

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

The Election Commission said that former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora had joined the board of advisers for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, a Stockholm based inter-governmental organisation of 34 member countries. He had served as CEC from December 2, 2018 to April 12, 2021.

The share of global wealth of the world's richest people soared at a record pace during the Covid pandemic, a report on inequality showed on Tuesday. Since 1995, the slice held by billionaires has risen from 1% to 3%, according to the World Inequality Report. "This increase was exacerbated during the COVID pandemic. In fact, 2020 marked the steepest increase in global billionaires' share of wealth on record," the document said. The club of the richest 1% has taken more than a third of all additional wealth accumulated since 1995, while the bottom 50% captured just 2%.

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) and their collaborators have identified a key role played by hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) gas in suppressing the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Increased H₂S was found to have a direct effect on reducing the rate at which the virus multiplies in HIV infected human immune cells. The finding paves the way for developing a more comprehensive antiretroviral therapy against HIV.

The Kerala Government will file an interlocutory application (IA) in the Supreme Court to prevent Tamil Nadu from releasing vast quantities of water from the Mullaperiyar dam at night, purportedly without warning. Interlocutory application" means an application to the Court in any suit, appeal or proceeding already instituted in such Court, other than a proceeding for execution of a decree or order.

Mon district in Nagaland observed a shutdown in protest against the killing of 14 civilians by the security forces, while the State Government called off a major ongoing festival as a mark of respect to the deceased. The State Cabinet also decided to write to the Union Government to immediately repeal the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, now in force in the State.

ANIMAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

1. After a long gap, the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) welcomed a Himalayan goral, Bengal fox and Nilgai as part of its animal exchange programme with National Zoological Park (NZP) in New Delhi. **Himalayan goral**-Himalayan gorals or grey gorals (*Naemorhedus goral*) are medium sized herbivores and are the smallest of the goat-antelopes. They have a stout & stocky build, which is advantageous for maneuvering the craggy terrain of the Himalayas. Himalayan gorals lack a pre-orbital gland, which is present in closely related Himalayan serows.

2. Behaviour - Himalayan gorals are diurnal but most active during the early morning and evening (crepuscular). They make small altitudinal migrations seasonally; in the colder months they move to lower altitudes to graze, returning to higher altitudes during warmer months. Himalayan gorals are gregarious, but adult males live in solitude until the breeding season. Reproduction - Himalayan gorals are polygynous (Dominant males have mating rights to all females in their ranges).

3. **Bengal fox or Indian fox** (*Vulpes bengalensis*) are medium sized omnivorous foxes, which is a species of Asian foxes. They are native to the Indian subcontinent, including India, Nepal and Pakistan. They are widely spread in this region. Habitat - Bengal foxes generally prefer foothills and non-forested regions such as open grassland, thorny scrub, semi-desert and arid environments.

4. They can also be found in agricultural fields. They inhabit burrows built 2 to 3 feet below ground surface that have several openings converging towards the center burrow area. Behaviour - Bengal foxes are diurnal and crepuscular. Reproduction - Bengal foxes are believed to live in long-term monogamous pairs.

5. **Nilgai** The Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) or Indian antelope or bluebuck or blue cow is the largest Asian antelope. The nilgai is indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. The nilgai's conformation is more horselike than cowlike. Habitat - Nilgai antelopes live in dry areas with a variety of land types. In India, they occur in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains southward to Mysore. Behaviour - Nilgai antelopes are diurnal with most activity in the early morning and late afternoon. They graze and browse, with grass as the main source of their diet.

NATIONAL MEDICINAL PLANTS BOARD

1. National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) and CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, (CSIR-CIMAP) have collaborated to promote the production of quality planting material (QPM) of medicinal plants. In order to promote medicinal plants sector, the Government of India set up National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) in 2000.

2. Currently, the board is **working under the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Homoeopathy)**. NMPB's main objective is the development of medicinal plants sector through developing a strong coordination between various ministries/ departments/ organization for implementation of policies / programs on medicinal plants.

3. The NMPB also promote research & development, capacity building through trainings, raising awareness through promotional activities like creation of Home/School herbal gardens.

STEPS TO ENHANCE COAL PRODUCTION

1. The Government has implemented the Central sector scheme (CSS) to increase domestic exploration of coal and lignite resources. Auction of commercial mining on Revenue Sharing Mechanism was launched in 2020.

2. This was done for a total of 28 coal mines. Mineral Concession Rules, 1960 was amended by the Ministry of Coal with a view to allow sale of coal or lignite, on payment of additional amount, by the lessee of a captive mine up to 50% of the total production in a financial year. This sale will be allowed, after meeting the requirement of the end use plant linked with the mine.

Responding to a proposal from the Ministry of Home Affairs, which urged the protesting farmers to call off their agitation as most of their pending demands had been resolved, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) sought clarifications on several points, including the withdrawal of "fake" cases against protesters. After a discussion at the Singhu border, the farmers' unions decided to reconvene today to announce a final decision on ending their protest.

Referring to the violence in Nagaland where 14 civilians were killed, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee directed police officials of certain border districts not to allow personnel of the Border Security Force in habitations without permission. "The BSF is allowed for 15 km, that too with the permission of the police.

High pendency of cases, large number of vacancies and the collegium system of appointment were among the key issues raised by Lok Sabha members while debating a Bill that seeks to bring clarity on when Supreme Court and High Court judges will get enhanced pension on attaining a certain age.

Only 4,018 people with disabilities have received both doses of the COVID19 vaccine till November 28, as per figures released by the Health Ministry during the ongoing session of Parliament. It added that as per the CoWIN portal, 8,390 people with disabilities received the first dose. As per Census 2011, the differently abled population in India stands at 26.8 million.

The Army's Srinagarbased 15 Corps conducted a triservice helicopter-borne training and validation exercise in the snow clad higher reaches of the Kashmir Valley. "The exercise was planned to validate the joint capability to insert the task force tactically behind enemy lines in an intense air defence and electronic warfare operating environment.

Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin held a twohour video summit in which the U.S. president said he would warn of painful sanctions and increased military support for Eastern Europe if Russia invades Ukraine. Russia denies planning to invade Ukraine, but with satellite pictures showing massive troop concentrations on the border, fears are growing of war in Europe.

An Israeli air strike hit a shipment of Iranian weapons in the Syrian port of Latakia on Tuesday, in the first such attack on the key facility,

3.Single Window Clearance portal has been launched. It is a unified platform that facilitates grant of clearances and approvals required for starting a coal mine in India. Coal India Ltd. has envisaged 15 Projects identified with a Capacity of about 160 Million Tonnes per Annum (MTPA) to be operated by Mine Developer cum Operator mode.

4.Increasing domestic production of coal through allocation of more coal blocks. Coking Coal Mission has been launched to increase coking coal production from the current level of 45 Million Tonnes (in 2020-21) to the production target of 170 MT (by FY 2029-30).

STEPS TO INCREASE INDIGENOUS DEFENCE PRODUCTION

1.Defence Industrial Corridors - In Budget 2018-19, the Central Government had announced setting up of 2 Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs) in the country. It was further decided to set up one of these Corridors in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and another in Tamil Nadu (TN).

2.DICs are aimed at providing fillip to the defence manufacturing ecosystem in both the States and attract investment worth Rs 10,000 crore in each of the DICs by the year 2024-25. The respective State Governments have taken action for acquisition of land and development of necessary infrastructure like road connectivity, basic amenities and security.

3.Defence Companies - The production units of Ordnance Factory Board have been converted and corporatized into 7 Defence Companies. This restructuring is aimed at enhancing the functional autonomy, efficiency and unleash new growth potential and innovation in Ordnance Factories.

4.This is aimed at transforming the Ordnance Factories into Productive and profitable assets; deepen specialization in the product range; enhance competitiveness; and improving quality and cost-efficiency. These new Defence Companies has the potential to grow in the domestic market through product diversification and import substitution, in addition to growth in exports.

WORLDWIDE COST OF LIVING REPORT

1.The Cost of Living Report, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), was released recently. The 2021 edition of the report explores the cost of living in 173 cities, measured against impactful global events.

2.On average, prices for goods and services have risen by 3.5% year-on-year, the highest inflation rate seen in the last five years. Tel Aviv tops the rankings, making it the most expensive city in the world to live in. Paris and Singapore came joint second, followed by Zurich and Hong Kong.

3.New York came in sixth, and Geneva took seventh place. Tel Aviv has climbed in the rankings due to the strength of the Israeli shekel against the dollar, and increases in transport and grocery prices. As the index is benchmarked against prices in New York City, the cities with currencies that are stronger against the US dollar would appear higher in the rankings.

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GREATER TIPRALAND

1.Following the recent killings, several tribal outfits in Tripura have joined hands to push their demand for a separate state for indigenous communities in the region, arguing that their "survival and existence" was at stake. The Demand: The parties are demanding a separate state of 'Greater Tipraland' for the

a war monitor said. The Israeli raid “directly targeted an Iranian weapons shipment in the container yard,” the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The Observatory, a U.K. based organisation.

SEBI has amended rules pertaining to delisting of shares of a company following an open offer as part of efforts to make mergers and acquisitions for listed firms more convenient. Under the new framework, the acquirers need to disclose their intention to delist the firm via an initial public announcement, according to a notification. If the acquirer wishes to delist the target company, the acquirer must propose a higher price with suitable premium over the open offer price. In the existing framework, if an open offer is triggered, compliance with takeover norms could take the acquirer’s holding to above 75% or even 90%.

indigenous communities of the north-eastern state. They want the Centre to carve out the separate state under Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

2. Greater Tipraland’ is essentially an extension of the ruling tribal partner Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura – IPFT’s demand of Tipraland, which sought a separate state for tribals of Tripura.

3. **The new demand seeks to include every tribal person living in indigenous area or village outside the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) under the proposed model.** However, the idea doesn’t restrict to simply the Tripura tribal council areas, but seeks to include ‘Tiprasa’ of Tripuris spread across different states of India like Assam, Mizoram etc. as well, even those living in Bandarban, Chittagong, Khagrachari and other bordering areas of neighbouring Bangladesh.