

BRIEF



Swami Vivekananda statue being painted ahead of his birth anniversary on Jan. 12, in Nadia, Sunday.

Surrender

Medininagar: A 34-year-old self-styled sub-zonal commander of proscribed Naxalite outfit "Jharkhand Jan-Mukti Parishad" (JUMP) on Sunday surrendered before the police in Palamu district, officials said. Bhawani Bhuiyan laid down an INSAS rifle, three magazines, 83 rounds of ammunition, one hand grenade and other items before Deputy Inspector of General of Police (Palamu division) Rajkumar Lakra at Medininagar. He was handed over Rs one lakh, a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi and a shawl as per the policy of the Jharkhand government, Lakra said.

Curbs

Jalna: Restrictions will be gradually brought in statewide at places of worship and other sites, including liquor vends, that attract crowds in order to control the coronavirus pandemic, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said on Sunday. Restrictions imposed by the state government a day earlier were in the interest of people, he added. "Curbs in crowded areas like liquor shops and places of worship will be imposed as well."

Connectivity

Kolkata: The Kolkata Police on Sunday said it has introduced mobile phone service with WhatsApp facility at every police station for smooth communication with people, amid a surge of COVID-19 cases. The metropolis had on Saturday recorded 7,337 fresh cases of the infection and seven fatalities.

Encounter

Srinagar: An encounter broke out between militants and security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, police said. Security forces had launched a cordon and search operation in Hassanpora village of the district following information about the presence of militants there, a police spokesman said. The operation turned into an encounter after militants opened firing on the security forces, he said.

Mishap

Beed: Four persons were killed and 14 injured after a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation bus and a truck collided on Ambajogai-Latur Road in Beed district on Sunday, police said. The accident took place near Nandgaon village when the ST bus, which was going from Latur to Aurangabad, and the truck carrying machinery to Hyderabad in neighbouring Telangana collided when the former tried to overtake another vehicle, an official said.

Weather
High 25 Low 16

OMICRON EFFECT

PM reviews COVID situation

New Delhi, Jan 09:

As the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 continues to fuel a surge in the infection count across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting through video conferencing to review the situation. The meeting conducted via video conference was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and other officials, ANI reported. The review meeting comes as India reported 1,59,632 new coronavirus cases, the highest in 224 days, as per Union health ministry data on Sunday. The daily positivity rate in the country jumped to 10.21 per



cent as India reels under the third COVID-19 wave threat. The active cases have risen to 5,90,611, the highest in around 197 days. The total tally of the Omicron variant has reached 3,623 in the country. Out of the total 3,623 Omicron cases, Maharashtra logged the highest with 1,009 cases, followed by Delhi with 513

and Karnataka with 441 cases. Reviewing the Covid situation amid a surge in cases fuelled by the Omicron variant of the virus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for ensuring adequate health infrastructure at district level and accelerating the vaccination drive for adolescents in mission mode.

Ensure adequate health infra, accelerate vaccination drive for adolescents

Noting that the coronavirus has been evolving continuously, Modi underlined the need for continuous scientific research in testing and vaccines besides pharmacological interventions, including genome sequencing, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Highlighting the need to ensure effective usage of masks and physical distancing measures as a new normal to control the spread of Covid, Modi called for effective implementation of home isolation for mild and asymptomatic cases and to disseminate the factual in-

formation to the community at large.

He said a meeting with chief ministers be convened to discuss state-specific scenarios, best-practices and public health response, the PMO added.

Conveying gratitude for the relentless services provided by healthcare workers in managing the pandemic, he said ensuring precaution dose for them and other frontline workers should be taken up in mission mode, it said.

A presentation was made in the meet to highlight India's consistent efforts towards the vaccination campaign, with 31 per cent adolescents aged 15-18 years having been administered with the first dose so far within seven days of the start of the drive.

4 judges, 5 % SC staff test positive

Four Supreme Court judges and almost five per cent of its staff have tested positive for COVID-19, official sources said on Sunday, as the national capital witnesses a sharp spike in coronavirus cases. An apex court official told PTI that out of the 32 judges in the apex court, at least four judges, and 150 out of the nearly 3,000 staff members, are currently infected with the virus. A COVID-19 testing facility has been set up on the top court's premises and it is open from Monday to Saturday. In view to contain the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus infection and sudden upsurge in the cases of Omicron variant of the coronavirus, it is reiterated that the entrants to the Supreme Court premises, i.e. the registry staff, staff of the coordinate agencies, advocates and their staff etc., particularly those who may be showing any symptom(s) similar to those notified for COVID-19 infection(s), may kindly get themselves tested at such facility..., a circular read.

IndiGo to cancel around 20 % flights

IndiGo on Sunday said it will cancel around 20 per cent of its flights because of the surge in Covid cases driven by the Omicron variant and waive change fees till March 31 in response to customer needs. Change fee is paid by a passenger to switch to a different flight date. In a press release, the airline stated that owing to the increasing number of infections, a large number of IndiGo customers are changing their travel plans. "In response to customer needs, IndiGo is waiving change fees and is offering free changes for all new and existing bookings made up to January 31, for flights up to March 31, 2022," it mentioned.

HUMANITARIAN DECISION

'Pregnant women, divyang employees exempted from attending office'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said that pregnant women and 'divyang' (differently-abled) employees of central government departments have been exempted from attending office in the wake of a sharp spike in Covid cases.

However, they will be required to remain available and work from home, he said.

Officials and staff living in Covid containment zone have also been exempted from coming to office, till the time the containment zone is de-notified, said Singh, who is the minister of state for per-

sonnel. He said physical attendance of government servants below the level of under secretary has been restricted to 50 per cent of actual strength and the remaining 50 per cent, will work from home, according to a statement issued by the personnel ministry on Sunday. Rosters will be prepared accordingly by all departments concerned, Singh said.

However, he said, officials and staffers, who are not attending office and are working from home, will remain available on telephone and through other electronic means of communications at all times. Delhi on Saturday, recorded seven fatalities

due to Covid and 20,181 cases as the positivity rate rose to 19.60 per cent, while the country, according to health ministry data updated on Sunday, reported a single day rise of 1,59,632 cases and 327 fatalities.

In view of the rapid spread of the coronavirus, Singh said that an order has been issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) with the advice that official meetings will be conducted, as far as possible, through video conferencing. Similarly, personal meetings with visitors are to be avoided, unless absolutely necessary, he said.

Pak boat with 10 crew members apprehended off Gujarat coast

Ahmedabad, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) apprehended a Pakistani fishing boat with ten crew members in Indian waters in the Arabian sea off the Gujarat coast, it said on Sunday.

The boat, named 'Yaseen,' was intercepted by the ICG vessel 'Ankit' during the operational patrol on Saturday night.

When the crew members of the boat failed to justify their presence in Indian waters after being questioned, the ICG ship apprehended it, the ICG said in a release.

The boat tried to flee towards the Pakistani waters, but due to the quick



Indian Coast Guard (ICG) personnel with 10 crew members of the Pakistani boat Yaseen, who were apprehended by them from Indian waters at Arabian Sea on Saturday night.

response by the ICG ship, it was made to stop and apprehended, said the ICG. Around 2,000 kg fish and

600 litres of diesel were seized from the boat, the ICG said, adding that the boat is registered at Keti

Bandar in Pakistan. The apprehended boat, with the ten crew members, is presently being towed to Porbandar for detailed investigation and joint interrogation, it said.

"Indian Coast Guard ship 'Ankit' during an operational patrol at the Arabian Sea apprehended a Pakistani fishing boat 'Yaseen' along with 10 Pakistani crew, operating in Indian waters during the intervening night of January 8, 2022," the ICG said in a release.

During the initial boarding, PFB Yaseen registered at Ketibandar was found in possession of approximately 2000 kgs of the fish catch along with 600 litres of diesel, the ICG added.

'NEET-PG counselling to begin Jan 12'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The NEET-PG counselling will commence from January 12, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Sunday.

The Supreme Court on January 7, in an interim order, allowed resumption of medical counselling for NEET-PG admissions for the year 2021-22. It also upheld the validity of 27 per cent OBC and 10 per cent EWS quotas. "As assured by the Ministry of Health to the resident doctors, following the order of the Honourable Supreme Court, the NEET-PG counselling is being started by the Medical Counselling Committee from January

12, 2022. "This will give more strength to the country in the fight against Corona. My best wishes to all the candidates," Mandaviya said in a tweet in Hindi. The NEET-PG exam was held on September 11, 2021, after being rescheduled twice in January and April.

Its results were declared in the last week of September following which students for nearly 45,000 postgraduate seats had been waiting for the counselling to begin.

Resident doctors of various medical colleges across the entire country last month held protests and boycotted work demanding expedition of the counselling.

BIRTH ANNIV CELEBRATION



Sikh priests sit behind the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) during a Jalau, a display of Sikhisms symbolic items, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sunday.

HEALTH, FRONTLINE WORKERS AND 60+ BENEFICIARIES

COVID-19 precaution dose to be rolled out from today

Bengaluru, Jan 09 (PTI):

Precaution dose of COVID-19 vaccine for healthcare workers, frontline workers and persons aged above 60 with co-morbidities will be rolled out from January 10, with a target of vaccinating about 21 lakh beneficiaries in the state, the Karnataka Health Department said on Sunday.

Healthcare workers (HCWs) and frontline workers (FLWs) who have completed 9 months or 39 weeks from the date of second

dose vaccination as registered on the CoWIN portal are eligible for precaution dose vaccination.

Similar is the criteria for the persons aged above 60 with co-morbidities, and no medical certificate is required for eligible beneficiaries to avail precaution dose. Precaution dose will be the same vaccine dose which was administered previously.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will launch this precaution dose vaccination on Monday at 10 AM at Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Medical College and Research Centre here, while all districts have planned for launch by in-charge Ministers and taluk launch by MLAs, the Health department's release said.

"Nine months/ 39 weeks completed 6 lakh healthcare workers, 7 lakh frontline workers and 8 lakh persons aged above 60 with Co-morbidities will be receiving precaution dose," it said. Beneficiaries who have received SPUTNIK as first and second dose are not eligible for precaution as of now, it added.

TAX AUDIT FILING

ICAI for waiver of penalty till March 31

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI has sought time till March 31 for filing tax audit reports without penalties, citing the coronavirus pandemic situation and "consistent technical glitches" being faced in using the new I-T portal.

In this regard, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has submitted a representation to Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman J B Mohapatra. ICAI has requested that penalty and other consequences should be waived for filing tax audit reports and other reports/certificates for AY (Assessment Year) 2021-22 till March 31, 2022.

NO CORONA HERE

K'taka Congress holds protest despite restrictions

Action as per law for COVID rules violation: K'taka CM

Bengaluru, Jan 09 (PTI):

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said action will be taken in accordance with law, as he hit out at Congress leaders for going ahead with 'padayatra' (march), demanding implementation of the Mekedatu project across the Cauvery river, by violating government's



COVID-19 restrictions. The Chief Minister also accused the grand old party of playing politics on the Mekedatu issue, instead of behaving like a responsible opposition. "I have called a meeting

of important leaders of our party and senior Ministers, where we will discuss several issues including Bengaluru development, Mekedatu project and the padayatra," Bommai said.

Determination and commitment lead to success: Anusuiya Uikey

Governor inaugurates audio-visual studio at CSVTU

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Jan 09: Governor Anusuiya Uikey visited Chhattisgarh Swami Vivekanand Technical University (CSVTU) on Sunday to inaugurate the audio-visual studio in the university campus in Bhilai. She inspected the digital evaluation system and addressed the gathering. She oversaw a report on 42 villages adopted by CSVTU and conducted a general discussion with Engineering and Diploma students.

On reaching the university campus, Governor Anusuiya Uikey inspected the Ultra High Resolution UAV Mapping Machine. Vice Chancellor Dr MK Verma informed the Governor that this machine is used for survey and mapping work. He added that its quality is many times better than satellite image. It is capable

of conducting mapping of about 35 acres of land within a minute. The Governor described this machine as very useful for the PWD Department, Urban Development, Water Resources and Irrigation Department, Agriculture Department and Public Health Engineering and Rural Engineering Department, Revenue Department, Forest Department and Mining Department. Such machines will prove to be very useful for design, especially for revenue, forest and mining departments and are very necessary to accelerate the mapping of the area in future.

Thereafter, the Governor reached to the top floor of the CSVTU building to have a glimpse of the en-



tire campus. She gave suggestions to develop the vacant areas of CSVTU. She suggested developing a children's park and making the campus more and more eco-friendly. The Vice Chancellor informed that in view of energy conservation, the entire campus has been converted into a solar system. Governor appreciated this initiative of energy conservation.

Then the Governor inspected the digital evaluation system and oversaw the methodology of digital assessment. Governor termed the digital assessment as very meaningful in the present time and said that digital evaluation is very effective in declaring the results within the minimum possible time. She added that the system is very useful in the ad-



verse situations of global pandemic. The system will bring transparency in the evaluation methodology. Governor inaugurated the Audio Visual Studio in the university campus. In her address, she spoke about inclusive development through education. Addressing the students, she said that the society and the state have many expectations from the stu-

dents and the bright students will definitely establish the identity of Chhattisgarh state worldwide. Later, CSVTU presented a report on 42 villages which have been adopted by the university. The report highlighted the social works conducted by the NSS operated in CSVTU. It also covered the social activities, educational activi-

ties, computer donation, women self-defense, save daughter programme, ground water recharge and soaking pit construction, health and blood donation camp, awareness campaign, etc. Governor gave her valuable guidance to the students in the University Education Department. She asked the children to inculcate leadership quality and self-reliance in them. She said that one should not be afraid of failures, but should achieve success with determination and commitment. She recollected the memories of her activities in the field of women empowerment. Emphasising on the importance of Hindi language, Governor informed that she had made available 75 percent of the pub-

lished documents Hindi language during her tenure so that common citizens could also understand the government documents. Citing a few examples, she explained the importance of language for a common man. She said that those who have courage, they win, so keep taking positive steps; no one can stop you from achieving success. She happily answered the queries of the students. Naveen Bharti, a student, asked for guidance for a bright future. Governor asked him to move towards the goal with perseverance and patience. Another student requested her to give suggestions to the youth. Governor said that self-confidence gives strength. One should take guidance from friends and gurus, adopt hard work and extra-curricular activities in student life for overall development.

Mayor switches to action mode after assuming office

Appeals citizens to follow Covid appropriate behaviour



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Jan 09: Bhilai Municipal Corporation Mayor Neeraj Pal has come in action mode immediately after taking charge of the office. He has started working for the interests of the city and citizens. For the prevention of coronavirus infection, he chaired a meeting of the officials and doctors. Bhilai Municipal Corporation Commissioner Prakash Surve and Corporator Ekansh Banchoke were also present in the meeting.

Mayor Neeraj Pal said that he is well acquainted with all the officials. He appreciated them for their significant contributions

in Covid Combat during the second wave. He said that the Covid Pandemic can be defeated only through teamwork. The biggest challenge before the civic body in the present time is prevention of corona infection. He added that the new variant will not be allowed to spread in the city. For preventing the spread of infection, cooperation of all the residents is required. He sought information from the Health Department about the vaccination, the target fixed for vaccination of children, number of people vaccinated, etc. He instructed them to ensure maximum vaccination of the children. He also enquired about

the booster dose for health workers and front line workers. He questioned the officials about the measure being taken by Bhilai Municipal Corporation for prevention of the infection. Additional Commissioner Ashok Dwivedi, Superintending Engineer UK Dhulendra, Deputy Commissioner Sunil Agrahari, Supela Hospital in-charge Dr Piyam Singh, Vijay Sujale, Hitendra Kosare, all zone commissioners and health department officials were present. Mayor Neeraj Pal launched the Covid Control Room by making the first phone call from his office. He took information from the control room about Covid vaccination,

Covid test and prevention from Covid. Now, Bhilai residents will be able to get more information on the control room's helpline number 07882296212 during 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Appealing to the residents of the city, Mayor Neeraj Pal said that for the prevention of corona infection, all the citizens must follow the guidelines issued by the government and administration. Vaccinations must be done to protect people from corona. In case of symptoms of corona, visit the nearest health center as soon as possible for a medical examination. He urged all to wear masks, follow social distancing and cooperate with the BMC administra-

tion in corona combat. There are 04 Urban Primary Health Centers and 04 Primary Health Centers under Bhilai Corporation area where Covid tests can be done. Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital Supela also has a facility of Covid test. CPM Tushar Verma said that Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital Supela, Urban Primary Health Centers in Kosanagar, Baikunthdham, Chhawani and Khursipar, Primary Health Centers in Bapunagar, Vaishalinagar, Junwani, and Kohka have facilities for corona testing. Apart from this, door to door and corona testing of persons arriving from other states is being done by six mobile teams.

Shop on fire: cylinder explodes

Bhilai, Jan 09: Fire broke out at a jewellery shop located in Laxmi Market, Supela on Sunday. Soon the entire shop was engulfed in flames. After some time, an explosion also occurred at the mishap site which triggered panic in the entire area. Fire tenders reached the spot and doused the flames. An estimated loss of over Rs 30 lakhs occurred in the mishap. According to information, an electric short circuit triggered fire at the premises of Jagdamba Jewellery Shop in Laxmi Market, Supela. Sensing trouble, all the people present in the shop rushed out of the building and moved to safer places. Shop owner Vinod Soni also came out but was standing very close to the shop. After some time, an explosion occurred in the shop, possibly due to the LPG cylinder. A youth suffered minor burns on face due to this explosion. On information, Fire Tenders immediately reached the mishap site and launched the fire fighting operations. Soon they managed to douse the flames and cool down the entire mishap site.



UCO Bank celebrates 79th Foundation Day

Bhilai, Jan 09: The 79th Foundation Day of UCO Bank was celebrated at Sector 01 branch on January 06. Mr Saurabh, Chief Branch Manager congratulated the entire staff and all the customers. He urged the staff to rededicate themselves for serving the customers in the best manner. He added that the bank has been in the forefront in various sectors. He also spoke about the customer friendly products and services. All the staff members and a large number of customers were present.



Ritika awarded PhD

Bhilai, Jan 09: Ritika Soni, Assistant Professor at Mansa College, Kurud has been awarded PhD by Pt Sunderlal Sharma (Open) University, Bilaspur. She has been awarded PhD on the topic Effect of Learning Style on self concept: A study in the context of locality and gender. She completed her thesis under the guidance of Dr Anita Singh, and her research centre was Department of Education, Pt Sunderlal Sharma (Open) University, Bilaspur. On her success, the Principal of the College Smita Saxena has congratulated her. On behalf of the College management BS Saxena, Sanjeev Saxena and college staff have extended their best wishes.



Ritika Soni

KBR Bimalarpan Sangeet Mahotsav providing stage to upcoming talents

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Jan 09: Team Bhilai Anthem and Welfare Society Bhilai flagged off their annual national-level music conference with a mellifluous evening of music. The festival is, as always, dedicated to musical maestro Acharya Pandit Bimalendu Mukherjee, a legendary artist who single-handedly popularized Sitar and instrumental music in this part of the country, creating a legacy through his marvelous renditions, inventing new ragas, and mentoring and guiding students on the way to become established maestros themselves. Khairagarh and the world of music are forever indebted to the uncountable contributions of Acharya Pandit Bimalendu Mukherjee and this festival, KBR Bimalarpan Sangeet



Mahotsav is one such tribute to his legacy. This 4th edition of the music festival also honoured their promise of successfully providing a stage to upcoming talents among well-established exponents of our time through featuring their competition SANYOGITA 2021 winners in this festival. The festival was inaugurated with a Saraswati Vandana performed by senior students of Indira

Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya, Khairagarh. This followed a presidential address by eminent poet, lyricist, and President of Team Bhilai Anthem and Welfare Society Bhilai, Professor Susmita Basu Majumdar. This was followed by a welcome address by Padmashri Dr Mamta Chandrakar, head of IKS, Khairagarh. Supported by SCZCC, the 4th KBR Bimalarpan

Sangeet Mahotsav featured a sarod recital by young sensation, and winner of last year's SANYOGITA 2021 instrumental competition, master Shounak Roy. His inspiring performance truly was a testament to the fact that Indian Classical Music is in good hands and the future of the art forms is promising. A disciple of Pt Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amir Hussain, Shounak's Sarod recital in Raag

Yaman was applauded by several notable music lovers and critics. He was accompanied by Indranil Bhaduri on the Tabla. The second musical performance of the evening was by a rising superstar in the field of vocal music, Vivek Karmahe. Belonging to the illustrious Gwalior Gharana of music, Vivek started to learn music from his parents and later went on to learn from several musi-

cal maestros such as Padmavibhushan Dr Girija Devi, Pt Ullas Kaushalkar, Pt Omkar Dadarkar and Vidushi Kumudini Mundgal (of Bhindi Bazar Gharana) to name a few. He then also went on to be a part of ITC SRA, Kolkata where he was under the tutelage of several maestros as well. His extensive learning is proven every time he takes a stage and this time was no different. His perform-

ance in Raag Bihag in Vilambit ektaal and druten taal was ably accompanied by Rohit Parmar on Harmonium and Tallin Trivedi on the Tabla. The final performance of the first day was by renowned and noted Sitar exponent Smarajit Sen. Sitarist Smarajit Sen, disciple of Padmabhusan Pt Buddhadev Dasgupta, A-Grade Artist of All India Radio and Doordarshan, from Delhi, performed Raga Vachaspati, A Raga from Carnatic origin. In this Raga, he played Alap Jod Jhala and Gats in Jhaptal and Drut Teental. Some typical materials of Senia Shahjahanpur Gharana is seen specially in his Layakari and Speedy Taans. He concluded his recital with a Ragamalika (Garland of Ragas) in a Traditional Composition in Mishra Bhairavi. On

the basis of Bhairavi he unveiled some soothing morning Ragas like Lalit, Todi, Bairaagi etc. He was ably accompanied by Shubhendu Das on Tabla. The first day of this marvelous musical evening was brilliantly compared by Shradha Bharadvaj. The pandemic which had restricted music lovers from coming to one place has also seen a breaking of geographical boundaries where each performance is now available for the world to witness at the same time and applauded together, and this day's performances are a true witness to that as audience and music lovers tuned in, in huge numbers from around the world. The three more days of this national-level festival promises to be treasured by music lovers for several years, taking cue from the inaugural day of the festival.

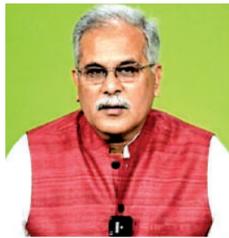
Youngsters have unlocked a whole new dimension of possibilities: Baghel

With their interests and talent

Episode-25 of Lokvaani (Apki Baat-Mukhyamantri Bhupesh Baghel Ke Sath) aired today

CM addressed people of the state on topic 'Yuva Sapne Aur Chhattisgarh'

Central Chronicle News



this year would be all about success, achievements and public empowerment. Chhattisgarh has turned 21 now, we are a young state. 12th January is the birth anniversary of youth icon and inspiration Swami Vivekananda, and we celebrate this day as 'Youth Day'.

Baghel said that New Year, Young Dreams, Youth Day and Nava Chhattisgarh are all interconnected. To cherish the strong connection of Swami Vivekananda with Raipur, we started celebrating his birthday i.e. 12th January as 'Yuva Mahotsav' from year 2020. Swamiji had said that had

there been no violence in the name of religion, caste and community, human society would have been far more advanced today. On various platforms across the world, Swamiji had affirmed that he is not there to promote one religion rather he is there to promote a vision which is in the essence of every religion across the world. He had said that he is not against any religion; he aimed to create spiritual awareness among people of every religion. Baghel said: "Today I want to tell those who want to minimize Swami's contribution by calling him a religious Saint, that Swamiji never spoke of discrimination, he advocated revolution. He used to talk about fighting social evils and solving them."

Chief Minister Baghel said that youth of Chhattisgarh had recently presented their multifaceted talents. Various effective steps have been taken in Chhattisgarh towards

enhancing the young talents, providing them better opportunities, and to give them a better future. "I believe that youth of this generation do not have to depend on government job to build their career. Today, our talented youngsters have unlocked a whole new dimension of opportunities with their interest and talent. And we are making continuous efforts to make all the dreams of youngsters come true", said Chief Minister.

Rather than creating ample opportunities for education and employment for youngsters in the state, we have taken the initiative to inculcate moral values and deep respect for culture among them. It is important for our youth to have the spirit of taking voluntary steps towards learning and understanding the people around them as well as their native culture. Besides achieving the goals of building name,

fame and career, youngsters should have empathy for those around, respect for their culture and the dedication towards social welfare. We aim to build such a cultured generation of youth in Chhattisgarh, said Chief Minister in his address to Lokvaani.

We had made an announcement regarding formation of 'Rajiv Yuva Mitan Club' to unite the youngsters of Chhattisgarh and to provide them a platform for creative activities and endeavours. In the same sequence, we have finalized the action plan for constituting Rajiv Yuva Mitan Club has been constituted in 13 thousand 269 urban bodies and gram panchayats of the state. Each club will consist of 20-40 youngsters of age between 15-40 years. Nearly Rs 132 crore 69 lakh would be provided to these clubs as grant in a year. Rs 19 crore 43 lakh has already been released to these clubs as the first installment of this grant.

SHEER IGNORANCE



Youths on two-wheeler riding without masks are trying to avoid stoppage by authorities imposing fine for violating corona protocol and least aware of likely consequences.

COVID-19 active tally stands at 13,066

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Jan 09: Chhattisgarh on Saturday added 3,455 COVID-19 cases to its tally, which reached 10,20,811, while four deaths took the toll in the state to 13,613, an official said. The recovery count stood at 9,94,132 after 12 people were discharged from hospitals and 57 completed home

isolation during the day, leaving the state with an active tally of 13,066, he said. "Raipur district reported 1,024 new cases, taking the tally to 1,62,312, including 3,147 deaths. The district has 3,984 active cases. Durg recorded 463 cases, followed by 455 in Raigarh, 372 in Bilaspur, 319 in Korba and 189 in Jashpur, among other districts," he said.

With 46,495 samples being examined during the day, the number of COVID-19 tests in the state went up to 1,52,17,139, the official said. Chhattisgarh's coronavirus figures are as follows: Positive cases 10,20,811, New cases 3,455, Death toll 13,613, Recovered 9,94,132. Active cases 13,066, today tests 46,495, Total tests 1,52,17,139.

Drive for precaution vaccine doses beginning today

Frontline workers, health workers and comorbid persons above 60 to get 3rd dose of Covid-19 vaccine

Vaccination centers set up under the drive in 37 offices of Raipur district

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Jan 09: The drive to administer the third dose of vaccines against Covid-19 to all the frontline workers, health workers and comorbid persons

above 60 years of age in Raipur district are beginning on Monday, January 10. Collector Raipur Sourabh Kumar informed that all such beneficiaries who have completed the period of second dose of Covid vaccine for 9 months will be given an additional dose as a precautionary dose.

The Collector said that an action plan has been prepared at the district level for this drive starting from January 10. The officers and employees who are on duty at Covid vaccination centres will be immunized with precautionary dose.

Vaccination centers in

37 offices of the district will become operational from 10:30 am on January 10 for the eligible beneficiaries of booster dose. The Collector has asked all the eligible beneficiaries and the co-morbid beneficiaries above 60 years of age to get the publication dose.

Vaccination centers have been set up in 37 offices including Commissionerate, Collectorate, Office of the Superintendent of Police, District Panchayat Office, Municipal Corporations of Raipur and Birgaon, Medical College, District Hospital Pandri and office of Joint Director Health Services.

PHE minister tests positive for coronavirus

Raipur, Jan 09: Chhattisgarh Public Health Engineering (PHE) Minister Guru Rudra Kumar on Sunday said he has tested positive for coronavirus and is in home isolation. With this, two state cabinet ministers have so far contracted the viral infection this month. "On noticing the symptoms of Covid, I got myself tested for the infection. My report came out positive. I am fine as of now and undergoing treatment in home isolation on the advice of doctors," Rudra Kumar tweeted. "I appeal to all those who came in contact with me in the recent past to get themselves tested," he added.

On January 2, state Health Minister T S Singh Deo had tested positive for the infection. Chhattisgarh on Saturday reported 3,455 new COVID-19 cases, raising the state's infection tally to 10,20,811, while four deaths took the toll to 13,613, an official earlier said. Since January 1 this year, the state has reported 12,624 new cases of the viral infection, as per official data.

In view of the sharp rise in coronavirus cases, night curfew has been imposed in several districts of Chhattisgarh, including capital Raipur, while rallies, processions and other public events have been banned across the state.

Contact tracing cell becomes active to identify Covid patients

Encouraging people who came in contact with infected patients to get Covid test done

Raipur, Jan 09: A special cell, formed under the guidance of district administration has become active for the identification and contact tracing of Corona patients and the persons who came in contact with them. Employees of various departments are on duty at this cell (control room) in three shifts under the direction of Collector Sourabh Kumar. Apart from gathering information about the health of corona

patients by contacting over phone, they are also identifying the persons who came in contact with Corona patients. They are also encouraging people who came in contact with Corona patients to go for Corona test.

According to Mukesh Kothari, the nodal officer of this control room, 150 employees of health, education, revenue departments are working to ensure access to every patient. They are gathering complete information of patients according to the prescribed form. The employees have been put on duty in three shifts. As many as 50 employees are working in every shift.

With the increase in the number of patients, this special

cell is being operated with expansion of the team size from January 6 onwards in the New Circuit House premises, he said. People are also being made aware of the control room of the district administration, 07712445785, 7880100331, 7880100332 through this cell, for any help related to corona.

This team is also coordinating to provide all possible help to the corona patients. People are motivated by the employees in the cell to fulfill their important responsibility in preventing corona infection by giving information about every person who came in contact. This special team has discharged its responsibility well in the last wave as well.



The award and oath ceremony of JCI Raipur Fenima City was held here on Sunday.

OATH CEREMONY

Two nabbed with 'ganja' worth Rs 1.40 cr

Mahasamund, Jan 09: Mahasamund police got a major breakthrough when two 'Ganja' inter-state drug smugglers were nabbed with 'Ganja' worth Rs 1.40 crore. Both the smugglers hail from Haryana and are bringing this 'ganja' from Odisha.

As per information in this regard from Mahasamund police, a major action was taken against drug smugglers in Komakhan area on Sunday. The Police seized two inter-state smugglers and the police seized 7 quintal 'Ganja' worth Rs 1.40 crore.

It is learnt that the accused were bringing "Ganja" from Odisha in a truck and the Komakhan



police nabbed the two near Temari naka on the national highway. The smugglers tried to fool the people putting scrap on top the 'Ganja', but the policemen acted smartly and detected 'ganja' secretly hidden beneath the scrap in plastic bags.

Police had arrested the two accused and took action under NDPS Act against both and will produce the two in the court on Monday.

Arrangement of 4847 beds in 117 govt and private hospitals

In view of rise in COVID-19 infection 111 beds occupied, 4736 beds vacant

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Jan 09: In view of the widespread infection of corona in Raipur district, extensive arrangements have been made for 4847 beds in 117 government and private hospitals. At present, patients affected by corona are being treated in 111 of these beds while 4736 beds are remaining vacant. At present, 614 general beds, 2520 oxygenated beds, 541 HDU beds, 681 ICU beds and 380 ventilator beds are

vacant in government and private hospitals in the district.

Out of 80 general beds in 15 government hospitals in Raipur district 5 have been occupied while 75 beds are remaining vacant. Out of 556 general beds in 92 non-government hospitals, 17 beds have been occupied whereas 539 beds are remaining vacant.

There are 1279 oxygenated beds in government hospitals in the district, out of which 22 are full and 1257 beds are vacant. There are 1294 oxygenated beds in private hospitals, out of which 31 are full and 1263 beds are vacant.

Government hospitals

in the district also have 48 HDU beds which remained vacant. Similarly, there are 496 HDU beds in private hospitals out of which 3 are full and 493 beds are vacant.

There are 20 bed ICUs in government hospitals in the district and 5 of them are full and 15 beds are vacant. Similarly, there are 672 ICU beds in private hospitals, out of which 6 are full and 666 beds are vacant.

There are 98 ventilator beds in government hospitals in the district, out of which 19 are full and 79 are vacant. Similarly, there are 304 ventilator beds in private hospitals, out of which 3 are full and 301 beds are vacant.

UCO Bank's celebrates 79th Foundation Day Ceremony

Raipur, Jan 09: UCO Bank, Zonal Office, Raipur celebrated the Foundation Day on January 06, 2022 in a cheerful atmosphere on the completion of 79 proud years of the bank. Offices and branches of UCO Bank were cleaned and decorated in an elegant manner. Various programs were organised on this occasion following the COVID 19 protocol. On the occasion of the foundation day of the bank, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the bank Mr. Som Shankar Prasad inaugurated the Agriculture Loan Hub at Pension Bada branch, Raipur through online. Earlier in the morning, the staff members of UCO Bank gave the message of cleanliness by cleaning around the office premises under the Swachh Bharat



Abhiyan.

In the sequel of the program, independent director of the bank, Mr. Radav Kumar Agrawal, zonal head Mr. Satya Ranjan Panda and other dignitaries planted saplings outside the circle office premises. After the tree plantation program, all the staff members reiterated their resolve to make UCO Bank a top class bank by providing best customer service as per the vi-

sion and mission of the bank.

Addressing the function, the Director of the Bank, Ravi Kumar Agarwal called upon to make customer service more effective. He said that by accepting the changing scenario, make maximum use of technology and also motivate the customers for this. Now banking service is based on mobile only. In the future, banking technology and

mobile will be more dependent on each other. Along with this, he also stressed on the personal status of the bank in Chhattisgarh so that more and more people can get banking facilities. On this occasion, the Circle Chief said that UCO Bank has been devoted to the service of the nation since its inception. He called for characterizing the vision and mission of the bank by visualizing the bank with 'One Team, One Dream' through better customer service. On this occasion Deputy Circle Chief, T.N. Brunel also expressed his views. A health checkup camp was also organised in the circle office in collaboration with NH MMI Narayana Hospital, Raipur, in which the health checkup of the staff members and

customers was done and necessary consultation was given by the doctor. Apart from this, under the Corporate Social Responsibility, the bank has provided blazer to 15 such children of Swami Atmanand Government Shaheed Memorial Excellence School, Raipur, who have become orphaned as a result of Covid 19. All the staff members enthusiastically participated in this Foundation Day celebrations. Several meticulous programs were also organised in various branches of the Bank on the occasion of Foundation Day. Accounts of customers were opened. They were given loans and other banking facilities as per their requirement. The program was conducted by Prav Kumar Padgrahi, Chief Manager (Security).

Weather turns chilly after rains

Light to moderate rain and hailstorm likely at many places of the state

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Jan 09: Weather in the city turned chilly after heavy rains accompanied with icy winds lashed suddenly on Sunday evening causing dip in temperature. After a sunny morning dense the sky turned cloudy in the afternoon. Within two hours cold wind started blowing resulting in rainfall. By evening the wind speed increased and it started drizzling leading to a significant drop in temper-

ature. It is also raining in Durg, Rajnandgaon, Kawardha and Bemetara.

According to the information received from the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility of hailstorm in Chhattisgarh within the next two-three days. Hailstorm is likely at one or two places in Surguja, Jashpur, Surajpur, Balrampur, Korba, Pendra, Bilaspur, Korba, Raigarh, Janjgir, Mungeli, Kabirdham, Bemetara, Balodabazar, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Raipur and Mahasamund and adjoining districts. It has been advised to take necessary precautions for this. According to the information re-

ceived, an upper air cyclonic circulation is located over North East Rajasthan wherein a trough extends up to a height of 0.9 km through eastern Rajasthan, western Madhya Pradesh, to Marathwada. Under its influence there is a possibility of light to moderate rain or thunder-showers at many places of the state on January 10. There is also a possibility of hailstorm with thunder and lightning at one or two places in Surguja division, Bilaspur division, northern part of Durg division and northern part of Raipur division of the state. The maximum temperature is also likely to drop significantly.

Bear gives birth two cubs in village, forest deptt ensuring safety of kids



Bear which gave birth to two cubs.



Bio-gas tank in circle where bear gave birth.

Central Chronicle News

Mainpur, Jan 09: At a distance of 10 km from the tehsil headquarter Mainpur in a village bio-gas tanks are installed for supplying gas to kitchens. In this bio-gas tank one bear gave birth to two cubs about a month back. The mother bear protects its cubs all throughout the day and in the evening

bear comes out the tank and roam outside. The forest department for the last one month braving cold has taken the responsibility of protecting these cubs.

The villagers are scared of bear attacking their children and also fear if they come face-to-face with bear.

As informed, this incident is of village

What official says..

"Bear gave birth to two cubs inside a gobar gas tank to ensure safety of her cubs. The forest department is committed for the safety of bear and its cubs and hope that soon the bear will proceed towards the forest with its cubs." Rajendra Sori- SDO Forest Mainpur.

Nakchera where in a bio-gas tank installed behind the house of a farmer, on December 10 villagers saw one bear entering the bio-gas tank and later it gave birth to two cubs inside this tank.

The villagers informed the forest department and SDO Rajendra Prasad Sori immediately send a team for the safety of bear and its cubs.

Sukma SP travels in motorcycle to take stock of road construction works

● In Naxal-affected areas

Central Chronicle News

Konta, Jan 09: Sukma SP Sunil Sharma took a motorcycle tour of the under-construction roads in the Naxal-affected areas. During this, he inspected the roads connecting directly to the district headquarters through the village panchayats of Nelvada, Pulpalli, Polampalli, Iteguda, Vardelton, Gorgunda. It should be known that the problems of the villagers will be overcome by the creation of easy and accessible roads of these interior areas. Along with this, people will also get the additional facility of good roads to connect with the district headquarters and reach Jagargunda.

SP Sunil Sharma said that due to the opening of



camp in the inner villages and construction of roads, the villagers have started getting facilities. The result is that where ambulances never reached, they are now reaching. After the opening of the camp in Kolaiguda, the vulnerable area of the district, after the last several decades, ambulance facilities were provided there twice.

Now the villagers are not feeling the need to bring sick people in cots to the access road for health facilities.

Along with roads, phone connectivity has reached many interior villages of the district. Due to which online education of children and people are getting many facilities. Better efforts are being made to connect directly

with the people of rural areas by running the Puna Narkom campaign in the district.

The end of Naxalism and the facilities of the government should reach the villagers easily, it is also the aim of the police and security forces. During this, along with SP Sunil Sharma, ASP Anjaneya Vaishnav and top officials were present.

Prevention and treatment of Covid infection should be done in mission mode: Tekam

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Jan 09: School Education Minister and District in-charge Minister Dr. Prem Sai Singh made a detailed review of the preparations being done in Raigarh district for prevention and treatment of Covid infection in the third wave of Corona. Dr. Tekam joined the review meeting held virtually from his residence office. He said that all the work of prevention and treatment of Covid infection should be done in mission mode, so that better and faster facilities can be provided to the people. He said that following the Corona protocol, all types of economic activities should be conducted. Hoarding, profiteering of essential commodities of daily use should be strictly monitored. He gave directions to



the employees of the Health Department, including the Collector of the district, to follow the Covid protocol. Minister in-charge of Raigarh district, Dr. Tekam said that due to the abundance of industrial activities in Raigarh district, special attention should be paid to

the corona test of people coming from outside. Corona test should be done for people coming from the border and abroad. Quarantine centers should also be established as per the requirement. Medical equipment should be checked and repaired in the wards earmarked for

the care and treatment of corona patients in hospitals. All necessary arrangements including oxygen supply should be ensured in hospitals. Dr. Tekam said that the field staff of the Health Department should be deployed for COVID testing in public places like railway stations, bus stands etc. Information of people coming from abroad should be compulsorily given to the Covid Control Room. For the treatment and care of corona victims, cooperation of voluntary organizations, public representatives, business organizations of the district should also be taken. Collector Bhim Singh informed about the arrangement of testing, tracing, oxygen and ICU beds, availability of oxygen, medical equipment and man power in the district that a Covid ward

is being made in the medical college. Apart from this, Covid and isolation wards have also been prepared in all the Community Health Centers. Along with this, oxygen plants have also been installed along with the pipeline for oxygen supply.

Private hospitals have also been kept in alert mode by getting Covid wards ready like last time. Appropriate arrangements have been made for treatment in the district. In the virtual review meeting, Higher Education Minister Umesh Patel, MLA Raigarh, Prakash Nayak, MLA Dharamajgarh, Laljit Singh Rathia, MLA Sarangarh Mrs. Uttari Ganpat Jangde, MLA Lailunga, Chakradhar Singh Sidar and District Panchayat President, Nirakar Patel attended.

Amicable solution of Dharmapura case

● Satnami community expresses gratitude towards minister

Central Chronicle News

Kawardha, Jan 09: A delegation of Satnami community paid a visit to Kawardha MLA and Cabinet minister Mohammed Akbar at its office residence in state capital for finding an accept-



able solution to Jaitkham case of Dharmapura. The delegation expressed gratitude to the minister and expressed gratitude for finding an amicable solu-

tion to this matter. The delegation comprised of Agandas Anant, Babudas Gop, Rajmahant Shiv Didore, Santan Satyavanshi and others.

Vaccination drive starts for children of 15-18 age groups



Central Chronicle News

Churikala, Jan 09: To curb the spread of third corona wave, administration has launched vaccination drive for the school

going children of the age-group 15-18 years. The drive was also launched from January 03 in Nagar Panchayat Churikala and surrounding villages. On the first day of vaccina-

tion school children following COVID protocol enthusiastically got first jab of COVID vaccine. The health team with full arrangements carried out the vaccination drive. At the start of drive, first jab was given in presence of ward councillor Hiralal Yadav, health officer Dr S R Sirso, school principal A Kujur, school staff and health team. In this connection school principal A Kujur said, 626 students are to get COVID vaccine and on the second day (Tuesday) about 200 students received the vaccine.

121 persons fined with Rs 14,970



● For not wearing mask in public place

Jagdulpur, Jan 09: The Bastar district administration has started taking action against those violating covid-19 protocol in view of increasing number of corona cases and has made an appeal to all the people to strictly adhere to covid-19 protocol and taking action against those not wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. SDM Jagdulpur Dinesh Nag in-

formed that due emphasis has been given on using of masks in public places and maintaining social distancing. Apart from this those violating the same are being imposed fine on charges of putting threat the lives of others.

In this series, action was taken against a total of 121 persons for not wearing masks in city's Lal Bagh, Gole Bazar, Agrasen Chowk, Bus Stand, Sanjay Bazar, Dharampur Marg and fine of Rs 14,970 was imposed against them.

Sanitation items distributed to employees

Katagi, Jan 09: For prevention of Corona virus, all the sanitary staff of Nagar Panchayat Kasdol were handed over 1 handwash, 2 masks and 1 sanitizer packet and 10 gum-boots, 10 pieces of spade, 10 pieces 'Khurpi' at the hands of President Nagar Panchayat Kasdol Neelu Chandan, corporator ward No. 9 Muniram Sahu, corporator ward No. 8 Swaroopchand Sahu, Vikas Yadav-corporator ward No.3, Chief Nagar Palika officer Kasdol Anuradha Rajmani.

It is notable here that Nagar Panchayat Kasdol was ranked 7th in the cleanliness category of cleanest Nagar Panchayat in the state in 2021 and with 3 star rating and due to which it got 28th rank in the East zone and with first award in the state's East Zone.

It is notable here that in earlier felicitation, Nagar Panchayat Kasdol was



ranked 3rd in the most cleanest state in the country and it was a big honour and the credit for this goes to all the 'swachhata commandos', 'Swachhat didis', all officers and employees of Sanitation department of Nagar Panchayat, who worked day and night with due honesty during first two waves of corona to ensure good health of others.

The above staff during corona pandemic went door-to-door and lifted both dry and wet waste and motivated people to adhere to this process of sanitation and cleanliness.

It was on this basis that the Nagar Panchayat

Kasdol got the honour of 7th rank in cleanliness in the state for ensuring cleanliness in the city and got the certificate for appreciation and it is an honour for the Nagar Panchayat and entire city and for all its citizens.

During this Chandan Sahu (President's rep), Sunil Sharma (revenue inspector), Bhavana Sahu (asst. RI), Anoop Mishra (Cashier), Gitesh Sahu (computer operator), Ravi Sahu (Mohirir), Mohian Pathak (Computer operator), Chotu Kaiwart (peon recovery), Loknath Yadav, Mithilesh Sahu and other employees were present.

Four vehicles seized for illegally transporting minerals



Jagdulpur, Jan 09: Four vehicles were seized for illegal transportation of minerals during surprise inspection by District Mineral team in Farsaguda, Bhanpuri and Jagdulpur area. Mineral officer in-charge Hemant Chherpa informed that two vehicles were seized with illegal transportation of

limestone and two other with sand. He informed that the in the action taken by the department on Saturday, two vehicles bearing No. CG 27 K 3174 and CG 27 H 0583 were seized with Limestone and two other tippers viz. CG 17 H 2824 and CG 17 H 9220 were seized for illegal transportation of sand. All

four vehicles were transporting minerals without valid licence and therefore all four were seized.

In all these four cases, due action will be taken under section 21 of Mine and Mineral (Development & Exploration) Act 1957 of rule 71 of Chhattisgarh Mineral Act 2015. Earlier also the vehicle owners involved in illegal transportation, excavation of minerals without valid licence were issued warning and necessary action was taken against those violating it and this action would continue in the near future.

Public awareness and social participation meeting concludes

Koriya Jan 09: Under the instructions of District Collector Shyam Dhawade, 'CEO Zilla Panchayat Kunal Dudawat, here held a meeting with public representatives, NGO workers and other departmental officials. In the meeting, he appealed to everyone present to make the general public aware of wearing masks and following COVID 19 rules. District Panchayat President Renuka Singh, DMC UNICEF Rumana Khan, Dr. Rashmi Sonkar, Principal of Government Ramanuj Pratap Singhdev PG College and Government New Girls College, officers of Women and Child Development Department, social workers and local public representatives were present.



district and informed that adequate medical equipments, medicines and oxygen cylinders are available in the COVID Care Center for emergency situations. Along with this, the district level and block level control room numbers have been activated again.

In the meeting, Mr. Dudawat informed about proper arrangements been made for the vaccination of children in the age group of 15 to 18 years in the district, for which session sites have been made in 186 schools. He said that to prevent the spread of COVID 19, prohibitory orders issued under Section 144 is applicable in the dis-

trict, and processions, public functions, rallies, social, cultural, religious functions and sports etc. will be completely banned. All malls, whole sale shops, gyms, cinema halls, hotels, restaurants, swimming pools, auditoriums, marriage halls and other venues will be operated with one-third capacity under the district. Similarly, a maximum of 100 people in marriage ceremony, and 50 will be allowed to participate in death related programs like Dashagatra. Passengers coming from outside at various railway stations of the district will have to show RTPCR corona test negative report within 72 hours on reaching the railway station, similarly, it will be mandatory for the local citizens to show the RTPCR corona test negative report 72 hours before entering the railway station for traveling outside.

Will beat the third wave of Corona with everyone's cooperation: Dr. Dahria

Raipur, Jan 09: Urban Administration and Development and Labour Minister Dr. Shivkumar Dahria has said that like the first and second wave of Covid, we will defeat the third wave of Corona also with the cooperation of all sections, social service organizations and public representatives. According to the guidelines of the Chief Minister, preparations are being made in all the districts of the state for prevention and treatment of Covid infection. The necessary equipment and facilities in the hospitals are being augmented. Dr. Dahria was reviewing through video conferencing the preparations being made for the prevention and treatment of Covid infection in the three districts of his charge, Surguja, Surajpur and



Balrampur. In the virtual meeting, Health Minister T.S. Singhdeo, Parliamentary Secretary Parasnath Rajwade, MLAs Chintamani Maharaj and Brihaspati Singh also participated. Dr. Dahria told the officials in the virtual meeting that the Covid protocol should be strictly followed. Residents should be motivated for covid vaccination. Similarly, maximum vaccination of school children should also be done. He said that people coming

from outside should be tested for corona. Arrangements should be made for corona test in public places, railway stations and bus stands. For the prevention and treatment of corona, the cooperation of local voluntary organizations and public representatives should be taken. Reviewing the preparations being made to deal with the third wave of Covid in all the three districts of the charge area, Dr. Dahria said that oxygen plants, oxygen cylinders, ambu-

lances and other equipment should be repaired in the Covid wards of the hospitals. He said that processions, rallies, public gatherings, social, cultural, religious and sports events should be banned. Where the rate of positivity is more than 4 percent, schools, Anganwadi, libraries and public places should be closed. The use of masks and sanitizers should be strictly enforced in public places, crowded markets and shops. During the review, Dr. Dahria discussed with the public representatives, media, industrial, business, religious, educational institutions, farmer laborers and representatives of various societies, including collectors, superintendents of police, chief medical officers of the three districts about prevention and treat-

ment of corona. During the review, Dr. Dahria took information from the collectors about various preparations including beds of government and private hospitals, stock of medicines and oxygen availability. He directed the officials to provide medicine kits to the patients living in home isolation. He said that these patients should also be monitored daily through doctors. Serious patients should be immediately admitted to the hospital. Similarly, random testing should be done in the border areas and railway stations of the state and efforts should be made to limit the rate of infection. Provide permission for home isolation through online portal and operate call center 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Skill Hub Initiative program launched

Koriya, Jan 09: Skill Hub Initiative program is being started in 18 schools of the state as a pilot project to connect school dropouts and youth to employable education. In this series, under the Skill Hub Initiative program in Government Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur, this scheme of the government was launched on January 1 by School Education Minister Dr. Premsai Singh Tekam to provide vocational education to 40 girl students identified in IT and Retail trade. Under this, 18 schools in 17 districts of the state have been selected in the first phase. This training will be a certificate course of six months. On this occasion, District Education Officer Sanjay Gupta, District Mission Coordinator Ajay Mishra,

ADPO Anil Jaiswal, in Government Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur, were present. It is noteworthy that under the program, short term certification courses of skill training will be conducted after school hours and on weekends to provide vocational education to the school dropouts. For this new initiative has been started for employable education and skill upgradation, and school dropouts and youth will be given training for various job oriented tasks. People in the age group of 15 to 29 years have been selected for the training. Arrangements will be made in selected schools for training the children in various employable works. The District Education Officer and the nominated officers attached to the

Education Department will monitor the training. Vocational trainers posted

in the school will make training and other arrangements. After the

training, the trainees who take the training will also be linked with employ-

ment. Simultaneously, skilling, re-skilling, skill certificates and academic

credit will be obtained through upskilling courses. Schools affiliated to the

Skill Hub Initiative will be registered on the Skill India portal.

In Govt Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School Baikunthpur

Table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Survey / Plot No., Type of Land, Nature of Land, Area (in Local Unit), Area (in Hectare). Contains land records for various plots.

नई दिल्ली, शुक्रवार, दिसम्बर 31, 2021/पौष 10, 1943 NEW DELHI, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2021/PAUSHA 10, 1943

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 31st December, 2021 S.O. 5500(E).—In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building (widening/two lane with paved shoulder/four laning etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH130CD in the stretch of land from Km. 78.08 to Km. 105.5 (Office of the Sub Divisional Officer (Rev.) Kanker) in the district of KANKER in the state of CHHATTISGARH, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.

Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section (1) of section 3C of the said Act.

Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, Sub Divisional Officer (Rev.) & Competent Authority Land Acquisition Kanker in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.

Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final. The land plans and other details of the land to be acquired under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.

SCHEDULE Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling NH130CD in the stretch of land from Km. 78.08 to Km.105.5 NH130CD (Office of the Sub Divisional Officer (Rev.) Kanker) in the district of KANKER in the state of CHHATTISGARH.

Main table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Survey / Plot No., Type of Land, Nature of Land, Area (in Local Unit), Area (in Hectare). Lists land records for various plots across different villages like Narharpur, Deodongar, Dhanora, Mandabharri, Sarwandi, and Shamtara.

Harish Kawasi lays stone of 'Jal Jeevan Yojana'

To be constructed with Rs 2.80 lakh



Konta/Sukma, Jan 09: In Permapara of Murtonda Gram Panchayat of Sukma district, 'Bhoomi Pujan' was performed of tap water work to be done under Jal Jeevan Yojana at a cost of 2.80 lakh. District Panchayat President Harish Kawasi reached Murtonda and performed the Bhoomipujan of the work. During this, the villagers gave a grand welcome to the District Panchayat President Harish Kawasi. Harish Kawasi said that Bhupesh Baghel's government is constantly giving priority to development and solving the problem of water along with the road and school. Local MLA and Minister Kawasi Lakhma thinks that the resi-

dents of our district should get city-like facilities. Under which water will be given through tap to every house. This will also save the time of women folks. After collecting the forest produce, they used to go to the river or boring and now that time will be saved. The villagers of Murtonda, while discussing with Harish Kawasi, said that after Congress party government came to power, an asphalt road has been built in our area. And now every house will get water, due to which the villagers are happy. After performing Bhoomi Pujan of Murtonda Reach work, villagers thanked Minister Kawasi Lakhma and Harish Kawasi.

Sahu Samaj an educated prosperous developing society : Chandrakar



Anwari, Dec 09: While fulfilling the demand of Sahu Samaj Mura, Tarini Neelam Chandrakar, District Panchayat Agriculture Chairman did Bhoomi Pujan and foundation stone laying by giving approval of Rs. Five lakh. There was a constant demand being made by the society, which was approved by Tarini Neelam Chandrakar, the Agriculture Chairman, taking the demand of Sahu society seriously. On this occasion, all the villagers welcomed Chandrakar with great enthusiasm and completed the program of Bhumi Pujan and foundation stone. Addressing the program, Smt. Chandrakar said that Sahu Samaj is an educated and prosperous developing society, and there is always a feeling of mutual cooperation and brotherhood among the people of Sahu society. Suman Santosh Sahu, District Panchayat Member, Women and Child Development Chairman, presiding the program, said the villagers and community members will always remember the development works done by the District Panchayat in Sahu Bhawan. In this occasion, special guest Purushottam Sahu district member Kurud, Radheshyam Sahu President Teshil Sahu Samaj, Vishwanath Sahu Treasurer Teshil Samaj, Janaki Nagarchi Sarpanch Mura, Puspendra Kumar Sahu Deputy Sarpanch Mura, Mahim Shukla, Umesh Kumar, Beni Ram Sahu, Kamlesh Sahu, Bhanu Pratap Sahu, Rupendra Sahu, Khorbakra

CHANGE OF NAME I Aditi Pahadiya, age -26 yrs, W/o Shri Ankur Pahadiya, caste Jain, R/o No. 57, ward No. 9, Ramnagar, Fingeshwar, Teshil Rajim, District Gariyaband (C.G.) do here make following statements: 1. That my name and address above is true and correct. 2. That my correct name is Aditi Pahadiya, age 26, H.No. 57, ward No. 9, Ramnagar, Fingeshwar, Teshil Rajim, District Gariyaband (C.G.) and it is mentioned in my Aadhar Card and in all the places I used the same name and address. 3. That a passport has been issued on my name and in this my name has been mentioned as Aditi Bharat Jain and address - Bharat Jain, ward No. 3, Opp. Jain Mandir, Devari, Gondia Maharashtra-441901. 4. That I am ready to follow all the rules and regulations of the department as well. 5. That I am ready to follow all the rules and regulations of the department as well. 6. So as and where applicable, my name and address should be written and read as I Aditi Pahadiya, age -26 yrs, W/o Shri Ankur Pahadiya, caste Jain, R/o No. 57, ward No. 9, Ramnagar, Fingeshwar, Teshil Rajim, District Gariyaband (C.G.). I do hereby solemnly affirm that the statement made from Sl. No. 1-6 are true and correct best of my knowledge and I do hereby stand firm by it and holds complete responsibility for it. Date- 8 Jan 2022 DEPONENT

BRIEF

Files complaint

Ambala: A Lieutenant Colonel has filed a case against her in-laws for allegedly causing her physical and mental harassment. Lieutenant Colonel Nidhi Dhania is presently posted in Light Air Defence Regiment at Ambala Cantt. She had filed a complaint naming her father-in-law Kuldeep Singh and mother-in-law Sheela as her harassers.

Bovines rescued

Jaipur: A total of 39 bovines were freed from cattle smugglers in Bharatpur and Alwar districts of Rajasthan, police said. An exchange of fire between the police and smugglers also took place in Bharatpur. Alwar SP Tejaswani Gautam said 26 bovines were freed from a truck in Alwar district.

ED arrests

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate arrested a former chancellor of a Bengaluru based private university who is alleged to have duped the parents of as many as 4,500 students by "siphoning off" Rs 107 crore funds taken from them as fees. Madhukar G Angur, the ex-chancellor of Alliance University. He was produced before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Bengaluru that sent him to judicial custody.

Man booked

Srinagar: A UK-based man of Kashmiri-origin has been booked under the UAPA for allegedly carrying out anti-national activities on social media. A complaint was also lodged by an advocate here against Muzammil Ayyub Thakur for threatening him in public and on social media. He said Thakur, who heads the World Kashmiri Freedom Movement (WKFM), was creating fear and alarm among the masses and inciting them to commit offences.

Bogus order

Mumbai: A complaint has been submitted in Marine Drive police station in Mumbai against unidentified persons over a bogus promotion-cum-transfer order of five additional collectors, an official said. The issue came to light when these five officials got this bogus order after which a written complaint was made in Marine Drive police station by state government authorities, he said.

Incentives raised

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government raised the retirement benefits of 1.3 lakh anganwadi workers, mini anganwadi workers, and helpers and approved a package for nearly 50,000 community support staff working in panchayats and villages. The incentives for mini anganwadi workers and helpers have been doubled from Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000 and Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 respectively. Incentive will be given with retrospective effect.

TN observes one day lockdown to help tackle rising COVID cases



City streets wear a deserted look during curfew imposed by Tamil Nadu government to curb the spread of COVID-19, near Central Railway Station in Chennai, Sunday.

Chennai, Jan 09 (PTI):

A one-day complete lockdown to tackle the rapidly rising COVID-19 cases was enforced across Tamil Nadu on Sunday while police, local and health authorities stepped up measures to check violations. Be it arterial roads, bylanes, markets or malls, public places in the state were deserted but for the movement of people, cargo trucks and other vehicles linked to essential services like milk distribution or in connection with purposes allowed by the government including health issues. Healthcare professionals and work-

ers, sanitary and civic personnel, continued their routine work. Barring flights, suburban and other train operations, bus and other public transport services including the Metrorail here were suspended. Suburban trains were operated here with 50 per cent occupancy.

In view of the one-day lockdown, restaurants were allowed to offer only takeaway services (from 7 AM to 10 PM) and food delivery firms were permitted to work. Police closed/regulated access to several flyovers, roads here and elsewhere and set up checkpoints on

highways, key intersections and thoroughfares as part of measures to crack down on violators. Similarly, civic and health authorities monitored effective implementation of lockdown across the state. Health Minister Ma Subramanian, along with top civic, health and police officials made inspections here and checked the enforcement of lockdown norms and sensitised people travelling for essential purposes to the guidelines to be followed to prevent virus spread. Greater Chennai police said 381 cases were booked for violation of curbs and 53 for not maintaining physical distance. As many as 761 vehicles were seized in connection with breaching COVID prevention norms, a release said. A fine of Rs 11,94,200 has been collected from a total of 5,971 people for not wearing mask, it added. Vehicle checks were intensified in districts bordering neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and the union territory of Puducherry in view of curbs.

Congress begins Mokedatu 'padayatra', despite COVID restrictions

Ramanagara, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Congress in Karnataka on Sunday began its 10 days 'padayatra' (march), demanding implementation of the Mokedatu project across the Cauvery river, despite the government's COVID-19 restrictions.

Led by Congress' state president DK Shivakumar and Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly Siddaramaiah, the padayatra with the theme 'Namma Neeru Namma Hakku' (Our water, Our right) began at the Sangama, the confluence of Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers in Kanakapura here, which will be spanning a distance of over 100 km. With participation from hundreds of workers, leaders and cultural



Congress party leaders play a drum during the inauguration of the 10 day padayatra from Mokedatu to Bengaluru to demand implementation of Mokedatu project, in Mokedatu, Sunday.

groups, the principal opposition party in the state is going ahead with the march, as planned, unfazed by the government's warning of action in case of violation of COVID restrictions and rules.

It now remains to be seen what action will the

government take, with large number of people gathering in violation of rules and orders. The Karnataka government has imposed curfew on weekends and restricted public gatherings to fight the third wave of COVID-19, till January 19. It has

MASK DISTRIBUTION



Trinamool Congress leader and party's councillor distributes masks to vendors at a market, as COVID-19 cases rise in Kolkata, Sunday.

'TMC's presence in Goa to help BJP in polls'

Mumbai, Jan 09 (PTI):

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday slammed the TMC for taking an "anti-Congress" stand ahead of the Goa Assembly polls, and claimed the presence of the Mamata-Banerjee led party in the coastal state will help the ruling BJP the most.

In his weekly column 'Rokhtok' in the Sena mouthpiece Saamana, Raut said the TMC has roped in "unreliable leaders" from other parties, including the Congress, and such an attitude does not suit West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is herself



Sanjay Raut

fighting the BJP. The TMC is spending extravagantly in Goa for the Assembly polls and many say the source of funds spent by the party is "somewhere else", he claimed without elaborating. Referring to

the current state of affairs in Goa, Raut said all parties have made the state a "political laboratory".

The Election Commission of India on Saturday announced that elections to all 40 Assembly constituencies in Goa would be held on February 14.

The BJP, Congress, Goa Forward Party (GFP), Maharashtra Aadi Gomantak Party (MGP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Trinamool Congress Party (TMC), and NCP are the main political parties in the fray.

"The TMC's presence in Goa will benefit BJP the most," Raut claimed.

Arrested interior designer granted bail by HC in models death case

Kochi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Kerala High Court has granted bail to an interior designer who was arrested in connection with the deaths of three people, including two models, in a car accident which allegedly resulted as he was chasing them in his four-wheeler. Justice Gopinath P, while granting the relief to Syju M Thankachan, said that prima facie and for the purpose of considering his entitlement to bail, the provisions of Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) may not be attracted even if all the allegations against the accused interior designer were true. According to the



Interior designer Syju

prosecution, investigation in the case has revealed instances of various other crimes, including those under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, committed by the accused and the CCTV visuals, including those of traf-

fic cameras, show the manner in which he caused the accident. Thankachan was arrested in the case on November 27, 2021. Anicy Kabeer (25) and Anjana Shajan (24) had died in the fatal crash on November 1 last year. A third passenger, in the car, succumbed to his injuries a few days later. The driver, who escaped with injuries, was later arrested and is the first accused in the case. Thankachan is accused of stalking the models from a bar and later intercepting their car at Kundannoor in Kochi city. Later, the women sped away in their car to avoid him and he allegedly chased them in his vehicle, police had said.

Lucknow, Jan 09 (PTI):

Authorities have begun removing hoardings and posters put up by political parties across Uttar Pradesh as the model code of conduct has come into effect with the Election Commission announcing polls dates for the state.

The commission on Saturday announced seven-phase voting in the state starting February 10. Counting of votes will take place in March, along with four other poll-bound states.

Voting will be held on February 10, February 14, February 20, February 23, February 27, March 3 and March 7. It will move from



A worker removes a political banner as the Model Code of Conduct has come into effect.

the western part of the state towards the east. "The model code of conduct has been implemented in the state, and it will

be followed. All district magistrates (district election officers) have been given the responsibility to implement the model code

of conduct. They will be sending their reports on a regular basis," Chief Electoral Officer Ajay Kumar Shukla told PTI on Sunday.

District Magistrate of Lucknow Abhishek Prakash said as per the directives of the Election Commission of India, the model code of conduct has been implemented, and it will be strictly adhered to. Instructions of the model code of conduct have been sent to the municipal commissioner of Lucknow, he said.

Following this, teams of the Lucknow Municipal Corporation were seen pulling down banners and posters.

Political party hoardings removed as code of conduct comes into effect

'EC must curb rising misuse of religion in politics during polls'

■ Mayawati asked people not to be misled by survey agencies

Lucknow, Jan 09 (PTI):

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday expressed concern over the "increasing" use of religion in politics during elections and said the Election Commission must curb this worrying trend. Her remarks came a day after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the assembly elections in the state will be an 80 per cent versus 20 per cent one,



Mayawati

alluding to the roughly 20 per cent Muslim population. "In the past few years, during the elections, there have been attempts to derive electoral advantage using religion. This impacts the election and the entire country is worried about this, Mayawati told reporters on Sunday. The

Election Commission should take serious steps to curb the narrow politics of selfishness as was evident in the past few years," she added. Accusing the Adityanath government of foisting a jungle raj through its biased policies, Mayawati also claimed that the BJP will lose the 2022 elections "if there is no misuse of government machinery and there are no discrepancies in EVMs". The BJP will be thrown out of power this time, provided there is no misuse of government machinery and there are no discrepancies in voting machines," she said while urging the poll panel to keep an eye on it.

Jairam Ramesh pays tribute to Nobel laureate Har Gobind Khorana

On his 100th birth anniversary

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Congress leader and former union minister Jairam Ramesh on Sunday paid rich tribute to Nobel laureate Har Gobind Khorana on his 100th birth anniversary.

Khorana was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1968. He was awarded the prize jointly with Robert W Holley and Marshall W Nirenberg. "This is the 100th birth anniversary of one of the iconic figures of molecular biology, Har Gobind Khorana. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1968. One of my great regrets is that I never gath-

HAR GOBIND KHORANA



ered courage to meet him, although we passed each other once in a while on campus... "However, in the past year I have been in touch with his daughter Julia and some of his students. Hope his biography gets written.

BRIEF

Intel reports

Washington: Intelligence reports compiled by the US Capitol Police in the days before last year's insurrection envisioned only an improbable or remote risk of violence, even as other assessments warned that crowds of potentially tens of thousands of pro-Trump demonstrators could converge in Washington to create a dangerous situation.

Activist arrives

Paris: An Egyptian-Palestinian human rights activist Rami Shaath arrived in Paris and reunited with his wife, after Egyptian authorities released him from prison and deported him. An overjoyed Shaath, the son of a prominent Palestinian politician, walked out of the Charles de Gaulle airport smiling, holding hands with his wife, Lebrun, a French national, and waving to a cheering crowd of supporters. His father is Palestinian advisor.

To probe

Kathmandu: The Nepal government has formed a committee to probe the unlawful involvement of a controversial private company in running hotels at a state owned dharmashala built with India's aid for the visitors of the iconic Pashupatinath Temple, the largest temple complex and one of the biggest Hindu pilgrimage sites in the country. It is the largest temple complex. It stretches on both sides of the Bagmati River.

Warns Greece

Ankara: Greece should refrain from testing Turkey's patience with provocations, including with a threat to extend its territorial waters in the Aegean, Turkey's defense minister warned. Hulusi Akar also said Turkey wanted to resolve disputes with neighbor and fellow NATO member Greece through dialogue and turn the Aegean into a sea of friendship but accused Athens of pressing ahead with what he said were provocative actions.

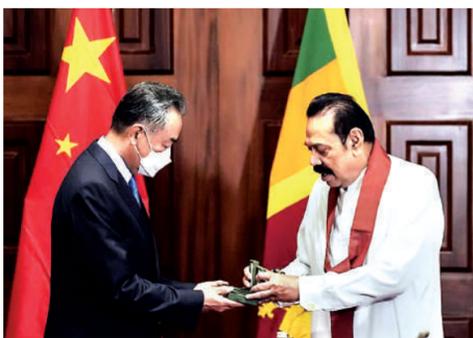
Block roads

Belgrade: Hundreds of people in Serbia spent part of a holiday weekend blocking roads to protest plans for lithium mining in the Balkan country. The protests came a day after Orthodox Christians in Serbia and many other countries celebrated Christmas. The demonstrations took place in the capital, Belgrade, and several other locations.

Brutal assault

New York: A New York man and his girlfriend are accused of holding the man's estranged wife captive for days and assaulting her, including cutting off one of her fingers, before she managed to escape. The 37-year-old woman told police she was kidnapped at gunpoint by her husband on New Year's Eve and physically assaulted, fearing for her life while being held at a home and at one point a motel room, according to court.

Chinese FM meets Lankan PM, discusses investments



Sri Lankan PM Mahinda Rajapaksa presents a souvenir to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Sunday.

Colombo, Jan 09 (PTI):

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday held talks with Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and discussed a host of issues, including promoting tourism, investments, and fight against the COVID-19 pandemic as the two countries marked the 65th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Wang, who is also the State Councillor, arrived here from the Maldives on a two-day visit during which he is scheduled to meet the country's top leadership.

Prime Minister Mahinda took to Twitter to announce that he had a very pleasant meeting with Wang.

Had a very pleasant meeting with the Foreign Min of #China. Discussions centered around the logistics of facilitating the return of the many #lka med students to China. Also discussed were a host of issues

inc Tourism, investments, #COVID19SL relief & post Covid preparedness, he said on Twitter. Mahinda Rajapaksa also thanked the Chinese government for its continued support to Sri Lanka. I thanked #China and her people for the continued support to #lka. As both our nations celebrate 65 years of bilateral relations, I am hopeful that this relationship we share will only grow & be strengthened in the years to come, he said in another tweet.

According to Foreign Secretary Jayanath Colombage, Foreign Minister Wang will also meet President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Foreign Minister G L Peiris during the visit.

His visit marks the 65th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two nations and the 70th anniversary of the Lanka-China Rubber Rice Pact. Signed in 1952, the Rubber-Rice Pact was a

trade agreement between Lanka and China under which Colombo supplied rubber to Beijing in exchange for rice, leading to the establishment of diplomatic relations and expansion of trade between the two nations.

The events marking the occasions will be held at the Chinese-built port city in central Colombo, one of the many mega infrastructure development projects supported by China since 2010.

Foreign Secretary Colombage said that new Chinese investment opportunities might be sealed by Sri Lanka during the foreign minister's visit.

The relationship between the two countries has been under stress in the recent months.

China protested against Sri Lanka's rejection of an organic fertiliser shipment which the local farmers and some experts claimed was contaminated.

The Sri Lankan commercial high court here blocked payment for it despite top level interventions by China. The Chinese black listed the Sri Lankan state bank for not honouring the payment.

Sri Lankan scientists had questioned the quality of the Chinese fertiliser consignment, saying that instead of helping, it could prove harmful to the crops.

However, on Friday, on the eve of Wang's visit, the Sri Lanka's People's Bank released USD 6.9 million US to the Chinese company.

RIDING AT BICYCLE PATH



A cyclist rides with his dog along a bicycle path on a road in Jakarta, Indonesia on Sunday.

New law allows noncitizens to vote in NYC

Legal challenge is likely by opponents

New York, Jan 09 (AP):

More than 800,000 noncitizens and so-called Dreamers in New York City will have access to the ballot box and could vote in municipal elections as early as next year after Mayor Eric Adams allowed legislation approved by the City Council a month ago to automatically become law. Opponents have vowed to challenge



General view shows the lower Manhattan skyline and New York city.

the new law. Unless a judge halts its implementation, New York City is now the most populous city in the

United States to grant voting rights to noncitizens.

More than a dozen communities across the US already allow noncitizens to cast ballots in local elections, including 11 towns in Maryland and two in Vermont. The Board of Elections must now begin drawing an implementation plan by July, including voter registration rules and provisions that would create separate ballots for municipal races to prevent noncitizens from casting ballots in federal and state contests.

Djokovic detention draws focus to Australia's asylum seekers

Sydney, Jan 09 (AP):

Novak Djokovic spent a fourth day on Sunday among the unwilling occupants of Melbourne's Park Hotel. His fellow residents in the immigration detention hotel include refugees and asylum-seekers who are challenging their own proceedings that have all lasted much longer than Djokovic's. So long in some cases they feel forgotten. Djokovic's mere presence at the hotel, a squat and unattractive building on the leafy fringe of the city's downtown, has drawn the world's eyes to those other residents and their ongoing struggles with the Australian immigration system. Refugee activists have been quick to capitalize on the media attention as one of the world's most feted athletes shares the hotel and its sparse amenities with some of the world's most vulnerable and dispossessed people.

Renata Voracova, a 38-



A protester hold a banner with others outside the Park Hotel calling for the release of refugees being detained inside the hotel in Melbourne, Australia.

year-old Czech doubles player, was detained in the same hotel over a vaccine dispute before leaving Australia. The Park Hotel was once a thriving tourist hotel, popular for its central location near Melbourne's network of trams and across the road from the home ground of the Carlton Australian Rules Football Club. But for the past two years it has often been referred to as the

notorious or infamous Park Hotel. At the outbreak of the pandemic it was a quarantine hotel for Australians returning from overseas and reportedly a source of a delta-variant outbreak that swept Melbourne and forced the city into months of lockdown while claiming hundreds of lives.

More recently it has been home to travelers of a different kind: refugees and

asylum-seekers who have been transferred for medical reasons from Australia's off-shore detention centers on Manus Island and Nauru in the Pacific. There are 32 asylum-seekers sharing the hotel with Djokovic. Among them is Mehdi Ali of Iran who was 15 when he made the dangerous journey to Australia by boat. He had spent the past nine years in an off-shore processing facility for asylum-seekers and refugees, and was recently moved to the Park Hotel, where armed police guard the entrance and residents cannot leave. Mehdi says the hotel is like a jail with its lengthy confinement, lack of fresh air and poor food.

In October, a COVID-19 outbreak infected more than half of the hotel's then 46 residents. In December, small fires broke out on one floor; residents were evacuated and one person was treated for smoke inhalation.

Brasilia, Jan 09 (AP):

A towering slab of rock broke from a cliff and toppled onto pleasure boaters drifting near a waterfall on a Brazilian lake and officials said at least six people died.

Edgard Estevo, commander of the Minas Gerais State Fire Department, said at a news conference that in addition to the dead as many as 20 people might be missing and officials were seeking to identify them. Officials said at least 32 people were injured, though most had been released from hospitals.

Video images showed a gathering of small boats moving slowly near the sheer rock cliff on Furnas Lake when a fissure appeared in the rock and a huge piece toppled onto at least two of the vessels.

Estevo said the accident occurred between the towns of Sao Jose da



FIREFIGHTERS DURING RESCUE OPERATION AFTER A LARGE ROCK FRAGMENT BROKE OFF A RAVINE AND PLUNGED ONTO SEVERAL TOURIST BOATS, AT THE CANYONS OF FURNAS LAKE IN BRAZIL.

Barra and Capitolio, from which the boats had left.

The press office of Minas Gerais state said the fire department had deployed divers and helicopters to help. Minas Gerais Gov. Romeu Zema sent messages of solidarity with the victims via social media. Furnas Lake, which was created in 1958 for the installation of a hydroelectric plant, is a popular tourist draw in the

area roughly 420 kilometres north of Sao Paulo.

Officials in Capitolio, which has about 8,400 residents, say the town can see around 5,000 visitors on a weekend, and up to 30,000 on holidays. Officials suggested the wall coming loose could have been related to heavy rains recently that caused flooding in the state ad forced almost 17,000 people out of their homes.

Venezuela's revolution divided in cradle of Chavismo



A man shows the photos of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at his childhood home that has been transformed into a museum, in Sabaneta, Venezuela.

Sabaneta, Jan 09 (AP):

Nancy Mora yearns for the affection she says late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez showed his people. She touches her heart when she talks about the man she still calls her president and believes the revolution he started will continue as long as self-

proclaimed Chavistas like her are alive. But in Mora's northwestern Venezuelan community of Sabaneta, Chavez's birthplace, not everyone remains as faithful as she does to his ideas. Some of his longtime supporters now feel abandoned by the ruling party and overwhelmed by a crush-

ing economy and lack of basic public services.

The internal struggles of Chavismo were encapsulated by the apparent defeat and its aftermath of one of Chavez's brothers during gubernatorial elections in November. Now, after the apparent winner in the state of Barinas was retroactively disqualified.

Mora said Chavez taught her that the revolution stands for equality. 'It is a socialism of love,' she said, but she could not explain why millions in the South American country struggle to feed themselves on a \$2 monthly minimum wage while others can drop \$15 for a coffee shop lunch.

Chavez, elected in 1998, promised to improve the lives of Venezuela's poorest using the country's oil.

Former quarry turns haven for endangered UK birds

Cambridge, Jan 09 (AFP):

Nature is reclaiming her territory at a quarry in the east of England that is being transformed into a vast reserve offering vital sanctuary to endangered birds. With its reedbed wetlands, the marshy plain of the Fens outside Cambridge has become an attractive habitat for the secretive bittern, which was until 2015 on the UK's Red list of most-threatened species.

The thickset heron, with its perfectly camouflaged streaked brown plumage and a booming springtime call that sounds like someone blowing over the top of a bottle, is on the less critical but still threatened Amber list. 'It's really a demonstration of how working with partners — big decisive action at large scale — we can bring species off that Red list,' said Chris Hudson, senior site manager at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' (RSPB) Ouse Fen



Mute Swans in flight over RSPB Ouse Fen Reserve in Willingham.

Nature Reserve, some 120 kilometres (80 miles) north of London.

Although the elusive bird did not put in an appearance when AFP visited on a brisk and rainy January winter morning, five percent of the UK's bitterns now nest at Ouse Fen.

The reserve's bittern population is larger than the nationwide total in the mid-1990s, when the RSPB's list of threatened species was first published, said Hudson, binoculars always at the ready. The latest edi-

tion of Birds of Conservation Concern was published in December 2021 and now includes 70 species on the Red list — more than double the figure when the first report was published in 1996. Around 30 percent of the British Isles' 245 bird species are now in danger.

Among the new species on the list are the house martin and the swift, migratory birds that fly thousands of kilometres (miles) from central and southern Africa each spring to breed in Europe.

Richard Gregory, head of monitoring at the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science, blames population decrease mainly on changing land use in the UK, Europe and beyond, which deprives birds of food and habitat.

'The decline of these birds might tell us something about a huge decline in the biomass of insects, which has been a real concern for conservationists across Europe recently, and it's probably a much wider phenomenon,' he said.

'So we need more research, but that's a real warning sign about how the environment is changing around us. 'But we also know that when you manage the habitats, when you protect the habitats, and you protect the birds, they can bounce right back,' said Gregory, pointing to the example of the 'magnificent' white-tailed eagle, which was extinct in the British Isles in the early 20th century.



CENTRAL Chronicle

Established 1974 Volume 47 No. 98

Geopolitical consequence

One of the most clarifying things about the COVID-19 epidemic has been which countries have been able to handle it and which haven't. To oversimplify, China and a few other nations have handled it well. None of the major Western powers have, certainly not America. In natural selection you compete against your environment. In nations, societies and civilizations there is something similar: internal vs. external competition. You compete against fellow members of your society for status, wealth and power within your society, but your society as a whole competes against other societies. There are always top dogs, hegemonic powers and so on, and losing an inter-society culture can, at worst, lead to you being genocided and at best to long periods of poverty and subjugation. Profiteering allowed to private industries will make some nations weak. China has not allowed its private business owners from profiteering. The world will witness geopolitical consequence of profiteering during pandemic. In the West, with some minor exceptions, COVID was treated as a profit event. It was a way for the richest and most powerful to become even more rich and powerful. That millions would die and millions more would be crippled (Long COVID rates seem somewhere between 10 to 20 percent depending on definitions) was secondary to the possibility of funneling more power and wealth to those who already had the most. Billionaires, just one group among elites have seen their wealth double during the pandemic. China, or more accurately, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) did not treat the pandemic primarily as being about internal competition. To them it was important that large numbers of citizens did not die, and were not disabled.

This means that China will come out of this stronger than the West, because the economy fundamentally and always is people, and there's aren't mass-disabled or dead, plus the legitimacy of the ruling class, rather than being reduced by their pandemic response has been increased. To the CCP the health of their citizens is integral to maintaining their power. To the West, it is an asset to be burned down to make more money and improve their internal position. The irony of this is that by taking care of their citizens the CCP has both improved their external and internal positions, while the West's elites, who can be best characterized as incompetent psychopaths capable of nothing but accumulating more internal power and wealth have been weakened despite their gains in wealth, because as a group, their power is dependent on the health of their population and on their legitimacy. COVID pretty much proves that barring outside shocks, China has already won the hegemonic competition between it and the US. Oh, it'll have to play out, but the CCP governs its country basically competently, and US elites are fools who let their society's power run down. America's military superiority, in the face of nukes and the Russia and China alliance is insufficient to alter this fact. China has the industry, it has more competent government and its government's legitimacy is riding high while the legitimacy of the West is in tatters. Given these facts, and that China has a much larger population, it's hard to see how America can remain in its position. Just as the end of Britain as world ruler took generations from America actually surpassing it economically, so this will take time to be seen, but just as by 1900 it was essentially inevitable that the US would take over from Britain, so it now seems that China's taking over is inevitable, or would be in a world without climate change and ecological collapse, those being the likely external shocks that even a functioning society may not be able to overcome.

Digital skills for campaigns

The Election Commission's announcement of dates for the forthcoming state assembly elections in five states is much on the lines the key opposition parties were anticipating. But where they have been taken by surprise was the decision to completely ban physical rallies and heavily restrict roadside meetings, as per COVID protocols. This has forced political parties to focus on digital skills. The assembly elections in some states last year during the second wave of pandemic were conducted smoothly, but election campaigning proved to be superspreader events. Now, physical rallies during the campaign period, as and when permitted after the decision of the Election Commission, shall be conducted subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines. Further, political parties and candidates are advised to conduct their campaign as much as possible through digital and virtual media platforms and mobile phone-based mode instead of physical mode ensuring strict compliance of COVID safety norms. EC had come under heavy criticism during the West Bengal Assembly elections which was spread over eight phases over five weeks last year as India was grappling with the second wave, the deadliest in terms of the death toll and the number of cases in the country.

This forced the poll panel to finally restrict campaigning towards the remaining two phases of the elections. It is common knowledge that the BJP was the only political party with a wide digital infrastructure with a huge IT cell at all levels, that none of opposition parties can match. BJP leadership has created WhatsApp groups right from the state level and district level, down to block and booth level. Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav had said that if the election commission leans in favour of a virtual campaign for political parties in the UP Assembly elections, then the commission should also make it a level-playing field for all the political parties. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi took his concerns to Twitter over the 'digital divide in India'. Ahead of polls, the AIMIM leader asked the Election Commission of India to review its guidelines for virtual rallies. COVID protocols can be strictly imposed during voting and counting phases but not in rallies and roadshows where mass participation is an indication of popularity. Digital canvassing is now a necessary skill for political parties.

Central Chronicle welcomes, articles, write ups, comments on different issues for editorial page (800-900 words), Letter to editor for this page. It can be sent by e-mail at: editor@centralchronicle@gmail.com

The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity of thoughts.

STALL TAKING PRECAUTIONS



A woman serves food from a stall, with all precautions taken for COVID-19 pandemic, at a fun fair in Bangkok, Thailand.

Doubts if Sri Lanka can turn around its corrupted democracy

**NEIL DEVOTTA**

The Rajapaksa family have drastically weakened democracy in Sri Lanka, but face a stirring civilian resistance that is picking up momentum. Once feared by the country's most powerful, the Rajapaksa family that rule Sri Lanka now see their effigies hit and burned in the street, by many who once voted for them. Although their ethnonationalist government sits securely in power, there is mounting resistance to a regime that has driven Sri Lanka into economic crisis amid continuous corruption. And they will not be aided by the United States who did not extend Sri Lanka an invitation to its online 'Summit for Democracy' held last year. The summit aimed to challenge authoritarianism, address corruption and advance human rights all difficult goals for Sri Lanka, since the majoritarian politics that led to civil war and grotesque human rights violations still lives on. The war ended in 2009, but corruption and authoritarianism have reached new heights under the rule of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa from 2005 to 2015, and his brother President Gotabaya Rajapaksa elected in 2019. Yet while Sri Lanka's backsliding democracy stands out, so too does the resilience of its civilians. Most Sri Lankans may reject pluralism and justify the prevailing majoritarian milieu, but they make abundantly clear they value the right to protest and vote. If the former contributes to democratic backsliding, the latter at least allows for electoral democracy.

The ethnocentric policies that rule Sri Lanka efficiently took hold within a decade after independence Sinhalese Buddhists rose to completely dominate state-associated institutions. This has benefitted so many powerful sectors government servants, security, Buddhist clergy, and corrupt entrepreneurs that completely reversing course is an almost impossible challenge. To grow and keep power, nationalists need enemies, real or manufactured. In the civil war, the terrorist tactics of separatist Tamil rebels energised Buddhist nationalists. Post-war, these forces have targeted Muslims. Extremist group Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force, or 'BBS') most forcefully spread anti-Muslim sentiment abetted by Mahinda Rajapaksa's Government. While Gotabaya Rajapaksa's election as president in 2019 prompted fears that anti-Muslim rioting would ramp up, the health and economic crises created by COVID-19 seem to stymie the anti-Muslim forces. The pandemic, however, did not completely prevent the government from tormenting the Muslim community. Congested Muslim areas in Colombo were among the first to register cases of COVID-19, and some claimed Muslims were spreading the virus. The government's requirement that all who died from COVID-19 be cremated was especially traumatic for Muslims, whose religion mandates burial. The government persisted with a blanket cremation policy, despite the World Health Organization's

declaration that burying coronavirus victims was safe. The government only reversed course in February 2021, when it required predominantly Muslim states in the United Nations Human Rights Commission to vote against a resolution brought against it.

Rampant corruption is another major factor undermining the rule of law in Sri Lanka. Family, friends and allies of the Rajapaksas have profited from lofty, well-paying state-funded positions that require little work. Today Gotabaya, Mahinda, two other brothers, and Mahinda's son oversee departments and agencies that collectively control nearly 70 percent of the island's budget. This takes place while the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Political Victimization, created by Rajapaksa's Government, absolves the family and their allies of criminal charges. Officials from the previous government's Attorney General's Office and Criminal Investigation Department who filed the charges are now being prosecuted for allegedly fabricating evidence. Chinese-funded projects have played a large role in promoting Rajapaksa, just as Chinese state support for the family has aided their authoritarianism. The no-revenue generating, non-concessionary, non-transparent, and unsolicited 'blingfranchise' projects have lined Rajapaksa pockets, but also have saddled Sri Lanka with massive unpayable debts and led to a dire economic climate. Sri Lankans have revolted against resultant scarcities, showing the island's resilience as a democracy. Sri Lanka was pushed into debt by civil war, but war-related corruption has seen the debt increase. Repaying China for exorbitant infrastructure projects, debts owed to non-Chinese entities, and corruption that persisted through the pandemic have all contributed to a severe balance of payments crisis.

Government coffers contain only around US\$1.5 billion in reserves as of November 2021, while debt payments for 2022 amount to around US\$4.3 bil-

lion. The foreign currency shortage has prevented banks from providing importers lines of credit, which has caused long queues for essential items like petrol and milk powder. The government banned chemical fertilisers, saving around US\$400 million and appealing to nationalist sentiment by claiming locally-produced organic fertiliser was better. But the decision led to widespread protests from farmers. Teachers also went on strike, citing rampant inflation, made worse by the government recklessly printing money. Protests have been led by grassroots civil society groups. Previously, village-level groups may have avoided challenging Rajapaksa governments given their mutual commitment to Sinhalese Buddhist supremacy. Their now-vociferous demands show the strength of civil society, and resilience of democracy in Sri Lanka. It seems illiberal democracy stands to dominate the world in the years ahead, and this will certainly be the case in Sri Lanka, where majoritarianism is here to stay. But an illiberal democracy can be improved faster than a mature autocracy.

The trick is to craft an ethno-religious compact where majoritarianism coexists in a peaceful and diverse setting. While Sri Lanka's leaders should be pushed to reconcile with minorities, reject ethno-religious violence, and promote a more pluralist setting, one must be realistic about what to expect. Pro-democracy advocates should continue to engage with the government while advocating for democratic reforms. Less engagement will push the country's leaders to further lean on autocratic states and exacerbate democratic backsliding. There's also an opportunity to leverage the island's dependence on western export markets to push for pro-democracy policies. The Elections Commission and anti-corruption bodies remain important for promoting transparency, and sanctions remain a live option to stymie individuals and their families who violate human rights and thrive on corruption.

(Neil Devotta is Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University in US.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Forgotten history

Not all have the privilege to have his/her body wrapped in the national flag of three different countries. Biju Patnaik alias Bijayananda Patnaik, who was born in 1916 and breathed his last in 1997, was one such individual. When he left for heavenly abode, his body was wrapped with three national flags of India, Russia and Indonesia. Biju Patnaik served as Chief Minister of Odisha for two terms but before jumping into active politics he served as a pilot. When the Soviet Union was in trouble during WW2, he bombed Nazi forces by flying a fighter aircraft named Dakota which forced Hitler's Army to retreat. For this act, he was later on honoured and granted honorary citizenship of the Soviet Union. When the Kavalis attacked Kashmir, it was Biju Patnaik who made several trips a day from Delhi to Srinagar on 27th October 1947 by flying a plane and transporting the Indian soldiers to Srinagar. Though Indonesia gained independence from the colonial power of Holland in 1945, again in 1947, Prime Minister of Indonesia Sutan Sjahrir was put under house arrest. The government of Indonesia sought India's help. So, on 22nd July 1947, Biju Patnaik along with his wife took a Dakota plane without caring little for his life, flew over the areas controlled by Dutch and landed on their soil, displaying exemplary bravery and bought the Indonesian PM safely to India via Singapore. In 1950, the Indonesian government granted honorary citizenship to Biju Patnaik and conferred the nation's highest award 'Bintang Jasa Utama', on Indonesia's 50th year of independence. After the death of Biju Patnaik, seven days of state mourning was observed in Indonesia and one-day state mourning was observed in Russia with all flags being lowered. Our history books ignored this great soul as a result subsequent generations hardly knew about him. Megawati Sukarnoputri who served as fifth President of Indonesia revealed the greatness of Biju Patnaik to the public during her Hinduism embracing ritual.

Julie, via email

Heroic exploits

After the 'heroic exploits' of one Param Vir Singh, the absconding top cop of Maharashtra police which has shamed the entire police force of the nation, the nation is blessed with yet another Vir, in the name of Vir Das, who is by choice a stand-up comedian who is supposed to bring smiles on the faces of his listeners. But he did otherwise. Recently in the USA, the said comedian Vir Das in his show in Kennedy Centre tarnished the image of his own country before a distinguished gathering which made every Indian hang his head in shame. We all vividly remember that some decades ago how Swami Vivekananda kept the entire audience spellbound with his priceless speech highlighting India's rich heritage, culture and tradition. It is a high time the nation honoured Vir Das along with Novjot Singh Sidhu with some brickbat awards.

Ashim, via email



WHAT THEY TWEET!

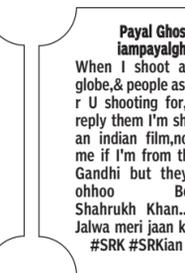


Arun Prakash@arunp2810
You may be right General, but I refuse to yield to despair. In the twilight of my years, should I hand over my nation to people who propagate blind hate, bigotry & genocide? Does it take a genius to see that provoking internal strife fulfills fondest dreams of India's enemies?

Ashok Swain@ashoswai
People forget what you want to ask if you start with Hon'ble, PM, Sri, & Ji. The sycophant, ruling party spokespersons, are asked to do so; why the opposition spokespersons are falling into that trap? This is nothing but a slave mentality.



KVJ@SuB8u
There's a big difference between being legally compliant and being ethically sound. It's always a choice. Banking on consumer ignorance of privacy/choice/consent is not the way to build a long-term sustainable business. We can and should do better.



Payal Ghosh@lampayalghosh
When I shoot across the globe, & people ask me what r U shooting for? When I reply them I'm shooting for an indian film, nobody ask me if I'm from the land of Gandhi but they ask me ohhoo Bollywood.. Shahrukh Khan.. yeh hai Jalwa meri jaan ki @iamsrk #SRK #SRKian forever.



Lakshay Singhal@lsinghal17
My office these days in Nubra! #ladakh



Vinay Kumar@vinaygb
I appreciate UPSC for setting good Essay paper. It seeks to eliminate candidates who come with 'herd mentality'. One can write essays to such topics only if they have diverse reading & writing habit, n also ability to think out of box. Upgrade yourself n your skills-is the message.

Sharell Cook@AboutIndia
Seriously can't make this stuff up! Now, my home help's recently boosted employer, family members and staff (who are also boosted) have tested positive for the virus seven people in total. The employer is currently the only one having symptoms.

BRIEF

New models



Mumbai: Jeep India is set to launch new products this year. Jeep India Head Nipun Mahajan told PTI that it anticipates the market to grow further notwithstanding concerns over the impact of Omicron variant. The market has gone through many ups and downs.

Reliance buys

New Delhi: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd announced acquisition of New York's premium luxury hotel Mandarin Oriental for USD 98.15 million. Set up in 2003, Mandarin Oriental New York is an iconic luxury hotel located at 80 Columbus Circle, directly adjacent to the pristine Central Park and Columbus Circle.

Samunnati's GTV



New Delhi: Samunnati on Sunday announced that gross transaction value (GTV) has crossed the Rs 10,000 crore mark within six years of scaled existence. CEO Anil Kumar SG told PTI, the GTV in ongoing 2021-22 financial year is expected to touch Rs 5,000 crore.

Issues tender

New Delhi: Alliance Air, a subsidiary of Air India, has issued a tender to refurbish its entire fleet of 18 ATR-72 aircraft. Air India, after its successful sale to the Tata Group in October last year, is expected to be handed over to the conglomerate in the first half of this year. However, Alliance Air will remain with the Centre as it was not up for sale. As per tender, which has been accessed by PTI, winning bidder will have to refurbish.

To raise



New Delhi: AMO Electric is looking to raise about USD 100 million next fiscal as it looks to scale up R&D to introduce new products, MD Sushant Kumar told PTI.

Voices concern

New Delhi: FIMI Southern Region has voiced its concern with the Karnataka government over the ban on export of iron ore in the state and stressed that at times there are deliberate imports of the key steel making raw material into the state despite surplus availability.

Taxmen to give 'reasonable time' to biz to explain reasons for mismatch

In GSTR-1, 3B before recovery action

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Tax officers will give reasonable time to erring business to explain reasons for mismatch in turnover reported in sales return GSTR-1 and tax payment form 3B before initiating recovery action for short payment or non-payment of taxes.

Apex indirect tax body CBIC has issued guidelines on recovery proceedings and said that taxmen would give a "reasonable time" to businesses to explain the reasons for such mismatch. As per the changes in the GST law effective January 1, GST officers were allowed to directly initiate recovery action against those errant businesses which showed higher sales in monthly return GSTR-1 but under-report it while tax payment in GSTR-3B. The move was aimed at curbing the menace of fake billing whereby sellers would



show higher sales in GSTR-1 to enable a purchaser to claim an input tax credit (ITC) but report suppressed sales in GSTR-3B to lower GST liability.

So far, under the goods and services tax law, show-cause notices were first issued and then a recovery process was initiated in such cases of mismatch in GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B. Following doubts raised by the trade and the field formations regarding modalities for initiation of the recovery proceedings, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on

January 7 issued guidelines, saying that an opportunity needs to be provided to the concerned businesses for short payment or non-payment of the amount of self-assessed tax liability.

It noted that in some cases there may be a genuine reason for the difference between the details of outward supplies declared in GSTR-1 and those declared in GSTR-3B.

Giving example, the CBIC said the GST law permits rectification of typographical errors or omissions in the GSTR-1 or GSTR-3B of a particular month, in the returns or tax payment forms of subsequent months.

There may also be cases, where a supply could not be declared by the registered person in GSTR-1 of an earlier tax period, though the tax on the same was paid by correctly reporting the said supply in GSTR-3B.

Macro data, quarterly earnings to guide equity market this week

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

A host of macroeconomic data announcements lined up during the week along with quarterly earnings from IT majors, including Infosys and TCS, are likely to dictate trends in the equity market, which kicked off the year 2022 on a strong footing, said analysts. Meanwhile, market participants would keep a close watch on various developments and news around the rising Covid cases both at the global and domestic front, they added. "IT majors like Infosys, TCS, Wipro, HCL Tech and Mindtree would announce their numbers. Besides, banking heavy-weight HDFC Bank result is also scheduled. On the macroeconomic front, par-

ticipants will be eyeing IIP, CPI Inflation and WPI Inflation data also during the week. Amid all, global cues and updates on the COVID situation would remain on the participants' radar," said Ajit Mishra, VP Research, Religare Broking. Earnings will dictate the market trend now and participants are hopeful of an encouraging start by the IT heavyweights, he said. Though markets are currently overlooking the rise in COVID cases, extension of strict restrictions imposed by several states might dent the sentiment, Mishra added. Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said, "Market will remain busy dealing with earnings from IT giants.

Consumer durables prices to go up 5-10% as input costs rise

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Prices of air conditioners and refrigerators have shot up in the new year as consumer durables makers pass on the impact of rising raw material costs and higher freight charges to customers, while home appliances like washing machines may witness 5-10 per cent price hike later this month or by March.

Companies including Panasonic, LG, Haier have already reviewed prices upwards, while other makers such as Sony, Hitachi, Godrej Appliances may take a call by the end of this quarter. According to the Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association (CEAMA), the

FPIs turn net buyers of equities in Jan so far, invest Rs 3,202 cr

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI): After three months of selling spree, foreign investors have turned net buyers in the first week of January by infusing Rs 3,202 crore in Indian equities, as correction in markets provided them good buying opportunity. Going forward, FPIs flows will remain volatile on the expectation of the US Fed rate hike, rising concerns over the Omicron variant and elevated inflation levels, experts said.

The latest inflow came after witnessing a net outflow of Rs 38,521 crore during October-December 2021. Before that, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) had made a net investment of Rs 13,154 crore in September last year.

According to data available with the depositories, FPIs have infused a net sum of Rs 3,202 crore in the Indian equities during January 3-7.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said, "Intermittent buying by FPIs could be attributed to the correction in the markets interim, which would have provided them some good buying opportunity".

Assocham pitches for permanent refinance window for NBFC sector

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Industry body Assocham has recommended setting up a refinance window for the NBFC sector and making banks' lending to non-banking financial companies under priority sector permanent for the upcoming Union Budget.

The funding support to the non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) will ensure liquidity in the sector, as they play a key role in financial inclusion and providing affordable financial services to the underbanked, Assocham said in its recommendations to the government through a pre-budget budget memorandum. The government will present the Budget for fiscal 2022-23 on February 1. The industry body said that in the past few years the NBFC sector has witnessed a liquidity crunch in the market due to external factors. During such times, the ability to borrow funds at rational prices



became difficult, it added. "A dedicated refinance window for NBFCs directly from the central bank, on the lines of National Housing Bank (which provides refinance to housing finance companies or HFCs) has been a long-standing demand for the NBFC sector," Assocham said.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance in June 2003 had recommended the setting up of a new refinance institution for NBFCs.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted the rural underbanked adversely, the RBI had mandated lending by banks to NBFCs for on-lending to agriculture,

MSME and housing to qualify as priority sector lending. The window was available till September 30, 2021. Banks' lending to NBFC under priority sector should be made permanent, the industry body suggested.

"As NBFCs play a key role in financial inclusion and providing affordable financial services to the underbanked, we suggest that this window can be made available on an on-going basis subject to certain limits such as 10 per cent of total priority sector lending of banks. This will enhance the reach of the PSL initiatives and add depth to the same," it said in the memorandum.

Among others, it has also recommended the government to establish an alternate investment fund for NBFCs; on-top issuance of secured bonds; establishment of a refinance mechanism with financial institutions to reduce overdependence on banks.

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos rise 4.4% to Rs 1,21,030 cr

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution companies (discoms) to power producers rose 4.4 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,21,030 crore in January 2022.

Discoms owed a total of Rs 1,15,904 crore to power generation firms in January 2021, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

On a sequential basis also, total dues in January increased from Rs 1,15,462 crore in December 2021.

The PRAAPTI portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase trans-

actions between generators and discoms.

In January 2022, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 1,01,357 crore as against Rs 99,650 crore in the same month a year ago. The overdue amount stood at Rs 99,981 crore in December 2021.

Power producers give 45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

To give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019.

Exports from STPI seen at over Rs 5 lakh crore despite Omicron wave

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The surge in COVID cases driven by the fast-spreading Omicron variant is not expected to disrupt the performance of units registered under the STPI scheme with proven remote working protocols already in place, according to a top official.

The value of software exports from the Software Technology Parks of India units is expected to be at over Rs 5 lakh crore during FY22, almost similar levels or a tad higher than the previous year, Arvind Kumar, Director General of STPI said. The safety protocols activated during the previous waves of



COVID have resulted in the adoption of an effective remote working model, and the digital nature of work has enabled STPI units to maintain continuity of services without disruption. The value of software exports from units

registered under the STPI scheme is expected to be a little over Rs 5 lakh crore during FY22, against nearly Rs 4.96 lakh crore in FY21, Kumar said. "We will not fall short of the levels achieved in FY21, given that remote working

model has matured and is proven. All the enabling provisions for work from home are already in place, and online approval procedure is ongoing," Kumar told PTI. Hence, the rising cases of Omicron in the country are not expected to disrupt the performance or business of these software units, he added.

As many as 4,689 units are registered under the SPTI scheme. Software Technology Parks of India or STPI is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) set up to encourage, promote and boost software exports from India.

Ex-RBI Governor Urjit Patel appointed VP of AIIB

Beijing, Jan 09 (PTI):

Former RBI Governor Urjit Patel has been appointed as a Vice President of the Beijing-based multilateral funding institution AIIB, according to sources in the bank on Sunday. India is a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with the second highest voting share after China. It is headed by former Chinese vice minister for finance Jin Lique.

Patel, 58, will be one of the five Vice Presidents of the AIIB with a three-year tenure. He is expected to take over his posting next month. He will succeed outgoing Vice President D



Urjit Patel

J Pandian, who is in charge of sovereign and non-sovereign lending of the AIIB in South Asia, the Pacific Islands and South-East Asia, AIIB sources told PTI. Pandian, who has previously served as the chief secretary of Gujarat, is set to return to India later this month. Patel had

taken over as the 24th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) succeeding Raghuram Rajan on September 5, 2016. Patel resigned in December, 2018 "on account of personal reasons", saying I have decided to step down from my current position effective immediately".

Prior to taking over on September 6, 2016, he was a Deputy Governor overseeing the monetary policy department at the RBI under Rajan and was known as his inflation-warrior. Patel has previously worked with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Boston Consulting Group and Reliance Industries among other organisations.

FMCG cos see customers pantry loading as COVID-19 cases spike

Omnichannel presence now becomes more important than ever

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

FMCG companies witnessed an increase in demand in the past two weeks as consumers stocked up in the wake of rise in COVID-19 cases across the country, and have ramped up supplies to their stockists to avoid supply shortage. Companies such as Parle Products, Dabur India and ITC, which are already facing inflationary pressures on inputs, are keeping extra stock of raw materials to avoid any disruptions in the supply chain due to the fresh wave of



the pandemic, putting in use their learnings from the past two waves.

The FMCG makers also expect that a sudden increase in COVID cases and some restrictions imposed by local authorities in some states would again impact the demand for out of home' channels products, which was recovering from the last few months, though demand for home consumption

and immunity products is going to gain for few weeks. The companies expect further accelerated digitalisation — e-commerce and omnichannel presence with technology platforms expected to play a strong role in ensuring continued and uninterrupted supply of FMCG products. "In the last two weeks, we have seen a 10-15 per cent increase in demand in the market.

Govt not to impose anti-dumping duty on certain steel products

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The government has decided not to impose anti-dumping duty on certain steel products being imported from countries like China, Japan, and Korea, as the finance ministry has not accepted the recommendations of the directorate general of trade remedies (DGTR).

The commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR had conducted a probe against imports of 'Cold Rolled/cold reduced flat steel products of iron or Non-Alloy Steel, or other Alloy Steel of all width and thickness - not clad, plated or coated' and 'Hot Rolled flat products of alloy or non-alloy steel', following complaints filed by domestic manufacturers of the respective products. On both these categories of



steel, the directorate on September 14, 2021, had recommended the imposition of definitive anti-dumping duties.

While DGTR recommends the duty, the Department of Revenue takes the final decision to impose the duties.

In separate office memorandums, the department has said that "the

central government, after considering the final findings of the designated authority (DGTR), has decided not to accept the recommendations".

The directorate had concluded in its findings that cold-rolled products are being dumped by companies from China, Japan, Korea and Ukraine; and hot-rolled goods are

dumped from China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Brazil and Indonesia. India has a free trade agreement with Japan and Korea. In international trade parlance, dumping happens when a country or a firm exports an item at a price lower than the price of that product in its domestic market.

Dumping impacts the price of that product in the importing country, hitting the margins and profits of manufacturing firms.

According to global trade norms, a country is allowed to impose tariffs on such dumped products to provide a level-playing field to domestic manufacturers.

The duty is imposed only after a thorough investigation by a quasi-judicial body, such as DGTR, in India.



Tasheen Shah to portray the role of a girl child

The upcoming track of Sony Entertainment Television's Mere Sai: Shradha Aur Saburi will be focusing on the topic of child marriage where, the viewers will see child actor Tasheen Shah portray the role of a girl child named Gayatri who is very good poet and wishes to study further. But, her father wants to get her married and settle well in a good family.

Remarking on her role, Tasheen Shah says, "I am overwhelmed to be a part of such a vital track of Mere Sai. The show touches the ground on such important and relevant issues and the viewers always have something to take away from each track. Being a part of such a show is a miracle to me because I always wanted to be part of

Mere Sai and with Sai Baba's blessings, this is the second time I am a part of the show. Also, I hope the audience takes away something thoughtful from the track and let their children do what they want."

She then goes on to say, "Even my family is excited to watch me yet again in such a show that circulates positivity and gives viewers a strong message"

The forthcoming track will depict the journey of Sai in changing Sopan's perspective towards her daughter marriage and making him realize that he should let his daughter study further.

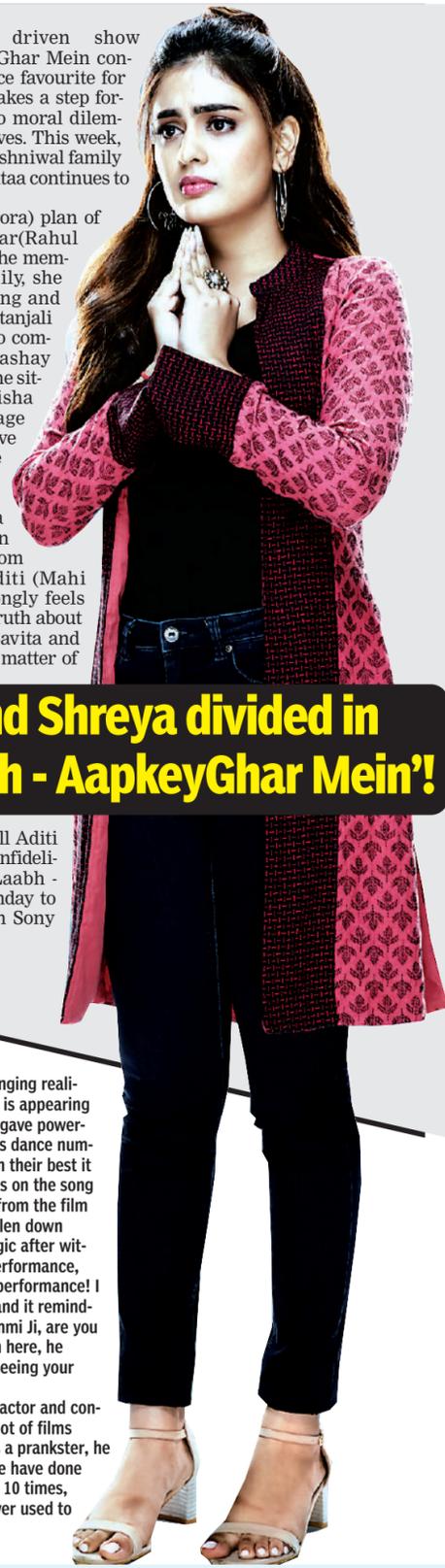
Watch the story of Gayatri on Sony Entertainment Television's Mere Sai: Shradha Aur Saburi at 7:00 PM, every Mon to Fri.

Sony SAB's value driven show ShubhLaabh - AapkeyGhar Mein continues to be an audience favourite for its unique storyline which takes a step forward in serving solutions to moral dilemmas faced in our everyday lives. This week, major drama brews in the Toshniwal family as Vidhyadhar affair with Vinitaa continues to haunt him.

After Vinitaa's (Mansi Arora) plan of falsely accusing Vidhyadhar (Rahul Singh) unravels in front of the members of the Toshniwal family, she continues with her scheming and locks herself in Savita's (Geetanjali Tiwari) room, attempting to commit suicide. Vaibhav (Aashay Mishra) brilliantly diffuses the situation, while Shreya (Tanisha Mehta) and Savita encourage her to do something productive with her life. However, the trouble is not over yet as Savita and Shreya are divided yet again. They have a heated discussion when Savita stops Vidhyadhar from confessing the truth to Aditi (Mahi Sharma) while Shreya strongly feels that Aditi should know the truth about her husband's affair. Will Savita and Shreya see eye-to-eye on the matter of

Savita and Shreya divided in 'ShubhLaabh - AapkeyGhar Mein'!

Vidhyadhar's affair? How will Aditi find out about Vidhyadhar's infidelity? Keep watching ShubhLaabh - AapkeyGhar Mein from Monday to Saturday at 9:30 PM only on Sony SAB.



Enigmatic yesteryear actress and dancer Helen recalled late actor Shammi Kapoor on the singing reality show 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'. As Helen is appearing as a special guest, each contestant gave power-packed performances on her famous dance numbers. While each of them have given their best it was Vraj and Rajashri's dance moves on the song 'O Haseena Zulfonwale Jane Jahan' from the film 'Teesri Manzil', that took Helen down memory lane. Feeling nostalgic after witnessing Vraj and Rajashri's performance, Helen said: "Such a beautiful performance! I just went down memory lane, and it reminded me of Shammi Ji today. Shammi Ji, are you listening?. If he would have been here, he would have been so happy after seeing your performance."

She recalled working with the late actor and continued: "We both have worked in a lot of films together but let me tell you, he was a prankster, he used to make us all laugh on set. We have done rehearsals for this song around 8 to 10 times, and Shammi Ji had his style. He never used to do any rehearsals."



Helen remembers late Shammi Kapoor on 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'

Kristen Stewart has chosen her wedding outfit



Actress Kristen Stewart got engaged to her girlfriend Dylan Meyer in November after two years together and although she is unsure how many "traditions" they will follow on their big day, she's already chosen her clothes but wants to keep the details a surprise.

She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "You're supposed to, I mean, I guess traditionally speaking and in this case, I mean, who knows how many ... I don't even know detail-wise, I don't know how many traditions we're going to follow. "But I know what I'm gonna wear, and I can't tell you. Like, the whole thing, we kind of have to do the surprise thing."

Stewart said portraying Princess Diana in 'Spencer' was "such a trip" and a very unique role because there are so few people like the late royal, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She said: "The most resounding takeaway that I have from making this movie was probably how big and how small I felt as her. I've never felt so big and so small at the same time."

"And I don't know, just to sort of be aware of there are certain impactful and, you know, touching people that exist and they're sort of lightning in a bottle, one-in-a-million special, but their inner lives are maybe not sometimes what it feels like for everyone outside, do you know what I mean?"

"You know, it's like this woman was able to reach out and touch so many people and responsible for so much good in the world, a just sort of unyielding, unbelievable amount of goodness, but at the same time it's just really nice to, you know, to fall into sort of wake of her dreamy nature." "(It's) such a trip and I've never done anything like it and I love work."

'Marriage was never a barrier'

Actress Kajal Pisal says marriage was never a barrier for her to survive in showbiz.

The actress is married to Abhijit Pisal.

She shares: "I personally feel we actually learn more when we struggle. You probably hate this as much as I do, but it's true. I got my first break very easily. Still remember it was the time I was conceiving Sara when I got my first show, 'Kuchh Is Tara' back in 2007.

"I got married at quite a young age but it was never a barrier for me. Instead my partner helped me to shape my career and was very supportive. I didn't struggle then

but as an actor, I started struggling in recent times. As the competition is huge and there is no reward for my versatility." The actress popularly known for featuring in shows like 'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain' and 'Saath Nibhaana Saathiya' calls struggle as her "cruel teacher".

The actress adds: "Struggle is cruel but a beneficial teacher in life. I feel struggle is cruel but it makes us more powerful and strong after we overcome it. I never keep negativity about my struggle but see it as a learning phase. It is fun to celebrate achievements counting our inputs of struggle. Easy achievements are never valuable."



HOROSCOPE MONDAY JANUARY 10

Aquarius: Jan 21 - Feb 18

You are fully charged and raring to go! Your friends are supportive of your new schemes, and your bosses are pushing you to complete pending projects. This shouldn't be a problem, considering your current levels of energy and enthusiasm, says Ganesha.

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

You will feel like King Midas himself today because everything you take up will fructify into something successful and rewarding, says Ganesha. You will be alight with incredible ideas and abuzz with stupendous energy. Feel free to skip the coffee!

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 20

Today, you may wake up with your nose in the air. Though you may feel bossy and important, others may not feel that way about you. Avoid giving orders that sound like insults. Otherwise, the whole thing may fall flat on your face, says Ganesha.

Taurus: Apr 21 - May 21

Getting through today will be like a cruise, says Ganesha. Business deals will kneel to the charm of your honey tongue and you will taste success. As the day progresses, you may lose interest in things. Beware of being too sentimental in the evening, warns Ganesha. You will feel loved and generous in social gatherings tonight.

Gemini: May 22 - June 21

There are indications that you will most certainly guard against going off on a tangent in important meetings today, foresees Ganesha. You are also likely to let your brains on an overdrive to get things done at the workplace. You will have a fabulous dinner with your sweetheart in the evening.

Cancer: June 22 - July 22

Chances are that your day will be filled with a lot of fun and celebration, says Ganesha. It is going to be a progressive day for your business. Later in the day, you may retreat into your shell, and refuse company.

Leo: July 23 - Aug 23

Your wish to be in a cocoon, protected from the vagaries of the world, may come to fruition today. You remain sensitive and protected, says Ganesha. At work, you will be filled with a sense of purpose, and a feeling of solidarity. But it is the evening that you should look forward to, as you are assured of a fantastic time with your family and loved ones.

Virgo: Aug 24 - Sept 22

It is quite probable that today will be an action-packed day for you, feels Ganesha. It is going to be a progressive day for your business. Later in the day, you may retreat into your shell, and refuse company.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 23

It's now or never for you, as today, you may finally take out time to do some sound thinking for your future goals and success. Things seem to go your way, and all your plans are beautifully executed towards the afternoon. Also, find time in the evening to be with the ones dear to you.

Scorpio: Oct 24 - Nov 22

Armed with a good sense of judgement, you will make a number of encouraging changes in your behaviour today, foretells Ganesha. Habits die hard, but all the effort that you put in to refine your routine will pay off brilliantly by the end of the day. Close friends and family will be pleasantly surprised by your efficiency and decisions.

Sagittarius: Nov 23 - Dec 21

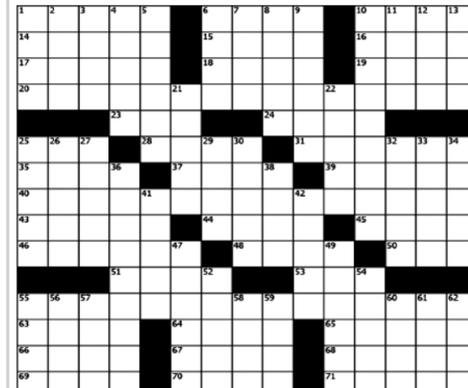
You may just strike the notes of your beloved's heart today. Your presence and presents will make them realise how much you do indeed love them. Expect a trip to posh showrooms and designer shops to buy them expensive gifts. But don't neglect work or your long-term goals, advises Ganesha.

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 20

It's not every day that you wake up with a positive feeling, one that pushes you to make right everything that has been going wrong around and within you. Today, you may be in one of those high-spirited moods, says Ganesha. At home, you will strive to gain the confidence of your family members while at work, you will slog hard the entire day and get adequately rewarded for the same.

CROSSWORD

182



ACROSS

- Hard to climb
- Type of beetle or party
- Luxury locale?
- Soda-can flaps
- Escort from the door
- Desserts that give chills
- Greek vowel
- Make preparation
- Sing, so to speak
- Buttinsky
- Score at will

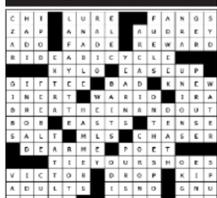
- Allen wrench shape
- Shipped off
- Luxury locale?
- Soda-can flaps
- Escort from the door
- Desserts that give chills
- Greek vowel
- Make preparation
- Sing, so to speak
- Buttinsky
- Score at will

- Word with beat or heat
- Give one's word
- Fashioned
- "Manon" duet?
- Go on a tirade
- Bed-and-breakfast
- "It'll never work."
- Touched down
- What the fat lady sings?
- With no warmth
- Paid attendees
- Big rig
- What we have here
- Approached 90
- Wide-spouted pitcher
- Words of approval

DOWN

- Capone facial feature
- Melt ingredient, sometimes
- Musical Clapton
- Conjure up
- Next-to-last syllable
- Game with 32 cards
- Computer repair pro
- Parts of pots
- Kind of truth
- Paused
- Fairy tale word
- Upbeat tone
- Top-flight individuals?
- Braid
- Bryant's teammate
- Chad's northern neighbor

SOLUTION 181



Indian team begins training ahead of series-deciding third Test against SA

Cape Town, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Indian team on Sunday began training for the decisive third and final Test against South Africa here, hoping to recover from the defeat in Johannesburg and claim its maiden series win in the Rainbow Nation.

"We are here at the picturesque Cape Town. #TeamIndia begin preparations for the 3rd Test," the BCCI tweeted along with a picture of the Indian camp after the visiting players hit the ground running at the magnificent Newlands Stadium. The third Test is scheduled to be played here from January 11-15.

Seeking to win their first-ever series on South African soil, India began the rubber on a rousing note, winning the opener



at Centurion by 113 runs before succumbing to a seven-wicket defeat in the second Test at Johannesburg.

The Indian team arrived at Cape Town on Saturday. The visitors were with-

out the services of skipper Virat Kohli at the Wanderers but after the game, head coach Rahul Dravid had said he was hopeful of the captain returning for the series-deciding match. Kohli had

missed the previous Test due to an upper back spasm, leading to the elevation of vice-captain KL Rahul to the top job.

"Virat Kohli should be fine from all accounts, he should be fine. He has had

the opportunity to run around a little bit, he has had the opportunity to test it a little bit," Dravid had said during a virtual press conference.

"Hopefully with a couple of net sessions in Cape Town, he should be good to go. Everything I am hearing and just having a chat with him, he should be good to go in four days time."

Led by skipper Dean Elgar's unbeaten 96, South Africa put up a fine show in the second Test to level the three-match Test series 1-1.

As far as the Indian team's pace bowling department is concerned, either Ishant Sharma or Umesh Yadav could be considered for selection, with Mohammed Siraj suffering a hamstring injury during the second Test.

Djokovic supporters demonstrate outside Melbourne hotel

Melbourne, Jan 09 (AP):

Novak Djokovic supporters on Sunday demonstrated outside Melbourne's Park Hotel as the tennis superstar spent a fourth day among the hotel's unwilling occupants.

Some of the fans wore Serbian flags as capes and danced to music outside the hotel.

Djokovic is awaiting court proceedings on Monday that will determine whether he can defend his Australian Open title or whether he will be deported and the world has shown keen interest in his temporary accommodation. His fellow residents in the immigration detention hotel include refugees and asylum-seekers who are challenging



their own proceedings that have all lasted much longer than Djokovic's.

So long in some cases they feel forgotten.

Djokovic's mere presence at the hotel, a squat and unattractive building on the leafy fringe of the city's downtown, has drawn the world's eyes to those other residents and

their ongoing struggles with the Australian immigration system.

Refugee activists have been quick to capitalize on the media attention as one of the world's most feted athletes shares the hotel and its sparse amenities with some of the world's most vulnerable and dispossessed people.

All eyes on Yuki, Ramkumar at Australian Open qualifiers

Melbourne, Jan 09 (PTI):

India will keenly watch Yuki Bhambhani's progress after his return to competitive tennis at the Australian Open Qualifiers while compatriot Ramkumar Ramanathan will enter the competition after a confidence-boosting maiden title triumph on the ATP Tour.

Bhambhani, 29, lost invaluable three years due to a troubling knee but in a few tournaments that he has played going into the fresh season, the talented Delhi player seems ready for the grind yet again. The close fight he had had against Aljaz Bedene in March was a testimony that he is ready for top flight tennis but his return came to halt again due to the same knee issue. He began again in November, competing on the Challenger and ITF cir-

cuit and won a doubles titles with Saketh Myneni in Gurugram.

In the tune-up event for the first Grand Slam, Yuki tied up with old partner Michael Venus but lost first round in Melbourne at the ATP event.

He has got a decent draw as he has been pitted against Portugal's Joao Domingues, ranked 248 and clearing first round should not be an issue for Yuki. A good show at Melbourne Park will set the tone for him in the 2022 season.

In 22 attempts so far, Ramkumar has not yet succeeded in cracking the singles main draw of a Grand Slam and it's time that he breaks the losing trend. He will be up against Italian Gian Moroni, ranked 197.

Ramkumar has enjoyed fantastic results going into Australian Open. He has

just won his maiden ATP doubles title in Adelaide with compatriot Rohan Bopanna and also won his maiden singles Challenger title in Manama, Bahrain in November.

His booming serve, a big heart to fight and nicely developed serve-and-volley game is there, just that he needs to put everything together at the big stage.

"It's amazing feeling to win my first ATP Title With Bopsy (Bopanna). A great week ended on a high note, always lived for these moments. Thankful to almighty God for all his blessings," Ramkumar told PTI. "I'll surely keep it going and give my best as always. I learnt a lot of things from Bopsy and Scott Davidoff (Bopanna's coach) who was part of our team. We combined well and didn't lose even one service game all week."

Benzema, Viničius net braces in Madrid rout

Barcelona draws

Barcelona, Jan 09 (AP):

Karim Benzema and Viničius Jr each scored a brace of goals as Real Madrid beat Valencia 4-1 and extended its lead of the Spanish league.

Madrid increased its lead over second-placed Sevilla to eight points before it plays Getafe on Sunday.

Benzema converted a penalty earned by Casemiro just before half-time on Saturday to reach 300 career goals for Madrid. He helped set up Viničius to double the lead in the 52nd minute after the Brazilian winger slalomed past several defenders. Shortly after, Viničius finished off a rebound for the third.

After Goncalo Guedes pulled one back for Valencia, Benzema took his league-leading tally to 17. Carlo Ancelotti's side



missed Viničius' verve last weekend in a shock loss to Getafe. Viničius was sit-

ting out the first of two games after testing positive for COVID-19.

Against Valencia, the forward again showed why he is a big reason Madrid is on course to reclaim the league title from Atletico Madrid. Viničius has developed the finishing touch and decision making to go with the quickness and dribbling skill he showed when he arrived at Madrid as a teenager to become the competition's breakout player.

All his talents were there in his first goal. With four defenders in his path, Viničius took them on. He blew past two, exchanged quick passes with Benzema, and slipped the ball past the last two men before beating the hapless Jasper Cillessen.

His next goal was his 11th, leaving him behind only Benzema on the league's scoring list. Benzema added a second goal with two minutes to play when he received

the ball, spun and drilled a low strike into the corner.

"I have always felt good with Viničius. I know his potential and that he can do even more," Benzema said after his 301st goal for Madrid.

"It is a source of pride to reach such numbers with this club, which I think is the best in the world."

BARCELONA HELD
Ten-man Barcelona conceded a late goal to draw at Granada 1-1 after Dani Alves set up the opener in his first league match since returning to the club.

The 38-year-old Alves curled in a long ball for Luuk de Jong to steer home with a header in the 57th.

But Granada poured forward after teenager Gavi Perez got his second booking with 10 minutes left. Antonio Puertas scored the 89th-minute equalizer with Barcelona hemmed in in its box.

England's Jos Buttler to return home with broken finger

Sydney, Jan 09 (AP):

England's Jos Buttler has a broken finger and will be returning home to end a difficult Ashes tour for the 57-test capped wicket-keeper batsman.

England team management said after the dramatic finish to the fourth test that saw the tourists cling on for a draw at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday that Buttler has a fractured left index finger and that he will return home on Monday for further assessment and treatment. It's quite a serious injury and for him to be able to front up and put in as he did from the moment he took that knock shows how much he cares, said



captain Joe Root after the fourth test.

It shows how much it means to him to play in this test team and how much it means to him to play for England.

With Buttler unable to take the gloves, his obvi-

ous replacement, Jonny Bairstow, was also hobbled, having hurt his thumb while scoring a century in England's first innings, which meant Ollie Pope was drafted in for the tourists as a substitute fielder.

Pope lost his spot in the batting order to Bairstow and wasn't in the starting XI in the fourth test.

The England team said that Bairstow would travel with the touring squad to Hobart for the fifth test starting on Friday and his thumb injury would be assessed later in the week.

England have also called limited-overs specialist wicket-keeper Sam Billings into the squad as cover for Bairstow and Buttler.

Lakshya Sen eyeing maiden title on India Open debut

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

World Championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen says he will look to build on his rich vein of form and return with a maiden title when he begins the new season with a debut appearance at the India Open Super 500 here on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old from Almorah had a good outing in the last season as he reached the final of Dutch Open, made it to the semi-finals at Hylo, and then entered the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals on debut.

However, the icing on the cake was his bronze at the World Championships, which helped him to emulate his

mentor Prakash Padukone and compatriot B Sai Praneeth.

"This is the first time I will be playing the India Open as the last two editions were cancelled due to the pandemic. So I am looking forward to making the most of this opportunity and win the title," Sen told PTI after arriving in the national capital. "I had a 10-day break after the world championships and started training from January 1st. I had some niggles but now I am back to full fitness."

Walking down memory lane, Sen talking about the time when he would come as a fan to watch greats such as Lin Dan and Taufik Hidayat compete in the tournament.

Root says England draw restored pride in his team

Sydney, Jan 09:

Joe Root claimed England's dramatic draw in Sydney had restored pride in his team and represented "a small step forward" after their Ashes disappointment.

Root's side batted for the entire fifth day at the SCG, clinging on by the skin of their teeth as they finished on 270 for nine with last man James Anderson arriving at the crease to see off the final over of the match.

While the urn was already lost after three hefty defeats over 12 depressing days of action, this was a much-needed show of resilience from a side that



had been widely tipped to capitulate 5-0.

Three batters survived for 100 balls or more - Zak Crawley, Ben Stokes and Jonny Bairstow all carrying a sizeable share of the load - while Anderson's late act of defiance was preceded by gutsy innings

by fellow tailenders Stuart Broad and Jack Leach.

Root, for once, was not central to his side's efforts having fallen for 24 in the afternoon session but he has long shouldered too much of the burden and was delighted with what he saw.

Dortmund fights back to win, cuts Bayern's Bundesliga lead

Berlin, Jan 09:

Borussia Dortmund fought back from two goals down after a lackluster start to beat Eintracht Frankfurt 3-2 and return some element of excitement to the Bundesliga title race.

Mahmoud Dahoud's 89th-minute winner on Saturday after Jude Bellingham equalized in the 86th moved Dortmund six points behind Bayern Munich a day after the league leader's 2-1 loss at home to Borussia M' nchengladbach.

A fired up Erling Haaland was a factor in all three goals for Dortmund,



which might easily have been four goals down in Frankfurt. "It's very annoying," Dortmund defender Mats Hummels said. That

the big issue for us, that we give away goals for nothing, that we always concede in situations where no goals should be conceded. "That

was the case with both goals today. It was the case two or three times in Berlin (3-2 defeat to Hertha before the winter break), and it was the case against Bayern, unfortunately twice through me. And that happens way too often, and then you don't always win. This stability is something we need to make our top priority if we want to have a chance for anything."

Colombian forward Rafael Borr opened the scoring with a simple finish to Filip Kostic's free kick in the 15th, then doubled the lead in the 24th after more lax defending.

Evan Ndjicka struck the post for Frankfurt before

Dahoud gifted Frankfurt's Jesper Lindström another huge opportunity in the 34th. But the midfielder shot wide. Haaland's and Julian Brandt's efforts showed some hope for the visitors around the hour mark. Thorgan Hazard pulled a goal back in the 71st after Haaland sent him through. The Norwegian was again involved before Thomas Meunier set up Jude Bellingham for the equalizer, and again before Dahoud curled in the late winner.

RIVALRY LOSE
Freiburg and Bayer Leverkusen dropped points after leading.

Patrik Schick's 17th

goal of the season wasn't enough for Leverkusen, which was fortunate to emerge with a 2-2 draw against Union Berlin as the visitor twice hit the post late on.

Schick rewarded the home team's early dominance against Union with the opener in the 39th, his ninth goal in their last five Bundesliga games.

However, the visitors equalized before the break. Luk Hradek pulled off two fine saves in quick succession to deny Christoph Trimmel then Kevin Behrens, but was powerless to stop Grischa Prmel scoring at the third attempt.

England shuttlers pull out of India Open badminton after 2 positive cases in contingent

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The entire England badminton contingent has withdrawn from the upcoming India Open after the country's doubles specialist Sean Vendi and coach Nathan Robertson tested positive for the COVID-19.

England's decision to pull out was made public by the Badminton Association of India (BAI) on Sunday.

The organisers, however, said that COVID tests of all players conducted this morning at the team hotel came out negative. "Entire @BadmintonEnglnd team had withdrawn two days back and they are not here in India. #YonexSunriseIndiaOpen22 is on track and all players

who were tested at the hotel this morning as per protocol have come negative," the BAI tweeted. Vendi's men's doubles partner, Ben Lane, too confirmed the development with a Twitter post.

"No India Open this year for myself and @SeanVendi after he returned a positive covid test along with our coach @Nath_Robertson," Lane tweeted.

Vendi and Lane were seeded fourth in the men's doubles competition.

The India Open will be held at the national capital from January 11 to 16 amid a spike in COVID-19 cases across the country.

Organised by the BAI, the USD 400,000 Super 500 event will start the 2022 BWF World Tour season.

Congress backs Nitish on caste census

Patna, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Congress in Bihar on Sunday asserted that it was "fully" with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on the issue of caste census and urged him to move forward and hold a state-specific exercise without waiting for a nod from his ally BJP which is keeping cards close to the chest.

Congress Legislature Party leader Ajeet Sharma's statement to the effect came close on the heels of Lalu Prasad's RJD, the principal opposition party in the state, adopting a similar stance.

"The Chief Minister wants to convene an all-party meeting.... apparently the BJP does not want to be seen on the same page.... Let Nitish

Kumar go ahead, the Congress is fully with him on the issue", Sharma told reporters here.

The state BJP has in the past backed a caste census with its MLAs voting in favour of resolutions passed twice, unanimously, by the legislature.

The party finds itself in a bind after the Narendra Modi government turned down demands for conducting headcount of social groups other than SCs and STs.

A meeting between the Prime Minister and an all-



Ajeet Sharma

party delegation from Bihar headed by the Chief Minister failed to achieve a breakthrough.

Politics in the state has for decades been dominated by the numerically powerful OBCs,

who are hopeful of gains in the event of an exercise that might confirm that their percentage in population is far greater than 27 percent which has been earmarked as their quota following the Mandal Commission's implementation.

In the wake of the Centre's lukewarm re-

sponse, Kumar who like Lalu Prasad is an OBC has decided to undertake a state-specific survey.

Recently, he disclosed that he proposed an all-party meeting on the issue which was hanging fire for want of the BJP's assent.

Kumar controls the JD(U) but, on account of the party's diminished numerical strength, has become heavily dependent on the BJP which is second only to the RJD in terms of the number of MLAs.

The 19-MLA-strong Congress is hardly a force to reckon with though it has been trying hard to make itself count ever since it was dumped by the RJD in assembly by-polls last year.

NETAJI JAYANTI CELEBRATION



Artists perform dance during celebration of 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in Kolkata, Sunday.

SPURT IN COVID CASES

'Complete ban on social, religious gatherings, five-day week in govt offices'

Shimla, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Himachal Pradesh government on Sunday announced five-day week in its offices besides banning social and religious gatherings from January 10 to 24 to check the coronavirus spread. It capped the attendance of staff at government offices to 50 per cent of the total strength from Monday to Friday during the period.

The government also prohibited the gathering of more than 100 people for indoor and 300 people

for outdoor academic, sport, cultural and political events, according to an order. The restrictions, however, will not be applicable on offices dealing with emergency services.

The state till January 8 has recorded 2,31,587 coronavirus cases, including 3,864 deaths. Earlier, the state government had imposed a night curfew till further orders and shut the educational institutions till January 26. "All offices of government departments/ PSUs/ local bodies/ autonomous bod-

ies, including the HP Secretariat, will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays and these offices will operate with 50 per cent attendance on working days," the order issued by state Chief Secretary Ram Subhag Singh said.

"These restrictions will not be on offices dealing with emergency or essential services such as health, police, fire, banks, electricity, water and sanitation, public transport, telecom, excise, budget and related incident services/activities etc, it added.

AYUSH Ministry to hold global Surya Namaskar event

On Makar Sankranti

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Ministry of AYUSH is organising a global Surya Namaskar demonstration programme for 75 lakh people on January 14, the day of Makar Sankranti. On this day, Surya Namaskar is offered as a salutation to the Sun to exhibit one's gratitude for each of its rays as it nurtures all living being, an Ayush ministry statement read.

Scientifically, Surya Namaskar has been known to develop immunity and improve vitality, which is significant to health during pandemic conditions, it

stated. Exposure to the Sun provides the human body Vitamin D, which has been widely recommended in all medical branches around the world, the ministry noted. The mass Surya Namaskar demonstration also intends to carry the message of climate change and global warming, the statement said.

In today's world where climate consciousness is imperative, the implementation of solar e-energy (green energy) in daily life will greatly reduce carbon emissions that threaten the planet. Further, the event will underline the importance of Makar Sankranti in our cultural and spiritual heritage, the statement said.

Exhibition at Pune art gallery stopped over 'nudity' in photographs

Pune, Jan 09 (PTI):

A photographer has said an exhibition of his picture collection was stopped at an art gallery in Pune, with its management citing the 'nudity' element in the photographs.

Sunil Mate, the in-charge of the Balgandharv Rang Mandir, which houses the art gallery, said the photographer, Akshay Mali, should have told the management about the exhibition theme in advance.

"We do not allow any such exhibitions which

can hurt someone's sentiments. Such nudity does not look appropriate (at the art gallery)," he said.

Mate said when they came to know about the photos and the display theme, the artist was told to remove the pictures.

The three-day exhibition of Mali's photographs started on Friday at the art gallery on J M Road here in Maharashtra, but it was stopped on Saturday.

"The theme of the exhibition was 'IT'S ME' in which the boundaries of art were broken. The exhibition contained nude

photos of me and other models clicked in the nature," Mali said. He said on Saturday, some people from the art gallery's management took objection to the photographs and asked him to remove them.

"When I booked the slot, I had not told the management about the nude theme. I had booked the slot by just mentioning that it would be a photography exhibition," said Mali, who claimed that some of his photographs featured on a platform through an online exhibition.

SURVEY RESULT

'41% people support ban on political rallies during assembly polls'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

A day after the Election Commission announced poll schedule for five states, a survey claimed that 41 per cent of people supported a ban on all political rallies. According to the survey, held after the announcement by the EC, 31 per cent of citizens favoured postponing elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur altogether.

In an unprecedented step, the commission on Saturday banned public rallies, roadshows and corner meetings till January 15 in the five states, citing the fresh surge in Covid cases, and issued stringent safety guidelines.

In the survey, conducted by digital community based platform LocalCircles, 24 per cent

respondents said that Covid compliance should be imposed on all political rallies, but they must continue. Four per cent of the respondents said that no action is needed as risk of Covid spread due to elections is low.

The survey received over 11,000 responses from citizens in 309 districts of the country, including 4,172 responses from districts in the five poll-going states, the platform said in a statement. While 68 per cent respondents were men, 32 per cent were women.

The announcement of assembly polls was welcomed by major parties, while parties, including the Congress, urged the poll watchdog to ensure a level playing field in view of the Covid curbs on campaigning.

DESERTED STREET



City streets wear a deserted look during full lockdown imposed by Tamil Nadu government to curb the spread of COVID-19, near Greater Chennai Corporation (Ribbon Building) in Chennai, Sunday.

MP cop grows hair and moustache, suspended for indiscipline

Bhopal, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Madhya Pradesh Police has suspended a constable for indiscipline as he grew his hair and moustache despite being told to trim it, an official said on Sunday.

The suspension order issued on Friday to constable Rakesh Rana, posted as a driver in the police's motor transport wing, surfaced on various social media platforms on Sunday.

Assistant Inspector General, Cooperatives Fraud and Public Service Guarantee, Prashant Sharma, who issued the order, told PTI that Rana was suspended as he did not follow his senior's order about correcting his appearance.

When his appearance was checked, the constable was found with hair

grown and a moustache till the neck. He was directed to trim the hair as his turnout was awkward, but he did not follow the directives, the official said.

Sharma also claimed the constable was adamant on keeping long hair and moustache, which was not in accordance with norms for the uniformed personnel. Hence, he was suspended as part of disciplinary action, the official said.

Centre surveys 17.78 lakh acres of defence land using advanced technologies

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

In a first such comprehensive exercise since Independence, the government has surveyed 17.78 lakh acres of defence land using the latest technologies such as three-dimensional modelling, drone and satellite imageries.

The defence ministry said the mammoth exercise of surveying about 1.61 lakh acres of defence land inside cantonments and 16.17 lakh acres outside cantonments was started in October 2018 and is now completed. "It is a remarkable achievement since, for the first

time after Independence, entire defence land has been surveyed by using latest survey technology," it said. The ministry said the magnitude of land-holding, the location of land in approximately 4,900 pockets, inaccessible terrain in many places and involvement of various stakeholders made it one of the "largest" land surveys in India.

It said modern survey technologies such as Electronic Total Station, Differential Global Positioning System as well as drone and satellite imageries were used to ensure "reliable, robust and



MoD surveyed 17.78 lakh acres of Defence Land in a little over three years using modern surveying technologies.

time-bound" outcomes. "For the first time, drone imagery-based survey technology was used for

survey of lakhs of acres of defence land in Rajasthan. The entire area was surveyed with the help of

Surveyor General of India in a matter of weeks, which earlier used to take years," the ministry said in a statement. It said satellite imagery-based survey was carried out for the first time for many defence land pockets.

"3D Modelling techniques for better visualisation of defence land in the hilly areas have also been introduced by utilising Digital Elevation Model in association with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)," it said. The Directorate General Defence Estates that operates under the Ministry of Defence was the nodal

agency for the survey. The ministry said out of 17.78 lakh acres, 8.90 lakh acres was surveyed during the last three months.

"As a part of the survey, a project for real-time change detection system based on the 'Time series Satellite imagery' for detection of encroachments on defence land has also been initiated," the ministry said. It said a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on land survey and GIS mapping has also been established in National Institute of Defence Estates Management for capacity building of Defence Estates officials

in the field of latest survey technologies. The CoE aims to be an apex survey institution capable of imparting training of various levels to the officers of central and state government departments.

"This mammoth exercise of survey of nearly 18 lakh acres of defence land spread pan India, which hitherto rested on the fulcrum of herculean human efforts, is a unique example of leveraging emerging technologies for land survey in a short time in line with the central government's emphasis on 'Digital India'," the ministry said.

Baidyanath
ASLI AYURVED

Useful to
Treat
CONSTIPATION
And Piles

SIDPILES
Tablet

Helps to relieve Piles, Fistula
Fissure,
Inflammation
& Pain,
Burning
Sensation,
Itching of
anal region &
Constipation



Abhayamrita
(Abhayarishta)

Helps to
treat chronic
constipation
and to
improve
digestion



Customer Care: 848444935
www.baidyanath.co

BRIEF



Swami Vivekananda statue being painted ahead of his birth anniversary on Jan. 12, in Nadia, Sunday.

Surrender

Medininagar: A 34-year-old self-styled sub-zonal commander of proscribed Naxalite outfit "Jharkhand Jan-Mukti Parishad" (JUMP) on Sunday surrendered before the police in Palamu district, officials said. Bhawani Bhuiyan laid down an INSAS rifle, three magazines, 83 rounds of ammunition, one hand grenade and other items before Deputy Inspector of General of Police (Palamu division) Rajkumar Lakra at Medininagar. He was handed over Rs one lakh, a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi and a shawl as per the policy of the Jharkhand government, Lakra said.

Curbs

Jalna: Restrictions will be gradually brought in statewide at places of worship and other sites, including liquor vends, that attract crowds in order to control the coronavirus pandemic, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said on Sunday. Restrictions imposed by the state government a day earlier were in the interest of people, he added. "Curbs in crowded areas like liquor shops and places of worship will be imposed as well."

Connectivity

Kolkata: The Kolkata Police on Sunday said it has introduced mobile phone service with WhatsApp facility at every police station for smooth communication with people, amid a surge of COVID-19 cases. The metropolis had on Saturday recorded 7,337 fresh cases of the infection and seven fatalities.

Encounter

Srinagar: An encounter broke out between militants and security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, police said. Security forces had launched a cordon and search operation in Hassanpora village of the district following information about the presence of militants there, a police spokesman said. The operation turned into an encounter after militants opened firing on the security forces, he said.

Mishap

Beed: Four persons were killed and 14 injured after a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation bus and a truck collided on Ambajogai-Latur Road in Beed district on Sunday, police said. The accident took place near Nandgaon village when the ST bus, which was going from Latur to Aurangabad, and the truck carrying machinery to Hyderabad in neighbouring Telangana collided when the former tried to overtake another vehicle, an official said.

Weather
High 25 Low 16

OMICRON EFFECT

New Delhi, Jan 09:

As the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 continues to fuel a surge in the infection count across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting through video conferencing to review the situation. The meeting conducted via video conference was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and other officials, ANI reported. The review meeting comes as India reported 1,59,632 new coronavirus cases, the highest in 224 days, as per Union health ministry data on Sunday. The daily positivity rate in the country jumped to 10.21 per



cent as India reels under the third COVID-19 wave threat. The active cases have risen to 5,90,611, the highest in around 197 days. The total tally of the Omicron variant has reached 3,623 in the country. Out of the total 3,623 Omicron cases, Maharashtra logged the highest with 1,009 cases, followed by Delhi with 513

and Karnataka with 441 cases. Reviewing the Covid situation amid a surge in cases fuelled by the Omicron variant of the virus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for ensuring adequate health infrastructure at district level and accelerating the vaccination drive for adolescents in mission mode.

Ensure adequate health infra, accelerate vaccination drive for adolescents

Noting that the coronavirus has been evolving continuously, Modi underlined the need for continuous scientific research in testing and vaccines besides pharmacological interventions, including genome sequencing, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Highlighting the need to ensure effective usage of masks and physical distancing measures as a new normal to control the spread of Covid, Modi called for effective implementation of home isolation for mild and asymptomatic cases and to disseminate the factual in-

formation to the community at large.

He said a meeting with chief ministers be convened to discuss state-specific scenarios, best-practices and public health response, the PMO added.

Conveying gratitude for the relentless services provided by healthcare workers in managing the pandemic, he said ensuring precaution dose for them and other frontline workers should be taken up in mission mode, it said.

A presentation was made in the meet to highlight India's consistent efforts towards the vaccination campaign, with 31 per cent adolescents aged 15-18 years having been administered with the first dose so far within seven days of the start of the drive.

4 judges, 5 % SC staff test positive

Four Supreme Court judges and almost five per cent of its staff have tested positive for COVID-19, official sources said on Sunday, as the national capital witnesses a sharp spike in coronavirus cases. An apex court official told PTI that out of the 32 judges in the apex court, at least four judges, and 150 out of the nearly 3,000 staff members, are currently infected with the virus. A COVID-19 testing facility has been set up on the top court's premises and it is open from Monday to Saturday. In view to contain the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus infection and sudden upsurge in the cases of Omicron variant of the coronavirus, it is reiterated that the entrants to the Supreme Court premises, i.e. the registry staff, staff of the coordinate agencies, advocates and their staff etc., particularly those who may be showing any symptom(s) similar to those notified for COVID-19 infection(s), may kindly get themselves tested at such facility..., a circular read.

IndiGo to cancel around 20 % flights

IndiGo on Sunday said it will cancel around 20 per cent of its flights because of the surge in Covid cases driven by the Omicron variant and waive change fees till March 31 in response to customer needs. Change fee is paid by a passenger to switch to a different flight date. In a press release, the airline stated that owing to the increasing number of infections, a large number of IndiGo customers are changing their travel plans. "In response to customer needs, IndiGo is waiving change fees and is offering free changes for all new and existing bookings made up to January 31, for flights up to March 31, 2022," it mentioned.

HUMANITARIAN DECISION

'Pregnant women, divyang employees exempted from attending office'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said that pregnant women and 'divyang' (differently-abled) employees of central government departments have been exempted from attending office in the wake of a sharp spike in Covid cases.

However, they will be required to remain available and work from home, he said.

Officials and staff living in Covid containment zone have also been exempted from coming to office, till the time the containment zone is de-notified, said Singh, who is the minister of state for per-

sonnel. He said physical attendance of government servants below the level of under secretary has been restricted to 50 per cent of actual strength and the remaining 50 per cent, will work from home, according to a statement issued by the personnel ministry on Sunday. Rosters will be prepared accordingly by all departments concerned, Singh said.

However, he said, officials and staffers, who are not attending office and are working from home, will remain available on telephone and through other electronic means of communications at all times. Delhi on Saturday, recorded seven fatalities

due to Covid and 20,181 cases as the positivity rate rose to 19.60 per cent, while the country, according to health ministry data updated on Sunday, reported a single day rise of 1,59,632 cases and 327 fatalities.

In view of the rapid spread of the coronavirus, Singh said that an order has been issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) with the advice that official meetings will be conducted, as far as possible, through video conferencing. Similarly, personal meetings with visitors are to be avoided, unless absolutely necessary, he said.

BIG SUCCESS

Pak boat with 10 crew members apprehended off Gujarat coast

Ahmedabad, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) apprehended a Pakistani fishing boat with ten crew members in Indian waters in the Arabian sea off the Gujarat coast, it said on Sunday.

The boat, named 'Yaseen,' was intercepted by the ICG vessel 'Ankit' during the operational patrol on Saturday night.

When the crew members of the boat failed to justify their presence in Indian waters after being questioned, the ICG ship apprehended it, the ICG said in a release.

The boat tried to flee towards the Pakistani waters, but due to the quick



Indian Coast Guard (ICG) personnel with 10 crew members of the Pakistani boat Yaseen, who were apprehended by them from Indian waters at Arabian Sea on Saturday night.

response by the ICG ship, it was made to stop and apprehended, said the ICG. Around 2,000 kg fish and

600 litres of diesel were seized from the boat, the ICG said, adding that the boat is registered at Keti

Bandar in Pakistan. The apprehended boat, with the ten crew members, is presently being towed to Porbandar for detailed investigation and joint interrogation, it said.

"Indian Coast Guard ship 'Ankit' during an operational patrol at the Arabian Sea apprehended a Pakistani fishing boat 'Yaseen' along with 10 Pakistani crew, operating in Indian waters during the intervening night of January 8, 2022," the ICG said in a release.

During the initial boarding, PFB Yaseen registered at Ketibandar was found in possession of approximately 2000 kgs of the fish catch along with 600 litres of diesel, the ICG added.

'NEET-PG counselling to begin Jan 12'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The NEET-PG counselling will commence from January 12, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Sunday.

The Supreme Court on January 7, in an interim order, allowed resumption of medical counselling for NEET-PG admissions for the year 2021-22. It also upheld the validity of 27 per cent OBC and 10 per cent EWS quotas. "As assured by the Ministry of Health to the resident doctors, following the order of the Honourable Supreme Court, the NEET-PG counselling is being started by the Medical Counselling Committee from January

12, 2022. "This will give more strength to the country in the fight against Corona. My best wishes to all the candidates," Mandaviya said in a tweet in Hindi. The NEET-PG exam was held on September 11, 2021, after being rescheduled twice in January and April.

Its results were declared in the last week of September following which students for nearly 45,000 postgraduate seats had been waiting for the counselling to begin.

Resident doctors of various medical colleges across the entire country last month held protests and boycotted work demanding expedition of the counselling.

BIRTH ANNIV CELEBRATION



Sikh priests sit behind the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) during a Jalau, a display of Sikhisms symbolic items, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sunday.

HEALTH, FRONTLINE WORKERS AND 60+ BENEFICIARIES

COVID-19 precaution dose to be rolled out from today

Bengaluru, Jan 09 (PTI):

Precaution dose of COVID-19 vaccine for healthcare workers, frontline workers and persons aged above 60 with co-morbidities will be rolled out from January 10, with a target of vaccinating about 21 lakh beneficiaries in the state, the Karnataka Health Department said on Sunday.

Healthcare workers (HCWs) and frontline workers (FLWs) who have completed 9 months or 39 weeks from the date of second

dose vaccination as registered on the CoWIN portal are eligible for precaution dose vaccination.

Similar is the criteria for the persons aged above 60 with co-morbidities, and no medical certificate is required for eligible beneficiaries to avail precaution dose. Precaution dose will be the same vaccine dose which was administered previously.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will launch this precaution dose vaccination on Monday at 10 AM at Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Medical College and Research Centre here, while all districts have planned for launch by in-charge Ministers and taluk launch by MLAs, the Health department's release said.

"Nine months/ 39 weeks completed 6 lakh healthcare workers, 7 lakh frontline workers and 8 lakh persons aged above 60 with Co-morbidities will be receiving precaution dose," it said. Beneficiaries who have received SPUTNIK as first and second dose are not eligible for precaution as of now, it added.

TAX AUDIT FILING

ICAI for waiver of penalty till March 31

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI has sought time till March 31 for filing tax audit reports without penalties, citing the coronavirus pandemic situation and "consistent technical glitches" being faced in using the new I-T portal.

In this regard, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has submitted a representation to Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman J B Mohapatra. ICAI has requested that penalty and other consequences should be waived for filing tax audit reports and other reports/certificates for AY (Assessment Year) 2021-22 till March 31, 2022.

NO CORONA HERE

K'taka Congress holds protest despite restrictions

Action as per law for COVID rules violation: K'taka CM

Bengaluru, Jan 09 (PTI):

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said action will be taken in accordance with law, as he hit out at Congress leaders for going ahead with 'padayatra' (march), demanding implementation of the Mekedatu project across the Cauvery river, by violating government's



COVID-19 restrictions. The Chief Minister also accused the grand old party of playing politics on the Mekedatu issue, instead of behaving like a responsible opposition. "I have called a meeting

of important leaders of our party and senior Ministers, where we will discuss several issues including Bengaluru development, Mekedatu project and the padayatra," Bommai said.

Skill Hub Initiative program launched

In Govt Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School Baikunthpur

Koriya, Jan 09: Skill Hub Initiative program is being started in 18 schools of the state as a pilot project to connect school dropouts and youth to employable education. In this series, under the Skill Hub Initiative program in Government Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur, this scheme of the government was launched on January 1 by Education Minister Dr. Premsai Singh Tekam to provide vocational education to 40 girl students identified in IT and Retail trade. Under this, 18 schools in 17 districts of the state have been selected in the first phase. This training will be a certificate course of six months. On this occa-

tion, District Education Officer Sanjay Gupta, District Mission Coordinator Ajay Mishra, ADPO Anil Jaiswal, in Government Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur, were present. It is noteworthy that under the program, short term certification courses of skill training will be conducted after school hours and on weekends to provide vocational education to the school dropouts.

For this new initiative has been started for employable education and skill upgradation, and school dropouts and youth will be given training for various job oriented tasks. People in the age group of 15 to 29 years have been se-

lected for the training. Arrangements will be made in selected schools for training the children in various employable works. The District Education Officer and the nominated officers attached to the Education Department will monitor the training. Vocational trainers posted in the school will make training and other arrangements. After the training, the trainees who take the training will also be linked with employment. Simultaneously, skilling, re-skilling, skill certificates and academic credit will be obtained through upskilling courses. Schools affiliated to the Skill Hub Initiative will be registered on the Skill India portal.

NAAC team inspects Govt Arvind College Kirandul

Kirandul, Jan 09:

In Government Arvind College Kirandul NAAC PEER TEAM members from Bengaluru came to visit from January 06 to January 07, 2022 for assessment of college as per UGC guidelines of accreditation to improve the teaching learning process of Higher Education institution. Dr. Rajendran Shahmugan Professor and Head, Department of Economics from Gandhigram Rural Institute Tamil Nadu was the chairperson of the team and Dr. Subhash Badhance Former Principal from Govt. Shivaji Arts and Science College Maharashtra was the member coordinator. This is the second college of Dantewada district which has gone for NAAC accreditation. The team visited the academ-



ic, administrative and support facilities and appreciated the college work and cultural programme presented by students on Bastar culture theme. The team also interacted with the Vice Chancellor Shahed Mahendra Karma university Prof Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh, principal and regional additional director higher education Dr. Vijaylakshmi, registrar Dr. Vinod Kumar pathak

, Dr. Swapan Kumar Kole (professor Anthropology dept. from Bastar university) deputy General Manager Arcelor Mittal Pvt. Ltd and discussed on quality enhancement of teaching learning and research work. They also appreciated the facilities provided to the college by corporate NMDC and Arcelor Mittal steel Pvt. Ltd. They stressed on developing research facilities in college and starting new courses on geolo-

gy and geography because of mining rich area and add on course on Bastar Culture and Heritage to gain the attraction of students of local area.

By NAAC accreditation college will get a grade and all types of funding from UGC and RUSA funding and other types of funding from state and central government. During the whole visit which lasted for two days from Jan 6 to 7, all

tasks was effectively performed under the leadership of head of institution Mrs Sharda Darro (I/C Principal), continuous efforts of IQAC & NAAC Coordinator Mrs Rajani Mandal (Asst. Prof. Chemistry) and cooperative support of Mrs Bindu Thakur (Asst. Prof. Political science), Irfan Ali (Asst. Prof. Zoology) and all teaching and non-teaching staff of Govt. Arvind College Kirandul.

Harish Kawasi lays stone of 'Jal Jeevan Yojana'

To be constructed with Rs 2.80 lakh



Konta/Sukma, Jan 09:

In Permapara of Murtonda Gram Panchayat of Sukma district, 'Bhoomi Pujan' was performed of tap water work to be done under Jal Jeevan Yojana at a cost of 2.80 lakh. District Panchayat President Harish Kawasi reached Murtonda and performed the Bhoomipujan of the work. During this, the villagers gave a grand welcome to the District Panchayat President Harish Kawasi. Harish Kawasi said that Bhupesh Baghel's government is constantly giving priority to development and solving the problem of water along with the road and school. Local MLA and Minister Kawasi Lakhma

thinks that the residents of our district should get city-like facilities. Under which water will be given through tap to every house. This will also save the time of women folks. After collecting the forest produce, they used to go to the river or boring and now that time will be saved. The villagers of Murtonda, while discussing with Harish Kawasi, said that after Congress party government came to power, an asphalt road has been built in our area. And now every house will get water, due to which the villagers are happy. After performing Bhoomi Pujan of Murtonda Reach work, villagers thanked Minister Kawasi Lakhma and Harish Kawasi.

Corona guidelines flouted in Rajim Mata Jayanti Celebrations

Rajim, Jan 09:

Sahu Samaj's adorable goddess Rajim Bhaktikin Mata Jayanti celebrations were held in Dharmanagari Rajim on Friday. Social officials had started preparations a week before to celebrate this state level event in a grand manner. But in view of the increasing phase of deadly infectious diseases like corona and omicron, the state government 3 days ago for prevention, had imposed Section 144 banning events like rally, procession. But there was tremendous enthusiasm among the people about the arrival of the Chief Minister. There was an attendance of more than 10,000 people. Despite this, the social officials tried that in this two-session event, the first session was kept in the festival site of the Sangam river. And the second session was held in the Shri Jagannath temple com-



plex, where the state's Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and two cabinet ministers, from parliamentary secretary to corporation president, MLA, BJP MP, former MP, former MLA, and members of the society were present. The program concluded in the presence of the officials, in which Corona guide line was blown up and sanitizers was nowhere to be seen, nor was social distance followed. Some people

were wearing masks, while some people kept the mask under the nose. At the same time, some people were present in the program without a mask, but no one dared to follow the guide line at the administration level. Describing this new variant omikrant as more lethal and infectious by the scientists, it is being asked to be fully vigilant and follow the guidelines given by the government sincerely. SDM Avinash

Bhoi has directed the shopkeepers and customers to follow the guidelines by taking a meeting of traders and awareness campaign is being run by distributing pamphlets from place to place. And on the other hand, in such an event, where the guidelines of the government are not followed in the presence of responsible people, it is actually pointing towards the danger, which is worrying people.

Ground reality of Covid-19 vaccination data fails to match the inoculated population



Mungeli, Dec 09:

For prevention of COVID 19 infection, vaccination campaigns are being run by the administration, particularly lately for age group 15-18 year olds, who are majorly students. According to data available 28 thousand 62 students of 130 schools of the region were vaccinated. But ground reality of the inoculation data is a reverse story, as many students have been reportedly issued vaccination certificate without being vaccinated. How serious is the administration regarding the campaign can be learnt from the fact that, many students after online registration for the vaccine were issued certificates, without getting

vaccinated. The schools in which they study are themselves camp for the vaccination drive, and the certificates have been issued by the school itself in collaboration with data available with the administration. According to information highest 12 thousand students got vaccinated in Mungeli Development Block, followed by 7 thousand 729 students of Lormi Development Block. Many school and students showed good enthusiasm in the drive, with a total percentile of 92.22 at many schools. District Panchayat CEO Rohit Vyas, in this regard said that the students have to register themselves in the schools data to get vaccinated.

Sahu Samaj an educated prosperous developing society : Chandrakar



Anwari, Dec 09:

While fulfilling the demand of Sahu Samaj Mura, Tarini Neelam Chandrakar, District Panchayat Agriculture Chairman did Bhoomi Pujan and foundation stone laying by giving approval of Rs. Five lakh. There was a constant demand being made by the society, which was approved by Tarini Neelam Chandrakar, the Agriculture Chairman, taking the demand of Sahu society seriously. On this occasion, all the villagers welcomed Chandrakar with great enthusiasm and completed the program of Bhumi Pujan and foundation stone. Addressing the program, Smt. Chandrakar said that Sahu Samaj is an educated and prosperous developing society, and there is always a feeling of mutual cooperation and brotherhood among the people of Sahu society. Suman Santosh Sahu, District Panchayat Member, Women and Child Development Chairman, presiding the program, said the villagers

and community members will always remember the development works done by the District Panchayat in Sahu Bhawan. On this occasion, special guest Purushottam Sahu district member Kurud, Radheshyam Sahu President Tehsil Sahu Samaj, Vishwanath Sahu Treasurer Tehsil Samaj, Janaki Nagarchi Sarpanch Mura, Pushpendra Kumar Sahu Deputy Sarpanch Mura, Mahim Shukla, Umesh Kumar, Beni Ram Sahu, Kamlesh Sahu, Bhanu Pratap Sahu, Rupendra Sahu, Khorbaha Sahu, Pardesi Sahu, Dhan Singh Sahu, Sukhchand Sahu, Kishore Kumar Sahu, Dahu Sahu, Shankar Sahu, Manohar Sahu, Kalyan Sahu, Suman Sahu, Umesh Sahu, Murlu Manohar Sahu, Bhisham Nagarchi, Hulas Ram Sahu, Gayatri Sahu, Hirondi Sahu, Jeevan Lal Sahu, Bhemini, Rameshwari, Basanta Bai Sahu, Tameshwari Sahu, Uma Bai Sahu, Bhanmati Sahu, Prabha Sahu, Rukhmani Sahu, Dularu Sahu, Makhanlal Sahu, Shatrughan Sahu were present.

CGEOF to submit memo to Collector

In the name of CM on Jan 12 for their 2 demands

Kondagaon, Jan 09:

Under the aegis of CG Employees-Officers' Federation (CGEOF), block-level, all the officers and employees in support of their 2-point demand prepared strategy in a meeting held on Wednesday. In this meeting, District Convener Neelkanth Sardul said

that all the officers and employees of the state are getting ready. In last few years, the Federation had launched many movements and out of which the very discrepancy of binding in the compassionate appointment has been removed due to Federation's involvement. Once again the members of Federation are forced to take to street, as their demands are just and it should be fulfilled. But the Bhupesh Baghel gov-



ernment is not paying any attention towards it and they are 14% behind the DA of the Centre. This is not a small

amount and due to which each employee is facing loss of around 8000-10000 per month. The other main demand of

Federation is Housing Rent Allowance and which even after inclusion in the 7th Pay Commission, has not been increased till date. So these two main demands have been included in their demand list and it would be handed over to Collector Kondagaon in the name of CM Bhupesh Baghel on Jan 12. Later on Jan 28 and 29, all the officers and employees of the Federation would stage protest all over the state,

informs Media head of CGEOF Shriram Kashyap in a press release. In the meeting held at BRC centre, Block Convener Ramesh Pradhan, Sakharam Vati, Ramesh Babu Pateria, Bhuneswar Pujari, Nathuram Netam, Ramdev Kaushik, Bhagatram Nag, Bhagwandas Kosariya, Sriram Kashyap, Jai Lal Poyam, Mansaram Markam, Rajuram Shardul, Birendra Netam and others were present.

DAV Bachelu wins inter-state football match



Bachelu, Jan 09:

Sports play a vital role in consolidation of the national strength, inspiring people with national dignity and Pride. With this objective an inter-school

football match was organized from 29th December, 2021 to 5th January 2022 by The All Muslim Welfare Foundation. The matches were played in the Kendriya Vidyalaya Football Ground

Bachelu. There were all together six teams. After giving a tough fight the team DAV Public School, Bachelu entered into the final against the team ITI Bhansi and won the match with 3-1. DAVPS

Defeats ITI Bhansi by 3-1, Girls brings laurels to School

Bachelu had a rising star in its team (Jyoti Karma of XI Commerce). Jyoti was just unbelievable and proved that girls are nowhere back in any field if they are just determined to achieve their goals. It was really a proud moment for the school.

The Principal, Dr. Chetna Sharma, the coach Niranjana Patra and the entire team blessed the upcoming heroes for bringing laurels to the institution and showered their blessings to be successful in all their future endeavours.

People stay indoors to drive away cold



Churikala, Jan 09: The sudden change in weather has led to cold wind and heavy rains. The cold condition has increased and common people are preferring to stay indoors for protection from cold. On Tuesday there was overcast sky since morning and from afternoon cold winds started blowing which was followed by heavy rains which continued whole night. It cast an effect on normal life and power sup-

ply was also affected. To protect themselves from cold, people have resorted to bonfire at homes. Ayurvedic doctor Dr Pushpa Lata Bhagat and Dr S R Sarso said, the coming three days will be colder and as there are chances of cough and cold it is advised to put on warm clothes along with taking hot food. In case cough and cold persists it is advisable to take advise of doctors and take medicines.



CENTRAL Chronicle

Since 1974 Volume 9 No. 280

Geopolitical consequence

One of the most clarifying things about the COVID-19 epidemic has been which countries have been able to handle it and which haven't. To oversimplify, China and a few other nations have handled it well. None of the major Western powers have, certainly not America. In natural selection you compete against your environment. In nations, societies and civilizations there is something similar: internal vs. external competition. You compete against fellow members of your society for status, wealth and power within your society, but your society as a whole competes against other societies. There are always top dogs, hegemonic powers and so on, and losing an inter-society culture can, at worst, lead to you being genocided and at best to long periods of poverty and subjugation. Profiteering allowed to private industries will make some nations weak. China has not allowed its private business owners from profiteering. The world will witness geopolitical consequence of profiteering during pandemic. In the West, with some minor exceptions, COVID was treated as a profit event. It was a way for the richest and most powerful to become even more rich and powerful. That millions would die and millions more would be crippled (Long COVID rates seem somewhere between 10 to 20 percent depending on definitions) was secondary to the possibility of funneling more power and wealth to those who already had the most. Billionaires, just one group among elites have seen their wealth double during the pandemic. China, or more accurately, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) did not treat the pandemic primarily as being about internal competition. To them it was important that large numbers of citizens did not die, and were not disabled.

This means that China will come out of this stronger than the West, because the economy fundamentally and always is people, and there's aren't mass-disabled or dead, plus the legitimacy of the ruling class, rather than being reduced by their pandemic response has been increased. To the CCP the health of their citizens is integral to maintaining their power. To the West, it is an asset to be burned down to make more money and improve their internal position. The irony of this is that by taking care of their citizens the CCP has both improved their external and internal positions, while the West's elites, who can be best characterized as incompetent psychopaths capable of nothing but accumulating more internal power and wealth have been weakened despite their gains in wealth, because as a group, their power is dependent on the health of their population and on their legitimacy. COVID pretty much proves that barring outside shocks, China has already won the hegemonic competition between it and the US. Oh, it'll have to play out, but the CCP governs its country basically competently, and US elites are fools who let their society's power run down. America's military superiority, in the face of nukes and the Russia and China alliance is insufficient to alter this fact. China has the industry, it has more competent government and its government's legitimacy is riding high while the legitimacy of the West is in tatters. Given these facts, and that China has a much larger population, it's hard to see how America can remain in its position. Just as the end of Britain as world ruler took generations from America actually surpassing it economically, so this will take time to be seen, but just as by 1900 it was essentially inevitable that the US would take over from Britain, so it now seems that China's taking over is inevitable, or would be in a world without climate change and ecological collapse, those being the likely external shocks that even a functioning society may not be able to overcome.

Digital skills for campaigns

The Election Commission's announcement of dates for the forthcoming state assembly elections in five states is much on the lines the key opposition parties were anticipating. But where they have been taken by surprise was the decision to completely ban physical rallies and heavily restrict roadside meetings, as per COVID protocols. This has forced political parties to focus on digital skills. The assembly elections in some states last year during the second wave of pandemic were conducted smoothly, but election campaigning proved to be superspreader events. Now, physical rallies during the campaign period, as and when permitted after the decision of the Election Commission, shall be conducted subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines. Further, political parties and candidates are advised to conduct their campaign as much as possible through digital and virtual media platforms and mobile phone-based mode instead of physical mode ensuring strict compliance of COVID safety norms. EC had come under heavy criticism during the West Bengal Assembly elections which was spread over eight phases over five weeks last year as India was grappling with the second wave, the deadliest in terms of the death toll and the number of cases in the country.

This forced the poll panel to finally restrict campaigning towards the remaining two phases of the elections. It is common knowledge that the BJP was the only political party with a wide digital infrastructure with a huge IT cell at all levels, that none of opposition parties can match. BJP leadership has created WhatsApp groups right from the state level and district level, down to block and booth level. Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav had said that if the election commission leans in favour of a virtual campaign for political parties in the UP Assembly elections, then the commission should also make it a level-playing field for all the political parties. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi took his concerns to Twitter over the 'digital divide in India'. Ahead of polls, the AIMIM leader asked the Election Commission of India to review its guidelines for virtual rallies. COVID protocols can be strictly imposed during voting and counting phases but not in rallies and roadshows where mass participation is an indication of popularity. Digital canvassing is now a necessary skill for political parties.

Central Chronicle welcomes, articles, write ups, comments on different issues for editorial page (800-900 words), Letter to editor for this page. It can be sent by e-mail at: editor@centralchronicle@gmail.com

The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity of thoughts.

STALL TAKING PRECAUTIONS



A woman serves food from a stall, with all precautions taken for COVID-19 pandemic, at a fun fair in Bangkok, Thailand.

Doubts if Sri Lanka can turn around its corrupted democracy

**NEIL DEVOTTA**

The Rajapaksa family have drastically weakened democracy in Sri Lanka, but face a stirring civilian resistance that is picking up momentum. Once feared by the country's most powerful, the Rajapaksa family that rule Sri Lanka now see their effigies hit and burned in the street, by many who once voted for them. Although their ethnonationalist government sits securely in power, there is mounting resistance to a regime that has driven Sri Lanka into economic crisis amid continuous corruption. And they will not be aided by the United States who did not extend Sri Lanka an invitation to its online 'Summit for Democracy' held last year. The summit aimed to challenge authoritarianism, address corruption and advance human rights all difficult goals for Sri Lanka, since the majoritarian politics that led to civil war and grotesque human rights violations still lives on. The war ended in 2009, but corruption and authoritarianism have reached new heights under the rule of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa from 2005 to 2015, and his brother President Gotabaya Rajapaksa elected in 2019. Yet while Sri Lanka's backsliding democracy stands out, so too does the resilience of its civilians. Most Sri Lankans may reject pluralism and justify the prevailing majoritarian milieu, but they make abundantly clear they value the right to protest and vote. If the former contributes to democratic backsliding, the latter at least allows for electoral democracy.

The ethnocentric policies that rule Sri Lanka efficiently took hold within a decade after independence Sinhalese Buddhists rose to completely dominate state-associated institutions. This has benefitted so many powerful sectors government servants, security, Buddhist clergy, and corrupt entrepreneurs that completely reversing course is an almost impossible challenge. To grow and keep power, nationalists need enemies, real or manufactured. In the civil war, the terrorist tactics of separatist Tamil rebels energised Buddhist nationalists. Post-war, these forces have targeted Muslims. Extremist group Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force, or 'BBS') most forcefully spread anti-Muslim sentiment abetted by Mahinda Rajapaksa's Government. While Gotabaya Rajapaksa's election as president in 2019 prompted fears that anti-Muslim rioting would ramp up, the health and economic crises created by COVID-19 seem to stymie the anti-Muslim forces. The pandemic, however, did not completely prevent the government from tormenting the Muslim community. Congested Muslim areas in Colombo were among the first to register cases of COVID-19, and some claimed Muslims were spreading the virus. The government's requirement that all who died from COVID-19 be cremated was especially traumatic for Muslims, whose religion mandates burial. The government persisted with a blanket cremation policy, despite the World Health Organization's

declaration that burying coronavirus victims was safe. The government only reversed course in February 2021, when it required predominantly Muslim states in the United Nations Human Rights Commission to vote against a resolution brought against it.

Rampant corruption is another major factor undermining the rule of law in Sri Lanka. Family, friends and allies of the Rajapaksas have profited from lofty, well-paying state-funded positions that require little work. Today Gotabaya, Mahinda, two other brothers, and Mahinda's son oversee departments and agencies that collectively control nearly 70 percent of the island's budget. This takes place while the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Political Victimization, created by Rajapaksa's Government, absolves the family and their allies of criminal charges. Officials from the previous government's Attorney General's Office and Criminal Investigation Department who filed the charges are now being prosecuted for allegedly fabricating evidence. Chinese-funded projects have played a large role in promoting Rajapaksa, just as Chinese state support for the family has aided their authoritarianism. The no-revenue generating, non-concessionary, non-transparent, and unsolicited 'blingfranchise' projects have lined Rajapaksa pockets, but also have saddled Sri Lanka with massive unpayable debts and led to a dire economic climate. Sri Lankans have revolted against resultant scarcities, showing the island's resilience as a democracy. Sri Lanka was pushed into debt by civil war, but war-related corruption has seen the debt increase. Repaying China for exorbitant infrastructure projects, debts owed to non-Chinese entities, and corruption that persisted through the pandemic have all contributed to a severe balance of payments crisis.

Government coffers contain only around US\$1.5 billion in reserves as of November 2021, while debt payments for 2022 amount to around US\$4.3 bil-

lion. The foreign currency shortage has prevented banks from providing importers lines of credit, which has caused long queues for essential items like petrol and milk powder. The government banned chemical fertilisers, saving around US\$400 million and appealing to nationalist sentiment by claiming locally-produced organic fertiliser was better. But the decision led to widespread protests from farmers. Teachers also went on strike, citing rampant inflation, made worse by the government recklessly printing money. Protests have been led by grassroots civil society groups. Previously, village-level groups may have avoided challenging Rajapaksa governments given their mutual commitment to Sinhalese Buddhist supremacy. Their now-vociferous demands show the strength of civil society, and resilience of democracy in Sri Lanka. It seems illiberal democracy stands to dominate the world in the years ahead, and this will certainly be the case in Sri Lanka, where majoritarianism is here to stay. But an illiberal democracy can be improved faster than a mature autocracy.

The trick is to craft an ethno-religious compact where majoritarianism coexists in a peaceful and diverse setting. While Sri Lanka's leaders should be pushed to reconcile with minorities, reject ethno-religious violence, and promote a more pluralist setting, one must be realistic about what to expect. Pro-democracy advocates should continue to engage with the government while advocating for democratic reforms. Less engagement will push the country's leaders to further lean on autocratic states and exacerbate democratic backsliding. There's also an opportunity to leverage the island's dependence on western export markets to push for pro-democracy policies. The Elections Commission and anti-corruption bodies remain important for promoting transparency, and sanctions remain a live option to stymie individuals and their families who violate human rights and thrive on corruption.

(Neil Devotta is Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University in US.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Forgotten history

Not all have the privilege to have his/her body wrapped in the national flag of three different countries. Biju Patnaik alias Bijayananda Patnaik, who was born in 1916 and breathed his last in 1997, was one such individual. When he left for heavenly abode, his body was wrapped with three national flags of India, Russia and Indonesia. Biju Patnaik served as Chief Minister of Odisha for two terms but before jumping into active politics he served as a pilot. When the Soviet Union was in trouble during WW2, he bombed Nazi forces by flying a fighter aircraft named Dakota which forced Hitler's Army to retreat. For this act, he was later on honoured and granted honorary citizenship of the Soviet Union. When the Kavalis attacked Kashmir, it was Biju Patnaik who made several trips a day from Delhi to Srinagar on 27th October 1947 by flying a plane and transporting the Indian soldiers to Srinagar. Though Indonesia gained independence from the colonial power of Holland in 1945, again in 1947, Prime Minister of Indonesia Sutan Sjahrir was put under house arrest. The government of Indonesia sought India's help. So, on 22nd July 1947, Biju Patnaik along with his wife took a Dakota plane without caring little for his life, flew over the areas controlled by Dutch and landed on their soil, displaying exemplary bravery and bought the Indonesian PM safely to India via Singapore. In 1950, the Indonesian government granted honorary citizenship to Biju Patnaik and conferred the nation's highest award 'Bintang Jasa Utama', on Indonesia's 50th year of independence. After the death of Biju Patnaik, seven days of state mourning was observed in Indonesia and one-day state mourning was observed in Russia with all flags being lowered. Our history books ignored this great soul as a result subsequent generations hardly knew about him. Megawati Sukarnoputri who served as fifth President of Indonesia revealed the greatness of Biju Patnaik to the public during her Hinduism embracing ritual.

Julie, via email

Heroic exploits

After the 'heroic exploits' of one Param Vir Singh, the absconding top cop of Maharashtra police which has shamed the entire police force of the nation, the nation is blessed with yet another Vir, in the name of Vir Das, who is by choice a stand-up comedian who is supposed to bring smiles on the faces of his listeners. But he did otherwise. Recently in the USA, the said comedian Vir Das in his show in Kennedy Centre tarnished the image of his own country before a distinguished gathering which made every Indian hang his head in shame. We all vividly remember that some decades ago how Swami Vivekananda kept the entire audience spellbound with his priceless speech highlighting India's rich heritage, culture and tradition. It is a high time the nation honoured Vir Das along with Novjot Singh Sidhu with some brickbat awards.

Ashim, via email



WHAT THEY TWEET!

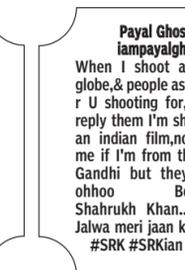


Arun Prakash@arunp2810
You may be right General, but I refuse to yield to despair. In the twilight of my years, should I hand over my nation to people who propagate blind hate, bigotry & genocide? Does it take a genius to see that provoking internal strife fulfills fondest dreams of India's enemies?

Ashok Swain@ashoswai
People forget what you want to ask if you start with Hon'ble, PM, Sri, & Ji. The sycophant, ruling party spokespersons, are asked to do so; why the opposition spokespersons are falling into that trap? This is nothing but a slave mentality.



KVJ@SuB8u
There's a big difference between being legally compliant and being ethically sound. It's always a choice. Banking on consumer ignorance of privacy/choice/consent is not the way to build a long-term sustainable business. We can and should do better.



Payal Ghosh@lampayalghosh
When I shoot across the globe, & people ask me what r U shooting for.? When I reply them I'm shooting for an indian film, nobody ask me if I'm from the land of Gandhi but they ask me ohhoo Bollywood.. Shahrukh Khan.. yeh hai Jalwa meri jaan ki @iamsrk #SRK #SRKian forever.



Lakshay Singhal@lsinghal17
My office these days in Nubra! #ladakh



Vinay Kumar@vinaygb
I appreciate UPSC for setting good Essay paper. It seeks to eliminate candidates who come with 'herd mentality'. One can write essays to such topics only if they have diverse reading & writing habit, n also ability to think out of box. Upgrade yourself n your skills-is the message.

Sharell Cook@AboutIndia
Seriously can't make this stuff up! Now, my home help's recently boosted employer, family members and staff (who are also boosted) have tested positive for the virus seven people in total. The employer is currently the only one having symptoms.



Congress backs Nitish on caste census

Patna, Jan 09 (PTD):

The Congress in Bihar on Sunday asserted that it was "fully" with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on the issue of caste census and urged him to move forward and hold a state-specific exercise without waiting for a nod from his ally BJP which is keeping cards close to the chest.

Congress Legislature Party leader Ajeet Sharma's statement to the effect came close on the heels of Lalu Prasad's RJD, the principal opposition party in the state, adopting a similar stance.

"The Chief Minister wants to convene an all-party meeting.... apparently the BJP does not want to be seen on the same page.... Let Nitish

Kumar go ahead, the Congress is fully with him on the issue", Sharma told reporters here.

The state BJP has in the past backed a caste census with its MLAs voting in favour of resolutions passed twice, unanimously, by the legislature.

The party finds itself in a bind after the Narendra Modi government turned down demands for conducting headcount of social groups other than SCs and STs.

A meeting between the Prime Minister and an all-



Ajeet Sharma

party delegation from Bihar headed by the Chief Minister failed to achieve a breakthrough.

Politics in the state has for decades been dominated by the numerically powerful OBCs, who are hopeful of gains in the event of an exercise that might confirm that their percentage in population is far greater than 27 percent which has been earmarked as their quota following the Mandal Commission's implementation.

In the wake of the Centre's lukewarm re-

sponse, Kumar who like Lalu Prasad is an OBC has decided to undertake a state-specific survey.

Recently, he disclosed that he proposed an all-party meeting on the issue which was hanging fire for want of the BJP's assent.

Kumar controls the JD(U) but, on account of the party's diminished numerical strength, has become heavily dependent on the BJP which is second only to the RJD in terms of the number of MLAs.

The 19-MLA-strong Congress is hardly a force to reckon with though it has been trying hard to make itself count ever since it was dumped by the RJD in assembly by-polls last year.

NETAJI JAYANTI CELEBRATION



Artists perform dance during celebration of 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in Kolkata, Sunday.

SPURT IN COVID CASES

'Complete ban on social, religious gatherings, five-day week in govt offices'

Shimla, Jan 09 (PTD):

The Himachal Pradesh government on Sunday announced five-day week in its offices besides banning social and religious gatherings from January 10 to 24 to check the coronavirus spread. It capped the attendance of staff at government offices to 50 per cent of the total strength from Monday to Friday during the period.

The government also prohibited the gathering of more than 100 people for indoor and 300 people

for outdoor academic, sport, cultural and political events, according to an order. The restrictions, however, will not be applicable on offices dealing with emergency services.

The state till January 8 has recorded 2,31,587 coronavirus cases, including 3,864 deaths. Earlier, the state government had imposed a night curfew till further orders and shut the educational institutions till January 26. "All offices of government departments/ PSUs/ local bodies/ autonomous bod-

ies, including the HP Secretariat, will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays and these offices will operate with 50 per cent attendance on working days," the order issued by state Chief Secretary Ram Subhag Singh said.

"These restrictions will not be on offices dealing with emergency or essential services such as health, police, fire, banks, electricity, water and sanitation, public transport, telecom, excise, budget and related incident services/activities etc, it added.

AYUSH Ministry to hold global Surya Namaskar event

On Makar Sankranti

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTD):

The Ministry of AYUSH is organising a global Surya Namaskar demonstration programme for 75 lakh people on January 14, the day of Makar Sankranti. On this day, Surya Namaskar is offered as a salutation to the Sun to exhibit one's gratitude for each of its rays as it nurtures all living being, an Ayush ministry statement read.

Scientifically, Surya Namaskar has been known to develop immunity and improve vitality, which is significant to health during pandemic conditions, it

stated. Exposure to the Sun provides the human body Vitamin D, which has been widely recommended in all medical branches around the world, the ministry noted. The mass Surya Namaskar demonstration also intends to carry the message of climate change and global warming, the statement said.

In today's world where climate consciousness is imperative, the implementation of solar e-energy (green energy) in daily life will greatly reduce carbon emissions that threaten the planet. Further, the event will underline the importance of Makar Sankranti in our cultural and spiritual heritage, the statement said.

Exhibition at Pune art gallery stopped over 'nudity' in photographs

Pune, Jan 09 (PTD):

A photographer has said an exhibition of his picture collection was stopped at an art gallery in Pune, with its management citing the 'nudity' element in the photographs.

Sunil Mate, the in-charge of the Balgandharv Rang Mandir, which houses the art gallery, said the photographer, Akshay Mali, should have told the management about the exhibition theme in advance.

"We do not allow any such exhibitions which

can hurt someone's sentiments. Such nudity does not look appropriate (at the art gallery)," he said.

Mate said when they came to know about the photos and the display theme, the artist was told to remove the pictures.

The three-day exhibition of Mali's photographs started on Friday at the art gallery on J M Road here in Maharashtra, but it was stopped on Saturday.

"The theme of the exhibition was 'IT'S ME' in which the boundaries of art were broken. The exhibition contained nude

photos of me and other models clicked in the nature," Mali said. He said on Saturday, some people from the art gallery's management took objection to the photographs and asked him to remove them.

"When I booked the slot, I had not told the management about the nude theme. I had booked the slot by just mentioning that it would be a photography exhibition," said Mali, who claimed that some of his photographs featured on a platform through an online exhibition.

SURVEY RESULT

'41% people support ban on political rallies during assembly polls'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTD):

A day after the Election Commission announced poll schedule for five states, a survey claimed that 41 per cent of people supported a ban on all political rallies. According to the survey, held after the announcement by the EC, 31 per cent of citizens favoured postponing elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur altogether.

In an unprecedented step, the commission on Saturday banned public rallies, roadshows and corner meetings till January 15 in the five states, citing the fresh surge in Covid cases, and issued stringent safety guidelines.

In the survey, conducted by digital community based platform LocalCircles, 24 per cent

respondents said that Covid compliance should be imposed on all political rallies, but they must continue. Four per cent of the respondents said that no action is needed as risk of Covid spread due to elections is low.

The survey received over 11,000 responses from citizens in 309 districts of the country, including 4,172 responses from districts in the five poll-going states, the platform said in a statement. While 68 per cent respondents were men, 32 per cent were women.

The announcement of assembly polls was welcomed by major parties, while parties, including the Congress, urged the poll watchdog to ensure a level playing field in view of the Covid curbs on campaigning.

DESERTED STREET



City streets wear a deserted look during full lockdown imposed by Tamil Nadu government to curb the spread of COVID-19, near Greater Chennai Corporation (Ribbon Building) in Chennai, Sunday.

MP cop grows hair and moustache, suspended for indiscipline

Bhopal, Jan 09 (PTD):

The Madhya Pradesh Police has suspended a constable for indiscipline as he grew his hair and moustache despite being told to trim it, an official said on Sunday.

The suspension order issued on Friday to constable Rakesh Rana, posted as a driver in the police's motor transport wing, surfaced on various social media platforms on Sunday.

Assistant Inspector General, Cooperatives Fraud and Public Service Guarantee, Prashant Sharma, who issued the order, told PTI that Rana was suspended as he did not follow his senior's order about correcting his appearance.

When his appearance was checked, the constable was found with hair

grown and a moustache till the neck. He was directed to trim the hair as his turnout was awkward, but he did not follow the directives, the official said.

Sharma also claimed the constable was adamant on keeping long hair and moustache, which was not in accordance with norms for the uniformed personnel. Hence, he was suspended as part of disciplinary action, the official said.

Centre surveys 17.78 lakh acres of defence land using advanced technologies

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTD):

In a first such comprehensive exercise since Independence, the government has surveyed 17.78 lakh acres of defence land using the latest technologies such as three-dimensional modelling, drone and satellite imageries.

The defence ministry said the mammoth exercise of surveying about 1.61 lakh acres of defence land inside cantonments and 16.17 lakh acres outside cantonments was started in October 2018 and is now completed. "It is a remarkable achievement since, for the first

time after Independence, entire defence land has been surveyed by using latest survey technology," it said. The ministry said the magnitude of land-holding, the location of land in approximately 4,900 pockets, inaccessible terrain in many places and involvement of various stakeholders made it one of the "largest" land surveys in India.

It said modern survey technologies such as Electronic Total Station, Differential Global Positioning System as well as drone and satellite imageries were used to ensure "reliable, robust and



MoD surveyed 17.78 lakh acres of Defence Land in a little over three years using modern surveying technologies.

time-bound" outcomes. "For the first time, drone imagery-based survey technology was used for

survey of lakhs of acres of defence land in Rajasthan. The entire area was surveyed with the help of

Surveyor General of India in a matter of weeks, which earlier used to take years," the ministry said in a statement. It said satellite imagery-based survey was carried out for the first time for many defence land pockets.

"3D Modelling techniques for better visualisation of defence land in the hilly areas have also been introduced by utilising Digital Elevation Model in association with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)," it said. The Directorate General Defence Estates that operates under the Ministry of Defence was the nodal

agency for the survey. The ministry said out of 17.78 lakh acres, 8.90 lakh acres was surveyed during the last three months.

"As a part of the survey, a project for real-time change detection system based on the 'Time series Satellite imagery' for detection of encroachments on defence land has also been initiated," the ministry said. It said a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on land survey and GIS mapping has also been established in National Institute of Defence Estates Management for capacity building of Defence Estates officials

in the field of latest survey technologies. The CoE aims to be an apex survey institution capable of imparting training of various levels to the officers of central and state government departments.

"This mammoth exercise of survey of nearly 18 lakh acres of defence land spread pan India, which hitherto rested on the fulcrum of Herculean human efforts, is a unique example of leveraging emerging technologies for land survey in a short time in line with the central government's emphasis on 'Digital India'," the ministry said.

Baidyanath
ASLI AYURVED

Useful to
Treat
CONSTIPATION
And Piles

SIDPILES
Tablet

Helps to relieve Piles, Fistula
Fissure,
Inflammation
& Pain,
Burning
Sensation,
Itching of
anal region &
Constipation



Abhayamrita
(Abhayarishta)

Helps to
treat chronic
constipation
and to
improve
digestion



Customer Care: 848444935
www.baidyanath.co

BRIEF



Swami Vivekananda statue being painted ahead of his birth anniversary on Jan. 12, in Nadia, Sunday.

Surrender

Medininagar: A 34-year-old self-styled sub-zonal commander of proscribed Naxalite outfit "Jharkhand Jan-Mukti Parishad" (JUMP) on Sunday surrendered before the police in Palamu district, officials said. Bhawani Bhuian laid down an INSAS rifle, three magazines, 83 rounds of ammunition, one hand grenade and other items before Deputy Inspector of General of Police (Palamu division) Rajkumar Lakra at Medininagar. He was handed over Rs one lakh, a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi and a shawl as per the policy of the Jharkhand government, Lakra said.

Curbs

Jalna: Restrictions will be gradually brought in statewide at places of worship and other sites, including liquor vends, that attract crowds in order to control the coronavirus pandemic, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said on Sunday. Restrictions imposed by the state government a day earlier were in the interest of people, he added. "Curbs in crowded areas like liquor shops and places of worship will be imposed as well."

Connectivity

Kolkata: The Kolkata Police on Sunday said it has introduced mobile phone service with WhatsApp facility at every police station for smooth communication with people, amid a surge of COVID-19 cases. The metropolis had on Saturday recorded 7,337 fresh cases of the infection and seven fatalities.

Encounter

Srinagar: An encounter broke out between militants and security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, police said. Security forces had launched a cordon and search operation in Hassanpora village of the district following information about the presence of militants there, a police spokesman said. The operation turned into an encounter after militants opened firing on the security forces, he said.

Mishap

Beed: Four persons were killed and 14 injured after a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation bus and a truck collided on Ambajogai-Latur Road in Beed district on Sunday, police said. The accident took place near Nandgaon village when the ST bus, which was going from Latur to Aurangabad, and the truck carrying machinery to Hyderabad in neighbouring Telangana collided when the former tried to overtake another vehicle, an official said.

Weather
High 25 Low 16

OMICRON EFFECT

New Delhi, Jan 09:

As the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 continues to fuel a surge in the infection count across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting through video conferencing to review the situation. The meeting conducted via video conference was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and other officials, ANI reported. The review meeting comes as India reported 1,59,632 new coronavirus cases, the highest in 224 days, as per Union health ministry data on Sunday. The daily positivity rate in the country jumped to 10.21 per



cent as India reels under the third COVID-19 wave threat. The active cases have risen to 5,90,611, the highest in around 197 days. The total tally of the Omicron variant has reached 3,623 in the country. Out of the total 3,623 Omicron cases, Maharashtra logged the highest with 1,009 cases, followed by Delhi with 513

and Karnataka with 441 cases. Reviewing the Covid situation amid a surge in cases fuelled by the Omicron variant of the virus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for ensuring adequate health infrastructure at district level and accelerating the vaccination drive for adolescents in mission mode.

Ensure adequate health infra, accelerate vaccination drive for adolescents

Noting that the coronavirus has been evolving continuously, Modi underlined the need for continuous scientific research in testing and vaccines besides pharmacological interventions, including genome sequencing, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Highlighting the need to ensure effective usage of masks and physical distancing measures as a new normal to control the spread of Covid, Modi called for effective implementation of home isolation for mild and asymptomatic cases and to disseminate the factual in-

formation to the community at large.

He said a meeting with chief ministers be convened to discuss state-specific scenarios, best practices and public health response, the PMO added.

Conveying gratitude for the relentless services provided by healthcare workers in managing the pandemic, he said ensuring precaution dose for them and other frontline workers should be taken up in mission mode, it said.

A presentation was made in the meet to highlight India's consistent efforts towards the vaccination campaign, with 31 per cent adolescents aged 15-18 years having been administered with the first dose so far within seven days of the start of the drive.

4 judges, 5 % SC staff test positive

Four Supreme Court judges and almost five per cent of its staff have tested positive for COVID-19, official sources said on Sunday, as the national capital witnesses a sharp spike in coronavirus cases. An apex court official told PTI that out of the 32 judges in the apex court, at least four judges, and 150 out of the nearly 3,000 staff members, are currently infected with the virus. A COVID-19 testing facility has been set up on the top court's premises and it is open from Monday to Saturday. In view to contain the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus infection and sudden upsurge in the cases of Omicron variant of the coronavirus, it is reiterated that the entrants to the Supreme Court premises, i.e. the registry staff, staff of the coordinate agencies, advocates and their staff etc., particularly those who may be showing any symptom(s) similar to those notified for COVID-19 infection(s), may kindly get themselves tested at such facility..., a circular read.

IndiGo to cancel around 20 % flights

IndiGo on Sunday said it will cancel around 20 per cent of its flights because of the surge in Covid cases driven by the Omicron variant and waive change fees till March 31 in response to customer needs. Change fee is paid by a passenger to switch to a different flight date. In a press release, the airline stated that owing to the increasing number of infections, a large number of IndiGo customers are changing their travel plans. "In response to customer needs, IndiGo is waiving change fees and is offering free changes for all new and existing bookings made up to January 31, for flights up to March 31, 2022," it mentioned.

HUMANITARIAN DECISION

'Pregnant women, divyang employees exempted from attending office'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said that pregnant women and 'divyang' (differently-abled) employees of central government departments have been exempted from attending office in the wake of a sharp spike in Covid cases.

However, they will be required to remain available and work from home, he said.

Officials and staff living in Covid containment zone have also been exempted from coming to office, till the time the containment zone is de-notified, said Singh, who is the minister of state for per-

sonnel. He said physical attendance of government servants below the level of under secretary has been restricted to 50 per cent of actual strength and the remaining 50 per cent, will work from home, according to a statement issued by the personnel ministry on Sunday. Rosters will be prepared accordingly by all departments concerned, Singh said.

However, he said, officials and staffers, who are not attending office and are working from home, will remain available on telephone and through other electronic means of communications at all times. Delhi on Saturday, recorded seven fatalities

due to Covid and 20,181 cases as the positivity rate rose to 19.60 per cent, while the country, according to health ministry data updated on Sunday, reported a single day rise of 1,59,632 cases and 327 fatalities.

In view of the rapid spread of the coronavirus, Singh said that an order has been issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) with the advice that official meetings will be conducted, as far as possible, through video conferencing. Similarly, personal meetings with visitors are to be avoided, unless absolutely necessary, he said.

Pak boat with 10 crew members apprehended off Gujarat coast

Ahmedabad, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) apprehended a Pakistani fishing boat with ten crew members in Indian waters in the Arabian sea off the Gujarat coast, it said on Sunday.

The boat, named 'Yaseen,' was intercepted by the ICG vessel 'Ankit' during the operational patrol on Saturday night.

When the crew members of the boat failed to justify their presence in Indian waters after being questioned, the ICG ship apprehended it, the ICG said in a release.

The boat tried to flee towards the Pakistani waters, but due to the quick



Indian Coast Guard (ICG) personnel with 10 crew members of the Pakistani boat Yaseen, who were apprehended by them from Indian waters at Arabian Sea on Saturday night.

response by the ICG ship, it was made to stop and apprehended, said the ICG. Around 2,000 kg fish and

600 litres of diesel were seized from the boat, the ICG said, adding that the boat is registered at Keti

Bandar in Pakistan. The apprehended boat, with the ten crew members, is presently being towed to Porbandar for detailed investigation and joint interrogation, it said.

"Indian Coast Guard ship 'Ankit' during an operational patrol at the Arabian Sea apprehended a Pakistani fishing boat 'Yaseen' along with 10 Pakistani crew, operating in Indian waters during the intervening night of January 8, 2022," the ICG said in a release.

During the initial boarding, PFB Yaseen registered at Ketibandar was found in possession of approximately 2000 kgs of the fish catch along with 600 litres of diesel, the ICG added.

'NEET-PG counselling to begin Jan 12'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The NEET-PG counselling will commence from January 12, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Sunday.

The Supreme Court on January 7, in an interim order, allowed resumption of medical counselling for NEET-PG admissions for the year 2021-22. It also upheld the validity of 27 per cent OBC and 10 per cent EWS quotas. "As assured by the Ministry of Health to the resident doctors, following the order of the Honourable Supreme Court, the NEET-PG counselling is being started by the Medical Counselling Committee from January

12, 2022. "This will give more strength to the country in the fight against Corona. My best wishes to all the candidates," Mandaviya said in a tweet in Hindi. The NEET-PG exam was held on September 11, 2021, after being rescheduled twice in January and April.

Its results were declared in the last week of September following which students for nearly 45,000 postgraduate seats had been waiting for the counselling to begin.

Resident doctors of various medical colleges across the entire country last month held protests and boycotted work demanding expedition of the counselling.

BIRTH ANNIV CELEBRATION



Sikh priests sit behind the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) during a Jalau, a display of Sikhisms symbolic items, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sunday.

HEALTH, FRONTLINE WORKERS AND 60+ BENEFICIARIES

COVID-19 precaution dose to be rolled out from today

Bengaluru, Jan 09 (PTI):

Precaution dose of COVID-19 vaccine for healthcare workers, frontline workers and persons aged above 60 with co-morbidities will be rolled out from January 10, with a target of vaccinating about 21 lakh beneficiaries in the state, the Karnataka Health Department said on Sunday.

Healthcare workers (HCWs) and frontline workers (FLWs) who have completed 9 months or 39 weeks from the date of second

dose vaccination as registered on the CoWIN portal are eligible for precaution dose vaccination.

Similar is the criteria for the persons aged above 60 with co-morbidities, and no medical certificate is required for eligible beneficiaries to avail precaution dose. Precaution dose will be the same vaccine dose which was administered previously.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will launch this precaution dose vaccination on Monday at 10 AM at Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Medical College and Research Centre here, while all districts have planned for launch by in-charge Ministers and taluk launch by MLAs, the Health department's release said.

"Nine months/ 39 weeks completed 6 lakh healthcare workers, 7 lakh frontline workers and 8 lakh persons aged above 60 with Co-morbidities will be receiving precaution dose," it said. Beneficiaries who have received SPUTNIK as first and second dose are not eligible for precaution as of now, it added.

TAX AUDIT FILING

ICAI for waiver of penalty till March 31

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI has sought time till March 31 for filing tax audit reports without penalties, citing the coronavirus pandemic situation and "consistent technical glitches" being faced in using the new I-T portal.

In this regard, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has submitted a representation to Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman J B Mohapatra. ICAI has requested that penalty and other consequences should be waived for filing tax audit reports and other reports/certificates for AY (Assessment Year) 2021-22 till March 31, 2022.

NO CORONA HERE

K'taka Congress holds protest despite restrictions

Action as per law for COVID rules violation: K'taka CM

Bengaluru, Jan 09 (PTI):

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said action will be taken in accordance with law, as he hit out at Congress leaders for going ahead with 'padayatra' (march), demanding implementation of the Mekedatu project across the Cauvery river, by violating government's



COVID-19 restrictions. The Chief Minister also accused the grand old party of playing politics on the Mekedatu issue, instead of behaving like a responsible opposition. "I have called a meeting

of important leaders of our party and senior Ministers, where we will discuss several issues including Bengaluru development, Mekedatu project and the padayatra," Bommai said.

Skill Hub Initiative program launched

In Govt Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School Baikunthpur

Koriya, Jan 09: Skill Hub Initiative program is being started in 18 schools of the state as a pilot project to connect school dropouts and youth to employable education. In this series, under the Skill Hub Initiative program in Government Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur, this scheme of the government was launched on January 1 by Education Minister Dr. Premsai Singh Tekam to provide vocational education to 40 girl students identified in IT and Retail trade. Under this, 18 schools in 17 districts of the state have been selected in the first phase. This training will be a certificate course of six months. On this occa-

sion, District Education Officer Sanjay Gupta, District Mission Coordinator Ajay Mishra, ADPO Anil Jaiswal, in Government Adarsh Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur, were present. It is noteworthy that under the program, short term certification courses of skill training will be conducted after school hours and on weekends to provide vocational education to the school dropouts.

For this new initiative has been started for employable education and skill upgradation, and school dropouts and youth will be given training for various job oriented tasks. People in the age group of 15 to 29 years have been se-

lected for the training. Arrangements will be made in selected schools for training the children in various employable works. The District Education Officer and the nominated officers attached to the Education Department will monitor the training. Vocational trainers posted in the school will make training and other arrangements. After the training, the trainees who take the training will also be linked with employment. Simultaneously, skilling, re-skilling, skill certificates and academic credit will be obtained through upskilling courses. Schools affiliated to the Skill Hub Initiative will be registered on the Skill India portal.

NAAC team inspects Govt Arvind College Kirandul

Kirandul, Jan 09:

In Government Arvind College Kirandul NAAC PEER TEAM members from Bengaluru came to visit from January 06 to January 07, 2022 for assessment of college as per UGC guidelines of accreditation to improve the teaching learning process of Higher Education institution. Dr. Rajendra Shahmugan Professor and Head, Department of Economics from Gandhigram Rural Institute Tamil Nadu was the chairperson of the team and Dr. Subhash Badhance Former Principal from Govt. Shivaji Arts and Science College Maharashtra was the member coordinator. This is the second college of Dantewada district which has gone for NAAC accreditation. The team visited the academ-



ic, administrative and support facilities and appreciated the college work and cultural programme presented by students on Bastar culture theme. The team also interacted with the Vice Chancellor Shahed Mahendra Karma university Prof. Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh, principal and regional additional director higher education Dr. Vijaylakshmi, registrar Dr. Vinod Kumar pathak

, Dr. Swapan Kumar Kole (professor Anthropology dept. from Bastar university) deputy General Manager Arcelor Mittal Pvt. Ltd and discussed on quality enhancement of teaching learning and research work. They also appreciated the facilities provided to the college by corporate NMDC and Arcelor Mittal steel Pvt. Ltd. They stressed on developing research facilities in college and starting new courses on geolo-

gy and geography because of mining rich area and add on course on Bastar Culture and Heritage to gain the attraction of students of local area.

By NAAC accreditation college will get a grade and all types of funding from UGC and RUSA funding and other types of funding from state and central government. During the whole visit which lasted for two days from Jan 6 to 7, all

tasks was effectively performed under the leadership of head of institution Mrs Sharda Darro (I/C Principal), continuous efforts of IQAC & NAAC Coordinator Mrs Rajani Mandal (Asst. Prof. Chemistry) and cooperative support of Mrs Bindu Thakur (Asst. Prof. Political science), Irfan Ali (Asst. Prof. Zoology) and all teaching and non-teaching staff of Govt. Arvind College Kirandul.

Harish Kawasi lays stone of 'Jal Jeevan Yojana'

To be constructed with Rs 2.80 lakh



Konta/Sukma, Jan 09:

In Permapara of Murtonda Gram Panchayat of Sukma district, 'Bhoomi Pujan' was performed of tap water work to be done under Jal Jeevan Yojana at a cost of 2.80 lakh. District Panchayat President Harish Kawasi reached Murtonda and performed the Bhoomipujan of the work. During this, the villagers gave a grand welcome to the District Panchayat President Harish Kawasi. Harish Kawasi said that Bhupesh Baghel's government is constantly giving priority to development and solving the problem of water along with the road and school. Local MLA and Minister Kawasi Lakhma

thinks that the residents of our district should get city-like facilities. Under which water will be given through tap to every house. This will also save the time of women folks. After collecting the forest produce, they used to go to the river or boring and now that time will be saved. The villagers of Murtonda, while discussing with Harish Kawasi, said that after Congress party government came to power, an asphalt road has been built in our area. And now every house will get water, due to which the villagers are happy. After performing Bhoomi Pujan of Murtonda Reach work, villagers thanked Minister Kawasi Lakhma and Harish Kawasi.

Corona guidelines flouted in Rajim Mata Jayanti Celebrations

Rajim, Jan 09:

Sahu Samaj's adorable goddess Rajim Bhaktikin Mata Jayanti celebrations were held in Dharmanagari Rajim on Friday. Social officials had started preparations a week before to celebrate this state level event in a grand manner. But in view of the increasing phase of deadly infectious diseases like corona and omicron, the state government 3 days ago for prevention, had imposed Section 144 banning events like rally, procession. But there was tremendous enthusiasm among the people about the arrival of the Chief Minister. There was an attendance of more than 10,000 people. Despite this, the social officials tried that in this two-session event, the first session was kept in the festival site of the Sangam river. And the second session was held in the Shri Jagannath temple com-



plex, where the state's Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and two cabinet ministers, from parliamentary secretary to corporation president, MLA, BJP MP, former MP, former MLA, and members of the society were present. The program concluded in the presence of the officials, in which Corona guide line was blown up and sanitizers was nowhere to be seen, nor was social distance followed. Some people

were wearing masks, while some people kept the mask under the nose. At the same time, some people were present in the program without a mask, but no one dared to follow the guide line at the administration level. Describing this new variant omikrant as more lethal and infectious by the scientists, it is being asked to be fully vigilant and follow the guidelines given by the government sincerely. SDM Avinash

Bhoi has directed the shopkeepers and customers to follow the guidelines by taking a meeting of traders and awareness campaign is being run by distributing pamphlets from place to place. And on the other hand, in such an event, where the guidelines of the government are not followed in the presence of responsible people, it is actually pointing towards the danger, which is worrying people.

Ground reality of Covid-19 vaccination data fails to match the inoculated population



Mungeli, Dec 09:

For prevention of COVID 19 infection, vaccination campaigns are being run by the administration, particularly lately for age group 15-18 year olds, who are majorly students. According to data available 28 thousand 62 students of 130 schools of the region were vaccinated. But ground reality of the inoculation data is a reverse story, as many students have been reportedly issued vaccination certificate without being vaccinated. How serious is the administration regarding the campaign can be learnt from the fact that, many students after online registration for the vaccine were issued certificates, without getting

vaccinated. The schools in which they study are themselves camp for the vaccination drive, and the certificates have been issued by the school itself in collaboration with data available with the administration. According to information highest 12 thousand students got vaccinated in Mungeli Development Block, followed by 7 thousand 729 students of Lormi Development Block. Many school and students showed good enthusiasm in the drive, with a total percentile of 92.22 at many schools. District Panchayat CEO Rohit Vyas, in this regard said that the students have to register themselves in the schools data to get vaccinated.

Sahu Samaj an educated prosperous developing society : Chandrakar



Anwari, Dec 09:

While fulfilling the demand of Sahu Samaj Mura, Tarini Neelam Chandrakar, District Panchayat Agriculture Chairman did Bhoomi Pujan and foundation stone laying by giving approval of Rs. Five lakh. There was a constant demand being made by the society, which was approved by Tarini Neelam Chandrakar, the Agriculture Chairman, taking the demand of Sahu society seriously. On this occasion, all the villagers welcomed Chandrakar with great enthusiasm and completed the program of Bhumi Pujan and foundation stone. Addressing the program, Smt. Chandrakar said that Sahu Samaj is an educated and prosperous developing society, and there is always a feeling of mutual cooperation and brotherhood among the people of Sahu society. Suman Santosh Sahu, District Panchayat Member, Women and Child Development Chairman, presiding the program, said the villagers

and community members will always remember the development works done by the District Panchayat in Sahu Bhawan. On this occasion, special guest Purushottam Sahu district member Kurud, Radheshyam Sahu President Tehsil Sahu Samaj, Vishwanath Sahu Treasurer Tehsil Samaj, Janaki Nagarchi Sarpanch Mura, Pushpendra Kumar Sahu Deputy Sarpanch Mura, Mahim Shukla, Umesh Kumar, Beni Ram Sahu, Kamlesh Sahu, Bhanu Pratap Sahu, Rupendra Sahu, Khorbaha Sahu, Pardesi Sahu, Dhan Singh Sahu, Sukhchand Sahu, Kishore Kumar Sahu, Dahu Sahu, Shankar Sahu, Manohar Sahu, Kalyan Sahu, Suman Sahu, Umesh Sahu, Murlu Manohar Sahu, Bhisham Nagarchi, Hulas Ram Sahu, Gayatri Sahu, Hirondi Sahu, Jeevan Lal Sahu, Bhemini, Rameshwari, Basanta Bai Sahu, Tameshwari Sahu, Uma Bai Sahu, Bhanmati Sahu, Prabha Sahu, Rukhmani Sahu, Dularu Sahu, Makhanlal Sahu, Shatrughan Sahu were present.

CGEOF to submit memo to Collector

In the name of CM on Jan 12 for their 2 demands

Kondagaon, Jan 09:

Under the aegis of CG Employees-Officers' Federation (CGEEOF), block-level, all the officers and employees in support of their 2-point demand prepared strategy in a meeting held on Wednesday. In this meeting, District Convener Neelkanth Sardul said

that all the officers and employees of the state are getting ready. In last few years, the Federation had launched many movements and out of which the very discrepancy of binding in the compassionate appointment has been removed due to Federation's involvement. Once again the members of Federation are forced to take to street, as their demands are just and it should be fulfilled. But the Bhupesh Baghel gov-



ernment is not paying any attention towards it and they are 14% behind the DA of the Centre. This is not a small

amount and due to which each employee is facing loss of around 8000-10000 per month. The other main demand of

Federation is Housing Rent Allowance and which even after inclusion in the 7th Pay Commission, has not been increased till date. So these two main demands have been included in their demand list and it would be handed over to Collector Kondagaon in the name of CM Bhupesh Baghel on Jan 12. Later on Jan 28 and 29, all the officers and employees of the Federation would stage protest all over the state,

informs Media head of CGEEOF Shriram Kashyap in a press release. In the meeting held at BRC centre, Block Convener Ramesh Pradhan, Sakharam Vati, Ramesh Babu Pateria, Bhuneswar Pujari, Nathuram Netam, Ramdev Kaushik, Bhagatram Nag, Bhagwandas Kosariya, Sriram Kashyap, Jai Lal Poyam, Mansaram Markam, Rajuram Shardul, Birendra Netam and others were present.

DAV Bachelu wins inter-state football match



Bachelu, Jan 09:

Sports play a vital role in consolidation of the national strength, inspiring people with national dignity and Pride. With this objective an inter-school

football match was organized from 29th December, 2021 to 5th January 2022 by The All Muslim Welfare Foundation. The matches were played in the Kendriya Vidyalaya Football Ground

Bachelu. There were all together six teams.

After giving a tough fight the team DAV Public School, Bachelu entered into the final against the team ITI Bhansi and won the match with 3-1. DAVPS

Defeats ITI Bhansi by 3-1, Girls brings laurels to School

Bachelu had a rising star in its team (Jyoti Karma of XI Commerce). Jyoti was just unbelievable and proved that girls are nowhere back in any field if they are just determined to achieve their goals. It was really a proud moment for the school.

The Principal, Dr. Chetna Sharma, the coach Niranjana Patra and the entire team blessed the upcoming heroes for bringing laurels to the institution and showered their blessings to be successful in all their future endeavours.

People stay indoors to drive away cold



Churikala, Jan 09: The sudden change in weather has led to cold wind and heavy rains. The cold condition has increased and common people are preferring to stay indoors for protection from cold. On Tuesday there was overcast sky since morning and from afternoon cold winds started blowing which was followed by heavy rains which continued whole night. It cast an effect on normal life and power sup-

ply was also affected. To protect themselves from cold, people have resorted to bonfire at homes. Ayurvedic doctor Dr Pushpa Lata Bhagat and Dr S R Sarso said, the coming three days will be colder and as there are chances of cough and cold it is advised to put on warm clothes along with taking hot food. In case cough and cold persists it is advisable to take advice of doctors and take medicines.



CENTRAL Chronicle

Since 1974 Volume 9 No. 280

Geopolitical consequence

One of the most clarifying things about the COVID-19 epidemic has been which countries have been able to handle it and which haven't. To oversimplify, China and a few other nations have handled it well. None of the major Western powers have, certainly not America. In natural selection you compete against your environment. In nations, societies and civilizations there is something similar: internal vs. external competition. You compete against fellow members of your society for status, wealth and power within your society, but your society as a whole competes against other societies. There are always top dogs, hegemonic powers and so on, and losing an inter-society culture can, at worst, lead to you being genocided and at best to long periods of poverty and subjugation. Profiteering allowed to private industries will make some nations weak. China has not allowed its private business owners from profiteering. The world will witness geopolitical consequence of profiteering during pandemic. In the West, with some minor exceptions, COVID was treated as a profit event. It was a way for the richest and most powerful to become even more rich and powerful. That millions would die and millions more would be crippled (Long COVID rates seem somewhere between 10 to 20 percent depending on definitions) was secondary to the possibility of funneling more power and wealth to those who already had the most. Billionaires, just one group among elites have seen their wealth double during the pandemic. China, or more accurately, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) did not treat the pandemic primarily as being about internal competition. To them it was important that large numbers of citizens did not die, and were not disabled.

This means that China will come out of this stronger than the West, because the economy fundamentally and always is people, and there's aren't mass-disabled or dead, plus the legitimacy of the ruling class, rather than being reduced by their pandemic response has been increased. To the CCP the health of their citizens is integral to maintaining their power. To the West, it is an asset to be burned down to make more money and improve their internal position. The irony of this is that by taking care of their citizens the CCP has both improved their external and internal positions, while the West's elites, who can be best characterized as incompetent psychopaths capable of nothing but accumulating more internal power and wealth have been weakened despite their gains in wealth, because as a group, their power is dependent on the health of their population and on their legitimacy. COVID pretty much proves that barring outside shocks, China has already won the hegemonic competition between it and the US. Oh, it'll have to play out, but the CCP governs its country basically competently, and US elites are fools who let their society's power run down. America's military superiority, in the face of nukes and the Russia and China alliance is insufficient to alter this fact. China has the industry, it has more competent government and its government's legitimacy is riding high while the legitimacy of the West is in tatters. Given these facts, and that China has a much larger population, it's hard to see how America can remain in its position. Just as the end of Britain as world ruler took generations from America actually surpassing it economically, so this will take time to be seen, but just as by 1900 it was essentially inevitable that the US would take over from Britain, so it now seems that China's taking over is inevitable, or would be in a world without climate change and ecological collapse, those being the likely external shocks that even a functioning society may not be able to overcome.

Digital skills for campaigns

The Election Commission's announcement of dates for the forthcoming state assembly elections in five states is much on the lines the key opposition parties were anticipating. But where they have been taken by surprise was the decision to completely ban physical rallies and heavily restrict roadside meetings, as per COVID protocols. This has forced political parties to focus on digital skills. The assembly elections in some states last year during the second wave of pandemic were conducted smoothly, but election campaigning proved to be superspreader events. Now, physical rallies during the campaign period, as and when permitted after the decision of the Election Commission, shall be conducted subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines. Further, political parties and candidates are advised to conduct their campaign as much as possible through digital and virtual media platforms and mobile phone-based mode instead of physical mode ensuring strict compliance of COVID safety norms. EC had come under heavy criticism during the West Bengal Assembly elections which was spread over eight phases over five weeks last year as India was grappling with the second wave, the deadliest in terms of the death toll and the number of cases in the country.

This forced the poll panel to finally restrict campaigning towards the remaining two phases of the elections. It is common knowledge that the BJP was the only political party with a wide digital infrastructure with a huge IT cell at all levels, that none of opposition parties can match. BJP leadership has created WhatsApp groups right from the state level and district level, down to block and booth level. Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav had said that if the election commission leans in favour of a virtual campaign for political parties in the UP Assembly elections, then the commission should also make it a level-playing field for all the political parties. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi took his concerns to Twitter over the 'digital divide in India'. Ahead of polls, the AIMIM leader asked the Election Commission of India to review its guidelines for virtual rallies. COVID protocols can be strictly imposed during voting and counting phases but not in rallies and roadshows where mass participation is an indication of popularity. Digital canvassing is now a necessary skill for political parties.

Central Chronicle welcomes, articles, write ups, comments on different issues for editorial page (800-900 words), Letter to editor for this page. It can be sent by e-mail at: editor@centralchronicle@gmail.com

The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity of thoughts.

STALL TAKING PRECAUTIONS



A woman serves food from a stall, with all precautions taken for COVID-19 pandemic, at a fun fair in Bangkok, Thailand.

Doubts if Sri Lanka can turn around its corrupted democracy

**NEIL DEVOTTA**

The Rajapaksa family have drastically weakened democracy in Sri Lanka, but face a stirring civilian resistance that is picking up momentum. Once feared by the country's most powerful, the Rajapaksa family that rule Sri Lanka now see their effigies hit and burned in the street, by many who once voted for them. Although their ethnonationalist government sits securely in power, there is mounting resistance to a regime that has driven Sri Lanka into economic crisis amid continuous corruption. And they will not be aided by the United States who did not extend Sri Lanka an invitation to its online 'Summit for Democracy' held last year. The summit aimed to challenge authoritarianism, address corruption and advance human rights all difficult goals for Sri Lanka, since the majoritarian politics that led to civil war and grotesque human rights violations still lives on. The war ended in 2009, but corruption and authoritarianism have reached new heights under the rule of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa from 2005 to 2015, and his brother President Gotabaya Rajapaksa elected in 2019. Yet while Sri Lanka's backsliding democracy stands out, so too does the resilience of its civilians. Most Sri Lankans may reject pluralism and justify the prevailing majoritarian milieu, but they make abundantly clear they value the right to protest and vote. If the former contributes to democratic backsliding, the latter at least allows for electoral democracy.

The ethnocentric policies that rule Sri Lanka efficiently took hold within a decade after independence Sinhalese Buddhists rose to completely dominate state-associated institutions. This has benefitted so many powerful sectors government servants, security, Buddhist clergy, and corrupt entrepreneurs that completely reversing course is an almost impossible challenge. To grow and keep power, nationalists need enemies, real or manufactured. In the civil war, the terrorist tactics of separatist Tamil rebels energised Buddhist nationalists. Post-war, these forces have targeted Muslims. Extremist group Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force, or 'BBS') most forcefully spread anti-Muslim sentiment abetted by Mahinda Rajapaksa's Government. While Gotabaya Rajapaksa's election as president in 2019 prompted fears that anti-Muslim rioting would ramp up, the health and economic crises created by COVID-19 seem to stymie the anti-Muslim forces. The pandemic, however, did not completely prevent the government from tormenting the Muslim community. Congested Muslim areas in Colombo were among the first to register cases of COVID-19, and some claimed Muslims were spreading the virus. The government's requirement that all who died from COVID-19 be cremated was especially traumatic for Muslims, whose religion mandates burial. The government persisted with a blanket cremation policy, despite the World Health Organization's

declaration that burying coronavirus victims was safe. The government only reversed course in February 2021, when it required predominantly Muslim states in the United Nations Human Rights Commission to vote against a resolution brought against it.

Rampant corruption is another major factor undermining the rule of law in Sri Lanka. Family, friends and allies of the Rajapaksas have profited from lofty, well-paying state-funded positions that require little work. Today Gotabaya, Mahinda, two other brothers, and Mahinda's son oversee departments and agencies that collectively control nearly 70 percent of the island's budget. This takes place while the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Political Victimization, created by Rajapaksa's Government, absolves the family and their allies of criminal charges. Officials from the previous government's Attorney General's Office and Criminal Investigation Department who filed the charges are now being prosecuted for allegedly fabricating evidence. Chinese-funded projects have played a large role in promoting Rajapaksa, just as Chinese state support for the family has aided their authoritarianism. The no-revenue generating, non-concessionary, non-transparent, and unsolicited 'blingfranchise' projects have lined Rajapaksa pockets, but also have saddled Sri Lanka with massive unpayable debts and led to a dire economic climate. Sri Lankans have revolted against resultant scarcities, showing the island's resilience as a democracy. Sri Lanka was pushed into debt by civil war, but war-related corruption has seen the debt increase. Repaying China for exorbitant infrastructure projects, debts owed to non-Chinese entities, and corruption that persisted through the pandemic have all contributed to a severe balance of payments crisis.

Government coffers contain only around US\$1.5 billion in reserves as of November 2021, while debt payments for 2022 amount to around US\$4.3 bil-

lion. The foreign currency shortage has prevented banks from providing importers lines of credit, which has caused long queues for essential items like petrol and milk powder. The government banned chemical fertilisers, saving around US\$400 million and appealing to nationalist sentiment by claiming locally-produced organic fertiliser was better. But the decision led to widespread protests from farmers. Teachers also went on strike, citing rampant inflation, made worse by the government recklessly printing money. Protests have been led by grassroots civil society groups. Previously, village-level groups may have avoided challenging Rajapaksa governments given their mutual commitment to Sinhalese Buddhist supremacy. Their now-vociferous demands show the strength of civil society, and resilience of democracy in Sri Lanka. It seems illiberal democracy stands to dominate the world in the years ahead, and this will certainly be the case in Sri Lanka, where majoritarianism is here to stay. But an illiberal democracy can be improved faster than a mature autocracy.

The trick is to craft an ethno-religious compact where majoritarianism coexists in a peaceful and diverse setting. While Sri Lanka's leaders should be pushed to reconcile with minorities, reject ethno-religious violence, and promote a more pluralist setting, one must be realistic about what to expect. Pro-democracy advocates should continue to engage with the government while advocating for democratic reforms. Less engagement will push the country's leaders to further lean on autocratic states and exacerbate democratic backsliding. There's also an opportunity to leverage the island's dependence on western export markets to push for pro-democracy policies. The Elections Commission and anti-corruption bodies remain important for promoting transparency, and sanctions remain a live option to stymie individuals and their families who violate human rights and thrive on corruption.

(Neil Devotta is Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University in US.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Forgotten history

Not all have the privilege to have his/her body wrapped in the national flag of three different countries. Biju Patnaik alias Bijayananda Patnaik, who was born in 1916 and breathed his last in 1997, was one such individual. When he left for heavenly abode, his body was wrapped with three national flags of India, Russia and Indonesia. Biju Patnaik served as Chief Minister of Odisha for two terms but before jumping into active politics he served as a pilot. When the Soviet Union was in trouble during WW2, he bombed Nazi forces by flying a fighter aircraft named Dakota which forced Hitler's Army to retreat. For this act, he was later on honoured and granted honorary citizenship of the Soviet Union. When the Kavalis attacked Kashmir, it was Biju Patnaik who made several trips a day from Delhi to Srinagar on 27th October 1947 by flying a plane and transporting the Indian soldiers to Srinagar. Though Indonesia gained independence from the colonial power of Holland in 1945, again in 1947, Prime Minister of Indonesia Sutan Sjahrir was put under house arrest. The government of Indonesia sought India's help. So, on 22nd July 1947, Biju Patnaik along with his wife took a Dakota plane without caring little for his life, flew over the areas controlled by Dutch and landed on their soil, displaying exemplary bravery and bought the Indonesian PM safely to India via Singapore. In 1950, the Indonesian government granted honorary citizenship to Biju Patnaik and conferred the nation's highest award 'Bintang Jasa Utama', on Indonesia's 50th year of independence. After the death of Biju Patnaik, seven days of state mourning was observed in Indonesia and one-day state mourning was observed in Russia with all flags being lowered. Our history books ignored this great soul as a result subsequent generations hardly knew about him. Megawati Sukarnoputri who served as fifth President of Indonesia revealed the greatness of Biju Patnaik to the public during her Hinduism embracing ritual.

Julie, via email

Heroic exploits

After the 'heroic exploits' of one Param Vir Singh, the absconding top cop of Maharashtra police which has shamed the entire police force of the nation, the nation is blessed with yet another Vir, in the name of Vir Das, who is by choice a stand-up comedian who is supposed to bring smiles on the faces of his listeners. But he did otherwise. Recently in the USA, the said comedian Vir Das in his show in Kennedy Centre tarnished the image of his own country before a distinguished gathering which made every Indian hang his head in shame. We all vividly remember that some decades ago how Swami Vivekananda kept the entire audience spellbound with his priceless speech highlighting India's rich heritage, culture and tradition. It is a high time the nation honoured Vir Das along with Novjot Singh Sidhu with some brickbat awards.

Ashim, via email



WHAT THEY TWEET!

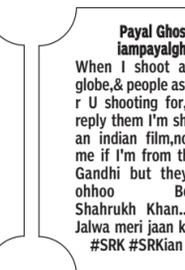


Arun Prakash@arunp2810
You may be right General, but I refuse to yield to despair. In the twilight of my years, should I hand over my nation to people who propagate blind hate, bigotry & genocide? Does it take a genius to see that provoking internal strife fulfills fondest dreams of India's enemies?

Ashok Swain@ashoswai
People forget what you want to ask if you start with Hon'ble, PM, Sri, & Ji. The sycophant, ruling party spokespersons, are asked to do so; why the opposition spokespersons are falling into that trap? This is nothing but a slave mentality.



KVJ@SuB8u
There's a big difference between being legally compliant and being ethically sound. It's always a choice. Banking on consumer ignorance of privacy/choice/consent is not the way to build a long-term sustainable business. We can and should do better.



Payal Ghosh@lampayalghosh
When I shoot across the globe, & people ask me what r U shooting for? When I reply them I'm shooting for an indian film, nobody ask me if I'm from the land of Gandhi but they ask me ohhoo Bollywood.. Shahrukh Khan.. yeh hai Jalwa meri jaan ki @iamsrk #SRK #SRKian forever.



Lakshay Singhal@lsinghal17
My office these days in Nubra! #ladakh



Vinay Kumar@vinaygb
I appreciate UPSC for setting good Essay paper. It seeks to eliminate candidates who come with 'herd mentality'. One can write essays to such topics only if they have diverse reading & writing habit, n also ability to think out of box. Upgrade yourself n your skills-is the message.

Sharell Cook@AboutIndia
Seriously can't make this stuff up! Now, my home help's recently boosted employer, family members and staff (who are also boosted) have tested positive for the virus seven people in total. The employer is currently the only one having symptoms.



Congress backs Nitish on caste census

Patna, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Congress in Bihar on Sunday asserted that it was "fully" with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on the issue of caste census and urged him to move forward and hold a state-specific exercise without waiting for a nod from his ally BJP which is keeping cards close to the chest.

Congress Legislature Party leader Ajeet Sharma's statement to the effect came close on the heels of Lalu Prasad's RJD, the principal opposition party in the state, adopting a similar stance. "The Chief Minister wants to convene an all-party meeting.... apparently the BJP does not want to be seen on the same page.... Let Nitish

Kumar go ahead, the Congress is fully with him on the issue", Sharma told reporters here.

The state BJP has in the past backed a caste census with its MLAs voting in favour of resolutions passed twice, unanimously, by the legislature.

The party finds itself in a bind after the Narendra Modi government turned down demands for conducting headcount of social groups other than SCs and STs.

A meeting between the Prime Minister and an all-



Ajeet Sharma

party delegation from Bihar headed by the Chief Minister failed to achieve a breakthrough.

Politics in the state has for decades been dominated by the numerically powerful OBCs, who are hopeful of gains in the event of an exercise that might confirm that their percentage in population is far greater than 27 percent which has been earmarked as their quota following the Mandal Commission's implementation.

In the wake of the Centre's lukewarm re-

sponse, Kumar who like Lalu Prasad is an OBC has decided to undertake a state-specific survey.

Recently, he disclosed that he proposed an all-party meeting on the issue which was hanging fire for want of the BJP's assent.

Kumar controls the JD(U) but, on account of the party's diminished numerical strength, has become heavily dependent on the BJP which is second only to the RJD in terms of the number of MLAs.

The 19-MLA-strong Congress is hardly a force to reckon with though it has been trying hard to make itself count ever since it was dumped by the RJD in assembly by-polls last year.

NETAJI JAYANTI CELEBRATION



Artists perform dance during celebration of 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in Kolkata, Sunday.

SPURT IN COVID CASES

'Complete ban on social, religious gatherings, five-day week in govt offices'

Shimla, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Himachal Pradesh government on Sunday announced five-day week in its offices besides banning social and religious gatherings from January 10 to 24 to check the coronavirus spread. It capped the attendance of staff at government offices to 50 per cent of the total strength from Monday to Friday during the period.

The government also prohibited the gathering of more than 100 people for indoor and 300 people

for outdoor academic, sport, cultural and political events, according to an order. The restrictions, however, will not be applicable on offices dealing with emergency services.

The state till January 8 has recorded 2,31,587 coronavirus cases, including 3,864 deaths. Earlier, the state government had imposed a night curfew till further orders and shut the educational institutions till January 26. "All offices of government departments/ PSUs/ local bodies/ autonomous bod-

ies, including the HP Secretariat, will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays and these offices will operate with 50 per cent attendance on working days," the order issued by state Chief Secretary Ram Subhag Singh said.

"These restrictions will not be on offices dealing with emergency or essential services such as health, police, fire, banks, electricity, water and sanitation, public transport, telecom, excise, budget and related incident services/activities etc, it added.

AYUSH Ministry to hold global Surya Namaskar event

On Makar Sankranti

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Ministry of AYUSH is organising a global Surya Namaskar demonstration programme for 75 lakh people on January 14, the day of Makar Sankranti. On this day, Surya Namaskar is offered as a salutation to the Sun to exhibit one's gratitude for each of its rays as it nurtures all living being, an Ayush ministry statement read.

Scientifically, Surya Namaskar has been known to develop immunity and improve vitality, which is significant to health during pandemic conditions, it

stated. Exposure to the Sun provides the human body Vitamin D, which has been widely recommended in all medical branches around the world, the ministry noted. The mass Surya Namaskar demonstration also intends to carry the message of climate change and global warming, the statement said.

In today's world where climate consciousness is imperative, the implementation of solar e-energy (green energy) in daily life will greatly reduce carbon emissions that threaten the planet. Further, the event will underline the importance of Makar Sankranti in our cultural and spiritual heritage, the statement said.

Exhibition at Pune art gallery stopped over 'nudity' in photographs

Pune, Jan 09 (PTI):

A photographer has said an exhibition of his picture collection was stopped at an art gallery in Pune, with its management citing the 'nudity' element in the photographs.

Sunil Mate, the in-charge of the Balgandharv Rang Mandir, which houses the art gallery, said the photographer, Akshay Mali, should have told the management about the exhibition theme in advance.

"We do not allow any such exhibitions which

can hurt someone's sentiments. Such nudity does not look appropriate (at the art gallery)," he said.

Mate said when they came to know about the photos and the display theme, the artist was told to remove the pictures.

The three-day exhibition of Mali's photographs started on Friday at the art gallery on J M Road here in Maharashtra, but it was stopped on Saturday.

"The theme of the exhibition was 'IT'S ME' in which the boundaries of art were broken. The exhibition contained nude

photos of me and other models clicked in the nature," Mali said. He said on Saturday, some people from the art gallery's management took objection to the photographs and asked him to remove them.

"When I booked the slot, I had not told the management about the nude theme. I had booked the slot by just mentioning that it would be a photography exhibition," said Mali, who claimed that some of his photographs featured on a platform through an online exhibition.

SURVEY RESULT

'41% people support ban on political rallies during assembly polls'

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

A day after the Election Commission announced poll schedule for five states, a survey claimed that 41 per cent of people supported a ban on all political rallies. According to the survey, held after the announcement by the EC, 31 per cent of citizens favoured postponing elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur altogether.

In an unprecedented step, the commission on Saturday banned public rallies, roadshows and corner meetings till January 15 in the five states, citing the fresh surge in Covid cases, and issued stringent safety guidelines.

In the survey, conducted by digital community based platform LocalCircles, 24 per cent

respondents said that Covid compliance should be imposed on all political rallies, but they must continue. Four per cent of the respondents said that no action is needed as risk of Covid spread due to elections is low.

The survey received over 11,000 responses from citizens in 309 districts of the country, including 4,172 responses from districts in the five poll-going states, the platform said in a statement. While 68 per cent respondents were men, 32 per cent were women.

The announcement of assembly polls was welcomed by major parties, while parties, including the Congress, urged the poll watchdog to ensure a level playing field in view of the Covid curbs on campaigning.

DESERTED STREET



City streets wear a deserted look during full lockdown imposed by Tamil Nadu government to curb the spread of COVID-19, near Greater Chennai Corporation (Ribbon Building) in Chennai, Sunday.

MP cop grows hair and moustache, suspended for indiscipline

Bhopal, Jan 09 (PTI):

The Madhya Pradesh Police has suspended a constable for indiscipline as he grew his hair and moustache despite being told to trim it, an official said on Sunday.

The suspension order issued on Friday to constable Rakesh Rana, posted as a driver in the police's motor transport wing, surfaced on various social media platforms on Sunday.

Assistant Inspector General, Cooperatives Fraud and Public Service Guarantee, Prashant Sharma, who issued the order, told PTI that Rana was suspended as he did not follow his senior's order about correcting his appearance.

When his appearance was checked, the constable was found with hair

grown and a moustache till the neck. He was directed to trim the hair as his turnout was awkward, but he did not follow the directives, the official said.

Sharma also claimed the constable was adamant on keeping long hair and moustache, which was not in accordance with norms for the uniformed personnel. Hence, he was suspended as part of disciplinary action, the official said.

Centre surveys 17.78 lakh acres of defence land using advanced technologies

New Delhi, Jan 09 (PTI):

In a first such comprehensive exercise since Independence, the government has surveyed 17.78 lakh acres of defence land using the latest technologies such as three-dimensional modelling, drone and satellite imageries.

The defence ministry said the mammoth exercise of surveying about 1.61 lakh acres of defence land inside cantonments and 16.17 lakh acres outside cantonments was started in October 2018 and is now completed. "It is a remarkable achievement since, for the first

time after Independence, entire defence land has been surveyed by using latest survey technology," it said. The ministry said the magnitude of land-holding, the location of land in approximately 4,900 pockets, inaccessible terrain in many places and involvement of various stakeholders made it one of the "largest" land surveys in India.

It said modern survey technologies such as Electronic Total Station, Differential Global Positioning System as well as drone and satellite imageries were used to ensure "reliable, robust and



MoD surveyed 17.78 lakh acres of Defence Land in a little over three years using modern surveying technologies.

time-bound" outcomes. "For the first time, drone imagery-based survey technology was used for

survey of lakhs of acres of defence land in Rajasthan. The entire area was surveyed with the help of

Surveyor General of India in a matter of weeks, which earlier used to take years," the ministry said in a statement. It said satellite imagery-based survey was carried out for the first time for many defence land pockets.

"3D Modelling techniques for better visualisation of defence land in the hilly areas have also been introduced by utilising Digital Elevation Model in association with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)," it said. The Directorate General Defence Estates that operates under the Ministry of Defence was the nodal

agency for the survey. The ministry said out of 17.78 lakh acres, 8.90 lakh acres was surveyed during the last three months.

"As a part of the survey, a project for real-time change detection system based on the 'Time series Satellite imagery' for detection of encroachments on defence land has also been initiated," the ministry said. It said a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on land survey and GIS mapping has also been established in National Institute of Defence Estates Management for capacity building of Defence Estates officials

in the field of latest survey technologies. The CoE aims to be an apex survey institution capable of imparting training of various levels to the officers of central and state government departments.

"This mammoth exercise of survey of nearly 18 lakh acres of defence land spread pan India, which hitherto rested on the fulcrum of herculean human efforts, is a unique example of leveraging emerging technologies for land survey in a short time in line with the central government's emphasis on 'Digital India'," the ministry said.

Baidyanath
ASLI AYURVED

Useful to
Treat
CONSTIPATION
And Piles

SIDPILES
Tablet

Helps to relieve Piles, Fistula
Fissure,
Inflammation
& Pain,
Burning
Sensation,
Itching of
anal region &
Constipation



Abhayamrita
(Abhayarishta)

Helps to
treat chronic
constipation
and to
improve
digestion



Customer Care: 848444935
www.baidyanath.co