thrown open to people after a gap of over nine months, but many devotees are reportedly finding it difficult to visit the 12th century shrine as they do not have the mandatory Covid negative reports.

Only 2,070 devotees visited Srimandir till 5.30 pm Tuesday even though the Puri district administration and the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) have made all arrangements to facilitate smooth darshan for at least 15,000 people on a daily basis, sources said.

It is learnt that the district administration does not have the required permission to conduct Covid tests on pilgrims coming from outside Puri. "A private hospital conducted Covid tests on hundreds of

AFTER NINE-MONTH WAIT



Empty barricades near Srimandir in Puri

OP PHOTO

devotees January 3. So, doubts were raised regarding the test reports issued by the hospital. Now, the

Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) has directed the hospital to conduct Covid tests on only 200

ONLY 2,070 DEVOTEES VISITED SRIMANDIR TILL 5.30 PM TUESDAY EVEN THOUGH THE PURI DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND SJTA HAVE MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR AT LEAST 15,000 PEOPLE

DEVOTEES BOTH FROM PURI CITY AND OUTSIDE ARE FACING DIFFICULTIES TO OBTAIN COVID NEGATIVE REPORTS TO VISIT SRIMANDIR

MANY DEVOTEES FROM POOR ECONOMIC BACKGROUND ARE UNABLE TO ARRANGE MONEY FOR COVID TESTS

people per day," said a source.

As a result, many devotees both from Puri city and outside are fac-

ing difficulties to obtain Covid negative reports to visit Srimandir. Moreover, devotees from poor economic background are unable to arrange money for Covid tests, sources said.

"The administration should have opened adequate Covid testing centres in the Holy City before re-opening the shrine for all the devotees. Besides, poor devotees may not arrange money for Covid tests. Many devotees returned home without visiting the shrine January 3 as they did not have the required Covid negative reports," said a social activist.

Many servitors, meanwhile, demanded that the administration should allow the locals to visit Srimandir without producing Covid reports. Besides, the administration should open adequate Covid testing centres for devotees from other places.

400 birds from Chilika, Capital sent for tests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Following reports of avian influenza spreading in various parts of the country, Khurda Chief District Veterinary Officer Bishnu Charan Sahoo Tuesday sent around 400 bird samples from Chilika and Bhubaneswar for examination.

Sahoo in a statement said, "Apart from samples of various migratory birds in Chilika, poultry samples from Odisha University of Agriculture & Technology (OAUAT) have also been sent to the Animal Disease Research Institute at Phulnakhara for tests as a precautionary measure. Samples will soon be sent from Chilika's Nalabana area as well."

"We have set up a task force which is usually kept ready as per proto-

col. As a precautionary measure, we have been collecting samples from Chilika and nearby areas and the samples have already been sent for tests to Phulnakhara and will be sent to Kolkata," Sahoo added.

A training programme for poultry farmers is underway in Khurda, Bhubaneswar and other parts of the state to educate them about necessary precautions to be undertaken in view of the bird flu outbreak, he added.

The development comes in the wake of several dead migratory waterbirds in Himachal Pradesh testing positive for avian influenza or bird flu. Himachal Pradesh is reportedly the fifth state in the country to have reported suspected cases of bird flu after Rajasthan, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

Prime accused among 4 held in Mahanga double murder



Activists of Student Congress hold a demonstration over the incident in Bhubaneswar

OP PHOTO

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Four people, including the prime accused, were arrested in connection with the sensational murder of a BJP leader and his associate at Mahanga in Cuttack January 2, police said Tuesday.

Cuttack (Rural) superintendent of police (SP) V Jugal Kishore identified the accused as Panchanan Sethi, 28 (the prime accused), Aravinda Khatua, 27, Khitish Acharya, 45, and Lalit Mohan Baral, 75.

The SP said that police have seized four mobile phones, two motorcycles, a blood-stained sword, two pairs of slippers, a glass piece of spectacle, blood stains collected in gauge cloth, wearing apparels of the accused and the victim.

Earlier, police took the accused to the crime spot and seized the sword while recreating the crime scene.

The SP, however, refused to divulge anything about the cause of the murder saying that investigation was in progress.

Some more arrests are likely to happen in the coming days, he said.

Former chairperson of Mahanga panchayat samiti, Kulamani Baral, 75, and his close associate Dibyasingh Baral were murdered on the night of January 2 near Jakoti while they were returning to their village Nrutanga on a motorcycle. Kulamani's son Ramakanta had filed FIR against 13 people, including the local MLA and Law Minister Pratap Jena, in connection with the murder.

COPS RECREATE CRIME SCENE

Four mobile phones, two motorcycles, a blood-stained sword, two pairs of slippers, a glass piece of spectacle, blood stains collected in gauge cloth, wearing apparels of the accused and the victim were seized

Police took the accused to the crime spot and seized the sword while recreating the crime scene

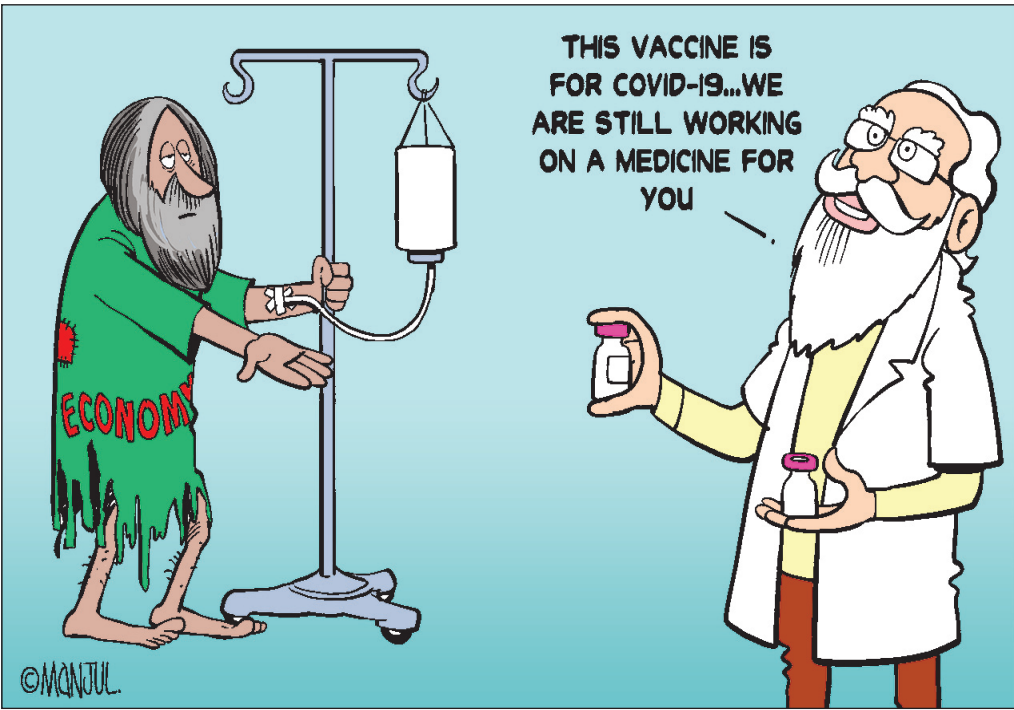
Some more arrests are likely to happen in the coming days

He alleged that the murder was committed at the instigation of the minister as Kulamani had exposed the irregularities in the allotment of PMAY houses.

Odisha BJP leaders dubbed the killing as a political murder.

Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi said as many as 17 political murders took place in the coastal state in the recent past, but there is no headway in the investigation into the cases. The BJP MP said that she would review the status of the investigation of the cases within 15 days.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



6-YR-OLD TIGRESS DIES AT NANDANKANAN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barang, Jan 5: A six-year-old tigress at Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) here died due to 'chronic anaemia', Tuesday.

According to the zoo authorities, tigress 'Anini' was one of the major of attractions for tourists at the Tiger Safari of Nandankanan.

Born to 'Manish' and 'Sneha' July 28, 2014, 'Anini' had stopped tak-



FILE PHOTO

ing food for the past few days. "She was later diagnosed with chronic anaemia following which it was

undergoing treatment at Cell No. 1 of Nandankanan's veterinary facility. However, she did not respond to the treatment and lost the life's battle at 3 pm," they said.

The exact cause of the death would be ascertained only after arrival of autopsy report, NZP deputy director Bimal Prasanna Acharya said.

With this, the nature's paradise is left with only 26 of the big cats.

8 students from Odisha to take part in R-Day parade

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 5: Eight students from Odisha, belonging to the National Service Scheme (NSS), will take part in the Republic Day parade at Rajpath here January 26, sources said Tuesday.

The students—Deepak Kumar Giri from Mayurbhanj, Dambaru Dhar Garada from Koraput, Alekh Sagariya from Bargarh, Swaraj Mohanty and Neha Pradhan from Berhampur, Himadri Tanaya Harichandan from Khurda,



Barsharani Sahoo from Koraput and Rubina Pradhan from Sambalpur—have arrived in Delhi January 1 to take part in the mega event. The students have started rehearsal. They will also perform in cultural programs at Delhi, sources said.

Every year, 200 students, 100 girls and as many boys, belonging different states take part in the Republic Day parade, they added.

BJP to gherao SP offices across state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: The state unit of BJP Tuesday said that it would gherao the SP offices across the state Wednesday to seek justice for the deceased Mahanga BJP leader Kulamani Baral.

"The FIR has named 13 persons including one state minister. We have warned the government that justice is sacrosanct in the case and we are not going to take the case lightly. The minister whose name has been mentioned in the list should be dismissed and all accused in the case should be arrested," senior BJP leader Prithviraj Harichandan.

"We want the police to do a fair investigation. On January 6, we are going to gherao the SP office and January 8 we have decided to gherao the DGP office," he said.

The police too are involved in the case, he added. "The former SDPO had earlier arrested the kin of the deceased in the past and beaten them up. We want justice in the case and we are going to agitate over the issue with full force," he said.

BJD spokesperson Sulata Deo said, "The government is strongly committed to bringing the culprits to justice. Strictest action will be taken against the perpetrators of this crime. Political murders in BJP ruled states like UP, Bihar, MP and Karnataka are far higher than in Odisha as per NCRB data. By politicising such crime related issues, the Odisha BJP is showing its insensitivity. It also shows that they do not find any genuine issues."

IN A FIRST, STATE OPENS FIRE PARK TO SPREAD AWARENESS

THE PARK IS OPEN FOR GENERAL PUBLIC EVERY SATURDAY BETWEEN 3:30PM AND 5:30PM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Tuesday, inaugurated a 'Fire Park', a unique and first such initiative in the country to create fire safety awareness among the people.

The park located on the premises of Odisha Fire & Disaster Response Academy Campus Baramunda, Bhubaneswar is open for general public every Saturday between 3:30pm and 5:30pm.

The Chief Minister also launched a dynamic online portal, 'AgnishamaSeva' of Odisha Fire Service. The 'Fire Park' is a novel initiative to bring awareness on fire safety measures, an official said.

Demonstrations on use of fire-fighting equipment, rescue and disaster operations, exhibition hall, screening of



Fire brigade personnel demonstrate their skills at the park



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurates the Fire Park through videoconferencing. 5T Secretary VK Pandian is also seen

OP PHOTOS

films and distribution of leaflets on fire safety, will be the part of the activities in the park. Students from schools and colleges will be the focus group, the official said.

Inaugurating the park through a videoconference,

Patnaik said that it would go a long way in educating and improving awareness on basic fire safety measures among the people, particularly among the students.

"It's no doubt an effort in the right direction to create a safety compliant citizenry," the Chief Minister said.

Patnaik said that 16 fire related services are now available to the citizens on online mode in the dynamic portal www.OdishaFireService.gov.in. He hoped that the Fire Service department will continue to prioritise on the feedback mechanism under the 'Mo Sarkar' (my government) to ensure hassle-free and time bound services to the public.

He also appreciated the role of Odisha Fire Service in fighting the pandemic and com-

mended the fire service personnel for the massive plasma donation for treatment of critical Covid patients.

Patnaik said that all these efforts continued uninterrupted in spite of the pre-occupation in rescue and restoration work during cyclone Amphan and high floods in August, 2020. He said Odisha Fire Service has earned glorious distinction for itself at the national level for its outstanding services on rescue and disaster response.

The Chief Minister hoped that the Odisha Fire Service will continue to adopt technological innovations and bring about transformational changes in the public delivery system. DG, Fire Services, Satyajit Mohanty said 3,000 fire service personnel are always ready to meet any challenges at any time.

As the dark night of 2020 comes to an end, let's look forward to the blessed dawn of 2021...



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- Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital, SOA's faculty of medicine, is the only institute in Odisha to be chosen by ICMR for human trial of COVAXIN, the vaccine against Covid-19

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WEAR MASK, WASH HANDS AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE TO DEFEAT COVID-19

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cmk

OHRC seeks report from Rourkela SP on tortured minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela/Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: In connection with a minor boy allegedly being subjected to third degree torture at Udit Nagar police station in Rourkela city of Sundargarh, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC)

asked the Rourkela SP to submit a report by February 15.

According to a source, the minor was taken to the police station December 28 for his involvement in a mobile theft case. Instead of sending him to Swadhar Home, the police detained him inside the police station.

The boy is an orphan staying with his grandparents at Timber Colony. His family members alleged that third degree torture was inflicted on him during interrogation. During interrogation, he was stripped, beaten up black and blue and then was subjected to electric shocks.

While the Child Welfare Committee and Childline have already initiated a probe into it, the OHRC has registered a suo motu case and issued a notice to Rourkela SP to launch a probe into the incident and submit the report by February 15.

Expedite livelihood projects: Chief Secy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Chief Secretary Suresh Mohapatra has directed the district Collectors to speed up execution of livelihood and employment generation programmes, in a bid to give a fillip to economic activities.

Speaking to the Collectors Monday evening, Mohapatra emphasised on timely completion of piped drinking water projects, construction of pucca houses under rural housing scheme, connecting bridges and culverts, rural roads,

Driver bludgeoned to death in Khurda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, Jan 5: A truck driver was bludgeoned to death in Palla Square area of the district headquarters town here in the wee hours of Tuesday, police said.

The victim was identified as Bijay Nayak of the locality. "Preliminary investigations reveal that Nayak was killed over past enmity," said an official of Khurda Town police station.

According to police, someone hit Nayak's head with a wooden plank from behind soon after he alighted from the truck near his home around 4 am.

A profusely bleeding Nayak was rushed to Khurda district headquarters hospital (DHH) in a 108-ambulance. Nayak was later shifted to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar after his condition deteriorated. He died while being treated at the premium health institute, police added.

"We have registered a case under Section 302 of the IPC as per a complaint filed by victim's wife Shasmita. The matter is under investigation," said Khurda Town police in-charge Umashankar Singh.

CLASSIFIED
LOST

I, Sidhantha Nayak have lost my Identity Card No. 200920600300025 issued by HDFC Bank Ltd. on 29.12.20. If anybody found please return it to Sai Associates, A/20, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Ph. No.: 0674-2598595.

State loosens purse strings

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Giving further relaxations on fiscal restrictions imposed in the wake of the economic downturn due to the pandemic, the state government has enhanced sanctioning power of the 20 departments from Rs 30 crore to Rs 100 crore.



ble state share from the allocation made in the annual budget and supplementary budget, 2020-21 for implementation of the Central Sector Schemes and Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

The state government has decided to scale up both program and administrative expenditure during the next three months to

■ The state government has enhanced sanctioning power of 20 departments from Rs 30 crore to Rs 100 crore

■ The Finance department had in May last year imposed restrictions on 20 major spending departments covered under Cash Management System on sanction Programme Expenditure

■ The total spending till November end of this financial year was Rs 59,936 crore while the state had utilised Rs 72,906 crore during the same period of 2019-20

In May last year, the Finance department had imposed restrictions on the 20 major spending departments covered under Cash Management System on sanction Programme Expenditure. Now, departments can release up to Rs 100 crore at a time under programme expenditure for schemes in various sectors.

All the departments have also been allowed to sanction admissi-

boost the economy. Therefore, the relaxation was given, sources said.

The state government's spending has slowed down during April-November 2020 due to the pandemic. The total spending till November end of this financial year was Rs 59,936 crore while the state had utilised Rs 72,906 crore during the same period of 2019-20. It means the spending was down by 17 per cent.

About 6 lakh rural housing units and 700 bridges are under construction in the 30 districts

village roads, lift irrigation projects and micro-composting projects in urban areas and others.

About 6 lakh rural housing units and 700 bridges are under construction in the 30 districts. Target has been set for creating 23

crore man-days under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for providing wage employment to various types of labourers.

The Collectors were asked to monitor progress of such projects on weekly basis.

Mohapatra further asked the Collectors to listen to the people and redress their grievances. Development Commissioner PK Jena has asked the Collectors to review all major projects in the district and identify bottlenecks in ground-

ing of the projects within 10 days.

FOR HERITAGE CORRIDOR



An excavator engaged by Puri administration pulls down a structure near Srimandir, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

7-yr-old clears Microsoft Technology Associate exam

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: A seven-year-old student of WhiteHat Jr of Bolangir has cleared the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) examination for introduction to programming in Java, Java Script, Python, HTML and CSS and for Database Administration Fundamentals.

MTA is a globally recognized certification sought by those interested in pursuing a career in technology.

Venkat Raman Patnaik, a Class III home-schooled student and one of WhiteHat Jr's early adopters, joined in March 2019 when he was



six, and has attended more than 160 classes till date.

Venkat's teacher Jatinder Kaur said, "He picked up the essence of coding from day one and revealed as the complexity levels increased.

He has made all of us proud by clearing the Microsoft MTA exam at such a young age—a rare achievement indeed."

"His love for technology prompted me to look for coding classes online and 1:1 individualised learning offered by WhiteHat Jr worked really well for him as it opened his horizons

KULDEEP PATNAIK | VENKAT'S FATHER

WhiteHat Jr Karan Bajaj said, "We are happy to have contributed in his enormous journey—but more importantly, huge congratulations to his parents and faculty for spotting his talents early on and honing his skills at such a young age."

At the young age of only seven, Venkat has not only successfully qualified as a Microsoft Technology Associate,

he was also invited by Chennai Institute of Technology as a guest speaker to motivate newcomers of the college in a program called 'Catapult 2020'.

Venkat developed the app 'Let's Reward Kids', which cemented his position as one of the 26 finalists of WhiteHat Jr's Silicon Valley Challenge.

He has also been featured as a guest on Yuva Founder Nikhil Taneja's program 'Teach me something with Nikhil Taneja'.

WhiteHat has so far taught more than 175k students across the globe, including in countries such as India, USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Pari: BJP slams SIT probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: The state leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Tuesday attacked the Special Investigation Team (SIT) on the murder of a minor in Nayagarh after a POCSO court declared the prime accused in the case a minor.

State BJP Mahila Morcha President Smrutti Patnaik Tuesday held a press conference and attacked the SIT team and state government on the issue.

Patnaik blamed the SIT team to have conducted a botched up investigation and falsely implicate the prime accused in the case. She also said that the SIT team neglected many others areas of investigation and in haste tried to make the minor a scapegoat in the case.

"A young boy was made to be the scapegoat by the SIT team. The team ignored many other important



charge of OSCB limited. Pakal alleged that Sethi had misutilised his position to misappropriate huge public money.

On the other hand, Sethi denied the charges and claimed that he was entitled to reimburse the bills related to the expenses incurred for the treatment of his father and wife. Sethi stated that he followed all the legal procedures while receiving the payments from the bank during his tenure.

Party spokesperson Sulata Deo

UPPING THE ANTE



People, mostly women, oppose BDA's bid to demolish an office of a 'Mahila Samiti' (women's group) at Badagada Brit Colony in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday OP PHOTO

Probe ordered against top official

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Odisha Lokayukta Tuesday ordered an enquiry into the alleged illegal withdrawal of several lakhs of rupees under medical expenses and various other heads by senior bureaucrat, Bishnupada Sethi from the coffers of the Orissa State Co-operative Bank Ltd (OSCB) during his tenure as the Management-in-charge of OSCB Ltd. in the period 2013 to 2015.

The Lokayukta issued the order of enquiry while hearing a plea filed by RTI activist Shrikant Pakal accusing Sethi of committing financial irregularities. The Director of Inquiry of Lokayukta has been directed to submit the enquiry report within 60 days of the receipt of the copy.

The Lokayukta, after hearing both the parties, asked the director of Inquiry to probe whether Sethi was legally entitled to reimburse the medical bills and get the honorarium from the net profit of the bank.

It also directed to check "Whether



Shri Bishnupada Sethi by misutilising his power/authority has reimbursed the medical bills and drawn the honorarium from OSCB for his wrongful gain."

Notably, the complainant Pakal alleged in his petition that Sethi had illegally withdrawn several lakhs from OSCB through incentives, honorarium, and reimbursement of medical bills, orderly allowances and book grant during his posting as Management-in-

State's virus toll mounts to 1,887

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: State's Covid-19 tally Tuesday mounted to 3,30,690 after 198 more people tested positive for the infection, while two fresh fatalities in Odisha took the toll to 1,887, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the 198 new cases, 115 were reported from various quarantine centres and the rest detected during contact tracing, the official said. Angul district recorded the maximum number of new cases at 34, followed by Sundargarh at 23 and Keonjhar at 19. Seven districts—Dhenkanal, Deogarh, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada—did not report any new case since Monday.

Two fresh fatalities were reported from Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts.

Apart from the 1,887 succumbing to the infection, 53 Covid-19 patients in the coastal state have died due to comorbidities.

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Fake agri-products flood Bargarh

BE IT SEEDS, PESTICIDES OR FERTILISERS, UNSCRUPULOUS TRADERS AND MANUFACTURERS ARE LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED TO DUPE GULLIBLE FARMERS WITH FAKE VERSIONS OF THE AGRI-PRODUCTS PASTED WITH REPUTED BRAND NAMES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Jan 5: Farmers in Bargarh district have been at their wits' end after fake and sub-standard seeds, pesticides and fertilisers started flooding the markets, a report said.

Bargarh is known as the rice bowl of the state. And for years, paddy has remained a lifeline for the farmers with the crop cultivated on 79,060 hectares of farmland during the Rabi season.

The matter came to fore when some unscrupulous traders were caught red-handed while trying to sell fake pesticides in the name and style of a premium brand, December 31, last year. The authorities of the genuine firms are aware about this but are yet to lodge a complaint in the police station for the reason best known to them. However, with fake and sub-standard seeds, pesticides and fertilisers manufactured by bogus companies flooding the market, cultivation has taken a serious hit in the district. This has become a cause of concern for the farmers as the fake companies spread their tentacles by selling these fake products in the district.

The cultivation of the crop has brought good return for the farmers. However, the sale of these products has resulted in slow downturn of fortunes for the farmers.

Reports said that farmers in the district need 8,000 litres of pesti-



With fake and sub-standard seeds, pesticides and fertilisers manufactured by bogus companies flooding the market, cultivation has taken a serious hit in the district



The fake product



The original product

cides and 1,000 quintals of seeds for paddy cultivation during the Rabi season. The state government has given licence to 471 fertiliser traders, 526 pesticide traders and 363 seed traders to sell these products at government approved rate to the

farmers.

However, with start of the crop season, agents and company representatives are moving from village to village and luring the gullible farmers to buy their products. Taken by their words, the farmers end up

buying their seeds and use them on their farmlands.

An employee of a genuine pesticide firm, BB Reddy, who is in charge of Bargarh and Sambalpur districts, confirmed the development. He said that he came to know about the sale of these fake pesticides when he had been on an inspection to Bargarh two days back. He also witnessed similar sale of fake pesticides in the district last year.

The authorised retailer accompanied by some farmers met the additional district magistrate (ADM) Mirdha Toppo in the district and submitted a memorandum to him as the Collector was not there then, Monday. The ADM advised them to file a complaint in the concerned police station. However, the company

I'm yet to receive any complaint in this regard. However, action has been taken on the complaint which was received earlier. Moreover, farmers have been advised to obtain bills and receipts after buying fertilisers, seeds and pesticides from the licenced shops

DINABANDHU GANDHI |
CHIEF DISTRICT AGRICULTURE OFFICER

I came to know about the sale of these fake pesticides when I had been on an inspection to Bargarh two days back. I also witnessed similar sale of fake pesticides in the district last year

BB REDDY |
EMPLOYEE OF A PESTICIDE FIRM

staff are yet to file a complaint in the Bargarh Town police station.

When contacted, the chief district agriculture officer Dinabandhu Gandhi said he is yet to receive any complaint in this regard. However, action has been taken on the complaint which was received earlier. Moreover, farmers have been advised to obtain bills and receipts after buying fertilisers, seeds and pesticides from the licenced shops, he added.

Organic farming gets boost in Ganjam dist



POST NEWS NETWORK

G Udaygiri, Jan 5: To get rid of garbage-induced pollution and ensure clean environment, preparation of organic fertilisers from city waste has started in G Udaygiri NAC of Ganjam district.

On the other hand, demand for vegetables, rice, cereal and other crops grown in organic way has been soaring across the country as the crops are beneficial for health.

Organic fertilisers prepared from the garbage treatment will cater to the needs of farmers keen to take organic farming.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had inaugurated a waste management and treatment plant at Hatibali through video conferencing. The plant segregates plastic waste from vegetable and organic waste. Organic fertiliser is sold for Rs20 a packet containing 5 kg. Farmers will use organic fertilisers instead of chemical fertilisers, whose overuse allegedly reduces the fertility of the land.

On the other hand, organic fertilisers boost land fertility, giving much production of crops. Local citizens laid stress on awareness for need of organic fertilisers among local farmers.

MAN STONES WIFE OVER 'INFIDELITY'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Jan 5: A man stoned his wife to death over suspicion of an extramarital affair at Umerkote area in Nabarangpur district.

After committing the crime, the accused, identified as Biplab Mandal, surrendered before the police, confessing to his crime.

The deceased woman has been identified as Chumki Mandal.

Sources said, the couple had been married for several years and often fought over one or the other reason.

Biplab had recently been picking up quarrels with Chumki accusing her of having extramarital affairs with a man of the same village.

They entered into a heated argument Tuesday as well. The scene turned uglier when Biplab lost his cool and hit the woman with a stone, causing her death on the spot.

Coming to learn about the murder from the accused, a police team rushed to the spot and recovered the body for postmortem. Registering a case, the cops have launched a detailed probe into the case.

SWEAT IT OUT



Malkangiri Mahavidyalaya holds a camp for +3 students for NCC selection at Barnapur NCC office, Tuesday

MISSING PAKISTAN RETURNEE BIRJU TRACED TO TALCHER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Jan 5: 51-year-old Birju Kulu from Sundargarh, who had returned to his native village Katanga under Kutra police limits in the district, after spending 20 years in a Pakistani jail and later went missing January 2 night, was traced to Talcher, Sundargarh SP Sagarika Nath informed Tuesday.

A team led by Kutra police station IIC left for Talcher to bring Kulu back. Birju, who is mentally unstable, had left his home and boarded a truck to reach Talcher, a source said.

The incident came to the fore after Birju's sister Tedrace Kulu lodged an FIR in this regard at Kutra police station Sunday afternoon.

Acting on the FIR, police launched a search operation.

Notably, Birju had returned after a long period of time in November last year. The man was accompanied by senior government officials who escorted him to his village. He was given a warm welcome by his fellow villagers amidst traditional tribal dance, music and beating of drums.

Since then, Birju had been staying at Katanga village with his paternal uncle, aunt and



Birju Kulu

A TEAM LED BY KUTRA POLICE STATION IIC LEFT FOR TALCHER TO BRING KULU BACK

BIRJU, WHO IS MENTALLY UNSTABLE, HAD LEFT HIS HOME AND BOARDED A TRUCK TO REACH TALCHER

sister Tedrace.

Birju had left his home at the age of 25 and had mistakenly crossed the India-Pakistan border. Pakistan's army caught him suspecting him to be a spy from India. He was imprisoned in a Pakistani jail for 20 years.

Teacher shortage cripples school edu in Angul

Schools will reopen Jan 8, within 100 days the syllabi will be covered, board exams will start from May 3, but where the teachers are

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, Jan 5: The government has announced reopening of schools across the state from January 8. This move comes keeping in mind that the board examinations will be conducted from May 3. Schools will be kept open Sundays also to ensure completion of courses in 100 days.

However, there are doubts whether this move of 100 days minimum schooling will be successful at all. Most schools in this district are facing shortage of teachers.

The situation in Kishorenagar block here can be taken as an example.

There are 15 government schools in this block, out of which 11 are facing a scarcity of teachers.

The posts of Science, Arts, Sanskrit and PET teachers are lying vacant at Kishorenagar High School (HS) for a long time. The Bamur Yuvajyoti HS does not have teachers in Science, Arts and Hindi subjects. The situation at Raniakata HS is no different either. Posts of teachers in Sanskrit, Hindi, Art, and Computer Sciences are lying vacant there. Forget teachers, the Angapada Panchayatraj HS does not even have a headmaster.

The other schools facing similar situations are Kadalimunda HS, Urukula Radhakrushna HS,



Nakichi Maa Maheshwari Nodal UP School, Ambapala HS, Boinda Ramdeo HS and Phulamba HS. The lack of proper number of teachers has affected online courses also. "After retirement of teachers, the posts are not being filled. So, there is shortage of teachers at these schools. Our children are facing problems in getting online classes also," observed Ramesh Kumar Behera, a Boinda resident.

When contacted, sub-Collector, Athmalik, Lalitmoan Behera said the matter of vacant posts will be brought to the notice of the dis-

trict education officer. But in the meantime the remaining teachers should ensure problem-free education for the students.

The Odisha Secondary School Teachers' Association (OSSTA) has expressed its concern about the lack of teachers in schools. They are unsure how the education process will roll out under the present circumstances.

OSSTA general secretary Prakash Chandra Mohanty said the government's SOP regarding the pattern of classes for Class X students is totally impractical. The SOP says one class should not have more

NOS. DON'T ADD UP

There are 15 govt-run schools in Kishorenagar block, of which 11 are facing scarcity of teachers

SOP says while conductance of classes, max 20-25 students will be taught in a room

But, there are many schools which have more than 100 students in one Class

In that case, if the SOP is followed, four to five classrooms are required

But most of the schools in the dist don't have that many teachers to handle four classes at a given time

than 20 to 25 students. "But, there are many such schools that have more than 100 students. In that case, if the SOP is followed, four to five class rooms are required. But most schools don't have that many teachers to handle four classes at a given time."

"We request the government to fill up the vacant posts before January 8 or give appointment to retired teachers to improve the system," Mohanty said. At the same time, the OSSTA has opposed the government's decision to run schools on Sundays as it may overburden the students.

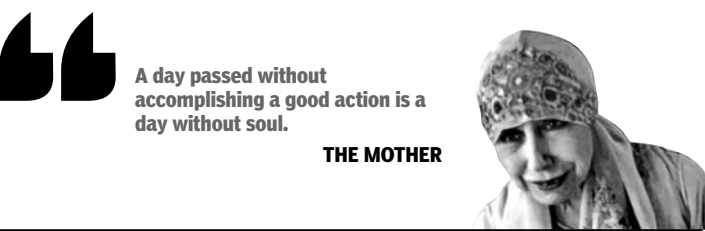
EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. ST-OT-AMC-PRS-UTS-207, Dt. 29.12.2020
Name of Work : ANNUAL MAINTENANCE SERVICE CONTRACT WORK OF ALL SYSTEM PERIPHERAL UNDER PASSENGER RESERVATION SYSTEM (PRS), UNRESERVED TICKETING SYSTEM (UTS), AUTOMATIC TICKET VENDING MACHINES (ATVM), NATIONAL TRAIN ENQUIRY SYSTEM (NTES), DORMITORY RESERVATION (DR) - RETIRING ROOM RESERVATION (RR) OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION FOR A PERIOD OF TWO (02) YEARS.
Tender Value (₹) : 58,17,341.80, EMD (₹) : 1,16,350/-, Cost of Tender Document (₹) : 5,900/- (Including 18% GST)
Bidding Start Date : 06.01.2021.
Date and time of closing of tender : 1100 hrs of 20.01.2021.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
NOTE : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.
Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website <http://www.iireps.gov.in>.
Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom) Khurda Road
PR-469/L/20-21

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, R.W.S.&S. DIVISION, NUAPADA
Govt. of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. RWS&S_15/2020-21
No. O-848: The Executive Engineer, R.W.S & S Division, Nuapada on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids through e-procurement in double cover system in conformity with the terms & conditions of the detailed tender call notice (DTCN) from the Contractor registered with the Odisha State Govt. & Contractors of equivalent grade/class registered with Central Govt. / any other State Govt. / MES / Railway & Reputed Engineering firms having valid & up to date Contractors registration certificate, GST clearance Certificate & PAN Card and possessing compatible Digital Signature Certificate as given in the DTCN to be eventually drawn up in the standard Lump sum (G2) contract form.
Nature of Work : Rural Piped Water Supply schemes in different villages under Nuapada district.
No. of Tender : 15 (Fifteen) Nos.
Approx. Estimated Cost : Rs.25.50 Lakhs to Rs.67.60 Lakhs
Period of completion : 06 (Six) months
Tender Cost : Rs.8000/- & Rs.10000/-
Class of Contractor : Class C & B & A
Date and Time of availability of bid document in the portal : 10.01.2021 at 10.00 A.M.
Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal : 21.01.2021 up to 5.00 P.M.
Date of Opening of bid : 23.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
The bidders have to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>.
Sd./- 29.12.20
(Er. G. C. Nayak), Executive Engineer
RWSS Division, Nuapada
OIPR-25043/11/0008/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER KALAHANDI RWS&S DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA
e-mail: eerwsskld@gmail.com, eerwss_kld@nic.in, Phone No.: 06670-230784
INVITATION OF BID THROUGH e-TENDERING
Bid Identification No. 31/EE/RWSS/2020-21/Ept Dated: 05.01.2021
01. Name of the Work : As per Annexure - A

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding on Office hour only From To	Date of Opening (Technical Bid)
1	2	3	4
Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna	31/EE/RWSS/2020-21 /Bpt Dated: 05.01.2021	11.01.2021 10.00 A.M.	22.01.2021 05.30 P.M.

Cost of tender paper & payment of EMD to be made online payment system. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>.
Sd./- Executive Engineer
Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna
OIPR-25005/11/0013/2021



IMPASSE AGAIN

The Union government, while dealing with the farmers’ protest against its three contentious farm legislations, even after the seventh round of protracted and fruitless discussions on January 4 has not budged from its earlier stand. The agitating farmers have, from day one, been insisting that they want nothing less than repeal of the controversial laws and they iterated the same demand at the last talk. But, the government repeats that it won’t concede and would only discuss the legislations clause by clause. Its strategy is seemingly to tire out the farmers, test their ability to suffer the pain of sitting at the borders of the capital for weeks in freezing cold, rain and hail and break their will to continue their protest.

The government seems to presume it knows better than the farmers as to what is good for them. Hence, its stand that the legislations are in the interest of the farmers which may at best be tinkered with here and there remains steadfast. The statement of Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar that “it takes two hands to clap” on the 40th day of the agitation betrays the same stand.

On the other hand, a section of the Corporate world accused of being the main beneficiaries of the new laws has started showing an honourable retreat in the face of hostile farmers ready to hit back with ferocity. This is because unlike politicians they have to think of their hard earned money and can’t afford to adopt strong posturing like the government.

Distancing itself from the controversial farm laws, one of the largest Corporates of the country, which also is a telecom service provider has, on 4 January, said in a press release that it neither buys food grains directly from farmers nor is in the business of contract farming. It categorically states that it has not done any “corporate” or “contract” farming in the past and “has absolutely no plans to enter this business.”

Obviously, realisation dawned on the company after it suffered huge damage by way of loss of its telecom consumers and destruction of towers in Punjab and Haryana. The farmers gave a call to return the service provider’s mobile phone connections as they are convinced the said company, along with some other corporate giants are behind the three farm laws. The disruption reached a stage that the telecom giant was forced to publicly allege that its rivals were fuelling farmers’ anger against it to harm its business interests. Of the 9,000 tower sites that it has in Punjab, power supply to about 1,800 have been either cut off or disconnected. It surprised many observers that this powerful Corporate had to issue an explanation wherein it has said that it has immense gratitude” and the “greatest respect” for India’s farmers and is committed to do everything to enrich and empower them.

This should be music to the ears of the agitating farmers. But, the government probably thinks that for an honourable retreat, unlike the Corporate giant, it would have to pay a heavy political price. The government probably feels retreating on this issue at this stage might prove that the leadership is not invincible and is anti-farmer and pro crony-capitalists. As mentioned in this column earlier; it would not dampen the government’s image if, in a democracy, the people’s voice is heard. The present impasse should not be allowed to continue. Every citizen in this country today, whether pro or anti BJP, is well aware what the fate of the farmers will be if they go to the Supreme Court. Instead of taking shelter under the SC umbrella, there still is time for the government to bow to people’s wishes.

WISDOM CORNER

- Travel in all the four quarters of the earth, yet you will find nothing anywhere. Whatever there is, is only here. **RAMAKRISHNA**
- We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. **EM FORSTER**
- I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit. **KAHLIL GIBRAN**

WORDSWORTH

Wildfire

“Sydney braces for surge in wildfires” said a headline on a website about the fires raging in New South Wales. That was an odd-sounding choice of word, so far has wildfire moved – particularly in Britain and Australia – from a literal reference to a raging conflagration to a metaphorical word for something that moves fast. Australians don’t use the term at all – they call them bushfires. Only in the US it is still used for a real fire. According to the big Oxford English Dictionary, the sense of a fast-moving blaze burning out of control died out in Britain in the seventeenth century; it isn’t in the New Oxford Dictionary of English in that sense at all. The original meaning – sometime in the twelfth century – was of a fire that had been caused by lightning (and so a doubly inappropriate word for these current Australian outbreaks, many of which are alleged to have been deliberately started). It was a fire that occurred in the wild, the uncultivated countryside, not necessarily one that was untameable (though the association of ideas between these two senses must have been hugely powerful). Somehow this idea got tangled up in people’s mind with the Jack-o’-lantern, will-o’-the-wisp, friar’s lantern, or ignis fatuus, that mysterious, cool, dancing flame of burning methane sometimes to be seen in marshes. The word wildfire comes from the old Germanic wildfire for that phenomenon (modern German prefers Irrlicht or Trugbild). In the thirteenth century, the same word became the usual English way to speak about the invention otherwise called Greek fire – a mixture of inflammable substances that was a precursor to napalm – easy to light but as hard to put out as any bushfire. The link with lightning resurfaced at the end of the seventeenth century, when the word was used for that curious phenomenon in which lightning flashes but no thunder is heard, better known as summer lightning. But our current sense of wildfire, for something that moves as fast as a fire in dry country, seems to be owed to Shakespeare, who used it in The Rape of Lucrece for an enchanting storyteller “Whose words like wildfire burnt the shining glory / Of rich-built Ilion.” So far had the figurative sense taken over that by the end of the seventeenth century William Dampier could write in his New Voyage round the World of 1699, quite without any punning intention, that they set fire to some grassland, which burnt “like Wild-fire.” How else?

LOL

Son-in-law

A very successful businessman had a meeting with his new son-in-law. “I love my daughter, and now I welcome you into the family,” said the man. “To show you how much we care for you, I’m making you a 50-50 partner in my business. All you have to do is go to the factory every day and learn the operations.” The son-in-law interrupted, “I hate factories. I can’t stand the noise.” “I see,” replied the father-in-law. “Well, then you’ll work in the office and take charge of some of the operations.” “I hate office work,” said the son-in-law. “I can’t stand being stuck behind a desk all day.” “Wait a minute,” said the father-in-law. “I just make you half-owner of a moneymaking organisation, but you don’t like factories and won’t work in an office. What am I going to do with you?” “Easy,” said the young man. “Buy me out.”



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

IN LESS THAN A YEAR, THE WORLD HAS COME TOGETHER TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE COVID-19 VACCINES AND A MULTILATERAL PLATFORM FOR ALLOCATING THEM MOST EFFICIENTLY AROUND THE WORLD. BUT WITH THE RISK OF VACCINE NATIONALISM STILL LOOMING LARGE, NOW IS THE TIME TO FINISH THE JOB

IN JEST THIS

Don’t get too comfy with online meetings



Melvin Durai

GETTING HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS TO BE QUIET DURING ONLINE MEETINGS IS QUITE A CHALLENGE, AKIN TO GETTING DONALD TRUMP TO STOP TWEETING

A prominent writer for an American literary magazine, The New Yorker, got fired recently because he inadvertently exposed himself to some colleagues, both men and women, in a Zoom meeting. During a break in the online work-related meeting, the writer, a married man, apparently switched to another video call that was definitely NSFW (not safe for work) and also NSFM (not safe for marriage).

The writer’s wife wasn’t around, but he nevertheless landed in serious trouble, largely because of what he did when he returned to the meeting: he unknowingly pointed his webcam below his waist, allowing his colleagues to get to know him a little more personally than they ever wanted to.

Well, perhaps it was a lot more personally than they ever wanted to. I don’t know exactly how much they were able to see, but it was enough for them to be offended and complain to the higher-ups in the magazine. After conducting an investigation, the bosses concluded that the writer had committed an egregious offense. He had broken a commonly known, but unwritten rule that when you’re attending a staff meeting, you should keep certain parts of your body fully covered.

Nobody wants to see them, and if they did, they would request a pri-

FOCUS PANDEMIC

GLOBALISING THE VACCINE

The development and approval of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines less than a year after the start of the pandemic is a truly remarkable achievement, offering hope that the end of this devastating crisis may be in sight. What will follow in the coming months – or even weeks – will be equally remarkable: COVID-19 vaccines will be made available to people around the world – not just in the wealthiest countries – at roughly the same time.

Vaccines will reach the majority of rich-country citizens in the first quarter of this year, and citizens of low- and lower-middle-income countries will also begin to access them. The speed and scale at which vaccines are being provided is both extraordinary and necessary to end the pandemic, and is possible only thanks to an unprecedented show of global solidarity and multilateral support for COVAX, the central mechanism in the global COVID-19 vaccination effort, launched last year by the World Health Organisation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (which I led).

COVAX will facilitate the rollout of two billion vaccine doses over the next year, reaching people in 190 participating countries and economies, regardless of their ability to pay. In fact, there should be enough doses to protect all health- and social-care workers worldwide by mid-2021. And despite meeting with its share of naysayers, the programme has continued to attract more governments, economic policymakers, and vaccine manufacturers. These participants are signing on because they recognise that COVAX is the only viable global solution to the COVID-19 crisis.

Now that we have reached this critical juncture, speculation about whether COVAX will fail must stop. It is time to start providing the support needed to ensure that it succeeds in doing what it was designed to do. The development and approval of vaccines is merely the first step. As long as the coro-



As long as the coronavirus can be transmitted between people, many will continue to be infected, and some will die. The hope of returning to normal trade, commerce, and travel will remain elusive. To end the cycle, we cannot vaccinate only some people in some countries; we must protect all people everywhere

navirus can be transmitted between people, many will continue to be infected, and some will die. The hope of returning to normal trade, commerce, and travel will remain elusive.

To end the cycle, we cannot vaccinate only some people in some countries; we must protect all people everywhere. Yet as vaccines have been rolled out, demand has predictably outpaced the still-limited supply. Under these conditions, even if doses are promised for the rest of the world further down the line, allocating vaccines to the highest bidder will merely prolong the crisis. Vaccine nationalism is precisely the problem that COVAX was created to solve.

In tackling COVID-19, we must avoid a repeat of 2009, when a small number of rich countries bought up most of global supply of H1N1 flu vaccine, leaving the rest of the world with none. Because every national government has a first-order duty to protect its own citizens, it is no surprise that some 35 countries have already concluded bilateral deals with pharmaceutical manufacturers for COVID-19 vaccines.

These arrangements are not ideal when it comes to the global vaccination effort. Although COVAX is flexible enough to work around this particular problem, it can do so only as long as manufacturers provide it with the same access to vaccines as national governments receive. Unfortunately, we are already seeing some governments buy far more doses than they need, adding to the pressure on global supply during this critical initial phase.

Some of these countries have indicated that they will donate their surplus orders, in which case these additional doses will need to be redirected as quickly and as equitably as possible. The best way to ensure that they are is for donor governments to go through the Gavi/COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) mechanism, which was created to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are made available to people living in the world’s 92 low- and middle-income countries.

So far, COVAX has secured around one billion doses for people in these countries, by striking deals with manufacturers of

several of the most-promising vaccine candidates. But many more doses are needed. All manufacturers must step up and make their vaccines available and affordable to COVAX, so that there can be a timely global rollout. Some manufacturers have already done this; and international donors have contributed the \$2 billion that the COVAX AMC needed for 2020. But the program needed an additional \$5 billion for 2021, and in December, the United States allocated \$4 billion for Gavi in its second COVID-19 relief package.

Back in February, few imagined that by year’s end we would have more than one approved vaccine and be in a position to deliver doses to high- and lower-income countries simultaneously. But the global community rallied and created a platform for doing precisely that. All COVAX needs now is enough international support to finish the job.

The writer is a former board chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and a former African Union special envoy on COVID-19.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Online meetings do have several advantages, but it’s important to be aware of their shortcomings (or hazards); otherwise you may find yourself searching for a new job, either because you’ve been fired or you’re too embarrassed to face your co-workers again

meeting, it’s probably because they can smell something in their own home, most likely a family member who hasn’t showered in months.

Another benefit is that you don’t have to dress up completely, especially if you’re sitting at a table or desk. The camera will show only your upper body, so you need to just wear something nice on top, such as a coat and tie. What you wear below the waist is up to you: shorts, pajamas, or lungi. Just make sure you don’t forget to wear something.

Almost any article of clothing will do, as long as it won’t get you fired if the camera happens to capture it. This is especially true if you are not alone at home. If you have a dog, child, partner or roommate, there is a good chance that one of these household members will make a noise in the middle of a meeting and you will have to stand up to take care of this disturbance, exposing your

full attire, or lack thereof, to the online meeting.

Getting household members to be quiet during online meetings is quite a challenge, akin to getting Donald Trump to stop tweeting. But even if they’re quiet, you may find them making surprise appearances. Your co-workers may get a kick out of it, but you’ll be aghast to spot your grandpa walking in the background wearing only a towel. Believe it or not, normal household behaviour is often inappropriate for work meetings.

If you’re tech-savvy and quick with your fingers, you might be able to mute yourself or turn off your camera to prevent any embarrassing audio or video from escaping your home. But if you’re not, you might find yourself joining the former New Yorker writer and cursing the creators of online meeting software.

Save Mollem National Park

Sir, After the Aarrey forest in Mumbai, now the Mollem National Park in Goa is under threat. Recently, the Goa police detained some minors who were wearing T-shirts with the slogan – “Save Mollem”. In November, 2020, massive protests took place in Goa against the efforts to turn the state into a coal hub. In the name of development the Central government is going to implement three projects which have been planned in an ecologically sensitive area and will pass through the Mollem National Park and the Bhagvan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary, both renowned for their rich flora and fauna. Lakhs of trees will cut for this purpose. Out of the three projects two been approved during the lockdown without following any procedure. The projects - a highway project, a railway project and a power transmission line project - would make Goa a coal transportation hub posing threat to the state’s ecology. These three projects are part of the Sagarmala Project which received the Centre’s nod in 2016. The three projects would have an adverse impact on the state’s fishing and tourism industries as well as the agriculture sector. Coal dust which can travel 5-15 km, depending upon wind and train speed, will negatively affect farming activities. If a highway or a railway line passes through a forest area the problem of habitat fragmentation will arise and this will eventually lead to extinct of species. To save the environment, people’s protest is the only way.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

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‘Umar, Tahir & others conspired Delhi riots’

Court says a witness statement was sufficient to show that during the relevant time, Khalid was allegedly in contact with Hussain, accused as the main conspirator who had funded the riots and instigated the mob from his house to rob people and burn properties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: There was reasonable ground to prima facie show that former JNU student leader Umar Khalid, suspended AAP Councillor Tahir Hussain and others conspired north-east Delhi riots last year, a court here said Tuesday while taking cognisance of the supplementary chargesheet filed in the case.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dinesh Kumar said there was sufficient material on record to proceed against Khalid in the case related to the communal violence in Khajuri Khas area in February last year.

The court said a witness statement was sufficient to show that during the relevant time, Khalid was allegedly in contact with Hussain, accused as the main conspirator who had funded the communal riots and instigated the mob from his house to rob the people and burn down properties.

It noted that the prosecution has alleged in the chargesheet that Khalid was an active participant in the criminal conspiracy to instigate communal riots in various parts of Delhi.

“Due to the instigation by the accused persons, a mob had gathered which had robbed persons and burnt down the properties including houses and shops. They had also destroyed the public property,” it said in its order.

It noted that the prosecution has relied upon the statement of a witness named Rahul Kasana and a pe-



rusal of his statement under section 161 (examination by police) CrPC would show that he has stated that he was working as driver of Hussain at the relevant time.

The court said as per his statement, Kasana had seen accused Hussain allegedly distributing money to the persons who were participating in the demonstration against the Citizenship Amendment Act. It said the statement alleged that January 8, 2020, he had taken Hussain to Shaheen Bagh where the latter had entered in an office after deboarding the car and after sometime he had seen Umar Khalid along with Khalid Saifi allegedly entering inside the office.

The court said: “After about 1-1.5 hours, accused Tahir Hussain had come out of the office. The statement of this witness is sufficient to show that during the relevant time, accused Umar Khalid was in contact with accused Tahir Hussain against whom there is sufficient material on record to prima facie show that he was the main conspirator who had funded the communal riots and instigated the mob from his

house to rob the persons and to burn down the properties.”

“Thus, there is reasonable ground to prima facie show that accused Umar Khalid, accused Tahir Hussain and other accused persons had conspired together to commit offences as mentioned in the charge sheet. Hence, there is sufficient material on record to proceed against accused Umar Khalid.”

The court directed the investigating officer to supply a copy of the supplementary charge sheet to Khalid through the concerned Jail Superintendent.

Meanwhile, the court also issued notice to the police on an application moved by Khalid alleging that a “vicious Media campaign” was being conducted against him. The application claimed that sections of the media were getting access to the charge sheet even before the accused or his counsel got it.

The police had filed the supplementary charge sheet against Khalid in the case December 26 last year. The main charge sheet was filed against 15 persons, including Hussain, in June last year.

NGT worried over high ammonia levels in Yamuna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: The National Green Tribunal-appointed Yamuna Monitoring Committee has asked the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to identify ‘point sources’ of pollution leading to high levels of ammonia in the river in Delhi and submit a report by January 10.

The directions from the two-member green panel came after the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) alleged that Haryana has not yet stopped discharging industrial pollutants in the river despite repeated reminders, and urged the CPCB to take immediate remedial measures.

The committee cited a media report that said ammonia levels in the Yamuna at Wazirabad rose to 7 parts per million (ppm) against the permissible limits of 0.8 ppm.

“It has also been reported that the reason primarily is the industrial effluent/untreated domestic sewage entering river Yamuna through drains number 6 and 8 and through the Rohtak regulator,” the panel, comprising former Delhi Chief Secretary Shailaja Chandra and retired NGT



If enough fresh water for dilution is not available, the production capacity of plants is reduced or they are temporarily shut

expert member BS Sajwan, said.

The incidence of high ammoniacal nitrogen concentration is sporadic in nature and is generally reported during the winter months of December-February almost every year, the committee said. “Considering the recurring nature of the problem, it is incumbent upon the CPCB and Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) to put in place a robust surveillance system, particularly during the critical winter months, for monitoring

the activities of the industries and the functioning of STPs and also take coercive action against the defaulting units,” it said. The panel asked the CPCB to associate with HSPCB and depute a team to identify point sources of pollution leading to high levels of ammoniacal nitrogen in the Yamuna and submit a report by January 10. According to United States Environmental Protection Agency, a point source is a single, identifiable source of pollution, such as a pipe or a drain. The YMC

WATER WOES

High levels of ammonia in the Yamuna have prompted the DJB to reduce or stop water production at its plants at least five times this year	According to officials, the DJB's water treatment plants can treat up to 0.9 parts per million ammonia concentration in the river water
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If the ammonia content is higher than this, the raw water is diluted with fresh water from the Upper Ganga Canal or the Munak Canal



MUFFLER MAN

A vendor sells mufflers during a cold winter morning in New Delhi, Tuesday. Sporadic rains continued in the national capital for the third consecutive day Tuesday, even as the minimum temperature rose to 13.2 degrees Celsius, six notches more than normal, the India Meteorological Department said.

PTI PHOTO

Survey begins to study quakes in Delhi-NCR

DELHI EXPERIENCED FOUR SMALL EARTHQUAKES DURING APRIL – AUGUST 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) has started a geophysical survey over the Delhi region for accurate assessment of seismic hazards, following tremors in the NCR last year.

The NCS will also carry out analysis and interpretation of satellite imageries and geological field investigations for locating the faults in the Earth's surface, the Ministry of Earth Sciences said.

Both the field surveys, geophysical and geological, are expected to be completed by March 31.

Further, the seismic network in Delhi and surrounding areas has been strengthened after the tremors in 2020 to improve the accuracy of epicentre location to 2 kilometres, the MoES said.

The NCS is a body under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. Delhi experienced four small earthquakes during April – August 2020, with the first event of magnitude 3.5 April 12 in the northeastern boundary of Delhi.

These earthquakes were followed by a dozen micro-events and a few aftershocks. Soon after the second event of magnitude 3.4 on May 10, the MoES held a detailed discussion with experts to address the ongoing earthquake activity.

“It was felt that it is necessary to characterise the earthquake sources in Delhi and surroundings through strengthening of local seismic network and delineation of sub-surface features such as fault, which may cause earthquakes. A fault is a fracture or discontinuity in a volume of rock,” the MoES said.

The seismic network in Delhi and its surrounding areas was strengthened by deploying 11 tem-

porary additional stations covering the known faults in the region to precisely locate the earthquakes and their aftershocks for a better understanding of the causative sources.

Data from these stations are received in near real-time and used for locating the micro and small earthquakes in the region.

“A geophysical survey, namely, Magneto-telluric (MT) is also being conducted over the Delhi region,” the MoES said.

MT is a geophysical method which uses natural time variation of the Earth's magnetic and electric fields to understand geological structure and processes.

These measurements are being conducted across three major seismic sources, namely the Mahendragarh-Dehradun Fault (MDF), Sohna Fault (SF) and Mathura Fault (MF).

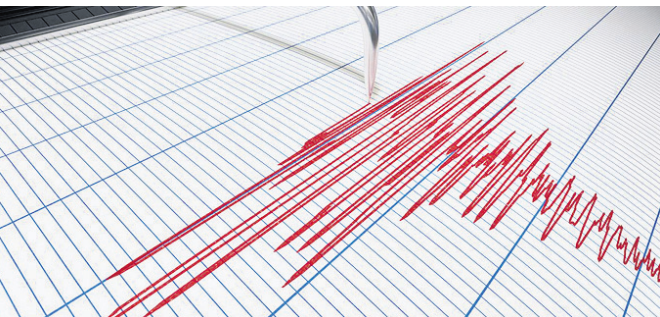
This will help ascertain the presence of fluid, which generally enhances the possibility of triggering of earthquakes.

This survey is carried out in collaboration with the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG), Dehradun.

Analysis and interpretation of satellite imageries and geological field investigations for locating the faults are also being carried out, the MoES said.

“This information along with the results of MT survey will be useful in accurate assessment of seismic hazard. It can also be used for designing the earthquake resistant buildings, industrial units and critical structures, like hospitals and schools,” the MoES said.

The study is being conducted by the NCS in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur.



Despite dinner & dharna together, Gehlot-Pilot differences are obvious

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Jan 5: Although Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his former deputy Sachin Pilot were seen together at the Congress' dharna staged against the Centre's farm laws in Jaipur, differences between the two remained obvious as not a word was exchanged except for courtesy purposes.

The dharna took place Sunday. It was for the first time after August last year that Gehlot and Pilot were seen together ever since the high command brokered peace between the two.

Gehlot called a dinner after the dharna in which he invited leaders from the Pilot's camp as well in a bid to be seen as the peace-maker.

Vishvendra Singh, a leader from the Pilot camp, who was stripped off his state minister's portfolio last year, was seen during the dinner. However, Ramesh Meena, another pro Pilot leader, who was also removed from the state minister's post, was absent from the dinner invite.

“This dinner diplomacy is of no use. There is intense dissatisfaction in the party. We are awaiting the PCC formation, political appointments and cabinet expansion. An even approach is what we want.



However, the continuous delay is making the situation volatile and this volcano simmering within the workers can erupt any time,” said a Congress worker who attended this dinner.

Sources confirmed that Gehlot wanted his close aides and senior leaders to be given plush positions in the PCC, which Pilot has 'not acceded' to so far, sources said.

In fact, many senior leaders have already shown their disinterest in joining the PCC. Archana Sharma, former PCC vice-president and media chief, has also accepted that she is not interested as she has been doing the same thing for the last 21 years. “I have asked the high command to give me a chance to serve people,” she said. Pilot had rebelled against the

MoEF panel advises withdrawal of elephant rides at Amber Fort

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

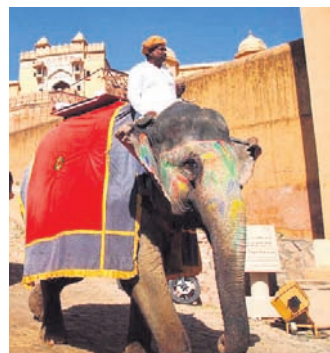
Jaipur, Jan 5: A central government panel has recommended the withdrawal of elephant rides at the iconic Amber Fort here in a phased manner and to replace them with electric or battery-operated vehicles.

The committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, formed on a Supreme Court order, has made the recommendation in its report, given to media persons by PETA India here, a party to a petition on the matter, pending in the apex court.

In its report dated December 28, the ministry's panel has advised withdrawal of elephant rides, considering the advancing age of jumbos and declining trend among tourists for rides.

“In a phased manner, the elephant rides in Amber Fort may be withdrawn and switched over to other modes of transportation like electric or battery-operated vehicles,” the report said.

“The declining trend of tourists on elephant rides and ageing animals are indicators for changes. The owners of the elephants also may be rehabilitated suitably in such situations. The new addition of elephants for rides should be



completely banned,” the report added.

The committee was appointed following a Supreme Court order based on concerns over alleged cruelty to elephants and their illegal use for joy rides and other activities at Amber Fort and Elephant Village in Jaipur, said a joint statement by Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre and PETA India.

The two outfits are respectively petitioner and intervenor in the matter, pending at the apex court.

The committee noted in its report that of the 98 captive elephants inspected, 22 suffered from irreversible eye problems and 42 had foot problems, including overgrown nails and flat footpads due to walking on concrete roads.

Why reasons of botulism not deciphered: Wildlife experts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Jan 5: As bird flu spreads its tentacles in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, experts have raised concerns over why the reasons for bird flu or avian influenza and animal botulism or any other disease infecting the nation's wildlife in recent years have not been deciphered so far.

Around 20,000 aquatic birds perished in November 2019 in and around Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan. The Rajasthan High Court at that time took suo-motu cognisance and formed a committee to ensure that such a tragedy does not occur again.

“In such a context, the court should ask the central government to set up a panel to decipher the reason behind such cases of bird flu, influenza, botulism or any other disease which is infecting India's

wild birds in recent years. Despite mortality happening in states which is a cause of grave concern to state governments, the reasons behind such infections are not yet known which is a worrying factor,” said environmentalist Harsh Vardhan.

All samples of dead birds from Rajasthan are being sent to Bhopal for further testing as there are no such labs in the desert state. The experts hinted that North-South migration can also be subjected to injecting virus in birds causing embarrassment to southern countries.

Most of the migratory birds to India fly North-South in October and go back South-North in March. The mortalities have been noticed on the N-S pathway i.e. reaching India, the experts said.

Harsh Vardhan said the Ministry of Environment has the jurisdiction to tackle such issues. However, it has



no expertise. It rests on the states' work. So Ministry of Animal Husbandry is the lone agency to handle such issues but it mostly deals with domestic livestock not directly supervising the wild species. So who is finally responsible for

wild species? The Forest Department, which has no where-withal to deal with such crises, he asked.

A total of 522 birds have died in Rajasthan in the last one week since the outbreak of bird flu, out of

which 471 were crows, while others include herons and baya weavers.

Mohanlal Meena, Chief Wildlife Warden, Jaipur told IANS, “Animal Husbandry is mostly responsible in dealing with such issues. However, we are working as joint teams with the Veterinary Department, district administration and Forest Department to contain the infection. Our teams are tracking all such cases without delay and disposing of them with caution,” he added.

Another senior official who monitored the Sambhar crises told IANS, “No lessons have been learnt from the Sambhar tragedy. The reason behind the birds' death was botulism which happens via poisoned food/meat or by injecting poison. Disposing their bodies was a challenge then and it is a challenge now too when bird flu has hit many parts of the state.”

of the day quote

The coronavirus pandemic has turned the clock back by many years and the lockdowns have raised insurmountable barriers and imposed many roadblocks

DR HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

I was surprised to know that recently some doctors opposed the move. I pity on their intelligence. They need to be told that the first surgeon on earth was given by Ayurveda

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

Nitish Kumar had become the Bihar Chief Minister on a compassionate ground and by the grace of BJP and therefore nobody listened to him right from his Cabinet colleagues to bureaucrats

TEJASHWI YADAV | LOP IN BIHAR ASSEMBLY

SHORT TAKES

Girl mauled to death by dogs

Pilibhit (UP): A 12-year-old girl was mauled to death by stray dogs in Bagva village under Jahanabad police station area here Tuesday, police said. The deceased girl has been identified as Neha. Her father told police that Neha had gone out to the family's agriculture field besides a canal when stray dogs attacked her in the morning, police said. She suffered serious injuries and died on the spot, the father told police.

5-year-old girl raped in UP

Shahjahanpur (UP): A youth has been arrested for allegedly raping a five-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur district, police said Tuesday. The incident occurred at a village under Jalalabad police station area Monday evening when the girl was playing outside her house, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Nipun Agarwal said. The suspect, aged 18, has been arrested and the girl sent for medical examination.

Woman, minors found dead

Chandigarh: A 30-year-old woman and her two minor daughters were found dead at their home in Punjab's Sangrur district, police said Tuesday. Baljit Kaur was found hanging from a ceiling fan at her home in Saron village Monday evening, Sangrur Deputy Superintendent of Police Satpal Sharma said over the phone. The bodies of her two daughters - Arshnoor Kaur (4) and Virasat Kaur (2) - were lying on a bed, said police. The bodies were first seen by the woman's husband after he returned from work, said police.

4 die in car-truck collision

Hathras (UP): Four people, including two children, have died and five were injured when a truck collided with their car and overturned on it in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district, police said Tuesday. Nine people from Alwar in Rajasthan were heading towards Kasganj to take a dip in the Ganga. The accident occurred on the Mathura-Bareilly road on Monday night, Sikandra Rao police station incharge Praveen Kumar said. A crane was used to remove the truck that had fallen on the SUV.



People have great anger against the TMC. Aligning with Trinamool will therefore only turn people against us and help the BJP

SITARAM YECHURY | CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY

CISF TO REVIEW TAJ MAHAL SECURITY

A day after four people were held for waving saffron flags on the Taj Mahal premises, the CISF, which has the responsibility to guard it, Tuesday said it will review its surveillance and intelligence gathering at the Mughal-era monument



Farmers defer 'tractor march' to Thursday

LAST WEEK, FARMERS HAD WARNED THAT THEY WOULD INTENSIFY THEIR PROTESTS IF THEIR DEMANDS WERE NOT MET IN THE JANUARY 4 MEETING

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 5: A day after talks with the centre ended in a stalemate, the protesting farmers have announced that they will intensify their agitation against the three contentious agriculture laws for the next two weeks.

Swaraj India's Yogendra Yadav, who has been backing the protesters, said Tuesday that a tractor march will be organised at four Delhi borders January 7 to press for their demands - repealing the laws and giving legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system. The leader called the march a "trailer" before the massive Republic Day agitation.

"We have decided that January 7, we will take out a tractor march at four borders of Delhi including eastern and western peripheral. This will be a trailer for what lies ahead January 26," Yadav said at a press conference at the Singhu border, the epicentre of the protests.

"From tomorrow, for two weeks, 'Desh Jagran Abhiyan' will be started and protests will be in-



tensified throughout the country," he added.

Last week, farmers had warned that they would intensify their protests if their demands were not met in the January 4 meeting. They had also announced a tractor rally and nationwide protests January 26.

"On January 26, we will hold a massive rally in Delhi with Tricolours on tractors. We give a call for countrywide protests at all head-

quarters (of the unions)," the protesting farmers had said.

BJP LEADERS FROM PUNJAB MEET PM

New Delhi: BJP leaders from Punjab Tuesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here amid protests by farmers at Delhi's borders against the Centre's new agri laws for nearly six weeks. BJP leaders Surjit Kumar Jyani, who is also a former Punjab minister, and Harjit Singh Grewal met Prime Minister Modi at his residence. Jyani was chairing the BJP's Kisan Coordination Committee for interacting with farmers in Punjab last year on the three farm Bills which at that time had not been passed by Parliament. Talking to PTI, Grewal said their meeting with Prime Minister Modi was about Punjab related issues, but did not specify further.

repeal of the laws," said Sarwan Singh Pandher of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, who attended the meeting.

The two sides have agreed to meet again January 8.

RELIGIOUS FERVOUR



Sikh devotees perform Gatka during Nagar Kirtan (religious procession) to mark the 355th birth anniversary of the 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh in Amritsar, Tuesday

Mamata hints at implementing PM Kisan scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 5: Continuing her tirade against the Centre over the new farm laws, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said arrangements would soon be made to convene an Assembly session to pass a resolution against the contentious Acts.

With Assembly polls knocking at

the door, Banerjee also hinted that she was ready to implement the PM-Kisan scheme in Bengal, if the farmers benefitted out of it and said she had asked the Centre to share details of all those who have registered themselves on the Union government's portal for the programme. Banerjee, however, as-

serted that said she would never allow the implementation of the

three farm laws, which have sparked protests across the country.

"We are against those farm laws. We would soon convene an Assembly session for a day or two and pass a resolution against the anti-farmer laws," Banerjee said.

Bengal, if it passes the resolution, would become the sixth state in the country to do so, after Kerala, Delhi, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

RSS meet to discuss Modi Cabinet rejig

The national convention of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and various affiliated organisations began Tuesday at Gandhinagar in Gujarat for an appraisal of the schemes, policies and actions of the Narendra Modi government and crafting the future course of action

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 5: The three-day national convention of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and various affiliated organisations began Tuesday at Gandhinagar in Gujarat for an appraisal of the schemes, policies and actions of the Narendra Modi government and crafting the future course of action.

BJP president JP Nadda, RSS sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat and leaders of all RSS affiliates had reached Ahmedabad Monday for the crucial meeting, which is the top coordination platform between the various organs of the RSS including the BJP.

It is expected that BJP chief Nadda may get inputs from the RSS on possible rejig of the Modi Cabinet on the sidelines of the Sangh Parivar's national convention, which has Ram temple fund campaign, Bengal situation and farm protests on its agenda of discussion. The meet is being attended by nearly 150 top leaders of the 25 Sangh affiliated organisations. Arun Kumar, the RSS Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh, told reporters, "The delegates will discuss the nationwide feedback generated on various schemes and policies, provide inputs for future actions and suggest ways for improvement."

Sources said apart from feedback from the ground in Bengal ahead of the crucial Assembly elections in the state and brainstorm-



ing over the ongoing farm protests, one of the crucial discussions between top RSS and BJP leaders could be over the much-anticipated expansion and rejig of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's council of ministers. Sangh's say in this matter is likely to be critical.

PM Modi is expected to fill in the vacancy after the demise of LJP leader Ram Vilas Paswan. Currently, Railways and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is handling the food and consumer affairs portfolio that Paswan held earlier.

Further, with the Bihar Assembly polls over, PM Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar are expected to work on the JDU's participation in the Union Cabinet. Bihar's Sushil Modi, who didn't return to the deputy CM's post and Jyotiraditya Scindia, who joined the BJP in March 2019 are also said to be waiting for a place in the Union Cabinet.

Though there is no clarity on when PM Modi may go for the Cabinet reshuffle, it is not likely to happen before 08.15 am January 14, a source said as the month long "kharmaas or inauspicious period" ends on that morning.

India gets its first women's team in disaster combat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: In yet another example of shattering of the proverbial glass ceiling, the first batch of over 100 women disaster combatants and rescuers has been inducted in the country's federal calamity force NDRF.

An all-woman team of freshly trained National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel was recently deployed for contingency duties on the banks of the Ganga river in Uttar Pradesh's Garh Mukteshwar town, a senior force officer said.

"The first women rescuers' team is already on ground. Recently, the UP government requisitioned an NDRF team and they (women) went there (Garh Mukteshwar). The team handled the rescue boats and related equipments," NDRF di-

rector general SN Pradhan told this news agency in an interview.

"These personnel have all the skills to be called complete rescuers," he said.

The move to include women personnel in the NDRF combat ranks was in the works for some time. The force, since it was raised over a decade ago, was till now an all-male affair.

More than 100 women personnel have joined the NDRF over the last few months and they are being deputed with its battalions across the country as soon as they finish their pre-induction course and training, the DG said. He said the numbers are expected to go over 200 women personnel in the near future.

The female personnel who are joining are in the constabulary and sub-officer (Sub Inspector and Inspector) ranks.



2020: From Patna to Ahmedabad, heritage faced demolition

2020 did not prove kind to heritage buildings in some cities across the country, even as sensitive citizenry fought hard to save the architectural legacy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: The outbreak of Covid-19 spelt doom for humans in the year gone by, but 2020 did not prove kind to heritage buildings either in some of the cities across the country, even as sensitive citizenry fought hard to save the architectural legacy from the wrecking ball.

From Patna to Ahmedabad, from Dutch-era historic structures to modern marvels, built heritage in these cities did not breathe easy.

The redevelopment of Central Vista in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi also irked heritage lovers in 2020, who had been demanding from the government to tread that heritage architectural and natural spaces

cautiously and not "obscure" the past to build future projects.

Foundation stone of the new Parliament House that will come up next to the old one, built in 1920s, was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December.

In the same month, some of the major structures of the iconic Louis Kahn Plaza that visually symbolises the campus of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA), came under the threat of demolition.

The institute had decided to demolish 14 of its dormitories designed by the renowned American architect, saying these dormitories have suffered damages beyond repairs over the years, due to various reasons including 2001 earthquake



Supreme Court stays demolition of iconic Patna Collectorate

and water seepages.

But the decision met with stiff opposition, from the IIMA alumni, architect community and children of Kahn, following which it decided

to withdraw its proposal, bringing cheers among history and architecture lovers on the New Year who hope 2021 will be kinder on heritage. Battle to save the historic

Patna Collectorate kept courts busy in pandemic, and people on tenterhooks throughout the year.

The legal battle to save the Dutch-era landmark from demolition, which had started in the Patna High Court, came to a halt on September 2020, leaving the heritage buildings in the campus vulnerable again to demolition, as the court disposed of the case and allowed the government to take "necessary consequential action".

Delhi-based Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) had taken the Bihar government to court in August 2019 seeking preservation of the Collectorate, and constitution of Bihar Urban Arts and Heritage Commission, which had been pend-

ing since 2012.

The matter had gone to the court of Chief Justice Sanjay Karol in early 2020, who had first heard the matter on January 31, and said, "we are not inclined to modify the interim order dated September 25 passed by this court in the connected writ petition," while directing that "the Collectorate building be not demolished till the next date of hearing".

The Supreme Court, after an on-line hearing on September 18, ordered a stay on the demolition of the Patna Collectorate, two days after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had laid the foundation stone for its new complex and a slew of other projects ahead of the state Assembly polls.

of the day quote

(Kangana) Ranaut in her latest tweet had used words indicating her intention to please the BJP. It clearly means her tirade against the MVA was scripted by the BJP

SACHIN SAWANT | MAHARASHTRA CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON

Bengal should answer a few questions. Why it is that businessmen are hesitant to invest in the state? Will corporates be allowed to do hassle-free business here?

ANURAG SINGH THAKUR | UNION MINISTER

The decision to create Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE) will provide a level playing field for private companies as well as start-ups

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Three of family commit suicide

Nawanshahr: Three members of a family allegedly committed suicide by consuming some poisonous substance in Malpur Arkan village here, police said Tuesday. The bodies of Jit Ram (80), his wife Channo Devi (78) and their daughter Yamuna Devi (42) were found on a bed in their house, they said. After not seeing them since Monday evening, the neighbours along with some villagers entered the house from the rooftop of an adjoining building, and found the bodies Tuesday, police said.

BSF nabs nine Bangla nationals

Nadia (WB): BSF troops apprehended nine Bangladeshi nationals, including three minors, who were trying to cross the International Border in West Bengal's Nadia district Monday. The individuals were later handed over to Bangladesh authorities as a gesture of goodwill. On December 4, Border Security Force (BSF) jawans posted at the border outpost Kumari received specific input from the force's intelligence branch regarding illegal migration from Bangladesh.

Sabarmati Ashram reopens

Ahmedabad: The historic Sabarmati Ashram here has reopened its doors for visitors, after remaining closed for over nine months due to the coronavirus outbreak, an ashram official said Tuesday. With social distancing and other COVID-19 protocols in place, the premises have been opened for the public from Monday, the ashram's director, Atul Pandya, said. Before the outbreak of Covid-19, the ashram, a former home of Mahatma Gandhi and a historic centre linked to India's Independence movement, used to receive a large number of visitors every day.

5 injured in LPG cylinder blast

New Delhi: Five people, including three children were injured in a cylinder blast in Delhi early Tuesday. According to police, a PCR call was made at around 4.56 a.m. It occurred in a house in west Delhi's Hari Nagar area at Asha Park's G-Block causing fire and collapse of one wall of the building. However a major disaster was averted. The three children injured were in the age group 10-12 years, besides a man and a woman both in their mid 30s.



The shocking visuals of our farmer brothers being attacked with teargas and water cannons made it appear as if this was an India-Pakistan war

RAGHU CHADHA | AAP'S PUNJAB UNIT CO-INCHARGE

J&K DMA ISSUES FRESH AVALANCHE WARNING

The Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority Tuesday issued fresh medium to low level avalanche warnings for higher reaches of avalanche-prone areas of the Union Territory



Thousands of birds to be culled over avian flu outbreak

AT LEAST SIX STATES HAVE STEPPED UP EFFORTS TO CONTAIN TWO STRAINS OF BIRD FLU AFTER THE DEATHS OF THOUSANDS OF MIGRATORY BIRDS, DUCKS, CROWS AND CHICKENS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Shimla, Jan 5: Tens of thousands of poultry will be slaughtered in the country after an outbreak of deadly avian influenza was found to have killed scores of birds across the country, officials said Tuesday. At least six Indian states have stepped up efforts to contain two strains of bird flu – H5N1 and H5N8 – in recent days after the deaths of thousands of migratory birds, ducks, crows and chickens. H5N8, an avian influenza subtype among poultry and wild birds, has spread across several countries since early last year. Officials in Himachal Pradesh said carcasses were found over the

past week at a Himalayan lake that witnesses large flocks of migratory birds during the winter season. “The death toll in the last week or so at the Pong lake crossed 2,400 migratory birds. Over 600 birds died on Monday,” state wildlife chief Archana Sharma told this news agency. Samples sent to the Indian National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases tested positive for H5N1, officials added. Most of the dead were Central Asian high-altitude bar-headed geese – one of the world's highest flying birds – that migrate to South Asia in their thousands during the winter season. Local authorities have banned the sale and export of poultry in the



region and have stepped-up testing to control the spread. The mass deaths came amid a cull of nearly 35,000 poultry in southern Kerala state, where an H5N8 virus outbreak killed up

to 12,000 ducks. Authorities said the slaughter was ordered within one kilometre radius of the infection epicentre. In northern Haryana state authorities said nearly 150,000 chick-

ens died mysteriously across several poultry farms in Barwala district. Neighbouring Punjab also reported similar deaths. More than 20 farms said their flocks were wiped out by an “unknown disease” and samples have been sent to labs for testing. Western Rajasthan and central Madhya Pradesh states have also reported hundreds of crow deaths caused by H5N1 and H5N8 over past weeks. Rajasthan had already seen nearly 4,500 crows and herons die over several months from avian flu. India has witnessed bouts of devastating bird flu outbreaks in recent decades, most seriously in 2008, when millions of poultry were culled.

BJP faces challenge to control dissidence in MP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Jan 5: It has been nearly 10 months since the BJP returned to power in Madhya Pradesh and has now also secured an absolute majority in the state but the biggest challenge before it is to control the dissidence brewing in the party. The BJP lost in the Assembly elections held in 2018 but wrested power in March 2019, following a rebellion in the ruling Congress-led by former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. Following this, in the by-elections held in 28 Assembly constituencies the BJP won 19 seats and the Congress nine. The BJP now has an absolute majority. Since then with the expansion of the Cabinet and the party organisation along with appointments to various corporations and boards, BJP leaders were looking forward to being inducted. Recently, another expansion of the Cabinet took place and two MLAs who had won in the by-elections were appointed ministers. Earlier they had to resign



On the dissent in the BJP, Congress leader and former minister Sajjan Singh Verma hinted that 35 MLAs were in touch with the Congress

The expansion of the state party organisation has been going on for a long time and many times it was said that the party executive would be announced soon, but it has been getting delayed

from the cabinet after six months since they were not even MLAs. This left many BJP leaders miffed with the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government for not getting a berth in the fourth cabinet expansion. This anger was openly expressed by BJP

MLA Ajay Vishnoi who also accused the state government of neglecting the Vindhya and Mahakaushal regions. On the other hand, the expansion of the state party organisation has been going on for a long time and many times it was said that the party executive would be announced soon, but it has been getting delayed. Along with this many leaders were hoping to be appointed to corporations and boards. On the discontent brewing within the BJP, former minister Umashankar Gupta said that it could be an individual personal problem. He added that Ajay Vishnoi is a senior leader, his concerns may be natural but the organisation has to think thoroughly before taking any decision. On the dissent in the BJP, Congress leader and former minister Sajjan Singh Verma hinted that 35 MLAs were in touch with the Congress. He said that those who want to be in power will not be happy with the organisation.

Obama admin ‘knowingly’ funded al-Qaeda affiliate

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/Washington, Jan 5: Former US President Barack Obama's administration knowingly funded a sanctioned affiliate of the pan-Islamist banned terror outfit al-Qaeda, as per a recently released report of a US Senate committee. The report is based on a probe by the office of the Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) into the Obama administration's approval of a \$200,000 grant to a US evangelical aid organisation World Vision for the al-Qaeda affiliate, Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA). Incidentally World Vision works in India as well and is a member of InterAction, America's largest alliance of international non-profit organisations. InterAction's Together Project involves the most controversial Islamic charities including Helping Hand for Relief & Development (HHRD), which works with the charitable and political wings of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistani terror outfit directed against India in Kashmir. The US Senate probe into World Vision and its ties with ISRA had been initiated in 2019 after the Middle East Forum's Sam Westrop

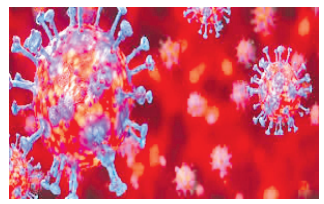


and Cliff Smith exposed the details through a series of articles published in 2018. In January 2014, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded World Vision a grant of \$723,405 grant for providing humanitarian services to the conflict-torn Blue Nile region of Sudan. World Vision outsourced the services to ISRA, with which it had collaborated earlier too. But ISRA has been sanctioned by the US government since 2004. World Vision in its defence has claimed that it was unaware about the sanctions against ISRA over its ties to terrorism. Though the Senate committee report has exonerated World Vision of any intentional wrongdoing, it lashed out at the charity for illegally sending government funds to ISRA.

20 more people test +ve for UK strain of Covid-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Twenty more people have tested positive for the new UK variant of SARS-CoV-2, taking the total number of such cases in the country to 58. The new cases have been identified at the National Institute of Virology (NIV) Pune. “The total number of cases infected with the new strain of the novel coronavirus first reported in the UK now stands at 58,” the Union Health Ministry said. All these persons have been kept in single room isolation in designated Health Care facilities by respective state governments. Their close contacts have also been put under quarantine. Comprehensive contact tracing has



Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), Delhi, in one in National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG), Kalyani (near Kolkata), 25 in the National Institute of Virology in Pune, three in Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad and ten was sequenced in National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences Hospital (NIMHANS), Bangalore. The INSACOG labs at NCBS InSTEM, Bangalore, CDFD Hyderabad, ILS Bhubaneswar, and NCBS Pune have so far found no mutant virus. The new UK variant has already been reported by several countries including Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan and Lebanon.



Motorcycle riders wade through a waterlogged road wade after heavy rains in Gurugram, Tuesday

Herd immunity, young populace behind dip in Covid count

WHILE INDIA'S COVID-19 NUMBERS ARE ON A DEFINITE DECLINE FOR A COMBINATION OF REASONS, A VACCINATION PROGRAMME CONTINUES TO BE IMPORTANT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: The absolute number of people infected with Covid-19 in India may never be known but much of the scientific community agrees the downward trajectory of the disease is real and can likely be attributed to ‘localised’ herd immunity and a younger population. As scientists attempt to understand India's sliding Covid count, the country Tuesday recorded 16,375 new Covid-19 cases, more than six times lower than the highest daily spike of 97,894 September 16 and the lowest in six months. While there is a glimmer of hope and India's Covid-19 numbers are on a definite decline for a combination of reasons, a vaccination

programme continues to be important, particularly given the presence of a mutant, more transmissible strain, several experts said while cautioning against infection upticks ahead. “It's not the absolute numbers, but the trajectory that is important,” said Shahid Jameel, director, Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University, looking at India's COVID graph. Noting that it is impossible and impractical to have true numbers during a pandemic, or even after that, unless everyone is tested, the virologist said Covid-19 cases in the country have gone down steadily since the peak in mid-September. Reflecting the national trend, Delhi's graph has also been on a downward slide with 384 fresh Covid-



19 cases recorded Monday, the lowest in over seven months, raising hopes that herd immunity may have set in. Herd immunity is a form of indirect protection from infectious disease that sets in when a sufficient percentage of a population has become

immune to an infection. “Nothing has changed drastically in testing or behaviour since mid-September. So relatively speaking, it's a downward trajectory,” Jameel told PTI. The country's average, he said, hides many localised

spikes and that would continue. While the actual numbers may well be underestimated, the trend of lower numbers appears to be real and the rate of spread of the infection is likely to have reduced, said immunologist Satyajit Rath. “A possible explanation for this may be that crowded urban localities and neighbourhoods where spread was very rapid earlier might be largely saturated a form of hyperlocal ‘herd immunity’,” Rath, from New Delhi's National Institute of Immunology (NII), told this news agency. The lack of more travel and the distancing measures – however poorly implemented – may be keeping rates of spread somewhat lower in other less crowded neighbourhoods, he said. Given the

67 died of drug abuse in Mizoram in 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, Jan 5: At least 67 people, including six women, have died due to substance abuse in Mizoram in 2020 with heroin being the main killer drug, an official said Tuesday. The state had reported 55 drug-related fatalities in 2019. “All the 67 people who died of drug abuse last year were addicted to heroin. The state government has been taking several measures to curb the menace,” the excise and narcotics department official said. Most of the drugs, especially heroin, have been smuggled from Myanmar, he said. Mizoram, which is sandwiched between Myanmar and Bangladesh, has been grappling with drug abuse since 1984 when the death of a heroin user was reported for the first time in the state. The hilly state shares 722 km of the international border with these two countries. Until 2015, spasmo proxyvon, which is used as a pain-killer, had caused maximum drug-related deaths in the state. With an increasing supply of heroin from Myanmar and neighbouring states, it has become the main killer drug, the official said. The excise and narcotics department's data showed that at least 1,646 people, including 193 women, have died of drug abuse in Mizoram since 1984. In a bid to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease, the international border with the two countries have been sealed since March 2020, which has considerably reduced smuggling of drug and alcohol last year, he added.

BENAMI ASSETS CASE

I-T dept quizzes Robert Vadra for second day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

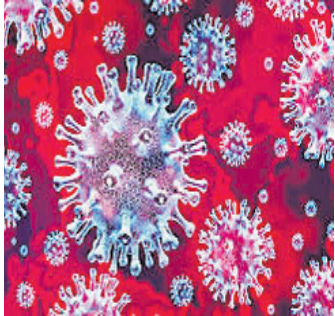
New Delhi, Jan 5: The Income Tax department questioned Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress President Sonia Gandhi, for the second consecutive day Tuesday in connection with its probe against him under the benami assets law, official sources said. A team from the Chandigarh investigation unit of the department, that is handling the probe, was seen going inside Vadra's office in the Sukhdev Vihar area of the national capital around 3 PM. After he was questioned on the first day on Monday, the 52-year-old had said the aim of the tax department's action was to “digress” from the “real issues” concerning the country like the farmers' agitation. On Monday, he was questioned for about eight hours and his statement was recorded as part of the proceedings related to the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, sources had said. Tax department sources had said Vadra was asked to join the investigation at their office but as he cited the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions, I-T officials decided to visit his premises. “Officials had said the questioning was linked to the purchase of some land parcels by a firm linked to Vadra in Rajasthan's border town of Bikaner in which another central probe agency, the Enforcement Directorate, had filed a money laundering case in 2015.



The President spends more time whining and complaining than doing something about the problem. I don't know why he still wants the job. He doesn't want to do the work
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT-ELECT

MAJOR THREAT

Sri Lanka faces the danger of new coronavirus variant entering the country as the government has allowed the foreign tourists to return to the country, a senior epidemiologist warned



of the day quote

The PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) has almost lost and died its own death, so it is no more a threat to the government
IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER

The new strain of the virus presents us all with a huge challenge – and whilst the vaccine is being rolled out, we have needed to tighten restrictions further
RISHI SUNAK | UK CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

As always, I would like to express my deep respect and gratitude to you (Nancy Pelosi) for your firm and ongoing support for the Tibetan people
THE DALAI LAMA | TIBETAN SPIRITUAL LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Germany set to extend lockdown

Berlin: Germany's disease control center Tuesday reported 944 more COVID-19 deaths, fuelling expectations that Chancellor Angela Merkel and the country's 16 state governors will extend the country's lockdown until the end of the month. Germany's latest lockdown took effect December 16 after a partial shutdown starting in early November failed to reduce the number of daily new coronavirus infections. It was initially set to expire January 10.

2.2mn Ethiopians displaced

Addis Ababa: Conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray regional state has displaced 2.2 million people, a government official said. "There are 2.2 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Tigray, half of them are whose houses were burnt and lost all their properties, the other half fled by foot to regional cities including Axum, Shire, Adigrat and Mekelle," Gebremeskel Kassa, head of the region's Interim Administration Office, told the media Monday.

Three days of mourning in Niger

Dakar (Senegal): Niger will hold three days of national mourning after an attack on two villages in the nation's southwest that killed more than 100 civilians, the government said. The government is strengthening security in the area of the attacks near the border with Mali and will provide support to those living there, it said in a statement after an emergency Cabinet meeting called by President Mahamadou Issoufou late Monday. The attacks on the western villages of Tchombangou and Zaroumdareye took place Saturday, the same day that Niger announced its presidential elections would go to a second round to be held February 21.

Germany exceeds climate target

Berlin: Germany exceeded its target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a report. The analysis published by the think tank Agora Energiewende on Monday said that Germany's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 were 42.3 per cent lower than the reference year 1990, exceeding the target of 40 per cent lower, reports Xinhua news agency.

Be ready to 'act at any second': Xi to PLA

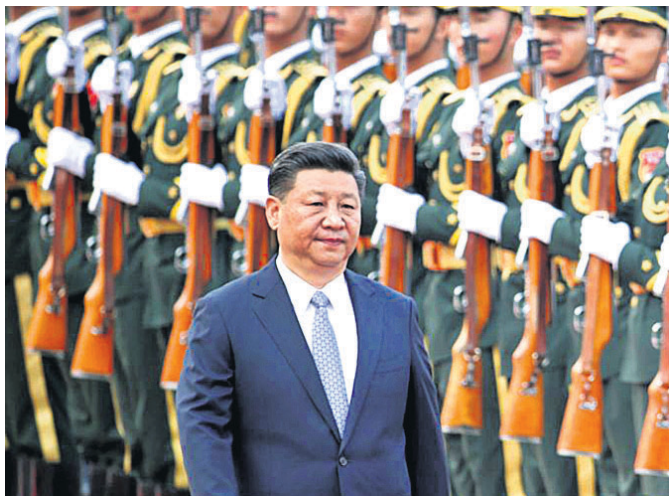
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 5: Chinese President Xi Jinping has asked the military to strengthen training to hone its combat skills and remain on high alert as the new revised defence law expanding the powers of the armed forces came into force from this year.

The 67-year-old leader, who also heads the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) besides the Central Military Commission (CMC) – the overall high command of the two million strong military – signed the commission's first order for 2021, which listed priorities in the training of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police Force (PLAF), official media here reported on Tuesday.

The order instructed the armed forces to stick to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as their guiding principle and uphold Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the Military as well as military strategies in the new era.

It said the CCP will enhance its guidance over the military's training, urging the armed forces to focus on improving their combat



readiness and continuing to reform their training system, state-run China Daily reported. The first such order was issued in January 2018, when Xi addressed a massive training and commencement ceremony at a shooting range in northern China.

According to the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, Xi said the PLA must be ready to "act at any second" as the armed forces kicked off the year's military training and exercises on Monday. "The PLA must" increase the integra-

tion of new equipment, new forces and new combat realms into training and combat systems," the report said, quoting the Chinese president. Xi has repeatedly stressed the importance of combat readiness training and joint operations to the armed forces since he became commander-in-chief in late 2012. In his order this year, he said the military must train their officers and soldiers in realistic combat scenarios, place more attention on research about war and military operations, increase the in-

tensity of exercises, conduct more emergency-response drills, and remain on high alert to ensure the troops are always ready for any possible military engagement. Training and exercises for joint operations must be priorities, it said, adding that the military must intensify inter service training to foster integrated joint combat capability. Commanders are required to introduce more scientific and technological factors into training and boost their units' ability to use high-tech hardware and methods. The order also stipulated that military authorities must conduct strict evaluation and supervision of training and also improve their management and planning.

All members of the armed forces must strengthen their fighting spirit and hone their skills and capabilities to fulfil the missions given them by the Party and the people and produce new achievements to celebrate the coming 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), according to the order. The year 2021 is the fourth consecutive year that Xi has issued a training order to the military as the year's first directive from the Central Military Commission.

Harsh lockdown in UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 5: The UK entered a tough new stay-at-home lockdown on Tuesday after Prime Minister Boris Johnson said it has been "both frustrating and alarming" to see the speed with which the new variant of the coronavirus is spreading and declared that hospitals in the country are under more pressure from the deadly virus than at any time in the pandemic.

While Scotland's new rules, which involve school and business closures become legal from Tuesday, England's rules – akin to the stringent measures of the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020 – become law in the early hours of Wednesday. However, Johnson has urged the public to begin following the strict work from home rules right away.

The new rules are expected to stay in place until mid-February with a review planned based on vaccine rollout data and infection rates.

"Our scientists have confirmed this new variant is between 50 and 70 per cent more transmissible – that means you are much, much more likely to catch the virus and to pass it on," Johnson said in his televised address to the nation on Monday night. "We must therefore go into a national lockdown which



is tough enough to contain this variant. That means the government is once again instructing you to stay at home. You may only leave home for limited reasons permitted in law, such as to shop for essentials, to work if you absolutely cannot work from home, to exercise, to seek medical assistance such as getting a COVID test, or to escape domestic abuse," he said.

The devolved regions of Wales and Northern Ireland were already under strict lockdown measures since the middle of last month.

According to the latest data, in England alone, the number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals has increased by nearly a third in the last week, to almost 27,000.

That number is 40 per cent higher than the first peak of the pandemic in April. On December 29, more than 80,000 people tested positive for COVID across the UK – a new record – and the number of deaths is up by 20 per cent over the last week.

PAK SC ORDERS RESTORATION OF VANDALISED TEMPLE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Jan 5: Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered authorities to start the reconstruction of a century-old Hindu temple that was vandalised by a mob in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa last week and instructed them to recover the money for the restoration work from the attackers whose act has caused "international embarrassment" to the country.

The apex court, which took notice of the attack and ordered the local authorities to appear before the court January 5, also directed the Evacuee Property Trust Board (EPTB) to submit in court details of all functional and non-functional temples and gurdwaras across Pakistan.

The attack on the temple in Terri village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Karak district on Wednesday by members of radical Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party (Fazal ur Rehman group) drew strong condemnation from human rights activists and the minority Hindu community leaders. During the hearing on Tuesday, a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed ordered the EPTB to start the reconstruction work.

Chief Justice Ahmed said the attack on the temple has "caused international embarrassment to Pakistan." The court also directed the EPTB to clear encroachments from temples across the country and take action against officials involved in the encroachments.

The EPTB is a statutory board that manages religious properties and shrines of Hindus and Sikhs who had migrated to India following the partition.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary, police chief, and Shoaib Suddle, the head of a commission on minorities' rights, were present during the hearing.

IN A PLAYFUL MOOD



Five-day-old lion cubs rest on the ground at Taigan safari park in Belogorsk, Crimea

REUTERS

South Korea calls for early release of tanker seized by Iran

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Seoul, Jan 5: The South Korean government Tuesday called for the early release of an oil tanker which was seized by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in the Gulf over what Tehran claimed to be "repeated violations" of environmental protocols.

Following the seizure on Monday, the IRGC said: "The tanker (Hankuk Chemi), departing from the Saudi port of Al-Jubail, was seized when sailing in the Gulf" by the Zulfiqar fleet in the first Naval District of the IRGC for repeated violations of marine environmental laws, "Xinhua news agency reported.

It was en route to the United Arab Emirates. The ship was carrying 7,200 tonnes of chemicals derived from petroleum and 20 crewmembers – five South Koreans, 11 Myanmar, two Indonesians and two Vietnamese, according to the statement. After being seized, the vessel was docked at the port of Bandar Abbas in southern Iran, and the case will be handed over to local judicial authorities for legal process, the IRGC further said.

In a statement Tuesday, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said that Seoul is making diplomatic efforts for the swift release of the ship and crewmembers. "We have been trying to figure out what happened through the Iranian Embassy in South Korea and the South Korean Embassy in Iran and continuing to make ef-

orts to address this situation," Kang told reporters at a briefing.

Meanwhile, a South Korean Foreign Ministry official said the country's anti-piracy Cheonghae Unit began operations in waters near the Strait of Hormuz "to ensure the safety of our nationals", Yonhap News Agency reported.

The 33rd contingent of the 300-strong Cheonghae Unit on the 4,400-tonne destroyer Choi Young has been in the Middle Eastern region since late last year to conduct anti-piracy missions. In a similar incident in 2019, Iran had seized the UK-flagged tanker Stena Impero, two weeks after a British warship had intercepted an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar, leading to an escalation of tensions.

Nearly 60K babies born in India on New Year's Day: UNICEF

UNICEF SAID THAT AN ESTIMATED 371,504 BABIES WERE BORN AROUND THE WORLD ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, Jan 5: More than 371,500 babies were born worldwide on New Year's Day and India is estimated to have recorded the highest number of births at around 60,000, according to the UN's children's agency.

UNICEF said that an estimated 371,504 babies were born around the world on New Year's Day. Fiji in the Pacific was projected to have welcomed 2021's first baby while the United States would welcome its last. Globally, over half of these births are estimated to have taken place in 10 countries: India (59,995), China (35,615), Nigeria (21,439), Pakistan (14,161), Indonesia (12,336),

Ethiopia (12,006), the United States (10,312), Egypt (9,455), Bangladesh (9,236) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (8,640), it said.

In total, an estimated 140 million children will be born in 2021 and their average life expectancy is expected to be 84 years, the UN agency said. "The children born today enter a world far different than even a year ago, and a New Year brings a new opportunity to reimagine it," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said, calling on nations to make 2021 the year they start to build a fairer, safer, healthier world for children.

The year 2021 will also mark the 75th anniversary of UNICEF. Over the course of the year, UNICEF and



Representative image

its partners will be commemorating the anniversary with events and announcements celebrating three-quarters of a century of pro-

tecting children from conflict, disease and exclusion and championing their right to survival, health and education.

"Today, as the world faces a global pandemic, economic slowdown, rising poverty and deepening inequality, the need for UNICEF's work is as great as ever," said Fore. "For the last 75 years, throughout conflicts, displacements, natural disasters and crises, UNICEF has been there for the world's children. As a New Year dawns, we renew our commitment to protect children, to speak up for their rights, and to make sure their voices are heard, no matter where they live," Fore said.

In response to the global pandemic, UNICEF launched the Reimagine campaign, a global effort to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from becoming a lasting

crisis for children.

Through the campaign, UNICEF is issuing an urgent appeal to governments, the public, donors and the private sector to join UNICEF as it seeks to respond, recover and reimagine a better, post-pandemic world. For the estimates, UNICEF used vital registration and nationally representative household survey data to estimate the monthly and daily fractions of births in countries. UNICEF used the annual live births numbers and period life expectancy from the latest revision of the UN's World Population Prospects (2019) to estimate the babies born January 1, 2021 and their cohort life expectancy.



We are extremely happy to start the year with the launch of the latest version of one of our bestsellers, the new Audi A4
BALBIR SINGH DHILLON | HEAD, AUDI INDIA

MARKETS SCALE FRESH PEAKS

Sensex defied gravity for the 10th straight session to close at a fresh lifetime high Tuesday as robust buying offset lacklustre global cues. Persistent foreign fund inflows supported the benchmarks, though a weakening rupee capped the gains, traders said.



of the day quote

Makers Lab's mission is to promote technology innovation by providing a common platform where academia, industry and government can come together
NIKHIL MALHOTRA | GLOBAL HEAD, MAKERS LAB

A committee set up under the chairmanship of former union secretary G K Pillai will fix ceiling rates under a duty refund scheme - RODTEP
AJAY BHUSHAN PANDEY | FINANCE SECRETARY

CMS has received mandate from SBI for a deployment of 3,000 ATMs. As a part of the term sheet, CMS will select the site, deploy ATMs and provide cash management services
MANJUNATH RAO | PRESIDENT, CMS INFO SYSTEMS

SHORT TAKES

Asset base of MFs rises 7.6%

New Delhi: Mutual funds' asset base rose by 7.6 per cent to 29.71 lakh crore in the quarter ended December, mainly on account of the rally in equity markets. The average asset under management (AAUM) of the industry, comprising 45 players, was at ₹27.6 lakh crore in July-September quarter, according to data by Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi). The AAUM of December quarter is higher compared to the preceding quarter due to surge in equity markets.

Practically raises ₹28 cr in funding

New Delhi: Hyderabad-based edutech firm Practically Tuesday announced to have raised around ₹28 crore in pre-Series B funding round led by Siana Capital. Existing investors YourNest Venture Capital and Exfinity Ventures also participated in the funding round, the company said. Practically co-founder and Chief Operating Officer Charu Noheria said revenue generation for its platform has begun in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana markets, which is in the run rate of ₹21 crore-₹28 crore.

Smartchem ties up with AgroStar

New Delhi: Fertiliser firm Smartchem Technologies Ltd Tuesday announced its partnership with agri-input startup e-commerce platform AgroStar for doorstep delivery of fertilisers to farmers in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In future, the scope of home delivery will be extended to other parts of the country, the company said in a statement. Smartchem Technologies Ltd is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (DFPCL).

Customer card details 'secure'

New Delhi: Payment processor Juspay Tuesday said the data compromised during the breach did not contain any transaction information, and customers' card numbers and passwords remain secure. Juspay faced a cyberattack on August 18 last year. While reports suggested that data of 10 crore cardholders was breached, the company termed these as "grossly inaccurate". "All of the customers' full card numbers, order information, card PINs, or passwords are secure. The compromised data does not contain any transaction or order information," it added.

BIZ BUZZ

Google Cloud appoints Bajwa as APAC leader

NEW DELHI: Google Cloud Tuesday announced the elevation of Karan Bajwa as its new leader for Asia Pacific. He currently leads Google Cloud in India. Bajwa will lead all regional revenue and go-to-market operations for Google Cloud, including on Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and Google Workspace from January 5, 2021, a statement said. He succeeds Rick Harshman who leaves the organization for a new opportunity, it added. Bajwa is currently based in Gurgaon, but will relocate to Singapore in 2021. He will continue to lead Google Cloud in India until a new senior leader for the business is appointed. He will report to Rob Enslin, President of Sales, Google Cloud.



HCL Tech acquires IT solutions firm

NEW DELHI: HCL Technologies Tuesday said it has completed acquisition of Australian IT solutions firm DWS. In September last year, HCL Technologies had announced it will acquire DWS, a move that will help the Indian company strengthen its position in the Australia and New Zealand market. The company has completed acquisition of DWS effective January 5, 2021, HCL Technologies said in a regulatory filing. HCL Technologies in September had said the total equity value pay-out will be 158.2 million Australian dollars (about ₹850.33 crore) after considering a total number of shares at 131.83 million on a fully diluted basis. HCL Technologies currently employs 1,600 people in major cities, including Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.



Exim Bank mops up USD 1 bn at record low rate

MUMBAI: The Exim Bank Tuesday raised USD 1 billion through an overseas bond sale offering just 2.25 per cent for the ten-year money, setting a new low in pricing. The issue was oversubscribed over 3.5 times, managing director David Rasquinha said, adding in Asia when the issue was launched the bonds were oversold within two hours. "The coupon of 2.25 per cent is a record low for any 10-year bond issuance out of the country till date," he added. The Exim Bank, with a substantially dollarised balance sheet, is one of the largest domestic issuers of long-term debt in the international debt capital markets and its paper is treated as quasi-sovereign. The funds thus raised will be used to support project exports.



India seeing V-shaped recovery

The agricultural sector remains the bright spot of Indian economy, with healthy year-on-year growth of 2.9%

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

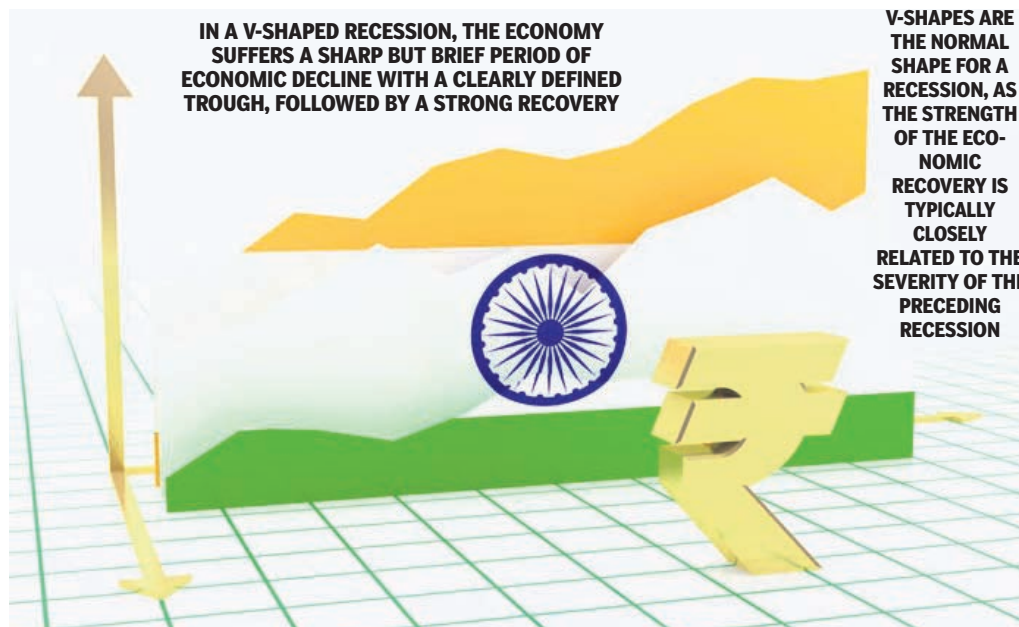
New Delhi, Jan 5: India has been witnessing a 'V-shaped' recovery since June with the gradual easing of restrictions on economic activities, said a Finance Ministry report.

"The sustained improvement in high frequency indicators ignite optimism of an improved performance in second half of the year," it said.

The Monthly Economic Recovery for December by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) also noted that the impending vaccination is set to spur the momentum in economic activity globally.

"The effective management of Covid-19 spread despite the festive season and onset of winter season, combined with sustained improvement in high frequency indicators and V-shaped recovery along with easing of lockdown restrictions distinguish Indian economy as one riding against the Covid-wave," it said.

The agricultural sector remains the bright spot of Indian economy, with healthy year-on-year growth of 2.9 per cent in rabi sowing, ac-



celerating tractor sales, and reservoirs' live storage at 122 per cent of decadal average.

As per the DEA report, rise in minimum support prices accompanied by record procurement, and accelerated wage employment generation through MGNREGS, bodes

well for rural incomes and bears testimony to PMGKY's success in alleviating rural distress.

"This rise in rural incomes is mirrored in the healthy, though moderated, sales in passenger vehicles, two and three wheelers and tractor, and a rebound in vehicle reg-

istrations for the first time after March 2020," it added.

Further, the industrial production growth ran parallel to the festive fervour of October and rose to an eight-month high, led by manufacturing and electricity sector. The core industries registered slight

Puri hotels post 50% occupancy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: With recovery indicators in sight, the hospitality sector from Puri and Bhubaneswar showed signs of revival during the period from December 20 to present, claimed Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO).

HRAO stated that tourist hotspot Puri witnessed 50 per cent hotel occupancy from December 20, 2020 till date. Hotels located in the coastal areas drew a good number of visitors during the month end of previous year. Hotels available near the beach had highest hotel occupancies during the same period of time, HRAO said.

On other hand, Bhubaneswar saw around 20-30 per cent of hotel occupancy during the same period.

The hospitality body also stated that after full resumption of transportation in the state, the hotel occupancy will increase. "Now the government has allowed temples to



be reopened and eventually transportation will get relaxations. We hope there is a spike in hotel occupancy once transportation is allowed," HRAO said.

The body is hopeful that the hospitality sector will show good recovery from March-April, 2021. The sector was one of the worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

There are around 900 hotels available in Puri and 300 in Bhubaneswar. Hotels from both the cities generate around ₹36 lakh per day and ₹4.32 crore per year. Earlier in the current fiscal, the industry recorded around 50 per cent fall in revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) in the post Q1 due to the pandemic.

Toll collection via FASTag in Dec increases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Toll collection in December 2020 through FASTags reached ₹2,303.79 crore in December 2020, recording an increase of ₹201 crore over the preceding month, the NHAI said Tuesday.

Similarly, toll transactions through FASTags recorded significant growth of 1.35 crore in December 2020.

The increased revenue comes after the government announced mandatory rollout of FASTag from January 1, 2021, though it has allowed hybrid lanes on National Highways till February 15 to avoid inconvenience to people.

Toll collection through FASTag in December increased significantly by over ₹201 crore to ₹2,303.79 crore, as against Rs. 2,102 crores in November 2020, NHAI said in a statement.

The monthly transactions through FASTag increased significantly by 1.35 crore in December.

M-cap of BSE-listed cos zooms ₹192L cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

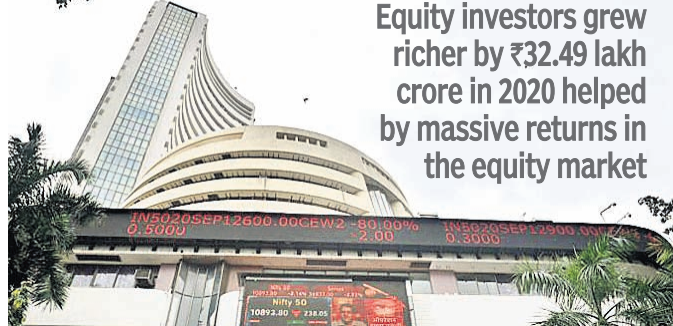
New Delhi, Jan 5: Total market capitalisation of all listed companies on BSE zoomed to a record high of ₹192.87 lakh crore Tuesday helped by continuous rally in the equity market.

Markets recorded their tenth straight session of gains on Tuesday.

During this period, the BSE Sensex jumped 2,883.82 points or 6.33 per cent and closed at 48,437.78 on Tuesday.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms have jumped a whopping ₹14,08,195.89 crore to a record ₹1,92,87,518.94 crore (USD 2.6 trillion) in 10 trading sessions. Approval of two COVID-19 vaccines brought cheers to the domestic market.

Despite opening on a negative note on Tuesday, the 30-share BSE index pared all losses and staged a smart recovery to close 260.98 points or 0.54 per cent higher at 48,437.78. It touched a lifetime high of 48,437.78.



Equity investors grew richer by ₹32.49 lakh crore in 2020 helped by massive returns in the equity market

during the day. Reliance Industries Limited is the country's most valuable firm with a market valuation of ₹12,46,334.05 crore, followed by Tata Consultancy Services (₹11,60,349.92 crore).

Domestic equities saw a brisk recovery from today's low mainly led by sharp rebound in banking and IT stocks. Continued improvement in COVID recovery rates along with likely commencement of vaccination drive shortly and sustained improvement in key economic data

defied weak global markets, according to Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

In a memorable year 2020, the Sensex gained 15.7 per cent where the benchmark index witnessed both ruthless selling and massive buying.

Equity investors grew richer by ₹32.49 lakh crore in 2020 helped by massive returns in the equity market which had a roller coaster ride during the year hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

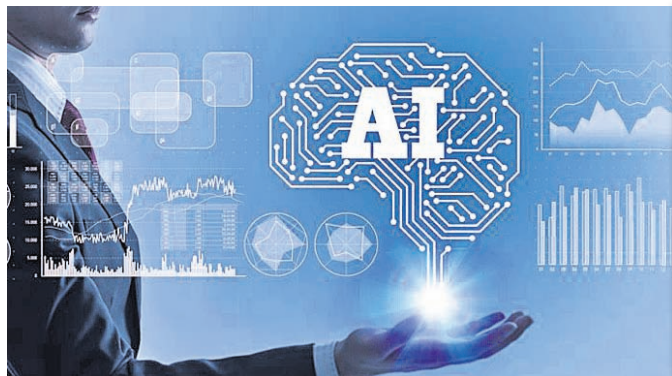
GeM using AI, blockchain tech to become more dynamic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Public procurement portal GeM is using high-end technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and blockchain to make the portal more dynamic and help both buyers and sellers for smooth transactions, a senior official said.

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal was launched in August 2016 for online purchases of goods and services by all the central government ministries and departments. GeM CEO Talleen Kumar also said the number of startups registered with the portal has more than doubled to 7,900 in 2020 on account of steps being taken by the platform to attract budding entrepreneurs.

As on December 31, 2020, there are 7,900 startups now with cumulative transaction value of ₹2,256



crore compared to 3,849 startups with a cumulative order value of ₹338 crore a year ago, he said.

He added that overall, there are over 49,000 buyers, 9.36 lakh sellers and over 20 lakh products at the platform. About use of modern technology tools, he said in the

procurement of drugs or medicines by government organisations, GeM has identified blockchain as the go-to technology to introduce a safe, distributed infrastructure for supply chain. Procurement of drugs or medicines in bulk is currently not available on GeM as traceability

TECH FOR EFFICIENCY

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used in the form of natural language processing for procurement planning and monitoring and for effective and efficient search
- It will also be used in areas including catalogue management, automatic tagging and text description, procurement planning, predictive analytics and monitoring

and authenticity in the supply chain for drugs are paramount in the procurement by government organisations.

A blockchain project for Proof of Concept for showcasing product supply chain visibility and traceability in procurement of medi-

cines in bulk in two districts of Uttar Pradesh...And by establishments under the Director General, Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS) is currently underway, he told PTI.

He added that this Proof of Concept exercise was undertaken to develop and demonstrate Track and Trace for drugs using blockchain wherein a certain manufacturer will move the required drugs to buyer warehouses and these drugs would subsequently be issued to associated health centres. The projects will be completed in 4-6 weeks.

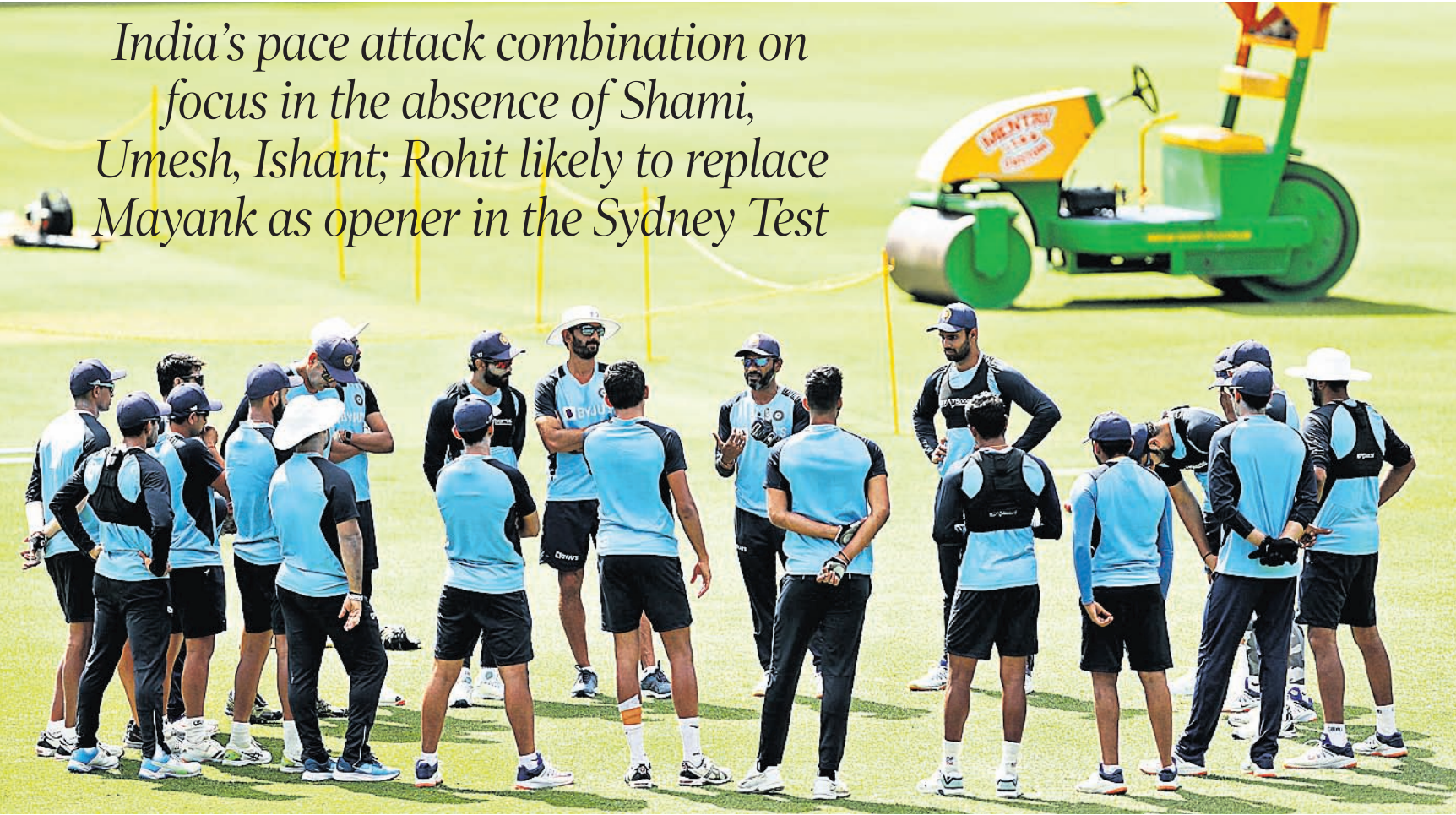
Further, he said that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used in the form of natural language processing for procurement planning and monitoring and for effective and efficient search.

It will also be used in areas in-

cluding catalogue management; automatic tagging and text description; procurement planning, predictive analytics and monitoring; market sanity, fraud and anomaly detection.

Besides, the AI tool will be used for customer mapping and behaviour prediction; product recommendation engine; and customer service automation including help desk call centre. Currently, government departments, ministries, public sector units, state governments, and central armed police forces are allowed to carry out transactions through this portal.

The portal provides a wide range of products from office stationery to vehicles. Services, including transportation, logistics, waste management, web casting and analytics, are listed on the portal.



India's pace attack combination on focus in the absence of Shami, Umesh, Ishant; Rohit likely to replace Mayank as opener in the Sydney Test



BIG QUESTION: SAINI OR SHARDUL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 5: The Indian team management is weighing its options for the third pacer's slot with Shardul Thakur and Navdeep Saini in contention but Rohit Sharma is certain to replace Mayank Agarwal at the top of the order against Australia in the third Test starting here on Thursday.

While Agarwal's axing was only a matter of time after seven failures in last eight Test innings, the choice for the third pacer's slot has got a bit tricky with divergent opinions emerging on who could fit the role best in absence of an injured Umesh Yadav.

A few days back, Mumbai seamer and useful lower-order batsman Shardul Thakur was considered a favourite but it is learnt that there are some senior players, who feel that Saini, India's fastest bowler by a distance, could be used to unsettle the wobbly Australian batting line-up with his raw pace.

The Indian team had a net session at the overcast Sydney Cricket Ground on the day and all eyes were on Rohit, who looked pretty comfortable against both pace and spin.

The decision on the third pacer has been primarily delayed because of the conditions on the strip, then Thakur is expected to be preferred. If the track is on the flatter side, Saini, with his pace and ability to reverse the old ball, could prove to be a handful against a batting order that is struggling to put up even 200 runs on the board.

If Saini plays, it will be his debut in the longest format while for Thakur, it would be like a debut as he couldn't even finish his first over when it was officially his debut two years back.

There is a third angle to the pacer's debate and that is Thangarasu Natarajan, who has had a meteoric rise in the past four months and is ready to be handed the red cherry in whites as his tweet after Monday's photo-shoot suggested.

Natarajan has 20 first-class games to his credit and his last longer format appearance was in January, 2020 against Railways on a rank-turner at the Chepauk where Railways were all-out for 76 and 90 largely due to the exploits of spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and R Sai Kishore.

Natarajan bowled a total of 11 overs in that game with three wickets. Whether Natarajan is ready for the arduous bump and grind of Test cricket is the biggest question.

India Expected XI: Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (C), Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur/Navdeep Saini.

cause on Tuesday, the SCG centre strip was covered due to overcast conditions. A look at the strip and the conditions will probably help them make a decisive choice.

If the conditions are overcast and there is bit more moisture on the strip, then Thakur is expected to be preferred.

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Langer heaps praise on disciplined India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 5: The series is level for now but Australia coach Justin Langer Tuesday said India have been distinctly well-planned and disciplined, especially in bowling, so far even as his side races to address its batting woes ahead of the third Test starting here Thursday.

Asked about Australia's low-scoring in the current series and if that is a concern, Langer cited various factors, the biggest being India's lethal accuracy with the ball. "Their greatest strength over the last couple of series has been their discipline. They (India) have been so well disciplined...I have loved the last two Tests because the wickets have been a contest between bat and ball and you have got to work a bit harder and that is what Test cricket is all about," Langer said at a virtual press conference.

According to Langer, a former opening batsman, India have taken a straighter line to couple of their batters and have accordingly placed their fields.

"So, I think, there is the factor of the wickets that we have played on, there is certainly some seam movement, there was a little bit of swing in both those wickets. India have (has) taken a straighter line to a couple of our batters and set the fields accordingly," he said.

He also praised India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin for his performance so far saying it is difficult to score quickly against great bowlers.

"And let's not discount Ravi Ashwin, how many has he taken

Head needs to work on technique: Warne

SYDNEY: Travis Head could be a future Australia captain but as of now he should be dropped from the side until he works on a 'technique deficiency', says spin legend Shane Warne. Head's scores of 7, 38 and 17 in the ongoing Test series against India have left Warne 'frustrated'. "We know what a talent he (Head) is, he's probably a future captain... He still could be, but he's got to get in the side first - and at the moment I wouldn't have him in the side. He's got a little technique deficiency he needs to sort out first," Warne told 'Fox Cricket'.

...380 Test wickets? The great bowlers are the ones who are hard to score against and (Jasprit) Bumrah is certainly up there at the moment, Ashwin is up there at the moment, we are aware of it," he said.

"We know how we like to play our cricket as Australians, but credit to India, very well-planned, as you would expect they have discipline in their bowling, the wickets that we have played on have been competitive, so we are aware of that and I'm not too stressed about it (scoring rate)," he added.

Langer also said that they were addressing the their batting concerns and working on strategies to counter the Indian spinners.

"I think we have got to look at our strategies against the Indian spinners. Ashwin is bowling in very well and we have worked hard on that last week or so," the Australian head coach added.



RAHUL OUT WITH SPRAINED WRIST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 5: India batsman KL Rahul was Tuesday ruled out of the remaining two Tests against Australia after sustaining a wrist injury during training in Melbourne, the BCCI said.

Rahul had not played any match of the ongoing series in which the third Test starts Thursday here. "KL Rahul sprained his left wrist while batting in the nets at the MCG during Team India's practice session Saturday," the BCCI said in a statement.

"The wicketkeeper-batsman will not be available for the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as he will need about three weeks time to recover completely and regain full strength," it added.

It has been learnt that the stylish right-hander suffered a sprain while facing one of the three throwdown specialists at the nets and had to call off

his training session.

For the time being, he will not be able to add to his 36 Test matches although Virat Kohli, before the start of the Test series, had stated that they were looking at Rahul as a middle-order batsman.

Rahul had accompanied the

squad to Sydney and Tuesday left for India. He will head to the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore for rehabilitation. The injury also puts him in doubt for the four-match home Test series against England, which begins February 5.

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Saina lashes out at BWF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Jan 5: Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal Tuesday lashed out at Badminton World Federation (BWF) for denying the athletes, among other things, access to trainers and physios ahead of the upcoming tournaments in Thailand and urged BWF to address the issues at the earliest.

In a series of tweets, Olympic bronze-medallist Saina expressed her displeasure at the restrictions

imposed by BWF as part of its COVID-19 protocols for the bio-security bubble.

"The physios and trainers cannot meet us during the entire tour after all (al) of us have tested negative? @bwfmedia @bwf.ac. 4 weeks of this how is it possible to maintain ourselves. We want to play the tournament in good condition. Please sort this @bwfmedia," Saina tweeted.

With March being the cut-off date for Tokyo Olympics qualification, Saina is worried that the

lack of proper training might have an impact on her performance.

The former World No.1 said she tried contacting the BWF, but to no avail. "Practice only for an hour everyday for the entire team? Gym timings the same ... Considering March being the important Olympic qualification period this is not good enough to be in good shape."

An Indian contingent is currently in the Thai capital to take part in the BWF World Tour Finals and two Super 1000 events, where the world's best players return following a long break brought about by the pandemic.

In another tweet, Saina wrote, "No Time for warm ups / taping / cool downs / stretches.. We are talking about the best players in the world competing isn't it? We've spent a lot of money getting the physios and trainers along with us. If they can't help us then why was this not told before?"



MCFC breeze past Bengaluru FC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Goa, Jan 5: Mumbai City FC (MCFC) extended their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League (ISL) with a comfortable 3-1 win over Bengaluru FC at the Fatorda Stadium, Tuesday.

Goals from Mourtada Fall (ninth minute), Bipin Singh (15th) and Bartholomew Ogbeche (84th) helped the Islanders remain unbeaten in their last eight games and climb to the top of the ISL table. Sunil Chhetri (79th) scored late but it wasn't enough to rescue BFC, who have now suffered three straight league defeats for the first time ever.

MCFC took the lead in the ninth minute. Bipin's looped corner was headed across the goal by Hernan Santana. Fall leapt highest to nod the ball into the net. This was Fall's tenth goal in the league — all of them headed — and he is just one



Mourtada Fall and Bipin Singh (R) celebrate a goal

goal away from equalling Chhetri's record of 11 headed goals.

MCFC doubled the lead through a perfect team goal which saw Santana and Le Fondre combine to find Mandar Rao Dessai on the flank. The full-back whipped in a perfect cross for Bipin, who timed his run to get past his marker and score the team's second goal.

MCFC were unlucky to concede a penalty in the 78th minute when Silva was challenged in the box by Fall. Chhetri kept his composure and scored.

In the 84th minute, a howler from BFC keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu restored Mumbai's two-goal cushion. Ogbeche nodded in a Cy Goddard corner, which Gurpreet fumbled and let in. There was late drama as Ahmed Jahouh received his marching orders for the second time this season, following a second booking in the match.