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ABBREVIATIONS USED

ദി.	-	ദീപിക
മാ.	-	മാതൃഭൂമി
എ.	-	എക്സ്പ്രസ്സ്
കേ.കൗ.	-	കേരളകൗമുദി
ദേ.	-	ദേശാഭിമാനി
മ.മ.	-	മലയാള മനോരമ
മാധ്യ.	-	മാധ്യമം
മം.	-	മംഗളം
ജന്മ.	-	ജന്മഭൂമി
ച.	-	ചന്ദ്രിക
B.T.	-	Business Times
H.	-	The Hindu
P.	-	The Pioneer
N.I.E	-	The New Indian Express
I.E.	-	The Indian Express
T.O.I.	-	The Times of India
F.E.	-	Financial Express
E.T.	-	The Economic Times
S.	-	The Statesman
T.	-	The Telegraph

സംസ്ഥാനവാർത്തകൾ

മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവകുപ്പ് സേവനം ഇനി ഓൺലൈനിൽ

പുതുവർഷം മുതൽ സംസ്ഥാന മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവകുപ്പ് പൂർണ്ണമായും കടലാസുരഹിതം. വെള്ളിയാഴ്ചമുതൽ വകുപ്പിന് കീഴിലെ എല്ലാ ഓഫീസും ഇ-ഓഫീസ് സംവിധാനത്തിലാകും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുക. സുതാര്യമായും വേഗത്തിലും പൊതുജനങ്ങൾക്ക് സേവനങ്ങൾ ലഭ്യമാക്കാനാണിത്. നികുതി ഒടുക്കൽ, വാഹനങ്ങളുടെ പെർമിറ്റ് ലഭ്യമാക്കൽ, ലൈസൻസ് സംബന്ധമായ എല്ലാ സേവനങ്ങളും (ഡ്രൈവിങ് ടെസ്റ്റ് ഒഴികെ) ഓഫീസ് സന്ദർശിക്കാതെതന്നെ ലഭ്യമാകും. രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റ്, ഡ്രൈവിങ് ലൈസൻസ് എന്നിവ അതത് ഓഫീസുകളിൽ പ്രിന്റ് ചെയ്ത് ലാമിനേറ്റ് ചെയ്ത് തപാൽ വഴി അയക്കുന്നതും ഒഴിവാക്കി. ഇവയുടെ കേന്ദ്രീകൃത അച്ചടിയും വിതരണവും സർക്കാർ സ്ഥാപനമായ കെബിപിഎസ് നിർവഹിക്കും. മോട്ടോർ വാഹന വകുപ്പിന്റെ എൻഫോഴ്സ്മെന്റ് വിഭാഗം ഇലക്ട്രിക് വാഹനങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കാനൊരുങ്ങുന്നു. അനേർട്ട് മുഖേന കരാർ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലാണ് വാഹനങ്ങൾ ലഭ്യമാക്കിയത്. ഇന്ത്യയിലാദ്യമാണ് ഒരു എൻഫോഴ്സ്മെന്റ് വിഭാഗം ഇ-വാഹനങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത്. അന്തരീക്ഷ മലിനീകരണം കുറയ്ക്കുകയും സർക്കാരിന്റെ ഇ-മൊബിലിറ്റി പദ്ധതി നടപ്പാക്കുകയുമാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം.

(ഭേ., 01/01)

ഒപ്പമുണ്ട്, കേരളം; കേന്ദ്ര കാർഷിക നിയമങ്ങൾക്കെതിരെ ഒറ്റക്കെട്ടായി നിയമസഭ

ഡൽഹിയിലെ അതിശൈത്യത്തിൽ 35 ദിവസമായി കർഷകർ തുടരുന്ന ഐതിഹാസിക സമരത്തിന് ഐക്യദാർഢ്യം പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചും കേന്ദ്രം പാസാക്കിയ 3 കൃഷി നിയമങ്ങളും പിൻവലിക്കണമെന്നാവശ്യപ്പെട്ടും സംസ്ഥാന നിയമസഭയുടെ ഏകദിന പ്രത്യേക സമ്മേളനം ഐക്യകണ്ഠേണ പ്രമേയം പാസാക്കി. ബിജെപി അംഗം ഒ.രാജഗോപാൽ പ്രമേയത്തിനെതിരെ പ്രസംഗിച്ചെങ്കിലും വോട്ടെടുപ്പിൽ എതിർപ്പു രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയില്ല. അതിനാൽ, ബിജെപി അംഗമടക്കം അനുകൂലിച്ച പ്രമേയമാകും സംസ്ഥാനം കേന്ദ്ര സർക്കാരിന് അയച്ചു കൊടുക്കുക.

(മ.മ., 01/01)

എൽഎൻജി പ്രതിദിന ഉപയോഗം ശരാശരി 45 ലക്ഷം ക്യൂബിക് മീറ്റർ

മംഗളൂരുവിൽ കൂടി പ്രകൃതിവാതകം (എൽഎൻജി) ഉപയോഗിച്ചു തുടങ്ങിയതോടെ

കൊച്ചി-മംഗളൂരു പൈപ്പ് ലൈനിൽ നിന്നുള്ള പ്രതിദിന ഉപയോഗം ശരാശരി 45 ലക്ഷം ക്യൂബിക് മീറ്ററായി ഉയർന്നു. മംഗളൂരുവിൽ പ്രതിദിനം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത് 8 ലക്ഷം ക്യൂബിക് മീറ്റർ വാതകം. 5 വർഷത്തിനുള്ളിൽ കേരളത്തിലും മംഗളൂരു വ്യവസായ മേഖലയിലുമായി ഉപയോഗം 110 ലക്ഷം ക്യൂബിക് മീറ്ററായി ഉയരുമെന്നാണ് വിലയിരുത്തൽ. 2013 മുതൽ കൊച്ചി വ്യവസായ മേഖലയിൽ ലഭ്യമായ വാതകം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതിൽ ബിപിസിഎൽ കൊച്ചി റിഫൈനറിയും ഫാക്ടുമാണ് മുന്തിൽ. കോടികളുടെ സാമ്പത്തിക ലാഭമാണ് ഇരു സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്കും എൽഎൻജി ഉപയോഗം നേടിക്കൊടുത്തത്. വാതകം 24 മണിക്കൂറും ലഭ്യമായതിനാൽ ഫാക്ടറിനെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളം തടസ്സമില്ലാതെ വളം ഉൽപാദനം നടത്താനായി. ഫലം: 20-25% ഉൽപാദന വർദ്ധന. പരിസ്ഥിതി സൗഹൃദ ഇന്ധനമായതിൽ കാർബൺ പുറന്തള്ളൽ 20 ശതമാനത്തിലേറെ കുറയ്ക്കാനായതു മറ്റൊരു നേട്ടം.

(മ.മ., 02/01)

സ്കൂളുകളിലേക്ക് 83000 ലിറ്റർ സാനിറ്റേഷൻ കെഎസ്ഡിപി നൽകും

കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധ മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ പാലിച്ച് സ്കൂളുകൾ തുറക്കുമ്പോൾ സുരക്ഷ ഒരുക്കാൻ 83000 ലിറ്റർ സാനിറ്റേഷൻ പൊതുമേഖലാ വ്യവസായ സ്ഥാപനം കേരളാ സ്റ്റേറ്റ് ഡ്രഗ്സ് ആന്റ് ഫാർമസ്യൂട്ടിക്കൽസ് (കെഎസ്ഡിപി) നൽകും. തിരുവനന്തപുരം മുതൽ കാസർകോട് വരെയുള്ള 4402 സർക്കാർ-എയിഡഡ് സ്കൂളുകളിലേക്കാണ് സാനിറ്റേഷൻ വിതരണം. പൊതുവിദ്യാഭ്യാസ വകുപ്പിൽനിന്ന് ലഭിച്ച ഓർഡർ പ്രകാരമാണ് സാനിറ്റേഷൻ നൽകുന്നത്. ആലപ്പുഴ, തിരുവനന്തപുരം, കോട്ടയം, തൃശൂർ, വയനാട് ജില്ലകളിൽ വിതരണം തുടങ്ങി. കാസർകോട്, കോഴിക്കോട്, കണ്ണൂർ, കൊല്ലം, പത്തനംതിട്ട ജില്ലകളിൽ വിതരണം തികളാഴ്ച തുടങ്ങും. കോവിഡ് പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ സർക്കാർ നിർദ്ദേശത്തെ തുടർന്നാണ് കെഎസ്ഡിപി സാനിറ്റേഷൻ നിർമ്മാണം തുടങ്ങിയത്. ലോകാരോഗ്യ സംഘടനയുടെ മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾക്ക് അനുസരിച്ച് കുറഞ്ഞവിലയിലാണ് കെഎസ്ഡിപി സാനിറ്റേഷൻ വിപണിയിലിറക്കിയത്.

(ഭേ., 03/01)

കർഷകർക്ക് ഉയർന്ന പെൻഷൻ പദ്ധതി യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തിലേക്ക്

മണ്ണിൽ കാലുറപ്പിച്ചു നിൽക്കാൻ കർഷകർക്കു ധൈര്യമേകുന്ന പെൻഷൻ പദ്ധതി പുതുവർഷത്തിൽ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാകുന്നു. കേരള കർഷക ക്ഷേമനിധി ബോർഡിൽ അംഗമാകുന്നതിന് ഓൺലൈൻ എൻറോൾമെന്റ് ഈ മാസമൊടുവിൽ തുടങ്ങും. കൃഷിഭവനിലൂടെയും അക്ഷയ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലൂടെയും അപേക്ഷിക്കാനും അവസരമുണ്ടാകും.

കൃഷി, അനുബന്ധ മേഖലകളിലായി 30 ലക്ഷം പേർക്കെങ്കിലും ആനുകൂല്യം ലഭ്യമാക്കുകയാണു ലക്ഷ്യം. അംഗത്വ റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഫീസ് 100 രൂപ. അംശദായമായി അടയ്ക്കേണ്ടത് കുറഞ്ഞത് 100 രൂപ; ഉയർന്ന പരിധിയില്ല. തുല്യവിഹിതമായി 250 രൂപ വരെ സർക്കാർ അടയ്ക്കും. 5 വർഷത്തിൽ കുറയാതെ അംശദായം അടച്ചവർക്ക് 60 വയസ്സു തികയുമ്പോൾ അംശദായത്തിന്റെയും വർഷത്തിന്റെയും അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ പെൻഷൻ. 30 ലക്ഷം പേർ അംഗത്വമെടുത്താൽ റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഫീസായി മാത്രം 30 കോടി രൂപ ബോർഡിലെത്തും. ഇതിനു പുറമേ പ്രതിമാസ അംശദായവും സർക്കാർ വിഹിതവും മറ്റു പദ്ധതികളിൽനിന്നു ലഭിക്കാവുന്ന തുകയും കൂടി ചേർത്തുള്ള കോർപസ് ഫണ്ട് ഉപയോഗിച്ചാകും പെൻഷനും മറ്റ് ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങളും നൽകുന്നത്.

(മ.മ., 03/01)

രണ്ടാംഘട്ട വ്യാപനം : കോവിഡ് സാമ്പ്രതാ പഠനം നടത്തും

കോവിഡ്- രണ്ടാംഘട്ട വ്യാപനത്തിന്റെ സാധ്യത കണ്ടെത്താനും പ്രതിരോധ തന്ത്രം ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുന്നതിനുമായി ആരോഗ്യ വകുപ്പ് കോവിഡ്- സാമ്പ്രതാ പഠനം നടത്തുന്നു. സംസ്ഥാനത്താകമാനം 18 വയസ്സിന് മുകളിലുള്ള 12,100 പേരുടെ രക്തസാമ്പിൾ എടുത്ത് പരിശോധിക്കും. സാർസ് കോവിഡ് 2 (SARS COV2) ആന്റിബോഡി എത്രത്തോളമുണ്ട് എന്ന് കണ്ടെത്തുകയാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം. അടുത്തഘട്ട വ്യാപന സാധ്യത മനസ്സിലാക്കി മുന്നൊരുക്കം നടത്താനും നയപരമായ തീരുമാനമെടുക്കാനും പഠനം സഹായിക്കുമെന്ന് ആരോഗ്യ മന്ത്രി കെ. കെ. ശൈലജ പറഞ്ഞു. ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പ് അഡീഷണൽ ഡയറക്ടറുടെയും തിരുവനന്തപുരം മെഡിക്കൽ കോളേജിലെ പിഇഎഡി സെൽ നോഡൽ ഓഫീസറുടെയും മേൽനോട്ടത്തിലാണ് പഠനം. ജില്ലാ തലത്തിൽ ജില്ലാ സർവ്വൈയ്ലൻസ് ഓഫീസർ പ്രവർത്തനം ഏകോപിപ്പിക്കും. താലൂക്കാശുപത്രികളിൽ സൂപ്രണ്ട് നേതൃത്വം നൽകും. ജില്ലാ സർവ്വൈയ്ലൻസ് ഓഫീസർ അഞ്ച് വീതം തദ്ദേശസ്ഥാപനങ്ങളെയും പൊലീസ് സ്റ്റേഷനുകളെയും പഠനത്തിനായി തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കും. ഗ്രാമ, നഗര മേഖലയിൽനിന്ന് സാമ്പിൾ ശേഖരിക്കും. ശേഖരണത്തിനുമുമ്പ് ആളുകളുടെ സമ്മതപത്രം വാങ്ങും. അയ്യായിരത്തോളം രക്ത സാമ്പിൾ ലാബുകളിൽനിന്നും രക്ത ബാങ്കുകളിൽനിന്നും ശേഖരിച്ച് പഠന വിധേയമാക്കും.

(ഭേ., 04/01)

മൊബൈൽ എടിഎമ്മുമായി കേരള ബാങ്ക്

പണം പിൻവലിക്കാൻ ഇനി ബാങ്കും എടിഎം കൗണ്ടറും തേടി നടക്കേണ്ട. എടിഎം

കൗണ്ടറുമായി ബാങ്ക് വീട്ടുമുറ്റത്തേക്ക്. പണം പിൻവലിക്കലടക്കമുള്ള സൗകര്യങ്ങളുമായി കേരള ബാങ്കാണ് മൊബൈൽ എടിഎം സേവനം സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് വ്യാപിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. ഇതിനായുള്ള വാഹനങ്ങൾ നബാർഡിന്റെ സഹായത്തോടെ വാങ്ങിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു. റിസർവ് ബാങ്കിന്റെ അനുമതി കിട്ടിയാലുടൻ സേവനമാരംഭിക്കാനാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം. കോഴിക്കോട്, കണ്ണൂർ, വയനാട്, എറണാകുളം, പാലക്കാട്, ഇടുക്കി എന്നീ ജില്ലകളിൽ കേരള ബാങ്കിന്റെ മൊബൈൽ എടിഎം കൗണ്ടറുകൾ നിലവിലുണ്ട്. ഇത് സംസ്ഥാന വ്യാപകമായി നടപ്പാക്കും. ഗ്രാമീണ മേഖലകൾ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചാകും മൊബൈൽ എടിഎമ്മുകളുടെ സഞ്ചാരം. കേരള ബാങ്കിന്റെ ഏതെങ്കിലുമൊരു ശാഖയുമായി ബന്ധിപ്പിച്ചാകും പ്രവർത്തനം. ഓരോ മേഖലയിലും എല്ലാ ദിവസവും നിശ്ചിതസമയം എടിഎം വാഹനമെത്തും. റൂട്ട് മുൻകൂട്ടി അറിയിക്കുന്നതിനാൽ ആളുകൾക്ക് പണമിടപാടുകൾ നടത്താൻ എളുപ്പമാകും. രണ്ടാംഘട്ടത്തിൽ അക്കൗണ്ട് തുറക്കാനുൾപ്പെടെ സൗകര്യവുമുണ്ടാകുമെന്നാണ് പ്രതീക്ഷ. ഏത് ബാങ്കിന്റെ എടിഎം കാർഡുപയോഗിച്ചും പണം പിൻവലിക്കാനാകും.

(ഭേ., 04/01)

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് രണ്ടിടത്ത് പക്ഷിപ്പനി സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ചു ; പ്രതിരോധപ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഊർജ്ജിതം

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് പക്ഷിപ്പനി സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ചതായി മന്ത്രി കെ. രാജു. ആലപ്പുഴയിലെ കട്ടനാടൻ മേഖലയിലും കോട്ടയത്ത് നീണ്ടൂരമാണ് എച്ച്-5 എൻ 8 എന്ന വൈറസ് രോഗം സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ചത്. ഈ പ്രദേശങ്ങളിൽ താരാവുകൾ കൂട്ടത്തോടെ ചത്തതിനെത്തുടർന്നാണ് ഭോപ്പാൽ ലാബിലേക്ക് സാമ്പിൾ അയച്ച് പരിശോധന നടത്തിയത്. എട്ട് സാമ്പിളുകളിൽ അഞ്ച് എണ്ണത്തിൽ രോഗം സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ചു. വൈറസിനുണ്ടാകുന്ന ജനിതകവ്യതിയാനം അനുസരിച്ച് മനുഷ്യരിലേക്ക് പകരാൻ സാധ്യതയുണ്ടെങ്കിലും ഇതുവരെ പകർന്നിട്ടില്ല. ആശങ്കവേണ്ടെന്ന് മന്ത്രി പറഞ്ഞു. രോഗം സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ച ആലപ്പുഴ, കോട്ടയം ജില്ലകളിൽ കലക്ടർമാരുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ രോഗ പ്രതിരോധ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഊർജ്ജിതമാക്കും. രോഗം സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ച മേഖലയ്ക്ക് ഒരു കിലോമീറ്റർ പരിധിയിൽ വരുന്ന എല്ലാ പക്ഷികളെയും കൊന്നൊടുക്കാനാണ് തീരുമാനം. മുഴുവൻ താരാവുകളെയും കൊന്ന് കത്തിക്കുന്ന നടപടി ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച ആരംഭിക്കും. ഏകദേശം 48,000 ഓളം പക്ഷികളെ ഇത്തരത്തിൽ കൊല്ലേണ്ടി വരും. കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം കോഴിക്കോടും മലപ്പുറത്തും പക്ഷിപ്പനി സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ചിരുന്നു. സമാനരീതിയിൽ പ്രദേശത്തെ പക്ഷികളെ നശിപ്പിച്ചാണ് രോഗം പടരുന്നത് തടഞ്ഞത്.

(ഭേ., 05/01)

അധ്യയനം ആരംഭിച്ചു; അവസാന വർഷ ബിരുദക്കാരും പിജിക്കാരും കോളേജിലെത്തി

സ്കൂളുകൾക്ക് പിന്നാലെ സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ കോളേജുകളിലും സർവകലാശാലാ ക്യാമ്പസുകളിലും 294 ദിവസത്തിനുശേഷം അധ്യയനം ആരംഭിച്ചു. അവസാന വർഷ ബിരുദ വിദ്യാർഥികളും പിജി വിദ്യാർഥികളും തിങ്കളാഴ്ച കോളേജിലെത്തി. കഴിഞ്ഞവർഷം മാർച്ച് 16 നാണ് ക്ലാസ് നിർത്തിവച്ചത്. പകുതി വിദ്യാർഥികളെ മാത്രം ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തി, കോവിഡ് മാനദണ്ഡപ്രകാരമാണ് ക്ലാസ് ആരംഭിച്ചത്. കോളേജുകളുടെ പ്രവൃത്തി സമയം രാവിലെ 8.30 മുതൽ വൈകിട്ട് അഞ്ചുവരെയാക്കി രണ്ട് ഷിഫ്റ്റായാണ് ക്ലാസ്. പ്രാക്ടിക്കലിനും പ്രധാന പാഠഭാഗങ്ങൾക്കും ഊന്നൽ നൽകിയാണ് ക്ലാസുകൾ. ക്യാമ്പസിലും ഹോസ്റ്റലിലും മെസിലും ശാരീരിക അകലം നിർബന്ധമാക്കി. 90 ശതമാനം അധ്യാപകരും വിദ്യാർഥികളും ആദ്യദിനം കോളേജിലെത്തിയതായി പ്രിൻസിപ്പൽമാർ വീഡിയോ കോൺഫറൻസിൽ മന്ത്രി കെ. ടി. ജലീലിനെ അറിയിച്ചു.

(ഭേ., 05/01)

അക്ഷയകേരളത്തിന് ദേശീയ പുരസ്കാരം

രാജ്യത്തെ മികച്ച മാതൃകാ പൊതുജനാരോഗ്യ പദ്ധതിയായി സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാരിന്റെ 'അക്ഷയകേരളം' പദ്ധതി തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ടു. കേന്ദ്ര ആരോഗ്യ കുടുംബക്ഷേമ വകുപ്പാണ് കേരള ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പിന്റെ അഭിമാന പദ്ധതിയെ പുരസ്കാരത്തിനായി പരിഗണിച്ചത്. കോവിഡ് കാലത്ത് ക്ഷയരോഗ നിവാരണം മുന്നിൽ കണ്ട് നടത്തിയ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള അംഗീകാരമാണിത്. ക്ഷയരോഗികൾക്ക് ആവശ്യമായ സേവനങ്ങൾ അവരുടെ വീടുകളിലെത്തിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു പദ്ധതിയുടെ ലക്ഷ്യം. ഒപ്പം ഒക്ടോബർ, നവംബർ മാസങ്ങളിൽ ആശുപത്രികളിൽ എത്താൻ കഴിയാത്ത പുതിയ ക്ഷയരോഗികളെ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതിനായി 'ക്യാച്ച് അപ്പ് ക്യാമ്പയിനം' നടത്തി. ഇങ്ങനെ 661470 പേരിൽ നടത്തിയ സ്ക്രീൻ ടെസ്റ്റിൽനിന്ന് 802 പുതിയ കേസുകൾ കണ്ടെത്തുകയും ചെയ്തു. തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ സഹായത്തോടെ കേരളം ക്ഷയരോഗ പര്യവേഷണവും നടത്തിയിരുന്നു. ഇതെല്ലാം പരിഗണിച്ചാണ് 'അക്ഷയകേരളം' പുരസ്കാരത്തിന് തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ടത്. ബുധനാഴ്ച നടക്കുന്ന ഏഴാം ദേശീയ പൊതുജനാരോഗ്യ ഉച്ചകോടിയിൽ സംസ്ഥാന മിഷൻ ഡയറക്ടർ പദ്ധതിയുടെ നേട്ടങ്ങൾ വിവരിക്കും.

(ഭേ., 06/01)

പക്ഷിപ്പനി സംസ്ഥാന ദുരന്തം: കർഷകർക്ക് നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം നൽകും

പക്ഷിപ്പനിയെ സംസ്ഥാന ദുരന്തമായി സർക്കാർ പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചു. ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ കർഷകർക്ക് നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം നൽകുമെന്ന് മന്ത്രി കെ. രാജു. പക്ഷിപ്പനി 50,000 പക്ഷികളെ വരെ ബാധിക്കാൻ ഇടയുണ്ടെന്നും പ്രതിരോധ പ്രവർത്തനം ശക്തമാക്കുമെന്നും മന്ത്രി പറഞ്ഞു. രോഗം കൂടുതൽ പടരാതിരിക്കാനുള്ള പ്രതിരോധ നടപടികൾ ആരംഭിച്ചു. ആലപ്പുഴയിലെ നാല് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളിലും കോട്ടയത്തെ ഒരു പഞ്ചായത്തിലുമായി മുപ്പത്തെട്ടായിരത്തോളം പക്ഷികളെ കൊന്ന് നശിപ്പിക്കാനാണ് തീരുമാനം. കോട്ടയം നീണ്ടൂരിൽ പക്ഷിപ്പനി സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ച ഫാമിലും ഒരു കിലോമീറ്റർ ചുറ്റളവിലുള്ള മേഖലയിലും വളർത്തു പക്ഷികളെ കൊന്ന് നശിപ്പിക്കാൻ തുടങ്ങി. രോഗം സ്ഥിരീകരിച്ച ഫാമിൽ ആറു സംഘങ്ങളെയും പുറത്ത് രണ്ടു സംഘങ്ങളെയുമാണ് നിയോഗിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. ആലപ്പുഴയിലും വളർത്തു പക്ഷികളെ നശിപ്പിക്കാൻ തുടങ്ങി. ആശങ്കപ്പെടേണ്ട സാഹചര്യമില്ലെന്നും നിലവിൽ രോഗം മനുഷ്യരിലേക്ക് പകരില്ലെന്നും മൃഗ സംരക്ഷണ വകുപ്പ് ഡയറക്ടർ ഡോ. കെ. എം. ദിലീപ് പറഞ്ഞു.

(ഭേ., 06/01)

പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് കിലോയ്ക്ക് 18 രൂപ, പാൽ കവറിന് 12 രൂപ

പുനരുപയോഗിക്കാവുന്ന പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക്കിന് ഇനി കിലോഗ്രാമിന് 18 രൂപ വരെ ഹരിത കർമ്മസേനാംഗങ്ങൾക്കു ലഭിക്കും. ഉപയോഗിച്ച പാൽ കവറിനു കിലോയ്ക്ക് 12 രൂപ. ഓരോ ചില്ലു കുപ്പിക്കും ഒരു രൂപയും ഒരു കിലോ പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മദ്യക്കുപ്പിക്കു 12 രൂപയും കിട്ടും. ഇത്തരം 20 ഇനം അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾക്കു സർക്കാരിനു കീഴിലുള്ള ക്ലീൻ കേരള കമ്പനി അടിസ്ഥാന വില നിശ്ചയിച്ചു ഇവ ശേഖരിച്ച് എത്തിക്കുന്ന സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ മുപ്പതിനായിരത്തിൽപരം സേനാംഗങ്ങൾക്കു പ്രതിഫലം നൽകാനാണു വില നിശ്ചയിച്ചത്. ഒരു സർക്കാർ സ്ഥാപനം അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾക്കു തറവില നിശ്ചയിക്കുന്നത് ഇതാദ്യമാണ്. പാഴ്വസ്തുക്കൾ അമർത്തി അട്ടിയാക്കി തിരിച്ചതിനും(ബെയിൻഡ്) അല്ലാത്തവയ്ക്കും പ്രത്യേക വിലയാണ്. വീടുകളിൽ നിന്നും സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും തരംതിരിച്ച് ഈർപ്പമില്ലാതെയും വൃത്തിയായും ശേഖരിക്കുന്ന അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ തദ്ദേശ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്കു കീഴിലുള്ള മെറ്റീരിയൽ കലക്ഷൻ ഫെസിലിറ്റിയിലേക്കാണ്(എം.സി.എഫ്.) ഹരിത കർമ്മസേനാംഗങ്ങൾ എത്തിക്കുക. ക്ലീൻ കേരള കമ്പനി ഇവ വിലയ്ക്കു വാങ്ങി പുനരുപയോഗ സാധ്യത നോക്കി വിവിധ ഏജൻസികൾക്കു വിറ്റഴിക്കും.

(മ.മ., 07/01)

അപേക്ഷകർ ആർ.ടി. ഓഫീസിൽ എത്തേണ്ട: നടപടി കൂടുതൽ ലളിതമാക്കി

ഓൺലൈൻ സേവനം ലഭ്യമാക്കിയിട്ടും അപേക്ഷകൻ വീണ്ടും ആർടി ഓഫീസിൽ

എത്തേണ്ടി വരുന്ന സ്ഥിതി മാറ്റാൻ പുതിയ ഉത്തരവ് പുറത്തിറക്കി. വാഹന രജിസ്ട്രേഷനും ഡ്രൈവിങ് ലൈസൻസിനും ഓൺലൈനിൽ അപേക്ഷിച്ച ശേഷം രണ്ടും വീട്ടിൽ ലഭ്യമാക്കാൻ അപേക്ഷകൻ ഓഫീസിലെത്തി സ്പീഡ് പോസ്റ്റ് അയയ്ക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള കവറും സ്റ്റാമ്പും നൽകണമായിരുന്നു. ഇത് ഒഴിവാക്കി. 1-ാം തീയതി മുതൽ ഈ രണ്ടു സേവനങ്ങൾക്കും ഫീസ് അടയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ 45 രൂപ കൂടി അധികം ഈടാക്കും. സ്പീഡ് പോസ്റ്റിൽ ലൈസൻസും ആർസി ബുക്കും നേരിട്ട് വീട്ടിൽ അയച്ചു തരുന്നതിനാണ് ഇത്. ഈ മാറ്റം 31 വരെ ഓൺലൈനിൽ അപേക്ഷിച്ചവർക്കും അവർ നൽകിയ കവറിലും സ്റ്റാമ്പിലും ലഭ്യമാക്കും. അവരിൽ നിന്ന് അധികം ഫീസ് ഈടാക്കില്ല.

(മ.മ., 07/01)

'ഫിലമെൻറ് രഹിത കേരളം' മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്തു

ഫിലമെൻറ് രഹിത കേരളം പദ്ധതിയുടെ സംസ്ഥാനതല ഉദ്ഘാടനം മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ നിർവഹിച്ചു. വീടുകളിലെ സാധാരണ ഫിലമെൻറ് ബൾബുകൾ മാറ്റി എൽഇഡി ബൾബുകൾ കുറഞ്ഞ നിരക്കിൽ വിതരണം ചെയ്യുന്ന പദ്ധതിയാണിത്. വൈദ്യുതി ഉപഭോഗവും ചെലവും ഗണ്യമായി കുറയ്ക്കാൻ ഇത് കൊണ്ടു കഴിയുമെന്ന് മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പറഞ്ഞു. പദ്ധതി പൂർണ്ണമായാൽ 100 മുതൽ 150 വരെ മെഗാവാട്ട് വൈദ്യുതി ലഭിക്കാൻ കഴിയും. ഇതുവഴി കെഎസ്ഇബിയുടെ വൈദ്യുതി വാങ്ങൽ ചെലവ് കുറയും. മൂന്നുവർഷം ഗ്യാരൻറിയുള്ള എൽഇഡി ബൾബുകളാണ് നൽകുന്നത്. 100 രൂപയിലധികം വിലയുള്ള ബൾബുകൾ 65 രൂപയ്ക്കാണ് നൽകുക. ഗ്യാരൻറി കാലയളവിനിടയിൽ കേടായാൽ മാറ്റി നൽകും. ബൾബിന്റെ വില വൈദ്യുതി ബില്ലിന്റെ കൂടെ ഒന്നിച്ചോ തവണകളായോ അടയ്ക്കാം. കെ.എസ്.ഇ.ബിയുടെ വെബ് പോർട്ടലിൽ രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്തവർക്കാണ് ബൾബ് നൽകുന്നത്. നിലവിൽ 17 ലക്ഷം പേർ രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇവർക്ക് നൽകാൻ 1 കോടി ബൾബുകൾ ഈ ഘട്ടത്തിൽ വേണം. രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാത്തവർക്ക് രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാൻ അവസരം നൽകും. പരമാവധി പേർ പദ്ധതി പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്തണമെന്ന് മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി ആഭ്യർത്ഥിച്ചു.

(ഭേ., 08/01)

അവിവാഹിതരായ അമ്മമാർ: സ്റ്റേറ്റ് സ്പർശം പദ്ധതിയ്ക്ക് 3.03 കോടി അനുവദിച്ചു
സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ അവിവാഹിതരായ അമ്മമാരുടെ ക്ഷേമത്തിനായി ആരംഭിച്ച സാമൂഹ്യനീതി വകുപ്പ് സാമൂഹ്യ സുരക്ഷ മിഷന്റെ സ്റ്റേറ്റ് സ്പർശം പദ്ധതിയ്ക്ക് ധനകാര്യ വകുപ്പ് 3,03,48,000 രൂപയുടെ അനുമതി നൽകിയതായി ആരോഗ്യ സാമൂഹ്യനീതി വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി കെ.കെ. ശൈലജ അറിയിച്ചു. ചൂഷണത്തിന് വിധേയരായി അവിവാഹിത അവസ്ഥയിൽ അമ്മമാരാകുന്നവർ കുടുംബങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും സമൂഹത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ട്

ജീവിക്കേണ്ടി വരുന്നു. ഇത്തരക്കാർക്ക് ദൈനംദിന ജീവിതത്തിന് ആവശ്യമായ സാമ്പത്തിക സഹായം നൽകി ഇവരെ പുനരധിവാസിപ്പിക്കുക എന്ന ഉദ്ദേശത്തോടെ ആവിഷ്കരിച്ച് നടപ്പാക്കി വരുന്ന പദ്ധതിയാണ് സ്റ്റേഹസ്പർശം. പ്രതിമാസം 1000 രൂപ ധനസഹായം അനുവദിച്ചു വന്ന ധനസഹായം ഈ സർക്കാർ അധികാരത്തിൽ വന്ന ശേഷം 2000 രൂപയാക്കി വർദ്ധിപ്പിച്ചു. പട്ടികവർഗ വിഭാഗത്തിൽപ്പെട്ട അവിവാഹിതരായ അമ്മമാർക്ക് മാത്രമുണ്ടായിരുന്ന ഈ ആനുകൂല്യം മറ്റ് വിവാഹിതരല്ലാത്ത അഗതികളായ അമ്മമാർക്കും ലഭിക്കുന്ന രീതിയിൽ പിന്നീട് ഭേദഗതി വരുത്തി ഉത്തരവായി. നിലവിൽ വിവാഹിതരോ ഏതെങ്കിലും പുരുഷനുമൊത്ത് കടുംബവുമായി കഴിയുന്നവരോ ആയിട്ടുള്ളവർക്ക് ഈ ആനുകൂല്യം ലഭിക്കുന്നതല്ല. അപേക്ഷ ഫോറം ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട സാമൂഹ്യനീതി വകുപ്പ് ഓഫീസിൽ നിന്നും സാമൂഹ്യ സുരക്ഷാമിഷൻ വെബ്സൈറ്റിൽ നിന്നും ലഭ്യമാണ്. അപേക്ഷകൾ ആവശ്യമായ രേഖകൾ സഹിതം ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ശിശുവികസന പദ്ധതി ഓഫീസർക്കോ ജില്ലാ സാമൂഹ്യനീതി ഓഫീസർക്കോ നൽകേണ്ടതാണ്.

(ഭേ., 08/01)

വരും, ജന്മ വൈവിധ്യ ചരിത്രം അറിയാം....

വികസന-ക്ഷേമ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കൊപ്പം, ഭൂതകാലത്തെ ഭാവി തലമുറയ്ക്കായി അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന മ്യൂസിയം പോലുള്ള പദ്ധതികൾക്കും സർക്കാർ വലിയ മുൻഗണനയാണു നൽകുന്നതെന്നു മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ. പ്രദർശന ശാലകൾ എന്ന നിലയിൽ നിന്നു മാറി കഥപറയുന്ന കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ എന്ന നിലയിലുള്ള തീമാറ്റിക് മ്യൂസിയങ്ങളാണ് വിവിധ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലായി സജ്ജമാക്കുന്നതെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം വ്യക്തമാക്കി. ജന്മ വർഗങ്ങളുടെ ചരിത്രം വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്ന തരത്തിൽ അത്യാധുനികമായി നവീകരിച്ച മ്യൂസിയം ലോകമെങ്ങുമുള്ള സഞ്ചാരികളെ ആകർഷിക്കുമെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം അഭിപ്രായപ്പെട്ടു. മ്യൂസിയം വളപ്പിൽ 1964-ൽ സ്ഥാപിതമായ നാച്ചറൽ ഹിസ്റ്ററി മ്യൂസിയം ആദ്യമായാണ് പൂർണ്ണമായി നവീകരിക്കുന്നത്. എട്ട് ഗാലറികളിലായിട്ടാണു ജന്മ വൈവിധ്യത്തിന്റെ ചരിത്രം പറയുന്ന കാഴ്ചകൾ ഒരുക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നത്. വംശനാശം സംഭവിച്ച് ഭൂമുഖത്തു നിന്ന് അപ്രത്യക്ഷമായ 19 ജീവികളുടെ ത്രിമാന രൂപം സജ്ജീകരിച്ച് ഒരുക്കിയ ഗാലറി, സസ്തനികളുടെ ഗാലറി എന്നിവ പുതിയ ആകർഷണങ്ങളാണ്. പ്രദർശന വസ്തുക്കളുടെ വിശദ വിവരങ്ങളടങ്ങിയ ടച്ച് സ്ക്രീൻ കിയോസ്കുകളുമുണ്ട്.

(മ.മ., 09/01)

അക്ഷയ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ വീട്ടിലെത്തിക്കാൻ സന്നദ്ധസേനാഗങ്ങൾ: മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി

അക്ഷയ സേവനങ്ങൾക്ക് ഓൺലൈനായി അപേക്ഷിക്കാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുള്ളവരെ സഹായിക്കുന്നതിനും സേവനം വീട്ടിലെത്തിക്കുന്നതിനും സന്നദ്ധസേനാഗങ്ങളെ നിയോഗിക്കുമെന്നു മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ. ഇങ്ങനെ ലഭിക്കുന്ന അപേക്ഷകളും പരാതികളും അധികാരികൾക്ക് എത്തിച്ചു കൊടുക്കുന്നതിനും തുടർനടപടികളുടെ വിവരങ്ങൾ അറിയിക്കുന്നതിനുമായി സന്നദ്ധസേനാഗങ്ങൾക്ക് ഇ-പാസ് അനുവദിക്കുമെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. ചലച്ചിത്രതാരം ടൊവിനോ തോമസിനെ സന്നദ്ധസേനയുടെ ബ്രാൻഡ് അംബാസഡറായി പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി. കോവിഡ് കാലത്തു സന്നദ്ധസേനയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം മാതൃകാപരമായിരുന്നു. 3,75,430 പേരാണ് സന്നദ്ധസേനാഗങ്ങളായത്. കോവിഡ് പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഓൺലൈനായാണ് സന്നദ്ധസേനാഗങ്ങൾക്ക് ആദ്യഘട്ട പ്രീമൺസൂൺ പരിശീലനം നൽകിയത്. 20, 429 പേർ പരിശീലനത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി.

(മ.മ., 10/01)

21 നദികൾക്ക് പുതുജീവൻ നൽകുന്നു

കേരളത്തിലെ മലിനമായ 21 നദികൾക്ക് പുതുജീവൻ നൽകാൻ ജല വിഭവ വകുപ്പിന്റെ സ്പെഷൽ പർപസ് വെഹിക്കിൾ ആയ കേരള ഇറിഗേഷൻ ഇൻഫ്രാസ്ട്രക്ചർ ഡവലപ്മെന്റ് കോർപ്പറേഷൻ (കിഡ്ക) പദ്ധതിക്ക് രൂപം നൽകി. മുപ്പതോളം എൻജിനീയറിങ് കോളേജുകളിലെ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളെയും അധ്യാപകരെയും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയാകും പദ്ധതി നടപ്പാക്കുക. അഡീഷണൽ ചീഫ് സെക്രട്ടറി ടി. കെ. ജോസിന്റെ മേൽനോട്ടത്തിലാണ് ഇത്. ദേശീയ ഹരിത ട്രൈബ്യൂണലിന്റെ നിർദ്ദേശക പ്രകാരമാണിത്.

(മാ., 11/01)

കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധമരുന്ന് വിതരണത്തിനു രൂപരേഖയായി

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധമരുന്ന് വിതരണത്തിനുള്ള രൂപരേഖ തയ്യാറായി. ആദ്യഘട്ടത്തിൽ 133 വിതരണ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളുണ്ടാവും. ആദ്യഘട്ടത്തിൽ ആരോഗ്യ പ്രവർത്തകർക്കാണ് വാക്സിൻ വിതരണം. ആവശ്യമെങ്കിൽ കൂടുതൽ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്താനും മന്ത്രി കെ. കെ. ശൈലജയുടെ അധ്യക്ഷതയിൽ ചേർന്ന ഉന്നതതല യോഗം തീരുമാനിച്ചു. സർക്കാർ മേഖലയിലെ അലോപ്പതി, ആയുഷ്, സ്വകാര്യ ആശുപത്രികളുൾപ്പെടെയുള്ളവയെ വിതരണ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തും.

കളക്ടർമാർക്കാണ് വാക്സിനേഷന്റെ ചുമതല. എകോപനത്തിന് കൺട്രോൾ റൂം തുടങ്ങും. പ്രതിരോധമരുന്ന് സ്വീകരിക്കാൻ 3,58,574 പേരാണ് രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്തത്.

(മാ., 11/01)

തദ്ദേശ പദ്ധതി ഫെബ്രുവരി 25 നകം അംഗീകാരം നേടണം; ആസൂത്രണ സമിതികളും വർക്കിങ് ഗ്രൂപ്പും പുനഃസംഘടിപ്പിക്കും

തദ്ദേശഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ അടുത്ത സാമ്പത്തിക വർഷത്തെ മുഴുവൻ പദ്ധതികളും ഫെബ്രുവരി 23 നകം സമർപ്പിച്ച് 25 നകം ജില്ലാ ആസൂത്രണ സമിതി അംഗീകാരം നേടണം. അംഗീകാരം ലഭിച്ച വാർഷിക പദ്ധതികൾ 27 നകം തദ്ദേശ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ ബജറ്റുമായി സംയോജിപ്പിക്കും. തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് പെരുമാറ്റചട്ടം നിലവിൽ വരുംമുമ്പ് വാർഷിക പദ്ധതികൾക്ക് അംഗീകാരം ലഭിക്കാനാണിത്. ഇതു സംബന്ധിച്ച വിശദമായ സമയക്രമം തദ്ദേശഭരണ വകുപ്പ് പുറപ്പെടുവിച്ചു. ഗ്രാമ-വാർഡ് സഭകൾ ഫെബ്രുവരി 12 നകവും വികസന സെമിനാറുകൾ 16 നകവും പൂർത്തിയാക്കണം. പെരുമാറ്റചട്ടം നിലവിൽവന്നാൽ പദ്ധതികൾക്ക് അംഗീകാരം നേടുന്നതിനെ ബാധിക്കും. ഇക്കാര്യം മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ തദ്ദേശഭരണ സ്ഥാപന പ്രതിനിധികളുടെ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെടുത്തിയിരുന്നു. ഇതേത്തുടർന്നാണ് ഫെബ്രുവരിയിൽ എല്ലാ നടപടിയും പൂർത്തിയാക്കാൻ സമയക്രമം നിശ്ചയിച്ചത്. മുൻകൂട്ടി അംഗീകാരം നേടിയാൽ പെരുമാറ്റചട്ടം നിലവിലുണ്ടായാലും കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധം പോലുള്ള അത്യാവശ്യ പദ്ധതി നിർവഹണം നടത്താനാകും.

(ഭേ., 12/01)

എയ്ഡഡ് അധ്യാപകർ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ മത്സരിക്കരുതെന്ന നിയമമില്ല; സർക്കാർ

എയ്ഡഡ് സ്കൂൾ അധ്യാപകർക്ക് 1967 മേയ് 29 ലെ സർക്കാർ വിജ്ഞാപന പ്രകാരം രാഷ്ട്രീയ അവകാശങ്ങൾ നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നും തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ മത്സരിക്കുന്നതിൽ നിന്ന് അവരെ വിലക്കുന്ന നിയമമില്ലെന്നും സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ ഹൈക്കോടതിയെ അറിയിച്ചു. കേരള വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ ചട്ട പ്രകാരമാണ് അധ്യാപകർ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് നടപടികളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതെന്നും സർക്കാർ വ്യക്തമാക്കി.

(മ.മ., 12/01)

തിയറ്റുകൾ നാളെ തുറക്കും

കേരളത്തിലെ തിയറ്ററുകളിൽ നാളെ മുതൽ വീണ്ടും സിനിമാക്കാലം. വിജയ്

നായകനായ തമിഴ് ചിത്രം 'മാസ്റ്റർ' ആദ്യ റിലീസായി തിയറ്ററുകളിലെത്തും. കോവിഡ് വ്യാപനത്തെ തുടർന്നു മാർച്ച് 11 ന് അടച്ച തിയറ്ററുകളിൽ 309-ാം ദിവസമായ നാളെ മുതൽ പ്രദർശനം പുനരാരംഭിക്കാനുള്ള തീരുമാനം പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചത് ഫിലിം ചേംബറാണ്. തിയറ്ററുകളുടെ വിനോദ നികുതി ഈ മാസം മുതൽ അടുത്ത മാർച്ച് വരെ ഒഴിവാക്കാൻ സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ തീരുമാനിച്ചതിനു പിന്നാലെയാണ് തിയറ്റർ തുറക്കാനുള്ള പ്രഖ്യാപനം വന്നത്. തിയറ്ററുകൾ അടഞ്ഞുകിടന്ന 10 മാസത്തെ വൈദ്യുതി ഫിക്സ്ഡ് ചാർജ് 50 ശതമാനമായി കുറയ്ക്കും. ബാക്കി തുക ഗഡുക്കളായി അടയ്ക്കാം.

(മ.മ., 12/01)

തടവുകാർക്ക് ഇനി ബർമുഡയും ടീ ഷർട്ടും ജയിൽ വേഷം

ജയിലിൽ തടവുകാർക്ക് ഇനി മുതൽ വേഷം ടീ ഷർട്ടും ബർമുഡയും. സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് ചുരിദാറും. മുണ്ട് ഉപയോഗിച്ച് ജയിലിൽ തൂങ്ങിമരണങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന സാഹചര്യത്തിലാണ് തടവുകാരുടെ വേഷത്തിൽ വ്യത്യാസം വരുത്താൻ തീരുമാനമായത്. സ്വകാര്യ കമ്പനികളുമായി സഹകരിച്ചായിരിക്കും പുതിയ വേഷം നൽകുക. നിറത്തിന്റെ കാര്യത്തിൽ തീരുമാനമായിട്ടില്ല. കഴിഞ്ഞ ദിവസം കോഴിക്കോട് സബ് ജയിലിൽ തടവുകാരൻ ജീവനൊടുക്കിയതിനെത്തുടർന്ന് ജയിൽ ഡിജിപി ഋഷിരാജ് സിങ് തന്നെയാണ് തടവുകാർക്ക് ടീ ഷർട്ടും ബർമുഡയും വേഷം ആകാമെന്ന ആശയം മുന്നോട്ടുവച്ചത്. ആദ്യഘട്ടമെന്ന നിലയിൽ കോഴിക്കോട് ജയിലിലായിരിക്കും വേഷമാറ്റം ഉണ്ടാകുക. 200 പുരുഷന്മാരും 15 സ്ത്രീകളുമാണ് ജയിലിൽ ഉള്ളത്. വസ്ത്രങ്ങൾ സ്പോൺസർ ചെയ്യാൻ താൽപര്യമുള്ള സ്വകാര്യ കമ്പനികൾ ജയിൽ അധികൃതരുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടണം. ഒരാൾക്ക് 2 ജോഡി വസ്ത്രമാണ് നൽകുന്നത്.

(മ.മ., 13/01)

ശല്യക്കാരായ കാട്ടുപന്നികളെ വനം ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്ക് വെടിവെച്ചു കൊല്ലാം

നാട്ടിലിറങ്ങി മനുഷ്യ ജീവനോ, സ്വത്തിനോ, കൃഷിക്കോ നാശം വരുത്തുന്ന കാട്ടുപന്നികളെ വനം ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്ക് വെടിവെച്ചു കൊല്ലാമെന്ന് വനം വകുപ്പ് പ്രിൻസിപ്പൽ സെക്രട്ടറിയുടെ ഉത്തരവ്. ഇതിനു വനം ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരെ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തി എല്ലാ ഡിവിഷനുകളിലും കർമ്മ സേന (ടാസ്ക് ഫോഴ്സ്) രൂപീകരിക്കാനും തീരുമാനം. ശല്യക്കാരായ കാട്ടുപന്നികളെ കൊല്ലുന്നതിനു മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ വനം വകുപ്പ് പുതുക്കി. ലൈസൻസുള്ള തോക്ക് കൈവശമുള്ള കർഷകർക്ക് 1972 ലെ വന്യജീവി സംരക്ഷണ നിയമ പ്രകാരം കാട്ടുപന്നികളെ കൊല്ലാമെന്നു കഴിഞ്ഞ മേയിൽ വനം വകുപ്പ് ഉത്തരവിറക്കിയിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഇതു കാര്യമായ ഫലമുണ്ടാക്കിയില്ല.

അതുകൊണ്ടാണ് മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ പുതുക്കിയത്. വിഷം, സ്റ്റോടകവസ്തു, വൈദ്യുതാഘാതം എന്നിവയിലൂടെ കാട്ടുപന്നിയെ കൊല്ലാൻ പാടില്ല. കൊല്ലുന്നതിന് അനുമതി തേടി റേഞ്ച് ഓഫീസർക്കും മറ്റും ലഭിക്കുന്ന അപേക്ഷകൾ 24 മണിക്കൂറിനകം തീർപ്പാക്കണം. മേയ് 17 വരെയാണ് ഉത്തരവിനു പ്രാബല്യം.

(മ.മ., 13/01)

പ്രളയ സെസ് പിൻവലിക്കും: ഓഗസ്റ്റ് ഒന്നു മുതൽ സെസ് ഇല്ല

ഉൽപന്നങ്ങൾ വാങ്ങുമ്പോൾ ജനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് ഒന്നര വർഷമായി പിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു ശതമാനം പ്രളയ സെസ് ഓഗസ്റ്റ് ഒന്നു മുതൽ നിർത്തും. പ്രഖ്യാപനം നാളെ രാവിലെ 9 ന് മന്ത്രി തോമസ് ഐസക് അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ബജറ്റിലുണ്ടായേക്കാം. ഇതോടെ സ്വർണം, വാഹനങ്ങൾ, ഇലക്ട്രോണിക് സാധനങ്ങൾ, വീട്ടുപകരണങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങിയവയുടെ വില കുറയും. പ്രളയത്തിൽ നിന്നു കരകയറുന്നതിന് 2 വർഷം കൊണ്ട് 2000 കോടി രൂപ പിരിക്കാൻ ലക്ഷ്യമിട്ട് 2019 ഓഗസ്റ്റ് ഒന്നു മുതലാണ് പ്രളയ സെസ് നടപ്പാക്കിയത്. ജൂലൈയോടെ ആകെ സെസ് വരാനും 2000 കോടിയിലെത്തും. 12%, 18%, 28% ജിഎസ്ടി നിരക്കുള്ള എല്ലാ ഉൽപന്നങ്ങൾക്കും സെസ് ഉണ്ട്. 0%, 5% നിരക്കുള്ള ഉൽപന്നങ്ങളെയും ഒന്നരക്കോടി വരെ വിറ്റുവരവുള്ള അനുമാന നികുതിക്കാരായ വ്യാപാരികളെയും ഒഴിവാക്കി. 3% ജിഎസ്ടിയുള്ള സ്വർണത്തിനും വെള്ളിക്കും കാൽ ശതമാനമാണു സെസ്. പെട്രോൾ, ഡീസൽ, മദ്യം, ഭൂമി വിൽപന എന്നിവയ്ക്കും സെസ് ഇല്ല.

(മ.മ., 14/01)

കടൽക്കൊല: ഇറ്റാലി 10 കോടി രൂപ നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം നൽകും

ഇറ്റാലിയൻ എണ്ണക്കപ്പൽ എന്റിക്ക ലെക്സിയിലെ നാവികരുടെ വെടിയേറ്റ രണ്ട് മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികൾ മരിച്ച കേസിൽ ഇറ്റാലി സർക്കാർ 10 കോടി രൂപ നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം നൽകും. മരിച്ച രണ്ട് മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ ബന്ധുക്കൾക്ക് നാലു കോടി രൂപ വീതവും തകർന്ന സെന്റ് ആന്റണി ബോട്ടിന്റെ ഉടമയ്ക്ക് രണ്ടു കോടി രൂപയുമാണ് നൽകുകയെന്ന് ഡൽഹിയിലെ ഇറ്റാലിയൻ എംബസി കേന്ദ്ര വിദേശമന്ത്രാലയത്തെ അറിയിച്ചു. മരിച്ച മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളി കൊല്ലം തങ്കശ്ശേരി സ്വദേശി വാലന്റൈന്റെ ഭാര്യ ഡോറയെ ബുധനാഴ്ച വൈകിട്ട് കൊല്ലം കലക്ടറേറ്റിൽ നിന്ന് ഫോണിൽ അറിയിച്ചു. കന്യാകുമാരി സ്വദേശി അജീഷ് പിങ്കുവാണ് മരിച്ച മറ്റൊരു മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളി. ഇറ്റാലിയുടെ തീരമാനം കേന്ദ്ര സർക്കാർ സത്യവാങ്മൂലമായി സുപ്രീംകോടതിയെ അറിയിക്കും. ടിബ്യൂണൽ ഉത്തരവ് അംഗീകരിച്ചതായും മരിച്ചവരുടെ ബന്ധുക്കൾ സുപ്രീംകോടതിയെ അറിയിക്കും.

നഷ്ടപരിഹാരക്കേസ് അവസാനിപ്പിക്കുകയാണെന്ന് മരിച്ചവരുടെ ബന്ധുക്കളുടെ കത്ത് ഒപ്പം സമർപ്പിക്കും. കൊല്ലം, കന്യാകുമാരി കലക്ടർമാരെ മരിച്ചവരുടെ ബന്ധുക്കളിൽനിന്ന് കത്തു വാങ്ങാൻ ചുമതലപ്പെടുത്തി. മരിച്ചവരുടെ കുടുംബങ്ങൾക്കു നേരത്തെ ഇറ്റാലിയൻ സർക്കാർ ഒരു കോടി രൂപ വീതം നൽകിയിരുന്നു. ആലപ്പുഴ തോട്ടപ്പള്ളി തീരക്കടലിൽ 2012 ഫെബ്രുവരി 15-നാണ് എന്റിക്ക ലെക്സി കപ്പലിൽനിന്ന് വെടിവയ്പ്പുണ്ടായത്.

(ദേ., 14/01)

കടബാധ്യത കൂടി; വളർച്ച കുറഞ്ഞു: വാഹനക്കണക്കിൽ കേരളം യുഎസിനൊപ്പം
രണ്ടു പ്രളയങ്ങളും കോവിഡ് വ്യാപനവും കാരണം കേരളത്തിന്റെ ആഭ്യന്തര വളർച്ചനിരക്കിലുണ്ടായ കുറവ് 3.04%. സംസ്ഥാന ആസൂത്രണ ബോർഡ് തയ്യാറാക്കിയ സാമ്പത്തിക അവലോകന റിപ്പോർട്ടിലാണ് ഈ വിവരം. സാമ്പത്തിക വളർച്ച 2018-19 ലെ 6.49 ശതമാനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് 2019-20 ൽ 3.45 ശതമാനമായി ഇടിഞ്ഞു. ദേശീയ ശരാശരിയെക്കാൾ ഉയർന്നിരുന്ന കേരളത്തിന്റെ വളർച്ച താഴോട്ടു പോകാൻ 3 വർഷമായി തുടരുന്ന സാമ്പത്തിക പ്രതിസന്ധിയും കാരണമായെന്ന് റിപ്പോർട്ട് ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടുന്നു. എന്നാൽ, മൊത്തം ആഭ്യന്തര ഉൽപാദനം 7.90 ലക്ഷം കോടി രൂപയിൽ നിന്ന് 8.54 ലക്ഷം കോടിയായി ഉയർന്നു. വർധന 8.15%. ഈ സാമ്പത്തിക വർഷത്തിന്റെ തുടക്കത്തിൽ സമ്പദ്വ്യവസ്ഥ 26% ചുരുങ്ങും. സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ കടബാധ്യത 2.60 ലക്ഷം കോടി രൂപയായി ഉയർന്നു. ആഭ്യന്തര കടം 1.65 ലക്ഷം കോടിയായി. റവന്യൂ വരുമാനത്തിൽ 2,629 കോടിയുടെ കുറവുണ്ടായി. വാഹനങ്ങളുടെ എണ്ണത്തിന്റെ അനുപാതമെടുത്താൽ കേരളം ഇപ്പോൾ ഏതാണ്ട് യുഎസിന് ഒപ്പം. യുഎസിൽ 1000 പേർക്ക് 425 വാഹനങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ഇന്ത്യയിൽ 1000 പേരിൽ 18 പേർക്കു മാത്രമേ സ്വന്തം വാഹനമുള്ളൂ. ചൈനയിൽ 1000 ൽ 47 പേർക്കാണ് വാഹനം. എന്നാൽ, മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവളർച്ച കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷത്തെ 10.7 ശതമാനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഇത്തവണ 6.35 ശതമാനമായി കുറഞ്ഞു. 1.41 കോടി വാഹനങ്ങളാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ കേരളത്തിലുള്ളത്.

(മ.മ., 15/01)

ഇ-വോട്ടിങ്: ചരിത്രം സൃഷ്ടിച്ച് സഭ

ഗവർണ്ണറുടെ നയപ്രഖ്യാപനത്തിനുള്ള നന്ദിപ്രമേയം വോട്ടിനിട്ടപ്പോൾ ഇ വോട്ടിങ് നടത്തി നിയമസഭ മറ്റൊരു ചരിത്രം കുറിച്ചു. പൂർണ്ണമായി ഡിജിറ്റൽ സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയിലേക്ക് മാറിയതിന്റെ ഭാഗമായാണ് ഡിജിറ്റൽ വോട്ടിങ് നടത്തിയത്. പ്രമേയത്തെ അനുകൂലിച്ച് 75 പേരും എതിർത്ത് 33 പേരും വോട്ട്

രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയതോടെ പ്രമേയം പാസായി. സാങ്കേതിക തകരാർ കാരണം പ്രതിപക്ഷ നേതാവിന്റെ വോട്ട് മോണിറ്ററിൽ തെളിഞ്ഞില്ലെങ്കിലും അവയും കൂട്ടിയാണ് എതിർക്കുന്നവരുടെ എണ്ണം 33 ആയത്. മൂന്ന് ദിവസത്തെ ചർച്ചയ്ക്ക് ശേഷം നന്ദിപ്രമേയം പാസാക്കുന്ന ഘട്ടത്തിലാണ് സ്പീക്കർ ഇ- വോട്ടിങ് പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചത്. എല്ലാ അംഗങ്ങളുടെയും ഇരിപ്പിടത്തിൽ സജ്ജീകരിച്ച കമ്പ്യൂട്ടർ സ്ക്രീനിലെ വിൻഡോയിൽ തെളിയുന്ന 'യെസ്, നോ' ഓപ്ഷനുകളിൽ തൊട്ടാണ് വോട്ട് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയത്. ആദ്യം റിഹേഴ്സൽ ആയിരുന്നു. അതിൽ പല അംഗങ്ങളുടെയും വോട്ട് സ്ക്രീനിൽ തെളിഞ്ഞില്ല. തുടർന്ന് വീണ്ടും റിഹേഴ്സൽ ആകാമെന്ന് സ്പീക്കർ അറിയിച്ചു. അനുകൂലിക്കുന്നവർ 70 ഉം എതിർക്കുന്നവർ 32 എന്ന നിലയാണ് ദൃശ്യമായത്. തുടർന്ന് യഥാർഥ വോട്ടിങ്ങിലേക്ക് കടന്നു.

(ഭേ., 15/01)

വാക്സിനേഷൻ ഇന്ന്; നൽകുന്നത് 0.5 എംഎൽ കോവീഷീൽഡ്

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് ആദ്യഘട്ട കോവിഡ്- വാക്സിൻ കുത്തിവയ്പ്പ് ശനിയാഴ്ച നടക്കും. 133 കേന്ദ്രത്തിലാണ് വാക്സിനേഷൻ. 4,33,500 ഡോസ് വാക്സിനാണ് ലഭിച്ചത്. എറണാകുളം ജില്ലയിൽ 12 കേന്ദ്രവും തിരുവനന്തപുരം, കോഴിക്കോട് ജില്ലകളിൽ 11 വീതം കേന്ദ്രവും ഉണ്ടാകും. ബാക്കി ജില്ലകളിൽ ഒമ്പത് വീതവും. ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പിന്റെ മേൽനോട്ടത്തിൽ വിവിധ വകുപ്പുകളുടെയും വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെയും അന്താരാഷ്ട്ര ഏജൻസികളായ ലോകാരോഗ്യ സംഘടന, യൂണിസെഫ്, യുഎൻഡിപി തുടങ്ങിയവയുടെ സഹകരണത്തോടെയാണ് വാക്സിനേഷൻ. ആദ്യ ദിവസം ഒരു കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽനിന്ന് 100 പേർക്കാണ് വാക്സിൻ നൽകുന്നത്. രാവിലെ ഒമ്പതുമുതൽ അഞ്ചുവരെയാണ് വാക്സിനേഷൻ. രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്ത ആളിന് എവിടെയാണ് വാക്സിൻ എടുക്കാൻ പോകേണ്ടതെന്ന് എസ്എംഎസ് ലഭിക്കും. വാക്സിൻ നൽകാൻ ഒരാൾക്ക് നാലു മിനിറ്റ് മുതൽ അഞ്ചു മിനിറ്റ് വരെ എടുക്കും. വാക്സിൻ എടുത്തുകഴിഞ്ഞാൽ 30 മിനിറ്റ് നിരീക്ഷണം നിർബന്ധമാണ്. വാക്സിനേഷൻ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ ഡോക്ടറുടെ സേവനവും ലഭ്യമാക്കും. അടിയന്തര ചികിത്സയ്ക്കായി എല്ലാ കേന്ദ്രത്തിലും എഇഎഫ്ഐ (രോഗപ്രതിരോധത്തെ തുടർന്നുള്ള പ്രതികൂല സംഭവങ്ങൾ) കിറ്റ് ഉണ്ടാകും. ചെറുതും വലുതുമായ എന്തെങ്കിലും പാർശ്വഫലങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായാൽ അത് പരിഹരിക്കാനുള്ള നടപടികൾ അപ്പോൾ തന്നെ സ്വീകരിക്കണമെന്നതിനാലാണ് നിരീക്ഷണം. വാക്സിനേഷൻ നടക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ കേന്ദ്രത്തിലും വെബ്കാസ്റ്റിങ് സംവിധാനം ഏർപ്പെടുത്തി.

(ഭേ., 16/01)

തരിശുരഹിത കേരളത്തിൽ 2 ലക്ഷം തൊഴിലവസരം

കൃഷിമേഖലയിൽ 2 ലക്ഷം തൊഴിലവസരങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുമെന്നു പ്രഖ്യാപനം. തരിശുരഹിത കേരളമാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം. ഒരുപൂ ആക്കുന്നതിനും തുടർവിളകളും ഇടവിളകളും കൃഷി ചെയ്യുന്നതിനും പ്രത്യേക പദ്ധതികൾ തയ്യാറാക്കും. കുടുംബശ്രീയുടെ 70,000 സംഘകൃഷി ഗ്രൂപ്പുകളിൽ നിലവിൽ 3 ലക്ഷം സ്ത്രീകൾക്കു ജോലിയുണ്ട്. ഗ്രൂപ്പുകൾ ഒരു ലക്ഷമാക്കി ഒന്നുകാൽ ലക്ഷം പേർക്കുകൂടി തൊഴിൽ നൽകും. കർഷകത്തൊഴിലാളി ക്ഷേമനിധിക്കുള്ള അതിവർഷാനുകൂല്യം നൽകാൻ 130 കോടി കൂടാതെ 100 കോടി രൂപ കൂടി അനുവദിച്ചു. മാർച്ചിനകം നൽകും. മണ്ണുജല സംരക്ഷണത്തിന് 103 കോടി രൂപ. ചെറുകിട ജലസേചനത്തിന് 168 കോടി രൂപ. മൈക്രോ ഇറിഗേഷൻ പദ്ധതി നബാർഡ് സഹായത്തോടെ തുടരും. ഇടമലയാർ, മുവാറ്റുപുഴയാർ ജലസേചന പദ്ധതികൾക്കു 40 കോടി രൂപ. കബനി, ഭവാനി, പമ്പ, കാവേരി തടങ്ങളിലെ ഇടത്തരം - ചെറുകിട ജലസംരക്ഷണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് 49 കോടിയും ചതുവട്ടം പദ്ധതി പൂർത്തീകരണത്തിന് 4 കോടിയും വകയിരുത്തി. ലോകബാങ്ക് സഹായത്തോടെയുള്ള ഡാം റീഹാബിലിറ്റേഷൻ പദ്ധതിയുടെ രണ്ടാം ഘട്ടത്തിൽ 16 ഡാമുകൾക്ക് 216 കോടി രൂപ ലഭ്യമാക്കും. കാഞ്ഞിരപ്പുഴ, ചിറ്റൂർപ്പുഴ പദ്ധതികളുടെ പ്രവൃത്തികൾ ഈ വർഷം പുതുതായി ഏറ്റെടുക്കാൻ 25 കോടി അനുവദിച്ചു.

(മ.മ., 16/01)

കടലിലും അതിസുരക്ഷ ; ആദ്യഘട്ടം 300 ബോട്ടിൽ ഹോളോഗ്രാം രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ബോർഡ്

മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളി സുരക്ഷ ഉറപ്പാക്കാൻ മത്സ്യബന്ധന ബോട്ടുകളിൽ കേരളം അതീവ സുരക്ഷാ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ബോർഡുകൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കും. ബോട്ടുകളുടെ സംരക്ഷണവും വിദൂര നിരീക്ഷണവും ലക്ഷ്യമിട്ട് മത്സ്യബന്ധന വകുപ്പാണ് ലോകത്താദ്യമായി പദ്ധതി നടപ്പാക്കുന്നത്. ആദ്യഘട്ടം 300 ബോട്ടിൽ ഹോളോഗ്രാം രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ബോർഡ് ഘടിപ്പിക്കും. നീണ്ടകര, മൂന്നമ്പം, കൊച്ചി എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിലെ നൂറോളം ബോട്ടിൽ ഘടിപ്പിച്ചു. രണ്ടാം ഘട്ടത്തിൽ 1500 ഉം മൂന്നാം ഘട്ടത്തോടെ സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ മുഴുവൻ മത്സ്യബന്ധന ബോട്ടുകളിലും ബോർഡുകളാവും. സി ഡിറ്റിന്റെ സാങ്കേതിക സഹായത്തോടെ കുറഞ്ഞ ചെലവിലാണ് ഇവ സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നത്. സമുദ്രമേഖലയിലെ എല്ലാ ഭീഷണികളും കണക്കിലെടുത്താണ് ഇത് ആവിഷ്കരിച്ചത്. രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാത്ത ബോട്ടുകളും വ്യാജ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഉള്ളവരും നിയമവിരുദ്ധ പ്രവർത്തനം നടത്തിയാൽ പരിശോധിക്കാനാവും. സാറ്റലൈറ്റ് അധിഷ്ഠിത ആശയവിനിമയ ഉപകരണം

ഉപയോഗിച്ച് രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ നമ്പറും സീരിയൽ നമ്പറും പരിശോധിക്കാമെന്നതിനാൽ വ്യാജനെയും തിരിച്ചറിയാം.

(ഭേ., 17/01)

വാഹനങ്ങളിലെ കർട്ടനും ഫിലിമും മാറ്റിക്കോ; പണികിട്ടും

കൂളിങ് പേപ്പറും കർട്ടനും നീക്കം ചെയ്യാത്ത വാഹനങ്ങളെ പിടികൂടാൻ ഞായറാഴ്ച മുതൽ മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവകുപ്പിന്റെ പരിശോധന. സുപ്രീംകോടതി, ഹൈക്കോടതി വിധികൾ ലംഘിച്ച് കൂളിങ് പേപ്പർ, കർട്ടൻ എന്നിവ നീക്കം ചെയ്യാത്ത വാഹനങ്ങൾക്കെതിരെ നടപടിയെടുക്കാൻ 'ഓപ്പറേഷൻ സ്ക്രീൻ' എന്നപേരിലാണ് പരിശോധന. വാഹനങ്ങളുടെ പിറകിലെ ഗ്ലാസിലും വശങ്ങളിലും കൂളിങ് ഫിലിം, കർട്ടൻ എന്നിവ വച്ചുമാർക്കുന്നത് കുറ്റകരമാണ്. നിരവധി സർക്കാർ, അർദ്ധ സർക്കാർ, സ്വകാര്യവാഹനങ്ങൾ നിയമം ലംഘിക്കുന്നതായി പരാതി ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. കർശന നടപടി വേണമെന്ന ഹൈക്കോടതി നിർദ്ദേശത്തിന്റെയും പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലാണ് പരിശോധനയെന്ന് ട്രാൻസ്പോർട്ട് കമീഷണർ ഉത്തരവിൽ പറഞ്ഞു. വാഹന ഉടമകളെ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടിക്കാത്തവിധം ഫോട്ടോ എടുത്ത് ഇ ചെലാൻ വഴിയാണ് കുറ്റപത്രം നൽകുക. കർട്ടനും ഫിലിമും നീക്കംചെയ്യാൻ വിസമ്മതിച്ചാൽ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ റദ്ദാക്കുമെന്നും ഉത്തരവിൽ പറഞ്ഞു.

(ഭേ., 17/01)

പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാലിന്യ ശേഖരണത്തിന് യൂസർ ഫീ

സംസ്ഥാനത്തു പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാലിന്യ നിർമ്മാർജ്ജനത്തിനു വീടുകൾ, സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ, വഴിയോര കച്ചവടക്കാർ, പൊതുപരിപാടികളുടെ സംഘാടകർ തുടങ്ങിയവരിൽനിന്നു തദ്ദേശ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ മുഖേന യൂസർ ഫീസ് പിരിവു നിർബന്ധമാക്കാൻ ചട്ടങ്ങൾ തയ്യാറായി. നികുതി, കുടിശിക എന്നിവ പോലെ യൂസർ ഫീസും ഈടാക്കാം. പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ ഉറവിടത്തിൽ തന്നെ സംഭരിച്ചു ശാസ്ത്രീയമായി സംസ്കരിക്കുന്നതിനും പരിപാലിക്കുന്നതിനുമായ ചട്ടങ്ങൾ. വീടുകളിൽനിന്നു പ്രതിമാസം 20 രൂപ മുതൽ 200 രൂപ വരെയാകും ഫീസ്. ഫ്ലാറ്റുകളിലും റസിഡന്റ് ഏരിയകളിലും ഓരോ ഫ്ലാറ്റും/വീടും പ്രത്യേകം ഫീസ് നൽകണം. സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ, വഴിയോരക്കച്ചവടക്കാർ, കേറ്ററിങ് യൂണിറ്റുകൾ തുടങ്ങിയവയിൽ മാലിന്യത്തിന്റെ അളവിന് അനുസരിച്ചാകും ഫീസ്. പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് കവറുകൾ പോലുള്ളവ 100 ഗ്രാമിനു 10- 20 രൂപ. മറ്റു പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാലിന്യങ്ങൾക്ക് ഓരോ 100 ഗ്രാമിനും 10 രൂപ വരെ ഫീസായി ഈടാക്കും. 100 പേരിൽ കൂടുതൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന പരിപാടികൾ നടത്തുന്നവർ ഒടുക്കേണ്ട അടിസ്ഥാന

യൂസർ ഫീസ് 250 രൂപയാണ്. ചട്ടങ്ങൾ, 'തദ്ദേശ പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാലിന്യ പരിപാലന ഉപനിയമാവലി' എന്ന പേരിൽ സർക്കാർ ഉത്തരവായി ഇറക്കി.

(മ.മ., 18/01)

കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധ കുത്തിവയ്പ്പ് ആഴ്ചയിൽ 4 ദിവസം: തിങ്കൾ, ചൊവ്വ, വ്യാഴം, വെള്ളി

കേരളത്തിൽ കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധ കുത്തിവയ്പ്പ് തിങ്കൾ, ചൊവ്വ, വ്യാഴം, വെള്ളി എന്നിങ്ങനെ ആഴ്ചയിൽ 4 ദിവസങ്ങളിലായി തുടരുന്നതും മന്ത്രി കെ.കെ.ശൈലജ അറിയിച്ചു. കുട്ടികൾക്കു പ്രതിരോധ കുത്തിവയ്പ്പ് നൽകുന്ന ദിവസമായതിനാൽ ബുധൻ ഒഴിവാക്കി. 133 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ 100 പേർക്കു വീതമായിരിക്കും കുത്തിവയ്പ്പ്. ആരോഗ്യപ്രവർത്തകർക്കുള്ള വാക്സിൻ വിതരണം പൂർത്തിയായാൽ കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധത്തിനു മുന്നിൽ നിന്ന വിവിധ സേനാംഗങ്ങൾ, പൊലീസുകാർ, റവന്യൂ വകുപ്പ് ജീവനക്കാർ, മുൻസിപ്പൽ വർക്കർമാർ, അങ്കണവാടി ജീവനക്കാർ എന്നിവർക്കു കുത്തിവയ്പ്പ് നൽകും.

(മ.മ., 18/01)

അതിരുകൾ ഇനി ഉപഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ നിർമ്മിക്കും; ധാരണപത്രം ഒപ്പിട്ടു; പദ്ധതി ഒരു വർഷത്തിനകം

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് ഭൂമിയുടെ സർവ്വേ ഇനി ഉപഗ്രഹസാങ്കേതികവിദ്യ വഴി. ഭൂമിയുടെ അളവും പരിപാലനവും കൂടുതൽ കാര്യക്ഷമവും കൃത്യവുമാക്കാൻ നൂതന ജിയോസ്പേഷ്യൽ സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയായ കണ്ടിനുസിലി ഓപ്പറേറ്റിങ് റെഫറൻസ് സ്ട്രേഷൻസ് (സിഒആർഎസ്) സ്ഥാപിക്കും. നാവിഗേഷൻ സാറ്റലൈറ്റുകളുപയോഗിച്ച് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന സിഒആർഎസ് വഴി ലഭിക്കുന്ന വിവരങ്ങളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ റിയൽ ടൈം കിനെമാറ്റിക് (ആർടികെ) മെഷീനുകൾ ഉപയോഗിച്ച് സർവ്വേ ചെയ്യുന്ന സംവിധാനമാണ് കേരളത്തിൽ നടപ്പാക്കുന്നത്. 12 കോടി രൂപ ചെലവിലാണ് ഈ സജ്ജീകരണമൊരുക്കുന്നത്. ഇതിൽ എട്ട് കോടി രൂപ സിഒആർ സ്പേഷനുകൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കാനും ശേഷിക്കുന്ന തുക ആർടികെ മെഷീനുകൾക്കുമാണ്. അഞ്ച് സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ ഇത് നടപ്പാക്കിയതിന്റെ പ്രാവീണ്യവും പരിചയസമ്പത്തും കണക്കിലെടുത്താണ് സർവ്വേ ഓഫ് ഇന്ത്യക്ക് നിർവഹണച്ചുമതല നൽകിയത്. 28 സിഒആർ സ്പേഷനാണ് കേരളത്തിൽ സ്ഥാപിക്കുക. ഇതുവഴി സർവ്വേയർമാരുടെ ലഭ്യതക്കുറവുമുലമുള്ള കാലതാമസം ഒഴിവാകും. പൂർണ്ണമായും ഡിജിറ്റൽ രീതിയിൽ സർവ്വേ രേഖകൾ തയ്യാറാക്കുന്നതിനാൽ ജനങ്ങൾക്ക് ഓൺലൈനായി സേവനങ്ങൾ

നൽകാം. ഒരു വർഷത്തിനകം പൂർത്തിയാകും. സർവ്വേ ജീവനക്കാർക്ക് സർവ്വേ ഓഫ് ഇന്ത്യ പരിശീലനം നൽകും.

(ദേ., 19/01)

വരമ്പു, ജലാശയങ്ങളിൽ വൻ സോളാർ പാനലുകൾ ;സാധ്യതാ പരിശോധന തുടങ്ങി

സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ ജലസേചന പദ്ധതി പ്രദേശങ്ങളിൽ കൂടുതൽ സോളാർ പാനലുകൾ സ്ഥാപിച്ച് വൈദ്യുതി ഉൽപ്പാദിപ്പിക്കുന്ന പദ്ധതിയുടെ സാധ്യതാ പരിശോധന ആരംഭിച്ചു. ഇടമലയാർ ജലസേചന പദ്ധതി പ്രദേശത്ത് 4,01,273.95 ചതുരശ്രമീറ്ററും പെരിയാർ വാലി പദ്ധതിയിൽ പെരുമ്പാവൂരിന് കീഴിൽ 6,27,236 ച.മീറ്ററും പിവിഐപി ഡിവിഷന്റെ കീഴിൽ 3316.71 ച. മീറ്ററും ചാലക്കുടി റിവർ ഡെവർഷൻ സ്കീമിൽ 34,140 ചതുരശ്ര മീറ്ററും സോളാർ പാനൽ സ്ഥാപിക്കാൻ സാധിക്കുമെന്ന് കണ്ടെത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. മലങ്കര ഡാമിന്റെ റിസർവോയർ പ്രദേശത്തും മൂവാറ്റുപുഴ പദ്ധതിയുടെ പ്രധാന കനാലിന്റെയും മുകളിൽ 80 കിലോമീറ്റർ ദൂരത്തും സോളാർ പാനലുകൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കാനും ലക്ഷ്യമിടുന്നു. തിരുവനന്തപുരം ജില്ലയിലെ ആറ്റുകാൽ, തിരുമല ജലസംഭരണികളിൽ സ്ഥാപിച്ച സൗരോർജ് പ്ലാന്റുകൾ കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒക്ടോബറോടെ പ്രവർത്തനം ആരംഭിച്ചു. 2.12 കോടി രൂപ ചെലവഴിച്ച് നിർമ്മിച്ച ഓരോ പ്ലാന്റുകളുടെയും ശേഷി 100 കിലോവാട്ട് വീതമാണ്. ബാറ്ററി ഉപയോഗിക്കാതെയുള്ള സംവിധാനമാനമായതിനാൽ ലഭ്യമാകുന്ന ഊർജം പരമാവധി ഉപയോഗിക്കാനും അറ്റകുറ്റപ്പണികളുടെ ചെലവ് കുറയ്ക്കാനും കഴിയും.

(ദേ., 19/01)

കേരളത്തിന് 3.60 ലക്ഷം ഡോസ് വാക്സിൻ കൂടി

കേരളത്തിന് രണ്ടാം ഘട്ടമായി 3,60,500 ഡോസ് കോവിഷീൽഡ് വാക്സിൻ കൂടി കേന്ദ്രം അനുവദിച്ചു. ഇന്ന് കൊച്ചി, തിരുവനന്തപുരം വിമാനത്താവളങ്ങളിലെത്തിക്കും. കോഴിക്കോട് മേഖലയിലേക്കുള്ള വാക്സിനം കൊച്ചിയിലാണെത്തിക്കുന്നത്. രണ്ടാം ഘട്ടത്തിൽ കോവിഡ് മുന്നണിപ്പോരാളികൾക്കാകും നൽകുക. ജില്ലകൾക്കുള്ള വിഹിതം: തിരുവനന്തപുരം 50,500, കൊല്ലം 21,000, പത്തനംതിട്ട 19,000, ആലപ്പുഴ 19,000, കോട്ടയം 24,000, ഇടുക്കി 7500, എറണാകുളം 59,000, തൃശൂർ 31,000, പാലക്കാട് 25,500, മലപ്പുറം 25,000, കോഴിക്കോട് 33,000, വയനാട് 14,000, കണ്ണൂർ 26,500, കാസർകോട് 5500 .

(മ.മ., 20/01)

കെഎസ്ആർടിസിയിൽ പരാതി പരിഹാര കമ്മിറ്റി രൂപീകരിക്കും

ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവു പ്രകാരം കെഎസ്ആർടിസിയിൽ പരാതി പരിഹാര കമ്മിറ്റി രൂപീകരിക്കാൻ സിഎംഡി ബിജുപ്രഭാകർ നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകി. മാനേജ്മെന്റ് തലത്തിൽ നിന്നും തൊഴിലാളികൾക്കിടയിൽ നിന്നും തുല്യ പ്രാതിനിധ്യത്തോട് ആയിരിക്കും കമ്മിറ്റി. ചെയർപേഴ്സനായി ഓരോ വർഷവും മാനേജ്മെന്റ് തലത്തിൽ നിന്നും, തൊഴിലാളി തലത്തിൽ നിന്നുമുള്ളവർ മാറി മാറി വരും. പരമാവധി 5 അംഗങ്ങൾ മാത്രം. ഇതിൽ 2 പേർ വനിതകളും ഒരാൾ മറ്റു ഭരണ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഉള്ളവരുമായിരിക്കും. പരാതി ലഭിച്ച് 30 ദിവസത്തിനകം നടപടി ക്രമങ്ങൾ പൂർത്തീകരിക്കണമെന്നും ഉത്തരവിൽ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു.

(മ.മ., 20/01)

കെഎസ്ആർടിസി കണ്ടക്ടർക്ക് ഇനി 'ഒറ്റയാൾ' സീറ്റ്

കെഎസ്ആർടിസി ബസുകളിലെ കണ്ടക്ടർ സീറ്റ് 'സിംഗിൾ' ആകുന്നു. ഒപ്പം ഡ്രൈവർ കാബിനും ഒഴിവാക്കുന്നു. മിക്ക ഡിപ്പോകളിലും ഇതിനുള്ള നടപടികൾ തുടങ്ങി. കോവിഡ് പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ കണ്ടക്ടറുടെ സീറ്റ് യാത്രക്കാരുമായി പങ്കു വയ്ക്കുന്നത് ഒഴിവാക്കുകയാണ് ഒരു ലക്ഷ്യം. വനിതാ കണ്ടക്ടർമാരുള്ള ബസുകളിൽ സീറ്റ് പങ്ക് വയ്ക്കുന്നതു സുരക്ഷിതത്വത്തെ ബാധിക്കുന്നതായി പരാതിയുമുണ്ട്. രാത്രി സമയങ്ങളിൽ മദ്യപർ അടക്കം വനിതാ കണ്ടക്ടർമാരുടെ സമീപം ഇരിക്കുന്നത് ഉപദ്രവമായി മാറുന്നതായി യൂണിയനുകൾ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെടുത്തിയിരുന്നു. ചില ദീർഘദൂര സർവീസുകളിൽ കണ്ടക്ടർമാർക്ക് ഇപ്പോൾത്തന്നെ സിംഗിൾ സീറ്റാണ്.

(മ.മ., 21/01)

നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഏപ്രിൽ പകുതിയോടെ

നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഏപ്രിൽ പകുതിയോടെ നടക്കുമെന്നു സൂചന. മാർച്ചിൽ എസ്.എസ്.എൽ.സി., മേയിൽ സി.ബി.എസ്.ഇ. പരീക്ഷകൾ നടക്കുന്നതിനാൽ ഏറ്റവും ഉചിതമായ സമയം ഏപ്രിൽ പകുതിയോടെയാണെന്നു മുഖ്യ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഓഫീസർ കേന്ദ്ര തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു കമ്മീഷനോടു ശുപാർശ ചെയ്തു. ഫെബ്രുവരി അവസാനമോ മാർച്ചിലോ വിജ്ഞാപനം പുറപ്പെടുവിക്കും. നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിനുള്ള അന്തിമ വോട്ടർപട്ടിക ഇന്നലെ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ചു. ആകെ വോട്ടർമാരുടെ എണ്ണവും മറ്റു വിശദാംശങ്ങളും മുഖ്യ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഓഫീസർ ഇന്നു വാർത്താ സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ അറിയിക്കും. വോട്ടർ പട്ടികയിൽ പേരു ചേർക്കാനുള്ള അവസരം ഇപ്പോഴുമുണ്ട്. അവസാന തീയതി പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചിട്ടില്ല.

(മ.മ., 21/01)

നിയമസഭാ തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിന് 2.67 കോടി വോട്ടർമാർ ; പുതുതായി 5,79,835 പേർ, കന്നിവോട്ടർമാർ 2,99,258

നിയമസഭാ തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിനുള്ള അന്തിമ വോട്ടർപട്ടികയിൽ 2,67,31,509 വോട്ടർമാർ. പുതുതായി 5,79,835 പേരെ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തി. 18-19 പ്രായത്തിലുള്ള കന്നിവോട്ടർമാർ 2,99,258. കരട് വോട്ടർപട്ടികയിൽ 2,63,08,087 വോട്ടർമാരാണുണ്ടായിരുന്നത്. 1,56,413 പേരെ ഒഴിവാക്കി. പുതുക്കിയ പട്ടികയിൽ 1,37,79,263 സ്ത്രീകളും 1,29,52,025 പുരുഷന്മാരും 221 ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡർ വോട്ടർമാരുമുണ്ട്. ഏറ്റവും കൂടുതൽ വോട്ടർ മലപ്പുറത്താണ്-32,14,943. കുറവ് വയനാട്-6,07,068. കൂടുതൽ സ്ത്രീ വോട്ടർമാരും മലപ്പുറത്താണ്-16,07,004. കൂടുതൽ ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡർ (57)വോട്ടർമാരുള്ളത് തിരുവനന്തപുരത്താണ്-80 വയസ്സിനു മുകളിലുള്ള 6,21,401 വോട്ടർമാരും ഭിന്നശേഷി വിഭാഗത്തിൽപ്പെട്ട-1,33,005 പേരുമുണ്ട്. 56,759 സർവീസ് വോട്ടർമാരും 90,709 പ്രവാസി വോട്ടർമാരുമാണ് പുതുക്കിയ പട്ടികയിലുള്ളത്. കൂടുതൽ പ്രവാസി വോട്ടർമാർ കോഴിക്കോട്ടാണ്-34,216. കൂടുതൽ കന്നിവോട്ടർമാരും കോഴിക്കോട്ടാണ്-40,867. 2020 ലെ വോട്ടർപട്ടികപ്രകാരം ജനസംഖ്യയുടെ 75.73 ശതമാനമായിരുന്നു വോട്ടർമാർ. അത് 76.55 ശതമാനമായി.

(ഭേ., 22/01)

'ഓപ്പറേഷൻ സ്ത്രീൻ' പിൻവലിച്ചു

വാഹനങ്ങളിലെ കൂളിങ് ഫിലിമുകളും കർട്ടനുകളും നീക്കം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനായി മോട്ടോർ വാഹന വകുപ്പ് ആരംഭിച്ച ' ഓപ്പറേഷൻ സ്ത്രീൻ' പിൻവലിച്ചു. ഈ പരിശോധന നിർത്തിവയ്ക്കാൻ ഗതാഗത കമ്മീഷണർ ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കു നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകി. വാഹന ഉടമകൾ നിയമം പാലിക്കണമെന്ന് കമ്മീഷണർ പറഞ്ഞു.

(മ.മ., 22/01)

സിഎജി റിപ്പോർട്ടിനെതിരെ പ്രമേയം പാസാക്കി നിയമസഭ

കൺട്രോളർ ആൻഡ് ഓഡിറ്റർ ജനറലിന്റെ (സിഎജി) റിപ്പോർട്ടിനെതിരെ ചരിത്രത്തിലാദ്യമായി നിയമസഭ പ്രമേയം പാസാക്കി. കിഫ്ബിക്കെതിരായുള്ള വിവാദ പരാമർശങ്ങൾ അടങ്ങിയ 3 പേജുകൾ നിരാകരിച്ചു കൊണ്ടുള്ള പ്രമേയം പാസായ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ, അത് ഒഴിവാക്കിയുള്ള സിഎജി റിപ്പോർട്ട് പബ്ലിക് അക്കൗണ്ട്സ് കമ്മിറ്റിക്കു(പിഎസി) കൈമാറാനാണു തീരുമാനം. ചട്ടം 118 അനുസരിച്ചു മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച പ്രമേയം ശബ്ദവോട്ടോടെ സഭ പാസാക്കുകയായിരുന്നു. ഭരണഘടനയ്ക്കും നിയമസഭാ ചട്ടങ്ങൾക്കും കീഴ്വഴക്കങ്ങൾക്കും വിരുദ്ധമാണ് ഈ നടപടിയെന്നു ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടി ബിജെപി ഉൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള പ്രതിപക്ഷം

പ്രമേയത്തെ എതിർത്തു. ഭരണഘടനാ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെയും നിയമസഭാ സമിതിയുടെയും അധികാരം കശാപ്പ ചെയ്യുന്നതിനു തുല്യമാണ് ഇതെന്നും അവർ ആരോപിച്ചു. സിഎജി റിപ്പോർട്ടിലെ 3 പേജ് നിരാകരിക്കാനുള്ള പ്രമേയം നിയമസഭ പാസാക്കിയതോടെ അതു സഭയുടെ തീരുമാനമായി മാറിയെന്നു സ്പീക്കർ പിന്നീടു വിശദമായ റൂളിങ് നൽകി. സഭയുടെ തീരുമാനം സഭാ സമിതികൾക്കും ബാധകമാണെന്നു സ്പീക്കർ വ്യക്തമാക്കി.

(മ.മ., 23/01)

കോവിഡ് 19: ആന്റിബോഡി കണ്ടെത്താൻ സീറോ സർവൈലൻസ് തുടങ്ങുന്നു

കോവിഡിനോടു സമൂഹം നേടിയ ആർജിത പ്രതിരോധ ശേഷി വിലയിരുത്താൻ സംസ്ഥാന വ്യാപകമായി ആന്റിബോഡി പഠനം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നു. ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പിന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ രണ്ടു ഘട്ടങ്ങളായാണ് പഠനം. സീറോ സർവൈലൻസ് എന്ന പേരിൽ നടത്തുന്ന പഠനത്തിൽ മൂന്നു വിഭാഗം ആളുകളെയാണ് ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്. 18 വയസ്സിനു മുകളിലുള്ളവർ, ആരോഗ്യപ്രവർത്തകർ, നൂറിലധികം സാംപിളുകൾ പ്രതിദിനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്ന ലാബുകളിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നവർ എന്നിവരിൽ നിന്നു രക്തസാംപിളുകൾ ശേഖരിച്ചാണ് പഠനം.

(മ.മ., 23/01)

ബുധനാഴ്ചയും വാക്സിനേഷൻ

ജില്ലാ തലങ്ങളിലെ സൗകര്യം അനുസരിച്ചു ബുധനാഴ്ച കൂടി കോവിഡ് വാക്സിനേഷൻ നടത്താൻ ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പിന്റെ അനുമതി. തിങ്കൾ, ചൊവ്വ, വ്യാഴം, വെള്ളി ദിവസങ്ങളിലാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ കുത്തിവെയ്പ്പ്. കുട്ടികൾക്കുള്ള മറ്റു വാക്സിനേഷനുകൾ മുടങ്ങാതെ ദിവസം കൂട്ടുന്നതിനു ജില്ലാ ടാസ്റ്റ് ഫോഴ്സുകൾക്കു തീരുമാനം എടുക്കാം. മൊത്തം 249 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ സജ്ജമാക്കുമെന്ന് മന്ത്രി കെ.കെ.ശൈലജ പറഞ്ഞു. എറണാകുളത്തു 38 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളും തിരുവനന്തപുരത്തു 30 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടാകും. മറ്റു ജില്ലകളിൽ കുറഞ്ഞതു 14 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ.

(മ.മ., 24/01)

റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ നിരക്ക് കൂട്ടില്ലെന്ന് സർക്കാർ

ഭൂമി, കെട്ടിട കൈമാറ്റ ഇടപാടുകൾക്കു 2% നികുതി ചുമത്താനുള്ള ധനകാര്യ കമ്മീഷന്റെ ശുപാർശ നടപ്പാക്കില്ലെന്ന് സർക്കാർ. മറ്റു സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളെ അപേക്ഷിച്ചു സ്റ്റാമ്പ് ഡ്യൂട്ടിയും റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഫീസും ഇപ്പോൾത്തന്നെ കൂടുതലായതിനാലാണ് വർധന വരുത്താനുള്ള ശുപാർശ അംഗീകരിക്കേണ്ടെന്നു ധനവകുപ്പ് തീരുമാനിച്ചത്. നിലവിൽ 8% സ്റ്റാമ്പ് ഡ്യൂട്ടിയും 2% റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഫീസുമാണ് സർക്കാർ ഈടാക്കുന്നത്. ഈ നിരക്കു തന്നെ തുടരാനാണ് തീരുമാനം. ജല അതോറിറ്റിക്കു കീഴിലെ

പൊതുടാപ്പുകളെല്ലാം ഗാർഹിക കണക്ഷനുകളാക്കുന്ന നടപടി വേഗത്തിലാക്കും. വിനോദ നികുതിക്കു പകരം ജിഎസ്ടി ഏർപ്പെടുത്തിയതു വഴി തദ്ദേശ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള നഷ്ടം നികത്താനും തീരുമാനിച്ചു.

(മ.മ., 24/01)

1912 വിളിക്കു; കെഎസ്ഇബി വീട്ടിൽ വരും, വൈദ്യുതി കണക്ഷൻ ലഭിക്കും

1912 എന്ന നമ്പറിൽ വിളിച്ചാൽ കെഎസ്ഇബി ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ വീട്ടിലെത്തി വൈദ്യുതി കണക്ഷൻ നൽകും. ഇതുശ്ചൈടെ സേവനങ്ങൾ വീട്ടിലെത്തിക്കുന്ന സംവിധാനം അടുത്ത മാസം മുതൽ പരീക്ഷണാർഥം 100 സെക്ഷൻ ഓഫീസുകളിൽ നടപ്പാക്കും. രണ്ടാം വാരത്തോടെ പൈലറ്റ് ഘട്ടം നടപ്പാക്കി ജൂണിനു മുൻപു സംസ്ഥാന വ്യാപകമാക്കാനാണു തീരുമാനം. ഇതിനായി മൊബൈൽ ആപ്പും വികസിപ്പിക്കും. ആദ്യഘട്ടത്തിൽ നിലവിലെ ലോ ടെൻഷൻ (എൽടി) ഉപയോക്താക്കൾക്കും പുതുതായി എൽടി കണക്ഷൻ അപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നവർക്കുമായിരിക്കും സേവനം ലഭ്യമാക്കുകയെന്ന് കെഎസ്ഇബി ചെയർമാൻ എൻ.എസ്.പിള്ള അറിയിച്ചു.

(മ.മ., 25/01)

ഒറ്റക്ലിക്കിൽ പുസ്തകം അടുത്തു; വരണം 'കാൾനെറ്റ്'

ഗവേഷണം ഉൾപ്പെടെ ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിന് ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം ഏതു ലൈബ്രറിയിലാണുള്ളതെന്ന് പരിശോധിക്കാനും അവ ഓൺലൈനിൽ ലഭ്യമാക്കാനും ഡിജിറ്റൽ പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോം 'കാൾനെറ്റ് ' ഒരുങ്ങുന്നു. സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ സർവകലാശാലാ ലൈബ്രറികളെയും കോളേജ് ലൈബ്രറികളെയും പരസ്പരം ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഡിജിറ്റൽ നെറ്റ്വർക്ക് സംവിധാനത്തിന് ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ കൗൺസിൽ രൂപം നൽകി. സർവകലാശാല, കോളേജ് ലൈബ്രറികളെ ഡിജിറ്റൽ പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോമിലൂടെ ഏകോപിപ്പിച്ച് വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്കും അധ്യാപകർക്കും ഗവേഷകർക്കും ഫലപ്രദമായി ഉപയോഗിക്കാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നതിനാണ് കേരള അക്കാദമിക് ലൈബ്രറീസ് നെറ്റ്വർക്ക് (കാൾനെറ്റ്) സജ്ജമാക്കുന്നതെന്ന് ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ കൗൺസിൽ വൈസ് ചെയർമാൻ ഡോ. രാജൻഗുരുക്കൾ പറഞ്ഞു. കാൾനെറ്റിലെ ഡിജിറ്റൽ കാറ്റ്ലോഗിൽ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്ക് ഓൺലൈനായി പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ തെരയാം. പുസ്തകം ഓൺലൈനായും എത്തിക്കും. ഇതിനായി കാൾനെറ്റ് ഓഫീസുകൾ ക്യാമ്പസുകളിൽ രൂപീകരിക്കും. നിലവിൽ ആദ്യഘട്ടത്തിന്റെ ട്രയൽ റൺ നടക്കുകയാണ്.

(ഭേ., 25/01)

ഹോട്ടലുകൾക്കു മുൻപിൽ ബസ് നിർത്തും; കെ.എസ്.ആർ.ടി.സി.ക്കും നൽകണം വിഹിതം

ഹോട്ടലുകൾക്കു മുൻപിൽ കെ.എസ്.ആർ.ടി.സി. ബസ് നിർത്തും; പക്ഷേ യാത്രക്കാർക്ക് ഭക്ഷണം കൊടുത്താൽ പോര, കെ.എസ്.ആർ.ടി.സി. ക്കും നൽകണം വിഹിതം. ടിക്കറ്റിതര വരുമാനം വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കാൻ പുതുവഴികൾ ആലോചിക്കുന്നതിനിടെയാണ് കെഎസ്ആർടിസി യാത്രക്കാരുടെ വിശപ്പിനു പരിഹാരത്തോടൊപ്പം സ്വന്തം നഷ്ടം നികത്താനൊരു വഴിയും കണ്ടെത്തിയത്. കെഎസ്ആർടിസി പുതുതായി തുടങ്ങിയ 'ബൈപാസ് റൈഡ്' ബസുകൾക്കാണ് ഈ പുതിയ രീതി ആലോചിക്കുന്നത്. നഗരങ്ങൾക്കുള്ളിലെ തിരക്കും കുരുക്കും ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന സമയനഷ്ടമൊഴിവാക്കാൻ പൂർണ്ണമായും ബൈപാസ് റോഡുകളിലൂടെ യാത്ര ചെയ്യുന്ന സർവ്വീസാണിത്. തിരുവനന്തപുരത്തു നിന്ന് ദേശീയപാത വഴി ബെംഗളൂരുവിനും എറണാകുളത്തിനും പോകാനാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ സർവീസ്. സമയത്തുതന്നെ എത്തുമെന്ന് ഉറപ്പിക്കാനാണ് ഈ നഗരക്കുരുക്കുകളെ ഒഴിവാക്കുന്നത്.

(മ.മ., 28/01)

കോവിഡ് നിയന്ത്രണം : പോലീസിന് വിവേചനാധികാരം പ്രയോഗിക്കാം

കോവിഡ് വ്യാപനം വർദ്ധിക്കുന്ന പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങൾ കർശനമായി പാലിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് ഉറപ്പാക്കാൻ മുഴുവൻ പോലീസ് സേനാംഗങ്ങളെയും രംഗത്തിറക്കാമെന്നു ഡിജിപി ലോകനാഥ് ബെഹ്റയുടെ നിർദ്ദേശം. ജനങ്ങൾ കൂട്ടം കൂട്ടുന്നത് പരമാവധി ഒഴിവാക്കുന്നതിനായിരിക്കും മുൻഗണന. ആവശ്യമുള്ള സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ വിവേചനാധികാരം പ്രയോഗിക്കാനും അനുമതിയുണ്ട്. ഫെബ്രുവരി 10 വരെയോ പുതിയ ക്രമീകരണം. ജില്ലാ പോലീസ് മേധാവികൾക്ക് ആവശ്യമെങ്കിൽ സ്പെഷൽ യൂണിറ്റുകളുടെ സേവനം വിനിയോഗിക്കാം. ബറ്റാലിയൻ ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെ സേവനവും തേടാം. ഹൈവേ പട്രോൾ, കൺട്രോൾ റൂം വാഹനങ്ങൾ, മറ്റു പോലീസ് വാഹനങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയും രംഗത്തുണ്ടാവും. ഒഴിവാക്കാനാവാത്ത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലേ അവധി അനുവദിക്കൂ. സെക്ടറൽ മജിസ്ട്രേറ്റുമാർ ഉള്ള സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ പോലീസ് അവരോടൊപ്പം ചേർന്നു പ്രവർത്തിക്കും. പോലീസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ സ്വന്തം സുരക്ഷയ്ക്കു വേണ്ട മുൻകരുതലുകൾ സ്വീകരിക്കണമെന്നും നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

(മ.മ., 29/01)

ശമ്പള വർധന 10%

സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ ജീവനക്കാരുടെ ശമ്പളത്തിൽ കുറഞ്ഞത് 4,650 രൂപയുടെ വർധന ഉറപ്പാക്കിയും വീട്ടുവാടക അലവൻസ് അടിസ്ഥാന ശമ്പളത്തിന്റെ 10% വരെ നൽകാൻ നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചും 11-ാം ശമ്പളകമ്മീഷൻ റിപ്പോർട്ട് നൽകി. നിലവിലെ ശമ്പളത്തിൽ നിന്നു ശരാശരി 10% ആണു വർധന. എല്ലാ അലവൻസുകളിലും 10% വർധന നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. കുറഞ്ഞ അടിസ്ഥാന ശമ്പളം 16,500 രൂപയിൽ നിന്നും 23,000

രൂപയാക്കി. കൂടിയത് 1,20,000 രൂപയിൽനിന്ന് 1,66,800 രൂപയാക്കും. കുറഞ്ഞ ഇൻക്രിമെന്റ് 700 രൂപ; കൂടിയത് 3400 രൂപ. 2019 ജൂലൈ 1 മുതലാണ് പ്രാബല്യം. വർദ്ധിപ്പിച്ച ശമ്പളം ഏപ്രിൽ മുതൽ വിതരണം ചെയ്യും.

(മ.മ., 30/01)

80 കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ 1000 രൂപ അധിക പെൻഷൻ

കുറഞ്ഞ പെൻഷൻ 11,500 രൂപ; കൂടിയത് 83,400 രൂപ. കുറഞ്ഞ കുടുംബ പെൻഷൻ 11,500 രൂപ; കൂടിയത് 50,040. ഗ്രാറ്റുവിറ്റി പരിധി 14 ലക്ഷം രൂപയിൽ നിന്നു 17 ലക്ഷമാക്കി. 80 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞവർക്കു മാസം 1000 രൂപ അധിക ബത്ത നൽകണം. പെൻഷൻ നിർണയ രീതി നിലവിൽ അവസാന 10 മാസത്തെ ശമ്പളത്തിന്റെ ശരാശരിയുടെ പകുതിയാണ്. ഇത് അവസാന ശമ്പളത്തിന്റെ പകുതിയാക്കണം. അവസാന സ്ഥാനക്കയറ്റം താൽക്കാലികമെങ്കിൽ മാത്രം 10 മാസ ശരാശരി നോക്കാം. കുടുംബ പെൻഷൻ വാങ്ങുന്ന മാനസിക വെല്ലുവിളിയുള്ള കുട്ടികൾക്കു പൂർണ്ണ പെൻഷൻ നൽകണം.

(മ.മ., 30/01)

നന്ദാവനം റോഡ് ഇനി 'സുഗതകുമാരി' വീഥി

ഓർമയുടെ പാതയിലേക്ക് അച്ഛന്റെ വഴിയേ മകളും. നന്ദാവനത്തെ കവി ബോധേശ്വരന്റെ പേരിലുള്ള റോഡിനു സമീപത്തെ പ്രധാന റോഡിന് മകൾ സുഗതകുമാരിയുടെ സ്മാരകമാക്കാൻ നഗരസഭയുടെ തീരുമാനം. കാവ്യലോകത്ത് വിശ്രുതരായ അച്ഛനും മകൾക്കും അനന്തപുരിയുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ അടുത്തടുത്ത വീഥികൾ സ്മാരകമാവുന്നുവെന്ന അപൂർവ്വത ചരിത്രത്തിലാവും. മൃഗസിയം ജംഗ്ഷനിലെ നന്ദാവനം വഴി ബേക്കറി ജംഗ്ഷൻ വരെയുള്ള റോഡിന് അന്തരിച്ച കവി സുഗതകുമാരിയുടെ പേരു നൽകി. ഇന്നലെ ചേർന്ന കോർപ്പറേഷൻ കൗൺസിലാണ് തീരുമാനമെടുത്തത്.

(മ.മ., 31/01)

9-ാം ക്ലാസ് വരെ ഇക്കോലും വാർഷിക പരീക്ഷ ഒഴിവാക്കാൻ ആലോചന

ഈ അധ്യയന വർഷം 1 മുതൽ 9 വരെ ക്ലാസുകളിലെ വാർഷിക പരീക്ഷ ഒഴിവാക്കിയേക്കാം. പകരം തുടർമൂല്യനിർണയ മാതൃകയിൽ വിലയിരുത്തൽ നടത്തി സ്ഥാനക്കയറ്റം നൽകാനാണ് ആലോചന. 1 മുതൽ 9 ൽ ക്ലാസുകളിലെ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ ഈ അക്കാദമിക് വർഷം സ്കൂളുകളിൽ എത്തിയിട്ടില്ല. കോവിഡ് വ്യാപനം രൂക്ഷമായ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ ലക്ഷക്കണക്കിനു വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളെ പരീക്ഷയ്ക്കായി സ്കൂളുകളിലേയ്ക്കു വിളിച്ചുവരുത്താൻ സർക്കാർ ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നില്ല. അതേ സമയം പരീക്ഷ ഒഴിവാക്കാൻ ഇപ്പോഴേ തീരുമാനിച്ചാൽ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ ഓൺലൈൻ

പഠനം അവസാനിപ്പിക്കും. ഇത് അവരുടെ വിജ്ഞാനത്തേയും തുടർപഠനത്തേയും ബാധിക്കും. ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിലാണ് സ്ഥാനക്കയറ്റം നൽകുന്നതിനു മറ്റ് എന്തെങ്കിലും മാർഗം ആരായുന്നത്. രണ്ടാഴ്ചയ്ക്കു ശേഷം തീരുമാനം ഉണ്ടാകുമെന്നു പൊതുവിദ്യാഭ്യാസ ഡയറക്ടർ അറിയിച്ചു.

(മ.മ., 31/01)

NATIONAL NEWS**Elaborate distribution plan on track as India awaits vaccine approval**

India is gearing up to roll out a vaccine against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), and has put in a place an elaborate air and road transport network, and identified locations where it will be administered to people eligible for a dose in the first phase. A nod by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation's Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on the application by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) for emergency use authorisation of its Covishield vaccine is expected this in the coming days, and will then go to the drug regulator for a final approval. The committee has been vetting the data from safety and efficacy trials conducted by SII. The adenovirus vaccine has been developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, which received regulatory approval in the UK on Wednesday, brightening the chances of Covishield getting the green light from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI). Described as a "vaccine for the world," the manufactured-in-India candidate will meet a large part of India's vaccination needs because it is cheaper, easier to store and transport and likely be available in greater quantities than the vaccines developed by Pfizer/BioNTech.

(H.T., 01/01)

Union ministry extends deadline for complete digital switch of toll payments till February 15

In a major relief for commuters, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has extended the deadline for complete digital transformation of toll payments till February 15. Earlier, the NHAI had mandated that all commuters will have to pay toll fees only through Fastags from January 1. Millennium City Expressway Private Limited (MCEPL), the concessionaire of Kherki Daula toll plaza, had started making preparations for the digital switch earlier this week. But it was soon observed that there are some technical issues that need to be resolved. Further, nearly 15 to 20 percent of commuters are still paying through cash at the toll plaza. As per the directions issued by union ministry of road transport and highways on Thursday, fee payments can be made via both Fastags and cash on the hybrid lanes of NHAI toll plazas till February

15. However, in Fastag lanes, no cash payments will be allowed, stated the order. Shashi Bhushan, project director, NHAI, confirmed that the deadline for digital payments has been extended but said that they are prepared for the switch as 80 to 85 percent of commuters on Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway already pay via digital mode. “We were ready to go digital but it is likely that some of the plazas in other parts of the country have still need to work in this regard,” he said. Bhushan also said that the “myFastag” mobile application can be used by commuters to get real-time information about their cash balance.

(H.T., 01/01)

India delivers humanitarian assistance, disaster relief support to cyclone-hit Fiji

India on Saturday delivered the first consignment of relief materials to the cyclone-hit Fiji, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. Another consignment is due to reach by January 6. The Ministry, in a statement, said over 6 tons of relief supplies were put together in a short span of time by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and were airlifted to Fiji with the help of Air India and Fiji Airways via Sydney, Australia. Fiji was hit by a Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasa on December 17-18, 2020, which caused extensive damage and destruction of critical infrastructure. “The relief material sent by the Government of India, consisting of shelter and hygiene kits, will provide immediate assistance to the cyclone-affected communities,” the statement read. “Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, over 6 tons of relief supplies were put together in a short span of time by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and were airlifted to Fiji with the help of Air India and Fiji Airways via Sydney, Australia. This was possible thanks to the effective cooperation among multiple agencies in three countries to deliver the relief material to Fiji in record time,” it added.

(H.T., 02/01)

Scientists outline steps for safely receiving Covid-19 vaccine

Following accounts of potential allergies to the Covid-19 vaccines produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, scientists have outlined steps on safely receiving the second dose of the therapeutic in individuals who develop a reaction to their

first dose. The research, published in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice, summarised what is currently known about allergic reactions to vaccines like those developed against Covid-19. In the study, a team of experts led by allergists at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in the US, proposed detailed advice so that individuals with different allergy histories can safely receive their Covid-19 vaccine. After closer review of the data related to allergic reactions, the US FDA recommended that the mRNA vaccines, based on the genetic material of the novel coronavirus, be withheld only from individuals with a history of severe allergic reactions to any component of the Covid-19 vaccine. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also advised that all patients be observed for 15 minutes post-vaccination by staff who can identify and manage such reactions. In the review research, Aleena Banerji, MD, clinical director of the Allergy and Clinical Immunology Unit at MGH and her colleagues outlined steps on safely receiving the second dose in individuals who develop a reaction to the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine.

(H.T., 02/01)

DCGI gives licensing permission to Bharat Biotech to manufacture Covaxin

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) on Sunday gave licensing permission to Bharat Biotech to manufacture Covaxin, news agency ANI reported. Bharat Biotech has been asked to submit updated safety, efficacy and immunogenicity data from the ongoing Phase I, II and III clinical trials till the completion of trials, it further said. Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) gives licensing permission to Bharat Biotech to manufacture COVAXIN. Bharat Biotech asked to submit updated safety, efficacy & immunogenicity data from the ongoing Phase I, II & III clinical trials till the completion of trials. The DCGI gave final approval to two Covid-19 vaccines on Sunday, paving the way for a huge inoculation program to stem the pandemic in the second worst-hit country. The DCGI gave approval for the emergency use of two Covid-19 vaccines, one developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University and the other by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Institute of Virology (NIV).

(H.T., 03/01)

NCW received 23,722 complaints in 2020, highest in six years

The National Commission for Women received 23,722 complaints of crimes committed against women in 2020, the highest in the last six years. Nearly one-fourth of the total complaints were of domestic violence, according to NCW data. Among states, the highest number of complaints were received from Uttar Pradesh at 11,872 followed by Delhi 2,635, Haryana 1,266 and Maharashtra 1,188, it added. Of the 23,722 complaints, 7,708 complaints were received under the right to live with dignity clause. The right to live with dignity clause takes into account the emotional abuse of women. According to the NCW data, a total of 5,294 complaints were related to domestic violence. NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma said economic insecurity, increased stress levels, anxiety, financial worry, and lack of other such emotional support from parents/family's side may have resulted in domestic violence in many instances in 2020. The NCW was flooded with complaints of domestic violence in March as the lockdown, imposed in view of the coronavirus outbreak, forced women to remain confined to their homes with their abusers. The number of complaints of domestic violence went on increasing through the months and in July, a record number of 660 such complaints were received.

(H.T., 03/01)

Centre draws plan for vaccine roll-out

From retired doctors and nurses to home guards and civil defence personnel and even volunteers from the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathans, the Centre and state governments will tap every human resource that is available for the smooth implementation of the world's largest vaccination drive against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19). Each vaccination site, according to official guidelines, would consist of at least three rooms and require a number of personnel to perform specific duties. Vaccination Officer 1 would be from the police, home guards, civil defence, the National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS) or the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan. His or her job would be to "check the registration status of a vaccine recipient and to ensure" that entry into the vaccination centre is regulated. India's vaccination campaign against Covid-19 is targeting offering protection against the viral disease to 300 million people by July, including health-care workers, front-line workers and the people most at

risk of infection. They would be inoculated at both large public and private health facilities with a minimum of 100 vaccine recipients covered in each session.

(H.T., 04/01)

77% Indian adults lost income due to Covid-19 pandemic: Survey

2020 has been a challenging year that no one could have predicted would turn out in the manner in which it did. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic sent economic shockwaves globally, and its impact extended beyond an international health crisis. The economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, in India, led to the reduction in economic activities, subsequently forcing businesses to scale or shut down their operations. It resulted in many families being affected due to the sharp increase in unemployment. In November 2020, Lotto247.com conducted a survey to understand the financial impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on its Indian market. Over 1,700 adults participated in the survey. The survey found that 77% of economically active adults in India had lost income due to the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the findings, the most affected age group were adults in their 40's. Over 80% of adults in the 40's lost income as a result of the pandemic. Adults in their 50's, compared to those in their 40's, were less affected. However, 73% of them still lost income. Those aged 70 and older were the least affected age group. Only 30% of them lost income due to the pandemic.

(H.T., 04/01)

NHRC recommends special Act against manual scavenging

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has made a series of recommendation to the Centre to eradicate manual scavenging, including bringing a new Act on “hazardous cleaning” and taking strict action against local authorities who employ people as manual scavengers. It has also asked the Centre to provide Rs10 lakh loan to manual scavengers’ family members so that they can start some business activity. Subsequently, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) should monitor the sewer deaths in its reports, it said. The NHRC said the tall claims made by states that they have no manual scavengers and zero sanitary latrines are “far from truth”. “Therefore, the Commission has

recommended that accountability must be fixed in case of wrong reporting by the concerned authorities about the number of manual scavengers in any region of the country,” the NHRC said in a statement on Monday. Advocating the broadening of the definition of manual scavenging to cover other types of hazardous cleaning or enactment of a new law for it, the Commission has also recommended that a penal section may be put in law to prevent the discrimination and harassment faced by the children of manual scavengers and women manual scavengers.

(H.T., 05/01)

2020 was eighth warmest year on record for India: IMD

Last year was the eighth warmest since India started keeping records in 1901, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD)’s Statement on Climate of India in 2020. During the year, the annual average temperature in the country was 0.29 degree Celsius (°C) above normal (29-year average from 1981-2010), said the report which looks at temperature and rainfall trends annually. Such temperature trends were reported despite the cooling effect of La Nina, a global weather pattern that prevailed in 2020 and is linked to substantially below normal temperatures in winter. In 2016, India recorded the warmest year when the mean land surface temperature was 0.71°C above normal. The temperature during the pre-monsoon season was below normal by 0.03°C. But both monsoon and post-monsoon seasons were 0.43°C and 0.53°C above normal, respectively, and that contributed to warming. The mean temperature during winter was 0.14°C above normal. India’s warming was, however, significantly lower than the global average. The global mean temperature rise during 2020 (January to October, as per the World Meteorological Organisation’s State of the Global Climate) was 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels.

(H.T., 05/01)

Project to develop Central Vista gets 2:1 Supreme Court green light

A Supreme Court bench on Tuesday greenlighted the mega Central Vista project by 2:1 majority, saying there were no infirmities in clearances granted to it. Justice A M Khanwilkar, writing for himself and Justice Dinesh Maheswari,

however, said authorities executing the project will have to get clearance from the Heritage Conservation Committee, rejecting the Centre's stand that the approval was to be taken subsequently. The two judges found the process to change the land use at the project site legal and valid. They also found all notifications issued for the project as also the approval granted by the environmental committee valid. The majority verdict directed the Union Ministry of Environment to set up smog towers as an integral part of the Central Vista project and ordered use of environment-friendly construction material. On the issue of award of contract to a Gujarat-based firm, the court held it was just and proper.

(N.I.E., 06/01)

UK Covid variant: 13 more test positive in India, total now at 71

With 13 more people testing positive for the new UK variant of Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes Coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the total number of UK returnees having tested positive for the mutant virus in the country has reached 71, the Centre has announced. The results are based on the genome sequencing of positive samples released by the Indian Sars-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) labs that the Centre has specifically created for the purpose of monitoring any kind of mutations in the virus. "As of now, there have been 71 positive cases detected of the new UK variant from different designated labs across the country," said Dr Renu Swarup, secretary, Department of Biotechnology, in the media briefing on Tuesday. The government has asked states to fast-track contact tracing of these positive cases, and isolate and test the symptomatic contacts so as to curb the spread of infection that is known to be at least 70% more infectious than the original virus.

(H.T., 06/01)

12 avian flu epicentres in India

Avian flu has been reported at 12 epicentres in four States – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala. Directions have been given to enforce culling of sick birds as per the government's 2015 National Avian Influenza Plan, according to a press statement from the Ministry of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry on Wednesday. In these States, cases of bird flu have been confirmed in crows in

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, in “migratory birds” in Himachal Pradesh, and in poultry and ducks in Kerala. Avian influenza (AI) viruses have been circulating worldwide for centuries with four known major outbreaks recorded in the last century. India notified the first outbreak of avian influenza in 2006. Infection in humans is not yet reported in India though the disease has an animal origin.

(H., 07/01)

SC to study anti-conversion laws of Uttarakhand and U.P.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to examine the constitutional validity of laws enacted by States, such as Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, that criminalise religious conversion via marriage and mandate prior official clearance before marrying into another faith. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, however, did not stay the implementation of the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018, despite fervent pleas by petitioners that “rampaging mobs are lifting off people in the middle of wedding ceremonies,” buoyed by the enactment of the laws.

(H., 07/01)

IAF, airlines to be roped in for COVID-19 vaccine transport across India

Commercial airlines as well as the Indian Air Force are being roped in to transport the vaccine vials as the government prepares to start giving the first jabs to immunize the people against Covid-19 next week, said sources. The transportation of vaccines to different parts of the country could begin Thursday evening or Friday morning. Officials in the Union Health Ministry, in consultation with the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration on Covid-19, aviation ministry and cargo operators on Thursday prepared a detailed outline for vaccine transportation. The first vaccine vials, said officials in the health ministry, are set to be from Pune where the Serum Institute of India has manufactured the ‘Covidshield’ developed by Oxford University-Astra Zeneca. The Centre has planned 41 mini-hubs across the country for the distribution of vaccines, which are mostly in state capitals where they will be stored before finally being dispatched to districts. Delhi and Karnal will be made mini-hubs for northern India while for the eastern part of the country, Kolkata and Guwahati will be the mini-hub for distribution. Guwahati will also be a nodal point for the Northeast.

(N.I.E., 08/01)

Sea of tractors touches capital from two sides ahead of Friday's talks between farmers, Centre.

Equipped with Google maps and contact details of points-persons appointed to guide them, thousands of farmers in tractor-trolleys descended on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways on the outskirts of the national capital on Thursday in a dress rehearsal of 'tractor parade' planned on Republic Day. At least 5,000 tractors with over 10,000 farmers took part in the rally on the arc-shaped Kundli-Ghaziabad-Palwal (Eastern) and Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (Western) expressways. The show of strength came a day before the government and the farmers' unions sit for eighth round of talks. The rally was taken out from four different points — Singhu to Tikri border, Tikri to Kundli, Ghazipur to Palwal and Rewasan to Palwal. The farmers camping at Singhu and Tikri borders entered the expressway from Kundli and Sampla, respectively. Both the groups met midway before returning to their bases. The farmers protesting at Ghazipur border met the group from Rewasan in Palwal, Haryana, and returned to their camps. Interestingly, the rally on KMP Expressway was joined by a large number of farmers and youngsters from Haryana. Both at Singhu and Tikri borders, it's the farmers from Punjab who are leading the stir. Farmers and youngsters were also seen in cars and jeeps. At the KMP crossing, the volunteers continuously made announcements and alerted the farmers to drive in a lane.

(N.I.E., 08/01)

Centre confirms bird flu outbreak in six states, deploys teams

The Centre on Friday bird flu outbreak in six states – Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat – and asked them to take the required measures to contain the diseases. In Delhi and some other states, too, deaths of dozens of birds at a few places have been reported and the samples have been sent for testing to check if the mortality was caused by the H5N1 virus or its H5N8 sub-type. The Centre has asked all the states to keep a vigil on any unusual mortality among birds and to report immediately so that necessary measures can be taken as quickly as possible. Central teams have been deployed to visit Kerala, Haryana and Himachal for monitoring and for epidemiological investigation.

(H., 09/01)

India to chair UNSC's crucial Taliban and Libya sanctions committees

India will head three key panels in the United Nations Security Council after it assumed a two-year-long non-permanent membership at the body on January 1. The panels include the Taliban sanctions committee, the counter-terrorism committee for the year 2022 and the Libya sanctions committee. By heading the Taliban sanctions committee, India will get a greater say in the Afghan peace process and will be able to step up pressure on Pakistan over the issue of terrorism. Reacting on the development, the spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs, Anurag Srivastava, said India's tenure would be guided by a commitment to promote responsible and inclusive solutions to international peace and security.

(N.I.E., 09/01)

Vaccination drive to start on January 16

The COVID-19 vaccination drive in India will begin on January 16, with priority being given to an estimated three crore healthcare workers and frontline workers, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. The Ministry said this would be followed by the voluntary vaccination of people above 50 and those below 50 with co-morbidities, numbering around 27 crore. The announcement followed a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to review the status of the pandemic in the country along with the preparedness of the States and the Union Territories for the vaccination programme. The Ministry, in a release, said the Drugs Controller General of India had granted Emergency Use Authorisation to two vaccines- Covishield and Covaxin.

(H., 10/01)

Amid farmers' protests, govt plans to scale up Kisan e-mart

The Central government is planning to scale up the digital online platform, Kisan e-mart, that allows farmers to directly sell their produce to private buyers, even as the impasse over the three new agricultural laws continues. According to people familiar with the matter, the pilot, which is currently active in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Haryana, will now be extended to Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Gujarat and Telangana. The Kisan e-mart is a partnership between Agri10x and the Common Services Centre (CSC) scheme, which operates under the

Digital India project of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Nearly 375,000 CSCs are functional at the panchayat-level across India. Farmers are allowed to register at the CSC and after their KYC is completed, they can sell produce online without the hassle of having to transport it.

(H.T., 11/01)

Courts digitise 100 cr files during pandemic

The pandemic seems to have paved way for a digital transformation in the judiciary. Even as courts turned to virtual platforms to hear fresh cases during the lockdown, several High Courts in the country completely digitised their old case records during the same period. As many as 13 High Courts has digitised all their records, numbering around 100 crore. With the digitisation, it is now possible to monitor the real-time progress of cases. Information on the status of a case, date of hearing and the counsel involved is now available online. The process involves scanning of case records and converting them into digital format. According to the Ministry of Law and Justice, by the end of 2021 all case records in the country, including in trial courts, will be completely digitised. “The digitisation of records will play a vital role in shifting a daily court proceedings to virtual mode. We have already studies the judicial system in five countries where it is completely digitised. We are also working on a plan to offer computer courses to fresh lawyers who are not well conversed with virtual hearings,” a ministry official said.

(N.I.E., 11/01)

Centre to bear expense of vaccinating frontline group

The Centre will bear the full expense of vaccinating three crore healthcare and frontline workers in the first phase. This was confirmed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his videoconference call with chief ministers on Monday. “Health workers, both government and private, will be vaccinated first. Sanitation workers, other frontline workers, defence forces, police and other paramilitary forces will also be vaccinated in the first phase,” Modi said. Thereafter, those above 50 years and younger people with serious co-morbidities will be given the vaccine against Covid-19. During his interaction with the CMs, Modi said that apart from Covishield and Covaxin, four others are in the

pipeline. The PM also said that politicians should not to try to get the vaccine in the first phase. Vaccine rollout will begin on January 16 with the help of 61,000 managers and 2 lakh vaccinators and 3.7 lakh other vaccination team members, the CMs were informed. The priority of vaccination has been decided as per advice of experts and the scientific community after consultation with the states, the Prime Minister said.

(N.I.E., 12/01)

Serum Institute receives purchase order for 11 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine from govt

The Union government on Monday placed a purchase order with Serum Institute of India (SII) for 11 million doses of Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, Covishield, each costing Rs 210 including GST, official sources said. Dispatch of the vaccine is likely to start by late Monday evening, they said. According to the order placed, each dose of the vaccine has been priced at Rs 200 and with GST of Rs 10, it would cost Rs 210. The health ministry is also likely to soon sign a purchase order for another anti-coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin, which has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech, a source said. Covishield vaccine doses would be initially shipped to 60 consignee points from where those would be distributed to various vaccination centres across India, the sources said. As many as 2,54,500 doses of Covishield are set to be delivered at Delhi's central storage, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, in Tahirpur. According to the Health Ministry, two doses of the vaccine need to be taken by an individual 28 days apart to complete the immunisation schedule.

(N.I.E., 12/01)

Air India becomes 19th airline in world to fly plane over North pole

It was only once in August 2019 that an aircraft by an Indian Airline flew over the North Pole. That was a validation flight by Air India aimed at proving to various regulators its prowess to fly over the the northernmost point on the planet. That solo effort has resulted in India getting clearance to fly over this icy, inhospitable region. Air India on Sunday become the 19th airline in the world to fly its plane over the North Pole. Flight no AI-176, steered by all-women cockpit crew achieved this historic feat. Guiding them every second was Air India's

Executive Director of Flight Safety, Capt. Nivedita Bhasin. Bhasin already has her name etched in Indian aviation's history books. When she was just 26 years, became the youngest women pilot in the world to fly a Boeing 737. She also flew the Second Dreamliner flight from Charleston in the US to India. Sharing her time on the flight, the Captain said, "It was the first Polar flight and also the longest, for Air India, and so I was brought in to monitor all safety related aspects. I travelled as an observer, and carried our spot checks in the cabin and on the ground in San Francisco. During the flight, I kept checking if everything was going on smooth and as per plan. " she told.

(N.I.E., 13/01)

Four more COVID-19 vaccines are in pipeline: Health Ministry

Four more COVID-19 vaccines are in the pipeline and their manufacturers may approach the drug controller for emergency use authorisation, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday. Addressing a press briefing, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said Zydus Cadila, Sputnik V, Biological E and Genova are other vaccines also in the pipeline which are in advanced clinical trials in India. "In the coming days you may see some of these vaccines too approaching the drug controller for emergency use authorization," Bhushan said. Elaborating further, Bhushan said Zydus Cadilla completed Phase 2 clinical trials of its coronavirus vaccine in December of last year and has been granted approval for Phase 3. Similarly, Phase 2 clinical trials of Russia's Sputnik-V COVID-19 vaccine have also concluded and Phase 3 trials are being carried out by its Indian partner Dr. Reddy's laboratories, he said. In the case of Biological E, Bhushan said the Phase 1 clinical trials of its vaccine started in December and Phase 2 is expected to begin in March. Genova's RnA-based COVID-19 vaccine is currently in Phase 1 with Phase 2 clinical trials likely to begin in March of this year, he said.

(N.I.E., 13/01)

3 lakh healthcare workers in 2934 sites to get shot on Day 1 of vaccination drive

The Central Government has planned to inoculate around 300 lakh healthcare workers at 2934 session sites on the first day of the world's biggest vaccination

COVID-19 drive that begins from January 16 across India. "This is the biggest vaccination drive in India so far and it has been decided to vaccinate about 300 lakhs healthcare workers at 2934 sites," a senior government official said on Wednesday. Two COVID-19 vaccines -Covishield and Covaxin- have been given Emergency Use Authorisation in the country after going through established safety and immunogenicity through a well prescribed regulatory process. These vaccines may cost in the range of Rs 200 to 295 in the country. Earlier in the day, the health ministry said that full initial procurement amount of 1.65 crore doses of Covishield and Covaxin vaccines have been allocated to all states and Union Territories was done in proportion of Health Care Workers database.

(N.I.E., 14/01)

Covid healthcare workers at risk of mental health problems: Study

More than half of doctors, nurses, and emergency responders involved in Covid-19 care could be at risk for one or more mental health problems, including acute traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, problematic alcohol use, and insomnia, as per a study. While noting that the daily toll of Covid-19, as measured by new cases and the growing number of deaths, overlooks a shadowy set of casualties, the researchers found that the risk of these mental health conditions was comparable to rates observed during natural disasters, such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. "What health care workers are experiencing is akin to domestic combat," said Andrew J Smith, Ph.D., director of the U of U Health Occupational Trauma Program at the Huntsman Mental Health Institute and the study's corresponding author. "Although the majority of health care professionals and emergency responders aren't necessarily going to develop PTSD, they are working under severe duress, day after day, with a lot of unknowns. Some will be susceptible to a host of stress-related mental health consequences. By studying both resilient and pathological trajectories, we can build a scaffold for constructing evidence-based interventions for both individuals and public health systems." The study appears in the Journal of Psychiatric Research.

(N.I.E., 14/01)

COVID-19 vaccines interchangeability not allowed, Pregnant, lactating women should not be administered shots: Centre to states

Interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines is not permitted and pregnant and lactating women should not be administered the shots as they have not been part of any anti-coronavirus vaccine clinical trial so far, the health ministry said on Thursday. In a letter to all states and Union territories, the ministry highlighted that under the emergency use authorisation, coronavirus vaccination is indicated only for 18 years and above. If required, COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines should be separated by an interval of at least 14 days. "Interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines is not permitted. Second dose should also be of the same COVID-19 vaccine which was administered as the first dose," the letter written by Manohar Agnani, Additional Secretary, Union health ministry said. The ministry has listed precautions and contraindications for COVID-19 vaccination along with a comparative factsheet for both the vaccines (Covishield and Covaxin) which contains information on vaccine platform, physical specifications, dosage, cold-chain storage requirements, contraindications and minor AEFIs (adverse event following immunization).

(N.I.E., 15/01)

Polio drops plan delayed due to mega Covid jab drive

As the country gears up to launch the mega anti-Covid-jab drive for health workers on January 16, children in the age group of 0-5 years will have to wait to get their share of polio drops with the Government rescheduling the polio immunisation programme from earlier January 17 to January 31 across India. "The massive countrywide COVID-19 vaccination drive will be rolled out by the Prime Minister from January 16. This would be the world's largest immunisation exercise. Therefore, it has been decided by the Health Ministry in consultation with the office of the President of India to reschedule the Polio vaccination day, also known as the National Immunisation Day (NID) or 'Polio Ravivar' to 31st January," the Ministry said in the statement. The decision is in keeping with the stated policy of the Union Health Ministry to ensure that COVID management and vaccination services as well as non-Covid essential health services proceed in tandem without adversely impacting each other, said the Union Health Ministry in a statement here on Thursday. The President will launch the Polio

National Immunisation Day on 30th January by administering Polio drops to some children at the Rashtrapati Bhawan at 11:45 am, the statement said.

(N.I.E., 15/01)

EC allows govt to use voters' data for vaccination, asks to delete it after drive

The Election Commission has agreed to share its electoral database with the government authorities and assured “all other possible help” in identifying targeted beneficiaries at the polling station-level for the Covid-19 vaccination drive. It, however, has asked the authorities to delete the data once the vaccination process is completed. Sources aware of the development said the EC’s nod came following Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla’s letter to Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, urging the panel to help authorities in identifying people above 50 years of age at the polling station-level. The sources said, on the issue of data security, Bhalla wrote that the government was “complying with the current best practices for ensuring cybersecurity” and assured the panel that the data will be “used only for the purpose of vaccination”. The EC, after detailed deliberations, wrote back to the home secretary on January 4, saying it has decided to render “full assistance” in the vaccination drive and asked the government to ensure that the data is “strictly used for the limited purpose for which it has been sought”, the sources said. Some senior EC officials will be in touch with nodal officers of the MHA and the Union Health Ministry to settle day-to-day issues, they said.

(N.I.E., 16/01)

Construction work of new Parliament building starts

The construction work of the new Parliament building started on Friday, a day after ‘Makar Sankranti’, considered auspicious. “Excavation work has started at the site where a sufficient number of labourers have been engaged to ensure that the project is completed on time”, officials said. The site of the construction is adjacent to the existing Parliament, which was completed in 1927. The new building is being constructed by Tata Projects Ltd. The project is estimated to cost Rs 971 crore. Tata Projects Ltd. said despite the 35-day delay in the commencement of the construction work, it is confident that it will be able to

deliver the project on or before time. The project was scheduled to start in December last, but construction and demolition at the site was put on hold while legal challenges to the project were pending with the apex court. On December 7, the Supreme Court allowed the ground-breaking ceremony to take place after the government submitted an affidavit that it would not start construction, demolition and tree transplantation until the court gave its judgment. With the judgment clearing the project on January 5, the Central Public Works Department moved the HCC for approval, which was granted on Monday, according to HUA Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra. The new Parliament building will have a triangular shape and is expected to be completed by the 75th anniversary of India's independence in 2022. The government plans to hold the monsoon session of Parliament in 2022 in the new building. PM Modi had laid the foundation stone for the new Parliament building on December 10 last year.

(P., 16/01)

To promote desi toy makers, CSC joins hands with AICTE for 'Toycathon-2021'

To promote toy manufacturing among domestic players, particularly among rural entrepreneurs, the Common Service Centre (CSC), an SPV under the Ministry of Electronics and IT Ministry, has joined hands with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to organise 'Toycathon-2021'. "Toycathon-2021 is aimed at understanding the creativity among start-ups in rural areas, students and professionals for developing and manufacturing toys. It is a unique opportunity for students, teachers, start-ups and toy experts/professionals in India to submit their innovative toys/games concepts and win prizes worth Rs.50 lakhs," said CSC Managing Director Dr Dinesh Tyagi. Toycathon-2021 is an inter-ministerial initiative involving six ministries. Organised by the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell with support from AICTE, the initiative is being supported by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of MSME, Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Toycathon-2021 will be conducted through CSC Academy, an arm of CSC, at 6,000 block and taluka level where CSC Academies are present. "CSC Academy, a not-for-profit society which delivers specialized courses/training programmes, and promotes entrepreneurship among the rural

masses, is best suited for this unique initiative due to its reach and expertise.

(P., 17/01)

Bharat Biotech to pay compensation if Covaxin causes side effects

Bharat Biotech, which has received a government purchase order for supply of 55 lakh doses of Covaxin, a Covid-19 vaccine, will pay compensation to recipients in case of any 'serious adverse' effects experienced after receiving the antidote. A consent form to be signed by the vaccine recipients said, "In case of any adverse events or serious adverse events, you will be provided medically recognised standard of care in the government designated and authorised centres and hospitals." "The compensation for serious adverse event will be paid by sponsor (BBIL) in case if the SAE is proven to be causally related to the vaccine," the form said. In phase 1 and 2 clinical trials, Covaxin has demonstrated the ability to produce antibodies against COVID-19. However the clinical efficacy of the vaccine is yet to be established and it is still being studied in phase 3 clinical trials. "Hence, it is important to appreciate that receiving the vaccine does not mean that other precautions related to COVID-19 need not be followed," it added. According to an industry expert, the company is liable to pay compensation to people in case of serious side effects caused by the vaccine administered while in the clinical trial mode.

(P., 17/01)

Use of regional languages increased during 2018-2020 in Upper House

The use of regional languages in the proceedings of Rajya Sabha increased manifold during 2018-2020 with Sanskrit emerging as the fifth widely used language among the 22 scheduled languages after Hindi, Telugu, Urdu and Tamil. Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu has been regularly urging the members of the House on the use of regional languages during the proceedings. According to research done by the Rajya Sabha secretariat, while Hindi and English are the widely used languages during the proceedings of the House, the use of 21 other scheduled Indian languages (other than Hindi) has increased to over five times (512 percent) per sitting in 2020 over that of the 14-year period between 2004 and 2017. During this period, four languages - Dogri, Kashmiri, Konkani and Sonthali - have been used for the first time since the Rajya Sabha came into

being in 1952 and another six languages - Assamese, Bodo, Gujarati, Maithili, Manipuri and Nepali - have been used after a long gap. Rajya Sabha members spoke in 10 scheduled languages (other than Hindi) in the House on 269 occasions during 923 sittings between 2004 and 2017 at the rate of 0.291 per sitting, the Rajya Sabha secretariat said. In 2020, 49 interventions in regional languages were made during 33 sittings at the rate of 1.49 per sitting, marking an increase to 512 per cent.

(P., 18/01)

All data pertaining to trials should be made public: Experts on COVID-19 vaccine choices

A national association of doctors and scientists has demanded that all data pertaining to COVID-19 vaccine trials should be made public to enable scientists and healthcare workers to make informed choices regarding administration of vaccination. In a statement issued on Sunday, the Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum said the Clinical Trial (PMSF) Phase 3 data should be evaluated in a transparent manner as and when available for India for both vaccines and the decision to grant Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) may be revisited once the Phase 3 trials are completed. They demanded that all data pertaining to the vaccine trials should be made public to enable scientists and healthcare workers to make informed choices regarding administration of vaccines for themselves and for their larger communities. "All healthcare workers should have an option for opting out without any fear, coercion or any other adverse impact on them, including linking vaccination status to air travel restrictions," it said. The body further demanded that the continuation or eligibility for working as healthcare should not have any precondition of COVID-19 vaccination, as is being done in a few countries.

(N.I.E., 18/01)

India to send 20 lakh Covid-19 vaccines to Dhaka, Pakistan explores options

While India plans to send 20 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines to Bangladesh, another neighbour, Pakistan, is exploring options to get made-in-India vaccines, either through a global alliance for vaccines or through the bilateral route, The

Indian Express has learnt. On Monday, authorities in Bangladesh confirmed that on Wednesday, January 20, a specially equipped plane will carry 20 lakh doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine — manufactured in India by the Serum Institute of India under the name Covishield — to Dhaka. The consignment will be handed over to the Bangladesh government by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka. Bangladesh has had more than 5 lakh cases of Covid, with about 7,900 deaths so far. Pakistan’s move to source Indian vaccines comes after the country’s drug regulator, the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), over the weekend approved Oxford-AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use. Pakistan has reported more than 5 lakh Covid cases and almost 11,000 deaths.

(P., 19/01)

Over 3.81 lakh receive COVID jabs, 580 adverse events reported

A total of 3,81,305 beneficiaries have so far been vaccinated for Covid-19 and 580 adverse events following immunisation were reported in the first three days of the inoculation drive in the country, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. It also said of the two deaths reported, the death of 52-year-old Mahipal Singh from Moradabad in UP (who was vaccinated on January 16 and died on the evening of January 17) was not related to vaccination as per the post mortem report. “The postmortem report by a board of three doctors revealed death due to reveals the immediate cause of death as a cardio-pulmonary disease (pockets of pus in lungs, enlarged heart)- not related to vaccination,” Manohar Agnani, additional secretary in the health ministry, said at a press briefing. Agnani said 1,48,266 beneficiaries were vaccinated across 25 states and Union Territories till 5 pm on Monday. The second person to die was a 43-year-old man in Karnataka’s Bellary. The government said “the cause of death anterior wall infarction with cardio-pulmonary failure”.

(N.I.E., 19/01)

Indian military team to leave for Russia soon to train on operational aspects of S-400 missiles

A group of Indian military personnel is leaving for Russia in the next few days to undergo training on key operational aspects of the S-400 air defence systems as Moscow looks at supplying the first batch of the missile to India later this year,

officials said on Tuesday. Russian Ambassador Nikolay R Kudashev interacted with the group at an event in the Russian embassy on Tuesday during which he said the S-400 programme is one of the flagship projects in further boosting military cooperation between the two countries. He said Indo-Russia military and military-technical ties were based on "ever-growing extraordinary mutual interest", coherence, consistency and complementarity. In October 2018, India had signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, notwithstanding a warning from the Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions. India made the first tranche of payment of around USD 800 million to Russia for the missile systems in 2019. The S-400 is known as Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system.

(N.I.E., 20/01)

India to provide Covid jabs to friendly countries

Following request from several countries for its two vaccines—Covishield and Covaxin, India is all set to provide the jabs under grant assistance to Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles, to begin with from Wednesday. It will also send shipments to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mauritius as well on receipt of necessary regulatory clearances. However, India said that it will be ensured that domestic manufacturers will have adequate stocks to meet domestic requirements while supplying abroad. In a tweet, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is deeply honoured to be a “long-trusted” partner in meeting the healthcare needs of the global community and that supplies of the vaccines to several countries will commence on Wednesday, and more will follow in the days ahead. India is one of the world’s biggest drugmakers, and an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring the coronavirus vaccines. The Ministry of External Affairs said India will supply Covid-19 vaccines to partner countries over the coming weeks and months in a phased manner keeping in view the domestic requirements. In a statement, the MEA said India has received several requests for the supply of Indian-manufactured vaccines from neighbouring and key partner countries.

(P., 20/01)

Narendra Modi government proposes to put farm laws on hold for two years to break the ice

The tenth round of talks with the protesting farmers on Wednesday opened a window of opportunity to break the deadlock on the contentious farm laws with the Centre proposing to constitute a new committee as also keeping the laws on hold for two years or more and the farmers agreeing to consider them. The two sides will meet again on Friday, when the farmers are expected to spell out their stand on the suggestions after holding consultations among themselves on Thursday. The fact that the government came out with new proposals and the farmers agreed to examine them are being seen as signs of accommodation from both sides. Until Wednesday, the government's consistent stand was that it was ready to amend the laws while the farmers remained firm in their repeal-or-nothing demand. Sources said the Centre, during the meeting, urged the farmers to consider its proposal for an hour separately. The two sides broke off into different rooms following which the farmer unions agreed to consider the offer. However, they insisted that their demand of repealing the laws still stands.

(N.I.E., 21/01)

Names of 20 'Galwan heroes' inscribed on national war memorial

The names of 20 Indian Army personnel, who were killed while valiantly fighting Chinese troops in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh in June last year, were inscribed on the National War Memorial ahead of the Republic Day, official sources said. Col B Santosh Babu, the commanding officer of the 16 Bihar regiment, was among the Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in the fierce hand-to-hand combat on June 15, an incident that marked one of the most serious military conflicts between the two sides in decades. China is yet to disclose the number of its soldiers killed and injured in the clash though it officially admitted to having suffered casualties. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35. The Galwan Valley clash had escalated the border row in eastern Ladakh and resulted in a large deployment of troops and heavy weaponry by both the armies at the friction points. "The names of the Galwan heroes have been inscribed at the National War Memorial," said a source. Some of these soldiers are also likely to be honoured with gallantry awards on the Republic Day.

(N.I.E., 21/01)

Centre modifies CoWIN app to address lower vaccination

Amid reports of low turnout of beneficiaries for Covid-19 vaccinations and wastage of vaccines, the Centre has modified the CoWIN app, the platform driving the immunisation drive, to allow registered but non-allocated individuals to take the shots. This new feature will permit states to accommodate walk-ins, especially at centres where less than 100 people per day, as planned, are taking the jabs. “While the average vaccination sessions allowed per site are 100, in a majority of the states, fewer people were turning up as a result of which a large number of vaccines were getting wasted,” said an official in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. “Therefore, following requests by the states, we have created a provision in the app to also accommodate registered beneficiaries scheduled to take the jab on other dates.” The pace of the vaccination, since the launch on January 16, however, has been slower than expected and till Thursday 10,40,014 beneficiaries had taken either Covishield or Covaxin across India.

(N.I.E., 22/01)

Farmers draw hard line, reject Centre’s offer to stay farm laws

Drawing the hard line to press for the repeal of the new agriculture laws, farmer unions Thursday rejected the Centre’s offer to keep the laws in abeyance for 18 months and form a joint committee to address grievances. The unions, scheduled to return to the talks table Friday, were virtually split down the middle at a meeting to discuss the Centre’s offer. Sources told The Indian Express that of the 32 unions from Punjab, more than a dozen were in favour of accepting the offer, but the majority vote carried the resolution to reject the offer. A statement on behalf of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of organisations spearheading the protest, released by Darshan Pal of Krantikari Kisan Union, stated: “In a full general body meeting of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha today, the proposal put forth by the Government yesterday was rejected. A full repeal of three central farm acts and enacting a legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement.”

(I.E., 22/01)

Women army officers once again move SC for grant of permanent commission, promotions and benefits

Eleven women army officers have moved the Supreme Court seeking compliance of its February last year directions to the Centre for grant of permanent commission, promotions and consequential benefits to them "in an inclusive, fair, just and reasonable manner". In a plea, Lieutenant Colonel Ashu Yadav and 10 other women Army officers alleged that the directions were not being complied with in "letter and spirit". The procedures for grant of permanent commission is "vitiating with arbitrariness, unfairness and unreasonableness", they alleged in the petition, which is scheduled to be taken up for hearing by a bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud on January 27. "The respondent institution is not leaving any possibility of thrusting their stand of unequal treatment to the women officers indirectly by trapping them into technical and procedural formalities and consequential denial of their rights," it said. The conduct of the Centre suggests that it is "playing a psychological warfare with these women officers" to avoid every possibility of granting them the benefits of permanent commission, promotion and consequential benefits, which is in clear violation of the order dated February 17, 2020, the plea said.

(N.I.E., 23/01)

Ministry of Home Affairs asks States, UTs to protect, rehabilitate transgenders

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has written a letter to all chief secretaries of Union Territories and states on protection of rights of transgender persons and also directed them to sensitise police and prison officials in this regard. The Ministry has also said that all states are required to protect and rehabilitate transgenders. "The law mandates adequate steps to be taken by the State Governments/Union Territories for not only providing for welfare measures to be taken but steps to be taken for rescue, protection and rehabilitation of a transgender person," read the MHA's letter. The MHA has said that under section 18 of the Transgenders (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, it is a punishable offence in case anyone compels or entices a transgender person to indulge in the act of forced or bonded labour other than any compulsory service for public purposes imposed by the government. While giving details of the act, MHA said

if someone denies a transgender person the right of passage to a public place or obstructs such person from using or having access to a public place to which other members have access to or a right to use, forces or causes a transgender person to leave the household, village or other place of residence, it also falls under the category of punishable offence.

(N.I.E., 23/01)

Bird flu confirmed in 12 Indian states for crow, migratory and wild birds: Centre

The central government on Saturday informed that avian influenza or bird flu has been confirmed in nine states for poultry birds and in 12 states for the crow, migratory and wild birds till January 24. "Till January 24 outbreaks of Avian Influenza (Bird flu) have been confirmed in 9 States (Kerala, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab) for poultry birds and in 12 states (Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab) for Crow/Migratory/ Wild birds," informed the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying. Control and Containment Operations (Cleaning and Disinfection) are going on in the rest of the affected epicenters of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand. Compensation is paid to farmers whose poultry birds, eggs and poultry feed are culled/disposed of by the state as per the action plan. "The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), Government of India provides funds to states / UTs on a 50:50 sharing basis under Assistance to States for control of animal diseases (ASCAD) component of its Livestock Health and Disease Control Scheme," the ministry said.

(N.I.E., 24/01)

Downloadable e-version of voter card to be launched on January 25

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will on Monday launch the electronic version of the voter identity card which can be downloaded on a mobile phone or a personal computer. The e-electoral photo identity card is non-editable digital version of the electoral photo identity card and it can be saved in facilities such as digital locker and can be printed in the PDF format, Election Commission

officials said. "Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will launch the e-EPIC programme and distribute e-EPICs and Elector Photo Identity Cards to five new voters," a Commission statement said on Sunday. The physical card takes time to print and reach the voter, and the idea is to provide faster delivery and easy accessibility to the document, the statement said. The Aadhaar card, Permanent Account Number (PAN) card and driving licence are available in digital mode. Introduced in 1993, the elector photo identity cards are acceptable as proof of identity and address. The e version of the voter card is being launched to mark the anniversary of the Election Commission.

(N.I.E., 24/01)

Next-generation surface-to-air Akash missile successfully test-fired

Achieving a major milestone in the ongoing Surface to Air Missile (SAM) programme, India on Monday successfully conducted the first test of Akash-New Generation (NG) aiming to bolster country's air defence capabilities. The missile was launched from a mobile platform at the Launching Complex - III of the Integrated Test Range off Odisha coast at about 2.30 pm against an electronic target. Defence sources said, the missile intercepted the target with text book precision having met all the test objectives by performing high manoeuvres during the trajectory. Performance of the command and control system, onboard avionics and aerodynamic configuration of the missile was successfully validated during the maiden trial. Akash-NG is a new generation SAM system meant for use by Indian Air Force to intercept high manoeuvring low radar cross section aerial threats. This advanced variant comes with Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) multi-function radar that features all three functions - search, track and fire control in one platform. The earlier version is guided by phased array fire control radar. The missile, with canisterised launcher and much smaller ground system footprint, has been developed with better deployability compared to other similar systems. The multi function radar was tested for its capability of integration with new missile system.

(N.I.E., 25/01)

COVID persistence may lead to regional strains with improved fitness: Study

Following a study of genomes of various variants of Covid-19 virus from over 2 lakh samples, scientists have predicted that the persistence of pandemic may lead to the emergence of newer regional strains with improved fitness. The scientists analysed 200,865 SARS-CoV-2 genome sequences from 155 countries, which had 2.58 million mutations as of late last year as compared to the reference Wuhan strain. They found about 39% synonymous mutations, mutations that are usually minor and do not change the amino acids while about 51% were non-synonymous mutations, which are mutations that change the amino acids. Upon comparing the variants predominant in the three new strains, the researchers found four common hotspot mutations, noted scientists attached with the Integrated Cancer Genomics Laboratory, Homi Bhabha National Institute and Institute of Advanced Virology, Kerala. Their paper “Evolving Insights from SARS-CoV-2 Genome from 200K COVID-19 Patients” says that N501Y was the base mutation in all the three variants, with the South African and Brazilian strains showing additional E484K mutation in the spike protein.

(N.I.E., 25/01)

Over 139 million Indian women now use modern methods of contraception: Report

Over 139 million women and girls in India now use modern methods of contraception, according to a new report released on Tuesday. The report published by FP2020, a global partnership that supports the reproductive rights of women and girls, details the progress achieved in family planning over the past eight years. In 13 low-income countries, the number of modern contraceptive users has doubled since 2012 and more than 121 million unintended pregnancies, 21 million unsafe abortions, and 1,25,000 maternal deaths were prevented in the last year alone, the report said. As a result of contraceptive use in India, more than 54.5 million unintended pregnancies were prevented, and 1.8 million unsafe abortions and 23,000 maternal deaths averted in the last year alone. In 2017, India updated its FP2020 commitment with two very specific, data-driven pledges: to invest USD 3 billion of domestic resources in family planning by 2020, and to increase the country's modern contraceptive prevalence for married women from 53.1 per cent to 54.3 per cent by 2020, with 74 per cent of the demand for modern contraceptives satisfied. Both of those

commitments have been fulfilled. "India continues to be one of the countries with the highest levels of domestic government expenditure, reflecting the governments' commitment to its family planning programmes," the report said.

(N.I.E., 26/01)

Samyukta Kisan Morcha disassociates itself from violence during tractor parade

Farmers' union body Samyukta Kisan Morcha Tuesday disassociated itself from those who indulged in violence during the tractor parade, and alleged some "antisocial elements" infiltrated their otherwise peaceful movement. The union also condemned and regretted the "undesirable" and "unacceptable" events as the parade turned violent after several groups of farmers deviated from the pre-decided route for the march. The Samkyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of 41 farmer unions, is leading the protest against the three central farm laws at several border points of Delhi. "We thank farmers for the unprecedented participation in today's farmers' Republic Day Parade. We also condemn and regret the undesirable and unacceptable events that have taken place today and dissociate ourselves from those indulging in such acts. "Despite all our efforts, some organisations and individuals have violated the route and indulged in condemnable acts. Antisocial elements had infiltrated the otherwise peaceful movement. We have always held that peace is our biggest strength, and that any violation would hurt the movement," the farmers' body said in a statement.

(N.I.E., 26/01)

Covaxin effective against U.K. virus variant, says study

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin has been found to neutralise the U.K. variant of the COVID-19 virus with "similar efficiency" as the strain used for making the vaccine and hence "dispels the uncertainty of possible neutralisation escape" following vaccination, say results posted on the bioRxiv preprint server. Preprints are yet to be peer-reviewed and published in medical journals. The work was carried out by researchers from ICMR and Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad. The sera from people vaccinated with Covaxin were tested against the same strain used for making the vaccine, another strain found in India, and the U.K.. variant. The median ratio of 50% neutralisation of sera was found to be 80% for the U.K. variant and 90% for the strain circulating in India, but different from the

one used for making the vaccine, Dr. Samiran Panda of the ICMR and one of the authors of the preprint told The Hindu.

(H., 28/01)

'A global Challenge to deliver vaccine'

If 2020 was the year of discovery of COVID 19 vaccines 2021 will be the year India faces the challenge of getting them to people across the world who most need it. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, who is the Chairman of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation, has said. He chaired the 148th session of the Board on Tuesday, said a press release issued by the Health Ministry on Wednesday. The release said Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to the U.S. President, addressed the Board on behalf of the Biden administration, announcing that the U.S. would remain a member of WHO and fulfil its financial obligations, with continued technical collaboration at all levels, including through its collaborating centres.

(H., 28/01)

Farmers face pushback at protest sites

There was a confrontation like situation on the Singhu border on Thursday when a group of people, claiming to be locals, staged a demonstration against the farmer's agitation demanding that the inter-state highway be cleared. As the agitation was nearing the two-month mark, heavy security was deployed and all entry points to the protest site were barricaded by security personnel, with farmer's on one side and the locals on the other. Mahesh Chauhan, a resident of the Pala Village, said "The road has been blocked for over two months now and it is causing inconvenience to all, including labourers and villages." "We want the road cleared. Today, we have come as a relatively small group. Tomorrow, a larger number of villagers will be gathering here", he added. Meanwhile the Ghaziabad administration and farmer unions continued at the Ghazipur border late on Thursday following orders to vacate the site.

(H., 29/01)

More 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccines on the way, says PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that more 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccines are on the way to help speed up the world's vaccination efforts, and India's economy would help global growth recover from the aftermath of the pandemic. "So far, there are only two Made in India Vaccines available. In the coming days, many more vaccines are expected to arrive. These will help the world vaccinate more people in an expeditious way," said

the Prime Minister at the World Economic Forum's virtual Davos Summit. Seeking to assuage concerns about India's self reliance aspirations as enunciated under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Programme, the Prime Minister said this drive would support globalism with a new vigour. "I would like to assure all here that India's every success. Even Atma Nirbhar Bharat is committed to global supply chains. We have the capacity and reliability to be a part of the global supply chain. We have large consumer base as were and as it grows, it will help the world's economy too he said.

(H., 29/01)

Economic Survey predicts 11% growth next fiscal

India's economy is firmly in the middle of a V-shaped recovery and will bounce back to record 11% growth in 2021-22 after an estimated 7.7 % contraction this year, as per a "conservative" estimate in the Economic Survey for 2020-21, which termed this a "lockdown dividend" from the country's stringent response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Making a strong pitch for the government to loosen its purse strings to spur the economy with a "counter-cyclical fiscal push" till the country returns to its pre-COVID-19 growth path, the survey, tabled in Parliament on Friday, defended the conservative fiscal stimulus during the initial phase of the pandemic, stating that pushing down on the accelerator while the brakes are clamped "only wastes fuel". Comparing the Indian economy's resurgence from the collapse in the first two quarters of the year to the country's recent cricketing fortunes, which recovered swiftly from the lows of being bowled out for 36 in the Adelaide Test to register a series win against Australia, Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian indicated that it was time to switch fiscal gears to a more aggressive approach.

(H., 30/01)

Govt. tightens oversight on funds received by NGOs

The Union Home Ministry has laid down a charter for banks which says that "donations received in Indian rupees" by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and associations from "any foreign source even if that source is located in India at the time of such donation" should be treated as foreign contribution. As per the existing rules, all banks have to report to the Central government within 48 hours the "receipt or utilisation of any foreign contribution" by any NGO, association or person whether or not they are registered or granted prior permission under the FCRA. Last September, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, was amended by Parliament and a new provision that makes it mandatory for all NGOs to receive foreign funds in a designated bank

account at the State Bank of India's (SBI) New Delhi branch was inserted.

(H., 30/01)

Govt. plans law to ban bitcoin, set up official digital currency

India plans to introduce a law to ban private cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin and put in place a framework for an official digital currency to be issued by the central bank, according to a legislative agenda listed by the government. The law will “create a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI),” the agenda, published on the lower house website on Friday, showed. The legislation, listed for debate in the current Parliamentary session, seeks “to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India, however, it allows for certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology for cryptocurrency and its uses,” the government said.

(H., 31/01)

'7% of those aged 10 years or older exposed to virus by August 2020'

Approximately one in 15 individuals aged 10 years or older in India is likely to have gone through a SARS –CoV-2 infection by August 18, 2020, according to the findings of a survey published in the Lancet Global Health. Adult sero-prevalence increased approximately tenfold between May and August, 2020, said the survey that was funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research. The study, titled ‘SARS-CoV-2 antibody sero-prevalence in India, August – September 2020’, found that sero-prevalence was highest in urban slums. The survey added that the lower infection-to-case ratio in August than in May reflected a substantial increase in testing across the country. Serum samples were collected from 29,082 individuals from 15,613 households between August 18 – September 20, 2020.

(H., 31/01)

NEWS FROM OTHER STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra Pradesh intermediate board to implement 1:40 teacher-student ratio

The Board of Intermediate Education (BIE), the regulator of the crucial two-year intermediate course in Andhra Pradesh, will implement a teacher-student ratio of 1:40 from the next academic year, 2021-22, an official said on Thursday. However, for the current 2020-21 academic year, obeying the Andhra High Court ruling, BIE will allow a maximum number of 88 students per classroom. “Yes, definitely we will reduce it to 40. Whatever studies the High Court has directed us to do, we will conduct them,” BIE secretary V. Ramakrishna told. The BIE envisioned restricting the number of students in a classroom to 40, adhering to international standards of the teacher-student ratio, considering the endless number of students corporate colleges were cramming into classrooms. However, the court allowed 88 students per classroom for this academic year. Ramakrishna himself is clueless about who recommended this 88 ratio earlier, which was existing as a government order even before the court recommended it. The state government has chosen not to challenge the High Court ruling in the Supreme Court as students and parents are eager to start the academic year after the time they lost due to the corona virus pandemic.

(P., 08/01)

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arunachal to hire porters to transport food grains

Arunachal Pradesh has sought a return to the British-era system of using porters to transport foodgrains in remote administrative circles to save on air freight charges paid or payable to the Indian Air Force (IAF). Appointment of porters under the Auxiliary Labour Corps was stopped after Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood in 1987.

(H., 10/01)

BIHAR

Vocational training for shelter home girls across Bihar

Self reliance is the keyword the state government is banking on to transform the lot of girls sheltered in various care homes in Bihar. Under a new model, the government aims to make all girls at state-sponsored institutions self-reliant through vocational training by the time they turn 18. The plan is significant as it comes in the wake of the 2018 sex scandal at a Muzaffarpur-based Girls Shelter Home. After having sent 14 girls from the shelter homes at Begusarai, Madhubani, Patna, Mothari, and Purnia to Bengaluru and other cities for vocational training in 2020, they plan to send another batch of 30 girls to participate in a programme on hotel management. The girls would be sent to Bengaluru, among other cities, in association with the Children and Human Rights Organisations Centre for Juvenile Justice. “Now, the second batch of 30 inmates – educated up to classes VI and VII – will be sent to Bengaluru for training on housekeeping to make them financially self reliant,” the director of the department said.

(N.I.E., 09/01)

Bihar to introduce tracking system to curb high school dropout rates in state

In a first of its kind move aimed to check the drop-out rate among children in Bihar, the state education department is set to introduce a tracking system. At present, the drop-out rate between children from primary to secondary levels is approximately 32 per cent, almost 34 per cent of whom are girls. Expressing concern, the state education department is preparing a system to ascertain when and how many children drop out of school. Principal secretary of the education department Sanjay Kumar, said that the system once developed and introduced, will not only aid in tracking the dropout rate of children in schools but also of those pursuing technical or professional education. The system will be introduced for around 3 crore students enrolled in more than 78,000 government schools from classes 1 to 12. "It will take six months to put it (the system) in place," Kumar said. Adding, that once enrolled, the children's performances can be tracked by the government till they graduate. Quoting a government statistic

from 2018, Kumar shared that out of over 24 lakh children enrolled in class 1, only around 4 lakh of them completed their school level education.

(N.I.E., 14/01)

Bihar to soon have gas insulated power sub-station

Bihar has started working on setting up a gas insulated power sub-station, with high safety features, in the state. A couple of days ago, secretary of Bihar energy department Sanjiv Hans went to Naubatpur in Patna and reviewed the work for the Naubatpur 400/220/132/33KV Gas Insulated Sub Station. The gas insulated power sub-station happens to be an upgraded technology which requires less maintenance. Hans said that this gas insulated power sub-station is due for completion by June 2021. "It will augment and stabilise power supply in and around areas of Patna. Apart from the state capital, Ara will also be one of the beneficiary of this gas insulated power sub-station", Hans claimed. In addition to this project, a power grid is also being set up in Katihar from which the international transmission of power can be done to Bangladesh and Bhutan also. With the completion of Katihar based power grid by 2022, Bihar will be the first state in the country to have international power transmission power connectivity with Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

(N.I.E., 23/01)

Digital land records to be a click away

In a State like Bihar, where land disputes dominate the crime scene, the state government is working to put even 100-year-old land records available at just with a click. A new system is being implemented for the search of land documents at the government level at warfooting. For this, 163 zones of the state have been selected in the first phase and the land documents are being digitizing and scanned for keeping them in digital preservation. Once implemented, the Document Management System and the Record management System will allow public to track their records online.

(H., 30/01)

CHHATTISGARH

Maoists' 'area of influence' declines but Chhattisgarh remains worst affected

Chhattisgarh saw a consistent decline in areas cited as the stronghold of the outlawed CPI (Maoist), though the state still remains as the worst-hit as over half of the violent incidents in the country involving the Red brigade have been reported only in Bastar zone. The comprehensive crime statistics released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) also suggest the state continues as the hardest-hit by violence and crime unleashed by Maoists. With the reach and the cross district raids by the security forces continue, as many as 16 new base camps were set up in 2020 across the strategically chosen hypersensitive forested terrain of conflict zone in south Chhattisgarh. “In spite of various challenges of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the security forces could make decisive inroads into some of the erstwhile epicentre of Maoists. The area of influence of Maoists reduced to a great extent as the forces moved in to set up new posts. The rebels on backfoot are restricted to small pockets of affected districts. As many as 105 times we carried out the raids at naxal hideouts and engaged in exchange of fire with the red guerrillas,” said Sunderraj P, inspector general of police (Bastar Range). This year the troopers recovered 40 bodies of the rebels killed in an encounter and arrested as many as 390 during the anti-Maoist operations. The forces lost 36 personnel in the gunfight with the ultras.

(N.I.E., 02/01)

Chhattisgarh first state to block covaxin

Chhattisgarh's government on Sunday said it was not inclined to use Bharat Biotech's Covaxin unless the vaccine successfully completes the recommended testing process, thus becoming the first state to indicate it may refuse the jab ahead of the national rollout of the vaccination programme on January 16. Whether or not other opposition states would adopt a similar approach was not immediately known. “The vaccine has been approved for emergency use (by the Drug Controller General of India). But its use should be avoided until its complete results are out,” Chhattisgarh health minister T S Singh Deo said. “In my opinion, it should not be allowed in the state. As of now, I am not confident

of asking people to accept this vaccine,” he added.

(N.I.E., 11/01)

Indian Railways longest freight train 'Vasuki' creates new record in SECR zone

The South-East Central Railways (SECR) zone in Chhattisgarh breaks its own previous record by successfully operating the longest ever freight train by amalgamating five rakes of goods trains as one unit of around 3.5 km. Named as 'Vasuki', it covered the distance of 224 km between the railway stations of Bhilai and Korba and took about seven hours. The 'Vasuki', comprising of 300 wagons of long haul rake of five goods trains, ran with the help of one pilot, one assistant loco pilot and a guard. The nation's most profitable railways zone SECR had earlier operated 177 loaded wagons "Super Anaconda" of 2 km long freight train on 29 June 2020, then connecting three goods trains using the latest technology of Distributed Power Control System (DPCS). SECR also successfully operated another trial 'Shesh-Naag' of 251 empty wagons with four electric locomotives that traveled a distance of 260 km from Nagpur to Bilaspur.

(N.I.E., 23/01)

DELHI

Delhi govt to set up Tamil academy

Delhi government's Department of Art, Culture, and Language on Sunday set-up a Tamil academy to promote the language and culture of the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who also holds the charge of the Art, Culture, and Language department, said, "It is this diversity that forms Delhi's vibrant and cosmopolitan culture. Delhi has a large population of people from Tamil Nadu and we want to present a platform to the people of Delhi to get a taste of the art and culture of Tamil Nadu." The Delhi government has appointed a former councilor and member of Delhi Tamil Sangam N Raja as the Vice-Chairman of the academy. In a statement issued by the government, Raja said, "I am glad to see that the Delhi Government under Deputy CM Manish Sisodia has established the Tamil language academy. I am honored to be

a part of this academy. The Tamil language and culture have a long tradition in the history of Indian culture as well as in Delhi.”

(H.T., 04/01)

Well-designed timetable, no heavy school bags: Kejriwal government issues policy to cut burden

From well-designed timetable, limited use of notebooks, awareness programmes and a variety of co-curricular activities, the Delhi government has issued a slew of directions to reduce the weight of school bags. The Directorate of Education (DoE) issued these revised guidelines on Monday for cutting down the burden students carry every day to school were issued in view of the fresh School Bag Policy 2020 released by the Union Ministry of Education last month. According to the policy, school bags should not be more than 10 per cent of the bodyweight of students studying in classes I –X. The newly framed rules say that no homework should be given to students till class II and students of pre-primary classes shouldn't carry school bags. The notice, recommending various measures to reduce the weight of school bags, has been sent to heads of all schools in the national capital. Noting that the school diary or Almanac also adds to the weight of the school bag, the DoE also suggests usage of digital mode of communication to contact parents.

(N.I.E., 06/01)

Air quality in Delhi touches hazardous level

Air quality in Delhi spiked to dangerous levels due to low ventilation and calm surface winds as Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) predicted on Saturday. According to the National Ambient Air Quality Index (NAAQI), the overall Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 492 micrograms per cubic. According to SAFAR, the values of Suspended Particulate Matters (SPMs) were recorded 436 and 278 microgram per cubic for Particulate Matters (PM) 10 and 2.5. SAFAR, in its short range weather forecast said that the air pollution in Delhi has spiked to dangerous levels due to extremely low ventilation and calm surface winds. On Saturday morning, the air quality touched the hazardous level with the AQI touching 492. SAFAR further

said that slight improvements in surface winds are observed wind speed is moderate and West northwesterly. "Due to slight better ventilation marginal improvement air quality is forecasted for Sunday, AQI likely to improve to the higher end of Very Poor. The SAFAR forecast reveals that AQI will continue at the high end of the Very Poor category for January 18, This is likely to be the first extended extreme air pollution event for 2021. Further improvement is expected on January 19 , 20," it added.

(P., 17/01)

Govt orders 'lockdown' against large gatherings in Delhi; temporary internet shutdown in parts of city as agri protests turn violent

Following violence in parts of the city during the tractor rally, Delhi Police on Tuesday announced a 'lockdown' to prevent 'large gatherings' and suspended internet in several parts of Delhi. Police authorities decided there would be no large assemblies, congregations of religious, political, social and cultural nature up to December 31. The government also ordered temporary suspension of internet services in parts of Delhi-NCR as a tractor parade by protesting farmers turned violent at several locations in the national capital, officials said. The internet shutdown will be effective till midnight Tuesday in Delhi's Singhu, Ghazipur, Tikri, Mukarba Chowk, Nangloi and their adjoining areas. An order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs said the decision has been taken in exercise of the powers conferred by section 7 of the Indian Telegraph Act 1855.

(N.I.E., 26/01)

GUJARAT

Gujarat government decides to rename dragon fruit as 'Kamalam': CM Vijay Rupani

The Gujarat government has decided to rename dragon fruit as 'Kamalam', Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has said. The state government has applied for a patent to change the nomenclature of dragon fruit, which is largely grown in Kutch, Navsari and different parts of Saurashtra, to 'Kamalam', Rupani told reporters on Tuesday. "The name dragon fruit is not proper, and due to its name one thinks of China. So

we have given it the name 'Kamalam'," he said. Asked why the name 'Kamalam' has been given to the fruit, Rupani said, "Farmers say it looks like lotus and that is the reason we have named it 'Kamalam'." The fruit is found in arid areas of the state and it is known for its nutritional value, like it also helps in increasing the hemoglobin, Rupani said in reply to question on the need to rename it.

(N.I.E., 20/01)

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Committee to look into Ladakh issues

A committee would be constituted under Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy to find an appropriate solution to the issues related to language, culture and conservation of land in the Union Territory of Ladakh, the Home Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. A 10-member delegation of Ladakh met Home Minister Amit Shah. "In view of the difficult geographical conditions and the strategic importance of Ladakh, all the representatives expressed their concern with respect to conservation of language, culture and land of Ladakh, participation of the people of Ladakh in its development, protection of employment and changes in the demography of Ladakh region. A protest was also held in this regard before the LAHDC[Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council] elections," the Ministry said.

(H., 07/01)

Centre approves Rs 28,000-crore plan to draw industries in J&K

The Centre on Wednesday approved a Rs 28,400-crore new industrial developmental scheme, paving the path for attracting investments and creating jobs for the youth in the militancy-hit Jammu and Kashmir. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), headed by the Prime Minister, on Wednesday approved the proposal of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade for Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of Jammu & Kashmir. The scheme will stay in force till 2037, and Rs 1,123.84 crore has already been disbursed under various special packages, the government said, in a statement. Welcoming the approval given by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs to the Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the decision illustrates

how the Union Territory holds a 'special place' in heart of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to CCEA, the provisions of the scheme aim at drawing both small and large units. Smaller units with an investment in plant and machinery up to Rs 50 crore will get a capital incentive up to Rs 7.5 crore and get capital interest subvention at the rate of 6% for a maximum of seven years.

(N.I.E., 08/01)

2 die, over 100 houses damaged due to snow

Two persons died and over 100 houses were damaged in snow in the Kashmir Valley on Wednesday. The Valley remained out of bounds for the fourth straight day, while 22 stranded families were rescued and shifted to safer locations. An official said CRPF sub-inspector H.C. Murmu dies after a structure collapsed under the weight of snow and hit him at the residence of a former legislator in the Hazratbal area here. Rehami Begam, 70, from Shah Mohalla at Trehgam in Kupwara, died after snow accumulated on the house roof fell and buried her in. A police spokesman said 22 stranded families were rescued and shifted to safer locations in Kulgam.

(H., 07/01)

Army to vacate Kargil land to build township

The Indian Army would vacate around 3,000 kanals (375 acres) land at Kargil Lower Plateau in six months, starting March, paving the path for a well-planned civilian township. The one-and-a-half years of talks on the issue culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Deputy Commissioner Kargil and CEO of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Baseer-ul Haq Choudhary and Brigade Commander, 121 Infantry Division, Brigadier Vivek Bakshi on Friday. The army had been using the land locally known as Khurbathang plateau for field and firing range, logistics, and operational purposes. The civilian administration has assured the army of alternative land. As per the MoU, army would start vacating the land in March, and hand over its control to the civil administration in six months.

(N.I.E., 09/01)

White winter raises hope for J&K tourism

Unlike most people, six feet of snow and minus 10 degrees Celsius are no cause for worry for Asif Iqbal Burza. The hotelier, who owns the Heaven Resorts in Gulmarg, north Kashmir's ski capital, is in fact overjoyed. For the first time in 15 months, Mr. Burza is happy to re-employ staff whom he had to lay off in the wake of the August 5, 2019 move to end J&K's special status. As did some 1,500 other hotels in the Kashmir Valley. "We had to stop hiring services such as security, laundry and transport. We retained a bare minimum staff and negotiated their salaries. However, it seems the good days are back. Gulmarg witnessed a very, very good season in the past two months. My hotel, like others, was booked for December and January," he said.

(H., 10/01)

JHARKHAND

Jharkhand cops to woo Maoists' kin in local dialect in new awareness drive

Intensifying efforts to eliminate Maoists from the state, Jharkhand Police is using local tribal languages as a tool to reach out to the people in the remote jungles to create awareness against the extremists. The police is also contacting family members of Maoists, asking them to convince their near ones to surrender. All SPs have been given a list of absconding Maoists so that they can approach their families and inform them about the state government's new surrender policy. This initiative was taken because it was felt that most arrested Maoists were not aware of the surrender policy. Else, they would have surrendered years back. Following the policy, families of surrendered Maoists are given land to live and their children are provided free education. The families are also given the reward money declared on their heads. A large number of area-specific pamphlets in local dialects are being distributed in remote villages. The dialects include Nagpuri, Sadri, Santhali, Ho and Khadia.

(N.I.E., 25/01)

KARNATAKA

Tourism dept issues series of guidelines for hotels, resorts

The Karnataka tourism department has issued guidelines for hotels, resorts and bars, in the wake of rising cases of drugs being found. While tourism is flourishing despite the pandemic, such illegal activities will drive away tourists and mar the state's image, and compromise the safety of domestic and international tourists, the department said. Property owners have been directed to submit documents to the Assistant Commissioner of Bengaluru, within 15 days. The list of documents include: No Objection Certificate from jurisdictional police station, BBMP and other departments, clearance from Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and food safety department. Fire and emergency department guidelines should be adhered to, besides clearance from forest department irrespective of whether it falls under eco-sensitive zones or not, licence from excise department, certificate from income-tax department, clearance and certification from the National Stunts Academy if stunts are being preformed, and monthly financial statements. The guidelines also state that the property owner must display the availability of rooms, rates and Covid- 19 guidelines being adhered to.

(N.I.E., 02/01)

16 lakh Corona warriors to get shots from Jan 16

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Monday said 16 lakh Corona warriors, including healthcare workers, will be vaccinated in the state in the first phase, starting from January 16. Apart from healthcare workers, the first phase will include employees of municipalities, rural development and panchayat raj, police and revenue departments, among others. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video-conference with chief ministers, Yediyurappa said that the second dose will be given 28 days after the first shot. The vaccination drive will be taken up at 235 centres in the state. "Both Covishield and Covaxin will be given in Karnataka," he said. Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar, who was present with the chief minister at the videoconference, said that the two vaccines, developed by Indian companies, will be given free of cost to three crore people across the country in the initial phase and the cost will be borne by the Centre. He said that

immunity develops 45 days after the shots. “One has to be careful for those 45 days,” he added, quoting the Prime Minister. Dr Sudhakar said that if the vaccination drive has to start on January 16, the vaccines have to reach the 235 centres across all 30 districts well before that date. The vaccines have to first reach the two state storage facilities in Bengaluru and Belagavi.

(N.I.E., 12/01)

Karnataka retains top spot on innovation index

Karnataka has retained the top position in the innovation index for a second year in a row, a pointer to its strength in maintaining the leadership position. The state’s innovation score of 42.5 was way above the average score of 25.35 among the major states. Maharashtra was in second place with a score of 38 and Bihar in the last place with just 14.5. Among City States and Union Territories, Delhi topped list. Skilled human resource, ease of doing business, legalities, knowledge dissemination, health and education are some of the parameters considered to decide the ranking. The NITI Aayog’s Innovation Index 2020 report, released on Wednesday, attributes Karnataka’s top rank to the number of venture capital deals, information and communication technology exports, high foreign direct investment inflow among other factors. The index learnings can be used in devising policies, both at the central and state levels, and it helps to attract investment. Karnataka has been categorized as “over-performing” in certain categories such as; Human Capital (54.27); Knowledge Diffusion (72.26); Investment (33.01), while it has been rated as “under-performing” in Safety and Legal Environment (39.75) and Business Environment (24.43).

(N.I.E., 21/01)

Karnataka govt, to set up 2 cow shelters in every taluk

The Karnataka government plans to set up two goshalas in every taluk to ensure that “not a single cow goes to slaughter house”, Prabhu Chavan, Minister for Animal Husbandry, has said. Officials of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department, the police, and various district administrations should do everything necessary to stop illegal transportation of cattle, he said at a meeting in Hassan. The Government had promulgated a strong ordinance prohibiting the slaughter of cattle and it had to be implemented effectively. A stronger law to stop the slaughter of cattle was part of the BJP agenda. The new law has stringent

punishment for those who violated it. In the earlier version, the penalty was only ₹ 1,000. Now it has been increased to up to ₹3 lakh. Earlier, imprisonment was only for six months. Now, offenders can be imprisoned for up to seven years”.

(H., 31/01)

LAKSHADWEEP

Nearly a year into COVID-19, Lakshadweep reports first positive case

The first COVID-19 case was reported in the Lakshadweep Islands on Monday, nearly an year after the outbreak of the pandemic in the country. The man, belonging to the India Reserve Battalion, had left for Kavaratti by ship from Kochi on January 3 and tested positive on Monday, official sources said. He is not a resident of the islands, they said. The case was reported two weeks after the Lakshadweep administration revised Standard Operating Procedures by doing away with mandatory quarantine guidelines for those arriving from Kochi. The islands had so far not reported a single positive COVID-19 case. Taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus, the administration has directed all those who had come in contact with him to go on quarantine, they said. The samples of his primary contacts have been taken for lab examination, officials said. The administration also suspended all the inter island movements, including ships from Tuesday, they said.

(N.I.E., 19/01)

MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh govt to register details of girls, boys going out for work in effort to prevent trafficking

Concerned about around 3000 girls missing from the state, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that a system will soon be put in place under which all boys and girls going out for work will have to first compulsorily register themselves with government bodies to ensure that they can be tracked easily in case they go missing. Addressing the state police

establishment at Bhopal's Minto Hall during the launch of Samman, a fortnight long awareness drive to create public awareness about crime against women, the CM said on Monday, "Entire rank and file of the state police establishment in all districts have to work to first ensure that none of our boys and girls go missing and if at all they are missing, they are tracked and brought back promptly." "We are giving final shape to a new system under which if any boy or girl goes out for work (particularly as labourers) out of their home district or state, they'll first have to compulsorily register themselves with authorities. If the boy or girl is going for work out the district, then the details will be registered with the concerned gram panchayat. If the boy or girl is going for work outside the state, then we're creating system in each district where his or her details will be registered to ensure that if the particular boy or girl goes missing, the police can track them," Chouhan said.

(N.I.E., 14/01)

MAHARASHTRA

Mumbai airport launches application to offer guided virtual tour of its Jaya He Museum

The Mumbai airport authorities have launched an application to offer a guided virtual tour of its Jaya He Museum with over 5,000 pieces of artwork and artifacts. Officials said the application is available on all play stores. Passengers using the airport's Terminal 2 can also access a web version of the tour by scanning a QR code. "Users can navigate the tour as per their preference through a menu of art content and opt for the audio-visual treat of the artwork spread across the international or domestic departures as per their choice. Moreover, the app operates on a unique technology platform that allows users to listen to the narrations offline, even with their phones on airplane mode," a spokesperson for the airport said. The second edition of the museum's carnival series was organised virtually in June and focussed on the art and heritage of North-East India.

(H.T., 01/01)

Maharashtra govt to penalise bureaucrats coming late to work

Going to a bureaucrat's office and hearing the peon say, "Sahab ab tak nahin aaye" will soon be a thing of the past. That is if the Maharashtra government has its way. Cracking the whip on habitual latecomers, Maharashtra has decided to start penalising staff, including senior state employees, who turn up late for work. It has decided to start deducting earned leaves of latecomers. According to a new circular issued by the Uddhav Thackeray-led General Administration Department, three or more days of tardiness in a month will lead to forfeiture of a day's casual leave. Further those reporting late to work for over nine or more days will see a daily deduction of earned leaves. Giving lessons in punctuality to employees, the new circular also said that those reporting an hour and a half late for more than two occasions will have to stay back after office hours to make up for the lost time. Department heads have been asked to review attendance of their staff on a monthly basis, asking each one of them to submit biannual reports.

(I.E., 03/01)

Bird flu confirmed after 900 hens die in Parbhani poultry farm

Bird flu has been confirmed as the cause of death of around 900 hens in the last few days at a poultry farm in Maharashtra's Parbhani district, a senior official said on Monday. The district administration has now decided to cull nearly 8,000 birds in Murumba village where these hens died, Collector Deepak Muglikar told. Earlier, Muglikar on Saturday said around 900 hens had died at a poultry farm, run by a Self-Help Group (SHG), in the village and their samples were sent for testing. "The cause of the death has been confirmed as bird flu. Hence, we have decided to cull all the birds in one-km radius of the place where these deaths took place," the collector said. "We have created a prohibitory zone in 10 km radius of the area where the birds died. No birds will be transported from there to any other place. Our medical team is stationed there and it is examining all people of the village," he said. The bird flu outbreak has already been confirmed in Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

(N.I.E., 11/01)

Health care workers to be vaccinated four days a week

Vaccination of health care workers for COVID-19 will be carried out in Maharashtra four days a week so that health services at hospitals are not hampered due to their absence, an official said on Friday. The inoculation drive is set to begin from Saturday with health care workers being the beneficiaries in the first phase. "The vaccination drive will be carried out for four days a week (after the launch on Saturday)," said a senior health department official. "Majority of the health staff in the state comprises of nurses and others having similar skill sets. Hence we need to manage their availability as well as their duty hours before sending them SMS for inoculation," he said. All beneficiaries will be getting text message before they are vaccinated. Asked when the state is expected to receive a second lot of vaccine doses, he said the state government will inform the Centre about the number of health workers it needs to vaccinate but it is up to the Centre to sanction vaccine supply.

(N.I.E., 16/01)

Maharashtra plan to invoke Official Secrets Act

The Maharashtra government would seek legal and expert opinion on whether Republic TV editor Arnab Goswami could be booked under the Official Secrets Act for disclosing sensitive information on Balakot strike three days before it took place. The government's decision follows the surfacing of a purported WhatsApp chat between ex-CEO of BARC and Arnab Goswami. Maharashtra Home minister Anil Deshmukh said that they have taken a serious note of Arnab Goswami's chat. "We have decided to seek legal and expert opinion on whether Arnab Goswami can be booked and arrested under the Official Secrets Act for allegedly sharing classified military information. We cannot compromise on national security. We have to find out with who else he has shared the information. Besides, we need to trace the source of this crucial information, and whether it was limited to Arnab and Partho Dasgupta," Deshmukh said.

(N.I.E., 20/01)

Committee set up to study increase in leopard deaths

In view of the increase in the number of leopard deaths and human-animal conflict in the state, the forest department on Thursday set up an 11-member committee headed by Additional Principal Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Sunil Limaye. The committee will study the increase in the number and cause of leopard deaths, increase in loss of human life due to leopard attacks and suggest measures to control the same. The report will be submitted in three months. According to a department report, 173 leopards have died in the state between January and November in 2020 – an increase of over 57 per cent from the previous year. Of the 173 deaths, 85 died of natural causes, 64 due to accidents, 17 due to poaching and seven from electrocution. The report also found a three-fold increase in loss of human life due to leopard attacks. While eight persons died in man-animal conflict in 2019, the number had gone up to 23 till last November. A total of 37 leopards were rescued this year.

(I.E., 22/01)

AAP gets a foothold in Maharashtra with wins in 70 gram panchayats

As the Aam Aadmi Party looks to spread its footprints and foray into local polls in various states this year, it has received a shot in the arm by winning a significant number of village panchayat seats in Maharashtra. Of the total 14,000 gram panchayat seats, the AAP has won 70 seats across 13 districts. Party spokesperson and national executive member Preeti Sharma Menon said, “The AAP has made a splash in Maharashtra politics with a spectacular debut in the recently concluded gram panchayat polls.” “Our gram panchayat win tally is now 145/300! And we have full majority in 4 villages. This is a historic entry and it shows that the whole country is keen to have the Kejriwal model of governance in their villages and towns,” she said in another tweet. Chief Minister and AAP’s national convener Arvind Kejriwal congratulated “Team Maharashtra” for the victory and tweeted his best wishes to all the winners. Menon said 300 party members had contested the elections and 70, including 13 in an alliance, emerged victorious.

(N.I.E., 24/01)

Maharashtra launches jail tourism project from Pune's Yerawada prison

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday launched a jail tourism initiative in the state with an aim to help students and other citizens experience "vignettes from history". People will be able to understand the struggles of freedom fighters by visiting jails under the new initiative, Thackeray said in a statement. The initiative was launched from the 150-year-old Yerawada prison in Pune, where several freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu and Subhas Chandra Bose, had been imprisoned under the British rule. "CM Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray today launched a unique jail tourism initiative. This will help school and college students, history enthusiasts and citizens to experience vignettes from our history," the Chief Ministers Office (CMO) said in a tweet. Addressing the initiative launch event virtually, the chief minister referred to his father, Shiv Sena founder late Bal Thackeray's days spent at the Yerawada prison.

(N.I.E., 26/01)

ODISHA

Odisha govt plans memorial for 'martyrs' Covid warriors

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday announced plans to build a memorial in the State Capital for the Covid warriors who laid their lives in the line of duty. The Chief Minister made this announcement during a discussion with family members of martyred Covid warriors of five districts through video conference. Expressing his gratitude to the family members of martyred warriors, Naveen said names of those who lost their lives will be inscribed in the memorial to keep their memory live. "The dedication of these martyrs will not go in vain and our victory is certain in this war against Covid," Patnaik said adding, the government will always be with the families of the Covid warriors who lost their lives in line of duty. Describing 2020 as a year of disaster, the Chief Minister said, "Odisha faced these challenges and bore the brunt of the Covid pandemic as much as anywhere else in the globe. However, we could stand tall

against all adversity because of the dedication and honesty of our lakhs of Covid warriors.”

(N.I.E., 01/01)

India’s first Fire Park comes up in Odisha

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday inaugurated the ‘Fire Park’, a first of its kind initiative in the country, to bring awareness on fire safety measures. He also launched a dynamic online portal, ‘AgnishamaSeva’ of Odisha Fire Service on virtual platform. Located inside the premises of the Odisha Fire and Disaster Academy in Bhubaneswar, the Fire Park will be open to the public every Saturday from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm. Demonstrations on use of first aid fire-fighting equipment, rescue and disaster operations, visit to exhibition hall, screening of films and distribution of leaflets on fire safety will be part of the activities. Students from schools and colleges will be the focus group. The Chief Minister said that the Fire Park will go a long way in educating and improving awareness on basic fire safety measures among the people, particularly the students. “It is no doubt an effort in the right direction to create a safety compliant citizenry,” he said.

(N.I.E., 06/01)

Odisha’s Chilika Lake logs its highest ever count with 11.42 lakh migratory birds

The bird population in Odisha’s Chilika Lake has touched its highest in the last two decades with officials estimating around 11.4 lakh birds during the annual bird census of the largest coastal lagoon in the country. Chief executive of Chilika Development Authority Susanta Nanda said the annual bird count of Asia’s largest brackish water lagoon undertaken on Tuesday revealed a record presence of 11.42 lakh migratory birds from 190 species. The annual bird census in the lagoon was carried out in five ranges under the Chilika Wildlife Division. As many as 21 teams comprising 111 wildlife officials, experts and environmentalists were deployed at Satpada in Puri, Rambha in Ganjam and Balugaon and Tangi of Khurda districts for carrying out the migratory bird count exercise.

(N.I.E., 06/01)

Survey on differently-abled children in Odisha on cards

The State government has planned to conduct a comprehensive survey of children with disabilities with an objective to initiate timely interventions for their rehabilitation and mainstreaming so that they can lead a normal life. The survey will be conducted by the Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department in collaboration with Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti department. Anganwadi workers and ICDS supervisors will be engaged for identification of the children aged up to six years and with disabilities. Secretary of SSEPD department Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma said around 70 per cent of disabilities is preventable if detected and treated at an early stage. “Initially, we will conduct the survey to identify the children with disabilities so that they can be provided treatment at the right time,” he said. After the survey, Sarma said a system will be put in place to identify such cases at the time of birth as part of the mandate given under Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016. As per the decision, anganwadi workers will monitor incidents of birth of children with disability in their area of operation and report to their supervisors.

(N.I.E., 18/01)

Odisha seeks 90:10 per cent sharing pattern for Central schemes

With pre-budget consultations between Centre and states kicking off, Odisha government on Monday reiterated its demand for fixing the sharing pattern in the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) on par with North-Eastern (NE) and Himalayan states. The sharing pattern of CSS for NE and Himalayan states is 90 per cent for Centre and 10 per cent for the latter. Participating in the consultation meeting convened by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman through video-conference, State Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari said that the Centre should give advance indication on Central assistance for CSS and release funds as per commitment. The Centre should stop off-budget transfers of funds for CSS, he said and added, even if it is an off-budget resource, it should be routed through the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). He also requested that states should be allowed to operate CSS directly instead of opening separate scheme-based bank accounts. In the 2020-21 budget, the State government had estimated its share in Central taxes at Rs 36,300 crore and grant-in-aid of Rs 32,000 crore, which,

totalling Rs 68,300 crore, was 55 per cent of its own budget of Rs 1,50,000 crore. However, the budget went haywire because of the Covid-19 pandemic as the economy came to standstill.

(N.I.E., 19/01)

Odisha government revises fee structure of all the private schools

The Odisha government on Wednesday notified the revised fee structure of all the private schools as per the MoU signed between the School and Mass Education department and 14 educational institutions. Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said the fee revision order has been issued as per the direction of Orissa High Court and will be applicable for all aided and unaided private schools in the State. However, the new fee structure will be effective for the current academic session of 2020-21 only. According to the notification of the department, there will be a waiver of 26 per cent (pc) for school (tuition) fees above Rs 1 lakh per annum, 25 pc for fees from Rs 72,001 to Rs 1 lakh per annum, 20 pc for Rs 48,001 to Rs 72,000 per annum, 15 pc for Rs 24,001 to Rs 48,000 per annum, 12 pc for Rs 12,001 to Rs 24,000 per annum and 7.5 pc for Rs 6,001 to Rs 12,000 per annum. There will be no waiver for fees up to Rs 6,000 and transport, food charges will also remain the same. There will also be a flat waiver of 30 pc hostel fees for all the students in private schools. The Minister said no school will be allowed to charge any optional fees beyond this fixed structure in the new academic year. Those having objections to the new fee slab may approach the Court again, the Minister said.

(N.I.E., 21/01)

PUNJAB

Punjab FM Manpreet launches one time settlement scheme for recovery of outstanding dues

Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal on Tuesday launched the One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme for the recovery of outstanding dues 2021, to clear and settle their pending arrears. Manpreet Singh Badal said that the performance of the other ministries reflects that of the Finance Ministry. “Despite the Covid-19 pandemic and centre's stoppage of Punjab's share of GST

and RDF, the State has not gone into overdraft” revealed the FM adding that Punjab especially Ludhiana have it in them to further rise up the ladder of economic progress which is due to the hardworking nature of the Punjabi community whose trust reposed in the Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh led Government would never be broken. Manpreet Singh Badal said this while chairing a state-level function organised regarding the OTS Scheme at Dr Manmohan Singh Auditorium at Punjab Agricultural University, here today. He was also accompanied by Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu, PWD Minister Vijay Inder Singla, PPCB President Sunil Jakhar, besides several others. While taking an aim at the Union government, Badal said that the partisan attitude of the Union Government towards Punjab is evident from the fact out of the three food parks to be developed by the UAE in India, none was given to Punjab although the UAE Government had clearly evinced keen interest in setting up the same in the State, revealed the FM. Coming to the OTS policy, he further added that the 47000 traders would be benefitted by the new OTS policy okayed by the State Government.

(P., 13/01)

Expressway project: Punjab farmers boycott public hearing for land acquisition

Farmers boycotted the public hearing held for acquisition of land for the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway at Sultanpur Lodhi (Kapurthala district) and Lohian (Jalandhar district) on Thursday. They also opposed the land acquisition because the government was not listening to the genuine grievances of the people protesting at Delhi borders. The public hearing was organised by the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). The agricultural land of several districts of Punjab is being acquired for this project. The farmers’ objections were to be listened to in this public meeting but the farmers boycotted the meeting. Protesting under the banner of Expressway Sangharsh Committee, the farmers raised slogans against the land acquisition. They said not even an inch of land will be given to the NHAI for this project as they already have small landholdings.

(I.E., 22/01)

Amarinder lays foundation stone of Jallianwala Bagh Centenary Memorial park

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday laid the foundation stone of the Jallianwala Bagh Centenary Memorial park at Amritsar, dedicated to unsung heroes of the massacre. He paid an emotional tribute to the unsung heroes of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and to their families by reciting a poem. The chief minister virtually laid the foundation of the memorial park. The Jallianwala Bagh Centenary Memorial Park, to come up over 4490 square metres at Amrit Anand Park in Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar, will stand out as a remembrance for the future generations, Amarinder Singh said. To be built at a cost of Rs 3.52 crore, the memorial will have soil brought by the kin of martyrs or panchayats/sarpanchs/councillors. Remembering the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for India's independence, the chief minister slammed those criticising the state government for setting up this memorial, and said every Punjabi has the right to remember the unparalleled tragedy that paved the way for the freedom struggle.

(N.I.E., 25/01)

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan government sets up special cell to nab corrupt officials

In a bid to tighten the noose around corrupt officials, the Rajasthan Government has decided to create a special cell in the personnel department that will closely monitor suspected corrupt and irresponsible officials in the state. This comes a day after two senior Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS) officials were trapped by Anti-corruption Bureau (ACB) while they were taking huge bribes in return of promised favours. In recent months, the ACB has been on a massive campaign against corrupt officials in the state at the behest of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. The new cell has also been created on his initiative and the information was conveyed by the CM himself while addressing the collectors of the state via a video conference. CM Gehlot stated that a cell within the department of personnel will be formed “to look into complaints of indiscipline and corruption against government officials and anyone found guilty will be

punished severely.” It may be noted that on Wednesday, the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau had trapped two senior RAS officials taking bribes of 10 and 5 lakhs each in a single day. The two officials were SDM of Bandikui Pinky Meena and Dausa SDM Pushkar Mittal. According to the ACB, both the SDMs were arrested for demanding bribes from a construction contractor under the Bharat Mata project of laying down the Delhi Mumbai Express Highway. The ACB conducted the action on the basis of a complaint which they received against the two officials who were caught red-handed on Wednesday.

(N.I.E., 15/01)

SIKKIM

Sikkim assembly adopts resolution for granting Scheduled Tribe status to 11 communities

The Sikkim assembly on Monday adopted a resolution for granting Scheduled Tribe status to 11 left-out communities of the state. The resolution will now be forwarded to the Centre for approval. Speaking at the one-day assembly session, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang said it is a long-standing demand of the 11 communities to be granted ST status. The assembly passed the Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Bill and the Sikkim Industries Licensing (Amendment) Bill. The House also passed the second supplementary demands of Rs 503.47 crore for 2020-21 fiscal by a voice vote. It also passed the Sikkim Appropriation Bill for the second supplementary demands. Governor Ganga Prasad, while addressing the House, said that the prevailing challenges related to the COVID-19 outbreak will not be allowed to derail the state government's resolve to bring all-round development of the state.

(N.I.E., 12/01)

TAMIL NADU

TN government allows 100 percent seating in theatres ahead of Pongal

In the wake of the Tamil Nadu government permitting 100 percent seating

capacity in theatres on Monday, public health experts have opposed the move, saying it may lead to more COVID-19 cases. The TN government's move to allow hundred percent seating comes after actor Vijay requested Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami to grant permission ahead of the release of his movie *Master* on January 13. Along with the Vijay-starrer, Silambarasan's movie *Eshwaran* is also set to hit the big screen. However, from the medical standpoint, experts say it is not safe inside closed spaces, that too for long hours. Infectious diseases specialist Ram Gopalakrishnan of Apollo Hospitals said it is not an optimal situation to allow 100 percent attendance in theatres and it may lead to more cases.

(N.I.E., 05/01)

UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand to provide 20,000 litres free water per month to 18.5 lakh consumers

Uttarakhand state government has decided to give 20000 liters of water per month free of cost to 18.5 lakh consumers in the state. Out of total consumers, 6.53 lakh are in urban areas while a majority of 12 lakh are based in rural areas of the hill state. Nitesh Jha, secretary, Uttarakhand government said, "The tariff on the drinking water supply is to be done by sub committee. The final decision in the matter will be taken by the states cabinet." The sub committee headed by Uttarakhand state cabinet minister Madan Kaushik has finalised the draft. According to the draft upto 20,000 liters of water will be free for domestic use while for commercial establishments, the limit has been powered to 10,000 liters. In case of usage of extra water by any of the consumers, whole bill will have to be paid even if a single litre of water is used more than the prescribed limit. The sources in the state government said that Uttarakhand is probably the first country to provide water connection at such a nominal fee.

(N.I.E., 16/01)

Enter at your own risk: Uttarakhand village bans entry for members, leaders of 'anti-farmer' BJP

As farmers agitation continues against the newly framed farm laws, a village in

Uttarakhand has banned the entry of Bhartiya Janta Party members, workers and leaders. Posters, banners and hoardings have come up in Malpuri village of Udham Singh Nagar district warning the 'Anti-Farmer' BJP workers and leaders. The banners further warn that if they venture into the village, none will be responsible for their 'security'. Suba Singh, former village pradhan said, "A total of 70 farmers have sacrificed their lives for the movement and the BJP led government is still adamant. We are not letting anyone from the BJP to enter our village. If the party doesn't care for us we don't care for them." Farmers from the district have been actively supporting the Delhi-NCR protests. More than 20,000 farmers from the district have already joined others in Delhi at the protest site. More than 3,000 farmers from Uttarakhand's Udham Singh Nagar district will drive their tractors to Gazipur on the Delhi border on January 23 to participate in the kisan tractor parade on Republic Day in the national capital.

(N.I.E., 24/01)

UTTAR PRADESH

UP govt plans 'new Noida' on 20,000 hectares

The Uttar Pradesh government has asked the Noida authority to work out a plan to develop a new Noida area on 20,000 hectares of land. Noida's boundaries will expand till Bulandshahr, which is an adjoining district, and the city will double its size for which 20,000 hectares will be acquired, officials of the Noida authority said. The move is aimed at creating more opportunities for industries in Noida, where no more land is left for industrial purposes, said the officials. This 20,000 hectares of land is located between Greater Noida and Bulandshahr, and was notified (earmarked for development) by the UP State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) about 10 years ago, they said. However, UPSIDA, a public sector undertaking of the Uttar Pradesh government spearheading the development of industrial infrastructure in the state, could not develop the notified area because it is already occupied in other industrial zones located elsewhere in the state, the authority officials said. The UP government is likely to finalise the 'model of development' for the new area in the next four to six months and hand over the land to the Noida authority if all goes well, said

the authority officials. The government had started the process for developing a new Noida area two months ago.

(H.T., 04/01)

Teachers to get psychology tips to help parents deal with kids post-pandemic

The Bureau of Psychology in the UP State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) will give tips first to the teachers and with their help to the parents on the way the children should be dealt with in the changing environment and emergent stresses in the changed post-pandemic scenario. According to the sources in the bureau, the experts feel that to cope with the emerging new normals related to both the lifestyle and studies owing to the pandemic, counselling of parents is a must to help them understand the challenges being faced by their children and enlighten them accordingly. Keeping these factors in mind, the Bureau of Psychology is readying the guidelines for the parents besides preparing training modules for basic and secondary level school teachers. As per the scheme of things, first, the teachers would be trained and then they would be roped in to help counsel parents so that they could deal with the kids in this new digital age, said a senior psychologist at the bureau. According to the psychologists, parents often come across unusual behaviour of their child who fails to put enough efforts to score good marks in tests. "Lack of concentration due to distractions at home and related distress could be the reason for their poor and 'not up to the mark' performance in various walks of life," says a noted psychologist Pallavi Bhatnagar.

(N.I.E., 09/01)

Yogi Adityanath launches app to give people access to UP government directory

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday launched a mobile application that will let people access the state government's directory. Speaking at an event, Adityanath praised the information department for coming up with the digital directory app and said that it will help people connect to their representatives and officials of government departments. The directory also contains information of Union ministers, he said. "We can provide better

facilities to people with technology people can get pension in their Jan-Dhan account while sitting at home. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it has become possible to provide help to 2.35 crore people every month through technology," he said. The additional chief secretary of information department, Navneet Sehgal said, "Anyone can download the UPIDINFO app through play store on a mobile phone and it is free. Till now, everyone was not able to get access to it (directory)."

(N.I.E., 15/01)

WEST BENGAL

Bengal to launch project today; free eye-care for all over next five years

The Mamata Banerjee administration would be launching on Tuesday a project to provide free eye-care to millions of people across West Bengal over the next five years. The project, Choker Alo (Light of the Eye), is to provide free eye-care, including cataract surgery, spectacles and eye check-up, to all. The name and logo of the project was decided by Banerjee herself. "We are launching a project from January 5 under which at least 2 million poor and elderly people can undergo free cataract surgery. We would also provide free spectacles to around 825,000 people," the chief minister said while speaking to media persons from the state secretariat. Free eye check-up would be provided to all students in government schools across the state and around four lakh students would be provided with free glasses. Children visiting anganwadi centres can also get free eye check-up, so that eye problems could be detected at an early stage. More than 300 eye surgeons and around 400 optometrists would be working on this project.

(H.T., 05/01)

West Bengal Assembly demands repeal of farm laws

The West Bengal Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution extending support to farmers protesting in the national capital and demanding the repeal of three farm laws passed by Centre. The State's Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Partha Chatterjee, moved a government resolution under Rule 169 urging the Centre that the three laws be repealed. Speaking on the resolution, Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee said the BJP government should either withdraw the farm laws or step down. She also accused the BJP government of passing these laws without much discussion. Referring to the developments in Delhi on January 26, the Chief Minister said there was prior permission for march, but the police could not handle it properly.

(H., 28/01)

West Bengal polls: Congress, Left agree to share 193 seats

The Left parties and the Congress on Thursday agreed on seat sharing in almost two-thirds of the assembly seats in West Bengal – 193 of the 294 seats. Of the 193, the Congress will contest 92 and the left 101. State Congress President Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Leader of the Left Front Biman Basu held a press conference at Bidhan Bhavan, announcing the seat sharing arrangement. Both expressed confidence that the seat sharing would be completed in the next few days. Sources said both the parties were trying to ensure a seamless seat sharing in all the 294 seats and there was no friendly contest in any seat. The Left parties and the Congress had come together and forged electoral understanding in the 2016 Assembly and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However, on both occasions, there were few seats where the parties had put up nominees.

(H., 29/01)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Macron sees tough months ahead before spring recovery

French President Emmanuel Macron said the corona virus will continue to weigh on the country for a few months until vaccinations are ramped up, pledging that the crisis will not stop the government pursuing economic, security and environmental reforms. “The first few months of the year will be difficult, and the epidemic will continue to weigh a lot on the life of our country until at least the spring,” Macron said on Thursday in a New Year’s Eve address. France will rise to the challenge and pursue reforms to protect the environment and biodiversity, boost security, reward work, and fight against discrimination, the president said. Sixteen months ahead of the next presidential election, Macron needs to find the right balance between protecting people against a virus that has already claimed more than 64,000 lives in the country, and revitalizing an economy that has contracted by about a 10th because of lockdowns and other restrictions aimed at stemming the pandemic. While some European nations such as Germany have closed non-essential shops again, France lifted the country’s second lockdown in mid-December and replaced it with a curfew. Restaurants, museums, cinemas, theaters, gyms, and amusement parks remain shut.

(H.T., 01/01)

Deal approved, post-Brexit era begins for UK and EU

Britain was all geared up to enter a new era at 11pm local time on Thursday, emerging out of the European Union to embark on a new, uncertain post-Brexit journey. “Covid loves a crowd, cancel parties” was the key message on a public information campaign on Thursday, the last day of 2020, urging Britons to usher in the New Year at home. For the first time since the April peak, the UK on Wednesday recorded nearly 1,000 Covid-19 deaths in a day and over 50,000 new cases. The post-Brexit agreement between the UK and the EU struck last week received Britain’s royal nod and became law amid continuing debate about whether leaving the bloc is better for Britain’s prosperity. Several aspects of life are likely to change as new post-Brexit realities unfold. This will include higher prices in supermarkets and changes to Britons visiting EU member states. There will be a 90-day limit to their stay in any 180-day period, using queues for non-

EU citizens at airports, and being asked by immigration officials to show return tickets and adequate funds for their stay.

(H.T., 01/01)

Australia changes word in anthem to honour Indigenous people

Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect what the Prime Minister called “the spirit of unity” and the country’s Indigenous population. Prime Minister Scott Morrison on New Years Eve announced that the second line of the anthem, Advance Australia Fair, has been changed from “For we are young and free” to “For we are one and free.” . The change took effect Friday. “It is time to ensure this great unity is reflected more fully in our national anthem,” he said, adding that Australia was the “most successful multicultural nation on Earth.” “While Australia as a modern nation may be relatively young, our country’s story is ancient, as are the stories of the many First Nations peoples whose stewardship we rightly acknowledge and respect,” Morrison said. “In the spirit of unity, it is only right that we ensure our national anthem reflects this truth and shared appreciation.” Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt said in a statement that he had been asked about the change and had given it his support. Wyatt, the first Indigenous Australian elected to the federal Parliament’s lower house, said the one-word change was “small in nature but significant in purpose.”

(H.T., 02/01)

Singapore and Malaysia Terminate High Speed Rail Project

Singapore said a multi-billion-dollar high-speed rail link between the city state and Malaysia’s capital Kuala Lumpur has been terminated. Malaysia has allowed the high-speed rail project “to be terminated, and has to compensate Singapore for costs that the city has already incurred in fulfilling its obligations,” according to a statement from Singapore’s transport ministry on Friday. The announcement came just after a December 31 deadline for the second and final extension of the suspension of the project, which was first mooted a decade ago and given the green light in 2013. In June, the Southeast Asian neighbours had agreed to put the development, which has already incurred multiple suspensions, on hold again amid a discussion around costs. The on-again, off-again 350 kilometer (218 mile) high-speed rail link would have cut travel time between the centers

down to about 90 minutes versus more than four hours by car. Although flying between the two only takes about an hour, that's a lot longer once airport check-in and security is taken into account. The service was due to start in 2026.

(H.T., 02/01)

Nancy Pelosi re-elected as US House speaker amid political uncertainty

Nancy Pelosi was narrowly re-elected speaker of the US House of Representatives on Sunday, as a new Congress took office amid political uncertainty, with Senate control undecided and a Republican fight looming over presidential election results. The House voted 216-209 to reinstate Pelosi, after Democrats lost 11 seats in the November elections to command a narrower 222-212 majority. Five Democrats chose not to support her - two voted for Democratic lawmakers who were not running, while three others simply voted "present." "As we are sworn in today, we accept a responsibility as daunting and demanding as any that previous generations of leadership have faced. We begin the new Congress during a time of extraordinary difficulty," Pelosi said in a floor speech that noted the deaths of more than 350,000 Americans from the Covid-19 pandemic. "Now is a time for our nation to heal. Our most urgent priority will continue to be defeating the corona virus. And defeat it, we will," she added, pledging that further aid would follow the latest \$892 billion package that Congress passed in December.

(H.T., 03/01)

400 million km within 163 days, China's Mars probe heads for red planet

China's first Mars exploration mission Tianwen-1 travelled more than 400 million km by Sunday morning and is expected to enter Mars orbit next month, the country's space agency said. So far, the Mars probe had flown in space for 163 days. It was about 130 million km from Earth and about 8.3 million km from Mars, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA). According to the CNSA, the probe is functioning stably and is scheduled to slow down before entering Mars orbit in more than a month and preparing itself to land on the red planet. Since its launch on July 23, 2020, the Mars probe has captured an image showing both Earth and the Moon, as well as taking several selfies. Tianwen-1 probe, weighing about five tonnes, consists of an orbiter, a

lander and a rover. It is designed to complete orbiting, landing and roving in one mission. After entering Mars orbit, it will spend two to three months surveying potential landing sites, using a high-resolution camera to prepare for the landing in May.

(H.T., 03/01)

US Congress passes ‘Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act’ for Pakistani women

The US Congress has passed the ‘Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act’ which will expand the number of scholarships available to Pakistani women to receive higher education under a merit and needs-based programme. Passed by the House of Representatives in March 2020, the bill was passed by the United States Senate by a voice vote on January 1. The bill now heads to the White House for US President Donald Trump to sign into law. The bill requires the US Agency for International Development to award at least 50% of scholarships under a Pakistan-based higher education scholarship programme to Pakistani women, from 2020 to 2022, across a range of academic disciplines and in accordance with existing eligibility criteria. The bill also requires USAID to consult with and leverage investments by the Pakistani private sector and Pakistani diaspora in the United States to improve and expand access to education programmes in Pakistan.

(H.T., 04/01)

Pakistan cancels 200,000 fake citizen ID cards held by Afghan refugees

Pakistan has cancelled about 200,000 computerised national identity cards (CNICs) fraudulently held by Afghanistan refugees. Speaking to reporters in his home town Rawalpindi on Saturday, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said: “We have data of 1.5 million Afghan refugees having legal status and about 800,000 Afghans living in the country illegally.” He said corruption in the issuance of visas was being tackled and the government was providing online visa facility to citizens of 192 countries. “To eliminate the chances of corruption, we have launched online visa service as there are chances of corruption in manual processing of visas,” he said, adding that over 200,000 visa applications were received for online visas in a single day. Meanwhile, Rashid said persons targeting the armed forces were doing so at the behest of

foreign countries and action would be taken “within 72 hours” against those making “anti-army” remarks. “We would defeat such disinformation against our country and state institutions,” he said. The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) - an alliance of 11 Opposition parties - has been formed against the Pakistan Army’s interference in politics and installing “puppet” Prime Minister Imran Khan through a manipulated election.

(H.T., 04/01)

South Africa testing whether vaccines work against indigenous COVID-19 variant

Scientists in South Africa are urgently testing to see if the vaccines for COVID-19 will be effective against the country's variant virus. The genomic studies come as Britain's health minister, Matt Hancock, and other experts in the UK have said they worry that vaccines may not be effective against the South African variant. "This is the most pressing question facing us right now," said Dr Richard Lessells, an infectious diseases expert who is working on the country's genomic studies of the variant. "We are urgently doing experiments in the laboratory to test the variant," against the blood of people with antibodies and against the blood of people who have received vaccines, Lessells told The Associated Press Monday. The tests, called neutralizing assays, will help determine the reliability of vaccines against the variant, he said. The South African variant, 501.V2, is more infectious than the original COVID-19 virus and has rapidly become dominant in the country's coastal areas.

(H.T., 05/01)

After India, UK, now Mexico approves Oxford COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use

Mexico approved the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine for emergency use Monday, hoping to spur a halting vaccination effort that has only given about 44,000 shots since the third week of December, about 82 per cent of the doses the country has received. Prior to this, the Pfizer vaccine was the only one approved for use in Mexico. Mexican regulators approved the AstraZeneca shot. Assistant Health Secretariat Hugo López-Gatell said he erroneously reported approval for Chinese vaccine maker CanSino, noting it had not yet submitted full study results for safety and efficacy. Mexico has pinned much of its hopes on the inexpensive, one-shot CanSino vaccine. "It will makes things a lot easier

for us," López-Gatell said. López-Gatell, who heads up efforts to deal with the pandemic, had to explain why he was spotted at a Pacific coast beach, apparently sitting at sea-side restaurant without a face mask on.

(H.T., 05/01)

US could soon give 1 million Covid-19 vaccinations a day, says Anthony Fauci

The U.S. could soon be giving at least a million COVID-19 vaccinations a day despite the sluggish start, Dr. Anthony Fauci said Tuesday, even as he warned of a dangerous next few weeks as the coronavirus surges. The slow pace is frustrating health officials and a desperate public alike, with only about a third of the first supplies shipped to states used as of Tuesday morning, just over three weeks into the vaccination campaign. "Any time you start a big program, there's always glitches. I think the glitches have been worked out," the nation's top infectious disease expert told The Associated Press. Vaccinations have already begun speeding up, reaching roughly half a million injections a day, he pointed out. Now, with the holidays over, "once you get rolling and get some momentum, I think we can achieve 1 million a day or even more," Fauci said. He called President-elect Joe Biden's goal of 100 million vaccinations in his first 100 days "a very realistic, important, achievable goal."

(H.T., 06/01)

Germany orders 62,000 poultry culled after bird flu found on farms

About 62,000 turkeys and ducks will be slaughtered after bird flu was found on more poultry farms in Germany, authorities said on Tuesday. Type H5N8 bird flu was confirmed in two farms in the Cloppenburg region in the northern state of Lower Saxony, the Cloppenburg local government authority said. Cloppenburg is one of Germany's leading poultry production areas. A series of outbreaks of bird flu have been reported in Europe in past weeks, with wild birds suspected to be spreading the disease. Outbreaks have been reported in countries including France and Britain, along with cases found elsewhere in Germany. Risk to humans from the disease is considered low, but past outbreaks among farm birds have needed extensive slaughtering programmes to contain.

(H.T., 06/01)

Democrats set to win Senate as Georgia results come in

Democrats inched closer to taking control of the U.S. Senate on Monday as African American pastor Raphael Warnock defeated incumbent Republican candidate Kelly Loeffler- a former businesswoman- in one of two run-off elections in Georgia. Mr. Warnock became the first black Senator elected from the southern State. The other run-off race was too close to call with incumbent David Perdue, a Republican, trailing his challenger, 33 year-old Jon Ossoff, a documentary film-maker, by over 1600 votes with 98% reporting on Wednesday morning (U.S. time).

(H., 07/01)

China denies entry to WHO experts

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said it was “very disappointed” that China had not allowed a team of international experts to go ahead with a visit to study the origins of COVID-19 that was planned for this week. China’s decision to not permit the trip appeared to come at the last minute and catch the WHO by surprise, with some of the experts already having left home and in transit when told the visit would not take place. WHO Director- General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was “very disappointed” the visit could not go forward. “Today, we learned that Chinese officials have not yet finalised the necessary permissions for the teams arrival in China,” he said in Geneva, “I have been in contact with Senior Chinese officials and I have once again made it clear the mission is a priority for the WHO”. The comments marked a rare instance of the WHO head expressing some displeasure with China’s government, which he has consistently praised from the start of the pandemic.

(H., 07/01)

US to modify H-1B visa selection process, to give priority to wages, skill level

The United States on Thursday announced that it will modify the selection process for H-1B visa, giving priority to salary and skills instead of the current lottery procedures. The final rule to be published in the federal register on January 8, officials said, 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. 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. 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 final rule will be effective 60 days after its publication in the Federal Register. The next H-1B visa filing season is slated to start on April 1.

(N.I.E, 08/01)

Brazil passes 200,000 COVID-19 deaths, second most in world

Brazil passed 200,000 deaths from the coronavirus pandemic Thursday. That is the second highest total in the world. The health ministry said the country had 1,524 deaths in the previous 24 hours, rising to a total of 200,498 for the pandemic. The milestone was reached as Brazilians are once again crowding their beaches. 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. Then big festivities kicked off after the Southern Hemisphere's summer started Dec 21. While many countries imposed new restrictions to limit the spread of the virus in mid-December, Brazil's government gave its blessing for holiday fun in the sun.

(N.I.E., 08/01)

WHO blames spiked Italy COVID-19 report on error, 'overlooked' rule

The World Health Organization denied Thursday that Italian officials pressured it to spike a report into Italy's coronavirus response but said the UN agency should have shared the document with Italy's government before publishing it. Dr Hans Kluge, head of WHO's Europe office, said the agency's procedures had been "overlooked," as he sought to explain WHO's decision to pull the report from its website a day after it was posted May 13. By then, it had already cleared all internal WHO approval protocols and been printed. The mystery over the spiked report became a headache for WHO and a problem for the Italian government. The document noted that Italy hadn't updated its influenza pandemic preparedness plan since 2006 and that its initial response as virus cases multiplied was "improvised, chaotic and creative."

(N.I.E, 09/01)

London declares 'major incident' as hospital flooded with Covid patients

London mayor Sadiq Khan on Friday declared a major incident, warning hospitals in the British capital could soon be overwhelmed after a surge in coronavirus infections linked to a new strain. “The stark reality is that we will run out of beds for patients in the next couple of weeks unless the spread of the virus slows down drastically,” Khan said in a statement, urging greater support from the central UK government. “We are declaring a major incident because the threat this virus poses to our city is at crisis point. If we do not take immediate action now, our NHS could be over whelmed and more people will die.” An estimated one in 30 Londoners now have the virus. The number of patients in the capital's hospitals has grown by 27 per cent over the last week and the number on ventilators has increased by 42 per cent.

(H., 09/01)

US tweaks H-1B process to prioritise salary, skills

The outgoing Trump administration on Friday modified the selection process for H-1B visa, giving priority to salary and skills instead of the current lottery procedures. The notification was published in the Federal Register. It would come into force in 60 days. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality 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.

(H., 09/01)

Removal of war victims' memorial at Jaffna University sparks tension

A tense situation continued at the Jaffna University on Saturday, as dozens of locals, students, and politicians gathered overnight, protesting the removal of a war memorial on campus. According to students and eyewitnesses, on Friday night university authorities bulldozed a sculpture, of hands held out of water, erected in memory of several thousand civilians brutally killed in the final phase of the civil war in 2009, in Mullivaikkal in Sri Lanka's northern Mullaitivu district.

(H., 10/01)

Brazil passes 200,000 COVID-19 deaths, second most in world

Brazil passed 200,000 deaths from the corona virus pandemic Thursday. That is the second highest total in the world. The health ministry said the country had 1,524 deaths in the previous 24 hours, rising to a total of 200,498 for the pandemic. The milestone was reached as Brazilians are once again crowding their beaches. 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. Then big festivities kicked off after the Southern Hemisphere's summer started Dec 21. While many countries imposed new restrictions to limit the spread of the virus in mid-December, Brazil's government gave its blessing for holiday fun in the sun.

(H., 10/01)

UK firms 'blindsided' by Brexit deal's export rule

Many British businesses are swiftly discovering that they must now pay duties on exports bound for the European Union, despite the breakthrough Brexit free trade deal clinched over Christmas. The development, which has already helped spark sliding freight traffic to Ireland, is part of trade disruption that has become increasingly evident this year after Britain's Brexit divorce was finalised on December 31. Trade has also been badly hampered by new Covid-19 border restrictions, with the roll-out of testing for lorry drivers as Britain races to curb a rampant variant of the deadly virus.

(N.I.E., 11/01)

Johnson under fire again as Britain records 30,000 death in 30 days

The crisis facing Britain this winter is depressingly familiar; Stay-at-home orders and empty streets. Hospitals overflowing, A daily toll of many hundreds of coronavirus deaths. The UK is the epicenter of Europe's Covid-19 outbreak once more, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government is facing questions, and anger, as people demand to know how the country has ended up here again. Many countries are enduring new waves of the virus, but Britain's is among the worst, and it comes after a horrendous 2020. More than 3 million people in the UK have tested positive for the coronavirus and 81,000 have died – 30,000 in just the last 30 days.

(N.I.E., 11/01)

House will consider Trump impeachment Wednesday; President, Pence speak for first time since Capitol riots

The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives would vote on the impeachment of outgoing President Donald Trump on Wednesday on charges of inciting his supporters to carry out a violent attack on the Capitol Hill last week. Co-authored by Congressmen Jamie Raskin, David Cicilline and Ted Lieu, the article of impeachment -- co-sponsored by 211 House members -- was tabled on Monday. During a conference call with his party colleagues on Monday, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said the impeachment vote will be held on Wednesday. The article of impeachment charges Trump with a count of "incitement of insurrection" for his actions on January 6, when he delivered a speech inciting his supporters to lay siege to the Capitol, an action that temporarily halted the counting of Electoral College votes and resulted in the deaths of five individuals, including an officer of the US Capitol Police. The Democrats have enough votes to impeach the president in the House, which requires a simple majority. But the Senate, where the Republicans have a razor-thin 51-50 majority -- requires votes of two-third of the members to remove the president out of the office.

(N.I.E, 12/01)

Eight gorillas test positive for coronavirus at US' San Diego park

Several gorillas at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park have tested positive for the coronavirus in what is believed to be the first known cases among such primates in the United States and possibly the world. The parks executive director, Lisa Peterson, told The Associated Press on Monday that eight gorillas that live together at the park are believed to have the virus and several have been coughing. It appears the infection came from a member of the parks wildlife care team who also tested positive for the virus but has been asymptomatic and wore a mask at all times around the gorillas. The park has been closed to the public since December 6 as part of the state of California's lockdown efforts to curb coronavirus cases. Veterinarians are closely monitoring the gorillas and they will remain in their habitat at the park, north of San Diego, Peterson said. For now, they are being given vitamins, fluid and food but no specific treatment for the virus. While other wildlife has contracted the coronavirus from minks to

tigers, this is the first known instance of transmission to great apes and it is unknown if they will have any serious reaction.

(N.I.E., 12/01)

US House passes 25th amendment resolution, urges Pence to help in Trump impeachment

The US House rushed ahead toward impeaching President Donald Trump for the deadly Capitol attack, taking time only to try to persuade his vice president to push him out first. Trump showed no remorse, blaming impeachment itself for the "tremendous anger" in America. Already scheduled to leave office next week, Trump is on the verge of becoming the only president in history to be twice impeached. His incendiary rhetoric at a rally ahead of the Capitol uprising is now in the impeachment charge against him, even as the falsehoods he spread about election fraud are still being championed by some Republicans. The House on Tuesday night approved a resolution urging Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to the Constitution to remove Trump with a Cabinet vote and "declare what is obvious to a horrified Nation: That the President is unable to successfully discharge the duties and powers of his office." The resolution passed was approved by 223-205 votes. Democrats proceeded even though Pence said he would not do what the resolution asked.

(N.I.E., 13/01)

China completes 3D mapping of its Western border: official media

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) recently started deploying the country's first panoramic, high-precision spatial datum that covers the uncharted Western border region of the country, official media here reported on Tuesday. The system which provides 3D mapping with centimetre level accuracy will contribute to the infrastructure construction as well as combat capability enhancement of Chinese forces in the region, state-run Global Times reported. China has the longest border spanning 22,000 kms and shares them with 14 countries with 11 of them, including India, in the Western sector. India and China have 3,488-km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) including the Eastern Ladakh where the armies of the two countries have deployed a large number of troops. Over the past two years a navigation and mapping unit affiliated with the PLA Western Theatre Command, which looks after the borders with India,

traversed over 20,000 kms and established the first panoramic, high-precision spatial datum in the western border region based on 3D geographic information from remote sensing images and joint situational precognition, the Global Times quoted the official China Central Television (CCTV) as saying.

(N.I.E., 13/01)

Donald Trump impeached for second time, becomes first US President in history

Donald Trump became the first US president in history to be impeached twice when the House of Representatives voted Wednesday to charge him with inciting last week's mob attack on Congress. The Senate will not hold a trial before January 20, when Democrat Joe Biden assumes the presidency, meaning the real estate tycoon will escape the risk of being forced to leave early. He will, however, depart in disgrace -- and likely due to face a Senate trial later. The only question in the House had been how many Republicans would join the Democratic majority. In the end, 10 Republicans broke ranks, including the party's number three in the House, Representative Liz Cheney. Holed up in the White House, Trump had no immediate reaction but he earlier issued a brief statement insisting that he opposed violence among his supporters. "In light of reports of more demonstrations, I urge that there must be no violence, no lawbreaking and no vandalism of any kind. That is not what I stand for," he said.

(N.I.E., 14/01)

WHO probe team arrives in Wuhan to search for COVID-19 origins

A global team of researchers arrived Thursday in the Chinese city where the coronavirus pandemic was first detected to conduct a politically sensitive investigation into its origins amid uncertainty about whether Beijing might try to prevent embarrassing discoveries. The 10-member team sent to Wuhan by the World Health Organization was approved by President Xi Jinping's government after months of diplomatic wrangling that prompted an unusual public complaint by the head of the WHO. Scientists suspect the virus that has killed 1.9 million people since late 2019 jumped to humans from bats or other animals, most likely in China's southwest. The ruling Communist Party, stung by complaints it allowed the disease to spread, says the virus came from abroad, possibly on

imported seafood, but scientists reject that. The members include virus and other experts from the United States, Australia, Germany, Japan, Britain, Russia, the Netherlands, Qatar and Vietnam.

(N.I.E., 14/01)

Joe Biden announces USD 1.9 trillion COVID-19 stimulus plan to revive US economy

President-elect Joe Biden will propose injecting \$1.9 trillion into the US economy when he takes office next week, as evidence mounts that the recovery from the sharp downturn caused by Covid-19 is flagging. With his fellow Democrats narrowly controlling both houses of Congress, Biden has a shot at passing what would be the United States' third massive pandemic aid package. Dubbed the American Rescue Plan, the proposal released Thursday includes a host of measures aimed at revitalizing the world's largest economy. Biden aims to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, help struggling state and local governments, safely reopen schools, roll out a massive Covid-19 vaccination campaign and raise the size of stimulus checks Congress approved last month. "The return on these investment in jobs, racial equity will prevent long-term economic damage, and the benefits will far surpass the cost," Biden said during a speech in Wilmington, Delaware. "In this moment of crisis... we cannot afford inaction."

(N.I.E, 15/01)

Earthquake sets off landslides, flattens homes in Indonesia

A strong, shallow earthquake shook Indonesia's Sulawesi island just after midnight, causing landslides and sending people fleeing from their homes in the nighttime darkness. At least three people died and 200 were injured, but authorities were still collecting information from devastated areas. In a video released by the National Disaster Mitigation Agency, a girl trapped in the wreckage of a house cried out for help and said her mother was alive but unable to move out. "Please help me, it's hurt," the girl told rescuers, who replied that they desperately wanted to help her. In the video, the rescuers said an excavator was needed to save the girl and others trapped in collapsed buildings. Other images in the video showed a severed bridge and damaged and even flattened houses. TV stations reported the earthquake damaged part of a hospital and

patients were moved to an emergency tent outside. Thousands of displaced people were evacuated to several temporary shelters. The magnitude 6.2 quake early Friday was centered 36 kilometers (22 miles) south of West Sulawesi province's Mamuju district, at a depth of 18 kilometers (11 miles), the U.S. Geological Survey said.

(N.I.E., 15/01)

COVID worldwide deaths cross 2 million; six countries including India make up over half count

Total confirmed deaths from Covid-19 around the world passed two million on Friday, according to a count by AFP. As of 1825 GMT on Friday, 2,000,066 people have died of the virus since it first emerged in China in late 2019, according to the count based on official figures provided by authorities. The grim milestone comes as countries around the globe battle rising infections, despite the gradual rollout of vaccination campaigns. In total, 93,321,070 cases of the virus have been confirmed worldwide since the start of the pandemic, according to the AFP count. Europe is the continent where the health crisis has proved most deadly, with 650,560 fatalities to date. Latin America and the Caribbean have recorded 542,410 deaths, while the United States and Canada have counted 407,090. The individual countries that have suffered the highest death figures are the United States (389,581), Brazil (207,095), India (151,918), Mexico (137,916), Britain (87,295) and Italy (81,325). These six countries alone make up more than half of the global death count.

(N.I.E, 16/01)

Nepal approves AstraZeneca's India-made COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use

Nepal has granted emergency approval for AstraZeneca's India-made Covishield vaccine against the novel coronavirus that has claimed nearly 1,950 lives in the country. The decision to grant the approval for the vaccine was taken on Friday, Nepal's Department of Drug Administration (DDA) said in a statement. "Conditional permission has been granted for emergency use authorization of Covishield vaccine against COVID-19 in Nepal," the statement said. Drug major AstraZeneca has partnered with the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, for the supply of the vaccine to the

Indian government and also to a large number of low and middle-income countries. The vaccine, developed with the University of Oxford, is made from a virus which is a weakened version of a common cold virus (adenovirus), that has been genetically changed so that it is impossible for it to grow in humans.

(N.I.E., 16/01)

Nepali team first to top world's 2nd tallest peak in winter

A team of Nepalese climbers on Saturday made history by scaling the world's second highest peak — Pakistan's K2 — in the winter season, a local Alpine Club official said. The secretary of Pakistan's Alpine Club, Karrar Haideri, said 10 Nepali Sherpas reached the summit around 5 pm. At 8,611 metres (28,251 feet), K2 is the most prominent peak on the Pakistani side of the Himalayan range, and the world's second tallest after Mount Everest. Winter winds on K2 can blow at more than 200 kilometers per hour (125 miles per hour) and temperatures drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius (minus 76 Fahrenheit). "This was never done by anyone before in winter," said Haideri. He added that four international climbing teams had arrived about a month ago to try scaling K2 — the last peak above 8,000 meters in the world to not be climbed in the winter. Of these dozens of climbers, the group of 10 Nepalis have so far been the only successful team, said Haideri. Since the maiden attempt back in 1988, just a handful of winter expeditions have been attempted on the storied 8,611-metre peak in the Karakoram range along the Chinese border that leads into the Himalayas. Haideri said no mountaineers had reached higher than 7,750 metres, until Saturday when fair weather conditions allowed the climbers to push ahead.

(P., 17/01)

Biden plans to give jobs to 30% nationals in 100 days

US President-elect Joe Biden has announced an ambitious goal of inoculating 100 million of total 331 million Americans with Covid-19 vaccines in the first 100 days of his administration, noting the vaccine rollout in the country, the worst hit by the pandemic, has been a "dismal failure." Ahead of his inauguration on January 20, Biden on Friday held a briefing with his team on addressing the major health crisis that has engulfed the nation for nearly a year now. The US is the worst-affected country in the world with more than 23,523,000 COVID-19 infections and 391,955 deaths, according to the Johns

Hopkins Coronavirus tracker. During his election campaign, Biden, a Democrat, made tackling COVID-19 and the economic hardships it had put on Americans a core pitch to voters. “The vaccine rollout in the United States has been a dismal failure thus far and in today’s briefing we discussed five things, five things we will do in an attempt to turn things around, five things to turn frustration into motivation, five things to help us meet our goal of 100 million shots by the end of our first 100 days in office. Some wonder if we are reaching too far for that goal. Is it achievable? It’s a legitimate question to ask,” Biden told reporters in Wilmington, Delaware.

(P., 17/01)

COVID-19 vaccine skepticism hurts East European anti-virus efforts

Vaccines from the West, Russia or China? Or none at all? That dilemma faces nations in southeastern Europe, where coronavirus vaccination campaigns are off to a slow start, overshadowed by heated political debates and conspiracy theories. In countries like the Czech Republic, Serbia, Bosnia, Romania and Bulgaria, vaccine skeptics have included former presidents and even some doctors. Serbian tennis champion Novak Djokovic was among those who said he did not want to be forced to get inoculated. False beliefs that the coronavirus is a hoax or that vaccines would inject microchips into people have spread in the countries that were formerly under harsh Communist rule. Those who once routinely underwent mass inoculations are deeply split over whether to get the vaccines at all. “There is a direct link between support for conspiracy theories and skepticism toward vaccination,” a recent Balkan study warned.

(N.I.E, 18/01)

Gene-mapping champion Iceland leads the way in Covid sequencing

Iceland has genetically sequenced all its positive Covid-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, an increasingly vital practice as worrying new strains emerge from Britain and South Africa. The World Health Organization on Friday urged all countries to ramp up genome sequencing to help combat the emerging variants. Scientists at the Icelandic biopharma group deCODE Genetics' laboratory in Reykjavik have worked relentlessly for the past 10 months, analysing each positive coronavirus test in Iceland at the request of the country's

health authorities. The aim is to trace every case in order to prevent problematic ones from slipping through the net. "It takes us relatively short time to do the actual sequencing," explains the head of the lab, Olafur Thor Magnusson, adding that "about three hours" is all that is needed to determine the virus strain. The entire process, from isolating the DNA to sequencing it, can take up to a day and a half, and has enabled Iceland to identify 463 separate variants -- which scientists call haplotypes. Prior to sequencing, the DNA of each sample is first isolated, then purified using magnetic beads.

(N.I.E., 18/01)

Dramatic drop in Saudi executions after laws changed in 2020

Saudi Arabia, for years one of the world's most prolific executioners, dramatically reduced the number of people put to death last year, following changes halting executions for non-violent drug-related crimes, according to the government's tally and independent observers. The Saudi government's Human Rights Commission said Monday it documented 27 executions in 2020. That's compared to an all-time high of 184 executions the year before as documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The change represents an 85 per cent reduction in the number of people put to death last year compared to 2019. "The sharp decrease was brought about in part by a moratorium on death penalties for drug-related offenses," the Saudi rights commission said. When asked by The Associated Press, the commission said the new law ordering a stop to such executions came into effect sometime last year. The new directive for judges does not appear to have been published publicly and it was not immediately clear whether the law was changed by royal decree, as is typically the case.

(N.I.E, 19/01)

UK's vaccination programme expands to cover over-70s

Millions of people aged 70 and over and those clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 will be invited to get their vaccinations as the National Health Service (NHS) expands the rollout of the vaccines to the next priority groups from Monday. The NHS has so far been working to vaccinate the first two priority cohorts recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and

Immunisation (JCVI), which are care home residents and staff, and those aged 80 and over and frontline health and care staff. Vaccinating these groups will remain the priority, but vaccination sites which have enough supply and capacity for vaccinating further people are allowed to offer vaccinations to the next two cohorts – those aged 70 and over and clinically extremely vulnerable people. “Today is a significant milestone in our vaccination programme as we open it up to millions of more people who are most at risk from Covid-19,” said UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. “We are now delivering the vaccine at a rate of 140 jabs a minute and I want to thank everyone involved in this national effort. We have a long way to go and there will doubtless be challenges ahead – but by working together we are making huge progress in our fight against this virus,” he said.

(N.I.E., 19/01)

Joe Biden to deliver 'forward-looking' inaugural speech written by Indian-American Vinay Reddy

Joe Biden, in his maiden address to the nation soon after being sworn in as the 46th President of the United States, would deliver a forward-looking speech built around the theme of unity, advisors close to the President-elect said. According to the advisors, in his first moments after being sworn in as the 46th President of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts after the clock strikes 12 noon (local time) at the West Front of the Capitol, Biden will speak about the need to bring the country together during an unprecedented moment of crisis. He will reach out to all Americans, and call on every citizen to be part of meeting the extraordinary challenges facing fellow Americans, his advisors said Tuesday on the condition of anonymity. Biden's "remarks will be a forward-looking vision for his presidency while addressing the moment we are living in as a country. The speech is built around the theme of unity," said the advisors who were not authorized to speak to the press. The speech is likely to last between 20 and 30 minutes. The theme of the speech is America United.

(P., 20/01)

Thailand leader threatens punishment for false vaccine news

Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha warned Tuesday that his government

will prosecute anyone who shares false information about coronavirus vaccines in social or mass media. The government already has the power to impose punishments under a state of emergency that was declared last March to deal with the health threat. Prayuth's warning was an apparent reaction to charges that his government has done too little to acquire adequate supplies of vaccines. The criticism took on a sharp political tinge after a popular politician aired such allegations in an internet broadcast Monday night. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, former leader of the dissolved Future Forward Party, accused the government of acting too slowly to inoculate the country's population. Thanathorn has long been a thorn in the side of Prayuth's government. His party made a strong third-place showing in the 2019 general election, but he was forced out of Parliament when a court ruled that he had broken an election law. His party was later dissolved on a similar technicality.

(P., 20/01)

Biden's immigration bill proposes to eliminate per country cap, to benefit Indian IT professionals

In his first official acts as US President, Joe Biden will send a comprehensive immigration bill to Congress which among other things proposes to eliminate the per country cap for employment-based green cards, a move that would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals whose current wait period for legal permanent residency runs into several decades. Called the US Citizenship Act of 2021, the legislation modernises the immigration system, according to an incoming White House official. It prioritises keeping families together, grows the country's economy, responsibly manages the border with smart investments, addresses the root causes of migration from Central America, and also ensures that the US remains a refuge for those fleeing persecution, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The bill clears employment-based visa backlogs, recaptures unused visas, reduces lengthy wait times, and eliminates per-country visa caps. The bill makes it easier for graduates of US universities with advanced degrees, in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) stay in the US; improves access to green cards for workers in lower-wage sectors; and eliminates other unnecessary hurdles for employment-based green cards. It also provides dependents of H-1B visa

holders work authorisation, and children are prevented from "aging out" of the system.

(N.I.E., 21/01)

On Day One, Biden to undo Trump policies on climate, COVID-19 management

In his first hours as president, Joe Biden will aim to strike at the heart of President Donald Trump's policy legacy, signing a series of executive actions that will reverse his predecessor's orders on immigration, climate change and handling of the coronavirus pandemic. Biden on Wednesday planned to halt construction on Trump's U.S.-Mexico border wall, end the ban on travel from some Muslim-majority countries, rejoin the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization and revoke the approval of the Keystone XL oil pipeline, aides said. The new president will sign the orders almost immediately after taking the oath of office at the Capitol, pivoting quickly from his pared-down inauguration ceremony to enacting his agenda. The 15 executive actions are an attempt to essentially rewind the last four years of federal policies with striking speed. Only two recent presidents signed executive actions on their first day in office, and each signed just one.

(N.I.E., 21/01)

Joe Biden launches '100 days mask challenge'; makes COVID test, quarantine mandatory for people entering US

US President Joe Biden has signed a series of executive orders to address COVID-19 challenges, including making coronavirus test followed by quarantine mandatory for all travellers coming from overseas. "In addition to wearing masks, everyone flying to the United States from another country will need to test before they get on that plane, before they depart, and quarantine when they arrive in America," Biden said at a White House event wherein he signed the orders. "Our national plan launches a full-scale wartime effort to address the supply shortages by ramping up production and protective equipment, syringes, needles, you name it. "And when I say wartime, people look at me like wartime? Well, as I said last night, 4,00,000 Americans have died. That's more than World War II. This is a wartime undertaking," he said. Unveiling a national strategy on COVID-19 and executive actions to beat the pandemic, Biden said this plan reflects the ideas he set forward during the

campaign and they have been further refined over the last three months. The national strategy is comprehensive and detailed, and is based on science and truth not politics and denial, he said.

(N.I.E., 22/01)

Germany moves to eradicate lingering World War II era-Nazi laws

Germany is moving to rid itself of a cluster of laws introduced by the Nazis, still lingering on its books 75 years after World War II. There are 29 German legal or regulatory texts that still use wording introduced when Hitler was in power, according to Felix Klein, the government's point man for fighting anti-Semitism. Some of them have "a very clear anti-Semitic background", Klein told. Now, with the support of several parties in the Bundestag lower house of parliament as well as Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, Klein wants to wipe the slate clean -- preferably before the end of the current term in September. But the question remains whether to introduce a single law to reform all the texts at once or to approach them one by one. Germany has already reformed several Nazi-era laws over the years, including the infamous Paragraph 175 that criminalised sex between men, and was repealed in 1994.

(N.I.E., 22/01)

Ageing dams in India, US, other nations pose growing threat: UN report

Over a thousand large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025 and such aging embankments across the world pose a growing threat, according to a UN report which notes that by 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of dams built in the 20th century. The report, titled 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' and compiled by United Nations University's Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50 to 100 years. It said at 50 years, a large concrete dam "would most probably begin to express signs of ageing." Ageing signs include increasing cases of dam failures, progressively increasing costs of dam repair and maintenance, increasing reservoir sedimentation, and loss of a dam's functionality and effectiveness, "strongly interconnected" manifestations, the report said. "By 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of large dams built in the 20th century, many of them already

operating at or beyond their design life," according to the UN University analysis. The analysis includes dam decommissioning or ageing case studies from the USA, France, Canada, India, Japan, and Zambia and Zimbabwe.

(N.I.E., 23/01)

China law empowers coast guard to use force amid disputes

China has authorised its coast guard to fire on foreign vessels and destroy structures on features it claims, potentially raising the possibility of clashes with regional maritime rivals. The Coast Guard Law passed on Friday empowers the force to take all necessary measures, including the use of weapons, when national sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction are being illegally infringed upon by foreign organisations or individuals at sea. The law also authorises the coast guard to demolish other countries' structures built on reefs and islands claimed by China and to seize or order foreign vessels illegally entering China's territorial waters to leave. China's coast guard is the most powerful force of its kind in the region and is already active in the vicinity of uninhabited East China Sea islands controlled by Japan but claimed by Beijing, as well as in the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety. Those activities have brought the coast guard into frequent contact with air and sea forces from Japan, its chief ally the US, and other claimants to territory in the South China Sea, including Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines. Both water bodies are considered potential flashpoints and the law's passage may be a signal that China is preparing to up the stakes over what it considers its key national interests.

(N.I.E., 23/01)

China pushes fringe theories on pandemic origins, virus

Chinese state media have played up questions about Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine and whether it could be lethal to the very old. A government spokesperson suggests the coronavirus could have emerged from a U.S. military lab. As the ruling Communist Party faces growing questioning about China's vaccines and renewed criticism of its early COVID response, it is hitting back by encouraging fringe theories that some experts say could cause harm. State media and officials are sowing doubts about Western vaccines and the origin of the coronavirus in an apparent bid to deflect the attacks. Both issues are in the spotlight because of

the ongoing rollout of vaccines globally and the recent arrival of a WHO team in Wuhan, China, to investigate the origins of the virus. While fringe theories may raise eyebrows overseas, the efforts also target a more receptive domestic audience. The social media hashtag “American’s Ft. Detrick,” started by the Communist Youth League, was viewed at least 1.4 billion times last week after a Foreign Ministry spokesperson called for a WHO investigation of the biological weapons lab in Maryland.

(N.I.E., 24/01)

Portugal chooses a president amid a severe pandemic surge

Portugal held a presidential election Sunday, with the moderate incumbent candidate strongly favored to earn a second five-year term as a devastating COVID-19 surge grips the European Union nation. The head of state in Portugal has no legislative powers, which lie with parliament and the government, but is an influential voice in the running of the country. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, 72, is regarded as the clear front-runner among seven candidates. He is an affable, approachable law professor and former television personality who as president has consistently had an approval rating of 60% or more. To win, a candidate must capture more than 50% of the vote. But a severe surge in coronavirus infections in recent days could keep turnout low and perhaps lead to a runoff between the two top candidates, which would take place on Feb. 14. Portugal has increased polling stations and allowed for early voting to reduce crowding on election day. Portugal has the world’s highest rates of new daily infections and deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, and the public health system is under huge strain.

(N.I.E., 24/01)

Italy PM Giuseppe Conte set to quit and seek new govt as pandemic rages

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is expected to quit on Tuesday and try to form a new coalition government to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 85,000 people in Italy and crippled the economy. Conte survived a confidence vote last week after a coalition partner pulled out but has been left severely weakened and his resignation bid is seen as an attempt to avert a humiliating defeat in the Senate later this week. Conte has called a

cabinet meeting for 9:00am (0800 GMT), when he "will inform the ministers of his desire... to resign", his office said late Monday. Media reports suggest Conte will seek a mandate to form a new government to replace a ruling coalition that has been on the edge of collapse since former premier Matteo Renzi withdrew his small Italia Viva party on January 13. Italy was the first European country to face the full force of the pandemic early in 2020 and has the sixth-highest death toll worldwide.

(N.I.E., 25/01)

Trump sets up 'Office of the Former President' in Florida

Former US President Donald Trump on Monday established an official post-presidency office in Palm Beach County setting up a vehicle for future public appearances and statements. "The Office of the Former President" will manage Trump's correspondence, public statements, appearance and official activities, according to a press release from the office. "Today, the 45th President of the United States, Donald J. Trump formally opened the Office of the Former President," the statement said. It added, "The Office will be responsible for managing President Trump's correspondence, public statements, appearances and official activities to advance the interests of the US and to carry the agenda of the Trump administration." "President Trump will always and forever be a champion for the American people," it further said. The Hill reported that the title of the office could fuel speculation that Trump may not run for president again in 2024, something he and his advisers have not definitively weighed in on.

(N.I.E., 25/01)

Estonia's new government sworn in with first-ever female Prime Minister

Estonia's new two-party coalition government has been sworn in with the first female prime minister in the Baltic country since it regained independence in 1991. The 15-member Cabinet of Prime Minister Kaja Kallas a 43-year-old lawyer and a former European Parliament lawmaker was approved Tuesday in the 101-seat Riigikogu legislature after President Kersti Kaljulaid had first appointed it. The centre-right Reform Party, chaired by Kallas, and the left-leaning Centre Party, which are Estonia's two biggest political parties, clinched a

deal on Sunday to form a government replacing the previous Cabinet led by Centre leader Juri Ratas that collapsed this month due to a corruption scandal. Both parties have seven ministerial portfolios in the Cabinet in addition to Kallas' prime minister post. The government musters a comfortable majority in the Parliament. The Reform Party emerged as the winner of Estonia's 2019 general election under Kallas' lead but she failed to form a government at the time.

(N.I.E., 26/01)

Angela Merkel urges 'fair' distribution of coronavirus jabs

German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged a "fair" distribution of coronavirus vaccines across the world on Tuesday, warning that the memories of countries left out in the race for the life-saving jabs would persist. "Money is one thing, but the other thing in a time of scarcity is the availability of the vaccine. Here it's about a fair distribution, and not about a question of money," she told an online forum. "Let's not kid ourselves, the question of who gets which vaccine in the world will of course leave new wounds and new memories because those who get such emergency help will remember that." Amid a global scramble for the jabs, countries particularly in the developing world are increasingly having to weigh up diplomatic and logistical considerations as they place their vaccine orders. While developed countries have so far only approved vaccines by Western makers Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, many in the developing world have turned to China's Sinopharm or Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday lashed out at "vaccine nationalism," accusing rich countries of bulk-buying coronavirus vaccines and hoarding them to the detriment of others.

(N.I.E., 26/01)

Pak. plans to hold Senate polls through open vote

Pakistan Cabinet has decided to table a Bill in Parliament to amend the Constitution for holding the Senate elections through open vote. The decision was taken during the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan. "The government wants the (Senate) polls to be held in a transparent manner and without horse-trading. This is why we want Senate polls to be held through an open ballot," Information Minister Shibli Faraz told the media after the meeting. He said that in the past, money was used in Senate

elections and votes were bought making the House election a mockery. The Minister asked what was the use of an upper house in which people come through purchasing of votes.

(H., 28/01)

Chinese media takes aim at India over COVID-19 vaccines

China's government said this week there was "no place for malign competition" on the issue of supplying vaccines. The media it control in China have, however, adopted a different line, from accusing India of "interference" in preventing Chinese Vaccines being use in South Asia, to questioning the efficacy of Indian and Western vaccines. "There are multiple COVID-19 vaccine candidates out there on the market, and countries should be able to make their choices on the vaccines independently", Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said this week when asked by Chinese State media about reports of India's "vaccine diplomacy" in the neighbourhood. "This issue can afford no place for malign competition, let alone the so-called 'rivalry'. We hope and welcome that more doses of safe and effective vaccines will be manufactured at a faster pace by more countries and then provided to more countries to benefit more people," he said.

(H., 28/01)

New Zealand tops COVID-19 performance ranking

New Zealand and Vietnam are ranked the best performing countries in their response to the pandemic, according to a COVID-19 "performance index" put together by the Lowy Institute, Australian think tank, such sought to assess the impact of geography, political systems and economic development in assessing incomes. The index, which was ranked on six different indications, including confirmed cases and deaths per million people and the scale of testing, sought "to gauge the relative performance of countries", assessing 98 countries in the 36 weeks that followed their hundredth case. "Fewer reported cases and deaths, both in aggregate and per capita terms, point towards a better response to the virus," the sydney-based think thank said. " More tests conducted on a per capita basis reveal a more accurate picture of the extent of the pandemic at the national level. Lower rates of positive tests, meanwhile, indicate greater degrees of control over the transmission of COVID-19."

(H., 29/01)

Biden warns Beijing over 'expansionism'

A week into the job, U.S., President Joe Biden has sent a clear warning to Beijing against any expansionist intentions in East and South-east Asia. In multiple calls

and statements, he and his top security officials have underscored support for allies Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, signalling Washington's rejection of China's disputed territorial claims in those areas. On Wednesday, Mr. Biden told Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga that his administration is committed to defending Japan, including the Senkaku Islands, which are claimed both by Japan and China, which calls them the Diaoyu Islands.

(H., 29/01)

WHO team begins fieldwork in Wuhan to trace virus origins

Experts from the World Health Organisation visited a Wuhan hospital on Friday as the fieldwork began in a closely watched coronavirus origins probe that will take in a food market presumed to be “ground zero” of the pandemic. The WHO investigation has been hobbled by delays, and there are fears over access and the strength of evidence a year after the virus emerged in the central Chinese City. The team met Chinese officials on Friday and then left their Wuhan hotel in a fleet of cars, trailed by a media pack reflecting the intense global scrutiny on a visit whose aim is to establish how the virus was transferred from animals to humans.

(H., 30/01)

Myanmar poll panel rejects fraud claims

Myanmar's Election Commission rejected allegations by the military that fraud played a significant role in determining the outcome of November's election, in which Aung San Suu Kyi's party won majority of seats. The decision, announced Thursday, came amid heightened tensions after the military, which had ruled Myanmar for five decades until 2015, refused to rule out the possibility of a coup if their complaints were ignored.

(H., 30/01)

After uproar, Myanmar Army plays down coup rhetoric

Myanmar's military on Saturday vowed to abide by the country's Constitution, in an apparent backtracking after its commander-in-chief spurred fears of a coup when he suggested the junta-scripted charter could be repealed. The powerful Army has for weeks alleged widespread irregularities in November's election, won in a landslide by Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling National League for Democracy(NLD). Tensions ramped up on Tuesday when a military spokesman refused to rule out the possibility of a coup. A day later, Army Chief General

Min Aung Hlaing – arguably the most powerful person in Myanmar – said revoking the 2008 Constitution could be “necessary” under certain circumstances.

(H., 31/01)

Post-poll crisis in CAR displaced 2 lakh : UN

More than 2,00,000 people have fled fighting in the Central African Republic since violence erupted over a December election result, the U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) said on Friday, with nearly half crossing into the Democratic Republic of Congo. The CAR Army, backed by U.N., Russian and Rwandan troops, has been battling rebels that are seeking to overturn a December 27 vote, in which President Faustin-Archange Touadera was declared the winner. “Refugees have told UNCHR that they fled in panic when they heard gun shots, leaving their belongings behind,” spokesman Boris Cheshirkov told journalists in Geneva. About 92,000 refugees have reached DRC and more than 13,000 have crossed into Cameroon, Chad and the Republic of Congo. The rest are displaced inside the Central African Republic.

(H., 31/01)
