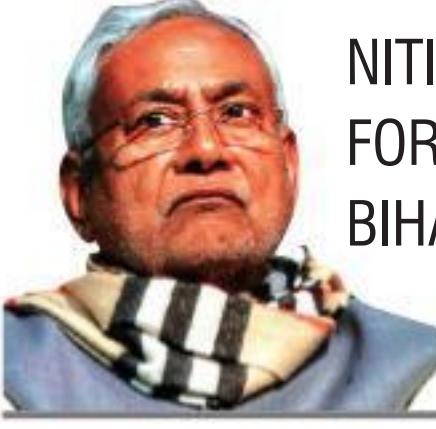




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KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR



NITISH TO MAKE WAY
FOR TEJASWI, CLAIMS
BIHAR JDU MLA



OBAMA
THE WORST?

P5



'VACCINES ARE
GLOBAL
PUBLIC GOOD'

P6

WHEN SMITH
FOUND HIS
BEARINGS



P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Shallow fog in the morning. Tomorrow's maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 18 and 12 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 78%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 16.9°C (-3) Min: 9.6°C (+3)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

07:15 hrs 17:42 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

04:10 hrs 14:10 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee during the inauguration of the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival at Nabanna on Friday. ■ SNS

Mamata announces 100% occupancy in theatres:

Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced that 100 per cent occupancy would be allowed in cinema halls, up from the current 50 per cent, while inaugurating the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival virtually from state secretariat Nabanna on Friday. "Chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay will issue necessary notifications in this regard. The cinema hall owners have to abide by all Covid protocols to ensure safety of people. Wearing of masks and carrying hand sanitizers are mandatory for people visiting the cinema halls," said Miss Banerjee.

Bird flu scare: Over 1.60 lakh birds at five poultry farms in Haryana's Panchkula district are set to be culled after some samples tested positive for bird flu, Agriculture Minister J P Dalal said. He said they had sent samples from two Panchkula poultry farms to Bhopal for testing. Five samples of Siddhart Poultry Farm at Kheri village in Raipur Rani block of Panchkula tested positive for H5N8 strain of avian flu. Dalal said poultry birds of five poultry farms falling within 1-km radius of the two farms will be culled. ■ P5

Cornered, Trump gives up amidst talk of early ouster

Democrats ask Vice-President to move to remove Trump; explore impeachment options

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 8 JANUARY

With 12 days left in his term, President Donald

Trump has finally bent to reality amidst growing talk of trying to force him out early, acknowledging he'll peacefully leave after Congress affirmed his defeat.

Trump led off a video from the White House Thursday by condemning the violence carried out in his name a day earlier at the Capitol. Then, for the first time on camera, he admitted his presidency would soon end - though he declined to mention President-elect Joe Biden by name or explicitly state he had lost. "A new administration will be inaugurated on 20 January," Trump said in the video. "My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly and seamless transition of power. This moment calls for healing and reconciliation."

The address, which appeared designed to stave off talk of a forced early eviction, came at the end of a day when the cornered president stayed out of sight in the White House. Silenced on some of his favourite internet lines of communication, he watched the resignations of several top aides, including two Cabinet secretaries.

And as officials sifted through the aftermath of the pro-Trump mob's siege of the US Capitol, there was growing discussion of impeaching him a second time or invoking the 25th Amendment to oust him



1 Silenced on his favourite internet lines of communication, Trump watched the resignations of several top aides, including two Cabinet secretaries.

2 There's growing discussion among US officials of impeaching Trump a second time or invoking the 25th Amendment to oust him from the Oval Office.

3 Democrats are discussing whether to act quickly to impeach Trump as soon as next week if his Cabinet doesn't first try to remove him by invoking the 25th Amendment to the US Constitution.

4 Fears of what a desperate president could do in his final days spread in the nation's capital and beyond.

from the Oval Office.

Democrats are discussing whether to act quickly to impeach Trump as soon as next week if his Cabinet doesn't first try to remove him by invoking the 25th Amendment - the forceful removal of Trump from power by his own Cabinet.

Fears of what a desperate president could do in his final days spread in the nation's capital and beyond, including speculation Trump could incite more violence, make rash appointments, issue ill-conceived pardons - including for himself and his family - or even trigger a destabilising international incident.

The president's video on Thursday - which was released upon his return to Twitter after his account was restored - was a complete reversal from the one he put out just 24 hours earlier in which he said to the violent mob: "We love you. You're very special."

► Trump at last denounced the demonstrators' "lawlessness and mayhem."

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His refusal to condemn the violence sparked a firestorm of criticism and, in the new video, he at last denounced the demonstrators' "lawlessness and mayhem."

Aides said the video was also meant to slow the mass exodus of staffers and ward off potential legal trouble for Trump

once he leaves office; White House counsel Pat Cipollone has repeatedly warned the president that he could be deemed responsible for inciting the violence.

As his feelings on leaving office, Trump told the nation that "serving as your president has been the honor of my lifetime" while hinting at a return to the public arena. He told supporters "our incredible journey is only just beginning."

Just a day earlier, Trump unleashed the destructive forces at the Capitol with his baseless claims of election fraud at a rally that prompted supporters to disrupt the congressional certification of Biden's victory. After the eventual wee-hours certification of Biden's win by the Congress, Trump said he would abide by a peaceful transfer of power on 20 January.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao became the first Cabinet member to resign. Chao was one of the lawmakers trapped at the Capitol on Wednesday.

Others who resigned in the wake of the riot: Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger; Ryan Tully, senior director for European and Russian affairs at the NSC; Melania Trump's chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary; Mick Mulvaney, Trump's former chief of staff-turned-special envoy to Northern Ireland, said he had called Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "to let him know I was resigning."

MORE REPORTS ON PAGE 10

26/11 mastermind gets 5-year jail for terror-financing



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, 8 JANUARY

Farcical action by Pak: India

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

India today termed as 'farcical' the sentencing by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court of Mumbai attack mastermind and LeT commander Zakir-Ur-Rehman Lakhvi to 5 years in jail in a terror funding case.

Last month, a Pakistani court had sentenced a LeT chief Hafiz Saeed, another key planner of the Mumbai attack, to fifteen and a half years in jail in one of the several terror-financing cases against him.

"The timing of these actions clearly suggests the intention of conveying a sense of compliance ahead of the APJG (Asia Pacific Joint Group) meeting and next FATF (Financial Action Task Force) plenary meeting in February. It has become routine for Pakistan to come up with such farcical actions prior to important meetings," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at a media briefing.

Lakhvi pleaded before the court that he was falsely implicated. He was accused of running a dispensary and using funds collected for terrorism financing. "He and others collected funds from this dispensary and used these funds for further terrorism financing. He also used these funds for personal expenses, the CTD said.

Ghar waapsi only after law waapsi: Farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

The government's negotiations with farm unions to end over-a-month-long agitation appeared heading nowhere at the eighth round of talks on Friday as the Centre ruled out repealing the three contentious laws claiming nationwide support for reforms while the farmer leaders said they are ready to fight till death and their 'ghar waapsi' will happen only after 'law waapsi'.

The next meeting has been fixed for 15 January, amidst indications that any headway will now depend on a Supreme Court hearing scheduled for 11 January on a batch of petitions related to the protest. The farmer groups have also decided to meet on January 11 to decide their next course of action, even as



Farmers during their protest against the new farm laws on a cold day at Delhi's Ghazipur border on Friday. ■ SNS

many leaders said they have lost hope now that any resolution could be reached even in the next round of negotiations.

The meeting at Vigyan Bhawan in the heart of the national capital lasted for little over two hours, during which just about one hour of discussions took place, after which union leaders went on

Briefing the media after the talks, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said no decision could be reached as the farmer leaders did not pre-

There was no breakthrough at the end of 8th round of Centre-farmer talks. The next meeting is on 15 January as any headway at present depends on a apex Court hearing on 11 January on a batch of petitions related to the protest

sent alternatives to their demand for the repeal of the laws.

Union leaders, however, insisted they do not want anything less than the repeal of the laws and they are ready to fight till death.

The union leaders also said the farmers will continue with their plan to hold a tractor rally on Republic Day on 26 January.

The union leaders also said the farmers will continue with their plan to hold a tractor rally on Republic Day on 26 January.

UP: Five dead after consuming spurious liquor

MEERUT, 8 JANUARY

Spurious liquor claimed five lives in Jeetgarhi village of Secunderabad area in district Bulandshahar on Thursday night. Condition of five others who also consumed the liquor have been stated to be critical. 16 villagers were admitted to the hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Taking cognisance in the matter, UP CM Yogi Adityanath has instructed the officials to provide best treatment to those who have fallen sick and directed the officials to take immediate action and book the accused under National Security Act.

According to SSP Bulandshahar, the villagers had consumed spurious liquor supplied to them by a person named Kuldeep on Thursday night. Shortly after drinking, their condition started deteriorating. ■ SNS

China mulls India's proposal to end plight of stranded crew

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

The Chinese authorities have indicated to India that they were considering the option suggested by New Delhi of alternative modes of crew change at sea of the two cargo vessels on which 39 Indian sailors have been stuck for months in China, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said today.

"We will continue to remain in touch with various relevant Chinese authorities as well as shipping companies to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the crew are taken care of and that crew changes can be effected at the earliest," he said at a media briefing.

The spokesperson said, "With regard to the request of exploring alternative modes of crew change at sea, this possibility has also been

taken up with the Chinese authorities, who have indicated that the details for this option are being worked out. We are awaiting these details from the Chinese authorities."

He said that in view of China's strict Covid-19 pandemic control as well as various travel restrictions in place, the Chinese authorities have outlined detailed steps to ensure the smooth movement of new crew to China to effect crew change. These steps have to be completed by the concerned shipping companies.

On the military stand-off at eastern Ladakh, the spokesperson said the two sides have agreed to hold the next round of senior commanders' meeting.

18K fresh Covid cases, 234 deaths

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

With 18,139 new coronavirus infections and 234 deaths in the last 24 hours, India's overall tally stood at 1,04,13,417, while the death toll touched 1,50,570, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said on Friday.

Till now, 1,00,37,398 Covid-19 patients have recovered. Currently, there are 2,25,449 active cases. The recovery rate stands at 96.36 per cent while the fatality rate is 1.45 as per cent, Ministry data

Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The number of people who have tested positive for the new UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 has climbed to 82 in India, the Health Ministry also informed. The number of such people stood at 73 till 6 January.

Delhi records 444 fresh Covid cases: Delhi today recorded 444 Covid cases following 75,724 tests conducted all over the city. Its Covid caseload thus mounted to 6,29,282, according to the Delhi government's latest bulletin. The city logged 10 fresh Covid-linked fatalities, which raised its coronavirus toll to 10,657, the health bulletin said. ■ P2



Flights from UK to India resume

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

Passenger flights resumed from the UK to India in limited numbers from Friday onwards after remaining suspended for 16 days due to the emergence of a new coronavirus variant in that country.

The first flight to land at the Delhi airport from London on Friday was Air India's AI112 that had 256 passengers in it, said Gauri Agarwal, founder of the Genestrings Diagnostic Center, which is handling coronavirus testing of all passengers at the Delhi airport.

One Vistara flight with 291 passengers will come from London to Delhi on Saturday and two flights - British Airways and Air India will land at the Delhi airport on Sunday. ■ PTI

India completes second vaccine dry run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

The second dry run on Covid-19 vaccination was conducted on Friday in 736 districts across 33 states and Union territories with Union Health minister Harsh Vardhan, who oversaw the dry run in Tamil Nadu, saying inoculating the country's entire population would soon become a reality.

He said vaccines would be made available in the next few days and those at risk such as healthcare professionals would be given priority.

The Health Ministry said the objective of the dry run was to simulate the actual vaccine administration event. The entire planning of the vaccination drive, including beneficiary registration, microplanning and vaccination at the planned session sites was tested under the leadership of district collector or district magistrate. The dry run





I request West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay to issue a notification allowing 100 per cent occupancy in all theatres from the present 50 per cent

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Man held along with wife for mortgaging his father's property fraudulently

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

A 40-year-old man along with his wife have been arrested for allegedly availing a loan by mortgaging his father's property fraudulently, police said on Friday.

The accused have been identified as Anuj Jaipuri, they said.

According to the police, Rajender Jaipuri had purchased a property at Noida in 2011 following which he allowed

his younger son Anuj to stay with him on the first floor of the house along with his wife and two children. In 2018, officials of a private finance company visited the complainant's house, claiming that a home loan of Rs 2,47,13,363 was availed by mortgaging the property that his father had purchased in Noida, a senior police officer said.

Apart from the complainant and his wife, Anuj along with his wife were shown as co-applicants in the loan, the officer said.

Institutional quarantine must for those arriving in Delhi from UK

UK passengers'll have to mandatorily take RT-PCR test at Delhi airport, positive ones'll be isolated at a govt facility, negative ones'll undergo both institutional & home quarantines, says Kejriwal

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

Travellers coming to Delhi from the United Kingdom will have to undergo a seven-day institutional quarantine even if they test negative for

Covid-19, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced today, tightening protocols to "protect Delhiites" from the new UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 or novel coronavirus.

After completion of the institutional quarantine, such passengers will have to go under home-quarantine for another seven days which will be ensured through "strict surveillance" by Delhi district authorities.

In

an order issued today, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) said such new rules would be applicable on a trial basis till 14 January.

An official said a decision on extending the enforcement of the new rules will be taken after reviewing the situation.

Those who test positive for Covid-19 at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport on arrival from the UK will be isolated at facilities set up by the government, CM Kejriwal said.

"Those found negative will be given the option of both the paid and the government's free institutional quarantine facility," Delhi chief secretary Vijay Dev said.

Apart from Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, the Delhi government has also created isolated facilities at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital.

In its order, the DDMA said, "As a matter of abundant precaution in view of the increased transmissibility of the new variant, it is decided that all travellers coming from United Kingdom (UK) to India would be mandatorily subjected to self-paid RT-PCR tests on arrival at the airport."

On 23 December, the central government suspended flights services from the UK.

Union aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said last Saturday that flights from India to the UK will resume from 6 January, while services from that country to here would resume 8 January onwards.

According to an SOP issued

by the Union health ministry earlier this month, all passengers coming from the UK between 8 January and 30 January would be subjected to self-paid Covid tests on arrival.

Around 1,400 Delhi residents have arrived between 25 November and 23 December last year, prompting the authorities to launch a door-to-door check-up of such persons and their contacts.

Meanwhile,

Delhi today

recorded 444 Covid cases following 75,724 tests conducted all over the city. Its Covid caseload thus mounted to 6,29,282, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

Delhi's coronavirus posi-

tivity rate came down to 0.59

per cent from yesterday's 0.63

per cent.

The city logged 10 fresh

Covid-linked fatalities, which

raised its coronavirus toll to

10,654, the health bulletin said.

Those who recuperated

and were discharged from

different healthcare facil-

ties during the past 24 hours numbered 823. The city's cumulative Covid recoveries thus rose to

6,14,849, the bulletin said.

The recovery rate climbed to

97.1 per cent.

Delhi now had 3,779 active

cases of Covid-19 with 1,807

patients remaining under

home isolation. The number

of the hospitalised Covid

patients was 1,528, the bulletin added.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF SHRI ANURAG DASS ADDITIONAL CHIEF JUDGE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CIVIL JUDGE-CUM-ADDITIONAL RENT CONTROLLER (WEST), COURT ROOM NO. 112, 1ST FLOOR

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi Petition No. : SC-109/2021 To, Sh. Raj Kumar, s/o Lt. Sh. Banwari Lal, r/o 2105/K-16, Gali No. 6, Prem Nagar, New Delhi-110008.

Versus State FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities of amount lying with S.C. Neelima Dutt, Delhi to be standing in the name of Late Shri Rajesh @ Tinku, deceased.

Whereas this at 10 (Ten) O'Clock in the forenoon has been fixed for 30-01-2021 hearing on the application notice is hereby given to all concerned.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court this 23rd day of December, 2020.

Administrative Civil Judge cum-Commercial Civil Judge cum-Additional Rent Controller (West), Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi Seal of the Court

COURT NOTICE (U/O 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF SH. LOKENDRA CUM JUDGE CLUNIOR DIVISION, SOHNA

Narendra Kumar Versus Kailash Bihari CS/315/2020 CNR No. HRGRC-000380-2020

Next Date: 05-02-2021 Publication Issued to Defendants:

1. Kailash Bihari, s/o Shyam Bihari Lal, s/o Ram Sharan Lal

2. Smt. Asha Devi, d/o Parkash Bihari Lal

3. Smt. Anita, d/o Parkash Bihari Lal

4. Smt. Sushila, widow of Parkash Bihari Lal

All residents of Village Raisenai, Tehsil Sohna, District Gurugram.

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered to serve the defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 05-02-2021 at 10:00 a.m.

For details logon to https://highcourtchd.gov.in/?rs=district_notice&district=gurugram.

Dated, this day of 18-12-2020.

Civil Judge (Junior Division), Sohna

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF SH. AASHISH GUPTA AC/CC/ARC (South East) Saket Courts, New Delhi SS-91/2020

In the matter of :

Pradeep Devgn, s/o Lt. Sh. Purshotam Lal Devgn, r/o 602, Rose Tower, RPS Omane, New Green Valley, Sector 41-42, Faridabad-121010.

— Petitioner

Versus

1. State of NCT of Delhi Through S.D.M. Kalkaji, S.D.M. Office Kalkaji 37, Tuglakabad Institutional Area, M.B. Road, New Delhi-110062

Phone : 011-29956500 email : kalkasdsm@nic.in

2. Smt. Pratima Bhagat, w/o (Rtd. Cdr.) N. K. Bhagat, r/o J-192, Sec. 4, Noida U.P. 201304

3. Smt. Parvati Andulkar, w/o Mr. Arind Paul r/o 601, Raaji Rajvanch Tewa Judges Bunglow, Ahmedabad-380054

— Respondents

Whereas, an application U/s 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 has been made by Pradeep Devgn successor of Late Pushpa Devgn for grant of Succession Certificate in respect of debts/securities of deceased.

And whereas the said applicant shall come for hearing on 16-02-2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Therefore, the public at large is hereby given notice that any person has objection to the grant of Succession Certificate in favour of the said applicant, he may appear and file objections in writing, in person or through duly appointed pleader, on the said date and time.

Given under my hand and

Seal on 07-01-2021.

ACI/CC/ARC (South East)

Saket Courts, New Delhi Seal of the Court

COURT NOTICE (U/O 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF MS. SURUCHI ATREJA SINGH Additional Principal Judge (Additional Family Court), Gurugram Rohit Prakash

AIR-SURCHARGE; Kathmandu - Rs. 2, Eastern Region - Re. 1 All other stations in India - Re. 1

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As of now, we have 1,000 trained vaccinators and four support team members per vaccinator. The state is equipped to administer four lakh doses of vaccine per day

BALBIR SINGH SIDHU
PUNJAB HEALTH MINISTER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 09 JANUARY 2021

03

Bird flu confirmed at two poultry farms in Haryana

Over 1.66 lakh birds of 5 poultry farms which fall within the periphery of 1 km radius of 2 infected farms in Panchkula district will be culled, says Haryana animal husbandry & dairying minister Dalal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 8 JANUARY

With poultry birds at two poultry farms in Panchkula testing avian influenza (H5N8) positive, the Haryana government on Friday said over 1.66 lakh birds of five poultry farms which fall within the periphery of one-kilometer (km) radius of the two infected farms will be culled.

Apart from it, the Haryana government has restricted the movement of poultry goods and declared the area within the radius of one km from these two poultry farms as "infected zone" and the area from one km to 10 km as "surveillance zone".

Adhering to the guidelines, 1,66,128 birds of five poultry farms which fall within the periphery of one km radius of the two infected farms will be culled under the supervision of experts to prevent further spread of the disease and the poultry farm owners will be given compensation for the same, the animal husbandry and dairying minister J.P. Dalal said at a Press conference.

He said the state government is concerned about the poultry business in the state and that immediate action was taken and clinical investigations were carried out as soon as the state government was apprised about the unusual death of birds in the poultry farms at Panchkula adjoining Chandigarh. During the



Haryana Animal Husbandry and Dairying Minister, Mr. J.P. Dalal addressing a press conference at Chandigarh on January 8, 2021.

investigations conducted by the department, it came to light that around four lakh birds had died in these poultry farms in the

last one month.

He said that the samples of these dead birds were initially sent to the Regional Dis-

ease Diagnostic Laboratory in Jalandhar. However, due to delay in its report, the samples were sent to the Nation-

al Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal for examination.

As per the report received now, it has been confirmed that birds of two poultry farms were infected with avian influenza (H5N8). He said that though this bird flu strain (H5N8) is less pathogenic, the state government has issued a notification for the affected poultry farms of Panchkula as a precautionary measure.

Divulguing the names of poultry farms, the minister said that now the state government has declared the areas within one-kilometre radius of infected poultry farms—"Sidharth Poultry Farm" at village Kheri and "Nature Poultry Farm, Dandlaver" at village Ganauli—in Panchkula district as "infected zone".

Furthermore, the area within the radius of 1 to 10 kilo-metres has been declared as "surveillance zone".

Sharing details on the culling of birds, Dalal said five poultry farms in the affected area have 1,66,128 poultry birds. They will be culled and buried by 59 teams. The owners of the poultry farm will be given a compensation of Rs 90 per bird.

The bird flu or avian influenza outbreak has been reported from a number of states including Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. The Centre had recently sent advisories to states, asking them to take measures to contain this infection.

Himachal govt 'alert & active' about tackling bird flu: CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 8 JANUARY

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Friday said that the state government was alert and active about tackling the state's bird flu situation.

He said that monitoring of Pong Dam and adjoining areas is being ensured in this regard and Quick Response Teams have also been constituted.

The chief minister said that while presiding over the review meeting for control of Bird Flu with District Administration, Animal Husbandry and Wildlife department at Dharamshala.

He said that till date about 3410 migratory birds have died of bird flu and these birds are being buried as per the protocol, to prevent the spread of the virus. He said that 65 teams of Animal Husbandry and Wildlife were regularly monitoring the Pong Dam and adjoining areas. He said that as "infected zone".

Furthermore, the area within the radius of 1 to 10 kilo-metres has been declared as "surveillance zone".

Sharing details on the culling of birds, Dalal said five poultry farms in the affected area have 1,66,128 poultry birds. They will be culled and buried by 59 teams. The owners of the poultry farm will be given a compensation of Rs 90 per bird.

The bird flu or avian influenza outbreak has been reported from a number of states including Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. The Centre had recently sent advisories to states, asking them to take measures to contain this infection.

Jai Ram says the monitoring of Pong dam and surrounding areas is being ensured

ty of Bird Flu, samples of poultry have been sent to RDDL Jalandhar by Animal Husbandry department.

The chief minister said that it is important to spread awareness amongst people regarding preventive measures from Bird Flu and directed the concerned officers to take necessary steps in this direction.

The chief minister also reviewed the Covid-19 situation in district Kangra and said that there are about 1200 active cases of Covid-19 in the state, out of which 300 cases are in district Kangra. He said that a decline in Covid-19 cases has been observed since 15 December, yet it is important to be careful.

He said that it is also important to follow the guidelines issued by the Health

Department. He said that arrangements for vaccination campaign of Covid-19 have been completed and the vaccination campaign would be made successful as per guidelines.

Thakur also took stock of the dry run for vaccination campaign at Zonal Hospital Dharamshala.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Prajapati detailed the arrangements to tackle bird flu situation at Pong Dam in District Kangra.

Veterinary doctor Vikram Singh and Conservator of Wild Life department Upasana Patial gave a powerpoint presentation on Bird Flu and Chief Medical Officer Dr Gurshan detailed about the present Covid-19 situation in Kangra.

HP Vidhan Sabha Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar, MLAs Arjun Thakur, Vishal Nehriya, Rita Dhiman and Ravinder Dhiman, Superintendent of Police Vimukt Ranjan and other senior officers were also present in the meeting.

HC warns of holding Sr officials' salaries for not clearing empanelled lawyers 6-mth old bills

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

the payment process has started and some bills have been cleared while others are in pipeline and will be cleared soon.

The authorities sought more time to clear all the pending bills of the panel lawyers.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Yoti Singh asked the authorities to clear all the bills which are six months old or more, or else the court will stay the salaries of senior officials, including secretary level.

It should not happen that advocates are not getting their six months old bills cleared and not getting salaries, the bench said.

The high court was hearing a petition filed by Piyush Gupta, a lawyer, who has contended that the government lawyers were facing financial hardships during the prevailing situation when courts are closed as their professional fees and bills, the only source of income for some, have been pending for long.

5 including a Nigerian, 3 Nepalese held for cheating woman

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

Five men, including three from Nepal and one from Nigeria, were arrested on Friday for allegedly cheating a woman in southwest Delhi's Kishangarh area, police said.

The accused have been identified as Prakash Gurung (24), Parva Mehto (25), Ankit (20), all residents of Nepal, and Vinay Kumar (25), a resident of Bihar and Chhajioke (37), a resident of Nigeria, they said.

Punjab cops gathering intelligence, not negotiating with farmers: Capt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 8 JANUARY



It was the job of the state police to keep tabs on the evolving situation, and it was his job, as both CM and home minister, to remain updated about all developments, he added.

being flaunted by the Shiromani Akali Dal and Aam Aadmi Party leaders on the basis of unfounded reports in a small section of the media.

With farmer protests going on in his state since long before

the agitation started at the Delhi border, he had naturally asked police officers to give him regular intelligence reports and updates on the situation not just from the national capital but also across Punjab, Amarinder pointed out, trashng the twisted and senseless interpretation being given to the presence of a few Punjab Police personnel at the farmers' protest site.

It was the job of the state police to keep tabs on the evolving situation, and it was his job, as both CM and home minister, to remain updated about all developments, he added.

"Anyone who believes that

a couple of police officers can negotiate with the farmers or persuade the farmers leaders to accept the Centre's suggestions on amendments to the Farm Laws is really naive," Amarinder remarked.

And where is the question of him (Captain Amarinder) coming into a negotiation process in which the top central government leadership is currently engaged?, he asked.

Amarinder said both Sukhbir Singh Badal (SAD chief) and Arvind Kejriwal (AAP chief and Delhi CM), as well as their party colleagues, were resorting to lies and deceit in their desperation to cover up their own failures in the entire crisis triggered by the farm laws.

Pointing to Sukhbir's ridiculous claim that the resolutions passed in the Punjab Assembly against the three farm bills had not been sent to the Governor, he quipped that the SAD president had clearly lost it. "Or perhaps he is suffering from serious amnesia since his party colleagues, including his own brother-in-law Bikram Majithia, had accompanied me to the Governor's House for submitting the resolution and the three State Amendment Bills," remarked the CM.

Punjab all set to undertake Covid vaccination: Minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SAS NAGAR/CHANDIGARH, 8 JANUARY

With the "success" of the Covid-19 vaccination dry-run in Punjab, the state is equipped to administer four lakh doses of vaccine per day, the state health minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said on Friday.

In an informal interaction with reporters after the conduct of vaccination dry-run at district hospital at Phase VI Mohali, the minister said Punjab is all prepared to administer the vaccination as and when it is received.

In an informal interaction with reporters after the conduct of vaccination dry-run at district hospital at Phase VI Mohali, the minister said Punjab is all prepared to administer the vaccination as and when it is received.

familiarized with all the aspects of the actual administration of the vaccine. The operational aspects have been thoroughly reviewed and feasibility of CoWIN Portal has been monitored," Sidhu said.

As of now we have 1000 trained vaccinators and four supporting team members

vaccinators are ready for the job. The minister informed that vaccine would be administered only with the consent of the pre-registered recipient and in the first phase of vaccination, 1.6 lakh Health Care Workers (HCWs) from private and public facilities would be inoculated followed by front-line corona warriors including police, revenue officials and other field staff and subsequently the elderly and population with co-morbidities.

Sidhu informed that he is in touch with the Union health minister and he took up the issue to provide Covid vaccine free of cost to all states. In the run up to the almost final allocation of corona vaccine, the Punjab government has finalised a micro-plan for the program so as to ensure the smooth run of all activities.

The minister said that as many as 25 beneficiaries, five member vaccination team and a supervisor per session site, participated in the mock drill as per micro-plan finalised for immunization (AEFI), if any.

The minister said that as many as 25 beneficiaries, five member vaccination team and a supervisor per session site, participated in the mock drill as per micro-plan finalised for immunization (AEFI), if any.

With the minister's support, the vaccination dry-run was successfully completed.

CELEBRATION TIME



Bharatiya Janata Party councillor Ravi Kant Sharma being offered sweets after getting elected as the new Mayor of Chandigarh on Friday.

PARDEEP SAINI

Uttarakhand HC stays order for elephant reserve's denotification

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 8 JANUARY

The Uttarakhand High Court has stayed the decision of the state wildlife board to denotify the Shivalik elephant reserve. In a move to expand the Jollygrant airport in Dehradun, the Uttarakhand State Wildlife Board had approved denotifying the Shivalik elephant reserve.

Passing an order on a petition filed by a Dehradun-based activist, Reenu Paul, the High Court has asked the state government, central government, biodiversity board and Uttarakhand State Wildlife Board to submit their replies within four weeks. The High Court passed



The MAD activists during a protest against denotification of the elephant reserve in Dehradun. The order in Nainital on Friday.

decided to revoke the elephant reserve notification, social organisations began staging protests.

The Doon-based student activist group, Making By Being the Difference (MAD) and other organizations took active part in the agitation against chopping the lush green forest of Thano for expanding the airport. The MAD has welcomed the decision of the Uttarakhand High Court.

The Uttarakhand government has passed a notification about Shivalik elephant reserve in 2002 consisting of 14 elephant corridors.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures.

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- WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing



The state government is also committed to provide
Rs 1,868 to farmers as MSP for every quintal of paddy

ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER SARBANANDA SONOWAL

STATING THAT THE ECONOMY OF ASSAM IS PREDOMINANTLY DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURE

India

THUMBNAILS



A beneficiary receives vaccination during the Covid-19 dry run for immunization activity, in Ranchi Friday.

LANS

Leopard kills boy: A four-year-old boy was mauled to death by a leopard in a village in Gujarat's Gir-Somnath district, said an official of the state forest department on Friday. The incident took place on Thursday evening at Nava Ugra village under Una taluka. Hours after the incident, the department trapped a leopard from the same village and sent it to Jasadar rescue centre in the Gir Forest. PTI

HP's 3-year house tax exemption: Himachal Pradesh Urban Development Minister Suresh Bhardwaj said the residents of areas that have been merged with the newly created Palampur Municipal Corporation will be exempt from any house tax for three years. According to the draft and rules of the corporation, the development work of all the wards will continue as it is. PTI

India to head two UNSC sanctions panels

Country to also chair the UNSC's counter-terrorism committee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS, 8 JANUARY

India will chair the crucial Taliban and Libya sanctions committees and the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council during its tenure as non-permanent member of the powerful 15-nation UN body.

India, which has been at the forefront of the years-long efforts to reform the UNSC, began its two-year tenure at the Council on Friday last.

"The UN Security Council establishes subsidiary bodies on specific issues, including on the sanctions regimes."

"I'm happy to announce that India has been asked to chair three important com-

mittees of the Security Council, which include the Taliban Sanctions Committee, Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Libyan Sanctions Committee, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti said in a video message on Thursday.

Tirumurti said the Taliban Sanctions Committee, also known as the 1988 Sanctions Committee, has always been a high priority for India, keeping in mind the country's strong interest and commitment to peace, security, development and progress of Afghanistan.

Our chairing this committee at this juncture will help keep the focus on the presence of terrorists and their sponsors threatening the

peace process in Afghanistan. It has been our view that peace process and violence cannot go hand in hand, he said.

Tirumurti will chair the CTC in 2022, the year in which India will commemorate the 75th anniversary of its independence.

"India will also chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2022, which coincides with the 75th anniversary of India's independence. The chairing of this committee has a special resonance for India, which has not only been in the forefront of fighting terrorism, especially cross-border terrorism, but has also been one of its biggest victims, he said.

Tirumurti said the Libya Sanctions Committee, also

called the 1970 Sanctions Committee, is a very important subsidiary body of the Council, which implements the sanctions regime, including a two-way arms embargo on Libya and assets freeze, a travel ban and measures on illicit export of petroleum.

The CTC, established in the wake of the 9/11 terror attack in the US, works to bolster the ability of UN member states to prevent terrorist acts both within their borders and across regions. It is assisted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), which carries out the policy decisions of the body, conducts expert assessments of each member state and facilitates counter-terrorism technical assistance to countries.

Adhir slams delay in chit fund probe

KOLKATA, 8 JANUARY

Congress protesting against sloppiness of chit fund probe.

Leading a procession of Congress activists today, PCC chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury accused prime minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Mamata Banerjee of delaying the investigation into chit funds companies operating in the state. Modi and Miss Banerjee's recrimination is a camouflage to the bonhomie they share, he said taking part in the upcoming elections, Chowdhury said. SNS

Modi to inaugurate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) tomorrow as scheduled despite the ongoing Covid pandemic in view of the sentiments of the vibrant Indian diaspora, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has announced.

The PBD is the flagship event of the MEA and provides an important platform to engage and connect with overseas Indians. It will be held in the virtual format, as were the PBD conferences held recently in the run up to the upcoming event. The theme of the PBD this year is "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat." The convention will have three segments. It will feature the keynote address by the chief guest, Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi. The winners of the online "Bharat ko Janiye Quiz" for the youth will also be announced on the occasion. The inaugural session will be followed by the two plenary sessions. The first plenary on the "Role of Diaspora in Aatmanirbhar Bharat" will feature addresses by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and

The finale would be the valedictory session at which President Ram Nath Kovind will deliver his valedictory address to mark the occasion. The names of the "Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awardees" for 2020-21 will also be announced. The awards are conferred on select Indian diaspora members to recognise their achievements and honour their contributions to various fields, both in India and abroad.

The youth PBD was celebrated virtually today on the theme "Bringing together Young Achievers from India and Indian Diaspora" and was anchored by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The special guest for the event was Ms. Priyanka Radhakrishnan, Minister for Community and Voluntary Sector of New Zealand.

Roy-Hakim duo lash out at BJP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 8 JANUARY

While the BJP hit Nandigram with all guns blazing spearheaded by former Nandigram MLAs Suden Adhikari taking centre stage, Trinamul Congress packed fire-power with party's Dum Dum MP Sougata Roy and state minister for urban development and municipal affairs Firhad Hakim who took the cudgels against the saffron brigade in

two separate rallies in the city.

While addressing a rally at Baranagar, Roy brushed aside the possibility of BJP wresting power in Bengal as "day-dreaming," he vowed to stop anti-cow-slaughter law enactment in the state. Hakim mocked BJP for letting loose the central agencies to carry out political vendetta against TMC. "People of Bengal are with Mamata Banerjee and they never act on tall talks by the leaders coming from outside. We are

for all religion. BJP's divisive tactics to polarise electorate won't work here. No law that seeks to hurt religious sentiment will be enacted here. Trinamul Congress will never bring anti-cow slaughter law in West Bengal," Roy said. Hakim, in a salvo of attacks at the BJP from a rally in Entally called Bengal as the "hub of democracy," where leaders across political divide even if they are Boilinggutoddy have any fears of "persecution".

Kerala Governor, in policy address, attacks farm laws

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 8 JANUARY

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, addressing the state Assembly on Friday, criticised the three agriculture laws passed by the Union government saying that the new laws hurt the farmers and would only help corporates.

Speaking on the first day of the 22nd session of the 14th Legislative Assembly on Friday, Mr Khan said "The agrarian laws will undermine regulated markets, result in eventual demise of minimum support price and tilt the balance of bargaining power definitively in favour of corporate middlemen."

Stating that the farm laws will result in farmers losing bargaining powers and income, the governor said that Kerala, as a consumer state, is also going to be adversely affected by the amendment of Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and the resultant hoarding and profiteering.

He further said the Central government's withdrawal of import duty and regional trade agreements have proved calamitous for the state's commercial crops.

He also made a reference to the state government's stance against the Centre's Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019. "When apprehensions were raised regarding the consequences of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, we have taken the lead in alleviating the fears among large sections of the society," he said.

The governor's speech was interrupted by constant sloganising from the Congress-led UDF opposition prompting him to take pauses twice. "You have raised and chanted enough slogans. Please let me do my constitutional duty. Do not interrupt me," the governor told the UDF MLAs. Later, the MLAs staged a walkout.

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a female namely Smt. Parmeena, W/o: Sh. Shambhu Sharma, R/o: Khajan Ka Makhan Village Dallupura, Delhi has been reported missing since 22.12.2020 from the area of P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 40A dated 24.12.2020, U/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi. The description of missing female is as under:

Name: Smt. Parmeena, Age: 34 Years, Height: 5'5", Face: Round, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Medium, Eyes: Black Colour, Wearing: Suit-Salwar of yellow colour, black colour sleepers and white socks.

If anyone have any information about this missing female please inform P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639 SHO
Police Station New Ashok Nagar, Delhi Ph: 011-22610839, 8750870631

DP/318/ED/2020



Smt. Parmeena

CHANGE IN THE TIME-TABLE AND TERMINAL OF TRAIN NO. 02691/02692 BENGALURU-HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN-BENGALURU SUPERFAST A.C. EXP. SPECIAL

It is notified for the information of all concerned that the Train No. 02691/02692 Bengaluru-Hazrat Nizamuddin-Bengaluru Superfast A.C. Express Special will run with revised timings and its terminal will be changed to Hazrat Nizamuddin instead of New Delhi w.e.f. 10.01.2021 from Bengaluru and w.e.f. 13.01.2021 from Hazrat Nizamuddin. The detailed revised timings of this Special Service will be as under:-

REVISED TIMINGS OF TRAIN NO. 02691/02692 BENGALURU-HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN-BENGALURU

Train No. 02691	ARR. DEP.	STATIONS	Train No. 02692	ARR. DEP.
20:00	20:00	KSR Bengaluru	05:20	05:20
22:33	22:35	Shri Sathy Sai P. Nilayam	02:28	02:30
01:05	01:10	Guntakal Jn.	23:40	23:45
02:47	02:49	Raichur	22:06	22:08
04:30	04:31	Sedam	19:29	19:30
07:05	07:15	Secunderabad Jn.	17:10	17:25
09:03	09:05	Kazipet Jn.	15:13	15:15
12:20	12:25	Balharshah	12:15	12:20
14:55	15:00	Nagpur	09:25	09:30
19:16	19:18	Itarsi Jn.	5:23	05:25
20:50	21:00	Bhopal Jn.	3:45	03:55
00:16	00:21	Jhansi Jn.	00:25	00:30
01:19	01:21	Gwalior	23:08	23:10
02:58	03:00	Agra Cantt.	21:43	21:45
05:30	05:30	Hazrat Nizamuddin	19:50	19:50

Time-Table and Terminal Change effective from: 02691 Ex. Bengaluru from 10.01.2021 and 02692 Ex. Hazrat Nizamuddin from 13.01.2021.

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Security Helpline No. 182 | Integrated Helpline No. 139

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of Rail Passengers that the timings of the following Special Trains will be revised as under :-

Train No. & Name	Station	Existing Time	Revised Time	Date (from Originating station)
02616 New Delhi - Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M.G. Ramachandran Central Railway Station Express Special	Nagpur	10:25/10:30	10:15/10:20	From 10.01.2021
	Chandrapur	13:00/13:02	13:08/13:10	
02806 New Delhi - Visakhapatnam Express Special	Nagpur	10:35/10:40	10:25/10:30	From 10.01.2021

Note : - The time-table of other stations of the above special trains will hold good.

Train No. 05101/05102 Chhapra - Lokmanya Tilak Terminus - Chhapra will arrive at / depart from Lomanya Tilak Terminus instead of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus with immediate effect.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., must be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Security Helpline No. 182 | Integrated Helpline No. 139

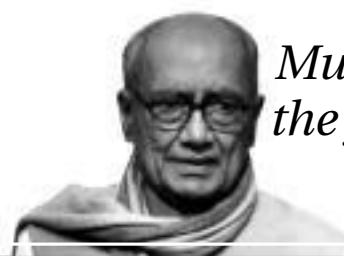
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TEMPORARY CANCELLATION AND PARTIALLY CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

In order to upgrade the infrastructure, Railways will undertake the Pre-Non-interlocking & Non-interlocking work in connection with commissioning of Hubballi yard remodelling work



Muslim localities in the state were being targeted during the fund raising rallies for the construction of Ram Temple

CONGRESS RAJYA SABHA MP DIGVIJAY SINGH
REACTING TO MADHYA PRADESH CM SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN'S STATEMENT ON STONE PELTERS

Guj HC refuses to ban kite flying on Uttarayan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, 8 JANUARY

Uttarayan, northern solstice which heralds the end of winter, is celebrated in Gujarat as a major festival when almost every person flies kites.

The Gujarat High Court on Friday refused to impose a ban on flying kites during Uttarayan on 14 January.

Uttarayan, northern solstice which heralds the end of winter, is celebrated in Gujarat as a major festival when almost every person flies kites.

The High Court, however, ruled that there would be reasonable restrictions like kite flying only from own rooftops and terraces.

Hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking a complete ban on kite flying on Uttarayan due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the High Court also heard the plea by an association of kite makers who said their livelihood would be adversely affected.

High Court bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice JB Pardiwala ruled that no one should be deprived of their livelihood. As a rejoinder to the PIL demanding a total ban on kite flying on this Uttarayan, the Gujarat Patang Manufacturers and Traders Association had sought to be heard as restrictions on flying and sale of kites would snatch away their livelihood.

Jagan moves to rebuild demolished temples

Nearly 40 temples were demolished during the TDP regime



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 8 JANUARY

Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy today laid the foundation stones for reconstruction of nine temples demolished during the tenure of N Chandrababu Naidu at a time when his own government is being criticised for failing to prevent attacks on temples and vandalism of idols.

Reddy laid the foundation stone at Seethama Padalu on the banks of river Krishna in Vijayawada for the temples which were mostly demolished to make way for the Kanak Durga flyover and during arrangements for the Krishnana Pushkralu.

According to the current government nearly 40 temples were demolished during the TDP regime and would now

be reconstructed though at alternate sites since new infrastructure have come up at their previous sites. The YSRCP government has definitely tried a clever ploy at a time when it has been put under tremendous pressure by the Opposition over the repeated attacks on temples in the state.

Former CM N Chandrababu Naidu has even resorted to calling Reddy, a practising Christian, "a betrayer of Hindus" over the incidents of vandalism. In view of the upcoming bypoll in Tirupati after the death of the sitting YSRCP MP the state government cannot afford to take the attacks on temples lightly.

The state government has also formed two committees at the state level and at the districts to maintain and promote communal harmony following repeated provocations

on the social media.

The state level committee will be headed by the chief secretary and DGP while the district level ones will be chaired by the collector with the superintendent of police as the vice chairman.

This has been done to tackle communal flare-ups quickly at the local level.

The CM today also laid the foundation stone for eight other development works worth Rs 77 crore in Kanakdurga temple. He later visited the temple.

Eversince Reddy assumed office he has been under attack with allegations of promoting Christianity at the cost of Hindu temples and other places of worship. His visit to Tirupati has also drawn criticism from the Opposition. Both BJP and TDP have attacked the chief minister on this ground.

India rejects US threat of sanctions over defence deal with Russia

He also noted that India and the US have a comprehensive global strategic partnership. At the same, India also has a special and privileged partnership with Russia.

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

India today dismissed the US threat that it could face American sanctions if it were to go ahead with the purchase of the S-400 air defence system from Russia.

"We pursue an independent foreign policy... this also applies to our defence acquisitions and supplies which are guided by national security interest," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at a media briefing.

He also noted that India and the US have a comprehensive global strategic partnership. At the same, India also has a special and privileged partnership with Russia.

The spokesperson's remarks came in response to outgoing US envoy Kenneth Juster's statement on Tuesday that the Indian government might have to make hard decisions regarding its decision to purchase the air defence system from Russia.

SNS

Budaun gangrape: Police quiz priest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BUDAUN (UP), JAN 8

A priest was quizzed throughout the night for his alleged role in the gangrape of an anganwadi worker in this Uttar Pradesh district after his arrest in the early hours of Friday, police said.

"Mahant" Satya Narayan, the main accused in the case, was hiding in a forest area near the house of one of his followers in Mewali village under the Ughaati police station, from where he was picked up in a late-night crackdown, they said, adding that he was on the

run for five days. They had informed senior officials about the incident after a delay of 17 hours, the SSP said. He said the priest is being questioned and further action will be taken in accordance with the information provided by him.

The priest will be taken for a medical examination and produced before a local court for seeking remand later.

The 50-year-old woman, who had gone to a temple, was found dead under mysterious circumstances on Sunday. Her family members accused the temple priest and his accomplices of raping and killing her.

Bihar JD-U MLA claims Nitish will quit soon to make way for Tejaswi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, 8 JANUARY

The two partners came into conflict shortly after winning the recently-held Assembly elections with the BJP taunting the JD-U as its "Junior Partner" and then keeping close tabs on the functioning of the Nitish Kumar government through its "shadow Cabinet".

Although Mandal has been infamous for making controversial statements, his claim assumes political significance in the light of continuing con-

flicts between the BJP and the JD-U. The relations between the two NDA partners soured following poaching of six JD-U legislators in Arunachal Pradesh by the BJP although the latter was enjoying a comfortable majority in the House and faced no threat to the government.

The two partners came into conflict shortly after winning the recently-held Assembly elections with the BJP taunting the JD-U as its "Junior Partner" and then keeping close tabs on the functioning of the Nitish Kumar government through its "shadow Cabinet".

Kumar enjoyed a free run during his previous terms but this time, he faces many obstacles on the way, one after another.

TENDER



HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Office of the Executive Engineer Shimla Division No. III, HPPWD Shimla-3.

Web: www.hppwd.gov.in Email: ee-smi3-hp@nic.in Phone/ Fax No.: 0177-2652832.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed item rate tenders on form No. 6&8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Shimla Division No. III, HP PWD, Shimla-3 on behalf of the Governor of H.P. for the following works from the eligible Contractors/Firms enlisted in HP PWD, so as to reach in his office on or before 03-03-2021 up to 10.30 A.M. and will be opened on the same day at 11.00 A.M. in the presence of the intending Contractors/Firms or their authorized representatives. The tender form can be had from his office against cash payment (non-refundable) on any working day up to 4.00 P.M. on 02-02-2021 and the application for issue of tender form shall be received up to 4.00 P.M. on 01-02-2021.

The earnest money in the shape of National saving Certificate/Time deposit account/saving account in any of the post office in HP, duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, Shimla Division No-III must accompany with the application form for the tender offer. Conditional tender and the tender received without earnest money will summarily be rejected. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to reject the tender without assigning any reason there to. Other conditions are applicable as per form No. 6&8. The offer shall remain open for 90 days.

Sr. No	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earnest money	Time	Form No	Cost of form
1	S/R to Council Chamber building at Vidhan Sabha Shimla(SH:- Renovation of police Gumpati near main gate etc.)	Rs. 3,53,426/-	Rs.7,100/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
2	S/R to Ellerslie main building at HP Sectt. Chotta Shimla(SH:- P/F cupboard in room No.E-112 & E-113 and C/O base for LED panel in Control room of Ellerslie main building).	Rs. 1,27,078/-	Rs.2,550/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
3	S/R to type-IV residential building Set no.1 & 2 of block-A at Correspondent Estate Shimla(SH:- P/F steel work, welded mesh, polycarbonate transparent sheet and painting in balcony etc.)	Rs. 1,57,214/-	Rs. 3,150/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
4	S/R to residential Ctrs. at Spring Field Chotta Shimla(SH:- Dismantling work, P/L tiles work, cupboard, aluminium work, painting,dismantling and sanitary work in type-III Qtr. Set No.6).	Rs. 1,69,519/-	Rs. 3,400/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
5	S/R to Himachal Hospital of Mental Health and Rehabilitation at Shimla.(SH:- P/F Interlocking paver block for approach road to OPD block).	Rs. 2,88,964/-	Rs. 5,780/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
6	S/R to Ellerslie main building at HP Sectt. Chotta Shimla(SH:- P/F cupboard, painting,dismantling in record room of C.M. constituency cell on 2nd floor).	Rs. 1,71,573/-	Rs. 3,440/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
7	S/R to Council Chamber Building at Vidhan Sabha Shimla(SH:- Renovation of main entrance M.S. gate, M.S. shutter, painting 3,13,720/- & distemping etc.)	Rs. 3,600/-	Rs. 6,300/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
8	S/R to various residential blocks/sets at Nabha Estate Shimla(SH:- P/F welded mesh with steel frame in block 20/2 1,49,477/- and 20/3 G.F. at Nabha Estate No.20/3 G.F. at Nabha Estate etc.).	Rs. 2,990/-	Rs. 2,990/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
9	S/R to Set No.210 at New MLA Hostel at Vidhan Sabha Shimla(SH:- occupied by Sh. Rajinder rana(SH:- Dismantling work, providing wood work, P/F tiles work, painting, distemping and sanitary fittings etc.).	Rs. 3,59,683/-	Rs. 7,200/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
10	S/R to block-A building at IGMC Shimla(SH:- Outside painting and distemping etc.).	Rs. 1,75,383/-	Rs. 3,510/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
11	R/R damages to Oak Over building Hon'ble C.M. official residence at Shimla(SH:- C/O R/Wall 0/27.50 to 0/33 and other misc. repair works etc.).	Rs. 3,02,705/-	Rs. 6,100/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
12	S/R to Armsdale building at HP Sectt. Chotta Shimla(SH:- P/G. pipe lined/maintaining of windows and providing brick work in room No. A-522 and other minor work etc.).	Rs. 1,46,645/-	Rs. 2,940/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
13	S/R to Ellerslie main building at HP Sectt. Chotta Shimla(SH:- Renovation of room vacated by PWD Electrical in ground floor 2,05,905/-).	Rs. 2,05,905/-	Rs. 4,120/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
14	R/R damages to Oak Over building Hon'ble C.M. official residence at Shimla(SH:- C/O R/Wall adjacent to kitchen garden etc. 0/33 to 0/39.50).	Rs. 3,05,753/-	Rs. 6,150/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
15	S/R to Ellerslie main building at HP Sectt. Chotta Shimla(SH:- Painting and Distemping in room No. A-221, A 222, A 618, A 215, A422, A424, A 522, A 216, A 224, A 507 and bath room of C.M. office and polishing in VIP waiting hall in C.M. office etc.).	Rs. 1,27,89	Rs. 2,560/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
16	C/O Lift of PSC building at Nigam Vicar Shimla(SH:- Shifting of reception counter near main entrance, partition, 2,44,398/- office tables, cupboards in Chairman staff room and shutters in reception counter etc.).	Rs. 4,890/-	Rs. 4,890/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
17	S/R to parking for Security guard building at Raj Bhawan Shimla(SH:- C/O ATM room & welded mesh in Car parking etc.) 2,01,184/-	Rs. 4,030/-	Rs. 4,030/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
18	S/R to Ellerslie main building at HP Sectt. Chotta Shimla(SH:- P/F Box for coffee Machine in CS office, P/F near C.M. lift, sanitary fitting, painting and distemping in room No. G-225 and E-209 etc.).	Rs. 1,39,475/-	Rs. 2,790/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
19	R/R damages to Oak Over building Hon'ble C.M. official residence at Shimla(SH:- C/O R/Wall at RD. 0/47.55 to 0/53.85 and 3,27,155/- 0/0 to 0/7.50).	Rs. 3,19,657/-	Rs. 6,400/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
20	R/R damages to Oak Over building Hon'ble C.M. official residence at Shimla(SH:- C/O R/Wall for protection of boundary etc. 0/39.50 to 0/47.55).	Rs. 3,04,773/-	Rs. 6,100/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
21	S/R to Old MLA Qtr. near Boileauganj Crossing Shimla (SH:- Providing PVC water storage tank, random rubble masonry pedestal for water storage tank with necessary fittings and painting etc.).	Rs. 2,30,100/-	Rs. 4,600/-	One Month	6&8	350/-
22	S/R to Annadale view building at Chaura maidan Shimla(SH:- Widening of approach road by providing R/Wall and P/F M.S. railing leading to Hon'ble Speaker residence etc.).	Rs. 525/20-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK	Rs. 525/20-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK	One Month	6&8	350/-

Terms & Conditions:-
1. The contractor/firm shall have his GST No. and attested copy of the same be attached with the application for issue of tender form.
2. The contractor/firm should attach attested copy of registration/renewal.
3. Copy of PAN card be attached with the application form

Smooth transition of power in India after every election post-independence: LS Speaker

PTI
DEHRADUN, 8 JANUARY

The smooth transition of power after 17 General elections and over 300 Assembly polls in the country since independence is a salient feature of Indian democracy, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Friday.

Keeping the people at the centre of governance has been the basic concept of the Constitution and has deepened the faith of citizens in democracy, he said.

Birla also said the country cannot be empowered without strengthening the Panchayati Raj institutions and making them more accountable to the people.

Speaking at an outreach programme here to introduce and familiarise Panchayat

representatives with the functioning of the Parliament and democratic principles, Birla said Gram Panchayats were the main force

behind the strength of Indian democracy.

Speaking at an outreach programme here to introduce and familiarise Panchayat

Assembly polls is a specialty of our democracy. We have made efforts to strengthen democracy from Panchayat to Parliament, the Lok Sabha Speaker said.

Panchayati Raj institutions like Gram Sabha have been our democratic traditions. Our concept of democracy is strong, he said, addressing representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions.

He said if Panchayati Raj institutions are run effectively and responsibly, a comprehensive change can be brought about in society.

Birla also talked about the scope for development of rural tourism in Utt

Anything goes

The free-for-all witnessed in Washington DC on 6 January as a mob of President Donald J. Trump's supporters ~ irresponsibly egged on by the President himself for which he must bear criminal culpability ~ stormed the US Congress and wrought untold damage both physical and psychological on the structures of the world's oldest democracy is not just condemnable but contemptible. In the apportioning of blame for this tragic turn of events, Mr Trump is rightly copping most of it. But what of the enablers? Because at the crux of this crisis on the continent of Circe, as it were, is the necessity to evolve the means by which Odysseus' men turned into swine by the eponymous sorceress can be restored back to human form. First, let us deal with those within the Trump universe. The disgraced President has worked assiduously to create an alternate reality replete with conspiracy theories, self-serving lies, infantile outbursts, and a lynch mob mentality. The cult which has bought into this grotesque fantasy numbers in the millions. More importantly, the platforms he has used to create this dystopian world have been varied ~ reality TV shows, leveraging the obsession with celebrity-cum-business news in mainstream media and, vitally, his use of social media. The last-mentioned of these is the key. For all their faults, and there are many, television and print media are regulated to the extent that they are morally responsible and legally liable for the content telecast or published by them respectively. Not so, social media. Ironically, possibly the only thing the Twitter-addicted US President got right in policy terms over the past four years was his effort to bring transnational digital platforms under some sort of regulatory framework. But because his intentions were so obviously suspect, the pushback was strong.

The Capitol disgrace the world has witnessed is but a mirror image of the anything goes approach enabled by the vicious abuse, fantastical fabrications, criminal defamation, cancel culture, and worse on unaccountable social media. President Trump is only following the template to promote his own biases and megalomania. Few would disagree with Jack Dorsey and Marc Zuckerberg acting with alacrity in banning the US President from Twitter and Facebook indefinitely given the potential the latter's incendiary comments have to ignite hate and violence. But consider, for a moment, if the leader of the so-called free world was a politician whose worldview Mr Zuckerberg and his megacorporation was ideologically simpatico to and he had had promoted a modern-day equivalent of the storming of the Bastille instead of the Capitol. Would the reaction have been as swift, or would the response be a shrug of the shoulders premised on the argument that social media can't be held legally responsible for what individuals post?

Dissent in China

It might appear to be somewhat ironical on the face of it, but the striking feature of the centenary celebrations of the omnipotent Communist Party of China (July 2021) must be that it has cracked the whip on dissent, and not through the normally customary bout of ideological grandstanding in the Great Hall of the People. It thus comes about that the CPC has rather dramatically amended the rules of engagement for its 92 million members. The cadres have now been granted the right to demand the removal of "incompetent leaders", implicitly enforcing a remarkable degree of checks and balances. The party has made it clear that it shall not tolerate what it calls "public expression of dissent". The impression thus conveyed is that dissent is arguably manifest in one of the world's most regimented entities, whose role has traditionally influenced governance and the military. It bears recall that the exceptionally strident dissent at Tiananmen Square in 1989 was spearheaded by the people, and not by the party. The amended rules provide for new guidelines on access to information and the party's praxis of handling "internal complaints". Going by the CPC's formulation, the ultimate objective is to "boost democracy within the party". Clearly, a measure of dissent is permissible with a modified 'yes'. The new rules are explicit on the point that the CPC will not tolerate dissent from its own ranks, most particularly by "airing the complaints in public". So, "when a party member criticises, exposes or requests for treatment or punishment, he/she shall use organisational channels. He/she shall not spread it freely or on the internet, exaggerate or distort facts, or falsely accuse or frame up". Ergo, the inherent curbs on dissent are no less critical than the right to hold a different point of view, even to curb the activities of wayward leaders. The party leadership's control over any expression of dissent has now been almost institutionalised. More basically, dissent can perhaps be aired on the party's terms. Article 16 of the rule book states that "party members shall not publicly express opinions that are inconsistent with the decisions of the central committee of the CPC". The new rules state that "work-related mistakes" will no longer be treated as violation of discipline. According to yet another rule, party members will be entitled to propose the removal of functionaries "if they can prove that they are incompetent". The onus is, therefore, on the complainant. Altogether, the President-for-life, Xi Jinping, has entrenched his omnipotent authority further still, and as never before since he assumed charge as China's supreme leader. Albeit concessionary in certain respects, the expression of dissent within the CPC is a tough proposition. Over and above the dissenting voices, the CPC leadership will control all and everything. The whiff of democracy remains an anathema in Mr Xi's China, almost reminiscent of the era of Mao Zedong and in many respects worse, when we consider the avenues that technology has opened up.

Obama The Worst?

Obama simply saw no percentage in promoting policies against stiff opposition from his campaign donors. If the measure of a presidency is the failure, and indeed disinclination, to meet the high expectations one generates, Obama should go down as the most disappointing president in American history



In his presidential memoir "A Promised Land" Barack Obama on the first page laments the heartrending fact that in 2016 he yielded the highest office in the land to Donald Trump, an uninhibited egomaniac who was "diametrically opposed to everything that we stood for," which is a statement that begs for a much closer look. Just a page later, Obama commences his chatty account of the skyrocketing political career of an earnest and ambitious young man (himself) deeply concerned with discerning how to "fit in," and there's the rub. Fitting in with the establishment is the last thing one expects from a professed agent of change. Obama turned out to be nothing of the sort.

In the influential circles Obama craved to enter the players are lauded by their peers and by the media for appearing, like Joe Biden today, as "reasonable," and Obama, unlike raucous Trump, is gifted with a knack for striking sober poses of the utmost reasonableness. After eight years of George Bush Jr.'s own piratical administration, ordinary Americans in 2008 after a financial crash reckoned it was highly reasonable for the next government to provide national health care, withdraw from deadly foreign mires, punish corrupt corporations and banks, tax the rich and launch job-creating infrastructure programmes. Obama, who one of us heard deliver a stirring anti-war speech in 2003, presented himself as the special politician to do it, or at least begin it.

The thrilling prospect of real reform is what gave many average income Obama voters, who later defected to Trump, the vain hope that their pressing everyday concerns, not the agendas of the wealthy, would be addressed at last. Alas, what is defined as reasonable can change in the blink of an eye when a smart young reformer steps into the "business as usual" realm to which he obligingly adapts because he is so, well, reasonable.

One adapts to the powers that be, to 'go along to get along', to consecrate things as they are. Where do hope and change figure into that beady-eyed imperative? What we beheld in Obama, and his Goldman Sachs cabinet, were cronies who indulged in social-

ly acceptable cynicism, which meant one reneged, however regrettably, on promises to the ho! pollio!

In Ron Suskind's book "Confidence Men", Obama at the outset of his presidency, and after ample time to plot his course, hosted a gang of nervous Wall Street and banking titans who were deeply nervous when the meeting began. In exchange for crucial Federal bailouts Obama could have asked the tycoons to do backflips if he pleased, only it was he who did the backflip, promising these malefactors of formerly great wealth, who inflicted their own wounds, that he would



KURT JACOBSEN
The writers are well-known commentators and the authors of *No Clean Hands: Parables of Permanent War*, and other books



SAYEED HASAN KHAN

restore their wealth, positions and status. Not one was prosecuted.

All you need to know is who the president's advisors are to know what policy will be, and his key advisors were all Wall Streeters who easily nudged the economically innocent Obama their way. To be fair, Obama faced a Republican-dominated Congress for the last six years of his presidency, but the obvious abject failure to help out the "little guy" during his first two years with a Democratic Congress had something to do with that electoral turn.

Estimates run to a tsunami of 10 million evictions in the 2008 crisis, but no one knows the total for sure because the US government does not keep data on foreclosures. It relies on dodgy information from self-interested mortgage lenders and realtors instead, both of the groups that centrist Democrats are determined to please. Meanwhile, we do

know that 15 too-big-to-fail banks today, out of over 5,000 federally insured banks, command 52 per cent of all deposits according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Obama did not even have the stomach to appoint firebrand Elizabeth Warren as head of a new financial oversight agency with actual powers to punish culprits.

What happened in the Obama years? The "Overton window", is a dubious but general notion in political science which argues that politicians, much like idealized markets, respond to the public's definition of needs, not vice versa. Political authorities evidently can only wring their hands until public preferences somehow align with their own goals. This naive view sidesteps the vast influence that the Executive branch, and accommodating private media, exert over public opinion. Examples? It was a very short distance from Donald Rumsfeld shaking hands with Saddam Hussein in 1985 to depicting the latter as the greatest threat to world peace since Adolf Hitler.

Colin Powell, credit to him, is still ashamed of his misleading UN speech in 2003 that opened the floodgates to the invasion of Iraq. We could go on and on with cases of politicians manipulating the public, for good ends and ill. This "Overton window" of permissible policy at any given time is the more the result of an imbalanced struggle between politicians, special interests and the public.

Franklin D. Roosevelt used the "bully pulpit" to whip up support for the New Deal, and it worked. Lyndon Johnson likewise created expectations ~ dashed by the Vietnam war ~ that a civil rights and welfare-oriented nation would welcome hitherto marginalised groups. Obama simply saw no percentage in promoting policies against stiff opposition from his campaign donors. If the measure of a presidency is the failure, and indeed disinclination, to meet the high expectations one generates, Obama should go down as the most disappointing president in American history. Who else prepared the way for Trump? Biden did not make the same mistake, generating no uplifting expectations he could fail to fulfill. That too is likely to be a grave mistake.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES
Winter of despair

Many countries across the world, including neighbouring India, have begun to roll out Covid-19 vaccines ~ a sign of hope for the world that is desperate to get back to normal. However, several countries are reporting the spread of a new and more active variant of the coronavirus ~ a sign that we are in for some more months of despair. It is the best of times, it is the worst of times, to rephrase the famous phrase used by Charles Dickens in his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. In its attempt to mitigate the spread of the new strain, Britain has imposed a nationwide lockdown ~ even as it rolls out its vaccination programme aggressively ~ raising alarms for the world that the danger is far from being averted yet. To borrow Dickens's phrase, it is the spring of hope, it is the winter of despair. In Nepal, however, it is just despair everywhere. Nepal's Covid-19 report is a sorry story of missed opportunities. After over 10 months in limbo, several spaces that invite large gatherings within closed and cosy spaces, including schools, fitness centres and cinema halls, are reopening. Most businesses are back on track even as public health experts warn the rampant reopening is certain to invite yet another wave of coronavirus infections. As the two factions within the ruling Nepal Communist Party, spearheaded by co-chairs KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, continue to train their guns on each other, there is no hope for the vaccine to be rolled out effectively. But that has not stopped the government from continuing

THE KATHMANDU POST
OUSLY SHEDDING ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO SECURE THE HEALTH OF THE CITIZENS. LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC GATHERINGS ARE A DAILY SIGHT IN KATHMANDU AND ELSEWHERE, WITH THE RULING NEPAL COMMUNIST PARTY Factions LEADING THE FLOATING OF THE COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOL.

While the pandemic continues to be the talk of the town, the imperatives of minimum guidelines such as maintaining safe distance, cleansing of hands, and wearing masks have more or less been lost. In Nepal, the infection tally stands at 262,784, although this is a fairly gross understatement as infection in a significant section of the population goes undetected for lack of contact tracing and testing. What is frustrating is that even those institutions that could have utilised the pandemic to transform the way they operated have reopened without learning much. Ten months was long enough for schools across the country to gather resources to digitise their classrooms so that students would not have to be physically present to take their lessons. Neither did the schools consider it financially feasible to continue running on the digital platform until the pandemic ends. Nor has the government provided substantial support to the schools and students towards transforming their teaching-learning practices as per the requirements of the digital age.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Centre must reach out to critics

SIR, This refers to the news item, "No infirmity in approvals, Central Vista Project gets SC nod", (*The Statesman*, 6 January).

The apex court's green light to the controversial Central Vista revamp project clears the way for a new parliament building envisaged to be ready by August 2022, when the country celebrates the 75th Independence day.

The 2:1 majority verdict came on petitions challenging the December 2019 notification regarding change of land use. Several public figures have been quite vocal in expressing concern regarding urgency to formalise such a grand project in the time of the Covid emergency and potential damage to the environment.

On the matter of conservation heritage, the Supreme Court wants clearances to be sought. Also in its

to-do list is the setting up of smog towers.

The project proponent has been asked to ensure these as an integral part, with directions to the Ministry of Environment and Forests to install smog towers in future projects.

The ground breaking ceremony last month was boycotted by the opposition and frowned upon by the Supreme Court since the case was pending.

Now that the project has been approved, the Centre needs to reach out across the political spectrum and be mindful of apprehensions.

It claims the project will take care of the deficiencies of the existing Parliament building like inadequate space, structural weaknesses and security problems, and save the exchequer crores of rupees

paid as rent for offices. That may be sound logic, but building an edifice for a forum meant for informed discussion and debate while giving these the go-by is a false start.

Yours, etc., N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru, 6 January

UNITY A MUST

SIR, Prafull Goradia is spot-on in his article "China's Border Claims" (4 January).

China, the communist giant, is the most powerful nation in Asia both militarily and economically and at the same time an expansionist to the core.

Combination of these factors has turned it into a dangerous and aggressive nation. No country in Asia has the military prowess to singly resist the Dragon in the event of a military confrontation.

ENGLISH, PLEASE

SIR, Arguments put forward in the article of Dilip Kumar Sarkar in your Perspective page of 3 January, favouring English as medium of instruction in IITs are highly commendable. Being alumnus of 1963 from Kharagpur, we understood the difference between English and Bengali medium students. Idea of teaching engineering in regional languages in IITs and NITs must be discarded as students come from different linguistic groups. How can there be classes of different languages in the same institute? Example of Russian journals on "Sputnik" getting translated by the American President should be an eye opener for our NEP makers. In a country of 130 crores and of 180+ regional languages, education may be through mother tongue upto school level but for engineering and medical science, it has to be in English because of its international acceptance. It is essential to grasp advanced knowledge especially in institutes like IITs, IIMs and IISc. Even JEE should be in English for proper screening of talent. English is now taught all over the world.

Yours, etc., Amal Biswas, Kolkata, 4 January.

Hence in order to remain safe, other states direly need a well-knit alliance. The number of alliance members should be many. In the event of hostility, they must collectively try to resist China's nefarious designs. A firm alliance is the best option; otherwise these nations will be continually browbeaten.

Yours, etc., Aranya Sanyal, Siliguri; 5 January

VITAL ROLE

SIR, Actor-politician Kamal Haasan's novel election promise of 'payment to homemakers' is welcome. 'Homemakers' are a key segment that no political party in Tamil Nadu has ever attempted to recognise before.

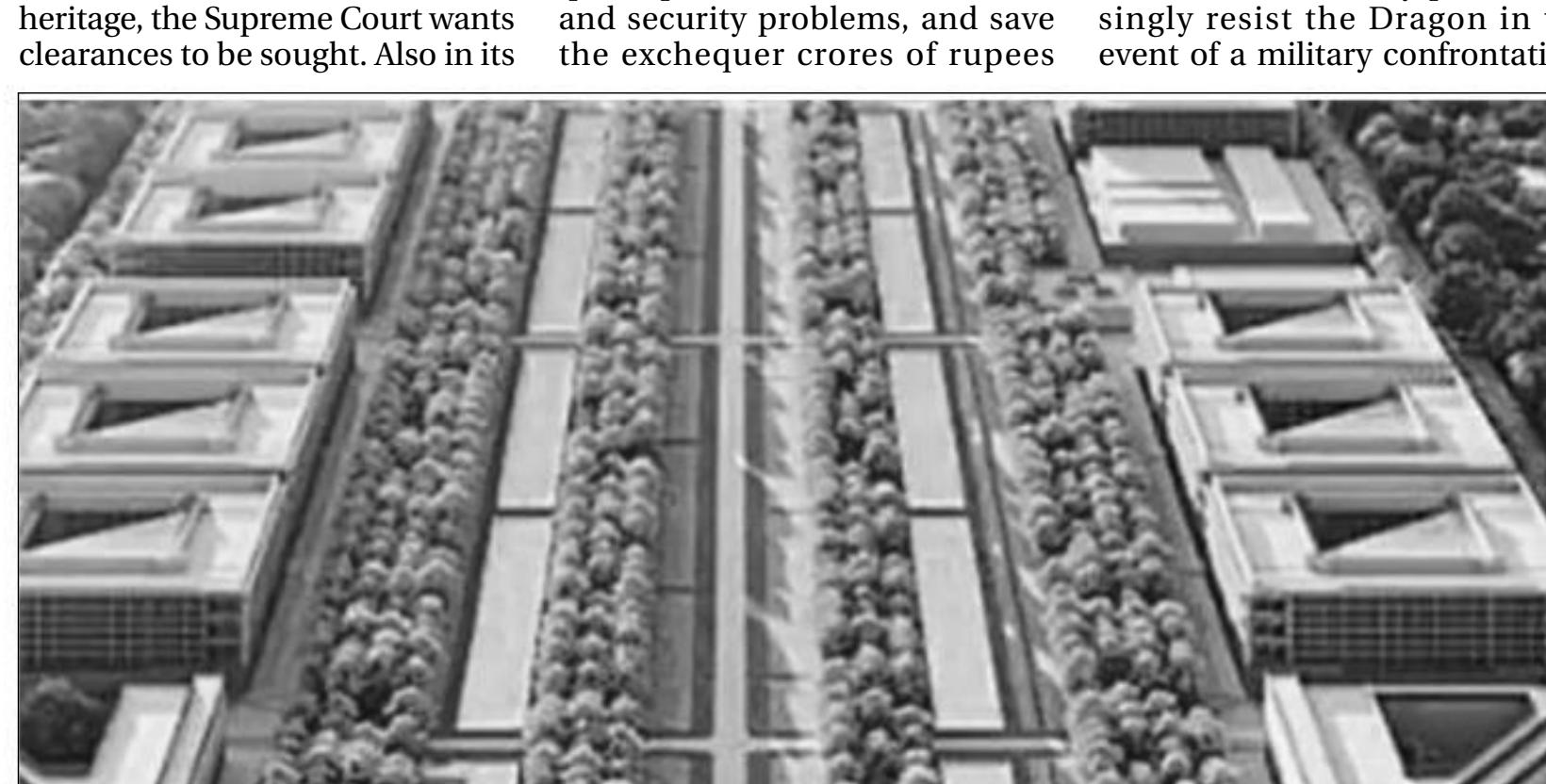
It took some intelligent minds and many women who understand the value of the so-called 'housewives' to provide them with a better name ~ 'homemaker'. From household chores to plan-

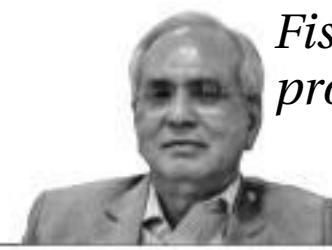
ning family events, homemakers have multifarious skills that many earning male members cannot match.

It may be recalled that few months back the Madras High Court enhanced monetary compensation ~ from Rs 8.46 lakh to Rs 14.07 lakh ~ awarded to a homemaker by the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal in Salem, Tamil Nadu. The judgment held that the homemaker stood on a higher pedestal than other earning family members. The Court also noted that the value of the homemaker's contribution was irreplaceable and cannot be compared with that of an "ordinary employee".

It is time the contribution of women to the household is duly recognised in terms of monetary compensation.

Yours, etc., Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai, 6 January.





Fiscal measures announced by the government are projected to offset the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

RAJIV KUMAR
NITI AAYOG VICE-CHAIRMAN

THUMBNAILS

CCI clears Columbia-Manipal deal: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Friday approved acquisition of Columbia Asia Hospitals by Manipal Health Enterprises. The approval came after multi-specialty healthcare provider Manipal Hospitals in November 2020 said it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Columbia Asia Hospitals in India. The acquisition will be for Rs 2,100 crore, sources had earlier said. Together, the combined entity will have a presence of 27 hospitals across 15 cities with over 7,300 beds and a pool of more than 4,000 doctors and over 10,000 employees, the healthcare providers had said in a statement.

PTI

Tech Mahindra's market capitalisation went past the Rs 1-lakh crore mark helped by a rally in its stock price on Friday. At the close of trade, the company's market valuation was at Rs 1,01,671.34 crore on the BSE. With this, the company has become the fifth information technology (IT) firm to enter the Rs 1-lakh crore market capitalisation club.

PTI

DcodeAI learning platform: DcodeAI, an EdTech start-up focused on Artificial Intelligence, has launched new DIY learning platform, including Natural Language Processing (NLP), Computer Vision (CV), Data Science for children aged between 12 and 18 years. DcodeAI was launched earlier this year, with the vision to equip the next-generation of learners with AI skills, without having a formal coding background, said a Press release.

SNS

Corning-Lava: Corning Incorporated has announced that Lava will be the first mobile device manufacturer in India to sell a Rs 5,499 military-grade smartphone featuring Gorilla Glass 3. Slated for release on 22 January, the Z1 smartphone is part of a new line-up of recently launched Lava devices that also include the Z2, Z4 and Z6 smartphones which all utilise Gorilla Glass 3, it said.

SNS

Samsung smartphone: Samsung has launched the "Max Up" Galaxy M02s under its popular Galaxy M series. The phone is priced below Rs 10,000 and is packed with a range of Samsung's first-ever features for the digital-first consumers in this price segment, according to a Press release from the company.

SNS

Nod to NHPC's resolution: The Hyderabad Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved state-owned NHPC's resolution plan for Jal Power Corporation Ltd (JPCL), according to a statement. JPCL is the second company after Lanco Teesta Hydro Power Ltd (LTHPL) to be acquired through the NCLT process by NHPC, NHPC said.

PTI

Economy to rebound with 8.9% growth in FY 2021-22

Economic activity showed significant improvement in the last quarter of 2020, says IHS Markit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

Indian economy is likely to rebound with an 8.9 per cent growth in the fiscal year beginning April 2021 after economic activity showed significant improvement in the last quarter, IHS Markit said today.

The National Statistical Organisation (NSO) on Thursday predicted that the economy will contract 7.7 per cent in the current financial year ending in March, the worst performance in four decades.

"The Indian economy suffered a severe recession in 2020," IHS Markit said in a note. "The worst contraction occurred during the period from March until August, with the economy having shown a strong rebound in economic activity since September."

The GDP contracted by a record 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter following a national lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The contraction came

OUTLOOK FOR GDP



► "With the Indian economy already showing a significant improvement in domestic economic activity in the fourth quarter of 2020, the outlook is for Indian GDP growth to rebound by 8.9 per cent year-on-year in the 2021-22 fiscal year," IHS said.

► Stating that there has been a marked improvement in business conditions

down to 7.5 per cent in the September quarter. "During the fourth quarter of 2020, India's industrial production and consumption expenditure have shown a rebound.

"October data showed that industrial production grew by 3.6 per cent year-on-year compared with a steep contraction of 55.5 per cent in April 2020," IHS said.

Stating that there has been a marked improvement in business conditions across the manufacturing sector, it said factory orders increased during December on the back of the loosening of Covid-19 restrictions, strengthening demand and improved market conditions.

Although India faces a vast challenge to vaccinate its

population of 1.4 billion people, it is about to commence its Covid-19 vaccination programme.

The health regulator has approved the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for emergency use.

An important advantage for India is that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is already being manufactured in the country by Serum Institute of India, which projects that it will be able to manufacture 100 million Covid-19 vaccine doses per month by April 2021.

"With the Indian economy already showing a significant improvement in domestic economic activity in the fourth quarter of 2020, the outlook is for Indian GDP growth to rebound by 8.9 per cent year-on-year in the 2021-22 fiscal year," IHS said.

India Ratings & Research said the NSO projections for GDP growth in FY21 mean that the size of the Indian economy is expected to shrink to Rs 134.40 lakh crore in FY21 as against Rs 145.66 lakh crore

in FY20.

From the demand side, except government consumption all other components namely private consumption, investment, exports and imports are estimated to contract in FY21," it said.

Although the headwinds emanating from the Covid-19 related challenges are unlikely to go away till mass vaccination becomes a reality, the rating agency said it expects GDP growth to turn positive in Q4FY21 (January-March) and FY22 GDP to come in at 9.6 per cent.

Arun Singh, global chief economist, Dun & Bradstreet, said the first advance estimates of GDP growth for FY21 is a tad lower than the RBI projection of 7.5 per cent contraction but more optimistic than the projections provided by many institutions, global and domestic.

"We expect the final GDP data to be slightly lower than the first advance estimates when the data for the informal economy is included and adjusted," he said.

Gopinathan said TCS' con-

REPORT CARD

► TCS reported a 7.2 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 8,701 crore for the December 2020 quarter compared to Rs 8,118 crore in the year-ago period.

► Revenue grew by 5.4 per cent to Rs 42,015 crore from Rs 39,854 crore in the same period last fiscal.

fidence reinforced by the "continued strength in our order book and deal pipeline".

V Ramakrishnan, chief financial officer at TCS, said the company saw strong growth across all its verticals.

Operational benefits from its SBWS (secure borderless workspaces) model allowed it to post the highest operating margin in the last five years, even after rolling out a salary increase this quarter, he added.

"This and our strong balance sheet position us very strongly to seize the opportunities that the current market offers, and more closely partner our customers in their growth and transformation journeys," he added.

TCS has declared an interim dividend of Rs 6 per share.

Sector-wise, BSE IT, auto, teck, utilities, oil and gas, realty and capital goods indices surged as much as 3.55 per cent, while metal and telecom were in the red.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices advanced up to 1.01 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with significant gains, while Shanghai was in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a positive note in early deals.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.59 per cent higher at \$54.70 per barrel.

The rupee rose 7 paise to finish at 73.24 against the US dollar.

Foreign investors bought shares worth Rs 382.30 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to provisional exchange data.

TCS logs strongest Q3 growth in 9 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 8 JANUARY

The country's largest software services firm TCS today reported a 7.2 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 8,701 crore for the December 2020 quarter compared to Rs 8,118 crore in the year-ago period.

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SBI offers concession on home loan rates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 8 JANUARY



State Bank of India today announced an interest concession of up to 30 basis points on home loans and a 100 per cent waiver on processing fees. The new home loan interest rates are linked to Cibil score and start from 6.80 per cent for loans up to Rs 30 lakh and 6.95 per cent for loans above Rs 30 lakh, a bank release said.

"With an aim to offer attractive concessions to the home buyers, country's largest lender SBI announces further interest concession of up to 30 bps on home loans and 100 per cent waiver on processing fees," the release said.

The bank said interest concession of up to 30 basis points is also available in eight metro cities for loans up to Rs 5

Sensex, Nifty rise to new lifetime highs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 8 JANUARY

Domestic markets returned to winning ways today after two days of declines as strong buying in IT stocks ahead of TCS' results propelled benchmarks to fresh lifetime highs amid a bullish trend overseas.

A recovering rupee and foreign fund inflows further buoyed sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 689.19 points or 1.43 per cent to close at a record 48,782.51 points. It touched an all-time peak of 48,854.34 points during the session.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rallied 209.90 points or 1.48 per cent to close at its new lifetime high of 14,347.25 points. During the day, the index scaled a record level of 14,367.30 points.

Maruti was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rally-

ing 5.94 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, Infosys, UltraTech Cement, M&M, PowerGrid and NTPC.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel, SBI, ITC, HDFC and Bajaj Finance slipped up to 1.37 per cent.

During the week, the Sensex rallied 913.53 points or 1.90 per cent, while the Nifty soared 328.75 points or 2.34 per cent.

According to Binod Modi, head-strategy at Reliance Securities, growing expectations of stronger fiscal stimulus in the US after Congress confirmed President-elect Joe Biden's victory fuelled equities globally.

"Markets completely downplayed earlier concerns of reversal of lower tax rates in the scenario of Democrats taking control of both the houses of Congress," he added.

A sustained rebound in

BULLISH OUTLOOK



key economic data for December 2020 and likely commencement of vaccination drive shortly in India augur well for domestic equities, the underlying strength of domestic equities is intact, which essentially can propel benchmark indices to witness fresh highs in coming weeks.

"FPIs are unlikely to turn net sellers...considering the status of global economy, stance of global central bankers and weak dollar," he stated.

Piramal Enterprises claims its bid for DHFL highest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

"The Piramal bid for DHFL offers the lenders the highest upfront cash recovery, has the highest score on the CoC evaluation matrix, is fully compliant with all regulatory norms, and is fully and immediately implementable," the company said in a statement.

Since the conclusion of the fifth and final round of the bidding process last month, Piramal Enterprises and the US-based Oaktree Capital are claiming that their bids are the highest and fully implementable.

According to sources, suitors have submitted bids in the range of Rs 35,000-37,000 crore.

The committee of creditors (CoC) is examining each bid in detail, including qualitative and quantitative parameters and it is expected to take a call on 14 January.

According to sources, Oaktree in a letter dated 6 January to members of the CoC

Coolpad plans mobile accessories production

NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

Smartphone maker Coolpad today said it plans to start mobile accessories production in India by the end of this year as the company announced foray into the segment with wireless ear buds.

"We have scaled our production capacity for smartphones and accessories to 5 million units and soon plan to start the production of accessories in India by end of 2021," Coolpad India CEO Fisher Yuan said in a statement.

The company has started selling its first audio accessory Cool Bass Buds through Amazon for Rs 1,199.

"After positioning Coolpad as one of the leading brands in the budget smartphone category, we are thrilled to enter into the audio accessories segment," Yuan said.

All fresh bookings for the new Thar, effective 8 January 2021, will have prices

M&M hikes prices of vehicles by 1.9%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 JANUARY

as applicable on the date of delivery, the company added.

Veejay Nakra, chief executive officer, automotive division, M&M said the price increase was necessitated due to unprecedented increase in commodity prices and various other input costs over the past many months.

"We have made all efforts to reduce our costs and deferred price increase for a significant duration, but due to the quantum of input cost increase, consequently we are taking this price increase effective 8 January 2021," he added.

Meanwhile, premium car maker Mercedes-Benz India today said it is hiking its car prices by 5 per cent from 15 January owing to the currency depreciation and increasing input costs that have pushed up the overall production cost.

Gems & jewellery exports picking up in major markets: GJEPC

MUMBAI, 8 JANUARY

Gems and jewellery exports reached the pre-Covid levels in November and December as the demand picked up in all major markets, including the US where the spending on Thanksgiving Day rose by nearly 22 per cent, the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said today.

The new year has brought in good news on many fronts. On the business front, demand for gems and jewellery picking up in all major export markets. Jewellery was the highest selling luxury product in China in 2020 and on the Thanksgiving Day spending in the US rose by nearly 22 per cent year-over-year to \$5.1 billion,

BJP workers gherao Odisha DGP office

Demand arrest of Minister Pratap Jena in Kulamani Baral murder case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY

Odisha is following the TMC in West Bengal by resorting to political violence to try and silence BJP leaders who are exposing corrupt practices of the ruling BJD Ministers and MLAs', charged the BJP while warning 'pliant police officers' that the next government will take necessary action.

Sound a battle cry at a protest meeting in front of the DGP Office and police headquarter at Cuttack, top BJP leaders including its state president Samir Mohanty, former state president K V Singh Deo, central leader in charge of Odisha Vijaypal Singh Tomar and a string of others launched a diatribe against CM Naveen Patnaik.

NGT puts brakes on further activity in Bhubaneswar's posh area

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY

In a significant ruling, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has put brakes on further activity along 436 acre land in one of the posh areas in Bhubaneswar- housing luxury hotels, corporate and government offices and multi-storey buildings- on the ground of lack of forest diversion clearance.

A city-based activist had moved the NGT last year seeking the tribunal's intervention in the unlawful use of revenue forest land Jaydev Vihar Mouza in Bhubaneswar for non-forestry purpose.

As many as 44 institutions had built hotels, corporate offices, a school and hospitals without adhering to the mandatory provisions of applying for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. Posh hotels and offices of multinationals, CPSU, schools dot the skyline of the said patches of the land.

"In view of the acknowl-

ed encroachment of forest land and diversion of forest land having been undertaken without obtaining the mandatory clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, we are of the firm view that no further activity shall be taken up without first complying with the requirements of law," directed a two-member NGT bench citing that the said patch of land is classified as Forest Category (Jungle II) as per the government records.

If the state government allows violation of the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, then the Ministry of Environment, forest and climate change (MoEF & CC) can take appropriate action under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2003 against those responsible for permitting such violations", the NGT bench ruled asking the government agencies including the Divisional Forest Officer, Chandaka forest division to furnish reports ahead of the next hearing of the matter on 19 February.



the BJP.

Kulamani Baral, the BJP leader who was murdered along with his associate Dibyasingh Baral had unearthed several scams and irregularities and had to pay with their lives, noted Mohanty. The BJP will not rest till Minister Jena is booked, he said.

The BJ also sought a status report on all 17 political murders that had taken place since 2017. Citing an instance, the party noted that the killers of Bikash, another BJP activist two years had not been arrested till date.

The minor girl Pari was

bluntly killed in Nayagarh district and fingers were pointed at another Minister Arun Sahoo, they said.

Conviction rate in Odisha is less than six percent due to poor investigation and the murders manage to get out on bail.

A delegation of BJP leaders met the DGP Abhay who assured them of strict action as per law. He also informed that an officer of the rank of DIG will supervise the murder case and culprits will be booked. Within 48 hours four accused persons have been arrested.

The BJP however insisted that the statement of Dibyasingh Baral should be treated as a dying declaration and all those named by him be arrested. The son of slain Kulamani Baral has also named Minister Jena as the main conspirator, they said.

The attendance varied from 60 to 70 per cent from one institution to the other.

The attendance is affected due to the health crisis, there will be also classes on every Saturday and Sunday, said school and mass education department officials.

"I was exasperated with the online classes and the confinement in the house. I could not attend because of the erratic mobile network. The thermal checks of the students were conducted at the entrance. The classrooms were properly sanitized prior to the commencement of

classes. The students were in

to quite a joyful mood and they virtually relished physical classroom teaching after nine months of online teaching", said Sanjukta Kar, the headmistress of Saheeda Nagar High School here.

The footfall was a lower note today with occupancy remaining at around 35%, said a staff of a theatre in the city.

The cinema halls and theatres in the state, shut for nine months due to the Covid-19 outbreak, reopened on Friday with a stipulation of 50 per cent capacity.

"It was a novel experience to watch the movie with slew of restrictions in place. There was ample privacy as the the-

atre owner stuck to 50 percent occupancy norm", said a local Aditya Hota, who watched the movie in a theatre in the city.

Use of facemask, hand sanitisation and thermal screening was mandatory for all prior to their entry.

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room teaching will be conducted to prepare the students to appear for the annual High School Certificate examination and Council of Higher Secondary Examination. To make up the courses' study lost affected due to the health crisis, there will be also classes on every Saturday and Sunday, said school and mass education department officials.

The 2021 board examination for Classes 10 and 12 will be held in May. The examination for Class 10 will be held between May 3 and May 15 while 12th class examination will be conducted between May 15 and June 11.

Policemen assaulted by villagers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PHULBANI, 8 JANUARY

A seven member Special Task Force (STF) team led by DSP from Bhubaneswar was assaulted and confined by irate villagers at Kakendri village in Kandhamal district.

The STF of the crime branch had reached to village after receiving information of illegal hemp cultivation and stockpiling of the drug.

The villagers suspected them to be a gang of dacoits and attacked them. They confined the cops for over four hours till the local police stepped in and rescued the STF team members.

The matter is under investigation, Mr. Jugal Nayak sub-inspector of Phulbani Sadar police station said today.

When contacted Ms. Madhumita Nayak, the Superintendent of Excise, Kandhamal said "I am aware of the fact which is most unfortunate but no consultation was made with me by any person prior to the raid."

'My Compost' initiative launched in Bhubaneswar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday launched 'Mo Khata' (My Compost) scheme to provide compost, the decayed organic material used as a fertilizer for growing plant, to the city residents at affordable price.

The organic or wet waste is being processed in Micro Composting Centres using enzyme solution and converted to compost-manure, said BMC officials.

The 'Mo Khata' kiosk being run and managed by Swachha Sathi, located at Rajmahal Square was inaugurated by Chief Secretary Surendra Kumar.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Odisha Crime Branch, investigating the alleged murder of the minor girl Pari in Nayagarh district

filed a petition with the Juvenile Justice Board seeking permission for brain mapping of the accused after the minor refused consent for a narco test.

The hearing on the petition has been posted to 13 January.

achandran, senior scientist and Dy. Director of Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), avid birder Mr. Arpit Deomurari addressed the inaugural function.

Elaborating the strategic agenda of Odisha Tourism, Principal Secretary Tourism, Vishal Dev, IAS said, "we jointly strive to double the capacity of Ecotour Odisha accommodations to 600. Eco Retreat Odisha - Eastern India's foremost glamping festival while Director Tourism, Sachin Jadhav informed "Eight states' representation makes the 3rd National Chilika Bird Festival a grand success. Next year we will soar higher, with foreign participants joining in large numbers."

Odisha currently has 2,163 active cases. A total of 71,11,212 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far, including 24,482 on Wednesday.

Impressive turnout as schools reopen in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY

Excitement coupled with anxiety gripped the students in Odisha on Friday as the schools in the state reopened for students of class 10 and 12 after grappling with over nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As reports trickle in from various parts of the State, there was impressive turnout of students for classroom teaching that recommended today. The attendance varied from 60 to 70 per cent from one institution to the other.

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Cine theatres reopen in Odisha after more than nine months

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY

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atre owner stuck to 50 percent occupancy norm", said a local Aditya Hota, who watched the movie in a theatre in the city.

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Coal demand to rise : CIL chairman

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
TALCHER, 8 JANUARY

Speaking to the media he said "need of the country is to produce more and more coal".

While the annual target of Coal India limited (CIL) remains at 660 Million tonne by the end of the current fiscal, the production of coal by the end of last month was 405 MT said the CIL chairman Pramod Agrawal.

There is a need to produce more coal as demand for dry fuel is expected to rise post-COVID19 pandemic, he added.

Agrawal, who was on a day-long visit here in Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), inspected mining and coal evacuation operations at Talcher coalfields.

Man presumed dead reunited with family after 20 yrs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KENDRAPARA, 8 JANUARY

Reported missing for the past two decades and presumed dead, a 55-year-old man from Kendrapara district was reunited with his family.

Srikant Khatua, a native of Kumarpada village under Mahakalapada police station jurisdiction, was reported missing in 2000.

Without informing family members, I had left home in search of a job. I had boarded a train without a ticket from Cuttack railway station. I landed in Nandgaon in Nashik district of Maha-

rashtra. I did a petty job there to earn livelihood. All over these years, I could not keep touch with family members as I had no contact numbers. I met one Santosh Acharya, a native of Odisha, in a chance meeting with him at Nandgaon. The net-savvy Acharya had managed to gather information on my family and brought him back to my village from his own pure. I am indebted to him for my reunion with the loved ones, Srikant described.

We owe our heartfelt gratitude to Acharya for his humanitarian gesture", said Babaji Khatua, the elder brother of Srikant.

3rd National Chilika Bird Festival takes flight

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY



This year's census has revealed a total count of 11.42 lakh birds across over 190 species at Chilika.

Additional Chief Secretary, Forest & Environment, Mona Sharma, Ministers Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Bikram Arukha, CDA chief executive Susanta Nanda, former PCCF Ajit Pattnaik, Dr. S. Bal-

achandran, senior scientist and Dy. Director of Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), avid birder Mr. Arpit Deomurari addressed the inaugural function.

Elaborating the strategic agenda of Odisha Tourism, Principal Secretary Tourism, Vishal Dev, IAS said, "we jointly strive to double the capacity of Ecotour Odisha accommodations to 600. Eco Retreat Odisha - Eastern India's foremost glamping festival while Director Tourism, Sachin Jadhav informed "Eight states' representation makes the 3rd National Chilika Bird Festival a grand success. Next year we will soar higher, with foreign participants joining in large numbers."

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COVID-19 continues to dip in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 JANUARY

Continuing the downward trend, Odisha on Friday reported 243 fresh COVID-19 cases. Two more fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 1,890.

Odisha currently has 2,163 active cases. A total of 71,11,212 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far, including 24,482 on Wednesday.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Weal (4)
- 2 Twist violently (6)
- 3 Expect (5)
- 7 Spread throughout (8)
- 8 Come to shore (4)
- 9 Transveste (5-7)
- 11 Bring in (9)
- 15 Centre of operations (12)
- 17 Deep affection (4)
- 19 Novel (8)
- 20 Shoes without heels (5)
- 21 Repast (4)

- DOWN
- 14 Remorse, 15 Rocket, 16 Recede, 17 Set, 18 Lest, 19 Tie, 20 Loft.
- 19 Figure (6)
- 20 Protective equipment for cricket (4)
- 21 Tight-lipped (9)
- 22 Harsly loud (7)
- 23 Begin a journey (3,3)
- 24 Beset (6)
- 25 Precipitation (4)
- 26 Hairs (3)
- 27 Eye (3)
- 28 Biceps, 29 Snowboarder, 30 Style,

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 17 Similar, 19 Gaze, 21 Virus, 22 Eyesore, 23 Section, 23 Reel, 24 Tie.
- 25 Aristocracy, 26 Tie, 27 Eye, 28 Biceps, 29 Snowboarder, 30 Style,

DOWN

Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



Vanita Gupta is one of the most respected civil rights lawyers in America and a proud daughter of immigrants from India

US PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE BIDEN

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	29	25 H
HONG KONG	10	5 H
TOKYO	7	-1 CL
LONDON	3	-2 H
DUBAI	23	16 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	13	9 H
NEW YORK	5	-3 H
MOSCOW	-3	-6 H

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



A station passageway is crowded with commuters wearing face masks during a rush hour in Tokyo on Friday.

AP

Israel postpones

Nanyahu's trial: Israel has postponed indefinitely the next hearing in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial because of a tightened coronavirus lockdown that began Friday. Netanyahu has been indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust connected to three long-running investigations.

AP

Kim vows to improve ties: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un underscored the need to drastically improve his nation's ties with the outside world as he addressed a major political conference for the third consecutive day. He also reviewed relations with South Korea

AP

Floyd case: The Minnesota judge overseeing the case against four former Minneapolis police officers charged in the death of George Floyd said he would take under advisement a prosecution request to delay the trial by three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

AP

Oz agency reviewing data on Vatican money transfers

ROME, 8 JANUARY

The Australian government's financial intelligence agency has said it is reviewing its data after questions were raised about its report that \$1.8 billion were transferred from the Vatican to Australia over six years.

The agency, Austrac, said on Thursday that it was working with the Vatican to get to the bottom of the matter. The Vatican confirmed it was in contact with Austrac regarding an examination of the data that it (Austrac) provided in recent days."

Austrac listed the annual transactions since 2014 in response to a parliamentary inquiry without providing any details about senders or recipients. The agency monitors financial transactions to identify money laundering, organised crime, tax evasion, welfare fraud and terrorism financing.

The data raised eyebrows in Australia and the Holy See, given the number of transfers and amounts that appeared to be greatly out of line with the Vatican's financial reality. It also fuelled media speculation that money from the Holy See helped influence the Australian criminal prosecution of Cardinal George Pell, who was convicted and then acquitted of historic sex abuse. Austrac is currently undertaking a detailed review of the figures and is working with the Holy See and Vatican City State Financial Intelligence Unit on this matter, the agency said.

Vatican officials have expressed perplexity at the reported transfers. The amounts greatly exceed the finances of the Holy See, the government of the Catholic Church.

AP

Capitol Police rejected Fed help to quell mob

Despite warnings of a possible insurrection, ample resources and time to prepare, Capitol Police planned only for a free speech demonstration

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 JANUARY

Three days before supporters of President Donald Trump rioted at the Capitol, the Pentagon asked the US Capitol Police if it needed National Guard troops against Americans.

The result is the US Capitol was overrun Wednesday and officers in a law enforcement agency with a large operating budget and experience in high-security events protecting lawmakers were overwhelmed for the world to see.

Four protesters died, including one shot inside the building. A Capitol Police officer died Thursday after being injured in the Wednesday melee, raising the death toll to five. The actions of the day raise troubling concerns about the treatment of mainly white Trump supporters, who were allowed to roam through the building for hours, while Black and brown protesters who demonstrated last year over police brutality faced more robust and aggressive policing.

LACK OF URGENCY?

► The actions of the day raise troubling concerns about the treatment of mainly white Trump supporters, who were allowed to roam through the building for hours, while Black and brown protesters who demonstrated last year over police brutality faced more robust and aggressive policing

► This was a failure of imagination, a failure of leadership

building for hours, while Black and brown protesters who demonstrated last year over police brutality faced more robust and aggressive policing.

This was a failure of imagination, a failure of leadership,

imagination, a failure of leadership, said Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, whose department responded to several large protests last year following the death of George Floyd.

► US Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, under pressure from Chuck Schumer, Nancy Pelosi and other congressional leaders, was forced to resign

said he has attended events on the Capitol grounds to honour slain police officers that had higher fences and a stronger security presence than what he saw on video Wednesday.

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said that as the rioting was underway, it became clear that the Capitol Police were overrun. But he said there was no contingency planning done in advance for what forces could do in case of a problem at the Capitol because Defense Department help was turned down.

They've got to ask us, the request has to come to us, said McCarthy.

US Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, under pressure from Schumer, Pelosi and other congressional leaders, was forced to resign. Senate

tives, 100 US senators and their staff.

By comparison, the city of Minneapolis has about 840 uniformed officers policing a population of 425,000 in a 6,000-acre area.

There were signs for weeks that violence could strike on January 6, when Congress convened for a joint session to finish counting the Electoral College votes that would confirm Democrat Joe Biden had won the presidential election.

On far-right message boards and in pro-Trump circles, plans were being made.

The leader of the far-right extremist group Proud Boys was arrested coming into the nation's capital this week on a weapons charge for carrying empty high-capacity magazines emblazoned with their logo.

Trump considering self-pardon amid calls for removal: Reports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 8 JANUARY



'Renounce false, dangerous narratives'



Embattled President Donald Trump has discussed with his close aides the possibility of pardoning himself before leaving the office on January 20, US media reports have said, amid growing calls for his removal from the White House.

According to CNN, some of those conversations happened in recent weeks, and Trump has asked about the legal and political consequences of a self-pardon.

The news comes as Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike rebuked Trump's conduct as thousands of his supporters stormed the US Capitol building on Wednesday and clashed with police, resulting in four deaths and interrupting a constitutional process by Congress to affirm the victories of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in the November 3 election.

Trump, who has issued a series of pardons to political allies and friends, said in a 2018 Twitter post I have the absolute right to PARDON myself.

"As has been stated by numerous legal scholars, I have the absolute right to PARDON myself, but why would I do that when I have done nothing wrong?" he said in a tweet in June 2018.

The president has also asked for legal opinions on whether he has the authority to issue a self-pardon and has been advised on the potential political fallout, it said.

The New York Times reported on Thursday that Trump has suggested in conversations since Election Day that he wants to pardon himself, citing two people familiar with the discussions.

In several conversations since Election Day, Mr Trump has told advisers that he is con-

sidering giving himself a pardon and, in other instances, asked whether he should and what the effect would be on him legally and politically, according to the two people, the Times reported.

House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer both said that Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet should invoke the 25th Amendment of the US Constitution to remove Trump from power.

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Compensate sex slaves: Seoul court orders Japan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL, 8 JANUARY

Priority to wages, skill in new H-1B selection process

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 8 JANUARY



A South Korean court on Friday ordered Japan to financially compensate 12 South Korean women forced to work as sex slaves for Japanese troops during World War II, the first such ruling expected to rekindle animosities between the Asian neighbours.

Japan immediately protested the ruling, maintaining that all wartime compensation issues were resolved under a 1965 treaty that normalised their ties

troops, which caused bodily harm, venereal diseases and unwanted pregnancies and left big mental scars in the women's lives.

Observers say it's unlikely for Japan to abide by the South Korean court ruling. A support group for the Korean women said it may take legal steps to freeze Japanese government assets in South Korea if Japan refuses to compensate the women.

Japan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that its vice Foreign Minister Takeo Akiba summoned South Korean Ambassador Nam Gwan-pyo to register its protest against the ruling.

The verdict comes as South Korea seeks to repair strained ties with Japan over wartime history and trade, since the September departure of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The next H-1B visa filing season is slated to start on April 1.

The notification, which comes with less than two weeks left in President Donald Trump's tenure, is the latest effort to bar the entry of immigrants to the US.

However, it is too early to say how the modification would impact Indian companies as there is a possibility of the incoming Biden administration reviewing the notification.

There was no reaction

from any companies or business bodies on the notification so far.

Restricting immigration has been a focus of the Trump administration since its first days when it issued the travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries, and it has continued into Trump's final year in office as the White House uses the coronavirus pandemic as cover.

Last week, Trump extended the freeze on H-1B visas along with other types of work visas and green cards until March 31.

Democratic leader Joe Biden, who will be sworn in as President on January 20, has promised to lift the suspension on H-1B visas, saying Trump's immigration policies are cruel.

Officials on Thursday said the move is aimed to protect the economic interests of US

workers and better ensure the most highly skilled foreign workers benefit from the temporary employment programme.

Modifying the H-1B cap selection process will incentivise employers to offer higher salaries, and/or petition for higher-skilled positions, and establish a more certain path for businesses to achieve personnel needs and remain globally competitive, said US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The H-1B temporary visa programme has been exploited and abused by employers primarily seeking to fill entry-level positions and reduce overall business costs, said USCIS Deputy Director for Policy Joseph Edlow.

The current H-1B random selection process makes it difficult for businesses to plan their hiring, fails to leverage

the programme to compete for the best and brightest international workforce, and has predominantly resulted in the annual influx of foreign labor placed in low-wage positions at the expense of US workers, he said.

This effort will only affect H-1B registrations (or petitions, if the registration process is suspended) submitted by prospective petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions. It will be implemented for both the H-1B regular cap and the H-1B advanced degree exemption, but it will not change the order of selection between the two as established by the H-1B registration final rule, USCIS said.

The Department of Homeland Security had published a notice of proposed rulemaking on November 2 last year. It carefully considered the public comments received before deciding to publish the proposed regulations as a final rule, USCIS said.

According to the final rule, a version of which was released by Department of Homeland Security, while administering a random lottery system is reasonable, it is considerate of Congress' statutory purposes for the H-1B programme and its administration."

Instead, a registration sys-

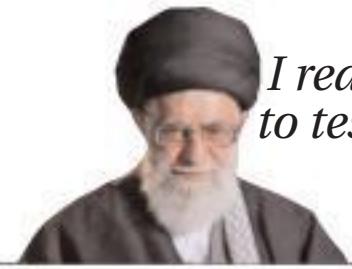
tem that faithfully implements the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) while prioritising registrations based on wage level within each cap will incentivise H-1B employers to offer higher wages, or to petition for positions requiring higher skills and higher-skilled aliens that are commensurate with higher wage levels, to increase the likelihood of selection and eligibility to file an H-1B cap-subject petition, it said.

Moreover, it will maximise H-1B cap allocations, so that they more likely will go to the best and brightest workers; and it will dis incentivate abuse of the H-1B programme to fill relatively lower-paid, lower-skilled positions, which is a significant problem under the present selection system, the final rule said.

The changes in this final rule will apply to all registrations, including those for the advanced degree exemption, submitted on or after the effective date of the final rule.

As per Congressional-mandated cap, USCIS in one year can issue a maximum of 65,000 H-1B visas. It can also issue another 20,000 H-1B visas to those foreign students who have completed higher studies from a US university in STEM subjects.





I really do not trust, them... Sometimes they want to test their vaccines on other countries

IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI

BANNING IRAN FROM IMPORTING OF PFIZER-BIONTECH AND ASTRazeneca VACCINES

Brazil's pandemic deaths top 200,000 amid explosion of celebrations

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SAO PAULO, 8 JANUARY

The night before New Year's Eve in Rio de Janeiro, thousands of revellers clad in their bathing suits crowded onto the iconic Ipanema beach to have some seaside drinks. It was one of many open-air parties occurring along Brazil's vast coastline since the summer heat set in, and as the Covid-19 death toll climbed higher.

It was so packed, you couldn't set foot on the beach, said a maintenance worker at a luxury apartment building across the street. And it wasn't just at night; the beach was packed during the day, too. And no one wears a mask! he added, insisting on not being quoted by name out of worry the build-

ing's owner would punish him for speaking to a reporter.

The explosion of celebrations came just ahead of a pandemic milestone: Brazil passed 200,000 deaths on Thursday, rising 1,524 in the previous 24 hours to a total of 200,498 for the pandemic, according to data released by Brazil's health ministry. It has the world's second highest death toll, behind the United States, according to Johns Hopkins University's database.

Many Brazilians have been straining against quarantine for months, going to bars or small gatherings with friends, but massive blowouts had been few and far between since the pandemic began. Festivities kicked off after the Southern Hemisphere's sum-



mer started on December 21.

While many countries imposed new restrictions to limit the spread of the virus in mid-December, the administration of Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro gave its blessing for holiday fun in the sun. Tourism Minister Gilson Machado told radio station Jovem Pan that gatherings of up to 300 people were perfectly

acceptable. The decision to impose restrictions is the prerogative of local governments; some that did so saw their rules ignored.

A prominent YouTuber organised a party near a river beach for hundreds of people in Alagoas state, in the country's northeast region. Days later, local media reported that 47 people, among

unmasked guests and staffers contracted Covid-19. At least two were admitted to intensive-care units.

A five-day New Year's bash drew 150 people near the property owned by soccer star Neymar outside Rio, although he denied any association with the VIP event.

Outside Sao Paulo, Bolsonaro kicked off 2021 by jumping off a boat and swimming towards a throng of unmasked, cheering supporters. And cops in the city of Bertioga on Sao Paulo's coast used tear gas to disperse celebration in the early hours New Year's Day.

Right before the parties, the situation was already getting bad. But this week or next, it will get even worse, Domin-

gos Alves, an adjunct professor of social medicine at the University of Sao Paulo, told The Associated Press this week.

Alves, who leads a team of researchers tracking Covid-19 data, warned that several states' daily confirmed cases have already surpassed the numbers seen during Brazil's peak in July.

Intensive-care units in many cities are once again slammed with Covid-19 patients. The mayor of Amazonas state's capital Manaus, which one local study speculated may have reached herd immunity after its brutal first wave declared a 180-day state of emergency Tuesday and suspended all permits for events.

State authorities prohibited all nonessential activities for 15 days in most of the city. The city of 2.2 million has recorded 3,550 deaths since the start of the pandemic, and the number of Covid-19 burials has surged. Outside at least one graveyard, cars lined up filled with people waiting to bury their loved ones.

Vanda Ortega, a volunteer nurse in Manaus' Community of Indigenous Nations, said the city had adopted a hands-off approach toward the virus, first during November local elections with large rallies and long lines of voters.

Then we had the holiday season, with a lot of secret parties, said Ortega, who belongs to the Witoto ethnicity. Many mayors on Sao

Paulo's shore ignored holiday restrictions their governor imposed. In at least 12 cities, mayors kept stores, hotels and beaches open to tourists.

Images of traffic jams and packed beaches, with crowds largely unmasked, were so jarring that European Union commissioner Paolo Gentiloni expressed his disbelief on Twitter, saying, I saw shameful images from Brazil.

Bolsonaro, who despite becoming ill from the virus himself, has consistently argued that the country faces a greater risk from the economic damage of lockdowns than from the pandemic. He signalled with his New Year's swim that he will continue to ignore protective measures observed in most countries.

No. 3: Moderna vaccine gets UK approval

Supplies of the new jab are not expected to be available until March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 8 JANUARY

The UK's medicine regulatory authority on Friday approved a third Covid-19 vaccine for use in the country, made by the American biotech company Moderna which has already been rolled out in the US.

It can now start being rolled out alongside the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines already being administered by the National Health Service (NHS) following approvals last year.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said the approval of the Moderna vaccine follows a thorough and rigorous assessment by its teams of scientists, including advice from the independent Commission on Human Medicines, which reviewed in-depth all the data to ensure this vaccine meets the required standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

"Having a third Covid-19 vaccine approved for supply following a robust and thorough assessment of all the available data is an important goal to have achieved and I am proud that the agency has helped to make this a reality," said Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive.

"I want to echo that our goal is always to put the protection

The Moderna vaccine works in a similar way to the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine that is already being offered by the NHS but is easier to store and move as it requires temperatures of around -20C for shipping, similar to a normal freezer



of the public first. Once in use, all Covid-19 vaccines are continually monitored by the MHRA. This ensures that the benefits in protecting people against Covid-19 continue to far outweigh any potential side-effects", she said.

However, supplies of the new jab are not expected to be available until March because while the UK has pre-ordered 7 million doses, they are being manufactured in the US at first and will take a few months before manufacturing facilities in Europe will be ready to distribute.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock called it "another weapon in our arsenal to tame this awful disease", and added it will "boost our vaccination programme even further once doses become available from the spring".

In trials with more than 30,000 volunteers, the Moderna vaccine showed that it offers nearly 95 per cent protection from severe Covid-19. The US Food and Drug Administration had based its decision of approval for America

approved for use in people 18 years and over, and it can be used by pregnant and breastfeeding women following a discussion with their healthcare provider on the benefits and risks.

Pfizer vaccine works against new variant

WASHINGTON, 8 JANUARY

New research suggests that Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine can protect against a mutation found in two highly contagious variants of the coronavirus that erupted in Britain and South Africa.

Those variants are causing global concern. They both share a common mutation called N501Y, a slight alteration on one spot of the spike protein that coats the virus. That change is believed to be the reason they can spread so easily.

Meanwhile, the European Commission said on Friday it has secured 300 million extra doses of the coronavirus Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, a move that could ease criticism that the EU's executive arm has not done enough to procure coronavirus shots for the entire bloc.

approved for use in people 18 years and over, and it can be used by pregnant and breastfeeding women following a discussion with their healthcare provider on the benefits and risks.

Morrison announces new travel restrictions as Brisbane enters three-day lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE, 8 JANUARY

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday announced new travel restrictions and described as serious the situation in Brisbane where a cleaner at a hotel was diagnosed with the highly transmissible UK variant of Covid-19, prompting the authorities to announce a three-day lockdown in the country's third-largest city.

Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced the lockdown after informing on Twitter that a cleaner working at a Brisbane quarantine hotel had tested positive for the UK

strain of Covid-19. Following a confirmed case of the highly infectious UK coronavirus strain, Greater Brisbane will be entering a three day lock-

down. From 6pm Friday until 6pm Monday, Local Government Areas of Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Ipswich, Redlands and Logan will enter a three-day lockdown. Stay home and stay safe this weekend, she tweeted.

Your safety is our number one priority. For the next three days, we're asking people in Greater Brisbane to stay at home. If you need to leave your home, masks are mandatory. If we don't do this now, it could end up being a 30-day lockdown, she said.

Morrison has said 80 per cent of Australians registered overseas were in countries where the new UK mutant strain of Covid-19 was evident.

UN fears 'massive' Covid transmission in Tigray

NAIROBI (KENYA), 8 JANUARY

The United Nations fears massive community transmission of Covid-19 in Ethiopia's troubled Tigray region, fueled by displacement and the collapse of health services, as humanitarian workers finally begin to access the region two months after fighting began. Hospitals have been looted, even destroyed.

A new UN report based on the first on-the-ground assessments confirms some of the grim concerns around Tigray's some 6 million people since the conflict erupted November 4 between Ethiopian forces and those of the Tigray region.

Tigray leaders dominated Ethiopia's government for nearly three decades before Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power and sidelined them amid sweeping reforms that won him the Nobel Peace Prize.

Abiy has rejected international interference in the conflict even as the UN and others pleaded for weeks for unhindered access to Tigray as food, medicines and other supplies ran out.

Now Covid-19 has emerged as the latest source of alarm. Only five out of 40 hospitals in Tigray are physically accessible, the new UN report issued Thursday says. Apart from those in (the Tigray capital) Mekelle, the remaining hospitals are looted and many reportedly destroyed.

China's Chang'e-4 probe resumes work for 26th lunar day

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS, 8 JANUARY

The lander and rover of China's Chang'e-4 probe have resumed work for the 26th lunar day on the far side of the moon, according to the country's space agency.

The Chang'e-4 probe, that made the first-ever soft-landing on the Von Karman Crater in the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the far side of the moon on January 3 last year, has survived 736 Earth days on the moon.

The far side of the moon is the hemisphere that never faces Earth, due to the moon's rotation. It is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the "dark side of the moon," even though it receives just as much sunlight as its Earth-facing side.

The lander woke up at 3:13 a.m. on Friday (Beijing time), and the rover Yutu-2, or Jade Rabbit-2, woke up at 10:29 a.m. on Thursday, according to the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Centre of the China National Space Administration.

During the 26th lunar day, Yutu-2 will move northwest toward the basalt area or the impact craters with high reflectivity, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Yutu-2 will take panoramic photos, and its infrared imaging spectrometer, neutral atom detector and lunar radar will continue to carry out scientific explorations. Research teams will analyse the detection data and release the scientific results.

US sending UN envoy to Taiwan, sparking warning from China

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS, 8 JANUARY

China's UN Mission said in a statement that Beijing firmly opposes UN Ambassador Kelly Craft's visit. It said that there is only one China in the world and the Taiwan region is an inalienable part of China's territory.

The United States will not succeed in its attempt to harm China's core interests through political manipulation on the Taiwan question, the unidentified spokesperson said. We wish to remind the United States that whoever plays with fire will burn himself.

American relations with democratic Taiwan have warmed, largely due to strong bipartisan support in the US

Congress, but the Trump administration has also been willing to defy Beijing's threats and promote an alternative to Chinese Communist Party authoritarianism.

The US outreach to Taiwan has exacerbated tensions between Washington and Beijing over the COVID-19 pandemic, trade, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

China has been stepping up its threats to bring the self-governing island under its control by military force with frequent war games and aerial patrols. It has been using its diplomatic clout to stop Taiwan from joining any organizations that require membership.

Taiwan left the United Nations in 1971 when China joined and is excluded from all of its agencies, including the World Health Organization's assembly.

Boeing to pay \$2.5 bn to settle charge over 737 Max

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 JANUARY

Boeing will pay \$2.5 billion to settle a Justice Department investigation and admit that employees misled regulators about the safety of its 737 Max aircraft, which suffered two deadly crashes shortly after entering airline service.

The government and the company said Thursday that the settlement includes money for the crash victims' families, airline customers and a fine. Prosecutors said Boeing employees gave misleading statements and half-truths about safety issues with the plane to the Federal Aviation Administration, then covered up their actions.

"Boeing's employees chose the path of profit over candor," said David Burns, acting assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's criminal division. Calhoun blamed two former pilots who helped determine how much training

was needed for the Max. CEO David Calhoun said their conduct doesn't reflect Boeing employees as a whole or the character of the company.

This is a substantial settlement of a very serious matter, and I firmly believe that entering into this resolution is the right thing for us to do, a step that appropriately acknowledges how we fell short of our values and expectations, Calhoun said in a memo to employees.

The government will drop the criminal charge of conspiracy to defraud the US after three years if Boeing

follows the terms of the settlement.

The settlement removes uncertainty about criminal charges against the iconic US aircraft maker, which is struggling to put the Max crisis behind it. Boeing still faces lawsuits by the families of passengers who died in the crashes, it has lost more than 1,000 orders for the Max, and its once-stellar reputation for engineering has suffered.

Boeing began working on the Max in 2011 as an answer to a new, more fuel-efficient model from European rival Airbus. Boeing admitted in court filings that two of its technical pilot experts deceived the FAA about a flight-control system called the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System, or MCAS, that could point a plane's nose down if sensors indicated the plane might be in danger of an aerodynamic stall that it might fall from the sky.

The system was not part of previous 737 models. MCAS was added because the Max's larger engines, which are mounted higher and farther forward on the 737's low-swept wings, gave the plane a tendency to tilt too far nose-up in some conditions.

Boeing downplayed the significance of MCAS and didn't mention it in airplane manuals. Most pilots didn't know about it.

The first airlines began flying the 737 Max in mid-2017. On Oct 29, 2018, a Max operated by Indonesia's Lion Air plunged into the Java Sea. The FAA let the Max keep flying, and on March 10, 2019, another Max operated by Ethiopian Airlines crashed nearly straight down into a field. In all, 346 people were killed. On both flights, MCAS was activated by a faulty reading from a single sensor. The system repeatedly pushed the planes' noses down, and pilots were unable to regain control.

Easing dispute, UAE announces reopening of borders to Qatar

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI, 8 JANUARY

through in settling the years-long rift with Qatar during the annual Gulf summit this week, saying the kingdom would restore diplomatic ties and that its allies would follow suit.

Saudi Arabia announced the reopening of its airspace and borders with Qatar earlier this week. National carrier Qatar Airways said it had started to reroute some flights through Saudi airspace, with the first flight cruising over Saudi skies from Doha to Johannesburg, South Africa on Thursday night.

The president of the Unit-

TOGETHER AGAIN

► The move comes after Saudi Arabia declared a breakthrough in settling the years-long rift with Qatar during the annual Gulf summit this week, saying the kingdom would restore diplomatic ties and that its allies would follow suit

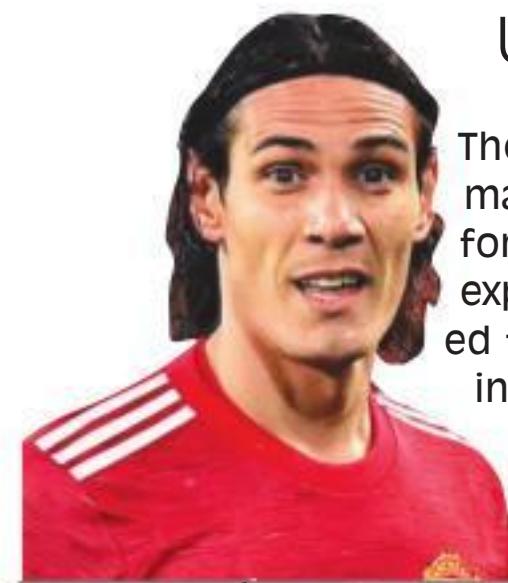
The UAE indicated on Friday that its restoration of full diplomatic relations with Qatar would take longer. Belhou said the federation of seven sheikhdoms is continuing talks to end all other outstanding issues. Opposition to Qatar's support for Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood runs deeper in the UAE than in Saudi Arabia, which is primarily concerned with Qatar's close ties with regional foe Iran.

Bahrain and Egypt, which had joined the UAE and Saudi Arabia in isolating Doha, have yet to publicly elaborate on their pledges to ease the boycott signed this week in the ancient Saudi desert site of Al-Ula.

The four Arab states severed commercial and diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2017, accusing the country of cozying up to Iran and financing extremist groups in the region, charges that Doha denies.

The four Arab states are reengaging with Qatar to change routes through Iranian skies. Analysts estimate the move has given the Islamic Republic hundreds of millions of dollars in overflight fees.

The reopening of Saudi and Emirati airspace to Qatar is critical as the country prepares to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which is expected to draw over 1 million foreign soccer fans.



UNTRAINED OFFENDER

The commission that had imposed a three-match ban on Edinson Cavani (in photo, left) for his use of a racial term on social media expressed "surprise" that the Manchester United forward had received no media training in the club. It accepted Cavani had not intended to cause offence.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Duo afflicted: Two United Arab Emirates players Chirag Suri and Aryan Lakra have tested positive for the coronavirus but the Emirates Cricket Board said on Friday that a four-match one-day series series against Ireland would be played as planned.

Big Bash: Australia's Big Bash League on Friday confirmed three matches of the current, 10th edition of the Twenty20 league would be moved from Sydney venues to Manuka Oval, Canberra, as a result of state border closures amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

In isolation: Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has been forced to self-isolate after being in contact with a person who has tested positive for Covid-19. The coach did not attend his side's Thursday morning training session and has undergone tests to see if he is infected.

Covid loan: Arsenal have confirmed they have borrowed £120 million as part of a Bank of England Covid loan scheme. The scheme is designed to support businesses experiencing cash flow problems during the pandemic. They announced 55 redundancies last year.

Blackmail plot: Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema will stand trial after being charged by prosecutors with being complicit in a conspiracy to blackmail his former France team-mate Matthieu Valbuena in a case linked to a sex tape. Benzema's lawyer confirmed the news.

Ozil trouble: Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta says he is open to Mesut Ozil leaving the Gunners this month after freezing the German out of his squad this season. Despite being the highest earner at the club, Ozil has not played since a 1-0 win on 7 March.

Grand Prix: The Australian Grand Prix will be postponed to the back end of the Formula One season with Bahrain replacing it as the opening race in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions. This, though, is yet to be confirmed by Formula One.

BFI elections: The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) will hold its elections on February 3 in Gurugram, the national federation said on Friday. The BFI said in a statement that the Delhi High Court on Friday accepted its proposed schedule for the elections. "During its previous hearing, the Hon'ble Court had directed BFI to submit a schedule of elections before January 8, 2021. BFI has filed an affidavit through Director-Administration along with a proposed election schedule," said the BFI.

Fare concessions: After Union sports minister Kiren Rijiju, former Maharashtra sports minister Ashish Shekar has also requested Union railways minister Piyush Goyal to restore the fare concessions for athletes travelling for various sports meets. With sporting activity resuming in the country now, a large number of sports persons are heavily dependent on the railways for their travel and the fare concessions help state associations ease the financial burden of sending their athletes for various all India, state and national events.

Shooting trials: Swapnil Kusale of the Railways overcame Tokyo 2020 Olympics quota holder Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar of Madhya Pradesh to win the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) T2 national shooting trials here on Friday. Swapnil, who made the strong eight-man finals field in third place with a score of 1168 in the qualifying, shot 462 in the finals to emerge triumphant.

Smith hits defiant, comfortable century

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SYDNEY, 8 JANUARY

Australia snatched up two wickets in the final session on Friday to leave India with work to do in the third Test as they chased the hosts' 338 following Steve Smith's (in photo) first century in more than a year.

Pace spearheads Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins got the breakthroughs, dismissing openers Rohit Sharma (26) and Shubman Gill (50) as India reached stumps at 96/2, leaving them 242 adrift.

The dogged Cheteshwar Pujara was not out nine and captain Ajinkya Rahane, who had scored a century in the last Test at Melbourne, on five. Australia resumed their first innings at the Sydney Cricket Ground on 166 for two, but only managed another 172 in the face of India's spirited fightback by spinner Ravindra Jadeja who took 4/62. Smith, though, was the star attraction, smacking 131 - his 27th century, and his first since the 2019 Ashes in England - before being the last man to fall. Marnus Labuschagne made 91 and Will Pucovski 62 on debut.

India's openers negotiated a tricky nine overs before tea to be 26 without loss, and they put on another 44 before Hazlewood struck, removing Sharma for 26.

The veteran right-hander hadn't played since straining a hamstring in October and only joined the team last week after spending a fortnight



in quarantine.

But he quickly shook off the rust, hitting a big six off Nathan Lyon before surviving a scare on 24, when he was given out before the decision was reversed on review.

His reprieve proved short-lived, however, making just two more before being caught and bowled. At the other end, Gill, who had made his debut

in Melbourne, scoring 45 and 35 not out, again showed his composure and skill, reinforcing his status as a potential long-term opener. Just 21, he brought up a maiden Test half-century before nicking an edge to Cameron Green off Cummins.

It left Pujara and Rahane to dig in and see India safely to stumps as the runs dried

Pace spearheads
Josh Hazlewood and
Pat Cummins got the
breakthroughs, dis-
missing openers
Rohit Sharma (26)
and Shubman Gill
(50) as India reached
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adrift.

up. Smith, who averages more than 61, failed to reach double figures in the first two Tests but roared back to life on his home ground, reaching his century off 201 balls. He looked comfortable throughout, crunching a four off Jasprit Bumrah on the first ball he faced from India's top bowler on Friday to signal his intent.

He survived an ambitious lbw review on 41 before bringing up a patient century then letting rip, adding a quickfire 31 before being run out by Jadeja's fabulous direct hit. Smith had resumed on 31 and

SCOREBOARD

Australia 1st Innings:

Will Pucovski lbw b Saini 62
David Warner c Pujara b Siraj 5
M Labuschagne c Rahane b Jadeja 91
Steven Smith run out (Jadeja) 131
Matthew Wade c Bumrah b Jadeja 13
Tim Paine lbw b Bumrah 1
Pat Cummins c Jadeja 0
Mitchell Starc c Gill b Saini 24
Nathan Lyon lbw b Jadeja 0
Josh Hazlewood not out 1
Extras: (B-4, NB-1) 10
Total: (105.4 overs) 338
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-106, 3-206, 4-232, 5-249, 6-255, 7-278, 8-310, 9-315
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 25.4-7-66-2,

Labuschagne 67, with both men making the most of a relatively flat pitch to bring up a 100-partnership.

It was a typically gritty innings from Labuschagne on a ground where he had scored 215 this time last year against New Zealand. But as he closed in on a fifth Test century, he was bamboozled by a Jadeja ball that took extra bounce, thick-edging it to Rahane at slip. Smith brought up a 30th Test half-century before light rain set in.

On their return from 24 minutes off the field, following an earlier eight-minute break, Matthew Wade was undone by his natural aggression, recklessly skying a Jadeja ball to Bumrah. Green went without scoring, trapped lbw by Bumrah who then clattered the stumps of Tim Paine (1). Cummins was bowled by Jadeja for nought as Smith began running out of partners. He found an ally briefly in Mitchell Starc to ensure he made his century, before the tailenders were mopped up.

The plan was to vary pace and create angles: Jadeja

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY, 8 JANUARY

ing too much only want to cash in on every chance that get."

Jadeja is batting at number seven in the series but won't mind batting higher up the order. "The higher up the order I bat, I play with more responsibility and playing with top order batsmen, you interact and gain confidence. About what we need to do and what we don't need to do. "Also you get a lot of time to plan and set your innings as per match situation. Initially, if get start, then I play in a flow. It is good if I bat high up in the order," said Jadeja without specifying the position where he wanted to bat. When asked about his preferred position, he joked: "Tell me should I open?"

India trail by 242 runs going into day three with eight wickets in hand. Jadeja stressed on the importance of being patient on the slow SCG surface.

"The approach tomorrow should be simple. One should spend time on the wicket. Australian bowlers are good and you won't get too many loose balls. You have to wait for it and that theory will suit our batting unit."

Jadeja also felt Australian batsmen, mainly Smith and Marnus Labuschagne, played him and RAshwin better in this innings but the pitch also helped them. "They played some sweep shots and at times over long on, they were positive. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."

Three-day Brisbane shutdown ahead of fourth Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY, 8 JANUARY



in

A new, three-day lockdown in Brisbane has put Cricket Australia in a spot of bother as it makes desperate efforts to hold the fourth and final Test against India in the Queensland state capital from 15 January.

The lockdown was announced less than 24 hours after top cricket board officials from India and Australia had discussed relaxing hard quarantine measures for the visitors.

Cricket Australia executives are urgently trying to determine the impact of a three-day lockdown in Brisbane on next week's fourth Test at the Gabba, which was already under a cloud because of India's hesitation to fly north and be subjected to tighter bio-security restrictions, the Sydney Morning Herald reported.

"A hotel quarantine worker's positive test to the more contagious UK strain of Covid-19 is the latest spanner in the works for CA's hopes to close out the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at the Gabba," it wrote. While Cricket Australia

was ready to allow a capacity crowd of 36,000, the fluid health situation might warrant a change in the spectator policy. "The health scare in the city, however, has left those attendance caps in jeopardy," the newspaper stated.

On Thursday, The Board of Control for Cricket in India wrote to CA, seeking relaxations in hard quarantine protocol of Brisbane, reminding the host board that the visitors were done with the strict isolation that had been agreed upon at the beginning of the tour. The quarant

ine rules in Brisbane will restrict the players to just their hotel rooms after day's play. CA has already verbally assured the Indians that "a deal" has been "signed by the Queensland government to allow players and staff out of their rooms to mingle together inside the hotel when not playing or training."

However, the BCCI wants a written assurance. In case, Brisbane cannot host the Test or the Indians refuse to travel, Sydney will be the back-up venue.

In Sydney, there are people coming to the ground and then going back and having dinner at a restaurant or having a gathering of 20, 30 people in a pub," Gavaskar said. The Indian team were not unjustified in saying that if the players were together at the ground for 10 hours, they should be at least allowed to mingle in the hotel. What they're saying is they should also be allowed to do something similar. You could have a situation where the ball goes into the crowd, somebody from the crowd touches the ball," added Gavaskar.

"In Sydney, there are people coming to the ground and then going back and having dinner at a restaurant or having a gathering of 20, 30 people in a pub," Gavaskar said. The Indian team were not unjustified in saying that if the players were together at the ground for 10 hours, they should be at least allowed to mingle in the hotel. What they're saying is they should also be allowed to do something similar. You could have a situation where the ball goes into the crowd, somebody from the crowd touches the ball," added Gavaskar.

"In this game, I was prob-

Gavaskar's argument

Sunil Gavaskar (in photo) on Friday said the BCCI was only "protecting its players" by seeking a quarantine relaxation ahead of the fourth Test, just like Queensland health authorities were required to shield their people. "The Queensland government is fully entitled to protect its people. Similarly I believe the BCCI is fully entitled to protect its team. I think that's something we should never forget," Gavaskar said on Channel 7.

"In Sydney, there are people coming to the ground and then going back and having dinner at a restaurant or having a gathering of 20, 30 people in a pub," Gavaskar said. The Indian team were not unjustified in saying that if the players were together at the ground for 10 hours, they should be at least allowed to mingle in the hotel. What they're saying is they should also be allowed to do something similar. You could have a situation where the ball goes into the crowd, somebody from the crowd touches the ball," added Gavaskar.

"In this game, I was prob-

Being faster on feet, putting concerted pressure on Ashwin worked: Smith

AGENCIES

SYDNEY, 8 JANUARY



Faster footwork along with the tactic of attacking Ravichandran Ashwin straightaway worked wonders for him during his first century on home soil in three years. Australian batsman Steve Smith said on Friday.

Having just managed to score only 10 runs in the first Two Tests, Smith roared back to form as his 131, single-handedly steered Australia to 338, their first innings total, despite a middle-order failure. "I decided to be a bit more positive. I think early on, I hit him over his head, just put a bit of pressure on him so that he bowls where I wanted him to bowl. It was a concerted effort to do that and I was happy with the way I played him," Ashwin said during virtual press conference.

Smith also said that he did not change his technique against the fast bowlers but was "just being faster on his feet particularly against the spin."

"In this game, I was prob-

ably a little more aggressive early and tried to put it back on the bowler a little bit more.

"I got off to a nice start, I was almost run-a-ball-20. So I got myself going and got into my innings and then you just have to play to play the game, absorb pressure when you need to, put pressure on when you need to and I did that pretty well in this innings," he added.

'This Smith run-out, my best ever'

An exceptional all-rounder, India's Ravindra Jadeja (in photo) was pretty chuffed about running Steve Smith out with a direct hit in the

ongoing third Test against Australia and called it his "best ever" fielding effort which he can watch any number of times. Smith, who was batting on 130 and was in a mood to slog every ball in company of No.11 batsman Josh Hazlewood, couldn't beat a direct throw from Jadeja, who sprinted from his deep square leg position and effected a direct hit with throw reminiscent of the great Kapil Dev during his heydays.

Asked what will he like to watch, the four wickets he got or the run-out, the senior all-rounder replied: "I will rewind and play this run-out as this is my best effort. A direct hit from outside the 30-yard circle and that's like a moment that gives you that satisfaction."

"Three or four wicket hauls are fine but this run-out will stay with me," said the Saurashtra all-rounder. Jadeja has been a live-wire on the field during this tour with some fantastic catches like the one he took running backwards at the MCG to dismiss Matthew Wade.

Santosh in coma after crash

RIYADH, 8 JANUARY

Indian motorcycle racer CS Santosh has been put in a medically-induced coma after suffering a crash on Wednesday during the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia.

Santosh, 37, is currently receiving treatment at Saudi German Hospital in Riyadh and has "no major physical injuries except for a dislocated right shoulder and head trauma," his team Hero MotoSports said.

The latest scans have also shown no major issue that could impact his full recovery," the team said. "The medical team attending to him has decided that the best approach to manage the injury is to reduce the body functions to a minimum and keep him in a sedated condition or an artificial coma.

He is receiving the best possible medical care and will continue to be under constant observation for the next few days." Santosh suffered the crash in stage 4, where Hero Motorsport's Paul Goncalves died in Dakar 2020. The team subsequently withdrew from the rally.

Colaco's late goals power Hyderabad to victory over inconsistent NorthEast United

AGENCIES

GOA, 8 JANUARY

Hyderabad FC piled further misery on NorthEast United, extending the Highlanders' winless run to six games with a thumping 4-2 win in the Hero Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium on Friday.

Hyderabad took the lead through goals from Aridane Santana (3') and Joel Chianese (36') before a penalty from Federico Gallego (45') and Benjamin Lambo's strike (45') helped NEUFC draw parity before the break. Hyderabad soon doubled their tally, pouncing on a defensive lapse from NEUFC as Chianese, creator for the first goal, turned goalscorer.

Akash Mishra did well to close down space on the left and find Chianese outside the box. The Goan forward beat three markers before curling his shot into the top corner. Colaco then added a second one with a neat finish after being assisted by Santana. His first goal was sublime. Receiving the ball on the left, the Goan forward beat three markers before curling his shot into the top corner. Colaco then added a second one with a neat finish after being assisted by Santana.

The result propelled Hyderabad to third in the Hero ISL table, level on points with FC Goa.

Chianese made his way into the box and cut inside, beating two markers before squaring a pass for Santana. The Spaniard poked his shot past NEUFC keeper Subashish Roy Chowdhury to notch his third goal of the season. NEUFC soon fashioned a gilt-edged chance to score the equaliser from a free-kick but Idrissa Sylla miscued his header. Federico Gallego's cross found Sylla at the near post, who got a free header but fired off target. Hyderabadi soon doubled their tally, pouncing on a defensive lapse from NEUFC as Chianese, creator for the first goal, turned goalscorer. Akash Mishra did well to close down space on the left and find Chianese outside the box. The Goan forward beat three markers before curling his shot into the top corner. Colaco then added a second one with a neat finish after being assisted by Santana. His first goal was sublime. Receiving the ball on the left, the Goan forward beat three markers before curling his shot into the top corner. Colaco then added a second one with a neat finish after being